



Perspectives™

On the World Christian Movement



Third Edition

Edited by
J. I. Packer
with contributions by
a number of leading scholars

WORLD MISSION

An Analysis
of the World Christian Movement

SECOND EDITION
Full revision of the original work

The Biblical / Historical Foundation

Part One of a Manual in Three Parts

Jonathan Lewis, Ph.D., Editor



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Jonathan Lewis, Editor
January 1994

Other Course Materials by the Editor

- *World Mission Leader's Guide*. An aid to those who want to organize and conduct a study group utilizing these manuals. It includes suggestions for promotion and organization of the course, as well as sample answers to each of the questions in the texts. An appendix gives useful helps on group dynamics. Available from William Carey Library.
- *Misión Mundial: Un Análisis del Movimiento Cristiano Mundial* (3 volumes).
- *Guía para el tutor del grupo de estudio de: Misión Mundial* (3 volumes).
- *Video de Misión Mundial* (3 videos, 5 hours total).

The Second Edition of the Spanish manuals, accompanying leader's guide, and the lecture videos are available from Unilit, 1360 N.W. 88th Ave., Miami, FL 33172.

Please contact the publisher for other language editions under production.

- *Working Your Way to the Nations: A Guide to Effective Tentmaking*. A 12-lesson course for use by local churches in guiding the preparation of cross-cultural "tentmaking" missionaries. Available from William Carey Library. Editions of this strategic course in Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese are under production.

PART 1

THE BIBLICAL / HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

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Preface to the Second Edition

We live in a rapidly changing world. These changes affect the way the advancing World Christian Movement perceives its mandate and carries out its task. The Second Edition of *World Mission* has tried to analyze these trends and incorporate their discussion into the text. Two Thirds World missions, reaching rapidly expanding cities, mission to the world's poor and destitute, the 10/40 window, strategic partnerships, church/mission tension—these and other current issues are woven into the discussion of the biblical, historical, strategic, and cross-cultural foundation of missions, improving and strengthening these basic themes.

The editors have worked closely with the *Perspectives* office at the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, to assure that these manuals are suited for students participating in their extension courses. Questions have been improved, and the research assignment has been redesigned to enhance the application of the end-product. Useful indexes and an appendix have also been added.

Organization and Use of This Manual

World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement is a manual that can be used by study groups in a formal or informal educational setting. The manual is in three parts, each being a separate unit.

- **Part One, The Biblical/Historical Foundation**, examines the roots of world mission, including its origin and its development through the ages.
- **Part Two, The Strategic Dimension**, defines the remaining mission task and the strategies necessary to reach the unreached.
- **Part Three, Cross-Cultural Considerations**, explores the challenge of cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

Each of the 15 chapters of this manual is divided into three study units. Each unit develops a distinct concept and relates it to the material studied in preceding units. Questions interspersed throughout the text direct the reader's attention to key points and stimulate reflection on the readings.

Each chapter ends with two sections of questions. The first section, **Integrative Assignment**, is designed to help the reader assimilate the material studied. The questions invite the student to do further research and encourage the development of the student's abilities to communicate what is learned. Study groups should use these questions for group discussion. In Part Two of the manual, an "Unreached Peoples" research project is incorporated into the Integrative Assignment. This fascinating project will require extra time and effort from the student.

The second section of questions, **Questions for Reflection**, asks for a response to personal and spiritual issues raised by the readings. We recommend that each student enter his or her thoughts either in the workbook or in a personal diary. We also suggest that a devotional time be provided during each group session to share these comments.

CHAPTER 1

God's Purpose and Plan

“For God so loved the world ...” (John 3:16)

The message of John 3:16 is simple enough for a child to understand, yet so profound that theologians will continue to probe its implications throughout time. Though most of us have individually experienced the salvation God offers through His Son, have we really begun to fathom the Father's love for lost mankind? What does “God so loved the world” really mean?

Since the beginning, God has been at work to fulfill His purposes. He created man to be like Him, placed him in a perfect environment, and enjoyed his fellowship. Man chose to frustrate God's good plan by rebelling against Him and His command. By that rebellion, the sentence of death came upon all men.

God could have justly destroyed mankind at that time. Instead, He chose to bless him by offering redemption and the right to become His children to as many of Adam's descendants as would accept it. In addition, He directed those who received redemption to accept the responsibility of joining Him in extending that redemption to others. This plan of blessing and responsibility constitutes God's world mission.

We begin our study by examining our primary source for what we know about God's mission: the Bible. Using that source, we then explore God's purpose in the creation and attempt to answer the question: What is God really trying to do? As we continue to examine the biblical record, we discover that to accomplish His purpose, God has implemented a plan in which His people are intended to play a significant role. Understanding this plan may give you a whole new perspective on the Bible.

I. Mission, the Basis for the Bible

Most Christians believe that a basis for worldwide mission can be found in isolated parts of the Bible, such as the “Great Commission” passages. In actuality, mission is much more fundamental to all of Scripture. God's worldwide purpose is, in fact, the basis for the entire biblical revelation.



Figure 1-1. The Bible Is Missions!

Simply stated, if God had not purposed to redeem mankind, there probably would have been no need for Him to reveal Himself through the biblical record. In fact, apart from God's redemptive mission, there would have been no chosen nation to trace throughout the Old Testament, no Messiah to expect, and no crucifixion or resurrection to proclaim. The abbreviated record would need only to have included the creation, man's fall, and his subsequent condemnation to death and eternal judgment.

Thank God, He did purpose to redeem mankind! Since He desires our participation in sharing this good news, He gave us a clear account of what He has done and what He yet intends to do. The Bible is the story of God's mission—why and how a loving God is redeeming lost humanity. As we examine the Bible in this light, we see that redeeming people is at the center of God's concern. We also see that taking the gospel forth is not just a good and right activity. It is a call to partnership with the living God to bring about the glorious fulfillment of Revelation 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever."

The Bible: The Mission Manual

God's redemptive mission is the central theme of the Bible. Not only does God's loving purpose radiate from every book, but the Bible is also God's manual on how to accomplish that purpose. In the following article, John Stott helps us understand this dynamic interrelationship. Read the article and carefully answer the study questions that follow each section.

□ **The Bible in World Evangelization ***

John R. W. Stott **

Without the Bible world evangelization would be not only impossible but actually inconceivable. It is the Bible that lays upon us the responsibility to evangelize the world, gives us a gospel to proclaim, tells us how to proclaim it, and promises us that it is God's power for salvation to every believer. It is, moreover, an observable fact of history, both past and contemporary, that the degree of the church's

commitment to world evangelization is commensurate with the degree of its conviction about the authority of the Bible. Whenever Christians lose their confidence in the Bible, they also lose their zeal for evangelism. Conversely, whenever they are convinced about the Bible, then they are determined about evangelism.

* Stott, J. R. W. (1992). The Bible in world evangelization. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. A3-A9). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** John R. W. Stott is Rector Emeritus of All Souls Church in London, President of Christian Impact, and an Extra Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II. For 25 years (1952-1977) he led university missions on five continents. He still travels widely, especially in the non-Western world, as a lecturer and speaker. Formerly he addressed five Urbana Student Missions Conventions. His many books include *Basic Christianity*, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, *The Cross of Christ*, and *The Spirit, the Church and the World*.

Let me develop four reasons why the Bible is indispensable to world evangelization.

Mandate for world evangelization

First, the Bible gives us the mandate for world evangelization. We certainly need one. Two phenomena are everywhere on the increase. One is religious fanaticism and the other, religious pluralism. The fanatic displays the kind of irrational zeal which (if it could) would use force to compel belief and eradicate disbelief. Religious pluralism encourages the opposite tendency.

Whenever the spirit of religious fanaticism or of its opposite, religious indifferentism, prevails, world evangelization is bitterly resented. Fanatics refuse to countenance the rival evangelism represents, and pluralists deny its exclusive claims. The Christian evangelist is regarded as making an unwarrantable intrusion into other people's private affairs.

In the face of this opposition we need to be clear about the mandate the Bible gives us. It is not just the Great Commission (important as that is) but the entire biblical revelation. Let me rehearse it briefly.

There is but one living and true God, the Creator of the universe, the Lord of the nations, and the God of the spirits of all flesh. Some 4,000 years ago He called Abraham and made a covenant with him, promising not only to bless him but also through his posterity to bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1-4). This biblical text is one of the foundation stones of the Christian mission. For Abraham's descendants (through whom all nations are being blessed) are Christ and the people of Christ. If by faith we belong to Christ, we are Abraham's spiritual children and have a responsibility to all mankind. So, too, the Old Testament prophets foretold how God would make His Christ the heir and the light of the nations (Ps. 2:8; Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

When Jesus came, He endorsed these promises. True, during His own earthly ministry He was restricted "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6; 15:24), but He prophesied that many would "come from east and west, and from north and south," and would "sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29). Further, after His resurrection and in anticipation of His ascension, He made the

tremendous claim that "all authority in heaven and on earth" had been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). It was in consequence of His universal authority that He commanded His followers to make all nations His disciples, baptizing them into His new community and teaching them all His teaching (Matt. 28:19).

And this, when the Holy Spirit of truth and power had come upon them, the early Christians proceeded to do. They became the witnesses of Jesus, even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Moreover, they did it "for the sake of His name" (Rom. 1:5; 3 John 7). They knew that God had superexalted Jesus, enthroning Him at His right hand and bestowing upon Him the highest rank, in order that every tongue should confess His Lordship. They longed that Jesus should receive the honor due to His name.

The church of God is a multinational missionary community, under orders to evangelize until Christ returns.

Besides, one day He would return in glory, to save, to judge, and to reign. So what was to fill the gap between His two comings? The worldwide mission of the church! Not till the gospel had reached the end of the world, He said, would the end of history come (cf. Matt. 24:14; 28:20; Acts 1:8). The two ends would coincide.

Our mandate for world evangelization, therefore, is the whole Bible. It is to be found in the creation of God (because of which all human beings are responsible to Him), in the character of God (as outgoing, loving, compassionate, not willing that any should perish, desiring that all should come to repentance), in the promises of God (that all nations will be blessed through Abraham's seed and will become the Messiah's inheritance), in the Christ of God (now exalted with universal authority, to receive universal acclaim), in the Spirit of God (who convicts of sin, witnesses to Christ, and impels the church to evangelize), and in the church of God (which is a multinational, missionary community, under orders to evangelize until Christ returns).

This global dimension of the Christian mission is irresistible. Individual Christians and local churches

not committed to world evangelization are contradicting (either through blindness or through disobedience) an essential part of their God-given identity.

The biblical mandate for world evangelization cannot be escaped.

The Biblical Mandate: The non-negotiable responsibility binding on all those who receive the benefits of God's covenant with Abraham, to share those same benefits with the other families (nations) of the earth.

1. According to Stott, what direct correlation exists between the church's commitment to world evangelization and her conviction about the authority of the Bible?

2. On what grounds does Stott demonstrate that the mandate for world evangelization is "the whole Bible"?

Now read Stott's comments concerning the biblical message for mission.

Message for world evangelization

Secondly, the Bible gives us the message for world evangelization. The Lausanne Covenant* defined evangelism in terms of the evangel [the gospel]. Paragraph Four begins: "To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord He now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe."

Our message comes out of the Bible. As we turn to the Bible for our message, however, we are immediately confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand the message is given to us. We are not left to invent it; it has been entrusted to us as a precious "deposit," which we, like faithful stewards, are both to guard and to dispense to God's household (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12-14; 2 Cor. 4:1-2). On the other hand, it has not been given to us as a single, neat, mathemati-

* The Lausanne Covenant is a declaration of commitment to world evangelization drawn up by participants in the Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland, July 1974.

cal formula, but rather in a rich diversity of formulations, in which different images or metaphors are used.

So there is only one gospel, on which all the apostles agreed (1 Cor. 15:11), and Paul could call down the curse of God upon anybody — including himself — who preached a “different” gospel from the original apostolic gospel of God’s grace (Gal. 1:6-8). Yet the apostles expressed this one gospel in various ways—now sacrificial (the shedding and sprinkling of Christ’s blood), now messianic (the breaking in of God’s promised rule), now legal (the Judge pronouncing the unrighteous righteous), now personal (the Father reconciling His wayward children), now salvific (the heavenly Liberator coming to rescue the helpless), now cosmic (the universal Lord claiming universal dominion); and this is only a selection.

The gospel is thus seen to be one, yet diverse. It is “given,” yet culturally adapted to its audience. Once we grasp this, we shall be saved from making two opposite mistakes.

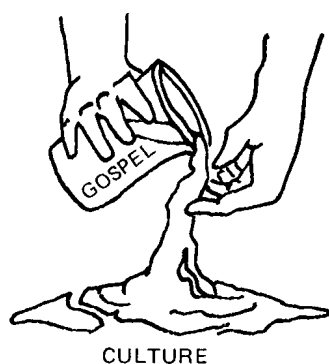
The first I will call “total fluidity.” I recently heard an English church leader declare that there is no such thing as the gospel until we enter the situation in which we are to witness. We take nothing with us into the situation, he said; we discover the gospel only when we have arrived there. Now I am in full agreement with the need to be sensitive to each

situation, but if this was the point which the leader in question was wanting to make, he grossly overstated it. There is such a thing as a revealed or given gospel, which we have no liberty to falsify.

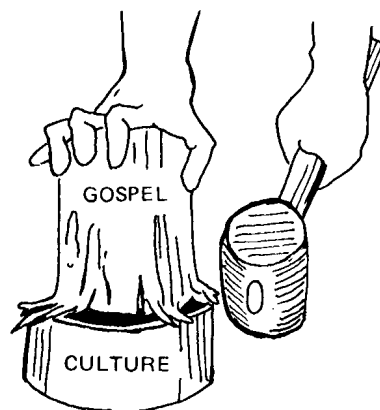
The opposite mistake I will call “total rigidity.” In this case the evangelist behaves as if God had given a series of precise formulas that we have to repeat more or less word for word, and certain images that we must invariably employ. This leads to bondage to either words or images or both. Some evangelists lapse into the use of stale jargon, while others feel obliged on every occasion to mention “the blood of Christ” or “justification by faith” or “the kingdom of God” or some other image.

Between these two extremes there is a third and better way. It combines commitment to the fact of revelation with commitment to the task of contextualization. It accepts that only the biblical formulations of the gospel are permanently normative and that every attempt to proclaim the gospel in modern idiom must justify itself as an authentic expression of the biblical gospel.

But if it refuses to jettison the biblical formulations, it also refuses to recite them in a wooden and unimaginative way. On the contrary, we have to engage in the continuous struggle (by prayer, study, and discussion) to relate the given gospel to the given situation. Since it comes from God we must



TOTAL FLUIDITY



TOTAL RIGIDITY

Figure 1-2. Two Opposite Mistakes in Presenting the Gospel

guard it; since it is intended for modern men and women we must interpret it. We have to combine fidelity (constantly studying the biblical text) with sensitivity (constantly studying the contemporary

scene). Only then can we hope with faithfulness and relevance to relate the Word to the world, the gospel to the context, Scripture to culture.

3. *In discussing the message of the Bible, Stott points out that there is only one gospel, but there are many formulations, images, and metaphors which are used in communicating it. What are the two dangers he mentions?*
-
-

4. *What two attitudes should we combine to avoid these deadly extremes?*
-
-

Read Stott's comments regarding the model for world evangelization.

Model for world evangelization

Thirdly, the Bible gives us the model for world evangelization. In addition to a message (what we are to say) we need a model (how we are to say it). The Bible supplies this too: for the Bible does not just contain the gospel; it is the gospel. Through the Bible God is Himself actually evangelizing, that is, communicating the good news to the world. You will recall Paul's statement about Genesis 12:3 that "the Scripture ... preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8, RSV). All Scripture preaches the gospel; God evangelizes through it.

If, then, Scripture is itself divine evangelization, it stands to reason that we can learn how to preach the gospel by considering how God has done it. He has given us in the process of biblical inspiration a beautiful evangelistic model.

What strikes us immediately is the greatness of God's condescension. He had sublime truth to reveal about Himself and His Christ, His mercy and His justice, and His full salvation. And He chose to make this disclosure through the vocabulary and grammar of human language, through human beings, human images, and human cultures.

Yet through this lowly medium of human words and images, God was speaking of His own word. Our evangelical doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture emphasizes its *double authorship* [italics added]. Men spoke and God spoke. Men spoke from God (2 Pet. 1:21), and God spoke through men (Heb. 1:1). The words spoken and written were equally His and theirs. He decided what He wanted to say yet did not smother their human personalities. They used their faculties freely yet did not distort the divine message. Christians want to assert something similar about the incarnation, the climax of the self-communicating God. "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). That is, God's eternal Word, who from eternity was with God and was God, the agent through whom the universe was created, became a human being, with all the particularity of a first-century Palestinian Jew. He became little, weak, poor, and vulnerable. He experienced pain and hunger and exposed Himself to temptation. All this was included in the "flesh," the human being He became. Yet when He became one of us, He did not cease to be Himself. He remained forever the eternal Word or Son of God.



REFUSAL TO IDENTIFY



TOTAL LOSS OF IDENTITY AND SURRENDER OF VALUES

Figure 1-3. Two Errors in Identifying

Essentially the same principle is illustrated in both the inspiration of the Scripture and the incarnation of the Son. The Word became flesh. The divine was communicated through the human. He identified with us, though without surrendering His own identity. And this principle of “identification without loss of identity” is the model for all evangelism, especially cross-cultural evangelism.

Some of us refuse to identify with the people we claim to be serving. We remain ourselves and do not become like them. We stay aloof. We hold on desperately to our own cultural practices with fierce tenacity, but we treat the cultural inheritance of the land of our adoption without the respect it deserves. We thus practice a double kind of cultural imperialism, imposing our own culture on others and despising theirs. But this was not the way of Christ, who emptied Himself of His glory and humbled Himself to serve.

Other cross-cultural messengers of the gospel make the opposite mistake. So determined are they to identify with the people to whom they go that they surrender even their Christian standards and values. But again this was not Christ's way, since in becoming human He remained truly divine. The Lausanne Covenant expressed the principle in these words: “Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity, in order to become the servants of others” (para. 10).

We have to wrestle with the reasons why people reject the gospel and in particular give due weight to the cultural factors. Some people reject the gospel not because they perceive it to be false, but because they perceive it to be alien.

Dr. Rene Padilla was criticized at Lausanne [the 1974 Congress on World Evangelization] for saying that the gospel some European and North American missionaries have exported was a “culture Christianity,” a Christian message that is distorted by the materialistic, consumer culture of the West. It was hurtful to us to hear him say this, but of course he was quite right. All of us need to subject our gospel to more critical scrutiny, and in a cross-cultural situation, visiting evangelists need humbly to seek the help of local Christians in order to discern the cultural distortions of their message.

Others reject the gospel because they perceive it to be a threat to their own culture. Of course Christ challenges every culture. Whenever we present the gospel to Hindus or Buddhists, Jews or Muslims, secularists or Marxists, Jesus Christ confronts them with His demand to dislodge whatever has thus far secured their allegiance and replace it with Himself. He is Lord of every person and every culture. That threat, that confrontation, cannot be avoided. But does the gospel we proclaim present people with other threats that are unnecessary—because it calls for the abolition of harmless customs, or appears

destructive of national art, architecture, music, and festivals, or because we who share it are culture-proud and culture-blind? To sum up, when God spoke to us in Scripture He used human language, and when He spoke to us in Christ He assumed human flesh. In order to reveal Himself, He both

emptied and humbled Himself. That is the model of evangelism which the Bible supplies. There is self-emptying and self-humbling in all authentic evangelism; without it we contradict the gospel and misrepresent the Christ we proclaim.

Two reasons people reject the gospel even when they want to believe:

- 1. It appears to be alien to their culture.***
- 2. It seems to be a threat to their culture.***

5. In this section, Stott again points out two extremes which can cause us to fail as messengers of the gospel. Explain these extremes in your own words.

6. In what ways did Christ portray a balanced model for cross-cultural witness?

Read this final section of Stott's article.

Power for world evangelization

Fourthly, the Bible gives us the power for world evangelization. It is hardly necessary for me to emphasize our need for power, for we know how feeble our human resources are in comparison with the magnitude of the task. We also know how armor-plated are the defenses of the human heart. Worse still, we know the personal reality, malevolence, and might of the devil and of the demonic forces at his command.

Sophisticated people may ridicule our belief and caricature it, too, in order to make their ridicule more plausible. But we evangelical Christians are naive enough to believe what Jesus and His apostles taught. To us it is a fact of great solemnity that, in John's expression, "the whole world is in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). For until they are liberated by Jesus Christ and transferred into His kingdom, all men and women are the slaves of

Satan. Moreover, we see his power in the contemporary world—in the darkness of idolatry and of the fear of spirits, in superstition and fatalism, in devotion to gods which are no gods, in the selfish materialism of the West, in the spread of atheistic communism, in the proliferation of irrational cults, in violence and aggression, and in the widespread declension from absolute standards of goodness and truth. These things are the work of him who is called in Scripture a liar, a deceiver, a slanderer, and a murderer.

Preaching the gospel is the God-appointed means by which the prince of darkness is defeated and the light comes streaming into people's hearts.

So Christian conversion and regeneration remain miracles of God's grace. They are the culmination of a power struggle between Christ and Satan or (in vivid apocalyptic imagery) between the Lamb and the Dragon. The plundering of the strong man's palace is possible only because he has been bound by the One who is stronger still and who by His death and resurrection disarmed and discarded the principalities and powers of evil (Matt. 12:27-29; Luke 11:20-22; Col. 2:15).

How then shall we enter into Christ's victory and overthrow the devil's power? Let Luther answer our question: *ein wortlein will ihn fallen* ("one little word will knock him down"). There is power in the Word of God and in the preaching of the gospel. Perhaps the most dramatic expression of this in the New Testament is to be found in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul portrays "the god of this world" as having "blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ ..." (v. 4).

If human minds are blinded, how then can they ever see? Only by the creative Word of God. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to "give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (v. 6). The apostle thus likens the unregenerate heart to the dark primeval chaos and attributes regeneration to the divine fiat, "Let there be light."

If then Satan blinds people's minds, and God shines into people's hearts, what can we hope to contribute to this encounter? Would it not be more modest for us to retire from the field of conflict and leave them to fight it out? No, this is not the conclusion Paul reaches. On the contrary, in between verses 4 and 6, which describe the activities of God and Satan, verse 5 describes the work of the evangelist: "We preach... Jesus Christ as Lord." Since the light which the devil wants to prevent people from seeing and which God shines into them is the gospel, we had better preach it! Preaching the gospel, far from being unnecessary, is indispensable. It is the God-appointed means by which the prince of darkness is defeated and the light comes streaming into people's hearts. There is power in God's gospel—His power for salvation (Rom. 1:16).

We may be very weak. I sometimes wish we were weaker. Faced with the forces of evil, we are often tempted to put on a show of Christian strength and engage in a little evangelical saber rattling. But it is in our weakness that Christ's strength is made perfect, and it is words of human weakness that the Spirit endorses with His power. So it is when we are weak that we are strong (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Let it loose in the world!

Let us not consume all our energies arguing about the Word of God; let's start using it. It will prove its divine origin by its divine power. Let's let it loose in the world! If only every Christian missionary and evangelist proclaimed the biblical gospel with faithfulness and sensitivity, and every Christian preacher were a faithful expositor of God's Word! Then God would display His saving power.

Without the Bible world evangelization is impossible. For without the Bible we have no gospel to take to the nations, no warrant to take it to them, no idea of how to set about the task, and no hope of any success. It is the Bible that gives us the mandate, the message, the model, and the power we need for world evangelization. So let's seek to repossess it by diligent study and meditation. Let's heed its summons, grasp its message, follow its directions, and trust its power. Let's lift up our voices and make it known.

7. According to Stott, what kind of power is needed for world evangelization?

8. What role does Stott feel the Word of God should play in our witness?

In the first part of this lesson, we have seen that mission is the reason God gave the Bible and that the Bible is our manual for mission. In this next part, we want to examine why God is involved in mission in the first place.

II. God's Purpose

What is God's purpose for His creation? What is He really trying to do? The following article by Stanley Ellisen delves into these questions by articulating two problems God is faced with and what He is doing about them. Read the following article and answer the study questions at the end.

☐ **Everyone's Question: What Is God Trying to Do? ***

Stanley A. Ellisen **

God's eternal kingdom

The Bible describes God as an eternal King: "The Lord is King forever" (Ps. 10:16). It also declares that He is sovereign over all things (Ps. 103:19). Being infinite, He is everywhere. So, at every time and place, in all the vast reaches of His universe, God has been in full control. He has never compromised this supreme prerogative of His Godhood. To do so would make Him less than God. It is essential to recognize His undiminished sovereignty if we are to have a proper view of His kingdom. His work of

creation, with all the apparent risks involved, was the work of His sovereignty.

Primeval rebellion

In the operation of His kingdom God rules by the principle of delegated authority. He organized the angels as a hierarchy, assigning levels of responsibility and spheres of service. To act as His supreme lieutenant in directing this kingdom, God endowed one specific archangel with striking beauty, wisdom, and power (Ezek. 28:12-17; Jude 9). He

* Ellisen, S. A. (1992). Everyone's question: What is God trying to do? In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. A19-A24). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

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named him Lucifer and gave him a throne from which to rule (Isa. 14:12-14). This angel ruled as God's prime minister par excellence. How long this harmonious arrangement continued in the distant past is not recorded.

Endowed with freedom of choice, the crucial test of any creature was allegiance to the will of God. That crucial test came for Lucifer when he shifted his gaze to himself and his God-given features of splendor. Dazzled by his own greatness, he asserted independence and presumed himself to be "like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). In that moment of decision he thrust himself outside the stabilizing axis of God's will and began the swirling catapult into the oblivion of a godless being. His decision was final and never repented of.

Lucifer, however, was not alone in this choice. He evidently had a following of one-third of the angels of heaven (Rev. 12:4-7), which also suggests the great allurements of his leadership. With this crowd of rebels he formed a kingdom of his own, a counterfeit kingdom of darkness. His name was changed to Satan ("adversary"), in keeping with his behavior. If God is sovereign, why didn't He immediately destroy this arch rebel? Why didn't He have a mass execution for the whole horde of disobedient angels? Or at least, why didn't He lock them up forever in the abyss of hell?

So deep is God's sovereignty that He is able to make the wrath of men to praise Him and all His enemies to serve Him.

The answer is that God does have such a plan, but He is temporarily using these rebels to accomplish another purpose. In the outworking of His program, God was not locked into a one-track plan but was able to flex with the punches, so to speak. So deep is His sovereignty that He is able to make the wrath of men to praise Him and all His enemies to serve Him (Ps. 76:10). The devastating irony of it for His enemies is that they end up serving Him in spite of themselves. Some of the fallen angels He chained until judgment; others He has allowed a limited liberty until His further purpose is accomplished.

The central fact to observe is that God did allow the formation of a kingdom of darkness. This kingdom was formed through voluntary forces led by Satan, not through God's creation, as such. It thus became an opposite pole to God's kingdom of light and an alluring option for all moral creatures in their exercise of moral freedom. It is a counterfeit kingdom running concurrently with the true kingdom of righteousness. Very often it seems to be dominant, not only coercing men and women but winning them. This is partly because of its *modus operandi*. Contrary to many naive opinions, the devil is not a red monster with a pitchfork, but often a do-gooder. His goal in life is to counterfeit the works of God. This has been his prized ambition ever since he went into business for himself. His first recorded intention ended with the words, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). This counterfeiting effort is his most effective ploy, for the more closely he can imitate God's work, the less likely will men be inclined to seek God or pursue His will.

God's earthly kingdom inaugurated

After the fall of Satan, God began another creation: man. He likewise endowed this being with freedom of choice, dangerous though this second venture appears. Freedom of choice was essential to human personality, if man and woman were to be made in the image of God. God's grand design is to reproduce Himself in human personalities, especially His traits of love and holiness. And these divine characteristics can grow only in the soil of moral freedom. Fellowship involves moral choice.

By this freedom God sought to establish man and woman in a wholesome relationship to His sovereignty. He sought to relate to them by love, not coercion. The bond of love is infinitely stronger than that of muscle. With this in mind He made Adam and Eve partners in His rule. As an initial test they were forbidden to eat of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). They were given a choice of compliance or disobedience, clear and simple. The tree was not put there as a teaser or trap, but as an inevitable test. It gave the couple a choice as to whether they would be loyal to God or submit to enticing alternatives presented by the serpent. Had they turned from his evil suggestion to firm commitment to God, they might have eaten of the

“tree of life” and been eternally confirmed in righteousness (Gen. 3:24; Rev. 22:2). But they each disobeyed the direct command of God, and the fall of the race took place.

By this deliberate action they declared their independence from the will of God and their affiliation with Satan’s kingdom of darkness. The cause of this disaster was not the tree; nor was it the serpent or the devil behind the serpent (Rev. 12:9). These provided only an occasion for two individuals to express their freedom of choice with respect to the will of God. The cause of disaster was in their decision. In this test of allegiance they failed and fell, along with the previously fallen host of angels.

To all outward appearance, this second fall of God’s creation seemed to dash God’s high hopes of extending His kingdom in moral agents. Man was given cosmic responsibilities to have dominion over the earth—but he could not be trusted with a piece of fruit. Was the divine gift of free choice too risky? Would this endowment be the suicidal undoing of the whole race? It certainly seemed to be counter-productive to God’s purpose, for sin appeared to be coming up the victor.

The two problems summarized

The dilemma at this point may be summarized as two problems which God acquired in the creative

process. One was the fact that His trusted lieutenant, Lucifer, defected and started a counterkingdom, stealing also the allegiance of a large contingent of the angels. The second was that man, made in God’s image, also defected and fell into a state of sin and personal disintegration. Thus God’s kingdom was dissected and partially usurped.

The question is often raised as to why God bothered with a salvage operation. Why not destroy everything and start over? Of course this was not within His sovereign plan, nor would it have been a real solution to the deep challenge the double rebellion posed. God not only rose to the insidious challenge of sin, but His great heart of grace initiated an operation that would marvelously redeem sinners. In this plan He addressed Himself to two problems: (1) how to reclaim His usurped kingdom, and (2) how to provide redemption for mankind. The solution God sought could not deal with both problems separately; He thus devised a plan whereby the victory over the counterfeit kingdom would provide salvation for mankind. It could not be achieved by a mere display of divine muscle; the answer was not to crack the whip. Cataclysmic and inclusive judgment would be postponed. It would require action with the depth and power of His greatest attribute: love.

Ellisen’s article begins by affirming God’s eternal sovereignty. God has allowed Satan, and later man, to contest that sovereignty. Nevertheless, this rebellion has posed a twofold “problem” for God.

9. Summarize the major aspects of God’s twofold “problem.”

10. What is the crucial test of any creature’s allegiance to God?

Now read the last part of the article dealing with God’s kingdom and redemptive programs.

God's kingdom and redemptive programs

When Adam and Eve first sinned, God began His judgment with the serpent (Gen. 3:14, 15). In this judgment He also gave the proto-evangel,* announcing His redemptive purpose for men. To the serpent He said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

This message was obviously for man as well as Satan, perhaps more so. In it God prophesied that, following a two-way enmity, two bruising or crushings would take place. The serpent's head would be crushed by the woman's seed, and the heel of the woman's seed would be crushed by the serpent. The two figures in this conflict are later declared to be Christ, who was the seed born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), and Satan, called "the serpent of old" (Rev. 20:2).

By analyzing these two crushings we get a thumbnail sketch of God's program with respect to Satan and man. The first statement, "He shall bruise you on the head," was a prophecy that Christ would destroy the devil. Christ Himself spoke of His binding Satan, the "strong man" of this world system, and casting him out (Matt. 12:29; John 12:31). Christ's death on the cross provided the ground for

Satan's final destruction, for "he who builds the scaffold finally hangs thereon." And with his final judgment, the counterfeit kingdom of his making will also be destroyed. This, of course, has not yet taken place, but will occur after Christ's millennial reign. This whole process by which God reclaims His authority in all realms and forever stops all rebellion can be thought of as God's "kingdom program."

The second crushing announced in Genesis 3:15 is the heel-crushing of the seed of the woman by the serpent. This devilish assault was fulfilled on the cross, where Satan was the driving force behind the crucifixion of Christ. The heel-crushing suggests the temporary nature of Christ's death in contrast to the head-crushing of the serpent. Christ's death on the cross then became the ground for God's redemptive program, the program by which He provided salvation for men.

Thus, in this proto-evangel in Eden, God introduced in outline form His twofold program for His kingdom and man's redemption. He would ultimately reclaim His total kingdom by destroying Satan and Satan's kingdom and would redeem believing men in the process by the death of Christ.

11. Why is Genesis 3:15 (the proto-evangel) significant to our understanding of God's purpose and plan?

God's twofold program unfolds

The rest of the Old Testament pictures the progressive development of this twofold purpose of God in the earth. The Lord chose two men of faith through

whom He inaugurated these programs and set them in motion. The first was Abraham, who lived about 2000 B.C. With him God made a covenant, promis-

* The proto-evangel is a preparation for the fuller message to come, as recorded in Genesis 3:15. It is the first biblical reference to the gospel message.

ing among other things a seed that would bless all nations. This seed Paul identified as Christ, and the blessing which was to come through Him he identified as redemption or justification (Gal. 3:6-16). Abraham's seed would bring redemption to men, fulfilling the redemptive program.

To fulfill His kingdom purpose, God chose David out of the same line about 1000 B.C. and made a covenant about a kingdom and a royal seed (2 Sam. 7:12-16). This seed of David eventually would rule over the house of Israel forever. Besides ruling over Israel, it was later revealed that this anointed One would extend His rule over the whole world (Amos 9:12; Zech. 14:9). Through the seed of David, God would fulfill His kingdom program by destroying the rebels and governing the world in righteousness.

Two typical sons

It is interesting to note also that each of these two men was given a son who typified the seed he was promised. Abraham's son, Isaac, typified Christ in His redemptive function, being offered on Mount Moriah as a living sacrifice. David's son, Solomon, typified Christ in His royalty, being a king of glory and splendor. These two sons strikingly typified that seed of Abraham and of David who was looked for with such anticipation throughout the rest of the Old Testament period. In this light, it is no wonder that the Spirit of God begins the New Testament by introducing its central figure as "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

Two typical animals

The Old Testament also portrays the redemptive and kingdom functions of Christ by two symbolic animals. The sacrificial lamb typified Him in His re-

demptive work as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). It portrayed Him as the Lord's servant who was led "like a lamb... to slaughter" (Isa. 53:7).

The other animal typifying Christ in the Old Testament is the lion (Gen. 49:9, 10). John, in Revelation 5:5, refers to this Old Testament metaphor when he describes Christ as the "Lion... from the tribe of Judah." As the king of the beasts, the lion represents kingly authority. The point is that out of the tribe of Judah would come a Ruler who would rule Israel and the world.

The two programs related

Although these two functions of Christ are inextricably related throughout the Bible, they are distinct in their purposes. The kingdom purpose is primarily for God, having to do with His reclaiming what was lost from His kingdom. The redemptive purpose relates primarily to man, providing the basis of his salvation. Though the kingdom purpose is broader, extending to the whole spiritual realm, it could not be accomplished without the redemptive program for man. Notice how John relates the two in his prophetic vision of Revelation 5. After seeing Christ as the Lion and Lamb, he hears the angelic throng loudly acclaim: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). He will have shown not only His right but His worthiness to rule as God's Lion, having been slain as God's Lamb. Before He moves in to destroy the kingdom of darkness with wrath, He had to walk the fires of judgment to salvage sinners, laying down His life as a lamb. These two roles then are inter-

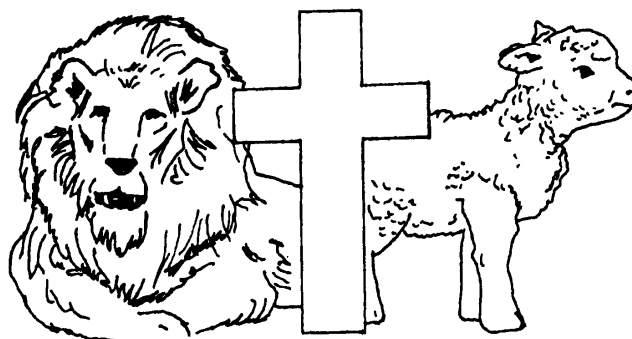


Figure 1-4. God's Twofold Program

woven, but they reach in two directions and demonstrate two qualities of God's nature.

This reclaimed kingdom Christ will finally present back to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). That presentation will constitute the fulfillment of His twofold commission from the Father in His role as the seed of the woman. And, of supreme importance, the proc-

ess by which He will have reclaimed that kingdom will be through His redemptive love, not His coercive might. This redemptive grace is the genius of His twofold program, and it will also constitute the basis of His eternal fellowship with men. That divine-human fellowship will not be based on fear or force, but on love.

12. The author outlines God's twofold program to deal with each aspect of His "problem." Through which two men of the Old Testament does He begin each part of the solution?

13. In what ways do their two sons typify the two aspects of the program?

14. How do two specific animals portray the redemptive and kingly functions of Jesus Christ?

15. What event will constitute the fulfillment of God's twofold program?

In counteracting the problem of rebellious mankind under the power of a satanic counterkingdom, God's redemptive and ruling purposes are intertwined.

- God aims to reestablish His rightful reign over all creation.
- God aims to reconcile people to Himself through Christ's death and the resurrection.

These two central purposes are the reason for His people's mission: that God's holy and loving rule would be extended throughout the earth, and people from every nation would be restored to fellowship with Him.

God's purposes on earth can be summarized:

- 1. To redeem a people from every people.***
- 2. To rule a kingdom over all other kingdoms.***

III. God's Plan

Immediately after Adam's and Eve's willful rebellion in the Garden of Eden, God committed Himself to a redemptive plan. How did man respond to God's initial overtures to reestablish their former relationship? Let us examine the emerging pattern found in Genesis 3-11 that has repeated itself throughout redemptive history.

Satan tempted Eve with the same temptation to which he fell prey. He wanted to be equal with God (Isa. 14:14), and that is what he promised Eve if she tasted of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:5). This desire to cast off God's Lordship has been at the root of man's sin problem from the very beginning.

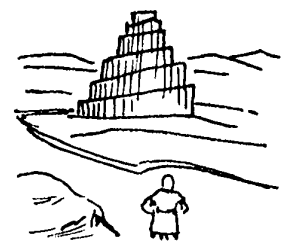


In spite of this ingrained attitude of rebellion, God has always shown mercy and offered reconciliation. When Adam and Eve sinned and their eyes were opened to their nakedness, the Lord's first act was one of tender mercy: He provided garments of skin for them (Gen. 3:21) and removed their shame. Although they had to suffer the consequences of their sin and were expelled from the Garden, God continued to communicate with them and demonstrate loving concern for them.



The human race as a whole was not interested in accepting the restoration of God's sovereignty. With the multiplication of men came the multiplication of violence and wickedness. Genesis 6:5 records of man that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The Lord was deeply grieved by this conduct. Mankind again paid the consequences of sin, and the race was almost destroyed by a great flood. Yet God showed mercy by saving one righteous man, Noah, and his family and by giving them a new start. When Noah and his family descended from the ark, God reestablished His command to them to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1).

Although guaranteed by covenant that God would never destroy the earth again by flood (Gen. 9:11), Noah's descendants were unwilling to trust in His faithfulness. They determined to protect themselves, building a great tower to escape any future flood. This action was also an attempt on their part to actively disobey God's command to go forth and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1, 7). The people wanted to make a name for themselves and resisted God's plan (Gen. 11:4).



God dealt firmly with this willful disobedience by confusing the people's language at Babel (Gen. 11:7-9). Unable to communicate with each other, mankind's rebellious attempt at unified self-sufficiency was frustrated. The nations were scattered, thus fulfilling God's intention to have them populate the entire world. From this initial dispersion arose the tremendous variety of ethnic groups, cultures, and languages that are found today.

Genesis 10:32 summarizes the situation, saying, "These are the families of the sons of Noah, ... and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood." Scholars agree that Genesis 10 is one of the most complete listing of the nations that existed at the time. In typical Hebrew style of stating outcomes and then explaining how they came about, this list of 70 nations (the outcome) precedes the story of Babel (the event), which explains why they were divided. Immediately after the rebellion of Genesis 10 and 11, God begins the foundation of a new strategy: He will build a particular nation (through Abraham) to reach all the other nations.

When Jacob and his children relocated to Egypt, there were 70 members recorded in his family. It is as if God underlined His intent to reach all 70 nations. See Figure 1-5 for a listing of the many nations with which God's people had the opportunity to interact throughout their history.

PEOPLE GROUPS IN CONTACT WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD, 2000 B.C. TO 3 B.C.	
PATRIARCHS <i>Genesis, Job</i>	Chaldeans, People of Ebla, People of Haran, Egyptians (Gen. 12); Canaanites, Perizzites (Gen. 13); Rephaites, Zuzites, Emmites, Horites, Amalekites, Amorites (Gen. 14); Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Girgashites, Jebusites (Gen. 15); Moabites, Ammonites (Gen. 19); Philistines (Gera, Gen. 20); Asshurites, Letushites, Leummites, Midianites, Ishmaelites, Arameans (Gen. 25); Hivites, Edomites (Gen. 36); Adullamites (Gen. 38)
SOJOURN IN EGYPT/ EXODUS <i>Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua</i>	Midianites, Egyptians, Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites (Ex. 3); Amalekites, Nephilim (Num. 13); Ammonites (Num. 21); Moabites (Num. 22)
JUDGES <i>Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel</i>	Canaanites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Amorites, Sidonians, Hivites, Philistines (Phoenicians), Hittites, Jebusites, Amalekites, Moabites, Ammonites, Midianites, Abiezrites (Jud. 8); Maonites (Jud. 10); Egyptians
KINGS <i>2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations</i>	Philistines, Amalekites, Ammonites, Arameans, Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Hittites, Gibeonites, Amorites, Hararites (2 Sam. 23); Egyptians, Phoenicians (Tyre and Sidon), Assyrians, Chaldeans, Sabeans (Queen of Sheba's people group)
BABYLONIAN EXILE <i>2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Hosea through Malachi</i>	Assyrians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Moabites, Philistines
INTERTESTAMENTAL	Seleucids, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Berbers?, Celts?, Goths?

Figure 1-5

The Breadth of God's Purpose

While it is clear from Scripture that God desires that all men come into a right relationship with Him, it is apparent that not all men will do so. What is our responsibility in this matter? Many have asked, "What about those who have never heard?" In the following article, Robertson McQuilkin discusses the implications of these serious questions.

❑ **Lost***

Robertson McQuilkin**

Have you ever experienced the terror of being lost—in some trackless mountain wilderness, perhaps, or in the labyrinth of a great, strange city? Hope of finding your way out fades and fear begins to seep in. You have likely seen that fear of lostness on the tear-streaked face of a child frantically screaming or quietly sobbing because he is separated from his parent in a huge shopping center. Lost.

Three of four people have never heard with understanding the way to life in Christ and, even more tragic, half the people of the world cannot hear because there is no one near enough to tell them.

Equally terrifying and more common is the feeling of being hopelessly entangled or trapped in a frustrating personal condition or circumstance: alcoholism, cancer, divorce. Incredibly alone! Lost.

The Bible uses the word “lost” to describe an even more terrible condition. Those who are away from the Father’s house and haven’t found the way back to Him are “lost.” Jesus saw the crowds of people surging about Him as sheep without a shepherd, helpless and hopeless, and He was deeply moved.

Worse than being trapped and not knowing the way out is to be lost and not even know it, for then one does not look for salvation, recognize it when it comes, nor accept it when it is offered. That’s being lost.

How many are lost in our world? We are told there are 200 million evangelicals.*** Some of these are lost, no doubt, but at least that many people believe Jesus is the only way of salvation and that through faith in Him one is forgiven and made a member of

God’s family. Surely some who are not evangelical have saving faith. So let us double the number to a hypothetical 400 million. Those who remain number more than four billion people or nine of every ten on earth. These are the lost—longing for salvation but not finding it, or trusting some other way to find meaning and hope.

The tragedy of this century of exploding population is that three of four people have never heard with understanding the way to life in Christ and, even more tragic, half the people of the world cannot hear because there is no one near enough to tell them. As we approach the end of the second millennium A.D., one of every two on planet earth lives in a tribe or culture or language group that has no evangelizing church at all. If someone does not go in from the outside, they have no way of knowing about Jesus.

But are these people in the “dark half of the world” really lost? What of those who have never had a chance, who have never heard—are *any* of them lost? Are *all* of them lost?

Universalism

Throughout church history there have been those who teach that none will finally be lost. The old universalism taught that all ultimately will be saved because God is good. Not much was heard of this position from the days of Origen in the third century until the 19th century when it was revived, especially by the Universalist Church. Simultaneously with the founding of the Universalist Church, which was honest enough to be up front about it and call itself by that name, the teaching began to spread in many mainline denominations.

There are problems with this position. Philosophically, such a teaching undermines belief in the

* McQuilkin, R. (1984). *The great omission* (pp. 39-53). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

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*** Ralph Winter places this estimate at 500 to 700 million.

atoning death of Christ. For if all sin will ultimately be overlooked by a gracious deity, Christ never should have died. It was not only unnecessary, it was surely the greatest error in history, if not actually criminal on the part of God for allowing it to happen. Universalism, therefore, philosophically demands a view of the death of Christ as having some purpose other than as an atonement for sin.

Another problem the Universalists faced is that Scripture consistently teaches a division after death between those who are acceptable to God and those who are not. This teaching and that concerning the atonement are so strong in the Bible that Universalists did not accept the authority of Scripture. Thus the marriage between the Universalist Church and the Unitarian Church was quite natural.

The New Universalism

A New Universalism arose in the 20th century which took the Bible more seriously. It was Trinitarian. Christ did die for sinners, and *all* will ultimately be saved on the basis of Christ's provision.

Karl Barth and many of his neo-orthodox disciples took such a position. All will be saved because God is all-powerful. His purposes will be accomplished. And He purposes redemption.

There were philosophical and biblical problems with this position also. Philosophically, if all will be saved eventually, for whatever reason, preaching the gospel is not really necessary. Why did Christ make this the primary mission of the church if all will ultimately find acceptance with God with or without the gospel? The more serious problem is biblical: Christ clearly taught of an eternal hell of a great gulf between the saved and the lost (Luke 16:19-31). In fact, He clearly taught that the majority are on the broad road that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14).

The Wider Hope Theory

Because Universalism cannot be reconciled with biblical data, there were those who promoted what

was called a "Wider Hope." Not all will be saved, but many who have not heard of Christ will be saved because God is just and will not condemn the sincere seeker after truth. The problem is that if sincerity saves in religion, it is the only realm in which it saves. For example, it does not save in engineering. The architect who designed the magnificent John Hancock Building in Boston was sincere. The builder was sincere. The glassmaker was sincere. The owner, especially, was sincere. But when the giant sheets of glass began to fall on the streets below, sincerity did not atone for error. Neither does sincerity save in chemistry. We do not say, "If you drink arsenic, sincerely believing it to be Coca-Cola, according to your faith be it unto you." Sincerity does not alter reality. We shall consider the question of God's justice later.

The New Wider Hope Theory

The 19th century doctrine of the Wider Hope has been superseded by what I have called the "New Wider Hope." According to this teaching, those who live by the light they have may be saved on the merits of Christ's death through general revelation. Or, at least, they will be given a chance at death or after death. This is a more conservative version of the New Universalism. Richard Quebedeaux identifies this position as held by some "younger evangelicals," the New Left. A practical problem is that preaching the gospel seems almost criminal, for it brings with it greater condemnation for those who reject it, whereas they conceivably could have been saved through general revelation had they not heard the gospel. In any event, it certainly seems less urgent to proclaim the way of salvation to those who may well be saved without that knowledge. A mutation of this view is the idea that only those who reject the gospel will be lost. This viewpoint is not widespread because it makes bad news of the Good News! If people are lost only if they hear and reject, it is far better not to hear and be saved. On this view it would be better to destroy the message than to proclaim it!

16. What common fault does the author find with the historical universalist positions he mentions?

Only one way? Only one name?

For one committed to the authority of Scripture, our debate concerning the reasonableness of each position must yield to the authority of Scripture. What does Scripture teach concerning the eternal spiritual condition of those who have not heard the gospel?

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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.... Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him (John 3:16-18, 36).

Scripture teaches clearly that there are those who perish and those who do not. Notice that it is those who believe on *Christ*—not simply those who, through their encounter with creation and their own innate moral judgment, believe in a righteous Creator—who receive eternal life. God's intent is to "save the world through Him [Christ]" (3:17). The word "through" speaks of agency: it is by means of Jesus Christ that a person gains eternal life.

The passage does not deny other agencies, however. The Japanese proverb assures us that many roads lead up famed Mount Fuji, but they all reach the top. This is the Japanese way of expressing the viewpoint that all religions will have a good outcome. But Jesus Christ Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). In other words, Jesus Christ is the *only* agency of salvation.

The New Wider Hope would affirm this. Salvation is by Jesus Christ alone. But, it would hold, that does

not mean Jesus Christ must be known by a person for that person to be saved.

Jesus assures us that people will be judged because they have not believed on the name (John 3:18). Peter is even more explicit in telling us that there is no salvation in any other name given among men (Acts 4:12). Surely it is no accident that the name is so prominent in the Bible, especially in teaching on saving faith. Peter did not say, "in no other person." When a person is named, the identity is settled and ambiguity is done away. Peter does not make room for us to call on the Ground of Being or the great "all." You will be saved, he tells us, if you call on and believe in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. John, Jesus, and Peter are not the only ones with this emphasis. Paul also speaks to the issue:

... "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:13-15).

The ones who call on the name are the ones who will be saved. But what of those who have not heard so they cannot call? Paul does not assure us that those who have not heard may simply believe on whatever they have heard. Rather, "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

Scripture is very clear that there are two kinds of people, both in life and in death: the saved and the lost. It is also very clear on the way of salvation. But still, for those who truly care, questions may remain: Is God loving, powerful, fair, just?

Is God loving? Yes, God is good and that is why men are lost. In love He created a being in His own image, not a robot programmed to respond as the Maker designed. In creating such a being to freely love and be loved, God risked the possibility of such a being rejecting His love in favor of independence or even self-love. Humankind did, in fact, choose

this option. Still true to His character, God provided a way back even though the cost was terrible. But the way back must not violate the image of God in man, must not force an obedient response. Rather, the God of love chooses to wait lovingly for the response of love. Those who wish to reject Him may do so.

17. According to McQuilkin, what does Scripture say a person has to know and do in order to be saved?

God's judgment based on man's response to light received

But is it fair and just for God to condemn those who have not had an opportunity to respond to His offer of grace? The Bible does not teach that God will judge a person for rejecting Christ if he has not heard of Christ. In fact, the Bible teaches clearly that God's judgment is based on a person's response to the truth he has received.

God's judgment is based on a person's response to the truth he has received.

That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:47-48).

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, "The kingdom of God is near you." But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,

"Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near." I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. He who listens to you listens to Me; he who rejects you rejects Me; but he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me (Luke 10:8-16).

Judgment is against a person in proportion to his rejection of moral light. All have sinned; no one is innocent. Therefore, all stand condemned. But not all have the same measure of condemnation, for not all have sinned against equal amounts of light. God does not condemn a person who has not heard of Christ for rejecting Him, but rather for rejecting the light he does have.

Not all respond to the light they have by seeking to follow that light. But God's response to those who seek to obey the truth they have is the provision of

more truth. To him who responds, more light will be given:

The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. That is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear” (Matt. 13:10-16).

He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

This repeated promise of additional light to those who obey the light they have is a basic and very important biblical truth concerning God’s justice and judgment.

“Consider carefully what you hear,” He continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (Mark 4:21-25).

This repeated promise of additional light to those who obey the light they have is a basic and very important biblical truth concerning God’s justice and judgment. Cornelius, the Roman officer, responded to the light he had with prayer and good

deeds. God did not leave him in ignorance and simply accept him on the basis of his response to the initial light he had received. God sent Peter to him with additional truth (Acts 10). To him who had, more was given. Since this is revealed as God’s way of dealing with men, we can be very sure that every person has received adequate light to which he may respond. God’s existence and His power are made clearly evident to all people through creation (Rom. 1:18-21) and through each person’s innate moral judgment or conscience (Rom. 2:14, 15). To the one who responds obediently, God will send additional light.

Of course, His method for sending this light is a human messenger. Paul makes clear in his letter to the church at Rome (10:14, 15) that the solution to the terrible lost condition of men is the preacher who is sent, the “beautiful feet” of him who goes. Ultimately, then, the problem is not with God’s righteousness, but with ours.

In conclusion: Our responsibility

But suppose no one goes? Will God send some angel or some other special revelation? On this, Scripture is silent and, I believe, for good reason. Even if God did have such an alternative plan, were He to reveal that to us, we who have proved so irresponsible and disobedient would no doubt cease altogether obedience to the Great Commission.

But the question will not go away. How does one respond in a Japanese village when a new convert inquires, “What about my ancestors?” My response is simple: I am not the judge. “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). Abraham was pleading with God for the salvation of innocent people who did not deserve to be condemned and destroyed along with the guilty. He was appealing to God’s justice, and God responded with grace more than Abraham dared ask. This crucial question recorded in the first book of the Bible is answered in the last: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments” (Rev. 16:7). We are not called as judge—either of God, whose ways we do not fully know, nor of man, whose destiny we are not called upon to settle. Rather, we are commissioned as His representatives to find the lost, declare amnesty to the captive, release the prisoner.

We may not be able to prove from Scripture with absolute certainty that no soul since Pentecost has ever been saved by extraordinary means without the knowledge of Christ. But neither can we prove from Scripture that a single soul has been so saved. If there is an alternative, God has not told us of it. If God in His revelation felt it mandatory not to proffer such a hope, how much more should we refrain from such theorizing. It may or may not be morally right for me to think there may be another way and to hope there is some other escape. But for me to propose it to other believers, to discuss it as a possibility, is certainly dangerous, if not immoral. It is almost as wrong as writing out such a hope so that those who are under the judgment of God may read it, take hope, and die. So long as the truth revealed to us identifies only one way of escape, this is what we must live by and proclaim.

The lost condition of human beings breaks the Father's heart. What does it do to ours?

Consider the analogy of a security guard charged with the safety of residents on the 10th floor of a nursing home. He knows the floor plan posted in a prominent place, and it is his responsibility in case of fire to get the residents to the fire escape which has been clearly marked. Should a fire break out and lives be put in jeopardy, it would be his responsibility to get those people to the fire escape. If he discusses with the patients or with a colleague the possibility of some other unmarked fire escape or recalls to them the news report he read of someone who had jumped from the 10th floor of a building and survived, he could surely be charged with criminal negligence. He must live and labor in obedience to the facts that are certain and not delay to act. He must not lead people astray on the basis of conjecture or logical deduction from limited information.

When all has been said that can be said on this issue, the greatest remaining mystery is not the character of God nor the destiny of lost people. The greatest mystery is why those who are charged with rescuing the lost have spent two thousand years doing other things, good things, perhaps, but have failed to send and be sent until all have heard the liberating word of life in Christ Jesus. The lost condition of human

beings breaks the Father's heart. What does it do to ours?

In a dream I found myself on an island—Sheep Island. Across the island sheep were scattered and lost. Soon I learned that a forest fire was sweeping across from the opposite side. It seemed that all were doomed to destruction unless there were some way of escape. Although there were many unofficial maps, I had a copy of the official map and there discovered that indeed there is a bridge to the mainland, a narrow bridge, built, it was said, at incredible cost.

My job, I was told, would be to get the sheep across that bridge. I discovered many shepherds herding the sheep who were found and seeking to corral those who were within easy access to the bridge. But most of the sheep were far off and the shepherds seeking them few. The sheep near the fire knew they were in trouble and were frightened; those at a distance were peacefully grazing, enjoying life.

I noticed two shepherds near the bridge whispering to one another and laughing. I moved near them to hear the cause of joy in such a dismal setting. "Perhaps the chasm is narrow somewhere, and at least the strong sheep have opportunity to save themselves," said one. "Maybe the current is gentle and the stream shallow. Then the courageous, at least, can make it across." The other responded, "That may well be. In fact, wouldn't it be great if this proves to be no island at all? Perhaps it is just a peninsula and great multitudes of sheep are already safe. Surely the owner would have provided some alternative route." And so they relaxed and went about other business.

In my mind I began to ponder their theories: Why would the owner have gone to such great expense to build a bridge, especially since it is a narrow bridge, and many of the sheep refuse to cross it even when they find it? In fact, if there is a better way by which many will be saved more easily, building the bridge is a terrible blunder. And if this isn't an island, after all, what is to keep the fire from sweeping right across into the mainland and destroying everything? As I pondered these things I heard a quiet voice behind me saying, "There is a better reason than the logic of it, my friend. Logic alone could lead you either way. Look at your map."

There on the map, by the bridge, I saw a quotation from the first undershepherd, Peter: “For neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other way from the island to the mainland whereby a sheep may be saved.” And then I discerned, carved on the old rugged bridge itself, “I am the bridge. No sheep escapes to safety but by me.”

In a world in which nine of every ten people are lost, three of four have never heard the way out, and one of every two cannot hear, the church sleeps on. “How come?” Could it be we think there must be some other way? Or perhaps we don’t really care that much.

18. *What relationship is likely to exist between a person’s conviction about the lostness of man without Christ and his or her conviction about mission work?*

As McQuilkin notes, we can’t always have everything figured out. If God’s redemptive purpose is to include more than those who call on His name for salvation, He hasn’t chosen to reveal that to us. In the meantime, let’s focus on what we do know about His plan and our role in it.

Summary

If God had not intended to redeem mankind and reestablish His loving rule, then He would have had no reason to give us His revelation, the Bible. Mission is the basis of the Bible, and the Bible is our manual for understanding God’s mission. It reveals God’s mandate, message, and model for mission, as well as His power for its fulfillment.

We begin our search for understanding God’s ultimate purpose by examining events surrounding the dawn of creation. Satan’s and man’s rebellions posed a twofold “problem” for God. Instead of destroying everyone, He determined to provide a means to redeem mankind and reestablish His sovereignty.

While God desires that all men be saved, there is no biblical evidence to support the assumption that they *will* be saved apart from God’s redemptive provision. Only through “hearing of the Word” can men come to a knowledge of the “narrow way.”

- ## Integrative Assignment

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CHAPTER 2

Israel, the Covenant People

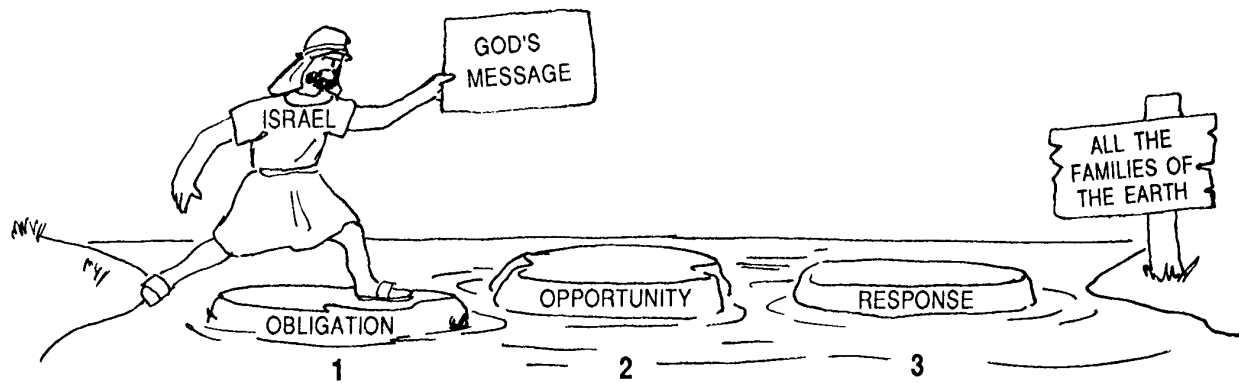
*“And I will establish My covenant between Me and you
and your descendants after you throughout their generations
for an everlasting covenant ...” (Gen. 17:7)*

The first chapter of our study traced mankind’s rebellion from Adam’s and Eve’s initial sin, through the conditions which brought about the flood, and on to the third great failure at Babel. By rejecting God’s dominion and choosing a life of self-exaltation and self-rule, the human race placed itself under Satan’s chaotic control. In spite of mankind’s rebellious heart, God in His mercy chose to begin a salvage operation outlined briefly in the proto-evangel given to Adam in Genesis 3:15.

God initiated His plan by approaching a man named Abram in Ur of the Chaldees (presently Iraq). The Lord made a proposal to Abram, which has become known as the “Abrahamic Covenant” (Gen. 12:1-3). This covenant was not a narrowing of His concern to one man or one people, but the creation of a nation for a worldwide mission: to communicate His redemptive message to all the other nations. God would no longer deal with people in a general way but would aim at reaching them nation by nation.

Much of the Old Testament is the account of how the Hebrew people came into being, their response to the opportunities God gave them to fulfill their covenant obligations, and the consequences of their actions. The Old Testament can be better understood by keeping these three points in mind:

1. **Obligation** – Israel was created with the expectation that she would be a blessing to all other nations.
2. **Opportunity** – Israel was given the means and the opportunities to fulfill her charge to be a blessing.
3. **Response** – Israel failed to respond voluntarily to her part of the covenant. God continually reminded Israel of her obligation and used her to touch the nations regardless of her disobedience.



When viewed from this perspective, all of the events in the Old Testament take on new significance. Instead of simply presenting the Old Testament as a series of historical and cultural events in the life of a struggling people whom God chose for His own reasons, this outline shows purpose and planning behind each incident. Familiar Old Testament accounts take on new meaning when read with God's mission to the nations in mind. You will need your Bible alongside you to explore this study.

I. The Abrahamic Covenant

Throughout the ages, God's relationship with the human race has been expressed in various covenants found in the Bible. These contracts with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David have provided clear expressions of God's intended relationship with His people. In our study of world mission, the Abrahamic Covenant is of particular significance. In the following article, John Stott gives an in-depth explanation of the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant to the entire missionary enterprise.

□ *The Living God Is a Missionary God* *

John R. W. Stott

Millions of people in today's world are extremely hostile to the Christian missionary enterprise. They regard it as politically disruptive (because it loosens the cement which binds the national culture) and religiously narrow minded (because it makes exclusive claims for Jesus), while those who are involved in it are thought to suffer from an arrogant imperialism.

And the attempt to convert people to Christ is rejected as an unpardonable interference in their pri-

vate lives. "My religion is my own affair," they say. "Mind your own business, and leave me alone to mind mine."

It is essential, therefore, for Christians to understand the grounds on which the Christian mission rests. Only then shall we be able to persevere in the missionary task, with courage and humility, in spite of the world's misunderstanding and opposition. More precisely, biblical Christians need biblical incentives. For we believe the Bible to be the reve-

* Stott, J. R. W. (1992). The living God is a missionary God. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. A10-A18). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

lation of God and of His will. So we ask: Has He revealed in Scripture that “mission” is His will for His people? Only then shall we be satisfied. For then it becomes a matter of obeying God, whatever others may think or say. Here we shall focus on the Old Testament, though the entire Bible is rich in evidence for the missionary purpose of God.

The call of Abraham

Our story begins about four thousand years ago with a man called Abraham, or more accurately, Abram as he was called at that time. Here is the account of God’s call to Abraham.

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran (Gen. 12:1-4).

God made a promise (a composite promise, as we shall see) to Abraham. And an understanding of that promise is indispensable to an understanding of the Bible and of the Christian mission. These are perhaps the most unifying verses in the Bible; the whole of God’s purpose is encapsulated here.

By way of introduction, we shall need to consider the setting of God’s promise, the context in which it came to be given. Then we shall divide the rest of our study into two. First, *the promise* (exactly what it was that God said He would do) and second—at greater length—*its fulfillment* (how God has kept and will keep His promise). We start, however, with the setting.

Genesis 12 begins: “Now the Lord said to Abram.” It sounds abrupt for an opening of a new chapter. We are prompted to ask: “Who is this ‘Lord’ who spoke to Abraham?” and “Who is this ‘Abraham’ to whom He spoke?” They are not introduced into the text out of the blue. A great deal lies behind these words. They are a key which opens up the whole of

Scripture. The previous eleven chapters lead up to them; the rest of the Bible follows and fulfills them.

What, then, is the background to this text? It is this. “The Lord” who chose and called Abraham is the same Lord who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, and who climaxed His creative work by making man and woman unique creatures in His own likeness. In other words, we should never allow ourselves to forget that the Bible begins with the universe, not with the planet earth; then with the earth, not with Palestine; then with Adam the father of the human race, not with Abraham the father of the chosen race. Since, then, God is the Creator of the universe, the earth, and all mankind, we must never demote Him to the status of a tribal deity or petty godling like Chemosh the god of the Moabites, or Milcom (or Molech) the god of the Ammonites, or Baal the male deity, or Ashtoreth the female deity, of the Canaanites. Nor must we suppose that God chose Abraham and his descendants because He had lost interest in other peoples or given them up. Election is not a synonym for elitism. On the contrary, as we shall soon see, God chose one man and his family in order, through them, to bless *all* the families of the earth.

Genesis 12:1- 4 are perhaps the most unifying verses in the Bible; the whole of God’s purpose is encapsulated here.

We are bound, therefore, to be deeply offended when Christianity is relegated to one chapter in a book on the world’s religions as if it were one option among many, or when people speak of “the Christian God” as if there were others! No, there is only one living and true God, who has revealed Himself fully and finally in His only Son Jesus Christ. Monotheism lies at the basis of mission. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

The Genesis record moves on from the creation of all things by the one God and of human beings in His likeness, to our rebellion against our own Creator and to God’s judgment upon His rebel creatures—a judgment which is relieved, however, by

His first gospel promise that one day the woman's seed would "bruise," indeed "crush," the serpent's head (3:15).

The following eight chapters (Genesis 4-11) describe the devastating results of the Fall in terms of the progressive alienation of human beings from God and from our fellow human beings. This was the setting in which God's call and promise came to

Abraham. All around was moral deterioration, darkness, and dispersal. Society was steadily disintegrating. Yet God the Creator did not abandon the human beings He had made in His own likeness (Gen. 9:6). Out of the prevailing godlessness He called one man and his family, and promised to bless not only them but through them the whole world. The scattering would not proceed unchecked; a grand process of ingathering would now begin.

1. Why is it so important to establish the identity of the Lord who spoke to Abraham?

Stott continues by describing God's promise to Abraham, followed by the stages of the fulfillment of that promise.

The promise

What then was the promise which God made to Abraham? It was a composite promise consisting of several parts.

First, it was the promise of *a posterity*. He was to go from his kindred and his father's house, and in exchange for the loss of his family God would make of him "a great nation." Later, in order to indicate this, God changed his name from "Abram" ("exalted father") to "Abraham" ("father of a multitude") because, He said to him, "I have made you the father of a multitude of nations" (17:5).

Second, it was the promise of *a land*. God's call seems to have come to him in two stages, first in Ur of the Chaldees while his father was still alive (11:31; 15:7) and then in Haran after his father had died (11:32; 12:1). At all events he was to leave his own land, and in return God would show him another country.

Third, it was the promise of *a blessing*. Five times the words *bless* and *blessing* occur in 12:2-3. The blessing God promised Abraham would spill over upon all mankind.

A posterity, a land, and a blessing. Each of these promises is elaborated in the chapters that follow Abraham's call.

First, *the land*. After Abraham had generously allowed his nephew Lot to choose where he wanted to settle (he selected the fertile Jordan valley), God said to Abraham: "Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever" (13:14-15).

Second, *the posterity*. A bit later God gave Abraham another visual aid, telling him to look now not to the earth but to the sky. On a clear, dark night He took him outside his tent and said to him, "Look toward heaven and number the stars." What a ludicrous command! Perhaps Abraham started, "1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 20, 30..." but he must soon have given up. It was an impossible task. Then God said to him: "So shall your descendants be." And we read: "He believed the Lord." Although he was probably by now in his eighties, and although he and Sarah were still childless, he yet believed God's promise, and God "reck-

oned it to him as righteousness.” That is, because he trusted God, God accepted him as righteous in His sight.

Third, *the blessing*. “I will bless you.” Already God has accepted Abraham as righteous or (to borrow the New Testament expression) has “justified him by faith.” No greater blessing is conceivable. It is the foundation blessing of the covenant of grace, which a few years later God went on to elaborate to Abraham: “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you... for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your

descendants after you... and I will be their God” (17:7-8). And He gave them circumcision as the outward and visible sign of His gracious covenant or pledge to be their God. It is the first time in Scripture that we hear the covenant formula which is repeated many times later: “I will be their God and they shall be my people.”

A land, a posterity, a blessing. “But what has all that to do with mission?” you may be asking with impatience. My answer is, “Everything! Be patient a little longer and you will see.” Let us turn now from the promise to the fulfillment.

2. Describe in your own words what God promised Abraham.

The fulfillment

The whole question of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is a difficult one in which there is often misunderstanding and not a little disagreement. Of particular importance is the principle, with which I think all of us will agree, that the New Testament writers themselves understood Old Testament prophecy to have not a *single* but usually a *triple* fulfillment—past, present, and future. The past fulfillment was an immediate or historical fulfillment in the life of the nation of Israel. The present is an intermediate or gospel fulfillment in Christ and His church. The future will be an ultimate or eschatological fulfillment in the new heaven and the new earth.

1. Immediate fulfillment

God’s promise to Abraham received an immediate historical fulfillment in his physical descendants, the people of Israel.

God’s promise to Abraham of a numerous, indeed of an innumerable, posterity was confirmed to his son Isaac (26:4, “as the stars of heaven”) and his grandson Jacob (32:12, “as the sand of the sea”). Gradually the promise began to come literally true.

Perhaps we could pick out some of the stages in this development.

The first concerns the years of slavery in Egypt, of which it is written, “The descendants of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong; so that the land was filled with them” (Ex. 1:7; cf. Acts 7:17). The next stage I will mention came several hundred years later when King Solomon called Israel “a great people that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude” (1 Kings 3:8). A third stage was some three hundred fifty years after Solomon; Jeremiah warned Israel of impending judgment and captivity, and then added this divine promise of restoration: “As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David my servant” (Jer. 33:22).

So much for Abraham’s posterity; what about the land? Again we note with worship and gratitude God’s faithfulness to His promise. For it was in remembrance of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He first rescued His people from their Egyptian slavery and gave them the territory which came on that account to be called “the promised

land” (Ex. 2:24; 3:6; 32:13), and then restored them to it some seven hundred years later after their captivity in Babylon. Nevertheless, neither Abraham nor his physical descendants fully inherited the land. As Hebrews 11 puts it, they “died in faith *not* having received what was promised.” Instead, as “strangers and exiles on the earth” they “looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (see Heb. 11:8-16, 39-40).

God kept His promises about the posterity and the land, at least in part. Now what about the blessing? Well, at Sinai God confirmed and clarified His covenant with Abraham, and pledged Himself to be Israel’s God (for example, Ex. 19:3-6). And throughout the rest of the Old Testament God went on blessing the obedient while the disobedient fell under His judgment.

Perhaps the most dramatic example comes at the beginning of Hosea’s prophecy, in which Hosea is told to give his three children names which describe God’s awful and progressive judgment on Israel. His firstborn (a boy) he called “Jezreel,” meaning “God will scatter.” Next came a daughter, “Lor-uhamah,” meaning “not pitied,” for God said He would no longer pity or forgive His people. Lastly he had another son, “Lo-ammi,” meaning “not my people,” for God said they were not now His people. What terrible names for the chosen people of God! They sound like a devastating contradiction of God’s eternal promise to Abraham.

But God does not stop there. For beyond the coming judgment there would be a restoration, which is

described in words which once more echo the promise to Abraham: “Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered” (Hos. 1:10). And then the judgments implicit in the names of Hosea’s children would be reversed. There would be a gathering instead of a scattering (“Jezreel” is ambiguous and can imply either), “not pitied” would be pitied, and “not my people” would become “sons of the living God” (1:10–2:1).

The wonderful thing is that the Apostles Paul and Peter both quote these verses from Hosea. They see their fulfillment not just in a further multiplication of Israel but in the inclusion of the Gentiles in the community of Jesus: “Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10; cf. Rom. 9:25-26).

This New Testament perspective is essential as we read the Old Testament prophecies. For what we miss in the Old Testament is any clear explanation of just *how* God’s promised blessing would overflow from Abraham and his descendants to “all families of the earth.” Although Israel is described as “a light to lighten the nations,” and has a mission to “bring forth justice to the nations” (Isa. 42:1-4, 6; 49:6), we do not actually see this happening. It is only in the Lord Jesus Himself that these prophecies are fulfilled, for only in His day are the nations actually included in the redeemed community. To this we now turn.

3. How did God’s promises of a posterity, a land, and a blessing set the stage for His plans for all nations?

2. Intermediate fulfillment

God's promise to Abraham receives an intermediate or gospel fulfillment in Christ and His church.

Almost the first word of the whole New Testament is the word "Abraham." For Matthew's Gospel begins, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac...." So it is right back to Abraham that Matthew traces the beginning not just of the genealogy but of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He knows that what he is recording is the fulfillment of God's ancient promises to Abraham some two thousand years previously (see also Luke 1:45-55, 67-75).

Part of God's covenant with Abraham promised an overspill of blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Yet from the start Matthew recognizes that it isn't just *physical* descent from Abraham which qualifies people to inherit the promises, but a kind of *spiritual* descent, namely, repentance and faith in the coming Messiah. This was John the Baptist's message to crowds who flocked to hear him: "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8; cf. John 8:33-40). The implications of his words would have shocked his hearers since "it was the current belief that no descendant of Abraham could be lost."*

And God has raised up children to Abraham, if not from stones, then from an equally unlikely source, namely, the Gentiles! So Matthew, although the most Jewish of all four Gospel writers, later records Jesus as having said, "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (8:11-12; cf. Luke 13:28-29).

It is hard for us to grasp how shocking, how completely topsy-turvy, these words would have sounded to the Jewish hearers of John the Baptist and Jesus. *They* were the descendants of Abraham; so *they* had a title to the promises which God made to Abraham. Who then were these outsiders who were to share in the promises, even apparently usurp them, while they themselves would be disqualified? They were indignant. They had quite forgotten that part of God's covenant with Abraham promised an overspill of blessing to *all* the nations of the earth. Now the Jews had to learn that it was in relation to Jesus the Messiah, who was Himself seed of Abraham, that all the nations would be blessed.

The Apostle Peter seems at least to have begun to grasp this in his second sermon, just after Pentecost. In it he addressed a Jewish crowd with the words: "You are heirs... of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up His servant [Jesus], He sent Him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:25-26). It is a very notable statement because he interprets the blessing in the moral terms of repentance and righteousness and because, if Jesus was sent "first" to the Jews, He was presumably sent next to the Gentiles, whose "families of the earth" had been "far off" (cf. Acts 2:39) but were now to share in the blessing.

It was given to the Apostle Paul, however, to bring this wonderful theme to its full development. For he was called and appointed to be the apostle to the Gentiles, and to him was revealed God's eternal but hitherto secret purpose to make Jews and the Gentiles "fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

Negatively, Paul declares with great boldness, "Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants" (Rom. 9:6-7).

* Jeremias, J. (1948). *Jesus' promise to the nations* (p. 48). SCM Press.

Who then are the true descendants of Abraham, the true beneficiaries of God's promises to him? Paul does not leave us in any doubt. They are believers in Christ of whatever race. In Romans 4 he points out that Abraham not only received justification by faith but also received this blessing *before he had been circumcised*. Therefore Abraham is the father of all those who, whether circumcised or uncircumcised (that is, Jews or Gentiles), "follow the example of [his] faith" (Rom. 4:9-12). If we "share the faith of Abraham," then "he is the father of us all, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations'" (vv. 16-17). Thus neither physical descent from Abraham, nor physical circumcision as a Jew, makes a person a true child of Abraham, but rather faith. Abraham's real descendants are believers in Jesus Christ, whether racially they happen to be Jews or Gentiles.

What then is the "land" which Abraham's descendants inherit? The letter to the Hebrews refers to a "rest" which God's people enter now by faith (Heb. 4:3). And in a most remarkable expression Paul refers to "the promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should *inherit the world*" (Rom. 4:13). One can only assume he means the same thing as when to the Corinthians he writes that in Christ

"all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). Christians by God's wonderful grace are joint heirs with Christ of the universe.

Somewhat similar teaching, both about the nature of the promised blessing and about its beneficiaries, is given by Paul in Galatians 3. He first repeats how Abraham was justified by faith, and then continues: "So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham" and who therefore "are blessed with Abraham who had faith" (vv. 6-9). What then is the blessing with which all the nations were to be blessed (v. 8)? In a word, it is the blessing of salvation. We were under the curse of the law, but Christ has redeemed us from it by becoming a curse in our place, in order "that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (vv. 10-14). Christ bore our curse that we might inherit Abraham's blessing, the blessing of justification (v. 8) and of the indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 14). Paul sums it up in the last verse of the chapter (v. 29): "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

4. How do the New Testament writers interpret and apply the three elements of the Abrahamic Covenant?

But we have not quite finished yet. There is a third stage of fulfillment still to come.

3. Ultimate fulfillment

God's promise to Abraham will receive an ultimate or eschatological fulfillment in the final destiny of all the redeemed.

In the book of Revelation there is one more reference to God's promise to Abraham (7:9ff). John sees in a vision "a great multitude which no man could number." It is an international throng, drawn "from

every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues." And they are "standing before the throne," the symbol of God's kingly reign. That is, His kingdom has finally come, and they are enjoying all the blessings of His gracious rule. He shelters them with His presence. Their wilderness days of hunger, thirst, and scorching heat are over. They have entered the promised land at last, described now not as "a land flowing with milk and honey" but as a land irrigated from "springs of living water" which never dry up. But how did they come to inherit these blessings? Partly because they have "come out of

great tribulation” (evidently a reference to the Christian life with all its trials and sufferings), but mostly because “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” that is, they have been cleansed from sin and clothed with righteousness through the merits of the death of Jesus Christ alone. “*Therefore* are they before the throne of God.”

Speaking personally, I find it extremely moving to glimpse this final fulfillment in a future eternity of that ancient promise of God to Abraham. All the essential elements of the promise may be detected.

For here are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, a “great multitude which no man could number,” as countless as the sand on the seashore and as the stars in the night sky. Here too are “all the families of the earth” being blessed, for the numberless multitude is composed of people from every nation. Here also is the promised land, namely, all the rich blessings which flow from God’s gracious rule. And here above all is Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham, who shed His blood for our redemption and who bestows His blessings on all those who call on Him to be saved.

5. *How does the book of Revelation show Abraham’s blessing passed on to all the nations of the earth?*

Stott summarizes his conclusions below.

Conclusion

Let me try to summarize what we learn about God from His promise to Abraham and its fulfillment.

First, He is the God of history. History is not a random flow of events. For God is working out in time a plan which He conceived in a past eternity and will consummate in a future eternity. In this historical process Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham is the key figure. Let’s rejoice that if we are Christ’s disciples we are Abraham’s descendants. We belong to His spiritual lineage. If we have received the blessings of justification by faith, acceptance with God, and of the indwelling Spirit, then we are beneficiaries today of a promise made to Abraham four thousand years ago.

Second, He is the God of the covenant. That is, God is gracious enough to make promises, and He always keeps the promises He makes. He is a God of steadfast love and faithfulness. Mind you, He does not always fulfill His promises immediately. Abraham and Sarah “died in faith *not* having received

what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar” (Heb. 11:13). That is, although Isaac was born to them in fulfillment of the promise, their seed was not yet numerous, nor was the land given to them, nor were the nations blessed. All God’s promises come true, but they are inherited “through faith *and patience*” (Heb. 6:12). We have to be content to wait for God’s time.

Third, He is the God of blessing. “I will bless you,” He said to Abraham (Gen. 12:2). “God... sent Him [Jesus] to you first, to bless you,” echoed Peter (Acts 3:26). God’s attitude to His people is positive, constructive, enriching. Judgment is His “strange work” (Isa. 28:21). His principal and characteristic work is to bless people with salvation.

Fourth, He is the God of mercy. I have always derived much comfort from the statement of Revelation 7:9 that the company of the redeemed in heaven will be “a great multitude which no man could number.” I do not profess to know how this

can be, since Christians have always seemed to be a rather small minority. But Scripture states it for our comfort. Although no biblical Christian can be a universalist (believing that all mankind will ultimately be saved), since Scripture teaches the awful reality and eternity of hell, yet a biblical Christian can—even must—assert that the redeemed will somehow be an international throng so immense as to be countless. For God’s promise is going to be fulfilled, and Abraham’s seed is going to be as innumerable as the dust of the earth, the stars of the sky, and the sand on the seashore.

Fifth, He is the God of mission. The nations are not gathered in automatically. If God has promised to bless “all the families of the earth,” He has promised to do so “through Abraham’s seed” (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). Now we are Abraham’s seed by faith, and the earth’s families will be blessed only if we go to them with the gospel. That is God’s plain purpose.

I pray that these words, “all the families of the earth,” may be written on our hearts. It is this expression more than any other which reveals the living God of the Bible to be a missionary God. It is this expression too which condemns all our petty parochialism and narrow nationalism, our racial pride (whether white or black), our condescending paternalism and arrogant imperialism. How dare we adopt a hostile or scornful or even indifferent attitude to any person of another color or culture if our God is the God of “all the families of the earth”? We need to become global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God.

So may God help us never to forget His four-thousand-year-old promise to Abraham: “By you and your descendants *all* the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

6. *What does God expect of Abram beyond simply enjoying the blessings He promised?*

7. *What did Abram have to do to accept the covenant relationship?*

The Hebrew word for covenant is a term used in ancient times to signify the formal agreement by which one man bound himself to another as his vassal. In such an agreement, both parties had obligations to fulfill. The vassal was to be totally loyal to his overlord, performing military and other duties in exchange for protection and other benefits. Don Richardson has used the popular term “top line” to express the benefits offered by God in the covenant and “bottom line” to denote the obligations incurred by Abram. Then as now, the effectiveness of such an agreement depends on the faithfulness with which the members uphold their parts. When one of the parties does not carry out his or her obligation, force may be needed to get the unfaithful member to comply.

8. *Why does the covenant with Abraham carry mandate force?*

II. The Covenant Is Established

At various times in Abraham's life, God reiterated the covenant terms to him, expanding Abraham's understanding of what his benefits and responsibilities involved.

9. *Read Genesis 13:14 and 15:5. What significance can be attached to the Lord's use of "stars" and "dust" to describe Abraham's offspring in these verses?*

10. *What missions significance is there in God's changing Abram's name to Abraham in Genesis 17?*

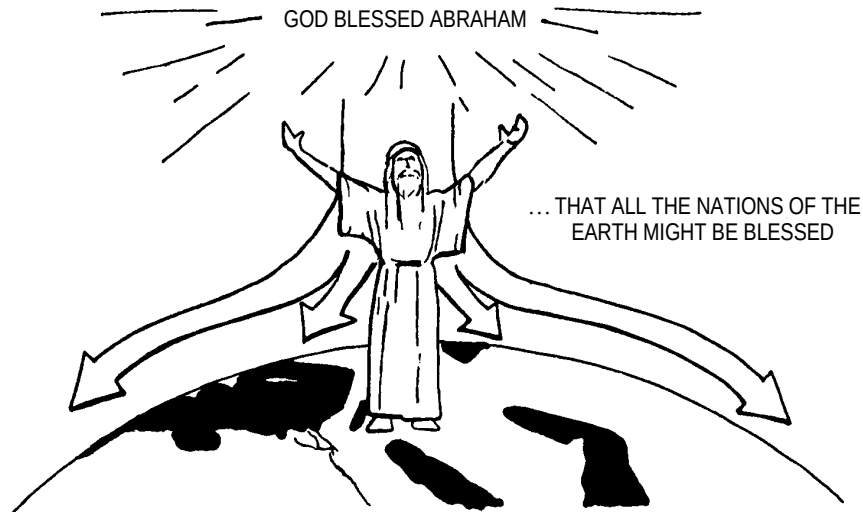
That Abraham was beginning to capture an "all nations" perspective is evident by his actions in Genesis 18:16-33. When the Lord revealed to him that He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham became an advocate for these ungodly people and interceded on their behalf.

11. *What does this passage suggest about our own role in reaching the nations?*

The final reiteration of the covenant terms to Abraham occurred when Abraham was given the ultimate test of his faith in Genesis 22:1-19. His obedience, expressed by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, secured the blessing for all the nations (v. 18). Because he believed God, he reconfirmed his covenant commitment and became the "father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11). Abraham was confident that God would uphold His end of the contract. It was that faith in God's faithfulness that "was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6; James 2:23).

Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant is key to understanding the basic dynamic which governs the participation of God's people in the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. God does bless His people, but He also expects obedience in return. The Abrahamic Covenant also makes clear God's intention to carry out His mission purpose through His children. He blesses them in order that they may be His agents of blessing to the world.

Characteristically, God revealed His plans little by little. To reinforce His directive, He continued to speak to Abraham, to Abraham's immediate offspring, Isaac and Jacob, and to Israel about all this plan entailed. Every renewal of the covenant specified "the nations of the earth" who were to become



recipients of the blessing. How these physical descendants of Abraham responded to their covenant obligations is the theme of the rest of the Old Testament.

Isaac, Abraham's "covenant" son, had the terms of the covenant set forth for him by God in Genesis 26. Likewise, Jacob, Isaac's son and the inheritor of the birthright and the blessing, had the terms of the same covenant given to him by God at Bethel in Genesis 28. From this time on, God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thus identifying Himself as the God who covenanted with these patriarchs of the nation. Throughout this entire period, God was faithfully at work fulfilling His part of the agreement. He greatly blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, giving them a land, wealth, fame, and a powerful family. Even the 400-year sojourn in Egypt contained many blessings. The Israelites were initially settled in the choice region of Goshen, where they also enjoyed the protection of Pharaoh's armies. Their women were noted both for their fertility and for their vigor in childbearing. In spite of the Israelites' eventual enslavement, Jacob's handful of 70 multiplied into a nation of millions in the fertile Nile Valley.

The Exodus

The book of Exodus recounts the marvelous ways God worked in delivering the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt. At every step, God's mighty hand was evident. In all history, no slave people has ever been delivered as they were. In the process, God made His name known among the nations (Ex. 7:5; 9:13-17; 15:15). Three months after this miraculous deliverance, we find Israel camped in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai. Read God's "Eagles' Wings" message to them in Exodus 19:3-6.

12. *God upheld His part of the covenant in delivering Israel. What did He desire of Israel in response to all He had done?*

God's plan was that His message be both visible and portable. That's why He entrusted it to His people. The nation of Israel was to be a "royal priesthood."

13. What is the function of a priest? How does this relate to Israel's role to the nations?

The term "special possession" (Ex. 19:5) can also be translated as "special treasure." The King James Bible uses the phrase "peculiar people" in this verse. Walter Kaiser has noted:

The old English word "peculiar" came from the Latin word which meant valuables or any kind of moveable goods which were not, in contrast to real estate, attached to the land, such as jewels, stocks, or bonds. The fact was that Israel was to be God's Son, His people, His firstborn (Ex. 4:22), and now His special treasure. The emphasis here is on the *portability* of that message and the fact that God has placed such high value in *people*. This is exactly as Malachi 3:17 describes us: "jewels."*



As God's "special treasure," those selected to receive His blessing, the Israelites were to embody God's grace. They were also to be set apart as a "holy nation" in the way they lived. They were not to pursue the vanities which consumed the Gentile nations but were to be pure, totally separated from the moral pollution of their neighbors. Thus, the Lord would be their God and they would be His people.

Both the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent conquest of Canaan served to establish this identity of separation by godliness. Through these events, God also sanctified His name, showing His goodness and holiness in contrast to the immoral, capricious, violent, and cruel gods of the surrounding Canaanite nations.

Holiness is often portrayed as a posture of passivity. Yet God's holiness and His defense of it in many of the bloody passages of the conquest can only be explained through the scriptural theme of *antagonism*. Johannes Verkuyl discusses this theme in the following excerpt.

* Kaiser, W. C., Jr. (1992). Israel's missionary call. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (p. A29). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

❑ The Motif of Antagonism *

Johannes Verkuyl **

The whole Old Testament (and the New Testament as well) is filled with descriptions of how Yahweh-Adonai, the covenant God of Israel, is waging war against those forces which try to thwart and subvert His plans for His creation. He battles against those false gods which human beings have fashioned from the created world, idolized, and used for their own purposes. Think, for example, of the Baals and the Ashtaroth, whose worshippers elevated nature, the tribe, the state, and the nation to a divine status. God fights against magic and astrology which, according to Deuteronomy, bend the line between God and His creation. He contends against every form of social injustice and pulls off every cloak under which it seeks to hide (see Amos and Jeremiah, for example).

The whole of the Old Testament burns with a feverish desire to defeat these opposing powers. There are grand visions of that coming kingdom where every relationship is properly restored and when the whole of creation—people, animals, plants, and

every other creature—will perfectly accord with God’s intentions for it (see Isaiah 2, Micah 4, and Isaiah 65). The Old Testament longs for this kingdom’s final revealing and categorically states its promise that Yahweh shall indeed finally overcome. This too is a highly significant theme for missionary participation. To participate in mission is quite impossible unless one also wages war against every form of opposition to God’s intentions wherever it be found, whether in churches, the world of the nations, or one’s own life.

The Old Testament ties the antagonistic motif closely with the doxological theme: the glory of Yahweh-Adonai shall be revealed among all peoples. Then every human being shall come to know Him as He really is, the “gracious and merciful God, slow to get angry, full of kindness, and always willing to turn back from meting out disaster” (Jon. 4:1-2).

14. How are “holiness” and “antagonism” a part of God’s mission mandate?

The Covenant Continues

The basic terms of the covenant God established with Abraham were continually referred to by the Israelites. In fact, they are restated, in one form or another, in over 50 passages and verses of the Old Testament. One of the clearest of these passages is Psalm 67. Known as the “Our Father” of the Old Testament, this psalm was probably sung at the yearly thanksgiving feast of Pentecost.

* Verkuyl, J. (1978). *Contemporary missiology: An introduction* (D. Cooper, Ed. and Trans.) (pp. 95-96). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

** Johannes Verkuyl was formerly Professor and Head of the Department of Missiology and Evangelism at the Free University of Amsterdam. He is now retired.

15. Read Psalm 67. Verses 1-2 and 6-7 demonstrate that the psalmist had a clear understanding of why God blesses Israel. State this reason in your own words.

16. What will God do for the nations in verses 3-5? What will their response be?

In this psalm God's justice is extolled. He is acknowledged as the rightful ruler of the nations. He blesses Israel in order that all the nations may come to recognize His sovereignty. God fulfills His promise, and Israel recognizes her obligation. How fitting that the words should find such tremendous prophetic fulfillment on the first day of Pentecost of the Christian era (Acts 2)!

The Opportunity

That Israel had an obligation to minister to the nations is clear. As a kingdom of priests, the Jews had the role of mediator between God and the nations. How were they to go about fulfilling this function? What kinds of opportunities were they to seek? Were they to actively "evangelize" the nations around them, or should they sit back and wait for the nations to come to them?



Two Forces

In the fulfillment of Israel's obligation, two forces were at work. The first of these was an attractive force, symbolized first by the tabernacle and then by the temple in Jerusalem. These buildings were the places where God's name dwelt. They were holy places, the heart of Israel's religious ceremony and practice. Yet they were not intended just to serve Israel. When Solomon dedicated the temple, it was clear to him that the temple had a wider purpose.

17. Read 1 Kings 8:41-43, 54-61. How was the temple to serve in reaching the nations?

18. Now read 1 Kings 10:1-9. What attracted the Queen of Sheba to Israel, and what was her reaction to what she experienced there?

The Bible records several other foreigners who were attracted to Israel because of the evidence of God's blessing, including Ruth, a Moabite woman, and Naaman the Syrian. Hundreds of other unrecorded accounts are evidenced by the fact that on the day of Pentecost there were devout men from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) staying in Jerusalem. God's plan to reach the nations, however, included much more than a passive attraction.

A second force in operation was an active, expansive force which operated to send God's message beyond the borders of Israel. Some examples of Israelites who were used to proclaim God's message to other nations include captives such as Joseph and exiles such as Daniel and Esther. Or consider the prophet Jonah, who was commanded to preach repentance to Nineveh. Jeremiah was appointed as a "prophet to the nations," and it is speculated that he or other messengers may have traveled widely in delivering his many oracles. Nor did God use only the great in this role of bearing His message. It was a little Israelite slave girl who announced His healing power to Naaman, the mighty but leprous captain of the Syrian army.

Some might argue that these cases are exceptions and would point out that many of these people were captives or otherwise ministered against their wills. However, volunteerism has never been the deciding factor in furthering God's mission. God will use His people to spread His message, whether they are willing agents or not. Israel's tragic history would have been considerably different if she had been a willing instrument of God's redemptive plan. She was not. God used captivity and exile both to judge Israel's disobedience and to extend her witness beyond her borders.

These two dynamic forces are also present today. On a global scale, many are attracted to "Christian" nations because of the evidence of God's blessing through material wealth and stability. In communities, congregations where God's power and grace are evident also draw people. On a personal level, godly character attracts those who want to possess those same qualities. Yet the gospel will not be spread to all nations simply through passive attraction. There are too many social, cultural, and geographic barriers that need to be crossed for this to happen. God's people must be willing to go to the nations with the good news if they hope to fulfill their covenant obligations.

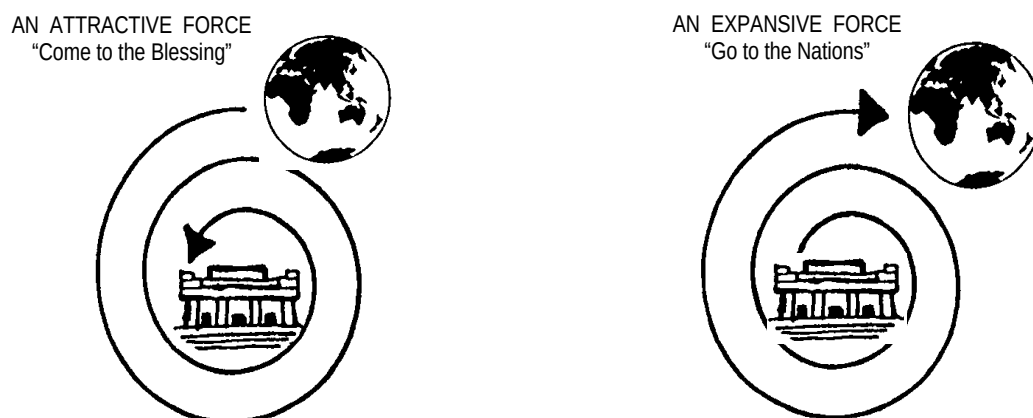


Figure 2-1. The Two Forces

Israel's Strategic Location

In considering these forces, it is important to note Israel's strategic geographic placement. The land of Israel is located at the juncture of three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Referred to by Ezekiel (38:12) as "the center of the land," it was a major crossroads of the ancient world. This important location afforded God's people many opportunities to expose travelers and traders from many nations to the true God. It was also a well-located base from which emissaries of the one true God could be sent to the nations.

Israel's strategic location presented many redemptive opportunities for God's covenant people. God continues to present opportunities by placing His people in strategic places around the world. The same attractive and expansive forces are still at work today. Together, they provide a dynamic tension for the establishment and propagation of God's kingdom among the peoples of the earth.



Figure 2-2
Israel's Strategic Location at the Crossroads of
Three Continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe

The Message

The Abrahamic Covenant promised not only that Abraham would be blessed, but that he and his descendants were to bless all nations. The covenant at Sinai specified Israel's role as advocate for the nations and as mobile bearers of the blessing. They knew their obligation and were placed strategically to fulfill their duty. What was the message they were to proclaim? They could not yet announce the gospel of repentance through Jesus Christ as we know it today. What were they to tell others?

God's Identity and Character

If the nations were to come under the loving rule of God, they had to know who He was. Almighty YHWH was not just a minor Hebrew deity but the great "I AM" (Ex. 3:13-15), the uncreated Creator of the universe. Each of His many names revealed an aspect of His character. Titles such as Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25), Jehovah Jireh ("provider," Gen. 22:14), Jehovah Rapha ("healer," Ex. 15:26), and Jehovah Nissi ("my banner," Ex. 17:15) demonstrated His attributes and relationship to His people.

19. *Read Exodus 34:5-7. How would you explain what this passage tells about the character of God to someone who had never heard of Him?*

As God through His name revealed His character to Israel, He also exalted His name by mighty deeds. He repeatedly demonstrated to the nations His right to be recognized as sovereign of the universe.

God's Saving Power

Not only do the various names applied to God reveal His identity, character, and supremacy, but His name is also the focal point of His power to save. Throughout Scripture we find repeated references to people "calling upon the name of the Lord" and other allusions to the saving power of the name of God.

20. *Study the following texts: Genesis 4:26; 12:8; Psalm 50:15; 55:16; Isaiah 55:6-7; Joel 2:32. What does "calling upon the name of the Lord" really mean?*

New Testament believers often have difficulty understanding how people in Old Testament times were saved. The answer is actually quite straightforward. Many passages in the Bible make it clear that the process of salvation was not significantly different in Old Testament times than it is now. Genuine believers in all ages are saved as they demonstrate belief in the one true God, place their faith in His grace and ability to save them, and submit to His rule in their lives. The New Testament amplifies our knowledge regarding the details of how God intended to accomplish His redemptive plan through Jesus. Old Testament believers, however, had no less confidence than we do that God would make provision for their redemption. Even Job, the protagonist of the oldest book in the Bible, could confidently assert: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is flayed, yet without my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

21. *The concept of "calling on the name of the Lord" is carried over into the New Testament, even after Christ and His redemptive role were fully revealed. Read Romans 10:12-15. What must happen in order for people to be saved in this day and age?*

God's Ultimate Victory

Believers from earliest time have looked forward to the day of God's return to earth and the establishment of His literal, physical kingdom. The prophetic books are filled with dozens of descriptions of that day when God's sovereign rule will be a reality in every corner of the earth. One of the most beautiful of these is given by Micah.

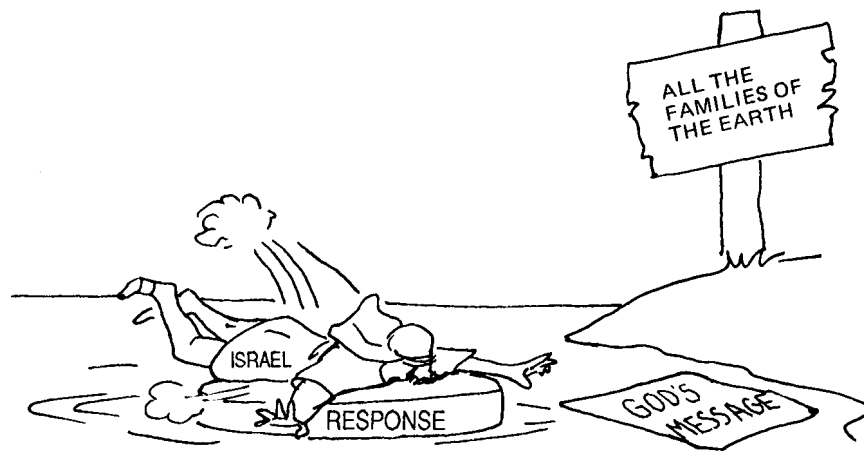
22. Read Micah 4:1-4. How will the nations respond to God's rule?

God's ultimate victory has an "all nations" perspective, as every kingdom of the earth is drawn to His name, His character, and His loving sovereignty.

In word, song, and deed, Israel was to make known to the nations that God is the Sovereign of the universe. Believers throughout the ages have recognized this rule and have submitted to it. From the earliest times, they have been united in the hope of His coming and of the restoration of His kingdom on earth. His kingdom come!

III. Israel's Response

One does not have to be a great Old Testament scholar to see how Israel failed in her responsibility to be God's agent of blessing. She did not perform her basic duty to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with [her] God" (Mic. 6:8). Had she lived a holy life, she would have demonstrated to the world God's identity, character, and saving power. Sadly, at almost every step Israel demonstrated her unfaithfulness to the Lord.



God, however, was faithful and blessed Israel at absolutely every step of her development as a nation. He delivered her from Egypt and nurtured her in the wilderness. He defeated her enemies on every side and allowed her to take possession of the promised land. He gave her the Mosaic Law, a “constitution” which, if followed, guaranteed her health, prosperity, and safety (Deut. 29-30). God intended that He should head up Israel’s government Himself and rule through appointed judges. Nevertheless, even during times when God was most actively demonstrating His power on Israel’s behalf, the people demonstrated an idolatrous and unbelieving heart.

There were times when, chastened by God’s discipline or exuberant with the success He had granted, the Jews would submit to God’s will and follow their calling. After a time of enjoying the benefits of their obedience, they would invariably fall prey to a lethal complacency, opening the door to sin and idolatry. Such disobedience ended every period of prosperity. Repentance under dire circumstances would produce deliverance by a patient God, and the cycle would be repeated. Finally, the nation rejected God’s rule through the judges in favor of the tyranny of a human king.

Even when the kingdom was established, God’s blessing still came. Saul was anointed to be the first king of Israel, but his disobedience cost him the throne. Nevertheless, God did begin to grant Israel deliverance under his rule. Later on, King David was anointed and proved to be a man after God’s own heart. Under his reign, the kingdom prospered and expanded its borders. David’s son Solomon built upon the accomplishments of his father and ushered the kingdom to its “golden” age. But during the latter part of his reign, his heart turned away from God. Even though there was great wealth evident in Israel during this time, it was acquired through heavy exploitation of the common people (1 Kings 12:4). More significantly, because of the concessions King Solomon made to his pagan wives, he caused the nation to worship false gods (1 Kings 11:1-13).

The account of the kingdom after Solomon’s death is one of tragedy and gradual disintegration. Civil strife broke out immediately with the crowning of Solomon’s son Rehoboam. This unrest eventually led to civil war and the division of the kingdom. Also, soon after Rehoboam’s crowning, the king of Egypt invaded Israel and plundered Jerusalem, thus initiating a long era of oppression and domination of Israel by her neighbors. Although there were brief revivals in Israel’s spiritual walk which affected her national fortunes, she never demonstrated real faithfulness to her covenant obligations. In spite of the many warnings her prophets gave her, she insisted on pursuing her own idolatrous way.

God was lovingly persistent with Israel and was more than willing to take her back when she repented. However, she was not responsive to His offers of forgiveness nor to His reproof and discipline. Finally, God was forced to allow His people to be carried into captivity. Exiled from their homeland, they were again placed in a position of servitude.

23. In what significant ways did Israel fail in relation to her covenant obligations to the nations?

God used these circumstances to begin the process of selecting a remnant who would bind themselves to the terms of the covenant that had been made with Abraham. Ezekiel, the great prophet of the Babylonian exile, reviews God’s dealings with Israel in Ezekiel 20:30-38. He describes the process God would use to assure Israel’s faithfulness as He restored a remnant to their homeland. In verse 33, God declares His intent to enforce His rule on Israel as her rightful King. In the subsequent verses, He outlines

a course of disciplinary measures leading up to her restoration as His people. This time, God was not going to allow Israel to run after false gods. Never again was Israel to exhibit an idolatrous lifestyle before the nations.

God was determined to see Israel become faithful not only to Him, but also to His mission purpose. As Isaiah the prophet foretold (Isa. 49:6), the Jews were to become the “servant of the Lord” and a “light to the nations.” After the exile, they did begin to proclaim God’s name to the nations. Throughout the 400-year intertestamental period, Jews migrated throughout the known world. Wherever they went, they established synagogues and won the allegiance of many Gentiles to the one true God.

24. *What was the reason for and the result of the exile?*

Israel Sent Involuntarily

God expects His people to glorify His name by the holiness of their lives. He wants them to demonstrate His saving power by the way they trust Him. He also desires a people who will develop a caring heart. He wants to bless the nations through them as agents of their restoration to God. When God’s people do not live holy lives or go to the nations freely, He accomplishes His purposes by sending them forth against their will.

There are many Old Testament accounts of Israelites taken captive or exiled to other nations. Many of these accounts relate how God’s name was magnified through these captives. Likewise, the Old Testament relates several instances of nations who were drawn to Israel by the evidence of her blessing and who then took those blessings by force. This pattern begins to emerge in the Old Testament and continues throughout Christian history.

25. *Read 2 Kings 5:1-14, 2 Kings 17:24-28, and Daniel 1:1-4. Identify the type of mechanism God used in the lives of the people in these passages, whether involuntary or voluntary, coming or going.*

Jonah

The book of Jonah is perhaps the clearest Old Testament example of God’s specific command to an Israelite to carry His message to a Gentile nation. Through Jonah’s response to that mandate, the book also reveals the ethnocentric (having a sense of ethnic superiority) and rebellious nature which characterized God’s people. It may also parallel similar attitudes held by His people today.

Turn to the book of Jonah and review it. Then read the following selection by Johannes Verkuyl.

❏ **The Book of Jonah ***

Johannes Verkuyl

The book of Jonah is so significant for understanding the biblical basis of mission, because it treats God's mandate to His people regarding the Gentile peoples, and thus serves as the preparatory step to the missionary mandate of the New Testament. But it is also important for catching a glimpse of the deep resistance this mandate encounters from the very servant Yahweh has chosen to discharge His worldwide work.

Jonah reveals the need for a radical conversion of one's natural tendencies and a complete restructuring of one's life to make it serviceable for mission.

Today there is much talk and writing about "educating the congregation" and "educating personnel" for mission. Jonah is a lesson in educating a person to be a missionary: it reveals the need for a radical conversion of one's natural tendencies and a complete restructuring of his life to make it serviceable for mission.

Background of the book

The title of the book is the personal name of the unwilling prophet, Jonah, and harks back to the days of King Jeroboam II (787-746 B.C.), when a prophet named Jonah ben Amittai was living. It is obvious, however, that this account is intended for reasons quite other than detailing the events of this prophet's life. The author uses this personal name to portray for his readers a missionary who has no heart for the Gentiles and who, like the later Pharisees, cannot tolerate a God who shows them mercy. In the words of the Dutch author Miskotte, "The writer intends to

picture a person who is the exact opposite of an apostle."

The author of Jonah warns his readers against this intolerant attitude and sets before each of them the question of whether he or she is willing to be transformed into a servant who works to accomplish the mandates of God.

As the author sees it, Israel has become so preoccupied with herself that she no longer directs her eyes toward the world of the nations. Israel, the recipient of all God's revelation, refuses to set foot in alien territory to tell the other peoples God's message of judgment and liberation. But the message of the book also is addressed to the New Testament congregation which tries various ways of evading her Lord's command to speak His message to the world.

Jonah's crafty evasion efforts represent a lazy and unfaithful church which does not heed her Lord's command. God has to wrestle against Israel's narrow ethnocentrism which tries to restrict His activity to the boundaries of Israel alone and against the church's ecclesiocentric refusal to go out into the world to proclaim God's message and do His work. The writer is bent on convincing his readers that the radius of God's liberating activity is wide enough to cover both Israel and the Gentiles.

It is a miracle that Jonah, with its strong warning against ethnocentrism, ever made its way into the canon of Scripture. It squarely sets forth man's attempt to sabotage God's worldwide plans so that its readers—Israel, the New Testament church, and us—can hear what the Holy Spirit, through the medium of this little book, is trying to tell them.

* Verkuyl, J. (1978). *Contemporary missiology: An introduction* (D. Cooper, Ed. and Trans.) (pp. 96-100). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

26. What purpose does the book of Jonah serve in the Old Testament canon?

A short review of the book's eight scenes

1 The first scene opens with Jonah receiving the command to go to Nineveh. While the Old Testament usually appeals to the other nations to come to Zion, the mountain of God, Jonah, like the disciples of the New Testament (cf. Matt. 28:18-20), is told to go! The Septuagint translation of Jonah uses the word *porrettomai* in 1:2-3 and again in 3:2-3, the very same verb used by Jesus in His Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28. Where must Jonah go? To Nineveh, of all places. Nineveh, a very center of totalitarianism, brutality, and warlike attitudes. To Nineveh, notorious for the shameful hounding, vicious torture, and imperialist brazenness it reserved for those who chose to oppose its policies. God wants His servant to warn Nineveh of impending judgment and to call her to repentance. He wants to save Nineveh! But Jonah refuses. He prepares himself, to be sure, but only to flee from the face of God who is Lord over all.

2 In the second scene God responds to Jonah's flight by sending a mighty storm (1:4-16). The wind obeys Yahweh's commands, but the disobedient Jonah sleeps in the bottom of the boat, oblivious of the fact that the storm is directed at him. At times the church, too, sleeps right through the storm of God's judgment passing over the world, assuring

At times the church sleeps right through the storm of God's judgment passing over the world, assuring herself that the wind outside has nothing to do with her.

herself that the wind outside has nothing to do with her. While the crew vainly searches for the storm's cause, Jonah confesses that he worships and fears the God who made both the sea and the dry land, the one God who is above all nations. This God, he claims, is bringing a charge against him, and the

only way to quiet the waters is to throw him into the sea. In this scene the crew represents the Gentiles, a people for whom Jonah is totally unconcerned, and yet who themselves are interested in sparing his life. After a second order from Jonah, they throw him overboard, and the storm ceases. Scarcely able to believe their eyes, the sailors break forth in praise to the God of Jonah. Their obedience surpasses that of the saboteur Jonah: they are more open to God than the very prophet himself.

3 The third scene (1:17) describes a large fish which, at Yahweh's instructions, opens its mouth to swallow Jonah and spew him onto the shore at the appropriate time. Jonah simply cannot escape God's missionary mandate. The God who whipped up the stormy winds and directed the sailors to accomplish His purposes now guides a fish as part of His plan to save Nineveh. Yahweh continues His work of reforming and preparing His missionary to be a fit instrument in His plans.

4 In the fourth scene (2:1-10) Jonah implores God to rescue him from the belly of the fish. He who had no mercy on the Gentiles and refused to acknowledge that God's promises extended to them now appeals for divine mercy, and by quoting lines from various psalms pants after those promises claimed by worshipers in God's temple.

Yahweh reacts, He speaks to the brute beast, and Jonah lands on shore safe and sound. By his very rescue Jonah was unwittingly a witness of God's saving mercy. Though covered with seaweed, Jonah was nonetheless a testimony that God takes no delight in the death of sinners and saboteurs but rather rejoices in their conversion.

5 In the fifth scene (3:1-4) God repeats His order to the man whose very life affirms the truth of what he confessed in the belly of the fish: "Salvation is from Yahweh."

The Septuagint uses the term *kerygma* in 3:1-2ff. That single word summarizes Jonah's mission: he must proclaim that Nineveh, however godless she may be, is still the object of God's concern, and unless she repents, she will be destroyed. His message must be one of threat as well as promise, of judgment as well as gospel.

6 In the sixth scene (3:5-10) Nineveh responds to Jonah's appeal to repent. The proud, despotic king steps down from his royal throne, exchanges his robes for dust and ashes, and enjoins every man and animal to follow his example. What Israel continually refused to do the heathen Gentiles did do: the cruel king of Nineveh stands as anti-type to the disobedient kings of Judah.

The people join the king in repenting. They cease all their devilish work, and the terrifying and coercing engines of political injustice come to a halt. In

deep penitence they turn away from idols to serve the God who is Lord of every nation and all creation. All this becomes possible because Yahweh is God. The world of the heathen is a potentially productive mission field for no other reason than this: He alone is God.

The curtain closes on this scene with these amazing words: "God saw what they did, and how they abandoned their wicked ways, and He repented and did not bring upon them the disaster He had threatened."

Yahweh is faithful to His promises. Still today His will for Moscow and Peking, for London and Amsterdam is no less "gracious and full of mercy" than it was for Nineveh. To borrow from Luther, who loved to preach from the book of Jonah, the left hand of God's wrath is replaced by His right hand of blessing and freedom.

27. What are the two elements of the message Jonah was to preach to Nineveh?

7 The seventh scene (4:1-4) recounts the fact that the greatest hurdle to overcome in discharging the missionary mandate was not the sailors, nor the fish, nor Nineveh's king and citizenry, but rather Jonah himself—the recalcitrant and narrow-minded church. Chapter 4 describes Jonah, who has long since departed the city to find shelter east of the borders. The 40-day period of repentance has passed, but since God has changed His mind about destroying it, the city continues to be nourished by Yahweh's grace and mercy. Jonah is furious that God has extended His mercy beyond the borders of Israel to the Gentiles. He wanted a God cut according to his own pattern: a cold, hard, cruel-natured god with an unbending will set against the heathen. He cannot stand to think of the Gentiles as part of salvation history.

This is Jonah's sin, the sin of a missionary whose heart is not in it. He who once pleaded with God for mercy from the desolate isolation of a fish's belly now is angry that this God shows mercy to the nations. He vents his fury in the form of a prayer found in 4:2, the key text of the whole book: "And he prayed to the Lord, 'This, O Lord, is what I feared when I was in my own country, and to forestall it I tried to escape to Tarshish: I knew that thou art a gracious and compassionate God, long-suffering and ever constant, and always willing to repent of the disaster.'"

Part of the text comes from an ancient Israelite liturgy which every Israelite knew by heart and could rattle off in worship at the temple or synagogue while half asleep (cf. Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15;

103:8; 145:8; Neh. 9:17). But Jonah cannot stand to think that this liturgy is true not only for Jerusalem, the location of God's temple, but for other places as well—Nineveh, São Paulo, Nairobi, New York, and Paris.

Why is Jonah really so angry? For no other reason than that God is treating those outside His covenant the same as He is those within. But Jonah's anger in effect is putting him outside the covenant, for he obstinately refuses to acknowledge the covenant's purpose—to bring salvation to the heathen. He had not yet learned that Israel could not presume upon some special favors from God. Both Israel and the Gentiles alike live by the grace which the Creator gives to all of His creatures. So God comes to His prophet, but no longer as a covenant partner; He comes as the Creator and asks His creature: "Do you have a right to be so angry?"

8 In the eighth and last scene (4:5-11) one can see God still working to teach His thick-skulled missionary His lessons. He did not catch the point of the storm, the sailors, the fish, and Nineveh's conversion because he did not want to. Now Yahweh tries one more approach—the miraculous tree. A climbing gourd springs up quickly, offers Jonah protection against the beating sun, but as quickly withers and dies, the victim of an attacking worm. Jonah is peeved.

At that point God again turns to His missionary student, using the tree as His object lesson. The very God who directs the whole course of history, rules the wind and waves, and turned Nineveh's millions to repentance now asks tenderly: "Are you so angry over the gourd? You are sorry about the gourd, though you had nothing to do with growing it, a plant which came up in a night and withered in a night. And should not I be sorry for the great city of Nineveh, with its hundred and twenty thousand who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and cattle without number?" God spares and rescues. Jerusalem's God is Nineveh's as well. Unlike Jonah, He has no "Gentile complex."

And while He never forces any one of us, He tenderly asks us to put our whole heart and soul into the work of mission. God is still interested in transforming obstinate, irritable, depressive, peevish Jonahs into heralds of the good news which brings freedom.

The book ends with an unsettling question which is never answered: God reached His goal with Nineveh, but what about Jonah? No one knows. The questions of Israel and the church and their obedience is still an open one.

The question is one which every generation of Christians must answer for itself. Jacques Ellul closes his book *The Judgment of Jonah* with these words: "The book of Jonah has no conclusion, and the final question of the book has no answer, except from the one who realizes the fullness of the mercy of God and who factually and not just mythically accomplishes the salvation of the world."*

Jonah is father to all those Christians who desire the benefits and blessings of election but refuse its responsibility.

The New Testament church must pay close heed to the message of Jonah's book. Jesus Christ is "One greater than Jonah" (Matt. 12:39-41; Luke 11:29-32). His death on the cross with its awful cry of God-forsakenness and His resurrection with its jubilant shout of victory are signs of Jonah for us, pointing to the profound meaning of His whole life and attesting that God loved the world so much.

If a person draws his lifeblood from the One greater than Jonah and yet declines to spread the good news among others, he in effect is sabotaging the aims of God Himself. Jonah is father to all those Christians who desire the benefits and blessings of election but refuse its responsibility.

Thomas Carlisle's poem "You Jonah" closes with these lines:

* Ellul, J. (1971). *The judgment of Jonah* (p. 103). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

And Jonah stalked
to his shaded seat
and waited for God
to come around
to his way of thinking.

And God is still waiting
for a host of Jonahs
in their comfortable houses
to come around
to His way of loving.



28. *How does the book of Jonah demonstrate the Old Testament themes of Israel's obligation, opportunity, and response, together with God's persistence in fulfilling His mission purpose?*

29. *What parallels can be drawn between Jonah's attitude and the attitudes which characterize many churches?*

It would be inappropriate to discuss Israel's disobedience and failures without examining ourselves in the same light. Israel was idolatrous, rebellious, and ethnocentric. Could it be that Christians are sometimes guilty of the same sins and failures? Is it possible that we are just as negligent in our attitude toward the nations? God is unchanging and is totally faithful. How often we disappoint Him with our unfaithfulness and disobedience!

Israel's Dispersion

During the events leading up to the demise of Israel as a political entity, the prophets continually challenged Israel's decadence and unfaithfulness to God. They reminded her of her covenant obligations: to proclaim and exemplify God's identity and character. Sometimes they succeeded in turning Israel's eyes back towards God for a short time. Then God blessed Israel, and she fulfilled her role as a positive

witness before the nations. Too often, however, she was a negative witness and a stumbling block to the advancement of God's kingdom. God had to judge and discipline her.

Devoid of God's protection and blessing, Israel was consumed by the nations around her. In 722 B.C., the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were exiled to Assyria, and Assyrians were brought to Israel, where they mixed racially with the Jews to become the Samaritans. During the rule of King Jehoiakim (609-587 B.C.), the Jews were forcibly deported to Babylon. Later, in 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem, thus signaling the end of the Kingdom of Judah as a political entity. It wasn't until 536 B.C. that Cyrus issued a decree allowing Jews to begin returning to their land. The Jews were to wait nearly 2,500 years until their national autonomy was restored in 1948.

Through exile and captivity, Israel began fulfilling her duty. Many of the brightest chapters of the Old Testament are the accounts of the faithful witness of Israelites who were forcibly taken to other nations. Through their testimony, God's name was exalted and glorified before the Gentiles. In the fire of tribulation, the best element came forth and was purified. Under these circumstances, the Israelites began to acknowledge the sovereignty of their God. Never again would the remnant that survived the captivity play the harlot by worshiping the gods of the nations. Thus they became the first people to staunchly embrace monotheism (belief in only one omnipotent God).

After the Jews returned to Israel from captivity, God's missionary purpose was carried out through the *Diaspora* (dispersion). During this time, a faithful remnant of Jews who were scattered throughout the Babylonian and Persian Empires spread God's name among the nations. It was during this period that synagogues first appeared. Under the Greek and Roman Empires the dispersion continued. Jews migrated to all of the important commercial and trade centers of the known world, where they prospered and multiplied. Wherever they went, they maintained their culture and established their religious centers. It was these Diaspora Jews whom the apostle Paul invariably contacted as he traveled from city to city during his missionary journeys.

In Matthew 23:15, Christ attests to the fact that some Jews even began to take their obligation seriously enough to begin missionary work. They traveled land and sea to convert Gentiles to the Jewish faith. Johannes Verkuyl comments on this "intertestamental period" in the following paragraph:

Research into the period of the Jewish Diaspora has uncovered evidence of a Jewish effort to proselytize, which, in turn, definitely stamped later missionary work carried on by the Gentile as well as the Jewish Christians. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) went through the whole of the civilized world and was explained in the synagogues. Diaspora Judaism's missionary impact was far greater than many realize. What is more, Judaism affected early Christianity, for the Jewish Christians kept close contact with the synagogue communities. The synagogue played a crucial role, for it attracted not only proselytes (Gentiles who adopted the complete range of Jewish beliefs and practices, including circumcision) but also a class it termed "God fearers" (Gentiles who accepted most of Judaism's ethics and some of its culture, but refused circumcision).*

* Verkuyl, J. (1978). *Contemporary missiology: An introduction* (D. Cooper, Ed. and Trans.) (p. 101). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

30. *During the time of the Diaspora, how was God setting the stage for the rapid spread of Christianity in the first century?*
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Summary

After mankind's failure to respond to God through His dealings with the human race in Genesis 1-11, God began to manifest His intention to reclaim His kingdom nation by nation. He chose Abraham and promised to bless him and make of him a great nation. That nation would in turn be an instrument of blessing to all the other nations. The Old Testament can thus be interpreted through understanding the obligation inherent in the Abrahamic Covenant, the opportunities God provided to fulfill the covenant, and Israel's response. The Abrahamic Covenant became the basis by which God's people could understand how God planned to use them in carrying out His redemptive purpose.

The covenant was firmly established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Later, it was passed on to the nation of Israel. God provided the message through the revelation of His character and through mighty deeds. He also provided the chance to be a witness to the nations by placing Israel in a strategic location. Israel, however, did not take seriously her covenant obligations, and God was forced to judge her.

Since Israel was unwilling to fulfill her obligation among the nations voluntarily, God used persecution and exile to disperse the Jews throughout the earth. Through the 400-year intertestamental period, the world finally began to hear the message Israel was intended to bear. Thousands of "God fearers" around the known world congregated with Jews to acknowledge Jehovah as Lord of the universe, paving the way for the coming of the Messiah.

Integrative Assignment

1. *Using Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:5-6, and Psalm 67 as a basis, prepare a concise outline for a short talk entitled, "God Blesses Us That All the Nations of the Earth Might Be Blessed."*
2. *How do attractive and expansive forces work together for the establishment and expansion of God's kingdom? Illustrate your answer.*
3. *Identify three instances of missionary activity in the Old Testament, beyond those already studied, and explain what mechanism God used to fulfill His purpose through His people, whether involuntary or voluntary, coming or going.*

Questions for Reflection

1. *“Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (James 2:23). Our righteousness is also based on our belief that God will do what His Word says He will do. There is a direct relationship between the depth of our understanding of God’s Word and our ability to act on it faithfully. Are you committed to knowing God’s Word intimately? If you haven’t done so already, schedule a daily time for Bible reading. Start by reading and meditating on Psalm 119. Covenant with God to be a faithful student of His Word. Write your commitment below.*

2. *In addition to affecting the establishment of God’s kingdom in Old Testament times, attractive and expansive forces also play a part in our lives as individual believers. In what way are you “attractive” to unbelievers? In what ways are you ministering blessing to them?*

3. *Idolatry is not simply the worship of idols. It is anything that captivates our heart and causes our affections to stray from God. Solomon permitted his affections to focus on his wives and concubines, with the result that his relationship with God was severely harmed. What "idols" are the biggest stumbling blocks to believers today? Are your affections placed wholly on God? Read Psalm 42:1. Then write out a verse which reflects your own heart's desire for God.*

CHAPTER 3

The Messiah, His Messengers, and the Message

*“... when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son,
born of a woman ...” (Gal. 4:4)*

From the earliest Genesis records, God has been at work to redeem a people from every people and to rule a kingdom over all other kingdoms. Through our study of the Abrahamic Covenant and other key passages in the last two chapters, we have come to understand that the Old Testament clearly contains God’s command to His people to bless all nations.

Now, as we study the New Testament era in this chapter, we find that God’s concern for all nations continues as the central purpose of His dealings with the human race. Initially, we will examine Christ’s role as “the Son of Man” and His ministry and teaching to His disciples as He developed in them an “all peoples” perspective. In the second section, we will consider the Great Commission and key events in the book of Acts which spurred the expansion of the gospel. We will also explore the clear relationship between the church and the missionary task. In the final part of this chapter, we want to examine Christ’s message, the gospel of the kingdom, analyzing its meaning, its mission, and our motive for sharing it.

I. Jesus, the Messiah for All Peoples

With the coming of Jesus the Messiah, God initiated a special phase of the reestablishment of His kingdom on earth. It was not, however, the kingdom the Jewish leadership hoped for. They were looking for a political dominion; Christ brought a spiritual one. They expected a Messiah who would rally the nation of Israel and overthrow the evil yoke of Roman rule; Christ taught that they should “render to Caesar what is Caesar’s” (Matt. 22:21).

Jesus of Nazareth's kingdom message was so radically different from the Jews' expectations that those who did not have "eyes to see or ears to hear" (Matt. 13:13-15) could only respond with unbelief and rejection. Even those Jews who did believe in Jesus found it difficult to disassociate the coming of the Messiah from the establishment of a literal, political kingdom. The disciples' confusion was due in part to Old Testament prophetic passages which speak to the eventual physical rule of Christ on this earth. It was hard for the disciples to understand the nature of the kingdom as Jesus taught and lived it.

1. *Israel's expectations for the coming of the Messiah were wrapped up in deeply ingrained hopes. Read the following passages and describe what these hopes were: Zephaniah 3:14-17, Isaiah 2:2-4, Isaiah 66:13-16.*

2. *Now contrast these expectations with Christ's birth, life, and teachings.*

Jesus' life and teachings were an enigma to those who expected the Messiah to come in power and might. Even for those who accepted Jesus as Christ, the association of His coming with nationalistic hopes had created a sense of extreme ethnocentricity. Jesus' disciples could accept Him as the Messiah for the Jews, but could their master also be a Messiah for all nations?

It takes more than a cursory reading of Scripture to understand how Jesus demonstrated His knowledge of His essentially spiritual, messianic role to all mankind. In the following excerpt, H. Cornell Goerner explains how the title Jesus chose for Himself clearly identified Him with His worldwide mission.

❑ **Jesus and the Gentiles ***

H. Cornell Goerner **

Son of Man

Nothing is more revealing than the personal title which Jesus chose for Himself. We have seen that He did not like the term “Son of David,” the popular designation of the Messiah. He realized that He was indeed “the Son of God” referred to in Psalm 2:7, and during His trial before the Sanhedrin, He acknowledged this. But the title which He used throughout His ministry was “Son of Man.”

More than 40 times in the Gospels the term is used, always by Jesus referring to Himself. The disciples never used the term, but called Him “Lord,” “Master,” or “Teacher.” For Jesus, the words were almost

a substitute for the personal pronoun “I.” Again and again He said it: “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20). “The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Matt. 9:6). “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:8). “Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).

Jesus derived this term from two principal sources: the books of Ezekiel and Daniel. “Son of man” is the distinctive title applied to the prophet Ezekiel by God and occurs 87 times. The Hebrew is *ben Adam*, literally, “son of Adam,” or “son of mankind.”

3. *In what way did the title Jesus chose for Himself demonstrate His identification with all mankind?*

4. *Why is it important for us to understand that Jesus’ messianic role was global in its perspective?*

Goerner goes on to illustrate how this identification with all mankind was expressed in Jesus’ ministry.

From the beginning

As we have already seen, the vision of a universal kingdom was integral to the plan of Jesus from the

very beginning of His ministry. The fact that one of the wilderness temptations involved “all the king-

* Goerner, H. C. (1979). *All nations in God’s purpose* (pp. 74-78). Nashville: Broadman Press.

** After teaching missions and comparative religion at Southern Baptist Seminary for more than 20 years, in 1957 H. Cornell Goerner became Secretary for Africa, Europe, and the Near East for the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He retired in 1976 as Secretary for West Africa and now is a pastor of a church in a community near Richmond, Virginia.

doms of the world and their glory” (Matt. 4:8) is conclusive. Jesus did aspire to world dominion. His ambition to rule over the nations was not wrong. The temptation was to take a shortcut to that noble goal: to adopt the methods of the devil. In rejecting Satan’s methods, Jesus did not give up His aim of worldwide authority. Rather, He chose the path of suffering and redemption which He found outlined in the Scriptures.

The first sermon at Nazareth demonstrates that His life purpose extended far beyond the nation of Israel. He was not surprised that His own people did not receive His message. “That’s the way it has always been,” He said. “The prophets have always found greater faith among foreigners than among their own people” (Luke 4:24, author’s paraphrase). He then gave an example: “There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah... and yet [he] was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow” (Luke 4:25-26). His hearers knew the rest of the story told in 1 Kings 17. Received into a Gentile home, Elijah performed the remarkable miracle of replenishing the flour and oil, then later restored the widow’s son to life—not a Jewish widow, but a Gentile!

No more dramatic illustration could have been given that the grace of God was not limited to the people of Israel.

Jesus did not stop with Elijah. He rubbed salt into the wounded feelings of His audience with the story of Elisha. For Naaman, the Syrian, was not only a Gentile, but a military leader—captain of the Syrian army which at that very time was at war with Israel and had almost eradicated the hapless little nation (2 Kings 5:1-14). Yet, although there were many lepers in Israel, “none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27). No more dramatic illustration could have been given that the grace of God was not limited to the people of Israel and that Gentiles often displayed greater faith than those who were considered “children of the kingdom.”

Small wonder that the proud citizens of Nazareth were infuriated at this brash young man, who in-

sulted their nation and called in question their privileged status as God’s “chosen people”! But for His miraculous power, they would have hurled Him to His death on the jagged rocks at the foot of a cliff (Luke 4:28-30).

To the Jews first

Jesus did have a deep conviction of a special mission to the Jewish nation. He expressed this so strongly that some have concluded that He envisioned no mission beyond Israel. But careful consideration of all His words and actions reveals that it was a question of strategy. As Paul later expressed it, his mission was “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16; 2:10).

Jesus’ concern for Israel was shown in the instructions to the 12 disciples as He sent them out on their first preaching mission. “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles,” He said, “and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5-6). The reason is obvious. The time was short, and doom was coming to the nation, if there was not speedy repentance. The need was urgent, more so for Israel than for the Gentile nations, whose time of judgment would come later. Indeed, in the very same context is the prediction that the preaching ministry of the disciples would be extended to the Gentiles: “You shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to the Gentiles” (v. 18). But they must concentrate upon the Jewish cities first, because their time of opportunity was short (v. 23).

Luke tells of a later preaching mission in which 70 others were sent out two by two (Luke 10:1). Just as the 12 apostles symbolically represent the 12 tribes of Israel, the 70 symbolize the Gentile nations. In Genesis 10, the descendants of Noah are listed, 70 in number. Rabbinical tradition assumed that this was the total number of nations scattered over the earth after the Tower of Babel and repeatedly referred to the 70 Gentile peoples. Jesus may have used this means of symbolizing His long-range purpose. The 12 were sent to warn the tribes of Israel of impending judgment. The 70 were sent later on a training mission in preparation for their ultimate mission to the whole world.



Figure 3-1. Two Symbols of Christ's Mission

5. *What evidence from the New Testament does the author present to demonstrate Jesus' lack of ethnic self-centeredness?*

6. *In what ways was the sending of the 12 disciples first, and later the 70, symbolically significant of Christ's whole mission?*

7. *Why did Jesus give priority to reaching the Jews? Are there other reasons you can think of beyond the author's strategic consideration?*

It is clear from the Old and New Testaments that the gospel was to be heard first by the Jews. Christ understood this, along with His need to fulfill the many prophetic passages regarding His coming within the context of the Jewish nation. It is also clear from Scripture (see John 12:20-26) that the blood of the new covenant had to be poured out first in order that forgiveness could be understood and received by the "many" Gentile nations.

Because of their knowledge of Scripture, the Jews were strategically equipped to grasp the atonement message. They knew the prophetic passages regarding the Messiah. Although they were not receptive, they *knew who Jesus claimed to be*. Had they accepted Him, they were undoubtedly in the best position to communicate this message to all mankind.

Disciples to Apostles

Christ had a clear understanding of His *global* messianic role. His disciples, however, did not necessarily share that understanding. Jesus had to use encounters with Gentiles to begin to give them an “all peoples” perspective. How successful was He in doing this? In the following excerpt, Don Richardson traces the passages in which Jesus encountered these “foreigners” during His ministry and shows how wisely He used these times to challenge His disciples’ attitudes.

❑ **A Man for All Peoples ***

Don Richardson **

Millions of Christians know, of course, that Jesus, at the end of His ministry, commanded His disciples to “go and make disciples of all [peoples]” (Matt. 28:19). We respectfully honor this last and most incredible command He gave with an august title—the Great Commission. And yet millions of us deep down in our hearts secretly believe, if our deeds are an accurate barometer of our beliefs (and Scripture says they are), that Jesus really uttered that awesome command without giving His disciples ample warning.

Read cursorily through the four Gospels, and the Great Commission looks like a sort of afterthought paper-clipped onto the end of the main body of Jesus’ teachings. It is almost as if our Lord, after divulging everything that was really close to His heart, snapped His fingers and said, “Oh yes, by the way, men, there’s one more thing. I want you all to proclaim this message to everyone in the world, regardless of his language and culture. That is, of course, if you have the time and feel disposed.”

Did Jesus hit His disciples with the Great Commission cold turkey? Did He just spring it on them at the last minute without fair warning and then slip

away to heaven before they had a chance to interact with Him about its feasibility? Did He fail to provide reasonable demonstration on ways to fulfill it?

How often we Christians read the four Gospels without discerning the abundant evidence God has provided for an entirely opposite conclusion! Consider, for example, how compassionately Jesus exploited the following encounters with Gentiles and Samaritans to help His disciples think in cross-cultural terms.

A Roman centurion

On one occasion (Matt. 8:5-13), a Roman centurion, a Gentile, approached Jesus with a request on behalf of his paralyzed servant. Jews, on this occasion, urged Jesus to comply. “This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue,” they explained.

In fact, walls and pillars of a synagogue built probably by that very centurion still stand 2,000 years later near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee! But notice the implication of the Jews’ reasoning. They were saying, in effect, that if the centurion had not thus helped them, neither should Jesus help the

* Richardson, D. (1981). *Eternity in their hearts* (pp. 136-139, 149, 152-154, 162-163). Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

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centurion of his pitifully paralyzed servant! How clannish of them! Little wonder Jesus could not help sighing occasionally, “O unbelieving and perverse generation... how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?” (Matt. 17:17).

Jesus responded to the centurion, “I will go and heal him.”

At that moment the centurion said something quite unexpected: “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.... When Jesus heard this, He was astonished,” wrote Matthew. What was so astonishing? Simply this—the centurion’s military experience had taught him something about authority. As water always flows downhill, so also authority always flows down an echelon (a chain of command). Whoever submits to authority from a higher level of an echelon is privileged also to wield authority over lower levels. Jesus, the centurion noticed, walked in perfect submission to God: therefore Jesus must have perfect authority over everything below Him on the greatest echelon of all—the cosmos! Ergo! Jesus must possess an infallible ability to command the mere matter of the sick servant’s body to adapt itself to a state of health!

Jesus exploited the occasion to teach His disciples that Gentiles have just as great a potential for faith as Jews!

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus exclaimed, “I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith!” As in many other discourses, Jesus exploited the occasion to teach His disciples that Gentiles have just as great a potential for faith as Jews! And they make just as valid objects for the grace of God too!

Determined to maximize the point, Jesus went on to say: “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west [Luke, a Gentile writer, adds in his parallel account: ‘and from the north and the south’] and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom [this could only mean the Jews as God’s chosen people] will be thrown out-

side, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:7-12; Luke 13:28, 29).

Feasts are usually called to celebrate. What would you guess that future feast attended by Abraham and a host of Gentile guests will celebrate?

Intimations of the Great Commission to follow could hardly have been clearer! Wait, there is still much more!

A Canaanite woman

Still later, a Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon begged Jesus’ mercy on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter. Jesus at first feigned indifference. His disciples, glad no doubt to see their Messiah turn a cold shoulder to a bothersome Gentile, concurred at once with what they thought were His true feelings. “Send her away,” they argued, “for she keeps crying out after us” (see Matt. 15:21-28).

Little did they know that Jesus was setting them up. “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel,” He said to the woman. Having already manifested an apparent insensitivity toward the woman, Jesus now manifests an apparent inconsistency also. He has already healed many Gentiles. On what basis does He now reject this one’s plea? One can imagine the disciples nodding grimly. Still they did not suspect. Undissuaded, the Canaanite woman actually knelt at Jesus’ feet, pleading, “Lord, help me!”

“It is not right to take the children’s bread.” Then He added the crusher—“and toss it to their dogs!” “Dogs” was a standard epithet Jews reserved for Gentiles, especially Gentiles who tried to intrude upon Jewish religious privacy and privilege. In other words, Jesus now complements His earlier “insensitivity” and “inconsistency” with even worse “cruelty.”

Was this really the Savior of the world talking? No doubt His disciples thought His reference quite appropriate for the occasion. But just when their chests were swollen to the full with pride of race, the Canaanite woman must have caught a twinkle in Jesus’ eye and realized the truth!

“Yes, Lord,” she replied ever so humbly, not to mention subtly, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs

that fall from their master's table!" (Matt. 15:21-27; see also Mark 7:26-30).

"Woman, you have great faith!" Jesus glowed. "Your request is granted!" No, He was not being fickle! This was what He intended to do all along. Immediately preceding this event, Jesus had taught His disciples about the difference between real versus figurative uncleanness. This was His way of driving the point home. "And her daughter was healed from that very hour," Matthew records (v. 28).

A Samaritan village

When on a later occasion Jesus and His band approached a certain Samaritan village, the Samaritans refused to welcome Him. James and John, two disciples whom Jesus nicknamed "sons of thunder" for their fiery tempers, were incensed. "Lord," they exclaimed indignantly (stamping their feet), "do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"

Jesus turned and rebuked James and John. Some ancient manuscripts add that He said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:51-55, including footnote).

With those words, Jesus identified Himself as a Savior for Samaritans!

Greeks at Jerusalem

Later on, some Greeks came to a feast at Jerusalem and sought audience with Jesus. Philip and Andrew, two of Jesus' disciples, relayed the request to Jesus who, as usual, exploited the occasion to get another wedge in for the "all peoples" perspective: "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). This prophecy foreshadowed the manner of Jesus' death—crucifixion! But it also foretold the effect! All men—not merely in spite of Jesus' humiliation, but because of it—would be drawn to Him as God's anointed deliverer. On the surface this statement could be interpreted to mean that everyone in the world will become a

Christian. Since we know that this is quite unlikely, the statement probably means instead that some of all kinds of men will be drawn to Jesus when they learn that His death atoned for their sins. And that

All men—not merely in spite of Jesus' humiliation, but because of it—would be drawn to Him as God's anointed deliverer.

is exactly what the Abrahamic Covenant promised—not that all people would be blessed, but that all peoples would be represented in the blessing. Jesus' disciples thus gained still another fair warning of the Great Commission soon to follow!

On the road to Emmaus

Just as the disciples still did not believe Jesus' intimations of Gentile evangelism, so also they never really believed Him when He said He would rise from the dead. But He surprised them on both counts! Three days after His entombment He resurrected! And one of His first encounters after resurrection began in incognito fashion with two of His disciples on a road leading to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13-49). During the opening exchange the two disciples, still not recognizing Jesus, complained: "We had hoped that [Jesus] was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (v. 21); they did not add, "and make Israel a blessing to all peoples." A blind spot in their hearts still effectively obscured that part of the Abrahamic Covenant.

"How foolish you are," Jesus responded, "and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" (vv. 25, 26).

Then, beginning with the five "books of Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself."

He had covered much of that ground before, but He went over it again—patiently (v. 27). And this time, the two disciples' hearts burned within them as He

opened the Scriptures (see v. 32). Was a wider perspective at last winning its way into their hearts?

Later they recognized Jesus, but at the same moment He vanished from their sight! They retraced their steps at once to Jerusalem, found the Eleven (as the disciples were called for a while after Judas' defection), and recounted their experience. But before they finished talking, Jesus Himself appeared among them, and the Eleven experienced the end of the story for themselves!

As unerringly as a swallow returning to its nest, Jesus returned to the Scriptures and their central theme: "Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations [i.e., *ethne*—peoples], beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:45-48).

8. *What attitudes in the disciples was Jesus challenging through His encounters with Gentiles? What similar attitudes may be present in the church today, and how could they be recognized?*

Go and make disciples

Notice, however, that He still did not command them to go. That would come a few days later, on a mountain in Galilee where—as far as the disciples were concerned—it all started. And here is the working of the command which the Abrahamic Covenant had already foreshadowed for 2,000 years, and which Jesus for three long years had been preparing His disciples to receive:

All authority in heaven and 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 [note the limitation that follows] everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt. 28:18-20).

It was not an unfair command. The Old Testament foreshadowed it. Jesus' daily teaching anticipated it. His frequent prejudice-free ministry among both

Samaritans and Gentiles had given the disciples a real-life demonstration of how to carry it out. Now He added the promise of His own authority bequeathed and His own presence in company—if they obeyed!

Still later, moments before He ascended back into heaven from the Mount of Olives (near Bethany), He added a further promise: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...."

Then followed Jesus' famous formula for the exocentric [outward] progression of the gospel: "...in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

It was Jesus' last command. Without another word, and without waiting for any discussion of the proposal, He ascended into heaven to await His followers' complete obedience to it!

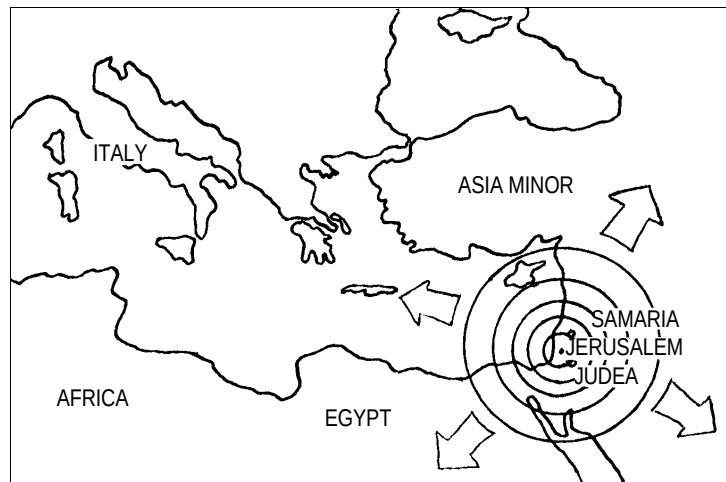


Figure 3-2. Outward Progression of the Gospel

The Great Commission

The most often quoted versions of the Great Commission are found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16. In both cases, the objective of the mandate is global in scope. Matthew's account of this universal directive is considered the most complete. In the following excerpt, Johannes Verkuyl elaborates on this passage.

❑ *The Great Commission of Matthew 28* *

Johannes Verkuyl

That only Matthew contains a mandate for engaging in worldwide mission is a popular and stubborn misconception. But there is no doubt about it: the concluding verses of Matthew's Gospel express it the most forthrightly. Not only is the conclusion to Matthew's Gospel extremely powerful compared to the other Gospels and Acts, but the final verses form a climax and present a summary of what was written before. They are the key to understanding the whole book.

In these concluding verses Jesus, the risen Lord, standing atop one of the mountains in Galilee—could it be the same one from which He delivered His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1)?—proclaims a three-point message to His disciples.

Jesus' authority

He mentions His authority in language reminiscent of Daniel 7:13-14 and of His own words before the Sanhedrin recorded in Matthew 26:64. No area, people, or culture now lies outside the domain of His power and authority. The missionary command which follows is directly connected to this report of the risen Lord's coronation. Having arisen, He now has exalted authority over the whole world. Thus, the mission mandate is not the basis for His enthronement. Rather, the reverse is true: the mandate follows from the fact of His authority. However the several recorded missionary mandates may vary, they all in unison proclaim this one truth: a saving and liberating authority proceeds from Him, the

* Verkuyl, J. (1978). *Contemporary missiology: An introduction* (D. Cooper, Ed. and Trans.) (pp. 106-108). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

victim who became a victor. He is the crucified Lord who now rules. His power is not that of a despot bent on destruction; instead He uses His power for our healing and liberation and accomplishes these goals by love, reconciliation, and patience.

Jesus' continuing mandate to mission

After His enthronement, the crucified and risen Lord issues His mandate to mission. The time between His resurrection and second coming is not simply an empty interim but rather a period during which the discharge of this command is included in the process of enthronement. Philippians 2:5-11 contains a strong parallel to this truth stated here.

“Go therefore” means “to depart, to leave, to cross boundaries” — sociological boundaries, racial boundaries, cultural boundaries, geographic boundaries.

What does the enthroned Lord command His disciples to do? He says, first of all, “Go therefore.” The author chooses the Greek word *poreuthentes*, which means “to depart, to leave, to cross boundaries”—sociological boundaries, racial boundaries, cultural boundaries, geographic boundaries. This point is most important to one who carries on the task of communicating the gospel. It affects work done in his own area as well as in faraway places. The missionary must always be willing and ready to cross boundaries, whether they be at home or away. The word *poreuomai* in this text reminded the early Christian church of a peripatetic Jesus and His disciples who were continually crossing boundaries to

reach out to the other person. Jesus also commands His followers to “make disciples of all nations.” The author makes the Greek noun *mathetes* into a verb. The verbal form of this word occurs four times in the New Testament (in Matt. 13:52 and 27:57, in Acts 14:21, and here in Matt. 28:20). To become a disciple of Jesus involves sharing with Him His death and resurrection and joining Him on His march to the final disclosure of His messianic kingdom. He commands us to *make* disciples, that is, to move them to surrender to His liberating authority and to volunteer for the march already enroute to a new order of things, namely, His kingdom.

Jesus' promise

When Jesus adds the concluding words of promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age,” He is reminding His disciples that He will be present among them in a new manner. The promise holds true for all time. Note in passing how often the word “all” occurs in this text: all power, all peoples, all the commandments, and finally, the word “always.”

Christ promises to be with His church during “all of her days.” As she discharges her missionary calling, the church must forever be asking, “What kind of day is it today?” for no two days are alike in her history. But however much the days and ages may change as the church carries on her mission in the six continents, one fact never changes: Jesus Christ is urging on His church to complete her missionary calling as He guides her to her final destination. And this missionary movement which emanates from Him will not cease until the end of the world. Thus, even though the methods of carrying it out must be changed continually, the task itself remains the same.

9. What is the objective of the Great Commission according to Matthew and Mark?

10. What is the main verb of Matthew 28:18-20, and how do the other three verbs relate to it?

II. Messengers for All Peoples

With so clear and inspirational a command as the Great Commission, we can imagine all 11 of the disciples hurrying off to evangelize the world. Unfortunately, Scripture doesn't record this kind of commitment. In the following article, Meg Crossman traces the disciples' disappointing performance.

The Reluctant Messengers

Meg Crossman *

Jesus spent the major part of His ministry training leaders. He entrusted His disciples with His message of love and truth—a message He commissioned them to take to all people, nations, tribes, and tongues. In His post-resurrection teaching, He made this focus especially direct and clear. How quickly did the disciples respond?

Traditionally, these early leaders are portrayed to us as dynamic apostles who immediately went forth with the Word to all. The facts, however, are a little different. The apostles certainly shook Jerusalem and their own culture with their proclamation. Were they equally responsive when it came to the call to be a light to the nations? Let us reexamine the book of Acts, looking especially at the cross-cultural facets of the apostles' commission.

Pentecost

The great breakthrough of Pentecost obviously demonstrated God's desire that His message be intelligible to people from all nations. As men from all over the Mediterranean world gathered for the Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out in an evident and particular way: wind, tongues of fire, and the miraculous ability of the gathered peo-

ple to hear the 120 speaking the “wonderful works of God” each in his own native language. Rather than being proclaimed in faultless Hebrew or common Aramaic, the words of praise resounded in languages from all across the Roman world. Could there have been a clearer witness of the Father's intention that all should be able to hear of His love?

Jerusalem and Samaria

The apostles rightly began to proclaim the message in Jerusalem, both by words of power and by deeds of holiness. Mighty miracles supported and confirmed their claims. Many heard and responded. The church grew in depth and in numbers. God was glorified in Jerusalem and Judea. However, at the same time, the book of Acts documents the Jewish church's reticence to make plans for reaching people of other races and cultures.

Surely it could be expected that some action would be taken to reach at least the nearby people of Samaria. After all, the Samaritans had even been specifically named in Jesus' directive of Acts 1:8. No such initiative, however, appears to have been intended. It was not until persecution arose after the martyrdom of Stephen that scattered believers (but

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not the apostles) “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Interestingly, it was a Greek believer, Philip, who took the message to Samaria. Perhaps the prejudice of the native-born Jews against their half-breed cousins next door was too great to allow living concern to arise quickly for Samaria’s salvation. After a number of Samaritans had been converted, the apostles sent Peter and John to investigate the work and pray for the new believers (Acts 8:14ff). Curiously, having set their seal on the Samaritan conversions, Peter and John did not seem to make plans to set up a regular ministry outpost in Samaria. Instead, they preached, prayed, and *returned to Jerusalem* (Acts 8:25).

As if to encourage Philip that he was moving in the right direction, the Spirit of the Lord immediately entrusted him with an even more culturally distant task. Instead of alerting someone still in Jerusalem (and physically much nearer), the angel of the Lord sent open-hearted Philip down to Gaza for the sake of an Ethiopian official who was also a eunuch (forbidden to enter a Jewish congregation by Deuteronomy 23:1). Philip’s fruitful ministry resulted in the Ethiopian’s conversion. Philip then found himself in the town of Azotus. He went right on preaching up the coast to Caesarea, where the Roman procurators resided.

Joppa

Meanwhile, Peter, traveling around the country, ministered to converted Jews in Joppa (Acts 10). Yet a thrice-repeated vision was necessary to prepare Peter’s heart to even consider going to Gentiles, who were actually *asking for a witness*. If the issue was simply giving witness to the household of the centurion Cornelius, surely there was Philip, already arrived in Caesarea, upon whom the Lord could have called. It seems clear, however, that this incident was necessary for the church leadership to become convinced of God’s inexorable world-embracing purpose.

In spite of Peter’s vision, the instantaneous response of the gathered Gentiles and the miraculous attestation of the Holy Spirit amazed Peter and his companions. The reluctance with which they admitted Gentiles to baptism is evident. Peter later recounted

his response not as, “How glorious that these people want to know God!” but, “Who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:17).

Peter returned to Jerusalem, needing to convince his fellow believers that he had not erred. In the only part of Acts which is repeated almost word for word, he recounted the entire incident (perhaps because the Holy Spirit wanted to emphasize this vital lesson by repetition). Apostolic response was not, “Praise God! Let’s go tell other nations!” Instead, Luke recorded that they “held their peace” and said, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).

Some may object that this assessment of apostolic reluctance to spread the gospel is too harsh. After all, the apostles were attending to a new and struggling community with limited resources. There were many needs at home. Perhaps they did not feel an individual “call” to go to other nations. They may have felt the need to stay in Jerusalem since the city’s destruction by Titus was imminent. Many people undoubtedly needed to hear and have the chance to repent before that terrible judgment fell.

Even if all these things were true, the apostles might surely have planned or commissioned others to go. They certainly knew enough about the Pharisaic bands who witnessed throughout the Roman Empire to realize that specific plans had to be made and people sent forth if purposeful missionary work was to be accomplished. No evidence emerges that these things took place.

A new breed of apostle

In Acts 9, God’s desire to see His message taken to the nations was manifested in an unlikely candidate: Saul of Tarsus, an adamant persecutor of the church. The person least likely to be won at all was selected for this trans-national task: “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16). Saul’s call to the nations was confirmed by Ananias, the man sent to pray for Paul: “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will... for you will be a witness for Him to all men...” (Acts 22:14-15).

Meanwhile, some of the scattered lay people hadn't realized that they needed to be careful to whom they spoke. In Acts 11:19-21 (perhaps 30 years after the outpouring at Pentecost), they couldn't resist telling the good news to Greeks in Antioch. Incredibly, a great harvest occurred. Again this called for apostolic investigation, and Barnabas was sent to undertake it. Having met and befriended Saul in Jerusalem shortly after Saul's conversion, Barnabas saw a perfect place to use the gifts of this new "apostle." Saul, born and raised in a Gentile city, understood the Greek mind and culture. He also knew the Scriptures intimately, having studied in Gamaliel's school in Jerusalem. Isn't it interesting that this very "Gentile" church in Antioch would shortly become the first to embrace the vision of actively evangelizing other nations, sending forth Paul and Barnabas in cross-cultural witness!

When Paul began to respond actively to God's directive, "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21), he experienced immediate response not only among the Jews, but also among the "God fearers." "God fearers" were Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel and had attached themselves to the synagogue, but they were unwilling to submit to circumcision or keep the Jewish law. They were delighted with the message of salvation available through faith in Jesus.

What opened the door to Gentiles, however, was one of the biggest stumbling blocks for the Jewish Christians: Paul's willingness to let Gentile Christians keep their "gentileness." As the equivalent of an ecclesiastical lawyer, Paul had the ability to discern and defend the scriptural background for his contention. This controversy raged in the early church until the Council of Jerusalem met to take up the matter, as recorded in Acts 15.

The Council of Jerusalem

Called before the church leaders in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas gave a spirited defense of their ministry throughout the Gentile world. They explained their teaching and detailed the confirmation of it by signs and wonders. At last, both Peter and James spoke out in favor of their approach, quoting from Amos regarding God's plan to rebuild the Tabernacle of David, "in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by

My name" (Acts 15:16, 17). James concluded that this approach is God's desire. These apostolic leaders affirmed the reality that faith in Jesus alone could save Gentiles. They merely asked Gentile believers to refrain from behavior that would be extremely offensive to Jewish culture, so that Jewish believers would not be troubled by fellowshiping with them.

This watershed decision by the Jerusalem Council opened the door for great movements to God among peoples throughout the Roman world. However, it did not signal a new missions thrust from Jerusalem.

Galatia

Interestingly, the letter Paul wrote defending and explaining the freeing of ethnic Christians from conformity to Jewish culture was addressed to the Galatians. This trading people, located near the Black Sea in Turkey, were the ancestors of the Celts (the Latin word for Celt was *Galatoi*). They were a Gentile people who had been thrown into confusion by the preaching of Judaizers, who wanted them to live by Old Testament law.

All cultures were acceptable, but not all apostles were ready to reach out to them.

Not only did Paul not expect Jewish legal requirements from the Galatians, he warned them that trying to add any such thing to their faith would actually bring them under a curse (Gal. 3:10-11)! In this letter, probably written a number of years after the Jerusalem Council, Paul recounted having to rebuke Peter publicly for his unwillingness to stand by the Gentile converts in the presence of brethren from Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11-17). At the same time, he affirmed the right of Jews to have their culture recognized, as he personally circumcised Timothy, a half-Jewish young man joining the mission band (Acts 16:3). In the case of Titus, a Greek believer, however, Paul insisted that he be accepted without that ceremonial initiation (Gal. 2:1-3).

All cultures were acceptable, but not all apostles were ready to reach out to them. Don Richardson, in his discussion of "The Hidden Message of Acts," comments:

How amazing! There were now at least 15 men generally recognized as apostles since Matthias, James the Lord's brother, and Saul and Barnabas joined the original 11. And yet, out of the 15, only two are "commissioned" to evangelize the estimated 900 million Gentiles in the world at that time. The other 13 are convinced that they are all needed to evangelize only about three million Jews, among whom there were already tens of thousands of witnessing believers! Their unashamed willingness to let Paul;ministry of Paul and Barnabas take on the entire Gentile world boggles my mind.*

As far as can be determined historically, all the apostles, other than James, died far from Jerusalem.

Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. Thomas is believed to have been martyred in India, where the Mar Toma churches still bear his name. Andrew may have gone to Scythia (near the Crimean peninsula in the Black Sea) and others to Ethiopia, parts of North Africa, and Arabia. No document records whether they went forth by choice or were forced to flee by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. However, the book of Acts clearly documents the difficulty of many of God's dearest and choicest servants in getting beyond their own ethnocentric walls. Not surprisingly, today's challenge is similar: We must help communities of Christians in every nation to reach beyond their own culture in fulfilling God's desire to extend the gospel to those far different from themselves.

11. *What was the core issue discussed at the Council of Jerusalem?*

12. *Why can this issue be viewed as more important to the expansion of the gospel than the initial outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2?*

Expansion of the Church in Acts

The evidence is clear that the disciples weren't moved out of the "home church" to any significant degree until the destruction of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Christ's clear "all nations" mandate was carried out *in spite of* the reluctant disciples. The well known passage in Acts 1:8, "And you shall be my witnesses," is not simply a reiteration of the Great Commission; it is a prophetic declaration of the progression of the gospel as recorded in this historic book (see Figure 3-3 on the next page).

* Richardson, D. (1981). *Eternity in their hearts* (p. 165). Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

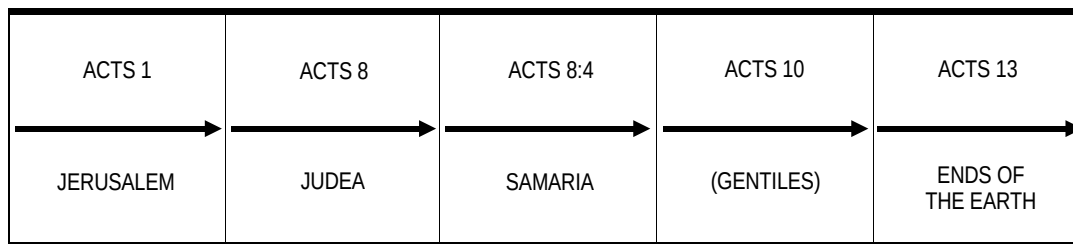


Figure 3-3. The Fulfillment of Acts 1:8

The first phase of this prophetic outline, Jerusalem, was fulfilled by the apostles rather quickly (Acts 1-2). Evidently, it took persecution to move the message out of Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria (Acts 8). No effective witness to Gentiles was extended until Peter, under virtual compulsion, went to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). Even then, his next stop, once again, was Jerusalem.

It is interesting to note the role Peter had in each of the crucial movements in the progression of the gospel across cultural barriers. In Matthew 16:19, Christ offered the keys of the kingdom to Peter. In Acts 2, Peter's preaching was the "key" which opened the door of the kingdom to the *Jews* assembled for Pentecost in Jerusalem. In Acts 8, he again used that "key" in opening the door of the kingdom to the *Samaritans*, through the laying on of hands and the granting of the gift of the Holy Spirit to these "half-brothers" of the Jews. In Acts 10, Peter again used his "key" to open the door to *Gentiles* in the house of Cornelius. Through these three "key" events, God allowed Peter to participate in the progressive accessing of the gospel first by Jews, then by Samaritans, and lastly by the vast majority of humanity designated in the Bible as "Gentiles."

Paul's Principles and Practice

While Peter opened the door in each of the gospel's major cultural leaps, it was Paul and his apostolic band whom God utilized in the rapid spread of Christianity among the Gentiles of the Mediterranean region. Through this unique missionary team, God provided a model of the most effective means to take the gospel to geographically and culturally distant people. This model, along with Paul's amazing success, has provoked much analysis by missiologists hoping to arrive at major principles which led to Paul's astounding record. The following is a partial listing of the major missions principles which have been identified from Paul's experience and practice.

- **Paul's calling** – Paul had a specific calling to the Gentiles (unreached). He clearly understood his mission (Acts 26) and was willing to pursue it under all circumstances, even when it meant imprisonment and death.
- **Paul's vision** – Paul's principal ambition was to proclaim Christ where no man had gone before. The "regions beyond" were continually beckoning him (Rom. 15:22). This focus needs to be the primary mission vision even today, if the Great Commission is to be completed.
- **Paul's ministry preparation** – Paul was uniquely qualified for mission work. He was from a Gentile city and was born a Roman citizen, which allowed him to travel freely. He had the finest biblical training available and was a member of the scholarly Pharisees. Even with these advantages, the Lord took many years to prepare Paul for service. God's training takes time.
- **Paul's missionary team** – The missionary band was always co-led and involved many other workers, both expatriates and nationals. This principle of "teams" follows Christ's example of sending out two by two.

- **Paul's missionary strategy** – Paul focused on major urban centers from which the gospel could then radiate to the surrounding regions. Once the church was established in such a center, he felt free to move on. He also focused initial efforts on “God fearers,” Gentiles who had already indicated receptivity to the message.

13. *As you continue to study the expanding world Christian movement, you will note that the above principles are an integral part of successful strategies throughout missions history. Can you think of others from Paul's ministry?*

Intentional Mission

Chapter 13 of Acts marks the beginning of the third phase of evangelization which Christ predicted in Acts 1:8, “...to the uttermost parts of the earth.” The church had been successful in evangelizing Jerusalem. Persecution moved this witness into the rest of Judea and the neighboring region of Samaria. But with the formation of the first Gentile church in Antioch and the clear recognition that the gospel indeed was for everyone, this church began to move in a purposeful manner to send emissaries of the gospel beyond their own geographical and cultural frontiers. The Antioch church was fully involved in the sending of Paul and Barnabas.

14. *Read Acts 13:1-4. Describe in your own words what happened in these verses.*

We are not given much detail concerning the events which may have contributed to the sending of Paul and Barnabas. It is clear, however, that the Holy Spirit had a major role both in calling Paul and Barnabas to the missionary task (v. 2) and in sending them (v. 4). Note that this calling and sending did not bypass the church in Antioch, but that the church was instrumental in the process. The Holy Spirit spoke through the gathered leadership of the assembly and not just to the two men. The Spirit also used the church to commission Paul and Barnabas through the laying on of hands and sending them on their way.

In subsequent passages, we see Paul and Barnabas reporting back to Antioch, “from which they had been commended” (Acts 14:26), and to Jerusalem, from which Barnabas had originally been sent. This reporting demonstrates the organic relationship this apostolic band had to its sending base. Although every evidence suggests that the team operated autonomously in the field, they did maintain a strong link

with their sending congregation through the reporting process. The concept of local churches as advanced bases for extending the gospel beyond current frontiers is developed by Arthur Glasser in the following excerpt.

❑ Church and Mission *

Arthur F. Glasser **

The most striking illustration of Paul's desire to establish this symbiotic relationship between local church and mobile mission is found in his epistle to the church in Rome. When he wrote this letter, he was midway through his great missionary career: his work in the Eastern Mediterranean had just been completed. Indeed, he could state that "from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum" (present day Yugoslavia) he had "fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). However, the Western Mediterranean represented unrelieved darkness, with but one point of light: the church in Rome. Apparently, this solitary fact had been on Paul's mind for some years as he agonized in prayer and deliberated about his future ministry (15:22).

So, he took pen in hand and wrote this tremendous epistle. As a "task theologian" he carefully selected certain themes, and developed them to prepare the Roman Christians for his missionary strategy. They had to realize anew (1) the abounding sin of man, with all the world guilty before God (1:18–3:20); (2) the abounding grace of God to sinners, with justification offered to the believing because of Christ's redemptive work (3:21–5:21); (3) the abounding grace of God to Christians, with sanctification made possible through the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence and power (6:1–8:39); (4) the abounding grace of God to the nations, for although Israel had failed through unbelief, God was nonetheless determined to reach them with the gospel through the Church and restore Israel at His return

(9:1–11:26); and (5) various practical matters such as the exercise of spiritual gifts (12:1–21), the relation of Church and State (13:1–7), and the importance of love to enable the diversity within the Church effectively to put united heart and conscience to reaching the nations (13:8–15:6).

The local congregation needs the mobile team. Church needs mission.

Only after this extensive review (15:15) does Paul reveal his strategy for the church at Rome: that it was to become a second Antioch, the new base of operations for his mission to Spain and the Western Mediterranean (15:22–24). It would have a significant role, providing Paul with experienced men and undertaking for their financial and prayer support. In other words, this epistle was written to give a strong cluster of house churches in a great pagan city a sense of their missionary responsibility for peoples beyond their borders. Through its participating in the missionary obedience of Paul's apostolic band, the church at Rome would attain a new sense of its role as the "sent people" of God (1:11–15). We conclude: the local congregation needs the mobile team. Church needs mission that the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

* Glasser, A. F., Hiebert, P. G., Wagner, C. P., & Winter, R. D. (1976). *Crucial dimensions in world evangelization* (pp. 31–32). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, Arthur F. Glasser served as a missionary in western China with the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship) and was also OMF's Home Secretary for North America for 12 years. Glasser is the editor of *Missiology: An International Review*, the official journal of the American Society of Missiology.

15. List at least three ways in which the local church can play a primary role in the missionary task.

16. How is the book of Romans a “missionary” book?

In the following article, Ken Mulholland clearly articulates the importance of the church in maintaining the continuity of the missionary task, not only as the primary *agent* in accomplishing the task, but also as the chief *objective* of missions.

❏ A Church for All Peoples

Kenneth B. Mulholland *

Although intensely personal, the Christian faith is not individualistic. Jesus came not only to save sinners, but also to build His church (Matt. 16:18). He came to establish communities of His followers among every people group on the face of the earth—communities that would reach out to others cross-culturally to share the good news of salvation.

The references to baptism and teaching in the Great Commission passages (e.g., Matt. 28:19) bear witness to the fact that Jesus had “churchness” in mind when He sent His disciples into the world to make other disciples. Commitment to the Messiah implied commitment to the messianic community. As Arthur F. Glasser has put it, “The missionary task is incomplete if it stops short of planting churches.”**

The evangelistic sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles conclude with a call to repentance, faith, and baptism. When Peter ended his Pentecost sermon, he appealed not just for individual conversion, but also for a public identification with other believers (Acts 2:38). When people came to Christ, they were incorporated into a new and caring community which is both universal and local by the very fact that it includes all God’s people in all places and in all times. Yet, while it transcends both space and time, it is also a community which expresses itself visibly and locally through groups of believers gathered into congregations.

In his masterful commentary on the book of Acts, John R. W. Stott describes the marks of the first

* Kenneth B. Mulholland is Dean and Professor of Missions at Columbia Biblical Seminary and Graduate School of Missions in Columbia, South Carolina. He and his wife, Ann, previously served for nearly 15 years as missionaries in Central America.

** Glasser, A. F., Hiebert, P. G., Wagner, C. P., & Winter, R. D. (1976). *Crucial dimensions in world evangelization* (p. 6). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Spirit-filled community that emerged following the Day of Pentecost:

First, they were related to the apostles (in submission). They were eager to receive the apostles' instructions. A Spirit-filled church is an apostolic church, a New Testament church, anxious to believe and obey what Jesus and His apostles taught. Secondly, they were related to each other (in love). They persevered in the fellowship, supporting each other and relieving the needs of the poor. A Spirit-filled church is a loving, caring, sharing church. Thirdly, they were related to God (in worship). They worshiped Him in the temple and in the home, in the Lord's supper and in the prayers, with joy and with reverence. A Spirit-filled church is a worshipping church. Fourthly, they were related to the world (in outreach). No self-centered, self-contained church (absorbed in its own parochial affairs) can claim to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. So a Spirit-filled church is a missionary church.*

The New Testament letters, which are replete with references to "one another," bear witness to the mutual interdependence meant to characterize the life of these early Christian communities. In fact, these letters, most of which are addressed to Christian churches located in the principal cities of the Roman Empire, deal with matters of Christian faith and practice related to the nurture and development of congregational life.

A variety of metaphors illumine not only the relationship between God and His people, but also the mutual interdependence that characterizes God's people. Christians are branches of the same vine, living stones in the same building, sheep in the same flock, children in the same family, organs in the same body.

These congregations are meant to be kingdom communities. Jesus taught His disciples to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The

church is a colony of heaven. It is a segment of humanity in which the ground rules are defined by God's will. In a sense, the church is meant to be a pilot project of the kingdom of God, a kingdom outpost, an anticipation of Christ's reign on earth. Thus, the church glorifies God, that is, makes God "look good," by continuing in the world the works of the kingdom which Jesus began. Although the church cannot avoid entirely the organizational and institutional forms of the culture in which it exists, essentially the church is the community of the King.

The goal of missions is to establish within every people group in the world indigenous church movements which are capable of so multiplying congregations that the entire people group is both evangelized and incorporated into the fellowship of the church.

This means that the goal of Christian missions is not limited to mere physical presence among unbelievers nor to the verbal proclamation of the gospel among those who have never heard it. It is not limited to establishing a network of mission stations across a defined geographical area. Neither is it confined to dotting the countryside of a given nation with a series of preaching points or developing Bible study groups in scattered urban neighborhoods. Nor is it restricted to the conversion of individual persons. The goal of missions is to establish within every people group in the world, within every piece of the human mosaic, indigenous church movements which are capable of so multiplying congregations that the entire people group is both evangelized and incorporated into the fellowship of the church.

However, the goal of planting new congregations which are capable of paying their own bills, making their own decisions, and evangelizing their own kind of people is not sufficient. For many years, missionaries believed that when these objectives

* Stott, J. R. W. (1990). *The Spirit, the church and the world: The message of Acts* (p. 87). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

had been accomplished, the missionary task was complete. Behind this conviction lay the assumption that only affluent, well-educated Christians were capable of establishing church movements in new cultural and linguistic spheres. The newly established churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were too deprived economically and educationally to engage in cross-cultural mission. We now realize that for mission to go full circle, it is necessary for the churches established by missionaries to become sending churches in order to gather the momentum necessary to penetrate each of the world's remaining unreached people groups. Thus, today's existing mission societies relate increasingly not just to the churches which they have brought into being, but to the mission structures which have emerged and are emerging from those churches.

Where there are no churches, there shall be churches. The Apostle Paul captured this central thrust of biblical missions when he testified to the Christians living in Rome: "And I have so made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). Cultural boundaries must be crossed. Social barriers must be penetrated. Linguistic obstacles must be bridged. Religious resistance must be overcome. A church movement must be brought into being within each people group. Churches that feel a responsibility themselves to work cross-culturally must be planted. That is the purpose of missions.

17. What is the central goal of missions?

III. A Message for All Peoples

Not only did Jesus model His worldwide concern through His ministry, but the gospel He preached was clearly a message for all peoples. The kingdom of God was the central theme of His teaching. His works demonstrated that this kingdom had truly come upon men (Matt. 12:28). Kingdom citizenship was not dependent on ethnicity or national origin. Jesus made it clear that *everyone* could enter that kingdom through the difficult, narrow gate of repentance and faith in God. It was a message appropriate to an "all peoples" perspective, transcending petty nationalistic expectations.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

In order to grasp the true significance of world mission, it is important to understand the dynamic inherent in the gospel of the kingdom. Christians aren't simply exporting "religion" through the missionary enterprise. Neither is their goal to impose cultural norms on the rest of the world or to engage in nationalistic imperialism of any sort. It is critical to understand, however, that missionaries *are* agents of a revolutionary government; they are kingdom envoys and ambassadors for Christ the Lord. In order to understand these concepts, in this section we will examine excerpts from George Eldon Ladd's book, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

❑ The Meaning of the Kingdom of God *

George Eldon Ladd **

God's kingdom always refers to His reign, His rule, His sovereignty, and not to the realm in which it is exercised. Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all." God's kingdom is His universal rule, His sovereignty over all the earth. Psalm 145:11, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and tell of thy power." In the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the two lines express the same truth. God's kingdom is His power. Psalm 145:13, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endures throughout all generations." The *realm* of God's rule is the heaven and earth, but this verse has no reference to the permanence of this realm. It is God's rule which is everlasting. Daniel 2:37, "You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory." Notice the synonyms for kingdom: power, might, glory—all expressions of authority. These terms identify the Kingdom as the "rule" which God has given to the king. Of Belshazzar, it was written, "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end" (Dan. 5:26). It is clear that the realm over which Belshazzar ruled was not destroyed. The Babylonian realm and people were not brought to an end; they were transferred to another ruler. It was the rule of the king which was terminated, and it was the rule which was given to Darius the Mede (Dan. 5:31).

One reference in our Gospels makes this meaning very clear. We read in Luke 19:11-12, "As they heard these things, He proceeded to tell a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive a *basileia* and then return.'" The nobleman did not go away to get a realm, an area over which to rule. The realm over which he wanted to reign was at hand. The territory

over which he was to rule was this place he left. The problem was that he was no king. He needed authority, the right to rule. He went off to get a "kingdom," i.e., kingship, authority. The Revised Standard Version has therefore translated the word "kingly power."

This very thing had happened some years before the days of our Lord. In the year 40 B.C. political conditions in Palestine had become chaotic. The Romans had subdued the country in 63 B.C., but stability had been slow in coming. Herod the Great finally went to Rome, obtained from the Roman Senate the kingdom, and was declared to be king. He literally went into a far country to receive a kingship, the authority to be king in Judea over the Jews. It may well be that our Lord had this incident in mind in this parable. In any case, it illustrates the fundamental meaning of kingdom.

The kingdom of God is His kingship, His rule, His authority.

The Kingdom of God is His kingship, His rule, His authority. When this is once realized, we can go through the New Testament and find passage after passage where this meaning is evident, where the Kingdom is not a realm or a people, but God's reign. Jesus said that we must "receive the kingdom of God" as little children (Mark 10:15). What is received? The Church? Heaven? What is received is God's rule. In order to enter the future realm of the Kingdom, one must submit himself in perfect trust to God's rule here and now.

We must also "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). What is the object of our quest? The Church? Heaven? No; we are to seek

* Ladd, G. E. (1959). *The gospel of the kingdom* (pp. 20-21, 55, 127-130, 133-135, 139-140). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

** George Eldon Ladd was Professor Emeritus of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He died in 1982 at the age of 71.

God's righteousness—His sway, His rule, His reign in our lives.

When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," are we praying for heaven to come to earth? In a sense we are praying for this; but heaven is an object of desire only because the reign of God is to be more perfectly realized than it is now. Apart from the reign of God,

heaven is meaningless. Therefore, what we pray for is, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This prayer is a petition for God to reign, to manifest His kingly sovereignty and power, to put to flight every enemy of righteousness and of His divine rule, that God alone may be King over all the world.

18. *What subtle but important distinction does Ladd point out between the common usage of the word "kingdom" and its biblical usage?*
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The Nature of the Kingdom

Christ used many parables to illustrate the nature of the kingdom. These stories, woven from the fabric of everyday life, were used to teach new truths which had not yet been revealed about the kingdom. Christ referred to these parables as setting forth the "mystery of the kingdom" (Mark 4:1). This curious term "mystery" was also used by Paul in Romans 16:25-26 to describe the nature of Christ's coming. What was held secret for generations was now revealed. God's kingdom was "at hand," but it did not conform to popular expectations.

It is clear from Old Testament passages that God's kingdom will someday fill the earth. Daniel's prophetic interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:31-35) is typical of the prophetic concept of the coming of the kingdom; that is, Christ's reign would shatter all earthly kingdoms and His dominion would be established forever (vv. 44, 45). The coming of the kingdom was seen as one great cataclysmic event, not unlike what believers today expect at Christ's second coming.

The incongruity between this prophetic image and the kingdom Christ brought puzzled even those who most firmly acclaimed Him as Messiah. John the Baptist sent his disciples to inquire if Jesus was the Coming One or if they should look for another (Matt. 11:2-6). John's doubt was produced by the fact that Jesus was not acting according to the Old Testament predictions that John himself had announced. Jesus' answer assured him that indeed, the kingdom had arrived with miracle-working power. But it was not the nation-destroying, justice-producing version of the kingdom that devout Jews awaited.

19. *Why is it important to understand the nature of the term "kingdom" if we are to comprehend Christ's global mission?*
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The kingdom Jesus ushered in was a subtle but powerful prelude to Christ's millennial rule. It is a kingdom which deals with first things first, the destruction of Satan and his perverse dominion over the souls of men. Ladd summarizes it well in the following excerpt.

The mystery of the Kingdom

This is the mystery of the Kingdom, the truth which God now discloses for the first time in redemptive history. God's Kingdom is to work among men in two different stages. The Kingdom is yet to come in the form prophesied by Daniel when every human sovereignty will be displaced by God's sovereignty. The world will yet behold the coming of God's Kingdom with power. But the mystery, the new revelation, is that this very Kingdom of God has now come to work among men, but in an utterly unexpected way. It is not now destroying human rule; it

is not now abolishing sin from the earth; it is not now bringing the baptism of fire that John had announced. It has come quietly, unobtrusively, secretly. It can work among men and never be recognized by the crowds. In the spiritual realm, the Kingdom now offers to men the blessings of God's rule, delivering them from the power of Satan and sin. The Kingdom of God is an offer, a gift which may be accepted or rejected. The Kingdom is now here with persuasion rather than with power.

20. *What essentially was the new truth Christ revealed about the kingdom?*

A Message for All Peoples

In a day in which conversion "formulas" are popular and the gospel of "prosperity" is often proclaimed, it is important to understand what Christ's messengers are to communicate. By understanding the ultimate goal of Christ's mission, we can better understand the message. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 describes the culmination of Christ's work when at the *end* "...He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power." His kingdom work is not completed until "...He has put all His enemies under His feet."

Christ has set out to destroy the enemies of men's souls. He has tackled death, Satan, and sin head on, but His defeat of these three enemies is to be done in stages. His initial victory was won through His death and resurrection. While these events signaled "the beginning of the end," Christ is continuing to wage war against these foes until the final victory is secured.

To understand this concept, we can look to an illustration from history. The most critical European battle of the Second World War was fought on the beaches of Normandy as the Allies gained a needed foothold on the Continent. It was understood by generals on both sides that once this beachhead was established, the destruction of Hitler's armies was inevitable. Yet the final victory did not come for many months, and it was secured only at a cost in human life which was much higher than that experienced before the invasion of Normandy. In the spiritual realm, Christ has won the initial victory. He has invaded enemy territory. The final victory will require time and a great sacrifice of His church in attaining it.

Our message is a liberating one. Christ has defeated death, Satan, and sin. The following three excerpts from Ladd's *Gospel of the Kingdom* will give us a clearer grasp of the powerful message we have to proclaim to the nations.

Victory over death

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the announcement of Christ's conquest over death. We have discovered that while the consummation of this victory is future, when death is finally cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14), Christ has nevertheless already defeated death. Speaking of God's grace, Paul says that it has now been "manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). The word here translated "abolish" does not mean to do away with, but to defeat, to break the power, to put out of action. The same Greek word is used in 1 Corinthians 15:26, "The last enemy to be *destroyed* is death." This word appears also in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after *destroying* every rule and every authority and power."

There are therefore two stages in the destruction—the abolition—the defeat of death. Its final destruction awaits the Second Coming of Christ; but by His death and resurrection, Christ has already destroyed death. He has broken its power. Death is still an enemy, but it is a defeated enemy. We are certain of the future victory because of the victory which has already been accomplished. We have an accomplished victory to proclaim.

This is the Good News about the Kingdom of God. How men need this gospel! Everywhere one goes he finds the gaping grave swallowing up the dying.

Tears of loss, of separation, of final departure stain every face. Every table sooner or later has an empty chair, every fireside its vacant place. Death is the great leveler. Wealth or poverty, fame or oblivion, power or futility, success or failure, race, creed, or culture—all our human distinctions mean nothing before the ultimate irresistible sweep of the scythe of death which cuts us all down. And whether the mausoleum is a fabulous Taj Mahal, a massive pyramid, an unmarked forgotten spot of ragged grass, or the unplotted depth of the sea, one fact stands: death reigns.

Death is still an enemy, but it is a defeated enemy. We have an accomplished victory to proclaim.

Apart from the Gospel of the Kingdom, death is the mighty conqueror before whom we are all helpless. We can only beat our fists in utter futility against the unyielding and unresponding tomb. But the Good News is this: death has been defeated; our conqueror has been conquered. In the face of the power of the Kingdom of God in Christ, death was helpless. It could not hold Him, death has been defeated; life and immortality have been brought to light. An empty tomb in Jerusalem is proof of it. This is the Gospel of the Kingdom.

21. *In your own words, what is the good news regarding death?*

Victory over Satan

The enemy of God's Kingdom is Satan; Christ must rule until He has put Satan under His feet. This victory also awaits the Coming of Christ. During the Millennium, Satan is to be bound in a bottomless pit. Only at the end of the Millennium is he to be cast into the lake of fire.

But we have discovered that Christ has already defeated Satan. The victory of God's Kingdom is not only future; a great initial victory has taken place. Christ partook of flesh and blood—He became incarnate—"that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15). The word translated "destroy" is the same word found in 2 Timothy 1:10 and 1 Corinthians 15:24

and 26. Christ has nullified the power of death; He has also nullified the power of Satan. Satan still goes about like a roaring lion bringing persecution upon God's people (1 Pet. 5:8). He insinuates himself like an angel of light into religious circles (2 Cor. 11:14). But he is a defeated enemy. His power, his domination has been broken. His doom is sure. A decisive, *the* decisive, victory has been won. Christ cast out demons, delivering men from satanic bondage, proving that God's Kingdom delivers men from their enslavement to Satan. It brings them out of darkness into the saving and healing light of the Gospel. This is the Good News about the Kingdom of God. Satan is defeated, and we may be released from demonic fear and from satanic evil and know the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

22. How does understanding Satan's defeat affect the way we present the gospel?

Victory over sin

Sin is an enemy of God's Kingdom. Has Christ done anything about sin, or has He merely promised a future deliverance when He brings the Kingdom in glory? We must admit that sin, like death, is abroad in the world. Every newspaper bears an eloquent testimony of the working of sin. Yet sin, like death and Satan, has been defeated. Christ has already appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). The power of sin has been broken. "We know this, that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rom. 6:6). Here a third time is the word "to destroy" or "abolish."

Christ's reign as King has the objective of "abolishing" every enemy (1 Cor. 15:24, 26). This work is indeed future, but it is also past. What our Lord will finish at His Second Coming He has already begun by His death and resurrection. "Death" has been abolished, destroyed (2 Tim. 1:10); Satan has been

destroyed (Heb. 2:14); and in Romans 6:6 the "body of sin" has been abolished, destroyed. The same word of victory, of the destruction of Christ's enemies, is used three times of this threefold victory: over Satan, over death, over sin.

Christ's reign as King has the objective of "abolishing" every enemy.

Therefore, we are to be no longer in bondage to sin (Rom. 6:6). The day of slavery to sin is past. Sin is in the world, but its power is not the same. Men are no longer helpless before it, for its dominion has been broken. The power of the Kingdom of God has invaded This Age, a power which can set men free from their bondage to sin.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the announcement of what God has done and will do. It is His victory over

His enemies. It is the Good News that Christ is coming again to destroy forever His enemies. It is a gospel of hope. It is also the Good News of what God has already done. He has already broken the power of death, defeated Satan, and overthrown the

rule of sin. The Gospel is one of promise but also of experience, and the promise is grounded in experience. What Christ has done guarantees what He will do. This is the Gospel which we must take into all the world.

23. How is our message about sin affected by our understanding of the present and future elements of the kingdom?

The gospel of the kingdom is a powerful message. Christ has defeated the enemies of our souls. His victory means that no one who acknowledges His Lordship needs to remain in slavery to death, Satan, or sin. While in the flesh, we still have struggles. Yet, as we experience His victory now, we are also assured of a future when the final victory is won and the last vestiges of Satanic rule will be destroyed forever.

The Mission and a Motive

In light of the confusion in the minds of the Jews regarding Christ's role as Messiah, it is not surprising to find Jesus' disciples again questioning Him regarding the coming of the kingdom in power during the few days they had with Jesus after His resurrection (Matt. 24:3). Christ's dialogue with them on this subject (vv. 4-14) reveals significant information affecting our view of the remaining task as well. Read the following excerpt from Ladd to see how Jesus dealt with the disciples' question.

When will the Kingdom come?

Perhaps the most important single verse in the Word of God for God's people today is the text for this study: Matthew 24:14.

This verse suggests the subject of this chapter, "When will the Kingdom come?" This of course refers to the manifestation of God's Kingdom in power and glory when the Lord Jesus returns. There is wide interest among God's people as to the time of Christ's return. Will it be soon or late? Many prophetic Bible conferences offer messages which search the Bible and scan the newspapers to understand the prophecies and the signs of the times to try to determine how near to the end we may be. Our text is the clearest statement in God's Word about the time of our Lord's coming. There is no verse

which speaks as concisely and distinctly as this verse about the time when the Kingdom will come.

The chapter is introduced by questions of the disciples to the Lord as they looked at the Temple whose destruction Jesus had just announced. "Tell us, when will this be and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the close of the age?" (Matt. 24:3). The disciples expected This Age to end with the return of Christ in glory. The Kingdom will come with the inauguration of The Age to Come. Here is their question: "When will This Age end? When will you come again and bring the Kingdom?"

Jesus answered their question in some detail. He described first of all the course of This Age down to the time of the end. This evil Age is to last until His

return. It will forever be hostile to the Gospel and to God's people. Evil will prevail. Subtle, deceitful influences will seek to turn men away from Christ. False religions, deceptive messiahs will lead many astray. Wars will continue; there will be famines and earthquakes. Persecution and martyrdom will plague the Church. Believers will suffer hatred so long as This Age lasts. Men will stumble and deliver up one another. False prophets will arise, iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

This is a dark picture, but this is what is to be expected of an age under the world-rulers of this darkness (Eph. 6:12). However, the picture is not one of unrelieved darkness and evil. God has not abandoned This Age to darkness. Jewish apocalyptic writings of New Testament times conceived of an age completely under the control of evil. God had withdrawn from active participation in the affairs of man; salvation belonged only to the future when God's Kingdom would come in glory. The present would witness only sorrow and suffering.

Some Christians have reflected a similar pessimistic attitude. Satan is the "god of This Age"; therefore,

God's people can expect nothing but evil and defeat in This Age. The Church is to become thoroughly apostate; civilization is to be utterly corrupted. Christians must fight a losing battle until Christ comes.

The Word of God does indeed teach that there will be an intensification of evil at the end of the Age, for Satan remains the god of This Age. But we must strongly emphasize that God has not abandoned This Age to the evil one. In fact, the Kingdom of God has entered into This evil Age; Satan has been defeated. The Kingdom of God, in Christ, has created the Church, and the Kingdom of God works in the world through the Church to accomplish the divine purposes of extending His kingdom in the world. We are caught up in a great struggle—the conflict of the ages. God's Kingdom works in this world through the power of the Gospel. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."

24. *The author suggests that Matthew 24:14 contains a tremendously significant truth for the church today. State in your own words the content of the verse and its implication for the church.*

The gospel of the kingdom is a marvelous message of freedom and power. It is a message which men and women everywhere desperately need to hear and understand. How important is it that the church be involved in discipling the nations? These final two excerpts from Ladd's *Gospel of the Kingdom* show us both the significance of the task and our motive for being involved in it.

The ultimate meaning of history

The Church is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9); and it is in the present mission of the Church, as she carries the Good News of the Kingdom of God unto all the world, that the redemptive purpose of God in history is being worked out.

The ultimate meaning of history between the Ascension of our Lord and His return in glory is found in the extension and working of the Gospel in the world. "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."

The divine purpose in the nineteen hundred years since our Lord lived on earth is found in the history of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The thread of meaning is woven into the missionary programme of the Church. Some day when we go into the archives of heaven to find a book which expounds the meaning of human history as God sees it, we will not draw out a book depicting “The History of the West” or “The Progress of Civilization” or “The Glory of the British Empire” or “The Growth and Expansion of America.” That book will be entitled *The Preparation for and the Extension of the Gospel Among the Nations*. For only here is God’s redemptive purpose carried forward.

This is a staggering fact. God has entrusted to people like us, redeemed sinners, the responsibility of carrying out the divine purpose in history. Why has

God done it in this way? Is He not taking a great risk that His purpose will fail of accomplishment? It is now over nineteen hundred years, and the goal is not yet achieved. Why did God not do it Himself? Why

God has entrusted to people like us, redeemed sinners, the responsibility of carrying out the divine purpose in history.

did He not send hosts of angels whom He could trust to complete the task at once? Why has He committed it to us? We do not try to answer the question except to say that such is God’s will. Here are the facts: God has entrusted to us this mission; and unless we do it, it will not get done.

25. *In what way is the church’s influence on history more significant than the influence of the United Nations or the governments of powerful nations?*

A motive for mission

Finally, our text contains a mighty motive. “Then the end will come.”

The subject of this chapter is, “When will the Kingdom come?” I am not setting any dates. I do not know when the end will come. And yet I do know this: When the Church has finished her task of evangelizing the world, Christ will come again. The

Word of God says it. Why did He not come in A.D. 500? Because the Church had not evangelized the world. Why did He not return in A.D. 1000? Because the Church had not finished her task of world-wide evangelization. Is He coming soon? He is—if we, God’s people, are obedient to the command of the Lord to take the Gospel into all the world.

26. *Why is the Lord’s return such an important motivational factor for the church’s involvement in the Great Commission?*

“Go ye therefore”

Do you love the Lord’s appearing? Then you will bend every effort to take the Gospel into all the world. It troubles me in the light of the clear teaching of God’s Word, in the light of our Lord’s explicit definition of our task in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), that we take it so lightly. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.” This is the Good News of the Kingdom. Christ has wrested authority from Satan. The Kingdom of God has attacked the kingdom of Satan; This Evil Age has been assaulted by The Age to Come in the person of Christ. All authority is now His. He will not display this authority in its final glorious victory

until He comes again; but the authority is now His. Satan is defeated and bound; death is conquered; sin is broken. All authority is His. “Go ye therefore.” Wherefore? Because all authority, all power is His, and because He is waiting until we have finished our task. His is the Kingdom; He reigns in heaven, and He manifests His reign on earth in and through His church. When we have accomplished our mission, He will return and establish His Kingdom in glory. To us it is given not only to wait for but also to hasten the coming of the day of God (2 Pet. 3:12). This is the mission of the Gospel of the Kingdom, and this is our mission.

Summary

The coming of the Messiah did not fulfill the expectations of devout Jews. Instead of rallying the nation to political fulfillment, Christ identified Himself with the whole of the human race and pursued God’s purpose for Himself. Even His disciples had trouble accepting this radically different “kingdom.” Although Jesus used every encounter with Gentiles as an opportunity to give His followers an “all peoples” perspective, He did not quickly change their ingrained attitudes. He clearly spelled out the Great Commission to them before His ascension, but the disciples failed to move out of their own cultural comfort zone in taking the gospel to the Gentile nations.

The Holy Spirit, however, was not deterred in moving the good news from the restrictive Jewish environment to the Samaritans and on to the boundless frontiers of the Gentile nations. The book of Acts records this progression and the work of the apostolic bands which God raised up to carry out His missionary mandate. Through obedience to the Great Commission, the church assumes her central role as propagator of other churches to the ends of the earth.

In a day in which different versions of the “gospel” are in circulation, it is important to grasp the original message as Christ and the apostles understood it and preached it. The gospel of the kingdom is still the truth which brings liberation from Satan, sin, and death. Communicating this vital message to each and every people on the face of the earth is the church’s explicit mission. The completion of the task prepares the way for the second coming of our Lord in power and glory. Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus!

Integrative Assignment

1. Write a paragraph describing the ways Jesus demonstrated He understood His messianic role to all the peoples of the world.
2. Describe the “ideal” role that the church is to have in the Great Commission. Then correlate this ideal model with what your local church is doing.
3. Prepare an outline for a short talk entitled, “The Liberating Message of the Gospel.” Be sure to support each point with Scripture.

Questions for Reflection

1. The key to missions is a mobilized church. Does your church have a mission vision? How can you strengthen the vision that's there? Let God use you to strengthen your church's commitment to world mission through whatever means are available to you. Write your thoughts and action plans below.

2. Christ's disciples aren't the only ones who needed to have their cultural and racial attitudes restructured. Cultural self-centeredness (ethnocentricity) is common to all cultures. In many societies there are dominant cultures which perpetuate social discrimination as a way of protecting their own status position. How are cultural biases expressed in your city? Have these biases been a hindrance to the spread of the gospel? Meditate on Galatians 3:27-29. Pray that the Lord will build a strong “all peoples” outlook in you and your church. Record your thoughts below.

[illegible]

CHAPTER 4

Expansion of the World Christian Movement

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world ...” (Matt. 24:14)

In the first three chapters of this study, we traced God’s mission purpose throughout the Old and New Testaments. We observed how God dealt with mankind in His never-ceasing concern to redeem humanity and restore His kingdom. After Adam’s descendants repeatedly failed to acknowledge His loving rule, God chose to raise up a people for Himself through the descendants of Abraham. For the most part, the nation of Israel also failed to serve as a willing agent of God’s redemptive purpose. However, by the time of Christ, through exile and dispersion, Israel had been used to extend the knowledge of God’s name within the surrounding nations. Thus the stage was set for the coming of the Messiah, God’s man for all the peoples.

Christ demonstrated a clear understanding of the worldwide dimensions of His messianic role. He practiced and preached an “all peoples” message. Through encounters with Gentiles, He attempted to confront the narrow, ethnocentric view of the kingdom which His disciples held. His message was accompanied by power to liberate all people everywhere from Satan, sin, and death. He commissioned and sent His disciples to every nation with the gospel of the kingdom, promising to return in glory when the task was finished.

Empowered after Pentecost to carry the good news forth, the disciples worked effectively within their own cultural comfort zone, but they balked at intentional evangelization of the Gentile nations. Through persecution, God scattered His people in such a way that the message did begin to cross cultural boundaries. With the conversion of Cornelius and his household, the fledgling movement was forced to recognize that God’s grace had been extended to the Gentiles. Later, at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, the church leaders agreed that God’s grace did not require converts to accept Jewish customs and culture.

Intentional “missions” began with the Gentile church in Antioch. The Holy Spirit raised up apostolic teams which began to travel the Mediterranean region. They worked effectively to carry the message across cultural boundaries. In spite of persecution and severe opposition, Christianity grew in its scope and influence.

During the first century A.D., Christianity spread throughout much of the Roman Empire and even beyond the borders of that empire. By the time of Christianity’s acceptance as the official religion of

Rome in 375 A.D., much of North Africa was evangelized, as well as parts of Asia Minor, the Iberian Peninsula, and Britain. There were communities of believers in Central Asia and even in India. Considering the severe religious and political opposition, geographical barriers, and the restrictive nature of travel, this widespread expansion of the gospel was a remarkable achievement. In this chapter, we will trace the advance of Christianity from this vigorous beginning to the present.

I. Epochs of Mission History

The full story of the advance of the gospel from people to people during the first 1900 years of Christian history is known only by God Himself. Our perceptions are colored by secular, Roman Catholic, and Protestant sources which paint the picture from their particular persuasion. Protestants, for example, espouse the “no saints in the middle” theory, which practically erases the possibility of a vital Christianity between the emergence of the Roman Catholic church in the fourth century and the Protestant Reformation in the 16th. Was God at work through His people during these “dark ages”? If so, how did He move His Great Commission messengers?

In this chapter, Dr. Ralph Winter, missions historian, will explain his view of these and other related issues, tracing the progression of the gospel from Jerusalem to the development of modern missions.

The Kingdom Strikes Back: The Ten Epochs of Redemptive History *

Ralph D. Winter **

Man has virtually erased his own story. Human beings have been pushing and shoving each other so much that they have destroyed well over 90 percent of their own handiwork. Their libraries, their literature, their cities, their works of art are mostly gone. Even what remains from the distant past is riddled with evidences of a strange and pervasive evil that has grotesquely distorted man’s potential. This is strange because apparently no other species of life treats its own with such deadly malignant hatred. The oldest skulls bear mute witness that they were

bashed in and roasted to deliver their contents as food for still other human beings.

We are not surprised then to find that the explanation for this strangeness comes up in the oldest, detailed, written records—surviving documents that are respected by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, whose adherents make up more than half of the world’s population. These documents, referred to by the Jews as “the Torah,” by Christians as the “Books of the Law,” and by Muslims as “the Taurat,” not only explain the strange source of evil but also

* Winter, R. D. (1992). The kingdom strikes back: The ten epochs of redemptive history. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. B3-B21). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

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describe a counter-campaign and follow that campaign through many centuries.

To be specific, the first 11 chapters of Genesis constitute a trenchant introduction to the whole problem. These pages describe three things: (1) a glorious and “good” original creation; (2) the entrance of a rebellious, evil, superhuman power who is more than a force, actually a personality; and the result; (3) a humanity caught up in that rebellion and brought under the power of that evil.

From Genesis 12 to the end of the Bible, we have a single drama: the entrance into this enemy-occupied territory of the kingdom, the power, and the glory of the living God.

In the whole remainder of the Bible, we have a single drama: the entrance into this enemy-occupied territory of the kingdom, the power, and the glory of the living God. From Genesis 12 to the end of the Bible, and indeed until the end of time, there unfolds the single, coherent drama of “the Kingdom strikes back.” In this drama we see the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming His fallen creation through the giving of His own Son at the very center of the 4,000-year period we are now ending.

This counter-attack clearly does not await the appearance of the central Person in the center of the story. Indeed, there would seem to be five identifiable epochs before the appearance of the Christ. While the purpose of this article is mainly to describe the five epochs following His “visitation,” in order for those to be seen as part of a single 10-epoch continuum, we will pause to give a few clues about the first five epochs.

The theme that links all 10 epochs is that of the grace of God intervening into history in order to contest the enemy who temporarily is “the god of this world.” God’s plan for doing this is to reach all peoples by blessing Abraham and Abraham’s children by faith. This blessing of God is in effect conditioned upon its being shared with other nations, since those who receive God’s blessings are, like Abraham, men of faith who subject themselves

to God’s will, become part of His kingdom, and represent the extension of His rule throughout the world among all other peoples.

In the first epoch of roughly 400 years, Abraham was chosen and moved to the geographic center of the Afro-Asian land mass. The story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph is often called the Period of the Patriarchs and displays only small breakthroughs of witness and sharing with the surrounding nations even though the central mandate (Gen. 12:1-3) is repeated twice again to Abraham (18:18; 22:18) and to Isaac (26:4) and Jacob (28:14, 15). Joseph observed to his brothers, “You sold me, but God sent me,” and was obviously a great blessing to Egypt. Even the Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was filled with the Holy Spirit. But this was not the intentional missionary obedience God wanted.

As we push on into the next four roughly-400-year periods—(2) the Captivity, (3) the Judges, (4) the Kings, and (5) the second captivity and Diaspora—the promised blessing and the expected mission (to share that blessing with all the nations of the world) often all but disappear from sight. As a result, where possible, God accomplished His will through the voluntary obedience and godliness of His people, but where necessary, He does His will through involuntary means. Joseph, Jonah, the nation as a whole when taken captive represent the category of involuntary missionary outreach intended by God to force the sharing of the blessings. The little girl carried away captive to the house of Naaman the Syrian was able to share her faith. On the other hand, Ruth, Naaman the Syrian, and the Queen of Sheba all came voluntarily, attracted by God’s blessings to Israel.

We see in every epoch the active concern of God to forward His mission, with or without the full cooperation of His chosen nation. Thus, when Jesus appears, it is an incriminating “visitation.” He comes to His own, and His own receive Him not. He is well received in Nazareth until He refers to God’s desire to bless the Gentiles. Then a homicidal outburst of fury betrays the fact that this chosen nation—chosen to receive and to mediate blessings (Ex. 19:5, 6; Ps. 67; Isa. 49:6)—has grossly departed from that. There was indeed a sprinkling of fanatical Bible students who “traversed land and sea to make a single proselyte.” But their outreach was not so

much to be a blessing to the other nations as it was to sustain and protect the nation Israel. They were not making sure that their converts were circumcised in heart (Jer. 9:24-26; Rom. 2:29).

In effect, under the circumstances, Jesus did not come to give the Great Commission but to take it away. The natural branches were broken off while other “unnatural” branches were grafted in (Rom.

11:13-24). Even so, despite the general reluctance of the chosen missionary nation, many people groups were in fact touched: Canaanites, Egyptians, Philistines (of the ancient Minoan culture), Hittites, the Moabites, the Phoenicians (of Tyre and Sidon), the Assyrians, the Sabeans (of the land of Sheba), the Babylonians, the Persians, the Parthians, the Medes, the Elamites, the Romans.

	TEN EPOCHS	MISSION AGENTS	MECHANISMS
2000 B.C.	1. PATRIARCHS	ABRAHAM	VG
	2. EGYPTIAN CAPTIVITY	JACOB	IG
	3. JUDGES	ISRAEL	I, BA
	4. KINGS	EXILES	I, BA
	5. POST-EXILE	DISPERSED JEWS	IG
	6. ROME	EARLY CHURCH	IG, VG
	7. BARBARIANS	CELTS/MONKS	I, VG
	8. VIKINGS	SLAVES	I, IG
	9. SARACENS	(CRUSADERS), FRIARS	VG
2000 A.D.	10. ENDS OF THE EARTH	MODERN MISSIONS	VG

KEY TO MECHANISMS:
 VG Voluntary Going
 IG Involuntary Going
 I Invasion
 BA Benign Attraction

Figure 4-1. Four Thousand Years of Mission History

And now, as we look into the next 2,000-year period, it is one in which God, on the basis of the intervention of His Son, is making sure that the other nations are both blessed and similarly called “to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.” Now, for them, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.” Now the Kingdom strikes back in the realms of the Armenians, the Romans, the Celts, the Franks, the Angles, the Saxons, the

Germans, and eventually even those ruthless pagan pirates, the Vikings. All were to be invaded, tamed, and subjugated by the power of the gospel, and expected to share their blessings with still others.

But the next five epochs are not all that different from the first five epochs. Those that are blessed do not seem terribly eager to share those blessings. The Celts are the only nation in the first millennium who

give an outstanding missionary response. As we will see, just as in the Old Testament, the coming of blessings brings sober responsibility, dangerous if unfulfilled. And we see repeated again and again God's use of the full range of His four missionary mechanisms.

The coming of blessings brings sober responsibility, dangerous if unfulfilled.

The "visitation" of the Christ was dramatic, full of portent, and strikingly "in due time." Jesus was born a member of a subjugated people. Yet in spite of her bloody imperialism, Rome was truly an instrument in God's hands to prepare the world for His coming. Rome controlled one of the largest empires the world has ever known, forcing the Roman peace upon all sorts of disparate and barbaric peoples. For centuries Roman emperors had been building an extensive communication system, both in the 250,000 miles of marvelous roads which stretched all over the empire, and in the rapid transmission of

messages and documents somewhat like the Pony Express on the American frontier. In its conquests, Rome had enveloped at least one civilization far more advanced than her own—Greece—and highly educated artisans and teachers taken as slaves to every major city of the empire taught the Greek language. Greek was understood from England to Palestine. How else could a few gospels and a few letters from St. Paul have had such a widespread impact among so many different ethnic groups in such a short period of time?

Jesus came, lived for 33 years on earth, confronted the wayward, missionary nation, was crucified and buried, rose again, underscored the same commission to all who would respond, and ascended once more to the Father. Today even the most agnostic historian stands amazed that what began in a humble stable in Bethlehem of Palestine, the backwater of the Roman Empire, in less than 300 years had taken control of the Lateran Palace of the emperors of Rome, a gift of Constantine to the church. How did it happen? It is truly an incredible story.

1. *List some characteristics of the Roman Empire which facilitated the spread of the gospel.*

2. *What has been the common responsibility of all those who have enjoyed God's blessing throughout the centuries?*

3. *Why does Winter contend that "Jesus did not come to give the Great Commission but to take it away"?*

Being a blessing to all nations is not an option for the people of God. God is determined to see His mission purpose fulfilled and will use His people to carry it out, *one way or another*.

In the next part of this article, Winter pieces together for us the story of the expansion of Christianity from the first century on.

No saints in the middle?

Let us interrupt the story here briefly. We can do well at this point to confront a psychological problem. In church circles today we have fled, or feared, or forgotten these middle centuries. Let us hope evangelicals are not as bad in this respect as the Mormons. They seem to hold to a “BOBO” theory that the Christian faith somehow “blinked out” after the Apostles and “blinked on” again when Joseph Smith dug up the sacred tablets in the 19th century. The result of this kind of BOBO approach is that you have “early” saints and “latter-day” saints, but no saints in the middle. Many Protestants may have roughly the same idea. Such people are not much interested in what happened prior to the Protestant Reformation: they have the vague impression that before Luther and Calvin the church was apostate

and whatever there was of real Christianity consisted of a few persecuted individuals here and there. In a series of twenty volumes on “Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching,” only half of the first volume is devoted to the first fifteen centuries! In evangelical Sunday schools children are busy as beavers with the story of God’s work from Genesis to Revelation, from Adam to the Apostles, and Sunday school publishers may even boast about their “all-Bible curriculum.” But this only really means that the children do not get exposed at all to what God did with the Bible between the times of the Apostles and the Reformers, a period which is staggering proof of the uniqueness and power of the Bible! To all such people it is as if there were no saints in the middle.

4. What does Winter mean by the theory of “no saints in the middle”? How has your perception of church history been affected by such a theory?

In the space available, it is possible to trace only the Western part of the story of Christianity—and only its outline at that, but to do that we must recognize

certain clear stages that make the whole story fairly easy to grasp. Note the pattern in the chart below.

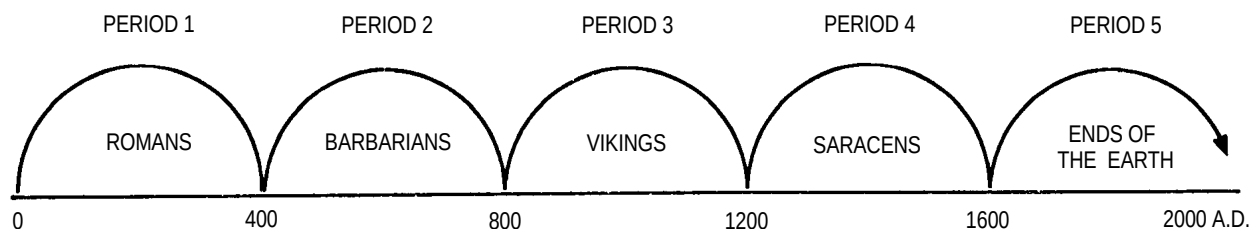


Figure 4-2. Periods of Expansion of Christianity

In Period 1, Rome was won but did not reach out with the gospel to the barbaric Celts and Goths.* Almost as a penalty, the Goths invaded Rome and caved in the whole western part of the empire.

In Period 2, the Goths were added in, and they briefly achieved a new “Holy” Roman Empire. But they also did not effectively reach further north with the gospel.

Thus, in Period 3, again almost as a penalty, the Vikings** invaded the area of these Christianized Celtic and Gothic barbarians, and the Vikings, too, became Christians in the process.

In Period 4, Europe, for the first time united by Christian faith, reached out in a sort of pseudo-mission to the Saracens and pointed further east in the aftermath of the great abortion of the Crusades.***

In Period 5, Europe now reached out to the very ends of the earth. In this period reaching out has been the order of the day, but with highly mixed motives; commercial and spiritual interests have been both a blight and a blessing. Yet, during this period, the entire non-Western world has suddenly been stirred into development. Never before have so few affected so many, and never before has so great a gap resulted between two halves of the world.

What will happen before the year 2000? Will the non-Western world invade Europe and America like the Goths invaded Rome and the Vikings overran Europe? Will the “Third World” turn on us in a new series of barbarian invasions? Will the OPEC nations gradually buy us out and take us over? Clearly we face the reaction of an awakened non-Western world that now suddenly is beyond our control. What will the role of the gospel be? Can we gain any light from these previous cycles of outreach?

5. Based on Figure 4-2, what mechanisms did God use to spread Christianity beyond its established borders during the first four periods that are outlined?

Period 1

After apostolic times, Christianity expanded relentlessly throughout the Greco-Roman world. From a tiny sect in a world full of sects and religions, it blossomed within three centuries to become the official religion under the Roman Emperor Constantine. The blessings inherent in the message spread throughout this cultural basin. Did the Roman church leadership then begin to take this blessing to their neighbors? In the next part of his article, Winter describes how the Roman Empire was conquered by Christianity and how the Empire’s response to the Great Commission mandate affected her subsequent history.

* The Celts were Indo-Europeans who inhabited much of Europe. The Goths were Germanic people who lived first in the region of the Baltic Sea and later near the Black Sea. They were one of several Barbarian tribes who overthrew the decaying Roman Empire.

** The Vikings were Scandinavian seafaring warriors.

*** Saracens were any persons—Arabs, Turks, or others—who professed the religion of Islam. The Crusades were a series of expeditions from Western Europe to the Eastern Mediterranean, designed to recover the Holy Land from Islam and then retain it in Christian hands. They ultimately failed to accomplish their objectives.

Winning the Romans (0-400 A.D.)

Perhaps the most spectacular triumph of Christianity in history is its conquest of the Roman Empire in roughly 20 decades. We know very little about this period. Our lack of knowledge makes much of it a mystery, and what happened to Christianity sounds impossible, almost unbelievable. Only the early part starts out blazoned in the floodlight of the New Testament epistles themselves. Let's take a glance at that. There we see a Jew named Paul brought up in a Greek city, committed to leadership in the Jewish tradition of his time. Suddenly he was transformed by Christ and saw that the faith of the Jews as fulfilled in Christ did not require Jewish garments but could be clothed in Greek language and customs as well as Semitic. In this one decisive struggle it should have once more been clarified that anyone could be a Christian, be transformed in the inner man by the living Christ—whether Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, male, or female. The Greeks didn't have to become Jews, undergo circumcision, take over the Jewish calendar of festivals or holy days, nor even observe Jewish dietary customs, any more than a woman had to be made into a man to be acceptable to God.

Paul based his work on the radical biblical principle (unaccepted by many Jews to this day) that it is circumcision of the heart that counts (Jer. 9) and that the new believers of a new culture did not have to speak the language, wear the clothes, or follow all

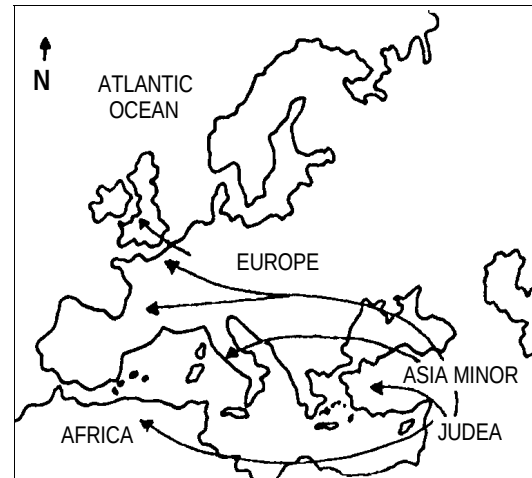


Figure 4-3. Christianization of Roman Empire

the customs of the sending church. This meant that for Greeks, the cultural details of the Jewish law were no longer relevant. Therefore, to the Jews Paul continued as one “under the law of Moses,” but to those unfamiliar with the Mosaic Law, he preached the “law of Christ” in such a way that it could be fulfilled dynamically and authentically in their particular circumstances. While to some he appeared to be “without law,” he maintained that he was not without law toward God, and indeed, as regards the basic purpose of the Mosaic Law, the believers in the Greek church immediately developed the functional equivalent to it, in their own cultural terms, and they held on to the Old Testament as well.

6. Why was Paul's “radical biblical principle” so critical to the expansion of Christianity into non-Jewish cultures?

We may get the impression that missions in this period benefited very little from deliberately organized effort. But Paul apparently worked within a “missionary team” structure, borrowed from the Pharisees. Paul's sending congregation in Antioch did undertake a definite responsibility. But they sent him off more than they sent him out. Let no one

suppose that every new Christian in those days opened his Bible to the Great Commission and dutifully turned over his life to this objective. There is good reason to suppose, for example, that the Christian faith expanded in many areas by the “involuntary-go” mechanism, that is, merely because Christians were dispersed as the result of persecu-

tions. We know that fleeing Arian* Christians had a lot to do with the conversion of the Goths. We have the stories of Ulfilas and Patrick, whose missionary efforts were in each case initiated by the accident of their being taken captive. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that Christianity followed the trade routes of the Roman Empire, and we know that there was a close relationship and correspondence between Christians in Gaul and Asia Minor. Yet we must face the fact that the early Christians of the Roman Empire (as are Christians today) were only rarely both willing and able to take conscious practical steps to fulfill the Great Commission. In view of the amazing results in these early decades, however, we are all the more impressed by the innate power of the gospel itself.

The early Christians (as are Christians today) were only rarely both willing and able to take conscious practical steps to fulfill the Great Commission.

One intriguing possibility of the natural transfer of the gospel within a given social unit is the case of the Celts. Historical studies clarify for us the fact that the province of Galatia in Asia Minor was so called because it was settled by *Galatoi* from Western Europe (who as late as the fourth century still spoke both their original Celtic tongue and also the Greek of that part of the Roman Empire). Whether or not Paul's Galatians were merely Jewish traders living in the province of Galatia or were from the beginning Celtic Galatoi who were attracted to synagogues as "God fearers," we note in any case that Paul's letter to the Galatians is especially wary of anyone pushing over on his readers the mere outward customs of the Jewish culture and confus-

ing such customs with essential Christianity. A matter of high missionary interest is the fact that Paul's preaching had tapped into a cultural vein of Celtic humanity that may soon have included friends, relatives, and trade contacts reaching a great distance to the west. Thus Paul's efforts in Galatia may give us one clue to the surprisingly early penetration of the gospel into the main Celtic areas of Europe—a belt running across southern Europe, clear over into Galicia in Spain, Brittany in France, and into the western and northern parts of the British Isles.

There came a time when not only hundreds of thousands of Greek and Roman citizens had become Christians, but Celtic-speaking peoples and Gothic tribespeople as well had developed their own forms of Christianity both within and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. It is probable that the missionary work behind this came about mainly through unplanned processes involving Christians from the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In any case this achievement certainly cannot readily be credited to Latin-speaking Romans in the West. This is the point we are trying to make. One piece of evidence is the fact that the earliest Irish mission compounds (distinguished from the Western Roman type by a central chapel) followed a ground plan derived from Christian centers in Egypt. And Greek, not Latin, was the language of the early churches in Gaul. Even the first organized mission efforts of John Cassian and Martin of Tours, for example, came from the East by means of commune structures begun in Syria and Egypt. Fortunately, these organized efforts carried with them a strong emphasis on literacy and literature and the studying and copying of biblical manuscripts and ancient Greek classics.

7. What factors influenced the way the gospel spread in this epoch?

* Arians denied the divinity of Christ and were branded as heretics. They were driven from the Roman Empire by Athanasians, who affirmed the true deity of God the Son.

As amazed pagan leaders looked on, the cumulative impact grew to prominent proportions by 300 A.D. We don't know with any confidence what personal reasons Constantine had in 312 for declaring himself a Christian. We know that his mother in Asia Minor was a Christian and that his father, as a co-regent in Gaul and Britain, did not enforce the Diocletian edicts* against Christians in his area. However, by this time in history the inescapable fact is that there were enough Christians in the Roman

Christianity was the one religion that had no nationalism at its root.

Empire to make an official reversal of policy toward Christianity not only feasible, but politically wise. According to Professor Lynn White, Jr., at U.C.L.A., one of the great medieval historians of the world today, even if Constantine had not become a Christian, the empire could not have held out against Christianity more than another decade or two! The long development of the Roman Empire had ended the local autonomy of the city-state and created a widespread need for a sense of belonging—he calls it a crisis of identity. Then as now, Christianity was the one religion that had no nationalism at its root. It was not the folk religion of any one tribe. In White's words, it had developed “an unbeatable combination.”

Thus, it is the very power of the movement which helps in part to explain why the momentous decision to tolerate Christianity almost inevitably led to its becoming (over 50 years later) the official religion of the empire. Not long after the curtain rises on Christianity as an officially tolerated religion, the head of the Christian community in Rome turns out astonishingly to be the strongest and most trusted man around. Why else would Constantine, when he moved the seat of government to Constantinople, leave his palace (the famous Lateran Palace**) to the people of the Christian community as their “White House” in Rome? Nevertheless, it is simply a matter of record that by 375 A.D. Christianity became the official religion of Rome. For one thing, of course, it couldn't have existed as just another type of tolerated Judaism since it had so much wider an appeal. If it had been merely an ethnic cult, it could not have been even a candidate as an official religion.

More important for us than the fact that Christianity became the official religion is the fact that Western Roman Christianity made no special effort to complete the Great Commission, not in this period. This is not because the Romans were unaware of the vast mission field to the north. Their military and political leaders had had to cope with the Germanic tribespeople for centuries. We shall see how willingly those peoples became Christians.

8. What political reasons does Winter suggest for the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion of Rome?

* The Emperor Diocletian (284-305 A.D.) was one of the fiercest of the early opponents of Christianity. He issued four edicts against Christianity and carried out full-scale, systematic persecution of Christians during his reign.

** The Lateran Palace is used to this day by the Pope.

9. According to Winter, what is the most important fact to realize, from a missions perspective, concerning the result of the Christianization of Rome?

Throughout the history of its growth and expansion, Christianity has often repeated a similar pattern. The newly introduced gospel message spreads aggressively along relational lines and established social networks. This dynamic flow is stanchied, however, when it comes to significant cultural and social barriers. Without special efforts to cross these cultural frontiers, the course of the gospel is halted.

In the case of Rome, the little evangelization that was accomplished among her Barbarian neighbors to the north was through means other than intentional missions by the Roman Christians. Among those who accomplished this work were individuals who were persecuted by the official church as heretics, as in the case of the Arians, who questioned the deity of Christ and were banned from the Empire for this belief. Ulfilas, an Arian who ministered north of the Danube River, reduced the Gothic language to writing and translated the Scriptures for this Barbarian people.

Were the Christianized peoples of northern Europe any better than the Romans in realizing their mission obligation and carrying the good news to their unevangelized neighbors? The following part of Winter's article continues to trace the saga of Christian expansion... and its recession.

II. Barbarians, Vikings, and Saracens

Period 2

Because of repeated hesitation on the part of believers to reach out beyond their culture, God must often use involuntary means to spread the gospel. In this section describing the Christianization of the Barbarians, we see this principle in action.

Winning the Barbarians (400-800 A.D.)

Curiously, as the Barbarian tribespeople became Christianized, they became a greater and greater threat to Rome. Somewhat unintentionally, they wrecked the network of civil government in the West long before they were to try to rebuild it. In fact, the only reason the city of Rome itself was not physically devastated by the invasions, which began in 410, was that the Barbarians were, all things considered, really very respectful of life and property and especially the churches. Why? Because missionary efforts (for which Western Romans could claim little or no credit) had brought the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, and the Vandals into at

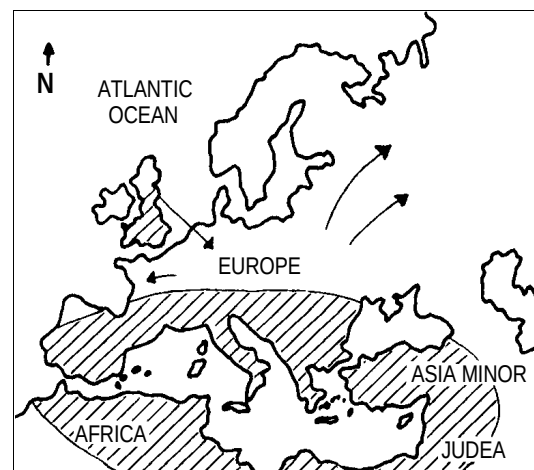


Figure 4-4. Christianization of Barbarians

least a superficial Christian faith. Even secular Romans observed how lucky they were that the invaders held high certain standards of Christian morality.

We are tantalized by the reflection that this much was accomplished by the informal and almost unconscious sharing of the blessings of the gospel. How much better might it have been for the Romans had that brief hundred years of official toleration of Christianity (310-410) prior to the first invasion been devoted to energetic, constructive missionary efforts. Even a little Christianity prevented the Barbarians from that total disregard of civilization which was to be shown by the Vikings in the Third Period. Perhaps a little more Christianity might have prevented the complete collapse of the governmental structure of the Roman Empire in the West. Today, for example, the ability of the new African states to maintain a stable government is to a great extent dependent upon their degree of Christianization (that is, both in knowledge and morality).

In any case, we confront the ominous phenomenon of a partially Christianized Barbarian horde being emboldened and enabled to pour in upon a complacent, officially Christian empire that had failed effectively to reach out to them. This may remind us of our relation to the present-day colossus of China. The Chinese, like the Barbarians north of Rome, have been crucially affected by Christianity. In the past 20 years they have adopted extensively and profoundly a kind of superficial faith which embod-

ies a number of distinctively Christian ingredients—despite the grave distortion of those Christian elements in the Communist milieu. Just as a modicum of Christian faith in some ways strengthened the hand of the Barbarians against the Romans, so the Chinese today are awesomely more dangerous due to the cleansing, integrating, and galvanizing

How much better might it have been for the Romans had that brief hundred years of official toleration of Christianity prior to the first invasion been devoted to energetic, constructive missionary efforts.

effect of the Communist philosophy and cell structure, which is clearly derived from the West and in many ways specifically from the Christian tradition itself. You can imagine the Barbarians criticizing the softness and degeneracy of the Roman Christians just as the Chinese today denounce the Russians for failing to live up to Communist standards.

Whether or not the Romans had it coming (for failing to reach out), and whether or not the Barbarians were both encouraged and tempered in their conquest by their initial Christian awareness, the indisputable fact is that, while the Romans lost the western half of their empire, the Barbarian world, in a very dramatic sense, gained a Christian faith.

10. How were the Barbarians both tempered and encouraged by Christianity in their conquest of Rome?

The immediate result was that right in the city of Rome there appeared at least two “denominations,” the one Arian and the other Athanasian. Also in the picture was the Celtic “church,” which was more a series of missionary compounds than it was a denomination made up of local churches. Still less like a church was an organization called the Benedictines, which came along later to compete with the Celts in establishing missionary compounds all over

Europe. By the time the Vikings appeared on the horizon there were, up through Europe, over 1,000 such mission compounds.

Protestants, and perhaps even modern Catholics, must pause at this point. Our problem in understanding these strange (and much misunderstood) instruments of evangelization is not so much our ignorance of what these people did, as our prejudice that has been developed against monks who lived

almost 1,000 years later. It is wholly unfair for us to judge the work of a traveling evangelist like Colom-ban or Boniface by the stagnation of the wealthy Augustinians in Luther's day—although we must certainly pardon Luther for thinking such thoughts.

It is indisputable that the chief characteristic of these "Jesus People" in this Second Period, whether they were Celtic *peregrini* * or their parallel in Benedictine communes, was the fact that they loved the Bible, that they sang their way through the whole book of Psalms each week as a routine discipline, and that it was they, in any case, who enabled the Kingdom and the power and the glory to be shared with the Anglo-Saxons and the Goths.

It is true that many strange, even bizarre and pagan customs were mixed up as secondary elements in the various forms of Christianity that were active during the period of the Christianization of Europe. The headlong collision and competition between Western Roman and Celtic forms of Christianity undoubtedly eventuated in an enhancement of common biblical elements in their faith. But we must remember the relative chaos introduced by the invasions and therefore not necessarily expect to see, dotting the landscape, the usual parish churches that are familiar in our day.

Under the particular circumstances then (similar to many chaotic corners of the world today), the most durable structure around was the *order*—a fellowship much more highly disciplined and tightly knit than the usual American Protestant congregation today. We must admit, furthermore, that these Christian communities not only were the source of scholarship during the Middle Ages, but they also preserved the technologies of the Roman tradesmen—tanning, dyeing, weaving, metal working, masonry skills, bridge building, etc. Their civil, charitable, and even scientific contribution is, in general, grossly underestimated. Probably the greatest accomplishment of these disciplined Christian

communities is seen in the simple fact that almost our total knowledge of the ancient world is derived from their libraries, whose silent testimony reveals the appreciation they had, even as Christians, of the "pagan" authors of ancient times. In our secular age it is embarrassing to recognize that, had it not been for these highly literate "mission field" Christians who preserved and copied manuscripts (not only of the Bible but of ancient Christian and non-Christian classics as well), we would know no more about the Roman Empire today than we do of the Mayan or Incan Empires or many other empires that have long since almost vanished from sight.

Christian communities not only were the source of scholarship during the Middle Ages, but they also preserved the technologies of the Roman tradesmen.

As a matter of fact, Barbarian Europe was won more by the witness and labors of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon converts than by the efforts of missionaries deriving from Italy or Gaul. This fact was to bear decisively upon the apparently permanent shift of power in Western Europe to the northern Europeans. Even as late as 596, when Rome's first missionary [Augustine] headed north (with great faintheartedness), he crossed the path of the much more daring and widely traveled Irish missionary Colom-ban, who had worked his way practically to the doorstep of Rome and who was already further from his birthplace than Augustine was planning to go from his. Thus, while Constantinople was considered the "Second Rome" by people who lived in the East, and Moscow was later to become the "Third Rome" to the descendants of the newly Christianized Russians, neither Rome as a city nor the Italian peninsula as a region was ever again to be politically as significant as the chief cities of the daughter nations—Spain, France, Germany, and England.

* *Peregrini* were traveling monks sent forth from the Scottish island of Iona. They succeeded in evangelizing much of Britain and Central Europe.

11. *What contributions did the Celts and early monks make to civilization? What efforts did they undertake for the advancement of the Christian movement?*

Toward the end of the Second Period, or at the end of each of these periods, there was a great flourishing of Christianity within the new cultural basin. The rise of a strong man like Charlemagne facilitated communication throughout Western Europe to a degree unknown for 300 years. Under his sponsorship a whole range of issues—social, theological, political—were soberly restudied in the light of the Bible and the writings of earlier Christian leaders in the Roman period. Charlemagne was a second Constantine in certain respects, and his political power was unmatched in Western Europe during a half a millennium. But he was much more of a Christian than Constantine and industriously sponsored far

The political force of a colonial power not so much paved the way for Christianity, but as often as not turned people against the faith.

more Christian activity. Like Constantine, his official espousal of Christianity produced many Christians who were Christians in name only. There is little doubt that the great missionary Boniface was slain by the Saxons because his patron, Charlemagne (with whose policies he did not at all agree) had brutally suppressed the Saxons on many occasions. Then, as in our own recent past, the political force of a colonial power not so much paved the way for Christianity, but as often as not turned people against the faith. Of interest to missionaries is the fact that the great centers of learning established by Charlemagne were copies and expansions of newly established mission compounds deep in German territory, outposts that were the work of British and Celtic missionaries from sending centers as far away as Iona and Lindisfarne in Britain.

Indeed, the first serious attempt at anything like public education was initiated by this great tribal chieftain, Charlemagne, on the advice and impulse of Anglo-Celtic missionaries and scholars, such as Alcuin, whose projects eventually required the help of thousands of literate Christians from Britain and Ireland to man schools founded on the Continent. It is hard to believe, but Irish teachers of Latin (never a native tongue in Ireland) were eventually needed to teach Latin in Rome, so extensively had the tribal invasions broken down the civilization of the Roman Empire.

The Celtic Christians and their Anglo-Saxon and continental heirs especially treasured the Bible. A sure clue to their chief source of inspiration is the fact that the highest works of art during these “dark” centuries were marvelously “illuminated” biblical manuscripts and devoutly ornamented church buildings; manuscripts of non-Christian classical authors were preserved and copied, but not illuminated. Through the long night of the progressive breakdown of the western part of the Roman Empire, when the tribal migrations reduced almost all of the life in the West to the level of the tribesmen themselves, the two great regenerating ideals were the hope of building anew the glory that was once Rome and the hope of making all subject to the Lord of Glory. The one really high point, when these twin objectives were most nearly achieved, was during Charlemagne’s long, vigorous career centered around the year 800. As one recent scholar puts it, “In the long sweep of European history, from the decline of the Roman Empire to the flowering of the Renaissance nearly a thousand years later, his [Charlemagne’s] is the sole commanding presence.”

No wonder recent scholars call Charlemagne’s period the Carolingian Renaissance, and thus discard the concept of “the Dark Ages” for a First Dark Ages early in this period and a Second Dark Ages early in the next period.

Unfortunately, the rebuilt empire (later to be called the Holy Roman Empire) was unable to find the ingredients of a Charlemagne in his successor; moreover, a new threat now posed itself externally. Charlemagne had been eager for his own kind to be made Christian—the Germanic tribes. He offered

wise, even spiritual leadership in many affairs but did not throw his weight behind any kind of bold mission outreach to the Scandinavian peoples to the north. What was begun under his son was too little and too late. This fact was to contribute greatly to the undoing of the empire.

12. What were Charlemagne's contributions to the spread of Christianity? What was his failure?

Period 3

With the conquest of Rome by the Barbarians from the north, Western civilization suffered a setback which led to what historians have labeled the Dark Ages. Although Rome was in decline, Christianity was making advances throughout Europe. The Barbarians eventually so adopted the Christian faith that they purposefully set out to evangelize the whole of Western Europe. Unfortunately, they failed to cross the cultural barriers and take Christian influence to the Scandinavian north. There, a far more savage people would rise to wreak havoc on their neighbors to the south.

Winning the Vikings (800-1200 A.D.)

No sooner had the consolidation in Western Europe been accomplished under Charlemagne than there appeared a new menace to peace and propriety that was to create a second period of at least semi-darkness to last 250 years: the Vikings. These savages further north had not yet been effectively evangelized. While the tribal invaders of Rome, who created the First Dark Ages, were rough forest people who, for the most part, were nevertheless nominally Arian Christians, the Vikings, by contrast, were neither civilized nor Christian. There was another difference: they were men of the sea. This meant that key island sanctuaries for missionary training, like Iona or like the off-shore promontory of Lindisfarne (connected to the land only at low tide), were as vulnerable to attacking seafarers as they had been invulnerable to attackers from the land. Both of these mission centers were sacked more than a dozen times, and their occupants slaughtered or sold off as slaves in middle Europe. It seems unquestionable that the Christians of

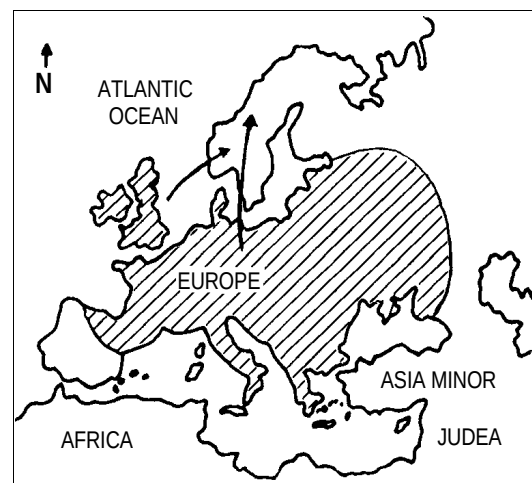


Figure 4-5. Christianization of Vikings

Charlemagne's empire would have fared far better had the Vikings had at least the appreciation of the Christian faith that the earlier Barbarians had when they overran Rome. The very opposite of the Visigoths and Vandals, who spared the churches, the

Vikings seemed attracted like magnets to the monastic centers of scholarship and Christian devotion; they took a special delight in burning churches, in putting human life to the sword, and in selling monks into slavery. A contemporary's words give us a graphic impression of their carnage:

The Northmen cease not to slay and carry into captivity the Christian people, to destroy the churches and to burn the towns. Everywhere, there is nothing but dead bodies—clergy and laymen, nobles and common people, women and children. There is no road or place where the ground is not covered with corpses. We live in distress and anguish before this spectacle of the destruction of the Christian people.*

Once more, when Christians did not reach out to them, pagan peoples came where they were. And once more, the phenomenal power of Christianity manifested itself: the conquerors became conquered by the faith of their captives. Usually it was the monks sold as slaves or the Christian girls forced to be their wives and mistresses which eventually won these savages of the north. In God's eyes, their redemption must have been more important than the harrowing tragedy of this new invasion of barbarian violence and evil which fell upon God's own people whom He loved. (After all, He had not even spared His own Son in order to redeem us!)

In the previous hundred years, Charlemagne's scholars had carefully collected the manuscripts of the ancient world. Now the majority were to be burned by the Vikings. Only because so many copies had been made and scattered so widely did the fruits of the Charlemagnic literary revival survive at all. Once scholars and missionaries had streamed from Ireland across England and onto the Continent, and even out beyond the frontiers of Charlemagne's empire. Thus the Irish volcano which had poured forth a passionate fire of evangelism for three centuries cooled almost to extinction. Viking warriors, newly based in Ireland, followed the paths of the earlier Irish peregrini across England and onto the

Continent, but this time ploughing with them waste and destruction rather than new life and hope.

There were some blessings in this horrifying disguise. Alfred successfully headed up guerrilla resistance and was equally concerned about spiritual as well as physical losses. As a measure of emergency, he let go the ideal of maintaining the Latin tongue as a general pattern for worship and began a Christian library in the vernacular—the Anglo-Saxon. This was a decision of monumental importance which might have been delayed several centuries had the tragedy of the Vikings not provided the necessity which was the mother of invention.

When Christians did not reach out to them, pagan peoples came where they were.

In any case, as Christopher Dawson puts it, the unparalleled devastation of England and the Continent was “not a victory for paganism” (p. 94). The Northmen who landed on the Continent under Rollo became the Christianized Normans, and the Danish who took over a huge section of middle England (along with invaders from Norway who planted their own kind in many other parts of England and Ireland) also were soon to become Christians. The gospel was too powerful. One result was that a new Christian culture spread back into Scandinavia. This stemmed largely from England from which came the first monastic communities and early missionary bishops. What England lost, Scandinavia gained.

It must also be admitted that the Vikings would not have been attracted either to the churches or to the monasteries had not those centers of Christian piety to a great extent succumbed to luxury. The switch from the Irish to the Benedictine pattern of monasticism was an improvement in many respects but apparently allowed greater possibilities for the development of the un-Christian opulence and glitter which attracted the greedy eyes of the Norsemen. Thus another side-benefit of the new invasions was its indirect cleansing and refinement of the Christian movement. Even before the Vikings appeared,

* Dawson, C. *Religion and the rise of Western culture* (p. 87).

** Investiture was a controversy over the appointment of clergy by civil or religious authorities.

14. *How did the various orders—Benedictine, Cistercian, etc.—play vital roles in advancing the gospel?*

Period 4

Invasion again played a key role in the expansion of Christianity during the Third Period. Those who did not have the gospel were drawn by the blessings and benefits it wrought in society. However, without the gospel's life-changing message, the invaders sought to obtain the blessings in ways that unleashed devastation. The eventual Christianization of the Vikings and the use of vernacular languages in Christian writings represented great advances for the gospel. Meanwhile, to the southeast, a vigorous new religion had rapidly spread through Arabia, North Africa, the Middle East, and even into Spain, eradicating gains made in previous centuries. How effectively would Christian Europe meet this new threat of Islam?

Winning the Saracens (1200-1600 A.D.)

The Fourth Period began with a spectacular, new evangelistic instrument—the Friars—and it would end with the greatest reformation of all, but was meanwhile already involved for a hundred years in the most massive, tragic misconstrual of Christian mission in all of history. Never before had any nation or group of nations launched as energetic and sustained a campaign into foreign territory as did Europe in the tragic debacle of the Crusades. This was in part the carry-over of the Viking spirit into the Christian church. All of the major Crusades were led by Viking descendants. Yet while the Crusades had many political overtones (they were often a unifying device for faltering rulers), they would not have come about apart from the vigorous sponsorship of the Christian leaders. They were not only an unprecedented blood-letting to the Europeans themselves and a savage wound in the side of the Muslim peoples (a wound which is not at all healed to this day),* but they were a fatal blow to the cause of Christian unity east and west and to the cultural unity of eastern Europe. In the long run, though they held Jerusalem for a hundred years, the Crusaders

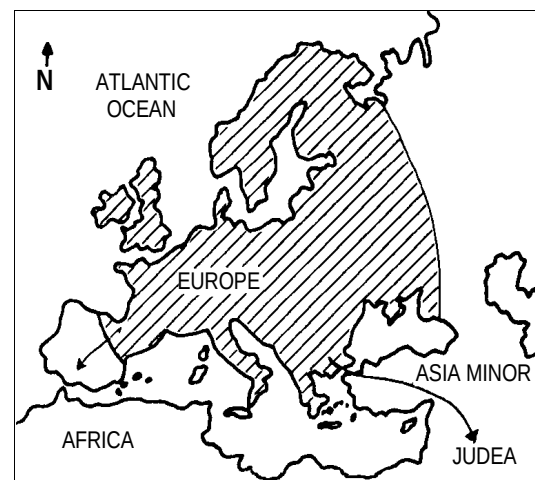


Figure 4-6. Christianization by Crusades

by default eventually gave the Byzantine inheritance over to the Ottoman sultans, and far worse, they established a permanent image of brutal, militant Christianity that alienates a large proportion of mankind to this day.

Ironically, the mission of the Crusaders would not have been so successfully negative had it not in-

* The horrible atrocities perpetrated by Crusaders against both Jews and Muslims are a major reason both groups are still strongly opposed to the gospel.

volved so high a component of abject Christian commitment. The great lesson of the Crusades is that good will, even sacrificial obedience to God, is no substitute for a clear understanding of His will. It was a devout man, Bernard of Clairvaux, to whom are attributed the words of the hymn “Jesus the Very Thought of Thee,” who preached the first crusade. In all this period two Franciscans, Francis of Assisi and Raymond Lull, stand out as the only ones whose insight into God’s will led them to substitute the gentle words of the evangel for warfare and violence as the proper means of extending the blessings God committed to Abraham and his children of faith.

At this point we must pause for reflection. We may not succeed, but let us try to see things from God’s point of view, treading with caution and tentativeness. We know, for example, that at the end of the First Period, after three centuries of hardship and persecution, just when things were apparently going great, invaders appeared, and chaos and catastrophe ensued. Why? This is the period that could be called the “Constantinian Renaissance”—that is, it was both good and not so good. Just when Christians were translating the Bible into Latin and waxing eloquent in theological debate, when Eusebius was editing a massive collection of previous Christian writings (as the official historian of the government), when heretics were thrown out of the empire (and became, however reluctantly, the only missionaries to the Goths), when Rome finally became officially Christian... then suddenly God brought down the curtain. It was now time for a new cluster of people groups to be confronted with the claims, blessings, and obligations of the expanding Kingdom of Christ.

Similarly, at the end of the Second Period, after three centuries of chaos during which the rampaging Gothic hordes were eventually Christianized, tamed, and civilized, when Bibles and biblical knowledge proliferated as never before, when major biblical/missionary centers were established by the Celtic Christians and their Anglo-Saxon pupils, when, in this Charlemagnic (actually “Carolingian”) Renaissance, thousands of public schools led by Christians attempted mass biblical and general literacy, when Charlemagne dared even to attack the endemic use of alcohol, great theologians tussled with theological/political issues, and the Venerable

Bede became Eusebius of this period (indeed, when both Charlemagne and Bede were much more Christian than Constantine and Eusebius), once again invaders appeared and chaos and catastrophe ensued. Why?

Strangely similar, then, is the end of the Third Period. It only took two and a half centuries for the Vikings to capitulate to the “counter-attack of the gospel.” The flourishing period was longer than a century and far more extensive than ever before. The Crusades, the cathedrals, the so-called Scholastic theologians, the universities, most importantly the blessed Friars, and even the early part of the Humanistic Renaissance make up this outsized 1050-1350 outburst of a Medieval Renaissance. And then suddenly a new invader appeared, more virulent than ever, and chaos and catastrophe greater than ever occurred. Why?

The great lesson of the Crusades is that good will, even sacrificial obedience to God, is no substitute for a clear understanding of His will.

Was God dissatisfied with incomplete obedience? Were the blessings being kept by those who received them and not sufficiently and determinedly shared with the other nations of the world? The plague that killed one-third of the inhabitants of Europe killed a much higher proportion of the Franciscans (120,000 were laid still in Germany alone). Surely God was not trying to judge their missionary fire. Was He trying to judge the Crusaders, whose atrocities greatly outweighed the Christian devotional elements in their movement? If so, why did He wait so long to do that? And why did He inflict the Christian leadership of Europe so greatly rather than the Crusaders themselves? Why didn’t the Crusaders die of the plague?

Perhaps it was that Europe did not sufficiently listen to the saintly Friars; that it was not the Friars that went wrong but the hearers who did not respond. God’s judgment upon Europe, then, was to take the gospel away from them, to take away the Friars and their message. Even though to us it seems like it was a judgment upon the messengers rather than upon the resistant hearers, is this not one impression that

could be received from the New Testament as well? Jesus Himself came unto His own, and His own received Him not, and Jesus rather than the people was the one who went to the cross. God's judgment may often consist of the removal of the messenger.

In any case, the invasion of the bubonic plague, first in 1346 and every so often during the next decade, brought a greater setback than either the Gothic or the Viking invasions. It first devastated parts of Italy and Spain, then spread west and north to France, England, Holland, Germany, and Scandinavia. By the time it had run its course 40 years later, one-third to one-half of the population of Europe was dead. Especially stricken were the Friars and the truly spiritual leaders. They were the only ones who

stayed behind to tend the sick and to bury the dead. Europe was absolutely in ruins. The result? There were three Popes at one point, the humanist elements turned menacingly humanistic, peasant tur-

God's judgment may often consist of the removal of the messenger.

moil (often based in justice and even justified by the Bible itself) ended up in orgies and excesses of violence. The poverty, confusion, and lengthy travail led to the new birth of the greatest reform yet seen.

15. Why does Winter suggest invasions and catastrophes repeatedly enveloped Christianity, just when it seemed to be entering stages of stability?

Once more, at the end of one of our periods, a great flourishing took place. Printing came to the fore, Europeans finally escaped their geographical cul de sac and sent ships for commerce, subjugation, and spiritual blessings to the very ends of the earth. And as a part of the reform, the Protestant Reformation now loomed on the horizon: that great, permanent, cultural decentralization of Europe.

Protestants often think of the Reformation as a legitimate reaction against the evils of a monstrous Christian bureaucracy sunken in corruption. But it must be admitted that the Reform was not just a reaction against decadence in the Christian movement. This great decentralization of Christendom was in many respects the result of an increasing vitality which, unknown to most Protestants, was as evident in the return to a study of the Bible and to the appearance of new life and evangelical preaching in Italy, Spain, and France as in Moravia, Germany, and England.

In the Reformation, the gospel finally succeeded in allowing Christians to be German, not merely per-

mitting Germans to be Roman Christians. Unfortunately, the emphasis on justification by faith (which was preached as much in Italy and Spain as in Germany at the time Luther loomed into view) became identified with German nationalistic hopes and thus was suppressed as a dangerous doctrine by political powers in the South. But it is merely a typical Protestant misunderstanding that there was not as much a revival of deeper life, Bible study, and prayer in Southern Europe as in Northern Europe at the time of the Reformation. The issue may have appeared to the Protestants as faith vs. law, or to the Romans as unity vs. division, but popular scales are askew because it was much more Latin uniformity vs. national diversity. The vernacular had to eventually conquer. Paul had not demanded that the Greeks become Jews, but the Germans had been obliged to become Roman. The Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians had at least been allowed their vernacular to an extent unknown in Christian Germany. Germany was where the revolt would have to take place. Italy, France, and Spain, formerly part of the Roman Empire and extensively assimilated cul-

turally in that direction, had no nationalistic steam behind their reforming movements, which became almost lost in the shuffle that ensued.

However, despite the fact that the Protestants won on the political front and to a great extent gained the power to formulate anew their own Christian tradition, they did not even talk of mission outreach, and

the period ended with Roman Europe expanding both politically and religiously on the seven seas. Thus, entirely unshared by Protestants, for at least two centuries, there ensued a worldwide movement of unprecedented scope in the annals of mankind in which there was greater Christian missionary presence than ever before.

16. How did cultural issues play a significant part in the Protestant Reformation?

Period 5

The emergence of nationalized forms of Christianity and the discovery and exploration of vast new portions of the globe set the stage for a tremendous surge in the Christian expansion. The next two centuries were to see vigorous missionary activity by the Roman Church. It took Protestants over 200 years to wake up to their own responsibility to be a blessing to the ends of the earth.

III. The Final Thrust

To the ends of the earth (1600-2000 A.D.)

The period from 1600 to 2000 began with European footholds in the rest of the world. Apart from taking over what was almost an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca Empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of the non-Western world. By 1945, Europeans had virtual control over 99.5 percent of the non-Western world. Twenty-five years later, the Western nations had lost control over all but five percent of the non-Western population of the world. This 1945-1969 period of the sudden collapse of Western control, coupled with the unexpected upsurge of significance of the Christian movement in the non-Western world, I have elsewhere called “the 25 unbelievable years.” If we compare this period to

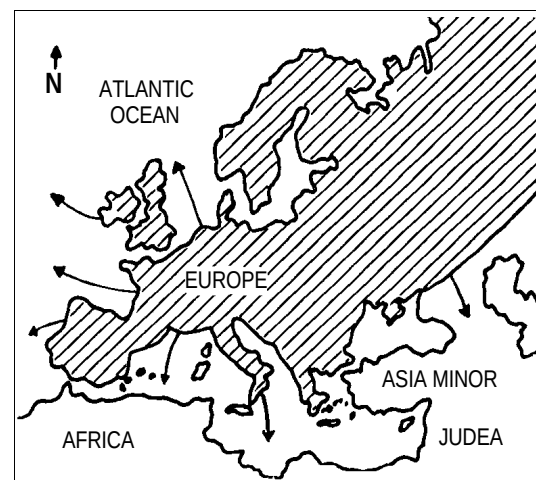


Figure 4-7. To the Ends of the Earth

the collapse of the Western Roman Empire's domination over its conquered provinces of Spain, Gaul, and Britain, and to the breakdown of control over non-Frankish Europe under Charlemagne's successors, we can anticipate—at least by the logic of sheer parallelism—that by the year 2000 the Western world itself will be dominated by non-Westerners.

Indeed, ever since the collapse of Western power became obvious (during “the 25 unbelievable years”), there have been many who have decried the thought of any further missionary effort moving from the West to the non-Western world, perhaps confusing the absence of political control for the absence of the need for foreign missions. The true situation is actually very different. Rather, the absence of political control for the first time in many areas has now begun to allow non-Western populations to yield to the Kingdom of Christ without simultaneously yielding to the political kingdoms of the Western world. Here we see a parallel to the Frankish tribespeople accepting the faith of Rome only after Rome had become politically powerless, and the continued relative acceptability of the Roman faith among the Anglo-Saxons, Germans, and Scandinavians up until the point where the emergence of strong papal authority mixed with power politics became a threat to legitimate national ambitions and led to a reformation which allowed nationalized forms of Christianity.

The present spectacle of a Western world flaunting the standards of Christian morality in more obvious ways than ever is not as likely, therefore, to dissuade others from embracing the Christian faith in non-Christian lands as it is to disassociate the treasure of Christian ideals from a Western world which has, until this age, been their most prominent sponsor. When Asians accuse Western nations of immorality in warfare, they are appealing to Christian values, certainly not the values of their own pagan past. In this sense, Christianity has already conquered the world. No longer, for example, is the long-standing Chinese tradition of skillful torture likely to be boasted about in China nor highly respected anywhere else, at least in public circles.

But this worldwide change has not come about suddenly. Even the present, minimal attainment of world Christian morality on a tenuous public level has been accomplished only at the cost of a great

amount of sacrificial missionary endeavor (during the four centuries of Period Five), labors which have been mightier and more deliberate than at any time in 2,000 years. The first half (1600-1800) of this Fifth Period was almost exclusively a Roman show. By the year 1800, it was painfully embarrassing to Protestants to hear Roman missionaries writing off the Protestant movement as apostate simply because it was not sending missionaries. But by the year 1800, Roman missionary effort had been forced into sudden decline due to the curtailment of the Jesuits and the combined effect of the French Revolution and ensuing chaos in the cutting of the European economic roots of Catholic missions.

The year 1800 marks the awakening of the Protestants from two and a half centuries of inactivity, if not actual slumber, in regard to missionary outreach across the world.

However, the year 1800 marks the awakening of the Protestants from two and a half centuries of inactivity, if not actual slumber, in regard to missionary outreach across the world. Now, for the first time, Protestants equipped themselves with structures of mission comparable to the Catholic orders and began to make up for lost time. Unheralded, unnoticed, all but forgotten in our day except for ill-informed criticism, Protestant missionary efforts in this period, more than Catholic missions, led the way in establishing all around the world the democratic apparatus of government, the schools, the hospitals, the universities, and the political foundations of the new nations. Rightly understood, Protestant missionaries along with their Roman brethren are surely not less than the prime movers of the tremendous energy that is mushrooming in the Third World today. Take China, for example. Two of its greatest modern leaders, Sun Yat Sen and Chiang Kai-shek, were both Christians.

If the Western home base is now to falter and to fail as the tide is reversed by the new power of its partially evangelized periphery (as is the pattern in the earlier periods), we can only refer to Dawson's comment on the devastation wrought by the

Vikings—that this will not be a “victory for paganism.” The fall of the West will be due in part to a decay of spirit. It will be due in part to the pagan power in the non-Western world emboldened and strengthened by its first contact with Christian faith. It may come as a most drastic punishment to a Western world that has always spent more on cosmetics than it has on foreign missions—and lately 10 times as much. From a secular or even nationalistic point of view, the next years may be a very dark period for the Western world, in which the normal hope and aspirations of Christian people for their own country may find only a very slight basis for optimism. But if the past is any guide at all, even this will have to be darkness before the dawn. While we may not be able to be sure about our own country, we have no reason to suppose—there is no historic determinism that assures us—that the Christian faith will not survive. The entire Western world in its present political form may be radically altered.

For one thing, we can readily calculate, in regard to population trends, that by the year 2000 Westerners will constitute less than half as large a percentage of the world (8%) as they did in the year 1900 (18%). This does seem inevitable. But certainly, judging by the past, we cannot ultimately be pessimistic. Beyond the agony of Rome was the winning of the Barbarians. Beyond the agony of the Barbarians was

the winning of the Vikings. Beyond the agony of the Western world we can only pray that there will be the winning of the “two billion” who have not yet heard. And we can only know that there is no basis in the past or in the present for assuming that things are out of the control of the living God.

If we in the West insist on keeping our blessings instead of sharing them, then we will have to lose our blessings for the remaining nations to receive them.

If we in the West insist on keeping our blessings instead of sharing them, then we will, like other nations before us, have to lose our blessings for the remaining nations to receive them. God has not changed His plan in the last 4,000 years. But how much better not to lose but to use our blessings, without reserve, in order “to be a blessing to all the families of the earth”? That is the only way we can continue in God’s blessing. The expanding Kingdom is not going to stop with us. “This gospel must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all people groups, and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14).

17. *Compare the current state of the West with dominant Christian societies in past epochs. What parallels do you see with the situation that now exists in your own country?*

18. *During the past 200 years, the gospel has spread widely throughout the non-Western world. Considering past patterns, how might vigorous new churches in these parts of the globe respond to the blessings they now enjoy?*

Before we leave our reflection on the past, it is healthy to see the tremendous positive influence the world Christian movement has already had. Renowned historian Kenneth Scott Latourette summarizes these effects from his lifelong study of the history of the expansion of Christianity.

❑ **The Effect of Christianity ***

Kenneth Scott Latourette **

In the relatively brief nineteen and a half centuries of its existence, in spite of its seemingly unpromising beginning, Christianity had spread over most of the earth's surface and was represented by adherents in almost every tribe and nation and in nearly every inhabited land. It had gone forward by pulsations of advance, retreat, and advance. Measured by the criteria of geographic extent, inner vigour as shown by new movements from within it, and the effect on mankind as a whole, each major advance had carried it further into the life of the world than the one before it, and each major recession had been less severe than its predecessor. In spite of this spread, in the middle of the 20th century Christianity was still the professed faith of only a minority of men, in some of the largest countries only a small minority. Of those who bore the Christian name, especially in lands where they were in the majority, only a minority made the thoroughgoing commitment required by the genius of the faith.

What effect had Christianity had across the centuries, operating as it did through this minority? Often we cannot know whether Christianity was at all an element in a particular movement or action. In many other instances we can be reasonably sure that it entered as a factor but so compounded with other causes that we cannot accurately appraise the extent of its responsibility. Among these were the emergence of universities in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the rise of the scientific method, the geographic discoveries by Europeans in the 15th,

16th, and 17th centuries, democracy of the Anglo-Saxon kind, and communism. Whether in any of these it was determinative, so that but for it they would not have come into being, we are not and probably cannot be sure. We can be clear that in some movements Christianity was dominant. Such were the appearance and development of the various churches, monasticism in its several manifestations, the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, the formulation of the great creeds of the first few centuries, and the construction of most of the systems of theology. Yet in none of these was Christianity the only cause. Indeed, what we call Christianity changed from time to time. In most of its forms what came from Jesus and His apostles was regarded as primary and determinative, but other contributions entered, among them the cultural background of individuals and groups, the personal experiences of outstanding leaders, and inherited religions and philosophical conceptions.

The fruits of the faith

In spite of these uncertainties and complicating factors, we can be fully assured of some of the fruits of what constitutes the core of the Christian faith and of Christianity, namely, the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We can, of course, be clear that without this core Christianity and the churches would not have been. It is by no means responsible for all that was done in the guise of Christianity or under the aegis of the churches, and much was performed in its name which was quite contrary to

* Latourette, K. S. (1953). *A history of Christianity* (pp. 1471-1474). New York: Harper & Bros.

** Kenneth Scott Latourette was probably the premier historian of the Christian movement. A member of the Student Volunteer Movement at Yale early in the 20th century and very active in a vast network of student Bible study groups, Latourette sailed for China but returned after a year because of illness. He taught from 1921 to 1953 at Yale as Professor of Missions and Oriental History. He was also a prolific author and is best known for his seven-volume *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, five-volume *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, and two-volume *History of Christianity*.

it. However, the perversion of the gospel is one of the facts of which an appraisal of the results of Christianity must take account. It is incontestable that from Christ issued unmeasured and immeasurable power in the life of mankind. We know that because of Him across the centuries untold thousands of individuals have borne something of His likeness. Thousands have been so reared in the knowledge of Him that from childhood and without striking struggle they have followed Him and have increasingly shown the radiance of the faith, hope, and self-giving love which were in Him. Other thousands have come to the same path and goal through deep sorrow, initial moral defeat, and soul-wrenching struggles. Some have been famous and have passed on to other thousands the light which has come from Him. More have been obscure and have been known only to a limited circle, but within that circle they have been towers of strength.

From individuals who have been inspired by Christ and from the church has issued movement after movement for attaining the Christian ideal.

Through Christ there has come into being the Church. The Church is never fully identical with ecclesiastical organizations. It is to be found in them, but not all of their members belong to it and it is greater than the sum of them all. Yet, though never fully visible as an institution, the Church has been and is a reality, more potent than any one or all of the churches. "The blessed company of all faithful people," it constitutes a fellowship which has been both aided and hampered by the churches, and is both in them and transcends them.

From individuals who have been inspired by Christ and from the Church has issued movement after movement for attaining the Christian ideal. That ideal has centered around the kingdom of God, an order in which God's will is done. It sets infinite value upon the individual. Its goal for the individual is to become a child of God, to "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" and to "be filled unto all the fullness of God"—God who is Creator and Father, who revealed His true nature, self-giving love, by becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ, and

permitting the seeming defeat and frustration of the cross, and who is ever active in history in individuals and the collective life of mankind. Its goal for the individual cannot be completely attained this side of the grave, but is so breath-taking that within history only a beginning is possible. Nor can it be reached in isolation, but only in community. In Christ's teaching, love for God, as the duty and privilege of man, is inseparably joined with love for one's neighbor.

The ideal and the goal have determined the character of the movements which have been the fruits of Christianity. Although men can use and often have used knowledge and education to the seeming defeat of the ideal, across the centuries Christianity has been the means of reducing more languages to writing than have all other factors combined. It has created more schools, more theories of education, and more systems than has any other one force. More than any other power in history it has impelled men to fight suffering, whether that suffering has come from disease, war, or natural disasters. It has built thousands of hospitals, inspired the emergence of nursing and medical professions, and furthered movements for public health and the relief and prevention of famine. Although explorations and conquests which were in part its outgrowth led to the enslavement of Africans for the plantations of the Americas, men and women whose consciences were awakened by Christianity and whose wills it nerved brought about the abolition of Negro slavery. Men and women similarly moved and sustained wrote into the laws of Spain and Portugal provisions to alleviate the ruthless exploitation of the Indians of the New World. Wars have often been waged in the name of Christianity. They have attained their most colossal dimensions through weapons and large scale organization initiated in Christendom. Yet from no other source have there come as many and as strong movements to eliminate or regulate war and to ease the suffering brought by war. From its first centuries the Christian faith has caused many of its adherents to be uneasy about war. It has led minorities to refuse to have any part in it. It has impelled others to seek to limit war by defining what, in their judgment, from the Christian standpoint is a "just war." In the turbulent middle ages of Europe it gave rise to the Truce of God and the Peace of God. In a later era it was the main impulse in the

formulation of international law. But for it the League of Nations and the United Nations would not have been. By its name and symbol the most extensive organization ever created for the relief of the suffering caused by war, the Red Cross, bears witness to its Christian origin. The list might go on indefinitely. It includes many other humanitarian

projects and movements, ideals in government, the reform of prisons and the emergence of criminology, great art and architecture, and outstanding literature. In geographic extent and potency the results were never as marked as in the 19th and 20th centuries.

19. *Why does Latourette suggest that the Christian ideal can be reached only in community, never in isolation?*

Where is the world Christian movement headed? The church has been planted around the globe, and the blessing has touched every country. Yet half the world's population still has not had a reasonable opportunity to know the power of the gospel in a personal way. Missiologists are calling the church to a strategy of *closure*, a concerted effort by the whole church to finish the Great Commission task.

Where will the resources come from which will bring the Great Commission task to completion? Can the seeming apathy of a self-indulgent Western church be overcome? Will the spirited young churches of the Two Thirds World* respond to this challenge? If history repeats itself, the West may be entering a period of decline. The reversal of this decline will be difficult if the West does not dedicate itself fully to being a blessing to the nations. Yet, even if this demise is imminent, beyond this "agony of the West" lies the bright promise of the new churches of the more recently evangelized continents. These churches are already rising up to take on the Great Commission challenge. In the following article, Theodore Williams and William Taylor describe the historical emergence of "sending" from former missionary "receiving" countries and the issues surrounding this great movement.

* The term "Two Thirds World" is being used increasingly by missiologists to speak of countries which are non-Western but contain now over two-thirds of the world's population and a great majority of the world's Christians. "Two Thirds World" replaces the term "Third World," which was coined as a political denotation and which has developed negative connotations over the years. Some people also use the term "Non-Western World" interchangeably with "Two Thirds World."

❑ **Two Thirds World Missions**

Theodore Williams and William Taylor *

The amazing story Thomas shared profoundly moved us as we marveled at God's creativity and power. Over 25 years ago, Thomas and another young Indian colleague went with the gospel to an isolated, unreached people of northern India. Called the "Valley of the Gods" for its bondage to the evil one, the area knew spiritual warfare as a dominant reality. In spite of opposition, God blessed His Word and the proclamation of the unique Christ in this religiously pluralistic society. Today the church flourishes in this valley and is sending out its own missionaries!

Missionaries with names like Suraja, Francisco, Kim, and Bayo come from different continents and represent an amazing and relatively new missionary force, perhaps 40,000 strong. We speak of one of the most significant phenomena in current church history—the rapid growth of indigenous missions in the Two Thirds World.

Indigenous missions began in the early 1900s. Non-Western missionaries sailed in canoes from island to island in the South Pacific. (Interestingly, this "deep sea canoe" vision is being revived again.) The real growth of Two Thirds World missions, however, began in the 1960s and mushroomed in the 1970s and 1980s. Research done on the size of this new force illustrates this growth, which we give in rounded figures:**

Year	Approximate Number of Two Thirds World Missionaries
1972	5,000
1982	15,000
1992	40,000

Significantly, the number of Two Thirds World missionaries is increasing faster than that of Western missionaries. By the year 2000 it is predicted that there will be more non-Western missionaries than their Western counterparts.

Where do these missionaries serve? They are going everywhere! In some cases, such as India and Nigeria, we see them concentrated within their own countries, where there are many totally unreached people groups. Thousands of others have moved internationally, such as the Koreans, Singaporeans, and Brazilians. In Africa, Nigeria has the highest number of missionaries. India sends the most cross-cultural missionaries from Asia, with the majority serving within the country. Brazil leads the Latin American continent in numbers of missionaries.

Factors producing the movement

What has caused the mushrooming of these Two Thirds World missions? Sadly, in most countries, Western missionaries did not impart the cross-cultural missionary vision to the churches that they

* Theodore Williams is the founder and director of India Evangelical Mission, an indigenous mission organization ministering primarily in northern India. He also travels extensively as President of the Missions Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

William D. Taylor was born of missionary parents in Costa Rica and served 17 years as a missionary in Guatemala. He is currently the Executive Secretary for the Missions Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

** We use general numbers as interpreted from different sources. There is no clear consensus of opinion on these statistics.

planted, so the movement cannot be attributed directly to missionary influence. Although we will attempt to trace this phenomenon to some other causes, we recognize that the primary initiator of this phenomenon is the Supreme Lord, who acts in a sovereign and timely manner in the history of missions.

Many nations in the Two Thirds World became independent from colonial rule in the period 1940-1960. The spirit of nationalism identified the native non-Christian religions with national culture and patriotism and regarded Christianity as a product of colonialism. This produced a compelling zeal on the part of national Christians and churches to accept responsibility for evangelizing their own people. The Sovereign Lord used this spirit of national pride to cause the churches to see their international responsibility.

Also, restrictions were placed on the entry of expatriate missionaries into many countries. Even if missionaries were given visas, they often were not permitted to go to certain unreached peoples, as in India. This reality stirred the national Christians and churches to accept responsibility to reach the unreached peoples in their own countries.

In some countries of the world the church has grown phenomenally. In Latin America, this is true in Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala. In

Asia, growth is evident in Singapore, Indonesia, and Korea. It is happening in Nigeria, Kenya, and other African nations also. Look at the figures:

Year	Percent of the World's Christians Living in the Two Thirds World*
1800	1%
1900	9%
1950	32%
1980	50%
1992	75%
* Includes Asia, Africa, Latin America, the South Pacific, and the Middle East	

Not only is there church growth, but there is also spiritual revival in several countries of the Two Thirds World. The Christians have become more aware of their Christian discipleship and responsibilities. There is deep zeal for prayer and fasting, an understanding of spiritual warfare, and a concern to bring others to Christ. In the history of the church, whenever and wherever there is true revival, missions has resulted. It is not surprising that strong missionary movements have arisen in Two Thirds World countries.

20. What factors have worked together to produce missions movements in the Two Thirds World?

Challenges and concerns

1. Most of the Two Thirds World missions are involved in pioneer evangelism and church planting. This is encouraging. It is reported that there are still 11,000 unreached people groups in the world. Most of them are in the non-Western world. Missions from the Two Thirds World must accept their responsibility for these and join

the worldwide missionary movement to accomplish this task. This will require sacrifice, creativity and long-term commitments.

2. The Western missionary movement is still associated with colonialism and imperialism in many parts of Asia and Africa. It is regarded as a threat to national identity and native cultures because

it comes with money power from the West. Two Thirds World missions can be free from this accusation because they generally come from a background of poverty and powerlessness. Because of cultural similarities and less disparity in economic levels, missionaries from the Two Thirds World may have certain advantages when they go to people groups in the Two Thirds World. Because they and some of their parents suffered when the gospel came to their area, they are now willing to suffer for our Lord.

3. Most of the Two Thirds World consists of economically poor, developing countries. The gross national product is low in these countries, and some of them are hit with staggering inflation rates. The national and international debts, coupled with internal corruption and mismanagement, are crushing burdens. But these factors must not create a "poverty complex" leading to a dependent, helpless mentality. The Two Thirds World church must seriously face the challenge of sacrifice for the sake of our Lord.

Two Thirds World missions should not make the mistake of doing missions by depending on the flow of funds from the West, without any cost to their own churches and Christians.

Two Thirds World missions should not make the mistake of doing missions by depending on the flow of funds from the West, without any cost to their own churches and Christians. These Christians may not be developed economically and technologically, but they are rich in cultural heritage and in human and spiritual resources potential. They can break the mentality which downgrades them and seek with God's help to rise to the challenge of His missionary mandate. This can be done by creating missions awareness in the churches through consistent, systematic education and mobilization of congregations in missions. Appropriate missionary infrastructures must be developed for the new movements to prosper.

4. The world increasingly seems to limit traditional missionary work. Two-thirds of the countries in the world today are in the Restricted Access category for missions. These countries can be reached only by bivocational, tentmaking, cross-cultural servants. There are already thousands of Two Thirds World believers who travel to other countries to make a living, whether simply in search of better jobs or in conscious cross-cultural service to Christ. They may be Filipino maids in Saudi Arabia; Nigerian agriculturalists in Libya; Middle East doctors in Muslim Africa; Indonesian engineers in Cambodia; Singaporean English teachers in China; Latin businessmen in North Africa; Korean fish farmers in India. The fact is that they are there. They need to be equipped as missionaries and then sent out by their churches with training and full prayer support.
5. In many countries of the Two Thirds World, there are strict foreign exchange regulations, and so money cannot be sent out of the country for missionary support. To overcome this hurdle, these missions should move beyond traditional patterns of missionary support, seeking innovative ways from the Holy Spirit. They need not organize themselves on Western patterns of administration, structure, and finance. They can learn from them and yet work out their own patterns that are culturally suitable. This is happening!
6. There are relatively few Two Thirds World mission agencies to care for the number of missionary volunteers. Many of the existing agencies are weak in their administrative structures and in providing adequate pastoral care for their missionaries. Several do not have full-time executive officers. This handicap results in inadequate communication with missionaries. The emphasis is often on recruiting and sending, but missionaries should not be sent unless there is proper home selection and financial support, followed by field placement and supervision, strategizing and shepherding. This area must be remedied as missions develop creative and contextualized infrastructure. Again, these missions can exam-

ine the strengths and weaknesses of the methods and practices of the West and learn from them.*

7. Two Thirds World missions must develop networking systems and partnerships among themselves and with Western missions. There is no place for a nationalistic, do-it-alone attitude, as missions flow from all nations to all nations in the world today.

There is no place for a nationalistic, do-it-alone attitude, as missions flow from all nations to all nations in the world today.

8. This newer missionary movement needs effective and carefully designed training programs and centers. The sad fact is that most of this cross-cultural force has been sent out with very limited prefield training. And the results are coming in: too many young missionaries are returning home after only a shortened first term, never to return; they encountered obstacles (spiritual, human, political, economic) that no one told them about before leaving for the field; some simply are so proud and ethnocentric that they frustrate themselves and the people they

minister to; others left with financial and prayer support promises which soon dried up. Many of these problems can be corrected with proper selection and adequate training.

The Western movement has tended to create a costly training system that is primarily dependent upon formal and academic schooling models. But the non-Western missions are in the enviable position of learning from the West and then designing new training models which have contextualized instruction and practice, combining formal, nonformal, and informal dimensions.

Conclusion

We are profoundly thankful to God for His marvelous new creation of this additional missionary force. The Western force joins hearts and hands with this massive international team. Missionaries from the West will increasingly serve alongside and under non-Western counterparts, and this is a unique challenge to cross-cultural servanthood. There is no room to call a moratorium on Western missions. This is anti-biblical. We need a global call for all churches to be sending missionaries and establishing training bases to further the kingdom of Christ.

21. *Which of the preceding challenges and concerns do you think can be met most effectively through cooperative efforts between Western and non-Western missions?*

* See Lane, D. (1990). *Tuning God's new instruments: A handbook for missions from the Two Thirds World*. OMF Books.

Summary

In broad brush strokes, this chapter has painted the world Christian movement from its tentative first century beginnings to today's stirring developments in the Two Thirds World. As Winter has so aptly illustrated through his whirlwind tour of the ten 400-year epochs of mission history, much of the frontier mission work has been done by a reluctant church being sent through involuntary means. Yet God's determination that some from every nation know His sovereignty and blessing has permitted Christianity to spread relentlessly from one cultural basin to another, even though the experience hasn't always been joyful for the messengers.

After the conquest of Rome by Christianity in 375 A.D., the unshared blessings of Christianity were appropriated by force through the invasion of the Barbarians. These northern European peoples adopted fully the religion of those they conquered, and Christianity thus spread. The mistake of not purposefully evangelizing the next frontier, the Vikings, allowed the gospel to be spread to these people through involuntary means: slaves and concubines taken from raided Christian communities. When these Christianized but warlike Scandinavian peoples turned their attention to spreading Christianity, it resulted in a sad, misdirected attempt to regain the Holy Land through expulsion of the Saracens. This bloody page of mission history, while a form of voluntary going, still represents a major obstacle in evangelization of Muslims.

The final epoch of Christian growth began about the 17th century and coincided with European colonial expansion. It has been an epoch characterized by the voluntary sending of missionaries. The Roman Catholic church led the way in mission advance in the first two centuries in this epoch. Protestants did not awaken to their mission responsibility till the early 19th century. When they did, they launched a tremendous mission effort which continues to this day. In spite of its many shortcomings, the world Christian movement has affected mankind much more profoundly than any other organized religion or philosophical expression and remains the most significant movement in the history of the world. Yet, as if guided by historical determinism, the West, which so long has enjoyed the blessing of Christianity, now seems to be in decline, while the churches of the most recently evangelized regions of the world take up the torch for world evangelization. Abdication of this role to this vigorous newer element of Christian expansion, however, would be a serious and unpardonable mistake by the Western church. The Great Commission task belongs to all churches everywhere.

Integrative Assignment

1. *Explain Winter's statement that history is a "single, coherent drama." What is the plot of the drama? Who are the main characters? How many "acts" does the play have?*
2. *How can you see the come/go, voluntary/involuntary mechanisms at work in your own country today? What strategies or responsibilities might these mechanisms suggest to you and your church?*
3. *Prepare a short talk entitled, "Share Your Blessings or Have Them Taken Away." Illustrate your talk from Scripture and history. Scriptures you might want to use are Luke 19:11-27, Mark 4:21-25, Matthew 21:42-44, and Romans 11.*

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CHAPTER 5

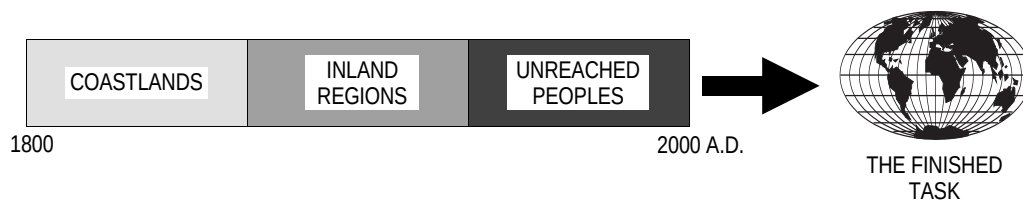
Eras, Pioneers, and Transitions

The God of history has moved governments, kingdoms, armies, and entire peoples in His desire to bring men and nations to know His loving rule. A study of His work through the centuries opens our eyes to an understanding of the depth of His determination to accomplish His mission purpose. As we adjust our own course to cooperate with His purpose, we can learn from history and from those who have served in His cause.

In the previous chapter, Ralph Winter led us on a whirlwind tour of the epochs of the expansion of Christianity. In this section, we will look more closely at the Fifth Period, the last 200 years of mission history. This period of active Protestant involvement in mission is marked by astounding advances in the world Christian movement. Many valuable lessons can be learned from this period—lessons that can help our generation as we work towards closure of the Great Commission mandate.

I. Three Eras of Expansion

The last two centuries of Christian expansion can be understood in terms of three distinct “eras.” In the First Era, lasting from 1792 to 1910, missionary efforts focused on reaching the coastlands of the major unreached continents. The Second Era, spanning 1865 to 1980, concentrated on inland regions. The Third Era, 1934 to the present, has targeted hidden and unreached peoples who were hitherto bypassed. In the following excerpts, Ralph Winter describes each of these eras, the advances for the kingdom made during each period, and persons who played key roles in pioneering these advances.



❑ **Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions ***

Ralph D. Winter

The First Era: Reaching the coastlands

An “under 30” young man, William Carey, got into trouble when he began to take the Great Commission seriously. When he had the opportunity to address a group of ministers, he challenged them to give a reason why the Great Commission did not apply to them. They rebuked him, saying, “When God chooses to win the heathen, He will do it without your help or ours.” He was unable to speak again on the subject, so he patiently wrote out his analysis, “An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens.”

William Carey’s little book, in combination with the Evangelical Awakening, quickened vision and changed lives on both sides of the Atlantic.

The resulting small book convinced a few of his friends to create a tiny missions agency, the “means” of which he had spoken.** The structure was flimsy and weak, providing only the minimal backing he needed to go to India. However, the impact of his example reverberated throughout the English-speaking world, and his little book became the Magna Carta of the Protestant mission movement.

William Carey was not the first Protestant missionary. For years the Moravians had sent people to Greenland, America, and Africa. But his little book, in combination with the Evangelical Awakening, quickened vision and changed lives on both sides of the Atlantic. Response was almost instantaneous: a second missionary society was founded in London;

two in Scotland; one in Holland; and then still another in England. By then it was apparent to all that Carey was right when he had insisted that organized efforts in the form of missions societies were essential to the success of the missionary endeavor.

In America, five college students, aroused by Carey’s book, met to pray for God’s direction for their lives. This unobtrusive prayer meeting, later known as the “Haystack Prayer Meeting,” resulted in an American “means”—the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Even more important, they started a student mission movement which became the example and forerunner of other student movements in missions to this day.

In fact, during the first 25 years after Carey sailed to India, a dozen mission agencies were formed on both sides of the Atlantic, and the First Era in Protestant missions was off to a good start. Realistically speaking, however, missions in this First Era was a pitifully small shoestring operation, in relation to the major preoccupations of most Europeans and Americans in that day. The idea that we should organize in order to send missionaries did not come easily, but it eventually became an accepted pattern.

Carey’s influence led some women in Boston to form women’s missionary prayer groups, a trend which led to women becoming the main custodians of mission knowledge and motivation. After some years women began to go to the field as single missionaries. Finally, by 1865, unmarried American women established women’s mission boards which, like Roman Catholic women’s orders, only sent out

* Winter, R. D. (1992). Four men, three eras, two transitions. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. B35-B43). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Carey’s thesis was that committed societies needed to be founded to advance the gospel in other cultures. These societies were the “means” to which he referred in his book.

single women as missionaries and were run entirely by single women at home.

There are two very bright notes about the First Era. One is the astonishing demonstration of love and sacrifice on the part of those who went out. Africa, especially, was a forbidding continent. All mission outreach to Africa, prior to 1775, had totally failed. Of all Catholic efforts, all Moravian efforts, nothing remained. Not one missionary of any kind existed on the continent on the eve of the First Era. The gruesome statistics of almost inevitable sickness and death that haunted, yet did not daunt, the decades of truly valiant missionaries who went out after 1790 in virtually a suicidal stream cannot be matched by any other era or by any other cause. Very few missionaries to Africa in the first 60 years of the First Era survived more than two years. As I have reflected on this measure of devotion, I have been humbled to tears, for I wonder—if I or my people today could or would match that record. Can you imagine our Urbana students today going out into missionary work if they knew that for decade after

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A second bright spot in this First Era is the development of high-quality insight into mission strategy. The movement had several great missiologists. In regard to home structure, they clearly understood the value of the mission structure being allowed a life of its own. For example, we read that the London Missionary Society experienced unprecedented and unequalled success, “due partly to its freedom from ecclesiastical supervision and partly to its formation

from an almost equal number of ministers and laymen.” In regard to field structure, we can take a note from Henry Venn, who was related to the famous Clapham evangelicals* and the son of a founder of the Church Missionary Society. Except for a few outdated terms, one of his most famous paragraphs sounds strangely modern:

Regarding the ultimate object of a Mission, viewed under its ecclesiastical result, to be the settlement of a Native Church under Native Pastors upon a self-supporting system, it should be borne in mind that the progress of a Mission mainly depends upon the training up and the location of Native Pastors; and that, as it has been happily expressed, the “euthanasia of a Mission” takes place when a missionary, surrounded by well-trained Native congregations under Native Pastors, is able to resign all pastoral work into their hands, and gradually relax his superintendence over the pastors themselves, ’til it insensibly ceases; and so the Mission passes into a settled Christian community. Then the missionary and all missionary agencies should be transferred to the “regions beyond.”

These missiologists were recognizing the stages of mission activity recently described in the alliterative sequence:

- Stage 1: A Pioneer stage – First contact with a people group.
- Stage 2: A Paternal stage – Expatriates train national leadership.
- Stage 3: A Partnership stage – National leaders work as equals with expatriates.
- Stage 4: A Participation stage – Expatriates are no longer equal partners, but only participate by invitation.

* The Clapham evangelicals were a group of influential evangelicals in England during the early 1800s.

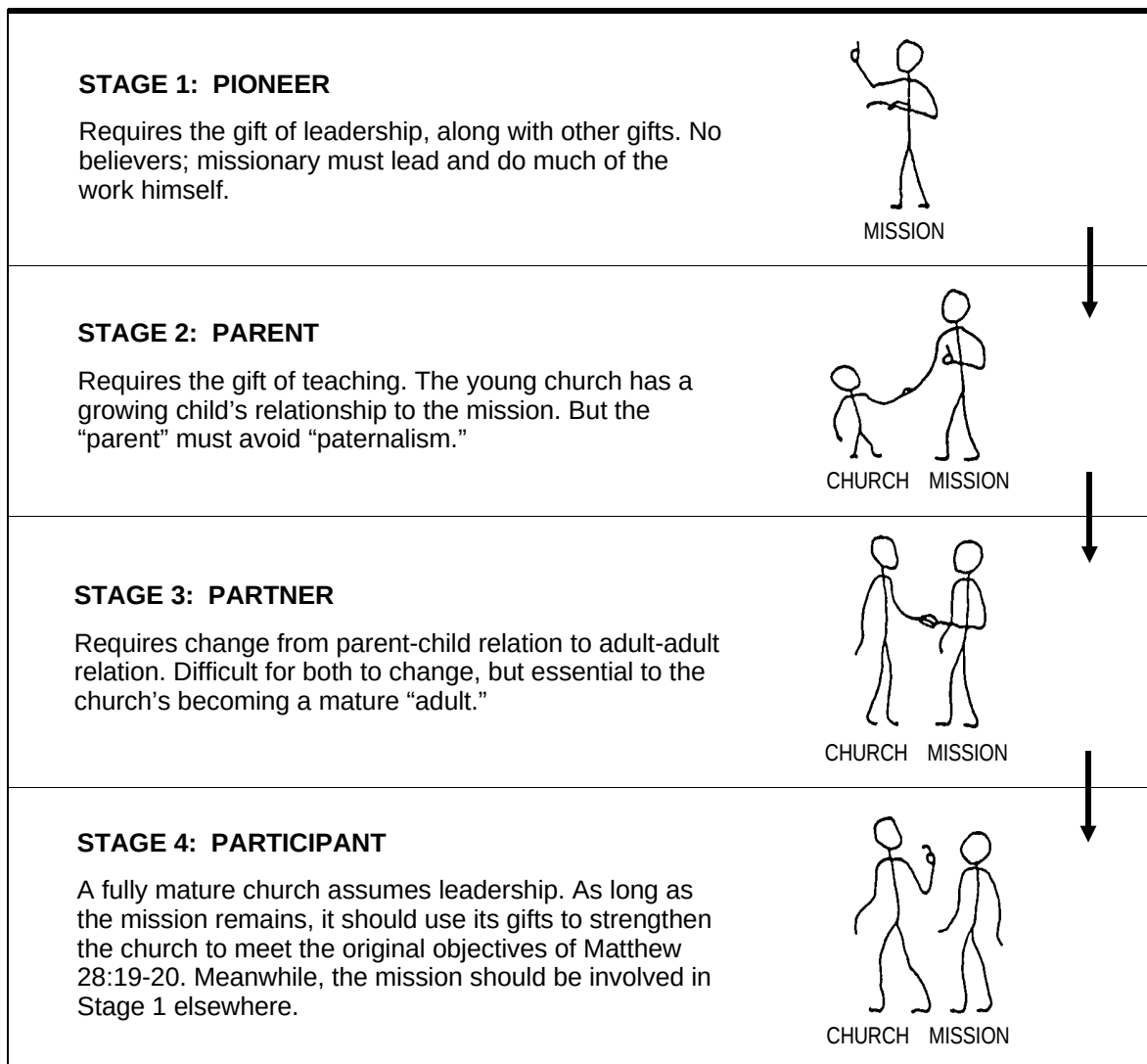


Figure 5-1. Mission-Church Relations: Four Stages of Development

1. What outstanding "bright spots" characterized the First Era of modern Protestant missions? Discuss these in light of what you observe to be the current state of missions activity, particularly in your own church or denomination.

Four stages of development

Slow and painstaking though the labors of the First Era were, they did bear fruit, and the familiar series of stages can be observed which goes from no church in the pioneer stage to infant church in the paternal stage and to the more complicated mature church in the partnership and participation stage. Samuel Hoffman of the Reformed Church in America Board puts it well: "The Christian missionary who was loved as an evangelist and liked as a teacher, may find himself resented as an administrator."

Lucky is the missionary in whose own career this whole sequence of stages takes place. More likely the series represents the work in a specific field with a succession of missionaries, or it may be the experience of an agency which in its early period bursts out in work in a number of places and then after some years finds that most of its fields are mature at about the same time. But rightly or wrongly, this kind of succession is visible in the mission move-

ment globally, as the fever for change and nationalization sweeps the thinking of almost all executives at once and leaps from continent to continent, affecting new fields still in earlier stages as well as old ones in the latter stages.

At any rate, by 1865 there was a strong consensus on both sides of the Atlantic that the missionary should go home when he had worked himself out of a job. Since the First Era focused primarily upon the coastlands of Asia and Africa, we are not surprised that literal withdrawal would come about first in a case where there were no inland territories. Thus, symbolizing the latter stages of the First Era was the withdrawal of all missionaries from the Hawaiian Islands, then a separate country. This was done with legitimate pride and fanfare and fulfilled the highest expectations, then and now, of successful progress through the stage of missionary planting, watering, and harvest.

2. Why is an understanding of the four stages of mission-church relations important for the evaluation of work in any field?

The First Era of Protestant missions was fueled by an intense, almost reckless compassion for the lost, as well as a measured attempt to understand the task and the implications for the long haul. From this era, Protestant missions learned that service for God does require heart and soul, but also mind and strength.

An awakened Protestant church in Europe and America applied herself to using "means" in carrying out her responsibility for world evangelization. Mission agencies (mostly related to denominations) which were organized as the "means" of promoting and directing that effort proved to be one of the most significant aspects of this awakening. The First Era also aroused missions leaders to the fact that the missionary task required not only compassion and prayer, but also an understanding of the process which would lead to effectiveness in completing the worldwide task. An emerging *missiology* * helped define their task and gave them tools to evaluate and organize their work, especially in planning to build the national church. It became clear: **Effective mission requires compassion and prayer. It also requires research and planning.**

* Missiology is the "science" of mission. It employs theology, linguistics, the social sciences, and other academic disciplines important to the training of missionaries and the effective formulation and implementation of mission strategy.

As First Era missiologists understood it, the completion of the four stages of mission-church relations signaled the end of the missionary task. In Hawaii, the South Sea islands, and some coastal regions, completion occurred relatively quickly, and the feeling prevailed that a missionary presence was no longer necessary. In other parts of the world, however, the stages were not completed, or if they were completed, much pioneer work was often still needed. Confusion ensued with supporting constituencies divided on whether missionaries in general were still needed or not. In the midst of this disorientation, God began to provide a clearer focus during a Second Era, as Winter explains below.

The Second Era: Penetrating the inland regions

A second symbolic event of 1865 is even more significant, at least for the inauguration of the Second Era. A young man, after a short term and like Carey still under 30, in the teeth of surrounding counter-advice, established the first of a whole new breed of missions emphasizing the inland territories. This second young upstart was given little but negative notice, but like William Carey, brooded over statistics, charts, and maps. When he suggested that the inland peoples of China needed to be reached, he was told you could not get there, and he was asked if he wished to carry on his shoulders the blood of the young people he would thus send to their deaths.

The Student Volunteer Movement was history's single most potent mission organization. It netted 100,000 volunteers who gave their lives to missions.

With only trade school medicine, without any university experience, much less missiological training, and a checkered past in regard to his own individualistic behavior while he was on the field, he was merely one more of the weak things that God used to confound the wise. Even his early anti-church-planting missionary strategy was breath-takingly erroneous by today's church-planting standards. Yet God strangely honored him because his gaze was fixed upon the world's least-reached peoples. Hudson Taylor had a divine wind behind him. The Holy Spirit spared him from many pitfalls, and it was his organization, the China Inland Mission [now called Overseas Missionary Fellowship]—the most cooperative, servant organization yet to appear—that eventually served in one way or

another over 6,000 missionaries, predominantly in the interior of China. It took 20 years for other missions to begin to join Taylor in his special emphasis—the unreached, inland frontiers.

One reason the Second Era began slowly is that many people were confused. There were already many missions in existence. Why more? Yet as Taylor pointed out, all existing agencies were confined to the coastlands of Africa and Asia, or islands in the Pacific. People questioned, “Why go to the interior if you haven’t finished the job on the coast?”

I am not sure the parallel is true today, but the Second Era apparently needed not only a new vision but a lot of new organizations. Taylor not only started an English frontier mission, he went to Scandinavia and the Continent to challenge people to start new agencies. As a result, directly or indirectly, over 40 new agencies took shape to compose the faith missions that rightly should be called frontier missions, as the names of many of them still indicate: China Inland Mission, Sudan Interior Mission, Africa Inland Mission, Heart of Africa Mission, Unevangelized Fields Mission, Regions Beyond Missionary Union.

As in the early stage of the First Era, when things began to move, God brought forth a student movement. This one was more massive than before—the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions—history's single most potent mission organization. In the 1880s and '90s there were only 1/37th as many college students as there are today, but the Student Volunteer Movement netted 100,000 volunteers who gave their lives to missions. Twenty thousand actually went overseas. As we see it now, the other 80,000 had to stay home to rebuild the foundations of the missions endeavor. They began

the Laymen's Missionary Movement and strengthened existing women's missionary societies.

However, as the fresh new college students of the Second Era burst on the scene overseas, they did not always fathom how the older missionaries of the First Era could have turned responsibility over to

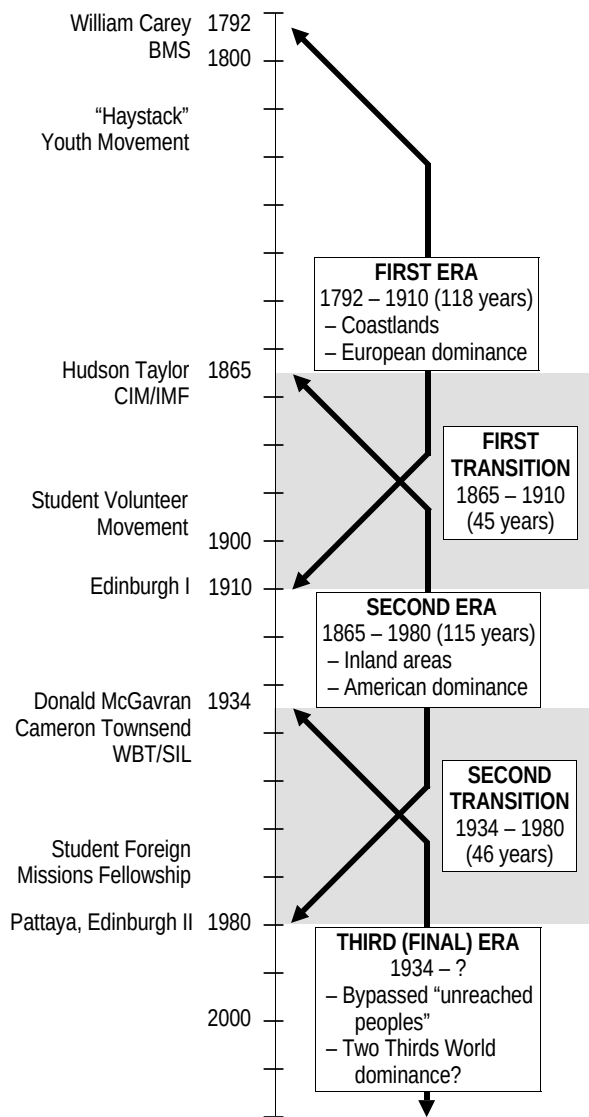


Figure 5-2. The Two Transitions

national leadership at the least educated levels of society. First Era missionaries were in the minority now, and the wisdom they had gained from their experience was bypassed by the large number of new college-educated recruits. Thus, in the early stages of the Second Era, the new missionaries, instead of going to new frontiers, sometimes assumed leadership over existing churches, forcing First Era missionaries and national leadership (which had been painstakingly developed) into the background. In some cases this caused a huge step backward in mission strategy.

By 1925, however, the largest mission movement in history was in full swing. By then, Second Era missionaries had finally learned the basic lessons they had first ignored and produced an incredible record. They had planted churches in a thousand new places, mainly "inland," and by 1940 the reality of the "younger churches" around the world was widely acclaimed as the "great new fact of our time." The strength of these churches led both national leaders and missionaries to assume that all additional frontiers could simply be mopped up by the ordinary evangelism of the churches scattered throughout the world. More and more people wondered if, in fact, missionaries weren't needed so badly! Once more, as in 1865, it seemed logical to send missionaries home from many areas of the world.

For us today it is highly important to note the overlap of these first two eras. The 45-year period between 1865 and 1910 (compare 1934 to 1980 today) was a transition between the strategy appropriate to the mature stages of Era 1, the Coastlands Era, and the strategy appropriate to the pioneering stages of Era 2, the Inland Era.

3. *What advances were made in the Second Era? What mistakes did missionaries have to overcome? How could the mistakes have been avoided?*

4. *Why does Winter draw our attention to the periods of transition?*

Shortly after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, there ensued the shattering World Wars and the worldwide collapse of the colonial apparatus. By 1945 many overseas churches were prepared not only for the withdrawal of the colonial powers, but for the absence of the missionary as well. While there was no very widespread outcry, "Missionary Go Home," as some supposed, nevertheless things were different now, as even the people in the pews at home ultimately sensed. Pioneer and paternal were no longer the relevant stages, but partnership and participation.

In 1967, the total number of career missionaries from America began to decline (and it has continued to do so to this day). Why? Christians had been led to believe that all necessary beachheads had been established. By 1967, over 90 percent of all missionaries from North America were working with strong national churches that had been in existence for some time.

The facts, however, were not that simple. Unnoticed by most everyone, another era in missions had begun.

5. *Contrast and compare the First and Second Eras. What similarities existed? What significant changes in focus characterized the Second Era?*

The Second Era met the challenge of the geographically isolated interiors of the continents. Hudson Taylor's vision spawned the formation of nearly 40 new mission societies, often called "faith missions," * which undertook this new focus of concern. These mission societies deployed thousands of recruits from the Student Volunteer Movement. The result was tens of thousands of churches established throughout previously unevangelized parts of the globe.

At the same time, special problems arose. How was the new wave of missionaries to be appropriately integrated into the work? When should these workers learn from the past, and when should they forge new paths? These challenges still arise today.

The Third Era: Reaching the unreached peoples

This era was begun by a pair of young men of the Student Volunteer Movement: Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran. Cameron Townsend was in so much of a hurry to get to the mission field that he didn't bother to finish college. He went to Guatemala as a Second Era missionary, building on work which had been done in the past. In that country, as in all other mission fields, there was plenty to do by missionaries working with established national churches.

But Townsend was alert enough to notice that the majority of Guatemala's population did not speak Spanish. As he moved from village to village, trying to distribute scriptures written in the Spanish language, he began to realize that Spanish evangelism would never reach all Guatemala's people. He was further convinced of this when an Indian asked him, "If your God is so smart, why can't He speak our language?" He was just 23 when he began to move on the basis of this new perspective.

Surely in our time one person comparable to William Carey and Hudson Taylor is Cameron Townsend. Like Carey and Taylor, Townsend saw that

there were still unreached frontiers, and for almost a half century he has waved the flag for the overlooked tribal peoples of the world. He started out hoping to help older boards reach out to tribal people. Like Carey and Taylor, he ended up starting his own mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators, which is dedicated to reaching these new frontiers. At first he

Cameron Townsend saw that there were still unreached frontiers, and for almost a half century he has waved the flag for the overlooked tribal peoples of the world.

thought there must be about 500 unreached tribal groups in the world. (He was judging by the large number of tribal languages in Mexico alone.) Later, he revised his figure to 1,000, then 2,000, and now it is closer to 5,000. As his conception of the enormity of the task has increased, the size of his organization has increased. Today it numbers over 4,000 adult workers.

6. In what ways was Townsend similar to Carey and Taylor?

* Faith missions are independent, non-denominationally aligned missions funded primarily through the freewill offerings of churches and individuals.

At the very same time Townsend was ruminating in Guatemala, Donald McGavran was beginning to yield to the seriousness, not of linguistic barriers, but of India's amazing social barriers. Townsend "discovered" the tribes; McGavran discovered a more nearly universal category he labeled "homogeneous units," which today are more often called "people groups."

Once such a group is penetrated, diligently taking advantage of that missiological breakthrough along group lines, the strategic "bridge of God" to that people group is established. The corollary of this truth is the fact that *until* such a breakthrough is made, normal evangelism and church planting cannot take place.

Donald McGavran's active efforts and writings spawned both the Church Growth Movement and the Frontier Mission Movement.

McGavran did not found a new mission. (Townsend did so only when the existing missions did not properly respond to the tribal challenge.) McGavran's active efforts and writings spawned both the Church Growth Movement and the Frontier Mission Movement, the one devoted to expanding within already penetrated groups and the other devoted to deliberate approaches to the remaining unpenetrated groups.

As with Carey and Taylor before them, for 20 years Townsend and McGavran attracted little attention. But by the 1950s both had wide audiences. By 1980, 46 years from 1934, a 1910-like conference was held, focusing precisely on the forgotten groups these two men emphasized. The Edinburgh-1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions was the largest mission meeting in history, measured by the number of mission agencies sending delegates. And wonder of wonders, 57 Third World agencies sent delegates. This is the sleeper of the Third Era! Also, a simultaneous youth meeting, the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions, pointed the way for all future mission meetings to include significant youth participation.

As happened in the early stages of the first two eras, the Third Era has spawned a number of new mission agencies. Some, like the New Tribes Mission, carry in their names reference to this new emphasis. The names of others, such as Gospel Recordings and Mission Aviation Fellowship, refer to the new technologies necessary for the reaching of tribal and other isolated peoples of the world. Some Second Era agencies, like Regions Beyond Missionary Union, have never ceased to stress frontiers and have merely increased their staff so they can penetrate further—to people groups previously overlooked.

More recently many have begun to realize that tribal peoples are not the only forgotten peoples. Many other groups, some in the middle of partially Christianized areas, have been completely overlooked. These peoples are being called the "Unreached Peoples" and are defined by ethnic or sociological traits to be people so different from the cultural traditions of any existing church that missions (rather than evangelism) strategies are necessary for the planting of indigenous churches within their traditions.

If the First Era was characterized by reaching coastland peoples and the Second Era by inland territories, the Third Era must be characterized by the more difficult-to-define, non-geographical category which we have called "Unreached Peoples"—people groups which are socially isolated. Because this concept has been so hard to define, the Third Era has been even slower getting started than the Second Era. Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran began calling attention to forgotten peoples over 40 years ago, but only recently has any major attention been given to them. More tragic still, we have essentially forgotten the pioneering techniques of the First and Second Eras, so we almost need to reinvent the wheel as we learn again how to approach groups of people completely untouched by the gospel!

We know that there are about 11,000 people groups in the "Unreached Peoples" category, gathered in clusters of similar peoples, these clusters numbering not more than 3,000. Each individual people will require a separate, new missionary beachhead. Is this too much? Can this be done? Is there any realism in the slogan gaining currency, "A church for every people by the year 2000"?

7. What characteristics distinguish the Third Era from its predecessors?

The Third Era is gaining momentum. Through the efforts of the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, and organizations with a similar focus around the world, the church has been alerted to the ultimate objective of this third and final era of mission history. Hundreds of new efforts are being initiated to reach the “unreached peoples”—groups socially, ethnically, or linguistically isolated from the gospel. In this burgeoning enthusiasm for reaching the final goal, let us be like the “head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52). While responding to this tremendous new challenge and considering new realities, let us not forget to look at the old lessons learned by those who went before us. The study of mission history and the pioneers who led the way can save us from many mistakes.

II. Four Pioneers

From the study of the eras of mission history, we learn that every major trend in missions has been led by men to whom God gave a specific vision. Selections from the writings of pioneers such as Carey, Taylor, Townsend, and McGavran provide a rich source of insight that is stirring and instructive. Many of the issues these men grappled with are still current today. In this section, Meg Crossman guides us as we look in more detail at the lives of these four pioneers and the principal concepts they imparted through their writings.

Mission Pioneers

Meg Crossman

William Carey: Pioneer to the coastlands

There is a curiously contemporary quality to the writings of William Carey, the 18th century shoemaker who has come to be called “The Father of Modern Missions.” Carey, with little formal education, was stirred to concern by reading the reports of Captain Cook’s Pacific explorations. He learned all he could about the people and cultures of other countries. The plight of unevangelized continents so burdened him that he covered his walls with maps, praying as he repaired shoes.

In 1792, the British had been in India (through the East India Company) for more than 150 years. In all

that time not one verse of Scripture had been translated into any native language. Carey had early demonstrated linguistic gifting, teaching himself Greek with the help of a New Testament commentary. He also learned French and Dutch in a matter of weeks. He began to ponder the responsibility of Christians to reach the unsaved with the Word of God.

This impoverished part-time pastor, hoping to convince his tiny denomination to act in reaching other nations, wrote a small pamphlet: “An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the

Conversion of the Heathens.” This “little book with the long name” produced an upheaval that affected all of Christianity. The following sections summarize some of Carey’s most significant concepts.*

Pray and act

As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event

by word, but to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of His name.

Carey saw that prayer required a response of obedience. He was also convinced that in order for the church to carry out her kingdom obligation, the members must first be informed of the actual situation. With these things in mind, Carey prepared detailed demographic charts of the unreached continents to inform and motivate the church to action.

8. What missions relevance does Carey attach to the Lord's command that we pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

Overcoming resistance at home

One of the greatest obstacles Carey faced in motivating the church towards her obligation was the then-popular theological opinion that the Great Commission was binding *only* on the apostles. Among other arguments to dispel this notion, Carey pointed out:

If the command of Christ to teach all nations be restricted to the apostles, or those under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then that of baptizing should be so, too; and every denomination of Christian, except the Quakers, do wrong in baptizing with water at all.

Next Carey dealt with an objection that is still current: “There is so much to be done here at home!” Although the language may seem stilted, the argument is fresh:

It has been objected that there are multitudes in our own nation and within our immediate spheres of action, who are as ignorant as the South-Sea savages, and that therefore we

have work enough at home, without going into other countries. That there are thousands in our own land as far from God as possible, I readily grant, and that this ought to excite us to ten-fold diligence to our work, and in attempts to spread divine knowledge amongst them is a certain fact; but that it ought to supersede all attempts to spread the gospel in foreign parts seems to want proof. Our own countrymen have the means of grace, and may attend on the word preached if they choose it. They have the means of knowing the truth, and faithful ministers are placed in almost every part of the land, whose spheres of action might be much extended if their congregations were but more hearty and active in the cause; but with them the case is widely different, who have no Bible, no written language (which many of them have not), no ministers, no good civil government, nor any of those advantages which we have. Pity therefore, humanity, and much more Christianity, call loudly for every possible exertion to introduce the gospel amongst them.

* Carey, W. (1962). *An enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathens* (New Facsimile ed.). London: Carey Kingsgate Press. (Original work published 1792)

9. Summarize Carey's response to the objection, "We have so many problems here at home."

A call to action

Carey researched extensively the state of the unsaved world in his day. In more than 20 charts covering information about every continent, he demonstrated the tremendous need. After evaluating the compelling nature of the gathered information, he called the church to act:

The impediments in the way of carrying the gospel among the heathen must arise, I think, from one or other of the following things;—either their distance from us, their barbarous and savage manner of living, the danger of being killed by them, the difficulty of procuring the necessities of life, or the unintelligibility of their language.

Carey dealt with each of these objections, pointing out that none of these considerations restrained commercial interests. If people could go for gain, could they not go for God? Certainly, these excuses did not stop "the apostles and their successors, who went among the barbarous *Germans* and *Gauls*, and still more barbarous *Britons*!" As for being killed, Carey pointed out that acts of savagery were usually provoked by hostility on the part of newcomers and that missionaries such as the Moravians were seldom molested.

The use of means

One of Carey's most important contributions was his concept of the use of "means":

Suppose a company of serious Christians, ministers and private persons, were to form themselves into a society, and make a number of rules respecting the regulation of the plan, and the persons who are to be employed as missionaries, the means of defraying the expense, etc., etc. This society must consist of persons whose hearts are in the work, men of serious religion, and possessing a spirit of perseverance; there must be a determination not to admit any person who is not of this description, or to retain him longer than he answers to it.

From such a society a *committee* might be appointed, whose business it should be to procure all the information they could upon the subject, to receive contributions, to enquire into the characters, tempers, abilities, and religious views of the missionaries, and also to provide them with necessities for their undertakings.

10. What practical steps does Carey suggest for the carrying out of God's intended purposes? Why was this idea revolutionary?

Carey acts on his own proposal

From this inauspicious beginning, the modern Protestant missions movement arose. The Baptist Missionary Society was formed, the first of many denominational mission agencies. Carey did not suggest to others what he was not willing to do himself. In 1793, he went out with his family to India as a missionary for BMS.

The hurdles Carey had to overcome in getting to the field are similar to the kind missionaries contend with today. First, Carey had to combat universalism and other theological objections. Next, he met severe resistance to his new idea of “means,” essentially a “parachurch organization.” He struggled to raise his outgoing expenses, an overwhelming amount at the time.

William Carey lived out his great watchword, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.”

Once Carey was on the field, his promised support dried up, and he was forced to undertake secular employment, much like today’s “tentmakers.”* His target, India, was firmly “closed” to missionary work, and the population was highly resistant to the gospel. Although Carey’s supporting base back home was always marginal, the group still attempted to control the work from England.

Carey worked in India for eight years, all the while battling the continuing hostility of the East India Company. At last he found refuge in the Danish-held city of Serampore, near Calcutta. With cowork-

ers Joshua Marshman and William Ward, Carey formed a team known as the Serampore Trio that would work together for many years. Even during this time, Carey supported his work almost entirely through his well-paid and prestigious position as professor of oriental languages at Fort William College in Calcutta. The team’s publication work was financed largely through the sale of published materials.

In spite of personal tragedy (Carey’s wife died insane, and several children perished as well) and ministry setbacks (a fire in 1812 destroyed priceless manuscripts and whole translations), Carey continued doggedly. He once said, “I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything.”

Carey lived out his great watchword, “Expect great things *from* God; attempt great things *for* God.” He translated the entire Bible into Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi. Together the team completed 46 translations, New Testaments, and portions in various languages and dialects. Carey founded Serampore College to train national leaders and church planters.

Carey died in 1834, but as Dr. Ruth Tucker notes, “not before leaving his mark on India and on missions for all time. His influence in India went beyond his massive linguistic accomplishments.... He also made a notable impact on harmful Indian practices through his long struggle against widow burning and infanticide. But otherwise he sought to leave the culture intact.”**

* Tentmakers are committed Christians with marketable occupational skills who are working overseas while effectively sharing their faith in Jesus Christ. The term is taken from the Apostle Paul’s practice of making tents to help support himself during his missionary journeys (Acts 18:3).

** Tucker, R. H. (1983). *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (p. 121). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

11. What impressions impact you most from the life and writings of William Carey?

**Hudson Taylor:
Champion of the inland regions**

Like Carey, the young Englishman who would launch the movement to the inland regions had an unprepossessing start. At the age of 17, Hudson Taylor experienced a compelling call to China. He began to learn about China and prepare himself to work there.

The call to service *

Well do I remember, as in unreserved consecration I put myself, my life, my friends, my all, upon the altar, the deep solemnity that came over my soul with the assurance that my offering was accepted. The presence of God became unutterably real and blessed; and though but a child under sixteen, I remember stretching myself on the ground and lying there silent before Him with unspeakable awe and unspeakable joy.

***“Move men through God by prayer alone,”
became Hudson Taylor’s motto and deeply
affected his view of ministry.***

While pursuing medical studies, Taylor began, in a disciplined way, to prepare himself for missionary service. He trained himself to live simply and frugally. He practiced trusting God for practical provision, letting the Lord provide his needs, even when

it was within his power and rights to ask things of others. “Move men through God by prayer alone,” became his motto and deeply affected his view of ministry.

I began to take more exercise in the open air to strengthen my physique. My feather bed I had taken away and sought to dispense with as many other home comforts as I could in order to prepare myself for rougher lines of life. I began also to do what Christian work was in my power, in the way of tract distribution, Sunday-school teaching, and visiting the poor and sick, as opportunity afforded.

... More time was given in my solitude to the study of the Word of God, to visiting the poor, and to evangelistic work on summer evenings than would otherwise have been the case. Brought into contact in this way with many who were in distress, I soon saw the privilege of still further economizing, and found it not difficult to give away much more than the proportion of my income I had at first intended.

Besides living in very simple accommodations, Taylor periodically went through his books and his wardrobe to see what he could give to others. As his guideline, he asked what he would be ashamed of still having if the Lord were to return that day.

* Taylor, J. H. (n.d.). *A retrospect* (pp. 10-14). Philadelphia: China Inland Mission.

12. In what practical ways did Taylor develop himself for missionary labor?

A new agency needed *

In 1854 Taylor arrived in Shanghai, China. He worked with some missionaries there but began to take trips into the interior where no missionaries had yet gone. To make himself more understandable to the Chinese, he adopted the dress of a Mandarin scholar, including blacking his hair and wearing a pigtail. British colleagues were horrified, but the increase in effectiveness with the nationals convinced Taylor of the wisdom of his actions. Even when he had to go home for health reasons, God used the apparent setback for ultimate good:

To me it seemed a great calamity that failure of health compelled my relinquishing work for God in China, just when it was more fruitful than ever before.... Little did I then realize that the long separation from China was a necessary step towards the formation of a work which God would bless as He has blessed the China Inland Mission.

Months of earnest prayer and not a few abortive efforts had resulted in a deep conviction that a special agency was essential for the evangelization of Inland China.... The grave difficulty of possibly interfering with existing missionary operations at home was foreseen; but it was concluded that, by simple trust in God, a suitable agency might be

raised up and sustained without interfering injuriously with any existing work. I had also a growing conviction that God would have *me* to seek from Him the needed workers, and to go forth with them. But for a long time unbelief hindered my taking the first step.

Taylor's great struggle in prayer centered not on God's ability to give workers, but on the dangers, difficulties, and trials those workers might face on the field. The struggle climaxed on a beach in Brighton, England.

On Sunday, June 25th, 1865, unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security, while millions were perishing for lack of knowledge, I wandered out on the sands alone, in great spiritual agony; and there the Lord conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself to God for this service. I told Him that all the responsibility as to issues and consequences must rest with Him; that as His servant, it was mine to obey and follow Him—His, to direct, to care for, and to guide me and those who might labour with me. Need I say that peace at once flowed into my heart?

13. Why was a new society needed at this time?

* Taylor, J. H. (n.d.). *A retrospect* (pp. 105-109). Philadelphia: China Inland Mission.

Taylor's society was unique, developed around the experiences and person of its founder. It was not linked to a denomination. It appealed to the working classes instead of demanding years of study and training. Its headquarters was in China, rather than far away in England, so it could be more responsive to field situations. Like Taylor, the missionaries were to adopt Chinese dress.

Hudson Taylor's missionaries were not to ask for funds but to trust God entirely for their needs, believing that "God's work, done God's way, will never lack for God's supply."

Taylor gladly accepted single women and expected missionary wives to be full partners in the enterprise. Most distinctive of all, the missionaries were not to ask for funds but to trust God entirely for their needs, believing that "God's work, done God's way, will never lack for God's supply." From this principle came the appellation, "faith missions."

Extending the kingdom to China *

Besides maintaining an extensive speaking schedule, Taylor mobilized many through the book he wrote with his wife, Maria, called *China's Spiritual Needs and Claims*. Like Carey, Taylor used charts and research as well as scriptural evidence in presenting his case.

Think of the over eighty millions beyond the reach of the Gospel in the seven provinces,

where missionaries have longest laboured; think of the over 100 millions in the other eleven provinces of China Proper, beyond the reach of the few missionaries labouring there; think of the over twenty millions who inhabit the vast regions of Manchuria, Mongolia, Thibet, and the Northwestern Dependencies, which exceed in extent the whole of Europe—an aggregate of over 200 millions beyond the reach of all existing agencies—and say, how shall

God's name be hallowed by them,
His kingdom come among them, and
His will be done by them?

His name and His attributes they have never heard. His kingdom is not proclaimed among them. His will is not made known to them!

We have now presented a brief and cursory view of the state and claims of China.... We have sought to press the great command of our risen Savior, "*Go ye, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,*" and would point out that in the parable of our Lord, contained in Matt. 25, it was not a *stranger*, but a *servant*; not an *immoral* but an *unprofitable* one who was to be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.... We cannot but believe that the contemplation of these solemn facts has awakened in many the heartfelt prayer, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do, that Thy name may be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done in China?"

14. How does Taylor's understanding of the prayer "Thy kingdom come" influence his call for workers?

* Taylor, J. H. (1887). *China's spiritual needs and claims* (7th ed.) (pp. 38, 47-48). London: Morgan & Scott.

In 1865, the China Inland Mission was officially organized, and the following year Taylor left with Maria, his four children, and 15 recruits for China. While extensive work was done and the force of laborers grew, there were also problems to be overcome and dangers to be faced. One such incident occurred in 1900, when 153 missionaries and 53 missionary children were killed in the hostility unleashed by the Boxer rebellion.

Hudson Taylor's agency, the China Inland Mission, became a model for more than 40 new "faith missions."

Taylor lived to see a company of over 1,500 workers committed to the vast inland regions of China. His agency became a model for more than 40 new "faith missions." His vision for the inlands stirred new zeal for the interior populations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well.

***Townsend and McGavran:
To see with new eyes***

Two very different men ushered in the Third Era. Cameron Townsend dropped out of college to go to work on the field. Donald McGavran, son and grandson of missionaries, left the field to seek a secular career. Townsend gloried in the fact that he never had a degree. McGavran finished his Ph.D. in his 30s. Townsend served in Guatemala. McGavran returned to work in India. Once again, it was not from the institutional church but from its periphery that new movements began.

The impact of each of these men was extensive. Townsend's agency became the largest in the Protestant world. McGavran did not found an agency, but his writings affected every agency. These two unique individuals, captured by provocative insights, tempered by field experience, changed forever the face of world missions.

***Cameron Townsend:
Visionary for tribes and translations***

Cam Townsend, or "Uncle Cam" as he would affectionately be known, was led to the Lord by his deaf father, Will. He began his work on the field selling Bibles. Confronted by an Indian who could not read the Spanish testaments, he determined to help those who did not have Scripture in their own language. His own words tell of his growing conviction:*

"Don't be a fool," friends told me fifty years ago when I decided to translate the Word for the Cakchiquel Indians, a large tribe in Central America. "Those Indians aren't worth what it would take to learn their outlandish language and translate the Bible for them. They can't read anyhow. Let the Indians learn Spanish," they said.

My friends used these same arguments fourteen years later, when, after having seen the transformation the Word brought to the Cakchiquels, I dreamed of reaching all other tribes. When I included even the small primitive groups in Amazonia in my plan, my friends added other arguments. "They'll kill you," said one old, experienced missionary. "Those jungle tribes are dying out anyway. They kill each other as well as outsiders with their spears, or bows and arrows. If they don't kill you, malaria will get you, or your canoe will upset in the rapids and you'll be without supplies and a month away from the last jumping-off place. Forget the other tribes, and stay with the Cakchiquels."

But I couldn't forget them. And one day God gave me a verse that settled the matter for me. He said: "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have a hundred sheep and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains and

* Townsend, W. C. (1963). Tribes, tongues, and translators. In Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., in cooperation with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, *Who brought the Word* (pp. 7-8). Santa Ana, CA: Wycliffe.

seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matt. 18:11-12).

That verse guided me; I went after the "one lost sheep," and four thousand young men and women have followed suit.

As Townsend began to see the need to develop a unique work with each tribal and language group, he was also forced to realize that a new agency was needed as well. The complex work of translation required a great degree of both specialization and support.

We call ourselves the "Wycliffe Bible Translators," in memory of John Wycliffe who first gave the whole Bible to the speakers of English. Half our members are dedicated to linguistic and translation work among the tribespeople, bringing them the Word. The other half are support personnel; teachers, secretaries, pilots, mechanics, printers, doctors, nurses, accountants, and others who man the supply lines.... Our tools are linguistics and the Word, administered in love and in the spirit of service to all without discrimination.

... Tribesmen formerly lost to the lifestream of their respective nations are being transformed by the Word. And whether the transformation occurs in the mountains of Southern Mexico, the jungles of Amazonia,

or the desert plains of Australia, it is a spectacular leap out of the old into the new.

Townsend maintained that "The greatest missionary is the Bible in the Mother tongue. It never needs a furlough, is never considered a foreigner."* His leadership and drive brought into being Wycliffe, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and JAARS (Jungle Aviation and Radio Service). Through these

"The greatest missionary is the Bible in the Mother tongue. It never needs a furlough, is never considered a foreigner."

— Cameron Townsend

organizations' service together, more than 300 translations have been dedicated, each for a different tribe or language group.

With personnel from more than 30 countries, Wycliffe currently fields more than 6,000 people into over 80 nations. Although Townsend continued to defend the value of non-degreed workers for translation work, Wycliffe probably has more Ph.D.'s than any other mission agency. Ruth Tucker credits Townsend with being "the one individual most responsible for the 20th century surge in Bible translation."** That surge produced not only Townsend's organization, but nearly 20 others worldwide.

15. Why was Townsend's concern for the tribes a new level of missiological insight?

* Hefley, J., & Hefley, M. (1974). *Uncle Cam* (p. 182). Waco, TX: Word.

** Tucker, R. A. (1983). *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (p. 351). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Donald McGavran: Voice for hidden peoples

At virtually the same time as Townsend, on the other side of the globe, Donald McGavran was beginning to ask some related questions. Born of missionary parents and raised in India, McGavran thought to pursue a career in law. The Lord changed his mind during meetings of the Student Volunteer Movement, and McGavran returned to work in India, where he was occupied as an administrator. When the mission with which he was working decided to open a work among the Satnamis people, McGavran's colleagues selected him for the task. Through this experience and his long-term observation of missions in India, McGavran became fascinated with the question of how people become Christians.*

This book asks how clans, tribes, castes, in short how Peoples become Christian. Every nation is made up of various layers of strata of society. In many nations each stratum is clearly separated from every other. The individuals in each stratum intermarry chiefly, if not solely, with each other. Their intimate life is therefore limited to their own society, that is, to their own people. They may work with others, they may buy from and sell to individuals of other societies, but their intimate life is wrapped up with the individuals of their own people. Individuals of another stratum, possibly close neighbours, may become Christians or Communists without the first stratum being much concerned. But when individuals of their own kind start becoming Christians, that touches their very lives. How do chain reactions in these strata of society begin? *How do Peoples become Christian?*

Western individualism vs. group decisions

It was the understanding of the uniqueness of various strata of society that started McGavran's quest for answers. Where but in India with its multi-layered caste system could this idea of strata come

into such sharp focus? McGavran also recognized that the way *decisions* are made in most cultures is a key factor in the way the society becomes Christian.

The way decisions are made in most cultures is a key factor in the way the society becomes Christian.

In the West, Christianization is an extremely individualistic process. This is due to various causes. For one thing, in Western nations there are few exclusive subsocieties. Then too, because freedom of conscience exists, one member of a family can become Christian and live as a Christian without being ostracized by the rest of the family. Furthermore, Christianity is regarded as true, even by many who do not profess it. It is considered a good thing to join the Church.... Thus individuals are able to make decisions as individuals without severing social bonds.

This way of thinking was exported with Western missionaries. However, it caused serious problems in other cultures.

Peoples were thought of as aggregates of individuals whose conversion was achieved one by one. The social factor in the conversion of peoples passed unnoticed because people were not identified as separate entities.

However, a people is not an aggregation of individuals. In a true people, intermarriage and the intimate details of social intercourse take place within the society. In a true people, individuals are bound together not merely by common social practices and religious beliefs but by common blood. A true people is a

* McGavran, D. A. (1955). *The bridges of God: A study in the strategy of missions* (pp. 1, 8-13). New York: Friendship Press.

social organism which, by virtue of the fact that its members intermarry very largely within its own confines, becomes a separate race in their minds. Since the human family, except in the individualistic West, is largely made up of such castes, clans, and peoples, the Christianization of each nation involves the prior Christianization of its various peoples as peoples.

McGavran goes on to explain how most cultures make decisions and the implications for Christianizing the culture. There he finds significant answers for his driving question.

To understand the psychology of the innumerable subsocieties which make up non-Christian nations, it is essential that the leaders of the Churches and missions strive to see life from the point of view of a people, to whom individual action is treachery. Among those who think corporately, only a rebel would strike out alone, without consultation and without companions. The individual does not think of himself as a self-sufficient unit, but a part of the group. His business affairs, his children's marriages, his personal problems, or the difficulties he has with his wife are properly settled by group thinking. Peoples become Christian as their group-mind is brought into a lifegiving relationship to Jesus as Lord.

It is important to note that the group decision is not the sum of separate individual deci-

sions. The leader makes sure that his followers will follow. The followers make sure that they are not ahead of each other. Husbands sound out wives. Sons pledge their fathers. "Will we as a group move if so-and-so does not come?" is a frequent question. As the group considers becoming Christian, tension mounts and excitement rises. Indeed, a prolonged informal vote-taking is under way. A change of religion involves community change. Only as its members move together, does change become healthy and constructive.

Peoples become Christian as a wave of decision for Christ sweeps through the group mind, involving many individual decisions but being far more than merely their sum.

Peoples become Christian as a wave of decision for Christ sweeps through the group mind, involving many individual decisions but being far more than merely their sum. This may be called a chain reaction. Each decision sets off others and the sum total powerfully affects every individual. When conditions are right, not merely each subgroup, but the entire group concerned decides together.

16. *Are group decisions valid? What questions would you have about the pros and cons of this approach?*

This group decision when “the entire group decides together” was called by McGavran a “People Movement.” In contrast to the laborious strategy of one-by-one decisions, a people movement is a much more culturally acceptable method of decision making. McGavran’s research proved it is also historically a far more stable type of conversion and has happened many times, often without the knowledge or approval of the missionary!

McGavran returned from India to become the first Dean of the Fuller School of World Mission. His prolific writing exposed the entire missions world

to his research. From his efforts grew the Church Growth Movement, devoted to expanding within already penetrated groups, and the Frontier Mission Movement, focused on reaching unpenetrated groups.

These two very different men, Townsend and McGavran, with their unique perspectives, began to see the necessity of looking at missions not in terms of geography, but in terms of particular ethnic groups, now referred to as “peoples.” The effect of their vision completely changes our understanding of the task ahead.

III. Transitions and Movements

The pioneers of the different eras inspired their generations with key concepts and clear objectives. Others followed who tested and carried out the challenges. In this section, we will continue to explore missions history to glean principles and truth that may be applied today. The “transition” periods, during which missions from one era overlap with those of the following era (see Figure 5-3), have been and continue to be challenging times. We also want to look at the movements produced during each era to try to recognize how God is working today. We will end our review of mission history with a forward look, hoping to catch a glimpse of things to come.

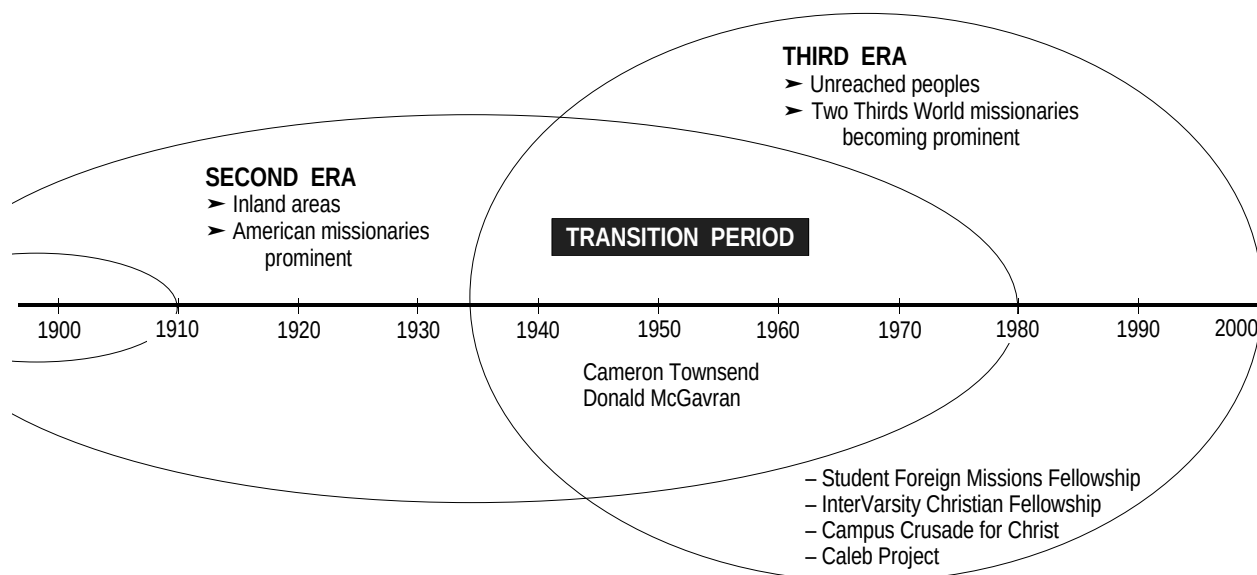


Figure 5-3. The Transition Period Between the Second and Third Eras

In the following article, Harry Larson takes us through a discussion of transition periods in seeking an understanding of critical issues facing us today.

❏ ***Responding to the Challenge of the Transitions***

Harry Larson *

In every generation, God has given individuals a passion for the unpenetrated frontiers. Paul strove to “preach the gospel, not where Christ was named” (Rom. 15:20) and “to preach the gospel in the regions beyond” (2 Cor. 10:16). Every new move of God in mission history has incorporated this driving desire to go beyond the current frontiers of the gospel. Each new effort has also built on the accomplishments of the previous one. The transitions from one period to another, however, have not always been smooth. Eager young missionaries, impatient to get on with their pioneer work, have often trampled on the insights, achievements, and feelings of their predecessors. This approach has produced pain, and in many cases the work of God has been greatly hindered.

God is moving all history towards the completion of world evangelization. We know we are currently in an exciting transition period between Second Era missions and the final thrust of Third Era missions. Those who grasp what God is doing may become impatient with those of God’s people who are slower to understand this new direction of the Spirit. Historical study of the transition periods can make us aware of these tensions and help us avoid the painful mistakes of the past. The many lessons to be learned can not only help Second and Third Era missionaries avoid unnecessary conflict and hurt, they may also provide a key for raising up the tremendous movements needed to complete the remaining task.

Transitions are seldom easy. In the current transition in mission history, the workers in the era being completed are turning the work over to the national church and stepping away from the level of involvement required of them in initial stages. However, the workers in the newly started era must enter un-

engaged fields in pioneering roles. This difference in roles can cause various kinds of conflict and misunderstanding.

Those who are ready to exit may be critical of those who are beginning to enter. The new strategies necessary for the new work may cause some to think that the earlier work was “wrong” or “inappropriate.” The valid reasons for moving on from a completed work may be incorrectly applied to say that all cross-cultural workers in every field should “go home.” This thinking can produce confusion, both in the national church and in the sending church at home.

When workers accept the fact that a transition is in progress, confusion can be replaced by understanding.

Such difficulties are particularly true in the transition from the Second to Third Era, since there may be both reached and unreached fields in the same geographical location. The Philippines, for example, are clearly reached in some areas and yet have a number of unreached people groups living within that large country of islands. New questions must be asked to determine what work is needed and where.

When workers accept the fact that a transition is in progress, confusion can be replaced by understanding. At the present time, the Second Era is drawing to a close, while the Third Era is under way. Excellent, life-changing work done by committed career missionaries is reaching the “Participant Stage,” in which the national church can fully manage the work and invite others to join them when

* Harry Larson worked as a missionary among the Mam Indians of Guatemala with the Central American Mission. He currently serves as Missions Pastor of Emmanuel Faith Community Church in Escondido, California.

they want them. At the same time, bold and daring pioneers of a whole new force of workers are being called forth from every nation to start new initiatives for God. Five intentional steps can help reduce the difficulties of living in such a critical stage.

1. *Continue to support and honor the veteran missionaries who are finishing up the Second Era task*

It is extremely distressing for faithful, lifelong missionaries on the field to hear about new “movements” at home and to be made to feel that their ministry is no longer valuable or valid. Division can arise in the local church when older Christians feel that “their missionaries” are being considered second class workers in the missionary enterprise. Well-meaning ambassadors for hidden people groups have sometimes left this impression.

It is precisely because faithful veterans have labored long at the Second Era task that some of the resources can now be allocated to new frontiers. The vast wealth of experience from missionaries’ years of service is a valuable training asset for new workers. Continuing to support and honor those who have served through “the heat of the day” is essential.

2. *Educate the sending church about the nature of the transition*

When local churches are taught some basics of missions history and strategy, they can appreciate the value of the past and the requirements of the future. They can see that while there is a place where “nationals can do the job better” in established fields, at the same time, there is a need for “a whole new missions force” in the as-yet-unreached fields. What an incredible day for sending churches as the churches that were established in the First and Second Eras now become senders themselves and as the new missionary force has the opportunity to become an integrated, international corps.

3. *Allocate new resources and missionary personnel to pioneer work*

Even while honoring and supporting those who are finishing the Second Era task, there must be inten-

tional appropriation of new funds and new forces for the task remaining. Missionaries retiring from a field will naturally be tied to the people they have given their lives to reach. They will be cognizant of the needs and will want to see people recruited to take their place. However, the task will not be finished simply by continuing to staff missionary posts that were created 50 to 100 years ago.

4. *Share new vision with present missionaries*

When missionaries come home on furlough, often the first thing they want to consider is additional study. They are anxious to know the results of new research and often contribute to such research from their field experience. Part of the sending church commitment should be to share current insights and strategies with these partners and offer additional training wherever possible. Few missionaries who are exposed to these insights are not excited by them.

5. *Maintain a strategic balance among different types of missionary work*

When sending churches and agencies do not intentionally consider their plans and goals, they will drown in a sea of conflicting voices. There is no one “right” way. Our God is a God of variety and individuality. He will lead each group to organize its involvement in world outreach in unique ways. Still, it is essential to act intentionally and strategically. Churches that want to be attuned to what the Spirit is doing today will ask themselves these questions and plan accordingly:

- Are we praying and seeking the Holy Spirit’s fresh guidance in our missions program?
- Are we satisfied with what we currently give to Third Era pioneer work among unreached people?
- How much, if any, of our *new* resources should we be budgeting for Second Era work?
- Does God want to make us a “Third Era church” through “adoption” and “engagement” of an unreached people group?*

* “Adoption” in this sense refers to the commitment by a congregation to pray for and support efforts to reach a

These are some of the questions we should be asking ourselves and praying about. Our Father's heart is moving all of history to its climactic conclusion.

This age will not end with a whimper, but with a bang! Let's tune our heartbeats to our Father's and get on with the Great Commission task!

17. *Why is an understanding of transition periods critical for church mission committees and others involved in supporting the missionary task?*

Movements

The visionary men God used, their influential writings, and some of the movements they helped engender are summed up in Figure 5-4. This table, while not comprehensive by any means, does help identify clearly each distinct period.

ERAS OF MISSION HISTORY	FIRST ERA (1792 - 1910)	SECOND ERA (1865 - 1980)	THIRD ERA (1934 - Present)
EMPHASIS	Coastlands of unreached continents	Interiors of unreached continents	Hidden and unreached peoples
PIONEERS	William Carey	Hudson Taylor	Cameron Townsend Donald McGavran
WRITINGS	<i>An Enquiry Into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens</i>	<i>The Call to Service China's Spiritual Needs and Claims</i>	<i>Tribes, Tongues, and Translators</i> <i>The Bridges of God</i>
RELATED MOVEMENTS	Haystack Prayer Meeting Society of Brethren	Cambridge Seven Student Volunteer Movement Laymen's Missionary Movement Women's Movements	Student Foreign Missions Fellowship Urbana Conventions Adopt-a-People A.D. 2000

Figure 5-4. Three Eras of Protestant Missions Showing Emphasis, Pioneers, Writings, and Related Movements

specifically named, unreached people group. "Engagement" is the actual establishment of an effort to reach the group through the appointment and sending of missionaries.

Each period has generated movements which have fueled the specific missions thrust with personnel, prayer, and financial support. Student movements have been of particular importance in producing recruits for mission work. Men's and women's movements have been a key in generating prayer and financial support as well as personnel. In this Third Era, the Holy Spirit is also raising up movements along strategic lines. Both the culmination in A.D. 2000 of the second millennium since Christ gave the Great Commission and an achievable unreached peoples target are generating a spontaneous worldwide crusade for the completion of the task.

Student Movements

Throughout Protestant mission history, student movements have been tremendously important. Students are the prime human resources for most enterprises. They are at an age when they are making career and other major decisions with lifelong implications. It is no surprise, then, that the Lord of the Harvest has consistently raised up movements to challenge students to consider the high calling of missions. Much of this work has been done in unobtrusive, low profile ways as students have gathered together to pray and study God's Word. Occasionally, this steady work of the Spirit takes on a more prominent aspect, as in the case of InterVarsity's student missionary convention, which regularly draws 20,000 participants to the University of Illinois' Urbana campus. The following sections excerpt and summarize a portion of a book by David Howard entitled *Student Power in World Missions*.

The Haystack Prayer Meeting*

The student missions movement in the First Era is identified with an event which has become known as the "Haystack Prayer Meeting." Samuel J. Mills, a young man who was converted during the "Great Awakening" which began in 1798, was instrumental in this event and in the movement that grew out of it. Howard describes that important meeting:

On the North American continent the beginnings of overseas interest on the part of the church can be traced directly to student influence, and more precisely to the impact of one student, Samuel J. Mills, Jr. (1783-1818). Born in Connecticut as the son of a Congregational minister, Mills was brought up in a godly home. His mother reportedly said of him, "I have consecrated this child to the service of God as a missionary." This was a remarkable statement since missionary interest was practically unknown in the churches of that day and no channels (such as mission boards) for overseas service existed in America. Mills was converted at the age of seventeen as a part of the Great Awakening that began in 1798 and touched his father's church. His commitment to world evangelism seemed to be an integral part of his conversion experience. From the moment of conversion, on through the years of his study and

for the rest of his public ministry, he never lost sight of this purpose.

In 1806, Mills enrolled in Williams College, Massachusetts. This school had been profoundly affected by the religious awakening of those years, and devout students on campus had a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of their fellow students. Mills joined with them in their desire to help others. It was Mills' custom to spend Wednesday and Saturday afternoons in prayer with other students on the banks of the Hoosack River or in a valley near the college. In August, 1806, Mills and four others were caught in a thunderstorm while returning from their usual meeting. Seeking refuge under a haystack, they waited out the storm and gave themselves to prayer. Their special focus of prayer that day was for the awakening of foreign missionary

* Howard, D. M. (1979). *Student power in world missions* (2nd ed.) (pp. 71, 73-76, 89-98). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

interest among students. Mills directed their discussion and prayer to their own missionary obligation. He exhorted his companions with the words that later became a watchword for them, “We can do this if we will.”

Bowed in prayer, these first American student volunteers for foreign missions willed that God should have their lives for service wherever He needed them, and in that self-dedication really gave birth to the first student missionary society in America. Kenneth Scott Latourette, the foremost historian of the church’s worldwide expansion, states, “It was

from this haystack meeting that the foreign missionary movement of the churches of the United States had an initial impulse.”*

The exact location of the haystack was unknown for a number of years. Then, in 1854, Bryan Green, one of those present in 1806, visited Williamstown and located the spot. A monument was erected on the site in 1867. Mark Hopkins, who was then president of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, gave the dedicatory address in which he said, “For once in the history of the world a prayer meeting is commemorated by a monument.”

The Cambridge Seven

As the Second Era began to gather momentum, students at Cambridge University in England were stirred to consider the plight of the unevangelized through a one-week visit by the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Students committed their lives to Christ, and many volunteered for missions, causing applications to the Anglican missionary society to increase dramatically. Interest was also drawn to the new mission founded by Hudson Taylor for the evangelization of inland China.

During 1883-84, a group of outstanding students, some of whom were converted through Moody’s ministry, volunteered to serve with Taylor’s mission. Sensing a unity of purpose and outlook, these seven traveled extensively throughout England and Scotland following graduation, visiting campuses and churches. David Howard comments:

Their impact for missionary work was far beyond the few months of time they invested in this tour. In February, 1885, the seven sailed for China, to be followed in subsequent years by scores of students who, under their influence, had given themselves to Jesus Christ to reach other parts of the world.

The Student Volunteer Movement (SVM)

The Second Era also received the blessing of the Student Volunteer Movement, largely among American students. The impact of this force for world evangelization cannot be overestimated. The powerful and eloquent writings of the movement’s leaders are still bearing fruit with students today. David Howard writes:

In the history of modern missions, probably no single factor has wielded a greater influence in the worldwide outreach of the Church than the Student Volunteer Movement. The names of its great leaders—men of the stature of John R. Mott, Robert C. Wilder, Robert E. Speer, to name a few—stand high in the annals of the foreign missionary movement. Its watchword, “The evangelization of the world in this generation,” was so profoundly influential in motivating students for overseas service that John R. Mott could write, “I can truthfully answer that next to the decision to take Christ as the leader and the Lord of my life, the watchword has had more influence than all other ideals and objectives committed to widen my horizon and enlarge my conception of the Kingdom of God.”

* Latourette, K. S. (1950). *These sought a country* (p. 46). New York: Harper & Bros.

In the summer of 1886, at the invitation of Dwight L. Moody, 251 students gathered at Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts, for a month-long Bible study. There was a great stirring among the students for foreign missions, and 100 volunteered for foreign service. During the 1886-87 school year, Robert C. Wilder and John Forman traveled to 167 different schools to share the vision for world evangelization. Over 2,000 students volunteered for foreign missions.

In 1888, the movement was formally organized. It focused its activities on college campuses through speaking tours, literature, and every four years, a massive student missions convention. Thousands of volunteers pledged their lives to foreign mission work. The movement peaked in 1920 with the convention in Des Moines, Iowa, which hosted 6,890 delegates. In subsequent years, however, the SVM began to decline due to liberal influences, and by 1940 it had turned its focus to social and political issues. Nevertheless, by the most conservative estimates, the movement produced at least 20,500 volunteers who reached the foreign field through the mission agencies which had emerged to channel them.

The Student Foreign Missions Fellowship (SFMF)

Concurrent with the emergence of the Third Era, the Holy Spirit raised up another student movement. The Student Foreign Missions Fellowship was organized in 1938 under student leadership, and chapters were formed throughout the United States. When the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) arrived in the United States from Canada in 1945, the SFMF merged with that organization as their “missionary department.” As with the SVM, one of the SFMF’s objectives was to hold periodic international student missions conferences. The first one was held in Toronto in 1946 and the second, in 1948, at the University of Illinois’ Urbana campus, where it has been held ever since. Fueled by returned veterans from World War II, the SFMF sent more students overseas in missionary endeavors during the next two decades than during any other comparable period in history.

The turbulent decade of the 1960s, with its anti-establishment philosophy, deeply affected students of that generation. Seldom have missions been looked on with more disfavor. By the 1970s, however, students began to take a more positive view towards reform from within the system, and a renewed interest in missions resulted. This shift in attitude is evident from the records of the Urbana student missionary conventions. In 1970, 7% of the delegates signed decision cards to volunteer as missionaries. In 1973, 28% pledged to go if called. In 1976, 50% signed decision cards, and the percentage has not dropped since that time.

The student movement in the Third Era has many expressions. While well established organizations like IVCF and Campus Crusade for Christ have actively realigned much of their emphasis to Third Era objectives, newer organizations patterned after the SVM have emerged. Caleb Project, for example, developed traveling teams to mobilize college students to concern for the unreached. Each of these organizations has had an important part in continuing to spread the gospel.

18. Why are student mission movements strategically essential to the missionary task?

While the impact of student movements on the three eras of Protestant missions is incalculable, other movements have also fueled the enterprise in their own way. Although not as eminent in mission history, they are worthy of consideration.

Men's Movements

In 1906, under the inspiration of former leaders of the SVM, the Laymen's Missionary Movement was founded during a prayer meeting commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Haystack Prayer Meeting. The organization called for men to band together in congregations to "work with the pastor in enlisting all members and adherents in the intelligent and adequate support and extension of missionary work."* The movement sought to be "an inspiration rather than an administration," desiring to present an adequate missionary policy to influential groups of men as well as exploit methods of missionary finance which had produced the best results. As the organization's first secretary, J. Campbell White wrote:

The Movement stands for investigation, agitation, and organization; the investigation by laymen of missionary conditions, the agitation of laymen of an adequate missionary policy, and the organization of laymen to co-operate with the ministers and Missionary Boards in enlisting the whole Church in its supreme work of saving the world.

Within a few years of its inception, the movement had been instrumental in organizing thousands of men as active promoters of missions in their congregations. The movement quickly spread to England, Scotland, Germany, and Australia. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised during the two decades of the group's existence for the support of the thousands of volunteers who were going out.

19. *What was the primary focus of the Laymen's Missionary Movement?*

Women's Movements

The incredible losses suffered by both sides during the American Civil War forced women into roles they had generally not exercised before that time. They ran businesses, banks, and farms and founded women's colleges. From the end of the war in 1865 into the next century, they also played a major role in the missions movement. During this period, over 40 women's mission agencies were formed which promoted and supervised the work of over 100,000 women's missionary "societies" in local churches. Each missionary society was dedicated to prayer and financial support of missionary work.

The women's movement of the Second Era peaked in 1910. In that year, there were 44 women's mission boards open to single women interested in a missionary career. By then, mission leaders of stature such as Hudson Taylor and Dwight L. Moody were publicly acclaiming the effective contribution of women missionaries to world evangelization. Single women had not always been accepted by standard denominational and faith missions. The change in policy by many of these mission agencies, due to the recognition of the legitimate and competent work of women on the field, may have contributed significantly to the decline and eventual disappearance of women's mission agencies.

* White, J. C. (1992). *The Laymen's Missionary Movement*. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (p. B91). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

20. What roles could lay movements play in the Third Era?

Current Movements

Along with a strong student movement, the Third Era is being characterized by worldwide movements based on strategic considerations. Two primary motivating factors are driving these movements:

- The identification, “adoption,” and “engagement” of the remaining unreached people groups for evangelization in a drive for “closure” of the Great Commission.
- The celebration of the second millennium approaching in A.D. 2000.

These movements are not bound exclusively to the Western world. The Two Thirds World missionary force has been strongly impacted by Third Era missiology, and thousands of unreached peoples have already been targeted by non-Westerners with the hope of planting the church within those groups by the year 2000.

Adopt-a-People

The primary distinctive of the Third Era is the identification and planting of the church among the remaining peoples of the earth where that has not happened. The task is quantifiable, and leading missiologists such as David Barrett, Patrick Johnstone, and Ralph Winter have attempted to establish what the number of remaining people groups is. While there is still no clear consensus, the discussion has brought into clear focus the fact that there is a *significant* number of such groups, perhaps as many as 12,000.

How can they be reached? One by one. Churches can take the initiative in “adopting” people groups. Mission agencies can then help the adopting churches and/or others “engage” these groups for evangelism. Efforts are being made to track through a centralized computer database the groups that need targeting and those that have been targeted. This information is then provided to agencies and congregations through a computer “bulletin board.” This way of “organizing” the task remaining has caught the imagination of mission leaders throughout the world. During the Asia Missions Congress (Seoul, Korea, 1990), Asians acknowledged their responsibility for “adopting” 3,000 groups. Latin Americans have carried out their first continent-wide consultation (Costa Rica, 1992) to divide up and begin “engaging” their share of groups as well.

A.D. 2000

Approximately 2000 years ago, Christ issued the Great Commission that converted His disciples into apostles. Over the centuries, hundreds of plans have been formulated by God’s people for completing the task, none of which has yet reached that ultimate conclusion. The close of this millennium has spurred a new series of global schemes for world evangelization. Over 80 organizations have launched initiatives to complete the work before 2000 A.D. An important difference between these and other plans is that for the first time ever, these organizations are making a significant attempt to *cooperate* in achieving their common objective. A consultation held in Singapore brought together the key mission agencies of the

entire world. Mechanisms were established for keeping in touch, and cooperative agreements were initiated between similar ministries such as radio broadcasters and research databases.

Specialized ministries for the fostering of *partnerships* have also emerged to help “broker” relationships. In some cases, up to 30 distinct agencies are now collaborating together to reach a specific people group. International alliances such as the World Evangelical Fellowship are also effectively providing a global network for churches as they pursue the goal of world evangelization. The theme, “A church for every people by the year 2000,” has struck a responsive chord in God’s people around the globe.

21. What is distinct about current mission related movements compared with former movements? What is similar?

Some missiologists assert that the Third Era will not be followed by a “Fourth Era” since, by definition, the Third Era is the “what is left” era. If Third Era missionaries can indeed plant a cluster of reproducing churches in every people group on the face of the earth, the Great Commission goal of “all nations” will have been met. This is the *strategy of closure* which is propelling many of the movements in this era. It is the hope of every “world” Christian that this completion of the Great Commission task will usher in Christ’s kingdom in power and glory. There is still much to do, however, before the assignment is completed. “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Luke 10:2).

Summary

The three eras of Protestant mission expansion help trace the systematic expansion of Christianity during the past 200 years. The lessons of each era provide unique contributions to subsequent eras. We have now entered the Third Era of missions history and have the advantage of being able to learn lessons from the past in pursuing the completion of the Great Commission.

The lives of the pioneers of the Protestant missions movement provide both inspiration and priceless insights into the nature of the task. William Carey fathered the movement; Hudson Taylor mobilized it towards the interiors of the darkened continents; Cameron Townsend brought attention to the thousands of tongues and tribes around the world; and Donald McGavran clarified the concept of people groups and paved the way for systematic church growth around the world.

The Holy Spirit has always raised up movements which have provided the resources for each of the eras. Student movements have been of particular importance in providing personnel, while men’s and women’s movements have given tremendous prayer and financial support. The Third Era of missions is characterized by a global movement which is focused on identifying and partitioning the task among Christians around the world. It is the hope of many that this strategy of closure will usher in Christ’s return in glory and power.

Integrative Assignment

1. *Contrast and compare the three eras of modern missions by pointing out their differences and similarities. Then list what you feel to be the most important lessons or principles we can learn from studying these eras.*
2. *Write a short inspirational paper utilizing lessons from the lives of the pioneers of the mission eras as your main source.*
3. *What will be the end result of the great missions fervor which has arisen during the current stage of the Third Era? Write a descriptive paper of what you expect from the year 2000 and beyond.*

Questions for Reflection

1. *God raises up movements at strategic points in mission history to channel personnel, prayer, and financial resources into the Great Commission task. Do you feel compelled to become part of today's mission movement? Why or why not? Talk to the Lord about this and let the Holy Spirit guide you.*

2. *You have now completed your study of the first volume of **World Mission**. In what areas have you been most challenged so far? What have you learned that you need to apply to your life? Record your thoughts.*

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An Analysis
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SECOND EDITION
Full revision of the original work

The Strategic Dimension

Part Two of a Manual in Three Parts

Jonathan Lewis, Ph.D., Editor



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Pasadena, California

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My heartfelt thanks go to my assistant editors, Meg Crossman and Dr. Stephen T. Hoke. Meg's advocacy and use of the *World Mission* manuals in the Arizona *Perspectives* courses provided a wealth of insights for improving the material. Her contributions are reflected primarily in the first two volumes. Steve Hoke, veteran missions lecturer, was of invaluable help in improving the third volume. His knowledge, insights, and ready assistance are very much appreciated. Most of the credit for the technical production of this work goes to Susan Peterson. Her long hours of formatting, proofreading, indexing, and producing the figures and tables speak eloquently for themselves. We gratefully acknowledge Joe Varela and Pat Roseman, who assisted Susan in these tasks. We have kept many of John Devine's and Dawn Lewis's illustrations from the first edition. Thank you all for your marvelous help. May it advance the expansion of God's kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Jonathan Lewis, Editor
January 1994

Other Course Materials by the Editor

- *World Mission Leader's Guide*. An aid to those who want to organize and conduct a study group utilizing these manuals. It includes suggestions for promotion and organization of the course, as well as sample answers to each of the questions in the texts. An appendix gives useful helps on group dynamics. Available from William Carey Library.
- *Misión Mundial: Un Análisis del Movimiento Cristiano Mundial* (3 volumes).
- *Guía para el tutor del grupo de estudio de: Misión Mundial* (3 volumes).
- *Video de Misión Mundial* (3 videos, 5 hours total).

The Second Edition of the Spanish manuals, accompanying leader's guide, and the lecture videos are available from Unilit, 1360 N.W. 88th Ave., Miami, FL 33172.

Please contact the publisher for other language editions under production.

- *Working Your Way to the Nations: A Guide to Effective Tentmaking*. A 12-lesson course for use by local churches in guiding the preparation of cross-cultural "tentmaking" missionaries. Available from William Carey Library. Editions of this strategic course in Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese are under production.

PART 2

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Preface to the Second Edition

We live in a rapidly changing world. These changes affect the way the advancing World Christian Movement perceives its mandate and carries out its task. The Second Edition of *World Mission* has tried to analyze these trends and incorporate their discussion into the text. Two Thirds World missions, reaching rapidly expanding cities, mission to the world's poor and destitute, the 10/40 window, strategic partnerships, church/mission tension—these and other current issues are woven into the discussion of the biblical, historical, strategic, and cross-cultural foundation of missions, improving and strengthening these basic themes.

The editors have worked closely with the *Perspectives* office at the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, to assure that these manuals are suited for students participating in their extension courses. Questions have been improved, and the research assignment has been redesigned to enhance the application of the end-product. Useful indexes and an appendix have also been added.

Organization and Use of This Manual

World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement is a manual that can be used by study groups in a formal or informal educational setting. The manual is in three parts, each being a separate unit.

- **Part One, The Biblical/Historical Foundation**, examines the roots of world mission, including its origin and its development through the ages.
- **Part Two, The Strategic Dimension**, defines the remaining mission task and the strategies necessary to reach the unreached.
- **Part Three, Cross-Cultural Considerations**, explores the challenge of cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

Each of the 15 chapters of this manual is divided into three study units. Each unit develops a distinct concept and relates it to the material studied in preceding units. Questions interspersed throughout the text direct the reader's attention to key points and stimulate reflection on the readings.

Each chapter ends with two sections of questions. The first section, **Integrative Assignment**, is designed to help the reader assimilate the material studied. The questions invite the student to do further research and encourage the development of the student's abilities to communicate what is learned. Study groups should use these questions for group discussion. In Part Two of the manual, an "Unreached Peoples" research project is incorporated into the Integrative Assignment. This fascinating project will require extra time and effort from the student.

The second section of questions, **Questions for Reflection**, asks for a response to personal and spiritual issues raised by the readings. We recommend that each student enter his or her thoughts either in the workbook or in a personal diary. We also suggest that a devotional time be provided during each group session to share these comments.

CHAPTER 6

Strategy for World Evangelization

Seen from a mission perspective, history reveals itself in a unique and refreshing way. The kingdom of God, rather than the kingdoms of terrestrial potentates, is history's central theme. God's purpose to redeem a people and reestablish His rule upon the earth is the main plot. The "ten epochs" of mission history reveal that God's people have seldom been willing ambassadors of His kingdom's expansion. As the drama unfolds, exile, dispersion, persecution, and invasion have often been needed to cause believers to fulfill their covenant obligation. When God's people have set out willingly to share the gospel with the nations, God has greatly blessed and multiplied those endeavors. Although it has been only in the last two centuries that Protestants have taken their responsibility for world evangelization seriously, phenomenal growth and expansion have taken place.

This growth can be categorized into three distinct "eras" of expansion. The First Era was marked by an awakening of Protestants to the task and the sending of missionaries to the coastal areas of the unreached continents. The Second Era saw a movement towards the unreached interiors of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Third Era, the current one, is characterized by a movement towards unreached people groups.

Most of these groups are no longer isolated geographically from the gospel but are isolated instead by social, cultural, and linguistic barriers. Such barriers have effectively prevented these "hidden" peoples from hearing and receiving the gospel, even though the church may exist nearby. Recent research, coupled with this clear understanding, demands a fresh, new, and culturally appropriate *strategy* for accomplishing the task of world evangelization.

As the Third Era unfolds, a flood of missionaries from the newer churches of the Two Thirds World has been added to the existing Western missions task force. Together, this broad, worldwide movement for world evangelization has the potential of bringing closure to the Great Commission!

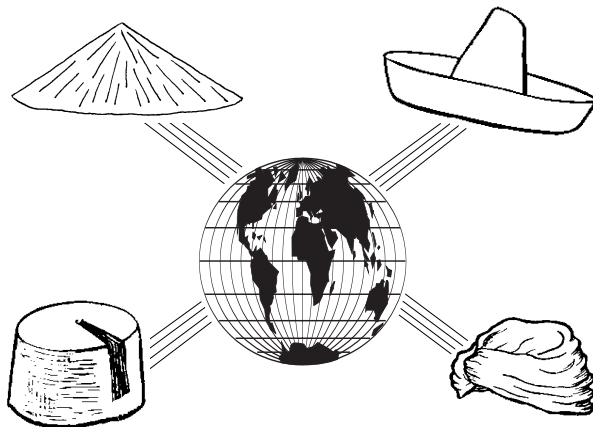


Figure 6-1. The "Together" Task Force

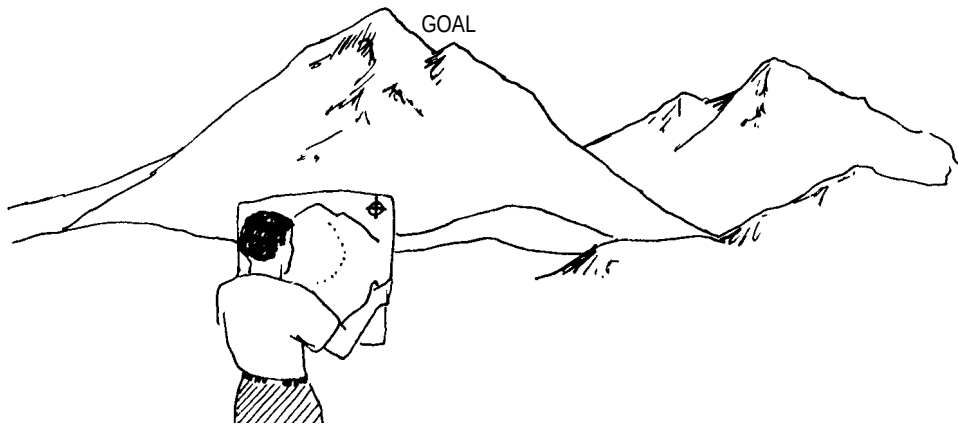
I. Strategy and Prayer

Some Christians believe that in performing God's work, strategy and planning conflict with prayer and the spontaneous leading of the Holy Spirit. If this were categorically true, a discussion of strategy would be useless. We are convinced, however, that when strategy is properly understood and implemented, it can work in perfect harmony with God's leading. We are aware of the dangers of merely applying human intelligence to the mission task, for "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Ps. 127:1). God, however, does have a plan for building His house, the living temple of believers around the world, and historically He has provided strategic insight when His people are open to receiving it.

Consider again the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Each servant was entrusted with a certain amount of money, and each one was expected to invest that money for the master's gain. The unfaithful servant was not judged for squandering his talent, but for failing to develop even the simplest investment strategy (such as putting the money in the bank), so that he could see growth for his lord. The other two servants used their investment skill, doubled their money, and were received "into the joy of [their] master" (Matt. 25:21, 23). It is this very matter of "investment skill" with which mission strategy deals.

Peter Wagner, Professor of Church Growth at Fuller School of World Mission, defines *strategy* as follows (emphasis added):

Strategy is the means agreed on to reach a certain goal. Missionary strategy is the way the body of Christ goes about obeying the Lord and accomplishing the objectives He lays down. I contend that every Christian every day uses strategy of some kind or other in the attempt to do God's will. I also contend that some strategies are demonstrably superior to others, and that we do poorly if we do not examine them all and choose the best.... The best strategy is, first of all, *biblical* because God's work must be done in God's way. Secondly, it is *efficient*. Since our personnel, money, and time are all limited, we need to make decisions sooner or later as to what priorities to assign in their use. We can't do everything we would like to do, so we must on the basis of efficiency—do what will best accomplish God's objective. Third, strategy must be *relevant*. Missions is such a fast-moving field that strategy useful five years ago might well be obsolete today. It needs constant updating.*



* Wagner, C. P. (1974). *Stop the world, I want to get on* (pp. 76-77). Glendale, CA: Regal Books.

1. How does strategy work alongside the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser have written one of the most influential books on mission strategy in recent times, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*. In the following excerpt, they define the term and present a rationale for the use of strategy.

□ **Strategy***

Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser**

What does “strategy” mean?

In one sense, everyone and every organization has a strategy—a way of approaching problems or achieving goals. Many organizations do this quite unconsciously. Others have developed their strategies into almost fixed, standard approaches.

The Apostle Paul had a strategy. We read in Acts 17:2 that on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue *as was his custom*. Paul’s strategy was to arrive at a major city, visit the synagogue if there was one, proclaim Jesus, and then let events take their course.

A strategy is an overall approach, plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving our problem. Its concern is not with the small details. Paul’s ultimate goal was to preach Christ throughout the world. His own calling motivated frontier evangelism, preaching Christ where there were no communities of Christians (Rom. 15:20). His day-to-day plans would differ, but his strategy remained the same.

Strategy looks for a range of possible “means and methods” and various “operations” that will best accomplish an objective. Strategy is a way to reach an objective. It looks for a time and place when things will be different from what they are now. For the military it might be capturing a key town or city.

A strategy is an overall approach, plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving our problem.

For a business person it might mean achieving a desired volume in a particular market. For a Christian organization it may mean everything from deciding in what country to serve to the overall approach to reaching a particular group of people.

* Dayton, E. R., & Fraser, D. A. (1990). *Planning strategies for world evangelization* (rev. ed.) (pp. 13-17). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

** Edward R. Dayton is a management consultant helping mission agencies. He served with World Vision International for 25 years, most recently as Vice President for Missions and Evangelism and as the founding director of World Vision’s Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC). He has written extensively on management and mission strategy.

David A. Fraser is currently Chair of the Department of Biblical and Theological Studies and Associate Professor of Sociology at Eastern College in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He was formerly a professor at Columbia Bible College in Columbia, South Carolina.

2. What relationship exists between the terms “strategy” and “goal”?

Why have a strategy?

As Christians, a strategy forces us to seek the mind and will of God. Strategy is an attempt to anticipate the future God wants to bring about. It is a *statement of faith* as to what we believe that future to be and how we can go about bringing it into existence.

Strategy is also a means of communication to fellow Christians so they can know where we think we

should concentrate our efforts. It thus gives us an overall sense of direction and helps to generate cohesiveness. Because it tells us and others what we *will* do, it tells others what we have decided *not* to do.

3. How can planning a strategy be a “spiritual” exercise?

4. What additional reasons are given for the importance of strategy? Can you think of any others?

Types of strategies

There are many different approaches to strategies for evangelism. Some are based on past success. That is, a particular way of doing things worked so well in the past that the pattern became a *Standard Solution Strategy*. Standard Solution Strategies are assumed to be universally applicable. Their advocates use them in all parts of the earth with only cosmetic modifications.

The problem with these strategies is that they assume all people everywhere are basically the same. Cultural and social differences are not thought to play important roles in evangelism strategies.

Other strategies come from the notion that the Holy Spirit will provide serendipitous guidance in the moment of action. *Being-in-the-Way Strategies* assume that Christian partnership with God’s activity does not require human planning. In fact, planning is sometimes seen as against the Holy Spirit.

The net effect of this approach eliminates failure. Whatever happens is God’s responsibility. Anything that happens is God’s will. But it runs into the problem that when two or more Christians appeal to the direct, inspired leading of the Holy Spirit “in-the-Way,” they may be in each other’s way. A

hidden assumption of this approach is that proper spirituality cuts out the need for human forethought.

We are proponents of the *Unique Solution* approach to strategy. Like the Standard Solution approach, it recognizes that we learn from the way God has led people in the past. The successes of the Spirit are a real resource. We can and must learn as much as possible about what God has done and use it where it is indeed applicable.

But this approach argues that the differences between the situations and cultures of various people groups are also important. People and culture are not like standardized machines that have interchangeable parts. We cannot simply use an evangelism approach that has worked in one context in another and expect the same results. Strategies must be as unique as the peoples to whom they apply.

Further, the Unique Solution approach recognizes with the Being-in-the-Way Strategy that God has new surprises for us. Strategies must be open to new insight and new developments and cannot be rigidly standardized once and for all. Yet it also argues that we risk the sin of sloth (laziness) in not using all we have and are. We are to offer to God our best human efforts.

When God calls us to preach, we do not suppose we violate the leading of the Holy Spirit in carefully planning a sermon: researching the text until we have confidence we understand the author's intention, developing a clear outline to follow, praying for illustrations and examples that will communicate the point of God's Word in contemporary terms. We *plan* the sermon carefully *because* we seek to speak about and for God. We can take the Lord's name in vain by invoking the Holy Spirit over our inattention, lack of discipline and forethought, or even laziness.

Just so, while remaining constantly open to God's surprises and extraordinary leadings, the Unique Solution approach believes that we can sketch the outline of a well-thought-out "solution" to the question of how a given people could be effectively evangelized. We are not ruling out visions, dreams, or sudden convictions. Planning uses whatever resources are authentically given to us by the Spirit of God. The idea that the Holy Spirit does not use good human preparation in doing the work of the kingdom is inadequate to Scripture and experience.

Strategies must be as unique as the peoples to whom they apply. They must be open to new insight and new developments and cannot be rigidly standardized.

The Unique Solution Strategy thus seeks to avoid what we see as the two extremes in some Christian approaches to strategy. On the one hand, the Standard Solution approach supposes we need only one basic strategy, that God has revealed the universal pattern once and for all, that success is "in the plan." The Being-in-the-Way approach, on the other hand, turns out to be an anti-strategy dressed up in a rigid portrait of the Holy Spirit as guiding only when human beings do the least.

The Unique Solution approach argues that God has given us some universal *goals* and *guidance* as to what we are about in evangelism. Yet how and when and where and many other components are as variable as are the cultures and social groups God sends us out to evangelize. This is not to say that we do not use the experience of the past. Rather, we combine past experience with that which lies ahead.

5. In what way is the Unique Solution Strategy a balanced perspective between the other two strategies described?

Is our strategy “Western”?

If you are new to this idea of strategy, you may logically ask: “Isn’t all this just a Western technological approach? Doesn’t this substitute modern human methods for God’s work?” These are valid questions.

We can never be complacent or arrogant about any of our approaches to doing God’s will. There is a constant tension here. Often we do not know which ideas are purely our own and which indeed come from the wisdom of God. We never grow beyond the childlike dependence upon God, even when we have done our very best planning. However, childlike does not mean childish. When we act without forethought, we risk the sin of tempting God (Matt. 4:7).

Planning and strategies, while greatly refined and strengthened in the modern industrial world, are not a modern or even Western invention. Joshua followed a strategy in his capture of the city of Ai. The building of the Great Wall of China or the pyramids of Egypt shows the signs of careful planning and forethought.

However, in the most refined and technical sense of planning and strategy development (which we advocate in this book), we are following a pattern that has its roots and strength in Western developments. Yet it is also related to the Christian worldview. Because a loving and rational Creator created our world, early science was convinced it was a lawful world. And if the world is to some degree lawful,

then we can anticipate it and plan for its future. The more we understand how the world and history work, the more we can plan for the future.

So on the one hand we must say: this is a Western approach. Yet, on the other, we must say that developing strategies is not incompatible with the Christian mission. Planning is a way we can be “as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

The more we understand how the world and history work, the more we can plan for the future.

Strategies take God’s commission and goals seriously. They do so by showing how we plan to carry out God’s commission. They also show how we seek to be wise in our evangelism. They help us insure that we are not harmful to God’s intentions or to the people He sends us to evangelize.

In the 10 years since the concepts in this book were first developed, thousands of First and Two Thirds World missionaries have been exposed to them. Non-Western missionaries in Nepal, Indonesia, Chad, Taiwan, Singapore, Argentina, Chile, India, the Philippines, Kenya, Uganda, and a host of other countries have expressed joy in using them. They say that the Holy Spirit *focused* their thinking with these concepts and made them more effective for the Lord.

6. How is strategy a concept which transcends time and culture?

As defined by Dayton and Fraser, strategy must have a goal. In the discussion of world mission, it is important that we know what the goal is and how to talk about it. While many good activities are undertaken in the name of missions, they are only strategic as they relate to the final goal.

❑ **Evangelism vs. Evangelization ***

Evangelism and evangelization share the same nature (communication of the gospel) and purpose (to give a valid opportunity to accept Christ), but they differ. Evangelism is an activity; evangelization adds the dimension of a goal.

“Evangelism” is making good news known. How it is made known (and with what aim it is made known) has been the subject of considerable debate. The following three “P’s” denoting the types of evangelism should not imply that they are mutually exclusive. Indeed, the most effective evangelism consists of all three being employed simultaneously.

Presence. Presence evangelism is that which radiates the character of Jesus by the quality of Christian character and concern registered in the life of the evangelist. To be specific, it is the type of evangelism reflected in the Christian’s care of the sick, his concern for the uneducated and poor, and his consistent godly life as a member of the community. In itself, “presence” evangelism does not denote a verbal witness as such, nor even close identification with the people.

Proclamation. Only the genuine good news of Jesus Christ can reproduce the church. Our task is to be sure we communicate the gospel and to select the appropriate means and media for this communication. At a minimum this is verbal proclamation by preaching or personal testimony.

Persuasion. To produce results, proclamation must intend to evoke a positive response from those who hear the gospel. The gospel confronts people with the necessity to make a commitment to Jesus

Christ. People must be urged to make a decision. The goal of evangelism is the making of disciples.

Good evangelism is usually a balanced three “P” evangelism.

Evangelism is an activity; evangelization adds the dimension of a goal.

“Evangelization” is in fact the goal of evangelistic activity. Evangelization has preeminently a “closure” perspective since it aims always at a comprehensive goal, such as evangelism throughout a people group, city, country, or the world. Evangelization then adds two more “P’s” to the list:

Planting. Those who believe the gospel and make a commitment to Jesus Christ must be incorporated into the body of Christ. They must become members of a local assembly of believers. This church is the context in which they can grow in Christ and in which they can properly serve Christ.

Propagation. Evangelization aims at the planting of churches that are able to spread the gospel throughout their own people group and also beyond to penetrate for the first time still other people groups. The ultimate goal is always to complete world evangelization. Take note of Brad Gill’s challenge: “It is not enough for us today to go across the world and do a good job. We must work toward the goal of finishing the task of evangelization.”** World evangelization should be the ultimate goal behind all mission activity.

* This section is excerpted from Hawthorne, S. C., & Winter, R. D. (1992). *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A study guide* (1992 ed.) (p. 9-2). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Gill, B. A. (1979). A church for every people. *Church Growth Bulletin*, 15(6), 280.

7. *Why is it helpful to keep in mind the distinction between evangelism and evangelization?*

The preceding excerpts have helped clarify the concept of mission strategy. We know that all Christians have a strategy by which they operate, whether they are conscious of it or not. Strategy is defined as the way we approach the task that God has given us to do. Since some strategies are better than others, it is wise to examine critically a particular strategy before adopting it as the approach to a specific mission task God has given us. Many efforts among the unreached peoples will require a “unique solution” approach to strategy. We will examine this approach in chapter 8.

Setting forth a strategy is not an “unspiritual” activity but rather one which has a sincere quest for the will of God as its foundation. Much of God’s will is already revealed to us in His Word. How to fulfill that will within a specific framework requires the use of our intelligence; it also drives us to our knees. Prayer and strategy are not at odds. In fact, any strategy which does not include prayer as a primary weapon is bound to fail.

We must pray as if we could not plan, and plan as if we could not pray.

Are unreached peoples resistant to the gospel, or has so little prayer gone up for them that they are effectively held in check by the enemy? How prominent a role should prayer have in strategy for reaching the unreached? These and other important questions are examined by John D. Robb in the following article.

❑ ***Prayer as a Strategic Weapon
in Frontier Missions ****

John D. Robb

A revealing case study

One of the greatest illustrations of prayer as a strategic weapon in frontier missions is found in the experience of J. O. Fraser, the pioneer missionary to the Lisu tribe of southwest China. As a young missionary with the China Inland Mission in the early 1900s, Fraser preached Christ for several years among the far flung mountain villages of this people with almost no outward results.

His wife later wrote about the difference this prayer effort made in Fraser’s work:

He described to me how in his early years he had been all but defeated by the forces of darkness arrayed against him.... He came to the place where he asked God to take away his life rather than allow him to labor on

* Robb, J. D. (1991). Prayer as a strategic weapon in frontier missions. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 8(1), 23-31.

without results. He would then tell me of the prayer forces that took up the burden at home and the tremendous lifting of the cloud over his soul, of the gift of faith that was given him and how God seemed suddenly to step in, drive back the forces of darkness, and take the field.*

Breakthrough occurred when two things happened:

1. The Spirit of God enabled him to pray “the prayer of faith” for several hundred Lisu families to come to Christ.
2. He succeeded in forming a prayer support group of eight to 10 Christians in his home country to back up the work in ongoing prayer.

Fraser himself said:

Work on our knees. I am feeling more and more that it is after all just the prayers of God’s people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God who gives the increase, and this increase can be brought down from heaven by believing prayer whether offered in China or in England.... If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. I believe it will only be known on the last day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home....**

I used to think that prayer should have the first place and teaching the second. I now feel that it would be truer to give prayer the first, second, and third places and teaching the fourth.... We are not dealing with an enemy that fires at the head only—that keeps the mind only in ignorance—but with an enemy who uses poison gas attacks which wrap the people around with deadly effect and yet are

impalpable, elusive.... Nor would it be of any more avail to teach or preach to Lisu here while they are held back by these invisible forces.... But the breath of God can blow away all those miasmic vapors from the atmosphere of a village in answer to your prayers.***

It is after all just the prayers of God’s people that call down blessing upon the work. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field.

In the years that followed, hundreds of families accepted Christ, and ultimately a people movement involving tens of thousands of Lisus ensued. Today in southwest China and northern Burma they are a missionary tribe taking the gospel to other tribes about them.****

Prayer, a linking activity

Prayer at its very heart is a linking activity. First, prayer links us with God to receive His power and direction as we pray for the world and carry out our own ministries. Secondly, as we pray for the unevangelized world, it links us with particular unreached groups and the Christian workers laboring among them. It links our efforts and their efforts to God in His almightiness, without whose help all such efforts ultimately are in vain. O. Hallesby writes:

The work of prayer is prerequisite to all other work in the Kingdom of God for the simple reason that it is by prayer that we *couple* the powers of Heaven to our helplessness, the powers which can turn water into wine and remove mountains in our own life and the

* Fraser, Mrs. J. O. (1963). *Fraser and prayer* (pp. 11-12). London: Missionary Fellowship.

** Fraser (p. 26).

*** Fraser (pp. 46-47).

**** For further study, see Fraser, Mrs. J. O. (1963). *Fraser and prayer*. London: Missionary Fellowship.

lives of others, the powers which can awaken those who sleep in sin and raise up the dead, the powers which can capture strongholds and make the impossible possible.*

Every time the church has set herself to praying, there have been stupendous movements in the mission world.

Yet having said this, prayer can often be the missing link in our efforts on behalf of the unevangelized world. As important as good organization, planning, and strategy are in world evangelization, in our busyness for God we may have neglected to link up with His power and direction to carry out that particular part of His mission given to us. And that is a crucial omission!

In musing over the failure of his generation to evangelize the world by 1900, A. T. Pierson attributed this failure not only to a lack of consecration in the church evidenced by a lack of giving, faith, and personal holiness, but most of all to the lack of prevailing prayer. He wrote:

Every time the church has set herself to praying, there have been stupendous movements in the mission world. If we should but transfer the stress of our dependence and emphasis from appeals to men to appeals to God—from trust in organization to trust in supplication—from confidence in methods to importunate prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit, we

should see results more astounding than have yet been wrought.**

World evangelization above all is an issue to be decided by spiritual power, the power of the Holy Spirit released in response to the prayers of His people.

Arthur Matthews, the late former missionary of the China Inland Mission, put his finger on the reason that we often do not emphasize prayer enough:

The concept that treats prayer as if it were a supplemental booster in getting some project off the ground makes the project primary and the prayer secondary. Prayer was never meant to be incidental to the work of God. It is the work.***

God requires intercession

Why does God desire and require His people's intercession? Most likely because God originally gave dominion of the earth to humankind. That dominion has never been revoked by God. Satan's dominion achieved through rebellion against the Creator is a false, illegitimate, usurped dominion. Redeemed through Christ, we can exercise our God-given right to influence the affairs of this world through the exercise of intercessory prayer. Prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit breaks through the false dominion of the enemy and clears the way for His deliverance and shalom to come to all peoples. He is seeking those who will stand before Him in the gap for the 2,000 major unreached peoples, the 1,000 unevangelized cities, and the 30 unevangelized countries.

* Hallesby, O. (1948). *Prayer* (p. 67). London: InterVarsity Press.

** Quoted in Johnson, T. (1988). *Countdown to 1900: World evangelization at the end of the 19th century* (p. 37). Birmingham: New Hope.

*** Matthews, A. (1978). *Born for battle* (p. 42). Robeson, PA: Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

8. In what way is the “linking” nature of intercession a key strategic concept?

9. Why is intercession a primary responsibility of Christians?

Victory in the spiritual realm is primary

King Jehoshaphat relied on the weapons of united fasting and prayer, public worship and praise which brought God’s intervention against the invading armies of Israel’s enemies. Bible teacher Derek Prince writes:

These weapons, scripturally employed by Christians today, will gain victories as powerful and dramatic as they gained for the people of Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat.... *Victory in the spiritual realm is primary.* It is to be obtained by spiritual weapons. Thereafter its outcome will be manifested in every area of the natural and material realm.*

Prayer extends the outreach of the church

Prayer is mentioned over 30 times in the book of Acts alone, and generally it is mentioned as occurring just before major breakthroughs in the outward expansion of the early Christian movement. For the apostles, extended times of united prayer and waiting on God together were pivotal in their mission to the unreached.

The whole European side of the modern Protestant missionary enterprise grew out of Pietism, a revival movement that was steeped in earnest prayer. From its influence the Danish-Halle Mission to India went forth, and the Moravian movement under Count

Zinzendorf emerged. The prayer meeting which the Moravians began in 1727 went on 100 years! This prayer effort kindled their desire to proclaim Christ to the unreached, and from this one small village, over 100 missionaries went out in 25 years.

Every fresh outbreak of missionary energy has been the result of believing prayer.

Robert Glover sums up the role of prayer in the history of missions:

From Pentecost and the Apostle Paul right down through the centuries to the present day, the story of missions has been the story of answered prayer. Every fresh outbreak of missionary energy has been the result of believing prayer. Every new missionary undertaking that has been owned and blessed of God has been the germinating of seed planted by the divine Spirit in the hearts of praying saints.**

Effective strategies come from research and prayer

Joshua was one of the original “researchers” who spied out the land of promise in Numbers 13. Because he knew the facts about the land and its peoples so well, he was prepared to be the great military strategist that he later became during the

* Prince, D. (1973). *Shaping history through prayer and fasting* (pp. 93, 95). Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell.

** Glover, R. H. (1946). *The Bible basis of missions* (p. 178). Chicago: Moody Press.

conquest. However, in the book of Joshua, we see him continually seeking God for His guidance in the development of effective strategies. He did not lean on his own understanding, but relied upon God's direction given through prayer.

The principle is still the same. I am becoming more and more convinced that coupling research findings concerning the people group we are trying to reach with ongoing persevering prayer is an unstoppable combination in the process of developing effective mission strategy. John Dawson's recent book *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds* insightfully ties together ministry related research and intercessory prayer.

Prayer is the supernatural way of sending out workers

Jesus did not tell the disciples to go all out and round up as many Christian workers as possible or to raise a million dollars for mission. Instead, He said that prayer to the One who owns the harvest was the priority, because He can call, equip, and send those workers who will be best able to reap the harvest.

I am convinced that the mightiest missionaries to the Muslims are not even converted yet. But God is waiting upon the prayers of His people to turn Muslim zealots around as He did the Apostle Paul, so they become missionaries to their people. I am convinced that as prayer networks are formed, focusing on particular peoples, cities, and countries, we will see God raise up armies of new workers.

In 1880, when the China Inland Mission had only 100 workers, and then again in 1887, when additional workers were required, Hudson Taylor and his associates spent protracted time in prayer until they received the assurance of faith that the number required would be granted. Both times, after an appeal for 70 new missionaries in 1880, and 100 in 1887, the full number reached China within the specified time and with all their support supplied.*

Prayer opens closed doors for Christian presence

Don McCurry of Ministries to Muslims International recently gave me a striking illustration in this regard. Six years ago he visited the West African country of Guinea. Sekou Toure, a Marxist leader, had just kicked out all the missionaries except two, and was busy torturing political prisoners. The two remaining missionaries, McCurry, and 12 national pastors met to intercede for the country.

First, they interceded with God for the removal of this Marxist tyrant who had closed the door to further mission efforts when most of the people groups still remained unoccupied by the church. Then they put up maps around the room in which they were meeting, and together laid their hands upon those areas of the country and groups that had no Christian presence. They prayed and agreed together for a breakthrough and the establishment of Christian ministries in them. Within a year, Sekou Toure was gone, replaced by a benign leader who opened the door to missions once again, and today every one of the people groups they prayed for is now occupied by a national or missionary effort!

Spiritual warfare breaks the control of darkness

Chains of spiritual darkness and bondage often link unreached peoples, cities, and countries to principalities and powers who seek to control the affairs of humankind. At present in the missions world, we are undergoing a rediscovery that the issue in reaching the unreached is one of spiritual power. If we are going to see missionary breakthroughs in peoples, cities, and countries, we will need to learn how to use the offensive weapon of prayer to dislodge the powers of darkness.

Francis Frangipane, writing about the strongholds the powers of darkness maintain over groups of people, takes a similar line of thinking:

* Glover, R. H. (1946). *The Bible basis of missions* (p. 183). Chicago: Moody Press.

There are satanic strongholds over countries and communities; there are strongholds which influence churches and individuals.... These fortresses exist in the thought patterns and ideas that govern individuals... as well as communities and nations. Before victory can be claimed, these strongholds must be pulled down, and Satan's armor removed. Then the mighty weapons of the Word and the Spirit can effectively plunder Satan's house.*

A study of the belief systems of pagan peoples attests to the reality of spirit beings portrayed in Ephesians 6, the book of Daniel, and elsewhere. The Burmese believe in supernatural beings called nats arranged hierarchically with control over natural phenomena, villages, regions, and nations. Their link with these beings is maintained through witches or mediums, at least one of whom is found in each village.

A book on the African country of Zimbabwe reveals that every region, city, and village is thought to be under the control of territorial spirits. In Nigeria an Assemblies of God leader, who formerly was a high-ranking occult practitioner before his conversion, said that Satan had assigned him control of 12 spirits, each of which controlled 600 demons. He testified, "I was in touch with all the spirits controlling each town in Nigeria, and I had a shrine in all the major cities."***

Could it be that whole peoples we have written off as being "resistant" are in themselves really not

resistant at all but are in the grip of spirit beings that are the source of the resistance?

There are enormous prayer resources within the body of Christ that by and large are not being tapped for the unevangelized world because we have thus far failed to develop practical mechanisms to link these resources with the need of the unreached. Probably the most strategic thing we can do for frontier missions is to stimulate the formation of ongoing prayer and spiritual warfare networks focused on particular unreached peoples, cities, and countries.

The most strategic thing we can do for frontier missions is to stimulate the formation of ongoing prayer and spiritual warfare networks focused on particular unreached peoples, cities, and countries.

David Bryant puts it this way:

The greatest challenge any of us will ever face in the global cause of Christ [and] the greatest contribution any of us will ever make to the glorious task of advancing Christ's Kingdom among earth's unreached is... to grow as men and women of prayer and to mobilize others with us into a movement of prayer for the world. Other things wait to be done, but this is the greatest.***

Prayer and the Word of God are indispensable strategic weapons in combating the spiritual forces of darkness. No strategic plan for evangelism can succeed without them. The Word is a sword, and our prayers are arrows which can be launched at the enemy near and far. It has been truly said, "God's army advances on its knees."

* Frangipane, F. (1989). *The three battlegrounds* (pp. 15, 21). Marion, IA: River of Life Ministries.

** Wagner, C. P. (1988, December). *Territorial spirits* (p. 4). Paper presented at the Academic Symposium on Power Evangelism, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA.

*** Bryant, D. (1987, April). Prayer movements signal new light for the nations. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 118.

10. What strategic “functions” or “facets” does intercessory prayer have in the carrying out of world missions?

II. History of Mission Strategy

In formulating our own strategy, it is important to see how mission strategy has developed and to note success factors as well as actions which have led to failure. This evaluation should help us determine what to attempt, as well as what to avoid in our mission strategy. A naive urge to “reinvent the wheel” will only lead to a repetition of past mistakes out of ignorance or simplistic optimism. In our enthusiasm to finish the task, let’s not “toss out the rice with the chaff.”



In his excellent article, “The History of Mission Strategy,” R. Pierce Beaver has noted: “Fifteen centuries of missionary action preceded the rise of Protestant world mission. Therefore, Protestant missionary action did not begin de novo, and with modern Roman Catholic theory makes up only the last chapter of a long story.” The following summary and timeline are provided as the briefest of outlines in this fascinating history.*

Boniface

Some of the earliest intentional mission strategy can be traced to Boniface. His eighth century missions from England to the Continent were characterized by aggressive power encounters. Rather than accommodating the existing culture, his missionaries defied native gods, demolished shrines, cut down sacred trees, and built churches on holy sites. Boniface civilized converts through educational programs and the establishment of monastic centers of learning. He introduced the concept of women missionaries, using nuns in educational programs. The eventual failure of these missions to grow was due in part to their close association with imperial expansion. They were rejected by rulers because they were perceived as agents of imperialism, not because of the nature of their message.

* Beaver, R. P. (1970). The history of mission strategy. *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 12(2), 7-28.

R. Pierce Beaver was Professor Emeritus from the University of Chicago until his death in 1982. He specialized in the history of missions in America and was for 15 years a formative director of the Missionary Research Library in New York City. He authored, among other books, *All Loves Excelling*, a description of the initiatives of American women in world evangelization.

The Crusades

The crusades to recapture Muslim-held lands can hardly be considered missions according to our current understanding of the word. The hatred and suspicion these wars created in Muslims towards Christians abide to this day. During this period, which lasted several centuries, there were only two prominent individuals whose efforts encompassed taking the gospel of love and peace to Muslims. The great monastic founder, Francis of Assisi, and the Spanish nobleman, Raymund Lull, both attempted missions to the followers of Mohammed.

Colonial Expansion

With the discovery of new continents, Catholic missions were given a great impetus. Missionaries were sent to all the newly discovered lands which came under the dominion of Spain, Portugal, and France. Since the Pope had a hand in dividing up these lands, he mandated that the natives must be Christianized. This was an obligation taken on by these governments. The natives were thus preserved, civilized, and Christianized. Although many of the early missionaries were sincerely interested in bringing the native peoples to faith in Christ, civilizing them was most often seen as the primary objective by colonial governments. Christianization was often equated with civilization. As with Boniface, aggression was often used, and the destruction of native culture was the primary objective. The annihilation of Mayan written records is still one of the most lamentable events in mission history.

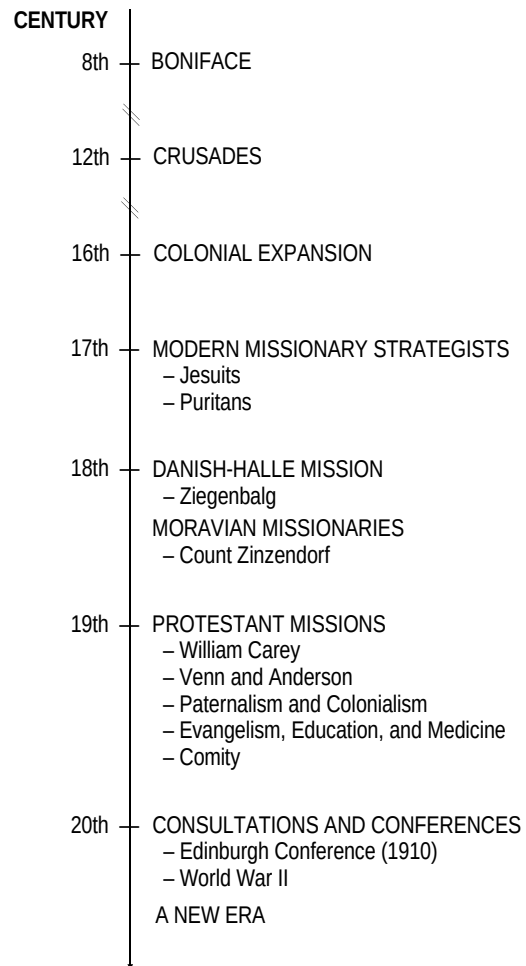


Figure 6-2. History of Mission Strategy

17th Century Missions

The Jesuits were the mission strategists of the 17th century. They were the pioneers of “cultural adaptation,” or the practice of conforming to the host culture rather than trying to force the missionary’s own cultural norms on the natives. These missionaries learned the native languages and used them for evangelism, teaching, and the production of literature. They also used native evangelists and catechists and even allowed some to become priests. In China, these intrepid missiologists used Confucian doctrine to teach Christian principles. Furthermore, they did not threaten the matrix of Chinese society by demanding that converts give up family and state rites, practices which they interpreted as civil rather than religious. In spite of the Jesuits’ huge success in mission terms, their practices created opposition by

those back home who could not separate European culture and forms from Christianity. Eventually, these progressive missiological practices were banned.

11. *What lessons in strategy can be learned from these earlier periods of missions efforts? List at least one from each period.*

Puritan Missions to Native Americans

Protestant strategy had its beginnings in 17th century efforts to Native Americans. These early missions aimed at evangelizing the Native Americans and civilizing them to become like the New World Puritans. Preaching, establishing churches, and founding Christian villages were all strategies employed. Christian villages were intended to isolate converts from the pagan influences in their own villages. While the strategy may have been effective to a degree in developing Christian character, it failed to allow new Christians to have a significant influence in converting their friends and family. Beaver summarizes the achievements of the Native American missions:

Perhaps the most lasting effects of the Native American missions of the 17th and 18th centuries were two: first, they inspired numerous missionary vocations in a later day as men read the lives of [John] Eliot and [David] Brainerd; and second, they endowed the great overseas Protestant enterprise with its initial strategic program. This included evangelism through preaching, organization of churches, education aimed at Christian nurture and the attainment of civilization in European terms, Bible translation, literature production, use of the vernacular language, and the recruitment and training of native pastors and teachers.

The Danish-Halle Mission

The first missionaries sent from Europe were members of the Danish-Halle Mission. In 1705, a group led by Bartholomew Ziegenbalg went to the southern coast of India. Ziegenbalg stressed "...worship, preaching, catechization, education, translation work, and the reproduction of vernacular literature. He blazed a trail in the study of Hindu philosophy and religion, discerning the great importance of such knowledge for evangelization and church growth...." His most famous successor was Frederick Schwartz, who had a remarkable influence on both Indian and colonist alike. Schwartz adopted the form of a *guru* and was loved and respected by all as a spiritual teacher.

Moravian Missions

The Moravian church introduced the strategy of self-support as a policy for their missionaries. Under the direction of Count Zinzendorf and Bishop Spangenberg, Moravian missionaries were sent to the most despised and neglected people around the globe. Their self-support strategy served the double purpose of support and identification with the people. They used a variety of approaches. While most established

businesses or small industries, others sold themselves into indentured servanthood to reach slaves in the West Indies!

These missionaries considered themselves “assistants” to the Holy Spirit. They were to recognize the people’s God-given distinctive traits, characteristics, and strong points. Their primary role was as messengers, evangelists, and preachers. They were not to stress heavy theological doctrines but rather tell the simple gospel story and wait patiently for the Holy Spirit to do the work. They were very persevering and only left if severe persecution drove them out.

12. What strategic emphasis led the Moravians to create businesses and industries, and what two advantages were gained through this practice?

Protestant missions in earnest did not really get underway until the early 19th century. It is important to recognize, however, that the earliest efforts did leave a legacy for William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and other pioneers. The following sections from Beaver’s article examine Protestant mission strategy during the last two centuries of mission history.

The great century of Protestant missions

Out of all these earlier beginnings, there came the great Protestant missionary overseas enterprise of the 19th century. It took initial form in Britain with the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society by William Carey in 1792. Organization had begun in the United States in 1787, and a score of societies came into being, all having a worldwide objective. However, the frontier settlements and the Native Americans absorbed all their resources. At length a student movement in 1810 broke the deadlock and launched the overseas mission through the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The Triennial Convention of the Baptist Denomination for Foreign Missions was next organized in 1814, followed in 1816 by the United Foreign Mission Society.

The new societies and boards began their work with the strategic presuppositions and methods inherited

from the Native American missions and the Danish-Halle Mission. For many years the directors at home thought that they understood fully how the mission was to be carried out, and detailed instructions were handed each missionary when he sailed. After half a century or so, it was discovered that the experienced missionaries on the field could best formulate strategy and policy, which might then be ratified by the board back home. There was in 1795 a conflict over strategy in the London Missionary Society between two strong personalities. One man wanted well-educated, ordained missionaries sent to countries of high civilization and high religions. The other wanted artisan missionaries under an ordained superintendent to be sent to primitive peoples in the South Seas to Christianize and civilize them. Both objectives were accepted.

Even in countries with a high culture, such as India and China, European missionaries stressed the “civilizing” objective as much as their brethren in primitive regions because they regarded the local culture as degenerate and superstitious—a barrier to Christianization. During the early decades there was never debate about the legitimacy of the stress on the civilizing function of missions. Debate was only about priority; which came first, Christianization or civilization? Some held that a certain degree of civilization was first necessary to enable a people to understand and accept the faith. Others argued that one should begin with Christianization since the gospel inevitably produced a hunger for civilization. Most persons believed that the two mutually interacted and should be stressed equally and simultaneously.

During the early decades there was never debate about the legitimacy of the stress on the civilizing function of missions. Debate was only about priority; which came first, Christianization or civilization?

India was soon receiving the greatest degree of attention from mission boards and societies, and the strategy and tactics developed there were copied and applied in other regions. The Baptist “Serampore Trio” of Carey, Marshman, and Ward was especially influential in the early period. Although Carey sought individual conversions, he wanted to foster the growth of a church that would be independent, well sustained by a literate and Bible-reading laity, and administered and shepherded by an educated native ministry. This self-educated genius was not content with establishing elementary schools but founded a college. The King of Denmark (Serampore was a Danish colony) gave him a college charter which permitted the giving of even theological degrees. At Serampore there were schools for Indians and for foreign children. The vast program of Bible translation and printing, ranging beyond the Indian vernaculars even to the Chinese, established the high priority of such work among all Protestants. Other literature was produced for the churches. The Trio also demonstrated the importance of scholarly research for mission strategy and action, producing

linguistic materials needed by all and taking the leadership in the study of Hinduism.

Furthermore, this famous Trio worked for the transformation of society under the impact of the gospel, and they became a mighty force for social reform, bringing pressure on the colonial government and leading Hindus to enlightened views on old wrongs and their elimination. These men were influential in causing the abolition of *suttee* or widow-burning, temple prostitution, and other dehumanizing customs. Carey also introduced modern journalism, publishing both vernacular Bengali and English newspapers and magazines. He stimulated a renaissance of Bengali literature. It was a very comprehensive mission which was based at Serampore.

Much like Robert de Nobili before him, the Scotsman Alexander Duff believed that the Indian populace could be won for Christ only if the Brahmin caste were first brought to our Lord. He sought to win Brahmin youths through a program of higher education in the English language. Where he succeeded in large measure, others failed; but his venture led to tremendous emphasis being put on English language schools and colleges. They produced few converts, but they did give economic advancement which made for the welfare of the churches, and to the pleasure of the colonial establishment they produced English-speaking staff for the civil service and commercial houses. Such education soon consumed a large part of the resources of all the missions.

At the same time, without any strategic planning, there developed huge concentrated central mission stations where the converts clustered in economic and social dependence on the missionaries. Unless a convert came to Christianity with an entire social group, he was cast out of his family and lost his livelihood. Simply to keep such persons alive, they were given jobs as servants, teachers, and evangelists. The church became over-professionalized, laymen being paid to do what they should have done voluntarily. This bad practice passed on to missions in other regions. In such a main station there were the central church, the schools, the hospital, and often the printing press. A missionary was pastor and ruler of the community. Such a system had little place for a native pastor as William Carey had

planned, and there were only preaching points, no organized churches, in the villages for 50 miles and more in the hinterland. Then in 1854-55 Rufus Anderson went on deputation to India and Ceylon. He caused the American Board missionaries to

break up the huge central stations, to organize village churches, and to ordain native pastors over them. He decreed that education in the vernacular should be the general rule and education in English the exception.

13. *What strategic mistake did the new mission boards of the early 19th century make?*

14. *How did the central mission stations develop, and what was their general impact on evangelization?*

Mission strategists of the 19th century

The two greatest mission theoreticians and strategists of the 19th century were also the executive officers of the largest mission agencies. Henry Venn was general secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London. Rufus Anderson was foreign secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Anderson's mission strategy dominated American mission work for more than a century, as did that of Venn in the British scene. The two men arrived independently at practically the same basic principles and in late years mutually influenced each other. Together they established as the recognized strategic aim of Protestant mission the famous "three self" formula to which British and American missions gave assent from the middle of the 19th century until World War II: the goal of mission is to plan and foster the development of churches which will be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.

Rufus Anderson was a Congregationalist and Venn an Anglican Episcopalian, but both would build the regional church from the bottom upward. Venn

wanted a bishop appointed as the crowning of the process of development when there was an adequate native clergy and a church supported by the people. Anderson protested the great stress on "civilization" and the attempt to reform society overnight, holding that such change would eventually result from the leaven of the gospel in the life of a nation. He based his strategy on that of Paul as he found it recorded in the New Testament.

"Three self" formula: The goal of mission is to plan and foster the development of churches which will be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.

According to Anderson, the task of the missionary was to preach the gospel and gather the converts into churches. He was always to be an evangelist and never a pastor or ruler. Churches were to be organized at once out of converts who showed a change of life towards Christ, without waiting for them to

reach the standard expected of American Christians with 2,000 years of Christian history behind them. These churches were to be put under their own pastors and were to develop their own local and regional polity. The missionaries would be advisors, elder brothers in the faith to the pastors and people.

Social Darwinism had converted Americans to the doctrine of inevitable progress. This led to the idea that the kingdom of God was coming through the influence of Christian institutions such as schools.

Both Anderson and Venn taught that when the churches were functioning well, the missionaries should leave and go to “regions beyond,” where they would begin the evangelistic process once again. The whole point of church planting was to be evangelism and mission. The churches would engage spontaneously in local evangelism and in a sending mission to other peoples. Mission would beget mission. In Anderson’s view, education in the vernacular would be for the sole purpose of serving the church or raising up a laity of high quality and an adequately trained ministry. All ancillary forms of work were to be solely for evangelism and for the edification of the church.

The British missions resisted Anderson’s views on vernacular education. American missions adopted his strategy officially and unofficially and in theory held to his system for more than a century. However, after his day they stressed secondary and higher education in English to an ever greater extent. This was partly due to the fact that social Darwinism had converted Americans to the doctrine of inevitable progress. This led to the replacement of the old eschatology with the idea that the kingdom of God was coming through the influence of Christian institutions such as schools. Also by the end of the 19th century a second great strategic objective had been more or less explicitly added to the three-self formula, that is, the leavening and transformation of society through the effect of Christian principles and the Christian spirit of service infused into the common life. High schools and colleges were essential to this aim.

John L. Nevius, Presbyterian missionary in Shantung, devised a strategy which somewhat modified that of Anderson, placing more responsibility on the layman. He advocated leaving the layman in his own craft or business and in his usual place in society. He was to be encouraged to be a voluntary, unpaid evangelist. Nevius advocated also constant Bible study and rigorous stewardship in combination with voluntary service and proposed a simple and flexible church government. His brethren in China did not adopt his system, but the missionaries in Korea did so with amazing success.

15. Briefly describe Rufus Anderson’s strategy.

16. What influence did social Darwinism have on missions of the late 19th century?

A colonialist mentality

Despite the avowed continued adherence to the Anderson-Venn formula, there was a great change in missionary mentality and consequently in strategy in the last quarter of the 19th century. Under Venn, British missions in West Africa, for example, had aimed at (1) the creation of an independent church under its own clergy, which would evangelize the interior of the continent, and (2) the creation of an African elite, i.e., an intelligentsia and middle class, which would produce the society and economy which could support such a church and its mission. Almost immediately after Venn's termination of leadership, mission executives and field missionaries took the view that the African was of inferior quality and could not provide ministerial leadership, which consequently would be furnished indefinitely by Europeans. The African middle-class businessman and intellectual was despised. This imperialist viewpoint was an ecclesiastical variant of the growing devotion to the theory of "the white man's burden," and it reduced the native church to a colony of the foreign planting church.

A very similar development occurred in India in the 1880s. Americans and others caught this colonialist mentality by contagion from the British. German

missions, under the guidance of their leading strategist, Professor Gustav Warneck, were simultaneously aiming at the creation of *Volkskirchen*, national churches, but until their full development had been reached, the churches were kept in bondage to the missionaries. Paternalism thwarted development. Thus all missions were paternalist and

The imperialist viewpoint reduced the native church to a colony of the foreign planting church.

colonialist at the turn of the century. This unhappy state of affairs lasted until the studies and surveys made for the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 suddenly destroyed complacency and inertia. They revealed that the native church was really a fact and was restive under paternal domination. Consequently, following the conference, there was a tremendous drive for "devolution" of authority from the mission organization to the church, and practically all boards and societies gave lip service, at least, to this ideal.

17. What unbiblical assumptions were a part of the "cultural baggage" of the imperialist viewpoint?

Evangelism, education, and medicine

Missionary strategy of the 19th century (down to Edinburgh 1910), in summary, aimed at individual conversions, church planting, and social transformation through three main types of actions, which became known as evangelism, education, and medicine. Evangelism included preaching in all its forms, the organizing and fostering of churches, Bible translation, literature production, and the distribution of Bibles and literature.

In the realm of education, industrial schools were stressed in earlier times but generally abandoned because of the desire for an academic education. By the end of the century, a vast educational system was in existence in Asian countries, ranging from kindergarten to college and including medical and theological schools. Africa, however, was neglected with respect to secondary and collegiate education.

The first doctors sent abroad were sent primarily to take care of the families of other missionaries, but it was soon discovered that medical service to the general populace brought good will and provided an evangelistic opportunity. Thereupon, it was made a major branch of mission work. It was not until the middle of the 20th century that it came to be realized that health services in the name and spirit of the Great Physician are in themselves a dramatic form of the preaching of the gospel. But at a very early date, even the rural evangelistic missionary had taken to carrying a medicine bag with him on his travels.

It was the same spirit of general helpfulness and cultivation of good will, as well as out of a desire to improve the economic base of the church, that missionaries introduced improved poultry and livestock and better seeds along with new crops. The great orchard industry and the big peanut industry in Shantung were introduced in this manner.

With regard to the other religions, mission strategy was aggressive, seeking their displacement and total conversion of the peoples. This aggressive spirit declined towards the end of the century, and something of an appreciation of the work of God in the other faiths grew slowly until by 1910 many regarded them as “broken lights” which were to be made whole in Christ and as bridges to the gospel.

Women as a strategic force

The customs of the Oriental peoples made it almost impossible for male missionaries to reach women and with them children in large numbers. Missionary wives endeavored to set up schools for girls and to penetrate the homes, zenanas, and harems, but they did not have enough freedom from home-making and child care and they could not itinerate. Realistic strategy demanded that adequate provision be made for women and children, but the boards and societies were stubbornly resistant to sending single women abroad for such work. Finally, in desperation the women in the 1860s began organizing their own societies and sent forth single women. A whole new dimension was thus added to mission strategy: the vast enterprise to reach women and children with the gospel, to educate girls, and to bring adequate medical care to women.

When women came into the church, their children followed them. Female education proved to be the most effective force for the liberation and social uplift of women. The emphasis which the women placed on medical service led the general boards to

The boards and societies were stubbornly resistant to sending single women abroad for missionary work. Finally, in desperation, the women in the 1860s began organizing their own societies and sent forth single women.

upgrade the medical work, and greater stress was put on medical education. Out of these two great endeavors of American women, followed by the British and Europeans, there opened to women of the Orient what are today their most prestigious professions, medical service both as physicians and nurses, and teaching.

Comity

One more feature of 19th century missionary strategy must be listed. This was the practice of comity [mutual courtesy]. Southern Baptists were among the founders and practitioners of comity. Good stewardship of men and money held a high priority among boards and societies. Waste was abhorred, and there was a strong desire to stretch resources as far as possible. The practice of comity was intended to make some agency responsible for the evangelism of every last piece of territory and every people. It was further intended to prevent double occupancy of a region (excepting big cities) and overlapping of mission programs, so that competition might be eliminated along with denominational differences which would confuse the inhabitants and thus hamper evangelism. Prior occupation of territory was recognized; the newcoming missions went to unoccupied areas. This custom produced “denominationalism by geography,” but the general expectation was that when the missionaries left for the “regions beyond,” the nationals would put the several pieces together into a national church which might be different from any of the planting churches.

Missions agreed on recognizing each other as valid branches of the one church of Christ, on baptism and transfer of membership, on discipline, on salaries, and on transfer of national workers. These agreements led to further cooperation in the establishment of regional and national boards for the arbitration of conflicts between missions and to union Bible translation projects, publication agencies, secondary

schools and colleges, teacher training schools, and medical schools. Effective strategy called more and more for doing together all things which could be better achieved through a united effort. City, regional, and national missionary conferences in almost every country provided occasions for common discussion and planning.

18. In what ways was mission strategy of the 19th century holistic in its theology and methodology?

19. What were the “aims” of 19th century missions? How did missions try to achieve these aims?

20. What key role did women play in the 19th century mission enterprise?

Consultations and conferences

Such cooperation on the mission fields led to increasing home base consultation and planning. The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 inaugurated the series of great conferences: Jerusalem 1928, Madras 1938, Whitby 1947, Willingen 1952, and Ghana 1957-58. In these the directions of strategy were largely determined and then applied locally through further study and discussion in national and regional bodies. The International Missionary Council was organized in 1921, bringing together national missionary conferences (such as the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, 1892), and national Christian councils (such as the NCC of China), and thus there was established a universal system at various levels for the voluntary

study of problems and planning of strategy in common by a host of sovereign mission boards. In 1961 the IMC became the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches.

From 1910 to World War II the most notable development of strategy was increasingly putting the national church in the central place, giving it full independence and authority, and developing partnership between the Western churches and the young churches. “The indigenous church” and “partnership in obedience” were watchwords which expressed the thrust of prevailing strategy. The participants in the Jerusalem Conference in 1928 defined the indigenous church, underscoring cultural

accommodation. The Madras Conference of 1938 restated the definition, emphasizing witness to Christ in “a direct, clear, and close relationship with the cultural and religious heritage of [the] country.” Whitby 1947 held up the ideal of “partnership in obedience.”

Since World War II

A radically different mission strategy, based on Paul, was expounded by Roland Allen in his books *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, but he gathered no following until after World War II, when the missionaries of the faith missions especially rallied to his standard. In barest essentials this is his strategy: The missionary communicates the gospel and transmits to the new community of converts the

According to a radically different mission strategy expounded by Roland Allen, the missionary stands by as a counseling elder brother while the Holy Spirit leads the new church to develop its own forms of polity, ministry, worship, and life.

simplest statement of the faith, the Bible, the sacraments, and the principle of ministry. He then stands by as a counseling elder brother while the Holy Spirit leads the new church, self-governing and self-supporting, to develop its own forms of polity, ministry, worship, and life. Such a church is spontaneously missionary. Allen's theory applied to new pioneer beginnings. The old boards and societies

were dealing with churches already old and set in their ways; they seldom sought untouched fields.

One after another the mission organizations on the fields were dissolved. Resources were placed at the disposal of the churches and missionary personnel assigned to their direction.

The Western boards and societies initiated very little that was new in the way of strategy, but much to develop new methods: agricultural missions or rural development, some urban industrial work, mass media communications, more effective literature. This was the final stage of a mission which had been in progress for 300 years. Now the world was no longer divided into Christendom and heathendom. There could no longer be a one-way mission from the West to the remainder of the world. The base for a mission was established in almost every land, for a Christian church and community with an obligation to give the gospel to the whole world existed there. The moment for a new world mission with a radical new strategy had arrived. The revolution which swept the non-Western portions of the world during and after World War II unmistakably put an end to the old order of Protestant missions.

A new age of world mission has arrived, one in which other religions are now engaged in world mission also. A new understanding of mission, a new strategy, new organization, new ways, means, and methods are the demand of this hour in the central task of the church which shall never end until the kingdom of God has come in all its glory. It will help as we pray, study, plan, and experiment if we know the past history of mission strategy.*

* *Editor's note:* Since this article was written, several major consultations on world evangelization have taken place in acknowledgment of “a new age of world mission.” Four of the most notable ones are Lausanne (1974), Pattaya (1980), Edinburgh (1980), and Lausanne II in Manila (1989). These consultations have opened dialogue on the new “ways, means, and methods” to which Beaver alludes in his conclusion.

21. *What contribution did Roland Allen make to mission strategy?*

22. *What is the author's conclusion regarding current developments in world mission?*

III. Structures and Power

The preceding study makes it evident that mission structures have played an indispensable role in the spread of the gospel. The widespread use of mission agencies in the ongoing work of world evangelization continues today. Most Christians accept this phenomenon without a thought. Others are troubled by it. They question whether mission agencies are truly biblical. Do they perhaps usurp a role which rightfully belongs to the church? Shouldn't the church exercise its God-given authority in controlling the mission effort?

It is healthy to precede the discussion of mission agencies with the reminder that the church universal, the total body of Christ in all places (and in all times), is much larger than what we normally associate with the term "church." Most of us belong to a local congregation which is identified with a specific building in a specific location. Parachurch organizations with specialized functions in evangelism, missions, counseling, teaching, or other ministries are somehow disassociated in our minds from "church." These organizations, however, are certainly part of the church universal, and through their specialization, they help local churches carry out their God-given ministries and responsibilities. It is a symbiotic relationship, one of mutual interdependence, as it should be in the body of Christ.

In an address given to the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul, Korea in August 1973, Ralph Winter described the forms that God's two "redemptive structures," existing in every human society, have taken throughout history. His thesis has two major implications:

1. We must accept both structures, represented in the Christian church today by (a) the local church and (b) the mission society, as legitimate and necessary.
2. Non-Western churches must form and utilize mission societies if they are to exercise their missionary responsibility.

The following sections summarize and excerpt some of the content of Winter's address.

Parallel Structures Throughout the Centuries*

Since the first century, God has always used two structures in carrying out His redemptive purposes. The first of these is a nurturing structure in which all believers can be included. The second is an outreach structure which calls for a greater level of commitment by those who participate. These two structures have emerged throughout the course of the expansion of Christianity.

During the first century, Christians borrowed the Jewish synagogue as their nurture structure. Paul's mission strategy was to preach in these Jewish "churches" all over the Roman Empire. He also organized believing communities into synagogue-type structures, ordaining elders and establishing norms for meetings (1 Cor. 14). When Paul set out on his first missionary journey, he was also following the tradition established by Jewish "missionaries," who Christ observed were "traversing land and sea to make a single proselyte" (Matt. 23:15). Paul used this known concept and practice and amplified it in the formation of his own mobile missionary band.

While neither of these New Testament structures was "let down from heaven," they did provide the basic pattern for the early church. It shouldn't surprise us that these forms were borrowed from existing cultural prototypes. As we have seen, cultural flexibility is one of the inherent premises of Christian expansion. These two prototypes, while not casting the *form* in stone, do provide the *functional* models for God's redemptive mission. The first focuses on nurture and incorporates all believers. The other focuses on outreach and incorporates selected members who have made a second, adult commitment commensurate with the purpose and demands of the structure.

As Christianity moved from being a primarily Jewish sect on to its conquest of the Roman Empire, two similar structures emerged, again borrowed from cultural models. The Roman *functional equivalents* of the two Jewish structures took preeminence as Christianity penetrated a larger world. While the *parish church* maintained much of the same nurturing function as the independent synagogues, a hierarchical structure borrowed from Roman civil government also emerged. Bishops were appointed to supervise a group of parish churches, giving rise to the *diocese*.

Roman military establishment provided an adequate model for the church's second structure. Calling men to a full commitment to a particular band or group, these structures eventually developed into a long tradition of monastic orders. The monastic movement was not entirely a "flee the world" tradition. Many orders were based on practical service to mankind and involved active mission outreach. The Irish *peregrini*, for example, were Celtic monks who "contributed more to the evangelization of Western Europe, even Central Europe, than any other force."

The two structures which emerged in the early Roman church were absorbed over time into Roman Catholic tradition and practice. In the 16th century, when Martin Luther and his followers protested the corruption which attended both structures during that time, they completely rejected the outreach

* Winter, R. D. (1992). The two structures of God's redemptive mission. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. B45-B57). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

After serving 10 years as a missionary among Mayan Indians in western Guatemala, Ralph D. Winter spent the next 10 years as a Professor of Missions at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is the founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, a cooperative center focused on people groups still lacking a culturally relevant church. Winter has also been instrumental in the formation of the movement called Theological Education by Extension, the William Carey Library publishing house, the American Society of Missiology, the Perspectives Study Program, and the International Society for Frontier Missiology. Since March 1990 he has been the President of the William Carey International University.

(monastic) organization. As a consequence, for two centuries, Protestants did little in missions. It was William Carey's eloquent argument for *means* which finally provoked the emergence of Protestant outreach structures. Only through these second-commitment organizations, the mission agencies, could Protestants harvest and channel the tremendous volunteer potential for missions which, to that time, had lain dormant in the church.

TYPE OF STRUCTURE	FUNCTION	
	NURTURE	OUTREACH
New Testament	Synagogue	Missionary Band
Roman	Parish Church, Diocese	Monastic Movement
Protestant	Local Church, Denomination	Mission Agencies

Figure 6-3. Parallel Structures of God's Redemptive Mission

23. What functional differences do the two structures of God's redemptive mission have?

24. How might you refute the assertion that mission agencies aren't "biblical"?

Winter has coined two terms to distinguish between the two church structures: *modality* and *sodality*. *Modality* refers to the nurture structure in which no distinction of sex or age is made for membership. This fellowship is composed of the "modal" or conventional fabric of a given society. It grows biologically or through evangelization and incorporation of persons from the immediate society. The synagogue, parish church, diocese, and our own local congregation are all examples of modalities.

A second term, *sodality*, designates the outreach structure we have been discussing. Members of a sodality make a voluntary commitment to a particular group or agency and agree to abide by its regulations in the pursuit of a common objective. Paul's missionary band, monasteries, and mission agencies are all examples of Christian sodalities.

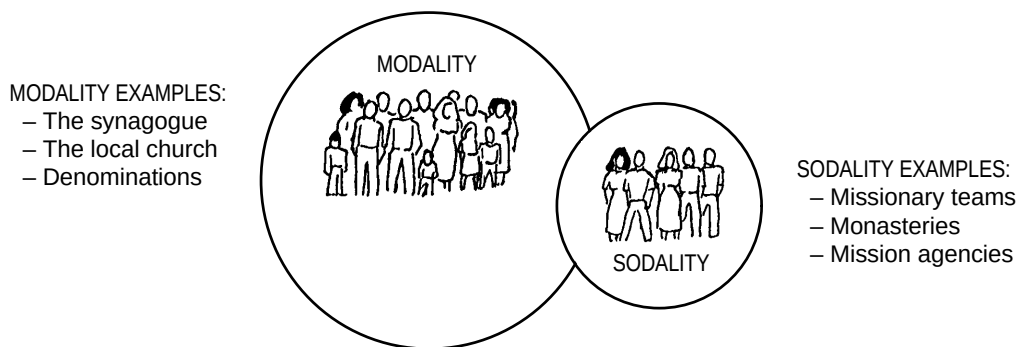


Figure 6-4. The Two Structures

25. *Using the concept of modality and sodality, explain why a mission agency is more like a professional football team, in some ways, than a local church.*

In the final portion of his Seoul address, Winter points out a contemporary blindness that needs to be corrected regarding the importance of outreach structures.

The importance of outreach structures

Protestant blindness about the need for mission sodalities has had a very tragic influence on mission fields. Protestant missions, being modality-minded, have tended to assume that merely modalities, e.g., churches, need to be established. Even in the case where mission work is being pursued by what are essentially semi-autonomous mission sodalities, it is modalities, not sodalities, that are the only goal. That is to say, the mission agencies (even those that have most independent from themselves been denominations back home) have tended in their mission work very simply to set up churches and not to plant, in addition, mission sodalities in the so-called mission lands.*

As we look back today, it is astonishing that most Protestant missionaries, working with (mission) structures that did not exist in the Protestant tradition for hundreds of years and without whose existence there would have been no mission initiative, have nevertheless been blind to the significance of the very structure within which they have worked. In this blindness they have merely planted churches and have not effectively concerned themselves to make sure that the kind of mission structure within which they operate also be set up on the field. As a matter of fact, many of the mission agencies founded after World War II, out of extreme deference to existing church movements already estab-

* See Winter, R. D. (1972). The planting of younger missions. In C. P. Wagner (Ed.), *Church/mission tensions today* (pp. 129-145). Chicago: Moody Press.

lished in foreign lands, have not even tried to set up churches and have worked for many years merely as auxiliary agencies in various service capacities trying to help the churches that were already there.

The question we must ask is how long it will be before the younger churches of the so-called mission territories of the non-Western world come to

that epochal conclusion (to which the Protestant movement in Europe only tardily came), namely, that there need to be sodality structures, such as William Carey's "use of means," in order for church people to reach out in vital initiatives in mission, especially cross-cultural mission. There are already some hopeful signs that this tragic delay will not continue.

26. Protestant blindness regarding sodality structures has led to what "tragic influence on mission fields"?

27. Why are mission agencies so important to world evangelization? List several reasons.

Mission Power

The most clever mission strategy utilizing the most proven structures will not accomplish mission ends if there is no "mission power." The familiar text, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers" (Eph. 6:12) takes on new meaning when applied to frontier mission work. This Third Era of Protestant mission has brought a renewed urgency in understanding the dynamic of spiritual warfare and God's use of the supernatural to bring men and women to Himself. Peter Wagner has traveled the world studying the most dynamic movements to Christ in recent time. In the following excerpt, he shares with us his insights regarding "mission power."

❑ On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy *

C. Peter Wagner **

A fresh look at God's supernatural

Jesus sent His disciples out with “power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of diseases” (Matt. 10:1). The Apostle Paul testified that he preached the gospel to the Gentiles from Jerusalem to Illyricum “in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God” (Rom. 15:19). Hebrews records that salvation has come through God’s witness “both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit...” (Heb. 2:4).

Let people see Christian power displayed in relation to the spirit world in which they live with great fear, and they will “hear” the message more clearly than our words alone could ever make it.

While we do not deny the validity of the Word of God, many of us have not experienced this kind of New Testament power in our personal ministries. I for one never saw it at all during my 16 years as a missionary to Bolivia. To me the power of God was to save souls and help us live a good Christian life. I now see that as correct, but only a partial view of God’s power. It is some consolation for me that all of my colleagues on the Fuller School of Mission faculty look on their missionary careers with similar observations.

As Timothy Warner of the Trinity School of World Mission and Evangelism says: “The issue of en-

counter with demonic forces is one which has understandably been avoided by large segments of the church. For most of my life, I was among those who steered clear of such involvement.” But, he goes on to say, “We can no longer afford this luxury.” Warner believes that power and the power encounter is a crucial factor in today’s mission. As he looks out on the unreached peoples, he observes:

In many parts of the world... people are much more power-conscious than they are truth-conscious. We may preach a very logical and convincing message by Western standards, but our hearers remain unimpressed. Let them see Christian power displayed in relation to the spirit world in which they live with great fear, however, and they will “hear” the message more clearly than our words alone could ever make it.

A similar concern is expressed by Richard De Ridder of Calvin Theological Seminary in his book *Discipling the Nations*. De Ridder reflects on his missionary experience in Sri Lanka in these words:

One thing deeply impressed me: how irrelevant so much of traditional Reformed Theology was to these people and their situation, and how seldom this theology spoke to their real needs. For example, the questions that concern Satan, demons, angels, charms, etc., are not of great concern, nor do they receive much attention in the West. These are living issues to the Christians of these areas, sur-

* Wagner, C. P. (1992). On the cutting edge of mission strategy. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D55-D59). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Peter Wagner has been Professor of Church Growth in the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission for over 20 years. Previous to joining the Fuller faculty, Wagner served the Lord in Bolivia in evangelism, church planting, seminary teaching, and mission administration. While there he began writing books and now has authored over 30 volumes on missions and church growth. Since 1980, Wagner has specialized in the spiritual aspects of church growth, writing such books as *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, *Spiritual Power and Church Growth*, and *Warfare Prayer*. In addition to teaching at Fuller Seminary, he coordinates the United Prayer Track of the AD 2000 Movement.

rounded as they were by animism and the continual fear of the spiritual realm. Among the greatest joys that we experienced was to proclaim to men the victory of Christ over the powers and see the shackles of slavery to elemental spirits broken by Christ. This is a chapter of Reformed Theology that has still not been written by the West. When the "Five Points of Calvinism" were preached to these people, they often responded with the question, "What's the issue?" Missionaries and pastors were scratching where it didn't itch.

How tragic when people get the idea that Christianity is a matter of mere intellectual conviction, a religion of words largely devoid of power.

I receive a large number of letters, both form letters and personal letters, from missionaries around the world. This personal letter is from a traditionally and impeccably evangelical mission executive:

As you know, we are committed to planting churches in the Muslim world. We are face to face with a power encounter of gigantic proportions. I am convinced that there is a demonic base to Islam that is much greater than most of us have ever dared admit. Of course, it doesn't make good copy to say these things or write them, and we are all rather embarrassed by our ineptitude in facing Islam today. Why does the Christian church have to lie down and let the Islamic horde sweep over us as so many tanks?

This is an increasing cry. Large numbers of missionaries and international church leaders in our school at Fuller are asking the same questions, and we are beginning to provide them with some answers, however elementary at this stage. Two of our students, serving with the Latin America Mission in Costa Rica, wrote of several experiences with supernatural power in a recent newsletter. Among them was this:

Since our return to Costa Rica in January, we have been operating in a new power we never knew in our previous six years here. We have ministered to a person that had been diag-

nosed to be epileptic, only to be freed by the expulsion of demons. This person had an experience early in life with witchcraft, through contact with a Ouija board. Her mother also had been very much involved in the occult. Now after 46 years of torment, she is totally free.

These missionaries lamented the fact that "Christianity has all too often been presented as a religion of the textbook and the head." They now see how distant this is from the Christianity of the New Testament, where "worship was alive and meaningful, prayer was an avid encounter, and signs and wonders drew people to faith."

An OMF missionary to Singapore recently wrote that he witnessed to a man there who said, "No point in becoming a Christian. My brother is a pastor. When my mother got ill, he couldn't do anything to help. We took her to the temple and she was healed." Another woman, a Hindu, said, "The trouble with you Christians is that you have no power!" My friend comments, "How tragic when people get the idea that Christianity is a matter of mere intellectual conviction, a religion of words largely devoid of power."

An increasing number of our evangelical seminary missions faculties and our evangelical mission agencies have begun to raise issues of spiritual power. I am convinced that it is an area which requires some fresh study and some discerning implementation if we are to participate fully in contemporary world evangelization.

A fresh awareness of worldview

Due to the pervasive influence of cultural anthropology in our current missiological research, the concept of *worldview* has gained a great deal of prominence. We are able to talk about worldview and to understand its implications in daily life much more freely and accurately than we used to. One of the more disturbing things we are beginning to discover is that, in more cases than we would care to think, our missionary message in the Third World has been having a secularizing influence.

I first realized this when I read an article by my colleague, Paul G. Hiebert, called "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," in 1982. He begins the article by

citing the question that John the Baptist had his disciples ask Jesus: “Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (Luke 7:20). Hiebert emphasized that Jesus’ reply was not a carefully reasoned argument, but rather a demonstration of power in healing the sick and casting out of evil spirits.

“When I read the passage as a missionary in India, and sought to apply it to missions in our day,” says Hiebert, “I had a sense of uneasiness. As a Westerner, I was used to presenting Christ on the basis of rational arguments, not by evidence of His power in the lives of people who were sick, possessed, and destitute.” He goes on to point out that the worldview of most non-Westerners is three-tiered. There is a cosmic tier on top, an everyday life tier on the bottom, and a large middle zone where the two constantly interact. This is a zone largely controlled by spirits, demons, ancestors, goblins, ghosts, magic, fetishes, witches, mediums, sorcerers, and such powers. The common reaction of Western missionaries, whose worldview does not contain such a middle zone, is to attempt to deny the existence of the spirits rather than claim the power of Christ over them. As a result, says Hiebert, “Western Christian missions have been one of the greatest secularizing forces in history.”

The worldview of most non-Westerners is three-tiered. There is a cosmic tier on top, an everyday life tier on the bottom, and a large middle zone where the two constantly interact.

Most of us are aware that secular humanism has deeply influenced our culture in America. But relatively few of us have understood how profoundly this has permeated even our Christian institutions including churches, colleges, and seminaries. The more we realize it, however, and the more we recognize that our secularized worldview is significantly different from those of the Jews and the Greeks in the New Testament context, the more we can become open to what is called a paradigm shift.

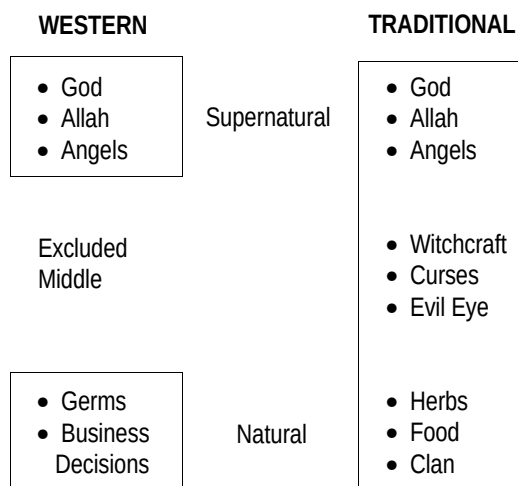


Figure 6-5. Western vs. Traditional Worldviews*

This paradigm shift is very helpful in bringing missionaries more in touch with the worldview of the men and women to whom they are attempting to communicate the gospel.

A fresh examination of the theology of the kingdom

In the Lord’s prayer we say, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” I must confess that up until recently those words had very little meaning for my life. I repeated them by rote memory without much spiritual processing taking place as I did. For one thing, my understanding was that the kingdom was something that was future, so my assumption was that I was praying for the return of the Lord. An accompanying assumption was that, because God is sovereign, His will is in fact being done on earth today and that we can rather passively accept what happens as something which God directly or indirectly approves of.

I now see the theology of the kingdom in a different light. I now believe that when Jesus came, He introduced the kingdom of God into the present world.

This was a direct confrontation or invasion of the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan, who is called

* This diagram was taken from Myers, B. L. (1991, June). The excluded middle. *MARC Newsletter*, 91-2, 3.

“the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). I take Satan more seriously than I used to, recognizing that some things which occur today do so because of the will of the enemy, not because they are the will of God. The era between the first and second comings of Christ is an era of warfare between the two kingdoms. Two strong powers are occupying the same territory.

Let me say quickly that I still believe in the sovereignty of God who, for His own reasons, has allowed this spiritual warfare to take place for almost 2,000 years now. And there is no doubt as to the outcome. Satan and all his demonic forces were defeated by the blood of Jesus on the cross. His is, at best, a holding action, but a ferocious, destructive and dehumanizing action which God expects us, as His servants, to actively oppose.

What are some things clearly out of God’s will which are happening today? In heaven there is not one poor, at war, oppressed, demonized, sick, or lost. As evangelicals we understand the last one best. Even though it is not God’s will that any should perish according to 2 Peter 3:9, the world today is full of those who are perishing, as I have previously mentioned. There are three billion of them out there, and our task, as instruments of God’s hands, is to reach out to them and bring them into the kingdom through the new birth (see John 3:3). This is the great missiological challenge.

We do the best we can to reach the lost for Christ, knowing full well ahead of time, on both biblical and experiential grounds, that we are not going to win them all. That knowledge does not discourage us, even though we know the reason why some do not respond. We learn from 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 that it is essentially because Satan has succeeded in blinding their eyes to the light of the gospel. We weep knowing that each year millions of people die and go into a Christless eternity, and we know that it is not God’s will that they should perish.

If this is true about the lost, it may well be true about the poor, those at war, the oppressed, the demonized, and the sick. So long as Satan is the god of this age, they will all be with us. But meanwhile, as citizens

of the kingdom of God, we must reflect the values of the kingdom and combat these evils as strenuously as possible. For example, we must heal the sick, knowing ahead of time that not all will be healed. I was pleased when this was recognized at a high level evangelical conference in 1982. At that time, the Lausanne Committee sponsored a Consultation on the Relationship of Evangelism to Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids and recognized in its report that among the signs of the kingdom were “making the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sick whole, raising the dead, stilling the storm, and multiplying loaves and fishes.”* The report mentions that “Demon possession is a real and terrible condition. Deliverance is possible only in a power encounter in which the name of Jesus is invoked and prevails.” This is what missiologists, such as Timothy Warner, are also saying to us.

We can no longer afford to send missionaries and national church leaders to the missions field without teaching them how to heal the sick and cast out demons.

At least two missiological faculties that I am aware of now consider this an important enough cutting edge issue to introduce it explicitly into their curriculum. Professor Warner of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School began a course on power encounter in the summer of 1991. In 1982 our Fuller missions faculty invited Pastor John Wimber to teach an experimental course on the miraculous and church growth, which he did for four years. It is now being reorganized under two of Wimber’s disciples, Professor Charles Kraft and myself. I agree with Kraft, who once said in a faculty meeting, “We can no longer afford to send missionaries and national church leaders back to their fields or to send young people to the missions field for the first time without teaching them how to heal the sick and cast out demons.” We are still at the beginning stages of this, and we are not yet satisfied with the way we are doing the job, but we are trusting God to continue to teach us so that we can in turn teach others.

* Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. (1982). *The CRESR Report*. Charlotte, NC: Author.

I feel that one of the callings that God has given me is to be an encouragement to traditional evangelical non-Pentecostal and non-Charismatic institutions

so that they will begin to take a new look at mission power—ministering supernaturally as we encounter the enemy.

28. *Why is “mission power” a strategic consideration?*

29. *What relationship does “worldview” have to “kingdom theology,” and how does this relationship affect our mission strategy?*

Summary

Simply stated, strategy is the means used in reaching a certain goal. All Christians operate with a strategy, whether they are conscious of it or not. Some strategies are better than others, however, and most often a “unique” strategy will have to be formulated to reach specific peoples. We don’t have to think of strategy as unspiritual. Good mission strategy causes us to make a statement of faith regarding the establishment of God’s kingdom among a particular people who are yet unreached. It forces us to depend on the Holy Spirit to meet the challenges of each unique situation. It drives us to our knees in rebellion against the status quo.

A look at the historical development of mission strategy reveals that strategy is not static. Strategy builds on strategy and is molded by the circumstances in which it finds itself. Principles for effective mission have emerged through trial and error and have been refined by time. As disciples of the kingdom, we do well to take from our treasure the old and the new in formulating strategy to meet the challenge of the present era of mission.

Historically, it is undeniable that God has used two structures with distinct functions in carrying out His redemptive plan. Modalities have functioned as the primary nurture structure; sodalities, as the primary mission structure. Both are needed to fulfill Christ’s global mandate. It is also critical that mission be carried out in “mission power.” Without such power, the most sophisticated strategies and structures will not accomplish kingdom ends.

- ## Questions for Reflection

It is true that all of us who endeavor to do God's will use some kind of strategy. Even the lack of a conscious strategy is a strategy in itself—the “no strategy” strategy. But this lack of method in what we do often results in ineffectiveness for the Lord. What can you do to improve your personal strategy for doing God's will? Towards what goals are you working? What disciplines will help you to achieve those goals? Reflect on these matters and enter your thoughts below.

CHAPTER 7

The Task Remaining

It is important to know how far we've come in missions. To plan an effective strategy, however, it is also essential that we understand what's left to be done. What is the task remaining?

In 1974, Christians from all over the world met in Lausanne, Switzerland, for an International Congress on World Evangelization. This Congress, like its historic predecessor in Edinburgh (1910), attempted to analyze the current progress of world evangelization and to define the remaining task. One of the most significant addresses of the Congress was delivered by Dr. Ralph Winter, who convincingly demonstrated that there were 2.4 billion people still beyond the current reach of the gospel message. Building on research done by World Vision's Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC), Winter defined the task remaining in terms of "unreached" or "hidden" *people groups*. He proved conclusively that the "crucial need" in world evangelization today is for missions which will cross cultural frontiers with the gospel.

In this chapter, we will look at Winter's thesis, define his terminology, and examine the rationale behind his conclusions. We will also look at how other missiologists build on Winter's concept to define the remaining task. Finally, we will evaluate the current state of world evangelization and will delineate the task in terms of its highest priorities.

I. The Great Commission Nations

What did Christ mean when He commanded us to make disciples of all "nations"? Was He thinking of politically defined "countries," or did He have something else in mind? What was the common understanding of the term "nation" in Bible times? In the following excerpt, Winter defines this concept biblically and graphically illustrates how this term applies today.

❑ The Task Remaining: All Humanity in Mission Perspective *

Ralph D. Winter

No perspective on the entire human race can be brief without tending to be simplistic. When God chose Abraham and his lineage both for special blessing and for special responsibility to share that blessing to “all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3; 18:18, etc.), Abraham mercifully did not understand how big and complex the task was.

Now, however, 4,000 years later, over half of “all the families of the earth” are at least superficially what Toynbee calls “Judaic” in religion and have certainly received at least some direct blessing through people with faith like Abraham’s and through the redemptive work of the One to whom Abraham looked (John 8:56). If we take into account indirect influences, it would be possible to estimate that nine-tenths of all humanity has by now received

some of that blessing, even if mixed with other elements.

Nations and countries

In today’s world we tend to think “political entity” or “country” when we see the word “nation.” Unfortunately, this is not the concept expressed in the Bible. A closer translation comes directly from the Greek word *ethnos*, which has not only been translated “nation” but also “ethnic unit,” “people,” or (as in the New Testament) “heathen” or “Gentiles.” In no case does it refer to a country as we think of a political unit today. A more correct usage would be as in the phrase “the Cherokee nation,” referring to the tribe of American Indians known as the Cherokee. Even in the Old Testament this same concept

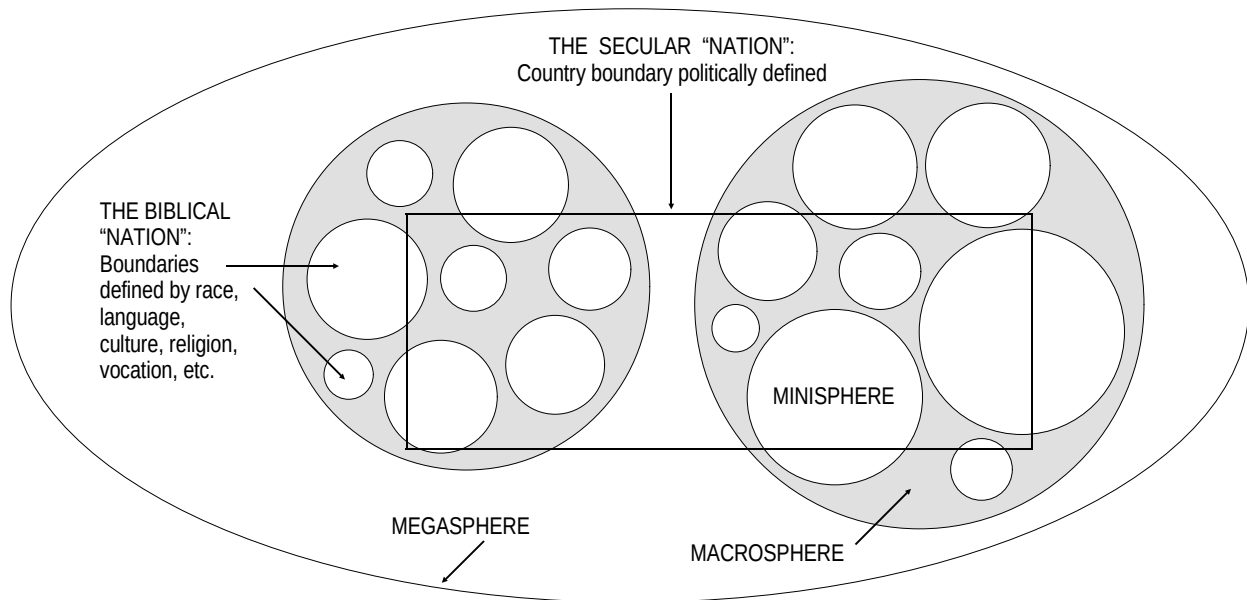


Figure 7-1. The Biblical “Nation”

* Winter, R. D. (1992). The task remaining: All humanity in mission perspective. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. B176-B181). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

holds true. Two words are used in the Old Testament. *Gam*, which occurs 1,821 times, refers to a people, a single race or tribe, or to a specific family of mankind, as in Deuteronomy 4:6 and 28:37. The other word, *mishpahgheh*, occurs only 267 times and is mainly used to refer to family, kindred, or relatives. This is the word used in Genesis 12:3, “In thee shall all the *families* of the earth be blessed.” The concept of “country” or a politically defined nation is totally absent in both of these cases. The fact that not countries, but rather ethnic units or people groups is what is implied is made even more pointed when in a number of places (e.g., Rev. 5:9; 10:11, etc.) not only is the word “nation” used, but it is further spelled out as peoples, tribes, tongues, and kindred.

Paul knew himself as the apostle to the Gentiles (read “peoples” or “nations”). He was one of the first of the new church to conclude that God wanted to use the marvelous diversity of the cultural mosaic of mankind. He came to see that God did not require a Gentile to commit cultural suicide to become a believer. Paul spoke of this as a mystery long hidden, but now made plain (Eph. 3:4). There was nothing new about a Gentile becoming a Jew and joining the community of faith of the people of God. A few hardy proselytes in Paul’s day did this, though they had a hard time. Most Gentiles would not have gone that far. (Did they sense instinctively that such a shift could not in itself be salvific?) They needed a Paul to establish a synagogue of, by, and for their own people, that is, a Gentile synagogue. The new thing was unity without uniformity. Gentiles could follow Jesus without becoming culturally Jewish.

Many Americans in particular tend to assume that all who live in China are racially Chinese, by which they probably mean “Han” Chinese. Or they may assume all the peoples of Russia are ethnically the same. However, even the unity-seeking government of the People’s Republic of China recognizes a number of ethnic minorities, that is, distinctly non-Han groups of people who were born and have lived in China for hundreds of years. Furthermore, there

are a great many varieties of Han Chinese. There are at least 100 mutually unintelligible varieties of the Chinese family of languages! India is a country of 3,000 nations, only 100 of which have any Christians at all. The Soviet Union also has widely diverse peoples with practically nothing in common except the political glue that binds them together.

For example, one major mission organization states its purpose as “multiplying laborers in every nation,” yet it only keeps track of how many *countries* it works in, not how many biblical *nations* it is touching, nor whether such nations already have a well established work or not. Another outstanding mission agency has produced a book entitled *The Discipling of a Nation*, which speaks of needing one church for every thousand people in a “nation.” The thinking of the leaders of that mission is clear, but the book title is ambiguous since most people would understand it to mean countries, not biblical nations. Yet, strange as it may at first sound, it is perfectly possible to reach the goal of having planted one church per thousand people in, say, the *country* of India and not have touched even half of the 3,000 different biblically defined nations in that country.

The “peoples” concept stresses the need to look at people as part of their own culture and to see them as strategic, natural bridges to the rest of their society.

Thus to look at the world from the “peoples” concept is not only biblical, it is also highly strategic, for there is one kind of cross-cultural evangelism and church planting that is far more strategic than all the others. Moreover, the “peoples” concept stresses the need to look at people as part of their own culture, not merely as individuals, and to see them, when converted as individuals, as strategic, natural bridges to the rest of their society. To give a diagrammatic example of the significance of the “peoples” concept for mission strategy, let us look at one small sector of the world.

1. What is the difference between a “country” and the biblical concept of “nation”?

2. What is the importance of this distinction?

The term “people group” has been coined to refer to the biblical concept of nation. People groups are sociological groupings of people, not political groupings. The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization has defined a people group as “a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these.”

Megaspheres, macrospheres, and minispheres

Figure 7-2 shows some people groups within two large cultural blocs or “megaspheres”—the Muslim megasphere and the Han Chinese megasphere. Within these megaspheres we find three large circles filled with a number of smaller circles. Each large circle represents a “cultural macrosphere”—a group of societies that have certain cultural similarities both within and between them. The middle

macrosphere consists of Cantonese-speaking people, most of whom are found in a single country, the People’s Republic of China, and they number in the millions of people. The smaller circles, which I will call “minispheres,” represent groups of people which speak divergent dialects of Cantonese mutually unintelligible to each other. People from two such subgroups can be understood by each other

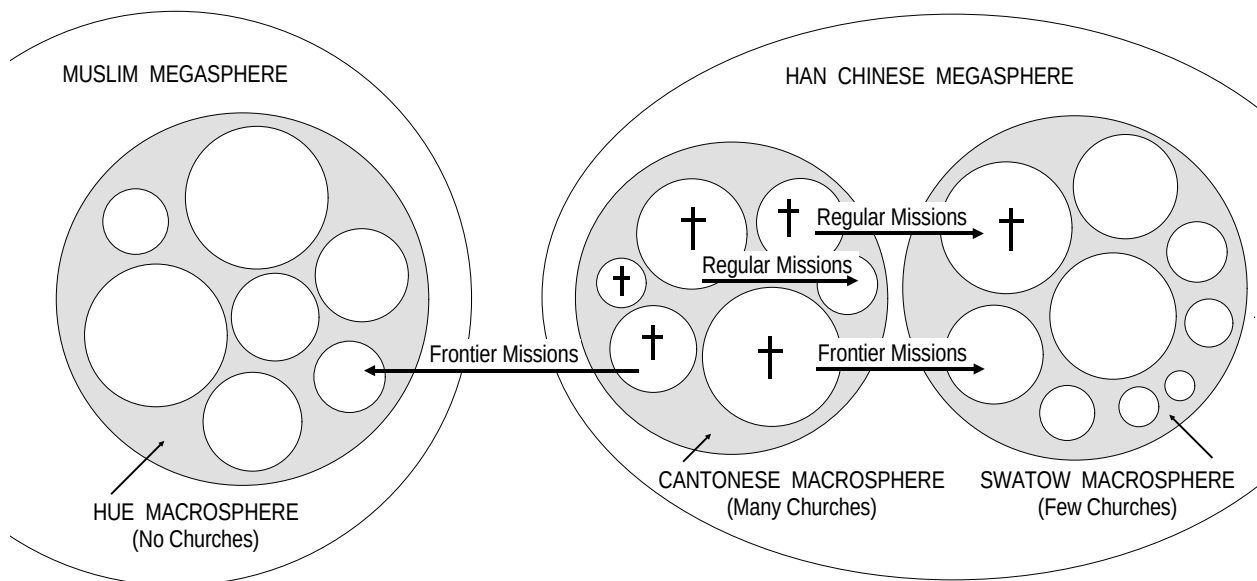


Figure 7-2. Regular Missions / Frontier Missions

only if they learn a “trade language” variety of Cantonese. Either the macrosphere or the minisphere could be considered a *nation* in biblical terms, but note that neither is a *country*. (Still

smaller “microspheres” could be defined by clan or family or vocational differences too small to require separate churches for maximally effective outreach.)

3. How do the three “spheres” help us arrive at the biblical understanding of the term “nations”?

E-1, E-2, and E-3 evangelism

Note further that in some of the minispheres—the smaller circles—there is a cross, representing an indigenous church that has been planted within that culture sometime in the past. These churches, if they are vital and witnessing, are readily able to win the remaining non-Christians in that dialect group by normal, near-neighbor evangelism. We call this E-1 evangelism. There is only one barrier to be crossed in near-neighbor evangelism, the “stained glass barrier.” Should that barrier get too thick, the believing community then becomes an enclave that is essentially a different minisphere and must be treated as such.

Some of the smaller circles, however, have no cross. Those minispheres obviously need someone from somewhere else to do that initial evangelizing and to plant the first church. That kind of evangelism from the outside is much more difficult than near-neighbor evangelism, for it requires the evangelist from the outside to learn another language, or at least another dialect of Cantonese. Also, he will find out that some of the cultural assumptions will be different. In other words, ordinary evangelism will not do the task that is required to pioneer in this frontier area. This type of evangelism we call E-2 or E-3. The evangelist must penetrate significant cultural barriers.

Looking again at Figure 7-2, you will notice that schematically we show only six of the many minispheres in the Cantonese macrosphere, and that five have a cross, meaning an indigenous church.

The Swatow macrosphere, by contrast, has only one minisphere with an indigenous church, and the Muslim Hue macrosphere, which pertains to an entirely different Muslim megasphere, has no Christian church at all in any of its minispheres. Each of these macrospheres numbers millions of people; indeed, even some of the minispheres may number over a million people. The job of the ordinary evangelist is to plant churches in his own minisphere. That we call E-1, near-neighbor evangelism.

There is only one barrier to be crossed in E-1 evangelism, the “stained glass” barrier. In E-2 or E-3 evangelism, the evangelist must penetrate significant cultural barriers.

But where there is no church—no indigenous community of believers—there is not the evangelism potential to reach the entire minisphere. In fact, there may be a number of individual believers who (like the New Testament “God fearers”) worship outside their culture. There may even be some believers from that group who have left their minisphere and become “proselytized” to another. But there is still no viable, indigenous church. By viable church we mean a minimum, yet sufficiently developed indigenous Christian tradition, capable of evangelizing its own people without cross-cultural help. This implies that there would be a cluster of indigenous evangelizing congregations

and a significant part of the Bible translated by the people themselves. Minispheres which do not have that cluster of indigenous, growing, evangelizing congregations can be considered “unreached.” These people groups require cross-cultural evangelism.

A people group can be considered “reached” if there is a body of Christians with the potential to evangelize its own people such that outside, cross-cultural efforts can be “safely” terminated. This potential may be roughly predicted by measuring the percentage of practicing Christians. The figure of 20 percent has been established by the Lausanne

Committee for World Evangelization, to be on the “safe side,” but this figure is not absolutely crucial if in a given case it is known that the indigenous church shows every indication that it can and will evangelize its entire minisphere. Where there is no viable church, it takes a Paul, or someone from outside that language group and culture, to go to that people and plant a church there. Or it takes a Luther within the culture to wake up and go indigenous. In any case, the Cantonese evangelist in Figure 7-2 who goes to a Swatow dialect where there is no church is doing a missionary type of evangelism. In Paul’s words, he is “going where Christ is not named.”

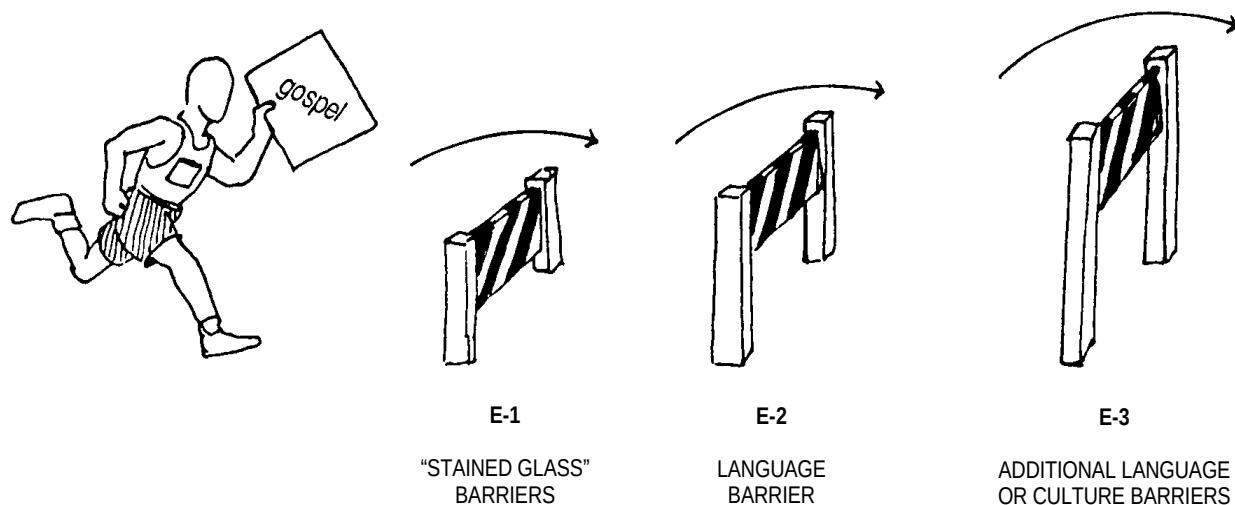


Figure 7-3. E-1, E-2, and E-3 Evangelism

4. What are the main barriers to be crossed in each of the three kinds of evangelism?

5. How do we know when a people group has a viable church?

Evangelism and missions

If, however, a Cantonese evangelist goes from his Cantonese-speaking church to a Swatow minisphere where there already is an indigenous church, to help those believers to evangelize their own non-Christian Swatows, remaining in the same minisphere, he may very well be making a “missionary trip,” but he is doing evangelism, not missions. We have defined as evangelism the activity of reaching out from an existing church within the same minisphere, working to its fringes. The people back home in his Cantonese minisphere may very likely call such a person their “missionary,” but technically speaking, even in the biblical and classical sense, he is an evangelist who happens to be working at a cultural distance from his own background. The main point is that winning people into a church that is already within their own minisphere is the work of an evangelist, even if the “missionary” comes from a great distance. We must admit that this is the usual pattern of so-called “missions” today. Most “missionaries,” whether from the U.S.A., Europe, Asia, or Africa, go from their own cultures to work in another culture where a church is already established. We may have to concede the term “regular missions” to such activity, just because of social pressure; in that case we fall back to the term “frontier missions” for the other activity. Some workers are incorrectly called “missionaries” even when they go to work with Christians from their own culture who have moved to a foreign country. In that case, such people are not even evangelists but rather “transplanted pastors.”

Regular missions and frontier missions

We can distinguish “Frontier Missions” from “Regular Missions” by considering the matrix in Figure 7-4. The quadrants on the left side are concerned with *reached* people groups, and the quadrants on the right side are concerned with *unreached* or *hidden* people groups. Thus the horizontal axis effectively measures the *cultural* distance between the people and the culturally nearest potential witness embodied in a church, while the vertical axis is the *evangelist’s* cultural distance from the potential convert. The bottom two quadrants designate *mono-cultural* work. The top two quadrants specify *cross-cultural* evangelism.

Quadrant I is classic near-neighbor evangelism. An evangelist makes disciples within his own minisphere, where there is already a vibrant growing fellowship. But it is quite possible for this same Christian worker to work in what is for him a radically different culture (E-3 evangelism) and yet be working among an essentially reached group (Quadrant II). This is “missions” only in the sense that the worker is away from his own home. The converts have all the advantages of those in Quadrant I. But if our evangelist does E-3 evangelism in a people group without a viable church (Quadrant III), then he must work for the “missiological breakthrough” of establishing the first indigenous church. This is the crucial task of “Frontier Missions.” We trust that the term “Regular Missions” highlights the strategic priority of “Frontier Missions” without diminishing the value of cross-cultural workers in reached people groups.

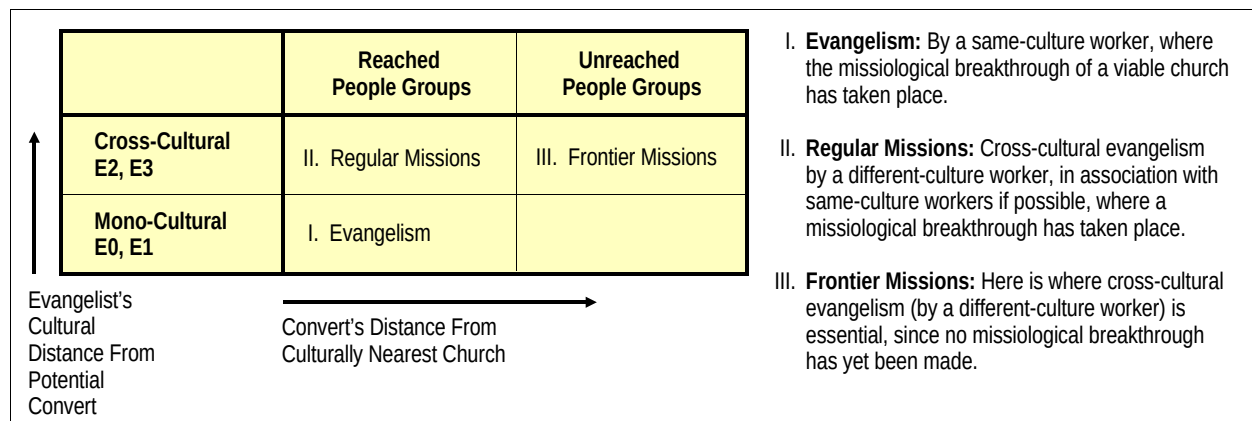


Figure 7-4. Evangelism vs. Missions

6. What are the determining factors in identifying frontier missions?

Cultural Barriers

When the biblical definition of “nation” is applied, Christ’s words, “Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19), may take on new significance. Most of the world’s *politically* defined nations have a viable church. But thousands of the world’s *culturally* defined nations still don’t have a viable Christian witness in their midst. These nations, or people groups, are isolated from the gospel by cultural barriers.

1. Linguistic Barriers

The most obvious cultural barrier which distinguishes one people from another is language. People who speak a language different from one’s own are obviously foreign. To a slightly lesser degree, the same is true of those who speak a different dialect of one’s own language. Dialects, or regional variations of a language, are distinguishable because of differences in accent, vocabulary, or grammar. Often these differences are so marked that it is difficult or impossible for people who belong to different dialect groups of the same language to understand each other. Because of these linguistic barriers, Bible translators have often identified a need for separate translations for different dialects. Currently, more than 4,500 linguistic groups need separate Bible translations.

Dialects may reflect geographical, economic, or social distance of members of the same tribe or ethnic grouping. Often, significant cultural differences beyond language exist. Most people think of the United States as a single nation, bound by a common language, English, which has only some slight regional differences. A study by Joel Garreau, however, identifies nine distinct regions in North America, each with its own economy and value system. Culturally and economically, these regions could well be considered as separate nations.* Even though most North Americans speak the same language, their regional culture may be sufficiently different that distinct strategies may be needed to communicate the gospel in each of these “nations.”

In many countries, a national language is spoken for the purpose of trade, education, and government, but many local languages and dialects are spoken in the homes and in the localities where the languages originate. For example, in Cameroon, West Africa, English and French are spoken as national languages, but 183 distinct languages and dialects are spoken regionally. Cameroon must not be thought of as evangelized simply because French and English speaking congregations are established throughout the country. On the contrary, we can consider Cameroon to be “reached” only when its 183 linguistically defined “nations” have viable churches ministering to them.

* See Garreau, J. (1981). *The nine nations of North America*. New York: Avon Books.

2. Social Barriers

The cultural barriers to spontaneous evangelization are not simply linguistic. Some of the most significant barriers are social. Within most societies there are social classes which are defined along racial, occupational, educational, economic, hereditary, or religious lines. We give these classes designations such as “upper” and “lower” class, working class, professional class, ruling class, etc. In India, an intricate class or “caste” system has developed with hundreds of distinct classifications.

Perhaps because of a greater awareness of their own need and dependence on God, the poor “lower” classes have often been the most responsive to the gospel. But it is improbable, and in some cases nearly impossible, for upper class members or castes to become Christians if it means forsaking their own social position to become members of a “lower” class or caste church. For example, millions of Hindus in Southern India speak the same language. The church is well established there, but its membership is drawn from approximately five percent of the castes. We could not consider Southern India to be reached until viable churches are established which can minister effectively to the other 95 percent of the castes that are still unevangelized.

3. Rivalries and Prejudices

The barriers preventing the gospel from spreading spontaneously from one culture to the next are many and complex. Linguistic and sociological factors are the most significant, but there are also other factors which bar Christian neighbors from evangelizing peoples who are geographically, linguistically, and even sociologically similar. For example, herdsmen and farmers in the same region may speak a common language and may be considered on the same social level. A viable church may exist among the farmers, but age-old rivalries over land use will probably prevent the farmers from evangelizing the herdsmen. It may well require E-2 or E-3 evangelism from the outside to reach the herdsmen successfully.

In many countries, racial or class discrimination is widely practiced. Black/white tensions in the United States and the practice of apartheid in South Africa are perhaps the best known examples. But each part of the globe has its own racial prejudices. Native American populations of North and South America, Russian Jews, pygmies in Africa, Palestinians in Israel, tenant farmers, religious minorities in India, and powerless majorities elsewhere have all suffered tyranny and exploitation. The net result is that such mistrust and hate have built up over the years that it is highly unlikely that the dominant group will ever find a hearing among those who have been oppressed. Only E-2 or E-3 evangelists from the outside are likely to receive an open hearing.

7. To what “nation” do you belong? Describe it in terms of linguistic and social boundaries with near neighbors.

8. *What rivalries or prejudices exist between the group you are a part of and others in your community or general locality? How difficult is it to share the gospel across these barriers?*

Crossing Cultural Barriers

In Acts 1:8 Christ emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural evangelism. At first glance, it may seem that He is speaking simply of a geographical progression of the gospel from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, to Samaria, and from there to the uttermost part of the earth. Although geographic distance does figure into this expansion, the fact remains that this sequence reflects a cultural progression from the center of Jewish culture, Jerusalem, throughout the Jewish fringes of Judea, to the part-Jewish, part-Gentile Samaritans, and on to the larger Gentile world of the “uttermost parts,” containing thousands of groups, each with its own cultural distinctives and barriers to be crossed.

The progression of the gospel in Acts was not as neat and simple as it might first appear; it did not simply flow from Jew to Samaritan to Greek. The Jews and the Samaritans, while culturally near, had no dealings with each other. The Jews despised the Samaritans for having defiled the Jewish race through intermarriage with Gentiles. Thus, although the Samaritans were at a close cultural and geographic distance from the Jews, long-standing prejudicial hatred was a difficult barrier to cross with the gospel. Indeed, when the Samaritans were reached, the contact was made not by an ethnic Jew, but by Philip, a Hellenistic Jew of Greek ethnicity (Acts 8). In this case, Philip may have been culturally more distant from the Samaritans than were the Jews, but it was this very distance which may well have given him a hearing among the Samaritans.

Paul himself, though ethnically a Jew, was raised in a Gentile culture. This heritage put him closer culturally to the Gentiles than the other apostles were, thus explaining in part why he was chosen to go to the Gentiles. Using Winter’s terminology, we could say that Paul was at an E-2 distance from the Greeks, while Peter was at E-3 distance from them. Luke, who himself was Greek, was at E-1 distance. Likewise, Barnabas may have been sent to Antioch by the elders in Jerusalem because, being a native of those parts, he could minister on an E-1 basis.

There are many factors which determine cultural distance and the possible effectiveness of an evangelist. In today’s complex world, there are many “Jeruselems,” “Judeas,” “Samarias,” and “uttermost parts.” One man’s “Samaria” is another’s “Judea” and a third person’s “uttermost part.” Figure 7-5 illustrates these relationships by showing the cultural distance between the Highland Quechuas of Peru and several other groups.

Farthest away culturally are the North Americans and the Koreans. They are clearly at E-3 distance because they must cross major linguistic and cultural barriers even to get to the Quechuas. Mestizos, the descendants of marriages between the Spanish conquerors and the Quechuas, are

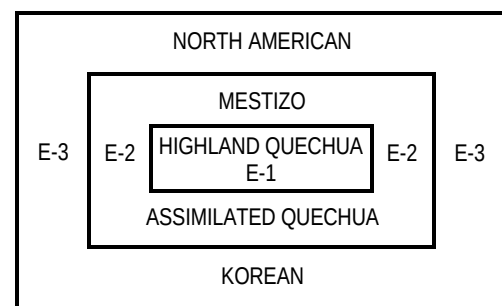


Figure 7-5. Cultural Distances

culturally closer, at an E-2 distance. The 500-year domination of the Quechuas by the Mestizos, however, has produced a “Jew/Samaritan” situation. Walls of prejudice in most cases inhibit effective evangelization of the Quechuas by the Mestizos because of the long tradition of exploitation.

At a closer E-2 distance are second generation urbanized Quechuas whose parents moved to the big cities to escape poverty and give their children greater opportunities. These ethnic Quechuas are being assimilated into Mestizo culture. Although the lifestyle and professions of these assimilated Quechuas have now distanced them from their Quechua heritage, they are barely beyond E-1 distance. Many understand their parents’ Quechua dialect and may speak it as well.

9. *Based on the above information, which group is the best candidate to evangelize the Highland Quechuas? Why?*

II. Envisioning the Task

Understanding the complexity of cultural barriers allows us to see distinct groupings of people who, because of their affinities, consider themselves quite distinct from others, even their near neighbors. One of the best known of the missiologists attempting to quantify the number of these biblically defined groups is Patrick Johnstone, whose book *Operation World* has helped thousands to understand and pray for the unreached peoples. He describes the challenge involved in trying to compute the number of these groups existing in our world today.

☐ **Unreached Peoples: How Many Are There? ***

Patrick Johnstone **

The very term “unreached” is a challenge! Unreached peoples must be reached as soon as possible. The Church of the Lord Jesus must be mobilized to reach them. For this, we *must* know who they are, where they live, and how to reach them effectively.

For this we need to know how many unreached people groups (UPs) there are.

Yet after 15 years of talk and research, there is often more heat than light, confusion than clarity. Why? I see three basic reasons:

* Johnstone, P. (1992). *Unreached peoples: How many are there?* In S. C. Hawthorne & R. D. Winter (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A study guide* (1992 ed.) (pp. G5-G6). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Patrick Johnstone has served as a missionary to southern Africa. He is presently the Director of Research for WEC International in England.

1. Differing goals

Christian anthropologists and sociologists are especially interested in defining our complex society. By this means, help can be given to churches struggling to find keys for evangelizing every section of the society in which they live. To such researchers, the actual number of people groups is not important, nor is the fact that in highly developed societies, any one person may be classified in a number of professional, occupational, residential, and social groups. Such a classification could mean an open ended total of millions of people groups in the world.

The command of the Lord Jesus that disciples be made of all nations or peoples must be bounded and completable.

Missionaries are primarily concerned for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that all the families of the earth (implying peoples) might be blessed in the gospel, and that the vision of Revelation 7:9 might become reality—that there might be those redeemed of every race, tribe, people, and tongue. The command of the Lord Jesus that disciples be made of *all* nations or peoples must be bounded and completable. For world evangelization it is important that we define what we mean by a people group or people in this more limited sense. Revelation 7:9 gives us a good guide: these terms are predominantly ethnic and linguistic. This narrows down the number of peoples in the world to between 7,000 and 30,000, depending on the distinctions you make.

2. Differing definitions

So much depends on the ministry of an agency as to what definition is best for the chosen medium of outreach. Take language, for example.

Christian radio strategists tend to think in terms of using major languages, and covering small minorities in a commonly understood “trade” language. The world could be 99 percent covered by broadcasting in 400-500 such languages.

Bible translators have a stiffer criterion. Languages that already have some Scriptures or that might warrant a translation program may number 5,455 or

more (the latest Wycliffe Bible Translators’ *Ethnologue* figure).

Gospel Recordings, Inc., prepares tape and disk evangelistic messages and can refine the program to dialects. Dialects vary from a moderate change in accentuation to a high degree of mutual incomprehension. Who could ever define every dialect in the world—20,000; 40,000?

Social systems can be rigid. Many advocate that Hindu caste systems should be classified as ethnolinguistic peoples—there are over 3,000 castes in India speaking 14 major officially recognized languages!

So much, therefore, depends on our definitions and classifications. So any who propose a number for peoples and UPs for the world must also give their parameters.

3. Differing cut-off points

What is the minimal size of people that can qualify for inclusion in a world list? For instance:

Small tribes—At what size is a tribal group viable? Many of the Amerindian, Pacific, and African tribes are so small that they are unlikely to survive as a separate entity for long. Should they be included?

Migrant communities—At what size or level of integration should the many thousands of immigrant or refugee communities be recognized as unassimilated, viable, countable entities? Would, for instance, 15 migrant Uzbeks from the U.S.S.R. in Canada constitute a separate people? The total for Canada could be anything from 50 to 500 migrant ethnic communities.

The criteria for a suggested model

This is the model I used for *Operation World*:

1. Every indigenous people within a country for which a separate cross-cultural discipling and church planting ministry is required. This would generally mean that dialect and class distinctions are not made unless local knowledge justifies this. It may prove wise for separate and specific evangelistic and early discipling strategies to be developed for these, but an integrated church to be the goal.

2. All immigrant communities that retain a cultural and geographical cohesion requiring a church planting strategy in their own language. I have taken 3,000 migrants as a general lower limit.
3. The total of each country gives the number of “peoples within the country.” The world total is derived by adding the totals for each country (i.e., any ethno-linguistic group found in a multiple number of countries will be included multiple times).

An estimation of the degree of reachedness of the world’s peoples

Using the above criteria, these are the results from the information that we have in our files:

Total number of peoples within country boundaries	12,017
Total number of peoples over 50% Christian	6,000
Peoples with some viable indigenous churches	3,000
Peoples with missionary outreach; no viable churches	1,800
Peoples with neither missionary outreach nor indigenous churches	1,200

How does this compare to other estimates?

1. The famous 17,000 unreached people groups out of a total of 24,000 used by Ralph Winter has been a rallying cry for 13 years. I see it as a conceptual total based on theoretical assumptions which now needs updating and refining in the light of the more complete data becoming available. It can only be justified if all dialects, castes, etc. are included. To me, this makes the church planting task unnecessarily complex—let us not assume this addition until more detailed research obliges us to do so!
2. David Barrett’s peoples database already had nearly 11,000 entries when I last heard. His cut-off points are higher than mine in large countries—possibly explaining some of the minor discrepancies with my world total.
3. Bob Waymire’s (Global Mapping Project) total of 11,600 is very close to mine—but we have shared much of the definitions and data we use.

I therefore believe that the figure of 12,000 peoples is within 1,000 of the final total of peoples for which specific cross-cultural discipling in our generation may be required or already minimally achieved. This is a measurable, achievable goal—let’s go for it, even by 2000 A.D.!

10. Does Johnstone’s figure of about 12,000 groups needing cross-cultural evangelization seem reasonable? Why or why not?

There are unreached peoples all around us. We find them in ethnic and social enclaves in cities and in the isolated countryside. These people have been “hidden” from the gospel because the church has not known about them or perhaps has not wanted to look for them. The church has often assumed that, as long as she keeps her doors open, it is the unreached who are at fault if they don’t choose to walk through those doors. The “stained glass” barrier is a very real one, and it will continue to prevent the evangelization of these peoples unless the church is cured of her “peoples blindness” and takes the initiative to “go... and make disciples of all nations.”

That Everyone May Hear

With thousands of unreached peoples left to hear, how do we go about defining the task? Ed Dayton has given a great deal of effort to helping Christians understand how the task can be managed.

❏ ***The Task at Hand: World Evangelization ****

Edward R. Dayton

How do we think about evangelizing the entire world? Somehow that seems like too big a responsibility in a world that every day grows more complex, a world torn by disasters, political upheaval, and starving people.

How do you even think about a world like that?

The countries of the world

One way to think about it is in terms of the world's countries. While these countries are geographical locations, we are not really talking about the nations that the Bible describes; rather, we are talking about geographical territories that break up language

groups and cultures. For example, the Kurdish nation is located in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and the U.S.S.R. There is not a country called Kurdistan, but there is a nation that God desires to be with Him filled with Kurds.

In 1990 the United Nations said there were over 250 countries in the world. They come in all sizes. They range from an estimated 1 billion people in China, down to only 3,500 people in Niue, South Pacific. That tremendous variation shows the difficulty of talking about world evangelization in terms of countries. It is one thing to evangelize Niue; it is quite another to reach the 1 billion people of China.

11. Why is it difficult to conceive of world evangelization in terms of countries?

The religions of the world

Another way to think about the world is in terms of its religions. Figure 7-6 shows the approximate distribution of the peoples of the world by different religions in 1990.

Those who acknowledge Jesus Christ number approximately 1.7 billion people. (This number includes many individuals who are Christians in name

only, going to church once a year and never really knowing Christ.)

The second largest religion in the world is Islam, with an estimated 935 million Muslims. With the majority in India, there are some 705 million Hindus found all over the world.

* Dayton, E. R. (1990). *That everyone may hear: Reaching the unreached*. Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research & Communication Center.

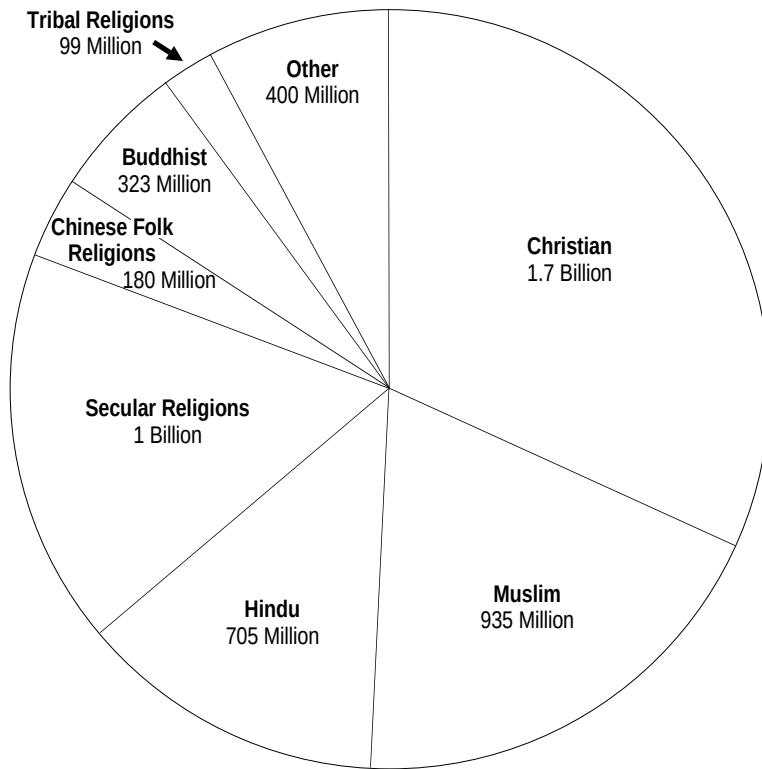


Figure 7-6. Religions of the World

“Secular religions” (such as Marxism, Communism, humanism, agnosticism, and atheism) include approximately 1 billion people. Chinese folk religionists are estimated to number 180 million. There are 323 million Buddhists (mostly in Japan, Thailand, Tibet, and Myanmar, formerly Burma) and 99 million tribal religionists (mostly in the South Pacific) who worship nature or the spirit world. All the other religions of the world make up the balance.

It is not so important how accurate any of these numbers are. In terms of proportions and magnitude, they are accurate enough to give us a picture of the challenge that approximately 68 percent of the world’s people do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Lord. But it is obvious that, though this breakdown helps us, it still does not give us the basis for a workable strategy for reaching the world.

12. What is useful about thinking of world evangelization in terms of other religions?

Three major tasks

Fulfilling Christ’s Commission involves three major tasks for the Church today. They vary in complexity and difficulty. But all three are tremendously important:

1. First, we need to evangelize the millions of nominal Christians we have included in the “1.7 billion Christians.” There are people all over the world, particularly in Western countries, who have been baptized and have joined a local

church but have little understanding of the saving power of Jesus Christ, and even less of what it means to serve Him.

2. Second, we need to evangelize the 1 billion non-Christians with whom we are in immediate contact. We need to find ways to share with our non-Christian friends and neighbors the gracious love of their Heavenly Father and His desire to make them citizens of His kingdom.

3. Third, we need to discover the more than 2.2 billion people who are unreached by any Christian witness and to develop strategies for reaching them. This is the major task of the Church. Today less than 10 percent of all missionaries are attempting to reach these 2.2 billion people. To put it another way, we need to see churches planted among these 2.2 billion people, churches which can then get on with the responsibility of evangelizing people who speak the same language, people “just like them.”

The challenge of unreached peoples

Of the approximately 3.6 billion people who are not Christians, only a little over 1 billion live within cultures where there are Christians who know Jesus and who can share His love. To put that another way, no matter how earnest all the local churches in the world are in reaching out to their near neighbors (people like them), only one-third of the non-Chris-

tians in the world can be reached by Christians who speak their language and understand their culture.

The other people of the world are not only unchurched, they are living in places around the world where there are no Christians to communicate Christ to them in their own language or culture. They live their lives every day without knowing or hearing about Christ, without any effective witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ. We need to say it over and over:

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Rom. 10:14-15)

13. *How does Dayton’s “three task” categorization help us make decisions on how best to allocate workers in the field?*
-
-
-

How do you evangelize the world?

God is in the business of redeeming the world. This is His business. Our responsibility is to become involved with Him in carrying out His good purposes for the world.

One way of thinking about reaching the world is *one people group at a time*. Not one country at a time, because countries vary so much. India, with its over 853 million people, has 15 official languages and thousands of castes, tribes, and other social groups.

Certainly, reaching India is quite a different responsibility from reaching Niue with its 3,500 people.

Not one religion at a time. Not only are most of the major religions of the world huge in numbers of adherents, but they are also spread out through many different people groups. There are more Buddhists in the world today than the total population of the world at the time of Christ!

The term “people group” is a contemporary term for the biblical concept of “nation.” Dayton’s analysis points us back to the scriptural “all nations” mandate and allows us to see that the task, while huge in scope, has its bite size components. By thinking of the remaining task in terms of individual people groups, we are encouraged to believe that they can be won, one by one.

The 10/40 Window

Another mission strategist providing valuable insights into the remaining task is Luis Bush. At the second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (Manila, 1989), Bush, citing research also done by David Barrett and George Otis, Jr.,* drew attention to the fact that the majority of unreached peoples live in a geographical region identified as “the 10/40 window.” Falling between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude and stretching from North Africa and southern Spain to Japan and the northern Philippine islands, this window contains the vast majority of the world’s unreached peoples.

□ **The 10/40 Window: Getting to the Core of the Core** **

Luis Bush ***

The core of the unreached people of our world live in a rectangular-shaped window! Often called “The Resistant Belt,” the window extends from West Africa to East Asia, from 10 degrees north to 40 degrees north of the equator. This specific region, which has increasingly become known as The 10/40 Window, encompasses the majority of the world’s Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists—billions of spiritually impoverished souls.

As we approach the end of this millennium, it is imperative that our evangelistic efforts be focused among the people who inhabit The 10/40 Window. If we are serious in our commitment to provide a valid opportunity for every person to experience the truth and saving power of Jesus Christ, we cannot ignore the compelling realities within this region.

The 10/40 Window confronts us with several important considerations: first, the historical and biblical significance; second, the least evangelized countries; third, the dominance of three religious blocs; fourth, the preponderance of the poor; fifth, the unreached ethno-linguistic people groups; sixth, the

least evangelized megacities; and, seventh, the strongholds of Satan within The 10/40 Window.

The first and most fundamental reason why committed Christians must focus on The 10/40 Window is because of the biblical and historical significance of this area. Indeed, the Bible begins with the account of Adam and Eve placed by God in the heart of what is now The 10/40 Window. God’s plan, expressed in Genesis 1:26, was that mankind should have dominion over the earth, subduing it fully. However, Adam and Eve sinned against God and forfeited their right to rule. Man’s sinful behavior increased until God intervened and judged the earth with a cataclysmic flood. Then came man’s futile attempt to establish new dominion in the building of the great Tower of Babel. That effort, which also occurred in the heart of The 10/40 Window, was an open defiance against God. Once again, God reached forth His hand in judgment. The result was the introduction of different languages, the scattering of earth’s people, and the formation of the nations.

* David Barrett is the world’s foremost authority on Christian demographics and is the author of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Oxford University Press. George Otis, Jr., has authored a book on the 10/40 window entitled *The Last of the Giants*.

** Bush, L. (n.d.). *The 10/40 window: Getting to the core of the core*. Colorado Springs, CO: AD 2000 and Beyond Movement.

*** Luis Bush, a citizen of Argentina, is the International Director of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement. He was formerly the International President of Partners International. In 1987, he served as Director of COMIBAM, a continent-wide congress on world missions held in São Paulo, Brazil.

COUNTRIES IN THE 10/40 WINDOW					
Afghanistan	Djibouti	Iran	Macau	Portugal	Turkmenistan
Algeria	Egypt	Iraq	Mali	Qatar	United Arab Emirates
Bahrain	Ethiopia	Israel	Malta	Saudi Arabia	Vietnam
Bangladesh	Gambia	Japan	Mauritania	Senegal	West Bank
Benin	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Morocco	Sudan	Western Sahara
Bhutan	Gibraltar	Korea, North	Myanmar	Syria	Yemen
Burkina Faso	Greece	Korea, South	Nepal	Taiwan	
Cambodia	Guinea	Kuwait	Niger	Tajikistan	
Chad	Guinea-Bissau	Laos	Oman	Thailand	
China	Hong Kong	Lebanon	Pakistan	Tunisia	
Cyprus	India	Libya	Philippines	Turkey	

Figure 7-7

In The 10/40 Window we can see clearly the crucial truth expressed in Graham Scroggie's book, *The Drama of World Redemption*: "A world having turned from God, He left it and chose a man through whom He would ultimately by Christ reach the world." Certainly we can see how ancient history ran its course in the territory marked by The 10/40 Window, from the cradle of civilization in Mesopotamia across the Fertile Crescent to Egypt. Empires

rose and fell. The fate of God's people Israel varied in relation to their obedience to His covenant. It was here that Christ was born, lived a perfect life, died sacrificially on the cross, and rose triumphant over death. The church age was ushered in, and it was not until the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul that events of biblical history occurred outside The 10/40 Window. Without question, this is an area of great biblical and historical significance.

14. What biblical significance does Bush attach to the 10/40 window?

The second reason why committed Christians should focus on The 10/40 Window is because it is home to the majority of the world's unevangelized people. The "unevangelized" are people who have a minimal knowledge of the gospel, but have had no valid opportunity to respond to it.

While it constitutes only one-third of earth's total land area, nearly two-thirds of the world's people reside in The 10/40 Window. With a total population nearing 4 billion, The 10/40 Window includes 61 countries, both sovereign states and non-sovereign dependencies. Those countries with the majority of their land mass lying within the boundaries of The 10/40 Window are included.

Of the world's 50 least evangelized countries, 37 are within The 10/40 Window. Yet those 37 countries comprise 97 percent of the total population of the 50 least evangelized countries! Such a fact leaves no doubt that our challenge in reaching the unreached must center on the core—The 10/40 Window.

If we take seriously the mandate to preach the gospel to every person, to make disciples of all peoples, and to be Christ's witnesses to the uttermost part of the earth, we must recognize the priority of concentrating our efforts on The 10/40 Window. No other area is so blatantly in need of the truth that salvation is only in Jesus Christ.

15. *Why is the 10/40 window significant if we are thinking in terms of completing the Great Commission task?*

A third reason we must focus on The 10/40 Window is evident in the fact that it contains three of the world's dominant religious blocs. The majority of those enslaved by Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism live within The 10/40 Window.

In Figure 7-8, the Muslim world can be seen most prominently stretching in a wide band across the north of Africa into the Middle East, a bloc representing over 700 million persons. In the middle of the map, overshadowing the subcontinent of India, is the presence of Hinduism, also constituting a population of more than 700 million. On the right side of the map is the Buddhist world, encompassing the whole of China.

From its center in The 10/40 Window, Islam is reaching out energetically to all parts of the globe; in similar strategy, we must penetrate the heart of Islam with the liberating truth of the gospel. We must do all in our power to show Muslims that the highest prophet described in the Koran is not Mohammed, but Jesus Christ. And that He is not only

the greatest prophet, but the Son of God Himself who died and resurrected in order that millions of Muslims may be saved.

Overwhelmed with poverty and ravaged by disease, India is victimized even more severely by the spiritual blindness of Hinduism. To a nation in which fattened cows roam freely among emaciated humans, we must proclaim the truth that Jesus came to give us life, and give it abundantly.

Although officially an atheistic country since the Marxist revolution of the late 1940s, China is nevertheless influenced deeply by its Buddhist roots. Some scholars, in fact, consider China's true religion to be a combination of atheism and Buddhism. In actuality, religion in China is a hodgepodge which includes folklore, mysticism, animism, and occult practices. Regardless of how one may assess the situation, the fact remains that 1.2 billion Chinese are in desperate need of Jesus Christ. They represent the largest identifiable bloc within The 10/40 Window.

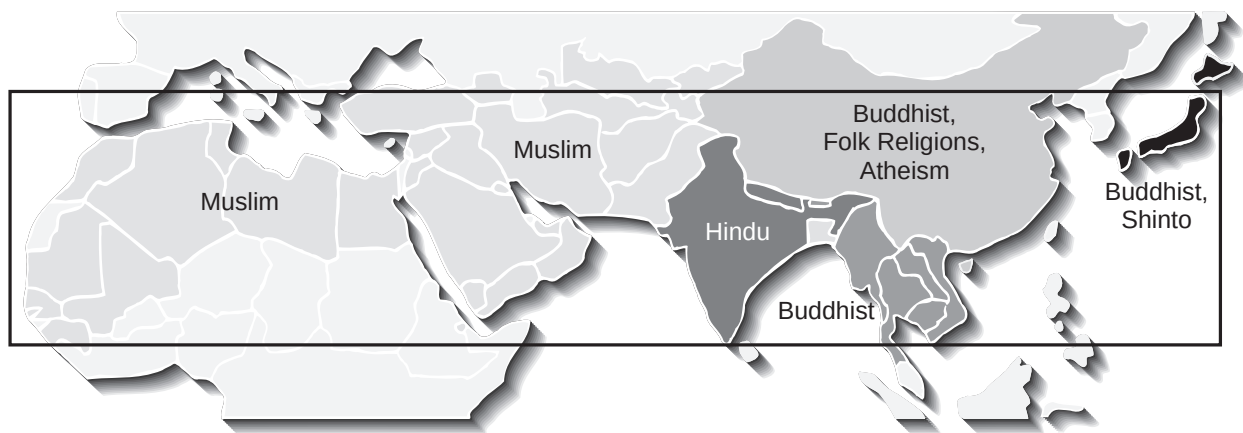


Figure 7-8. Religions Within the 10/40 Window

16. In what ways is the predominance of other world religions in the 10/40 window significant to the missionary task?

A fourth reason we must focus on The 10/40 Window is because the poor are there. Of the poorest of the poor, more than eight out of 10 live in The 10/40 Window. On average, they exist on less than \$500 per person per year. Although 2.4 billion of these people live within The 10/40 Window, only 8 percent of all missionaries work among them.

Bryant L. Myers, in his perceptive article entitled, “Where Are the Poor and Lost?” states that “the poor are the lost, and the lost are the poor.” He arrived at this conclusion after illustrating that the majority of the unreached live in the poorest countries of the world.

When Christians from 170 countries gathered at Lausanne II in Manila in 1989, great concern was expressed for the materially poor. In the second section of the Manila Manifesto, that concern was recorded in the following declaration: “We have again been confronted with Luke’s emphasis that

the gospel is the good news for the poor (Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22) and have asked ourselves what this means to the majority of the world’s population who are destitute, suffering, and oppressed. We have been reminded that the law, the prophets, the wisdom books, and the teaching and ministry of Jesus all stress God’s concern for the materially poor and our consequent duty to defend and care for them.”

Committed Christians cannot ignore the reality that there is a remarkable overlap between the poorest countries of the world and those which are the least evangelized.

The fifth reason we must address our concerns on The 10/40 Window is because it contains the largest spiritually bankrupt ethno-linguistic megapeoples (over 1 million). In fact, over 90 percent of the individuals in these people groups live in The 10/40 Window.

17. How will the staggering poverty and quality of life indicators in the 10/40 window affect evangelistic efforts? What do you see the relation to be between poverty and lostness?

The sixth major reason we must focus on The 10/40 Window is because it contains the overwhelming majority of the world’s least evangelized megacities—that is, those with a population of more than 1 million. Of the top 50 cities on this list, all 50 are in The 10/40 Window! This fact alone underscores

the need for prioritizing our efforts to reach each of these great metroplexes with Christ’s love and truth.

Reason number seven for focusing on The 10/40 Window is that it includes numerous strongholds of Satan. The billions of people who live in The 10/40

Window have suffered not only the ravages of poverty and disease, they have also been kept from the transforming power of the gospel. They are poignant examples of the truth expressed in 2 Corinthians 4:4, which states that “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

We must not view this situation with a fatalistic attitude, for we have been granted power to intervene. In a later passage of the same letter, the Apostle Paul declares: “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:3-4). Although Satan has established a territorial stronghold in The 10/40 Window, we must not concede one parcel of land nor one person. The gospel must advance!

Looking back across the pages of history, we discover a heartening story about spiritual warfare in the writings of the prophet Daniel. A fervent man of prayer, Daniel was highly esteemed by God and by the people of his generation. On one occasion, while waiting on God in prayer, Daniel fasted on bread and water for three weeks. Finally, a majestic angel whose appearance was as lightning brought an answer to his prayer. He assured Daniel with the promise that “... your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words” (Dan. 10:12). However, the angel then went on to explain how, en route to answer Daniel’s prayer, he was detained for 21 days by the demon assigned to the Persian king (Dan. 10:13). It was only when the archangel

Michael arrived to help that he was able to free himself from the battle to go to Daniel.

This fascinating passage unveils the reality and territorial nature of the spiritual battle in the heavens. The angel who visited Daniel announced that he would have to return to the battle over the Persian kingdom. Apparently, that battle still rages, for ancient Persia is now modern-day Iran. Still a stronghold zealously held by Satan, Iran is situated at the center of The 10/40 Window.

If we are to storm the enemy’s territory, we must put on the full armor of God and fight with the weapons of spiritual warfare described in Ephesians 6.

George Otis, Jr., has concluded that two powerful demonic forces, with great biblical significance, stand at the epicenter of the unreached world—the prince of Persia (Iran) and the spirit of Babylon (Iraq)—and both must be penetrated with the gospel before the Great Commission can be completed. Otis observes that this will occur in the region of the Garden of Eden, where the command to “subdue the earth” was originally given.

It is evident that the forces of Satan have great power and will resist all attempts to be overcome. If we are to storm the enemy’s territory, we must put on the full armor of God and fight with the weapons of spiritual warfare described in Ephesians 6. To depend on anything less is utter foolishness.

18. The six previous “realities” about the 10/40 window add up to one salient fact: it is the center of Satanic control and oppression. How does this fact affect our approach to evangelization of the unreached peoples of this region?

The leaders of the AD 2000 Movement are in full agreement that our greatest challenge in the final years of this century is to provide a valid opportunity for every people, every city, every person to experience the truth and saving power of Jesus Christ. The goal of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement is a church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000.

The focus of the concerned Christian community 200 years ago was for the coastlands of the world. A century later, the success of the coastlands effort motivated a new generation to reach the interior regions of the continents. Within the past decades, the success of the inland thrust has led to a major focus on people groups. More recently, the world's burgeoning megacities have also become focal points of concern. Today, rapidly approaching the third millennium since Christ, we are wise to concentrate our efforts on The 10/40 Window.

Of course, this calls for some of us to reevaluate priorities. We must find the most innovative ways

to reach the billions of people within The 10/40 Window with the love and truth of Jesus Christ. We must mobilize for a massive prayer focus on The 10/40 Window with the body of Christ worldwide.

However, it must be clearly understood that concentration on The 10/40 Window does not mean a curtailing of Christ's work going on elsewhere around the globe. Missionary endeavors in evangelism, training, relief, development, church planting, and mobilization for cross-cultural missions should go on unhindered.

If we are faithful to the Scriptures, obedient to the mandate of Christ, and unwavering in our commitment to plant churches within every people and city by A.D. 2000, then we will get to the core of the core—The 10/40 Window. May God grant each of us boldness and wisdom and energy to do our part in taking on this great and eternally significant challenge.

19. *Unlike Ralph Winter, who affirms unequivocally that we are in the third and last era of mission history, Bush suggests that the 10/40 window may be the challenge of a fourth era in world evangelization. Do you agree with this premise? Why or why not?*

III. Major Blocs of Unreached Peoples

Unreached or "hidden" peoples in need of cross-cultural evangelization can be found all over the world, perhaps even in your own neighborhood. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the unreached live in the 10/40 window and can be classified into five "megaspheres." These large, culturally defined groupings each contain hundreds of millions of peoples: Muslims, Chinese, Hindus, tribals, and Buddhists. In this section, we begin to gain an understanding of who these people are and the current state of their evangelization. For this purpose, we excerpt appropriate sections from Ralph Winter's and David Fraser's "World Mission Survey."

❑ World Mission Survey*

Ralph D. Winter and David A. Fraser

“Muslims for Jesus” strategy explored

Imagine you’re a geographer. But in the world in which you live continents move several miles a year. Earthquakes weekly thrust up new islands or level mountain ranges. Lakes vanish overnight, their waters gulped by thirsty cracks in the earth.

What headaches in trying to draw a map! Every year the atlases and textbooks would have to be rewritten and relearned. A place known to be located at one point this year would have to be repositioned next year because of how much it had moved.

Such is the Muslim world. Not just because of the Gulf War. That brief war merely gives us a clue to what has massively modified the dynamics of the entire Middle East: oil. Titanic changes are affecting everything we thought we once knew about Islam’s nearly one billion people. It is no longer the world Samuel Zwemer tried to reach with the good news. What used to be major features of its landscape are being transformed overnight. New maps must be drawn if the Christian is to discover passable highways to use in carrying the gospel to responsive Muslim peoples.

Muslims are on the move. While there are 42 countries with Muslim majorities, 40 other countries contain significant minorities. Petro-migration is thrusting Muslims out of traditional isolation. Six million reside in Western Europe. The U.S.A. boasts a dozen cities with more than 50,000 Muslims (and more than 70 Muslim sects competing for allegiance)! \$15 million was spent on a mosque in Chicago. Yet the largest populations of Muslims are not found in oil-rich countries or the West but in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, the People’s Republic of China, and Turkey.

More Christians are flooding into the heartlands of Islam around Mecca than ever before. Professionals, technicians, and skilled laborers are being imported

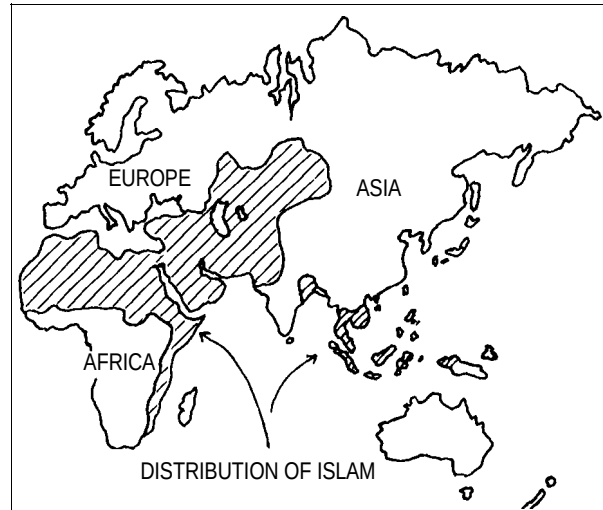


Figure 7-9. The Distribution of Islam

from dozens of countries to modernize sheikdoms and help the deserts bloom. Fifty thousand Arab Christians are employed in Saudi Arabia. Thirteen thousand foreign Christians work in Qatar. Foreigners outnumber the citizens in the United Arab Emirates (240,000 to 225,000), and no one has counted how many Christians there are among these Western technicians. Modernization is revolutionizing the atmosphere and opportunity for Christian-Muslim relationships.

There is a creeping optimism emerging in Christian circles. The long glacial age that began with the Christian Crusades in the Middle Ages appears to be thawing as traditionally icy attitudes towards Christianity seem to be melting. Not that there aren’t places where Muslim conversion is met with death or where there are purgatories of hatred, such as Lebanon, with Christian and Muslim struggling in a death grip. But there are signs of new receptivity to the gospel. And promising developments are appearing on the horizon:

* Winter, R. D., & Fraser, D. A. (1992). World mission survey. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. B198-B210). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

1. The Ancient Christian Churches in Muslim lands (17 million members in the Middle East and Northern Africa) are being shown that they can break out of their ethnic and cultural defensiveness and win Muslims to Jesus. The Orthodox Egyptian Coptic Church has been undergoing a steady, massive revival for the past 30 years, and now it is resulting in 30 to 40 baptisms of Muslim converts a week. But this is still the exception rather than the rule. Centuries of turmoil and battering have made the ancient churches generally ingrown enclaves, whose cultural difference from the Islamic community is so great that it is almost impossible for a Muslim convert to join them without betraying his own cultural heritage or without remaining a “foreigner” to the Christian community with centuries of cultural divergence.
2. Cross-cultural ministry is finding explosive response where greater cultural sensitivity is being used in evangelistic approaches. The enrollment in one non-Arab country correspondence course added 3,900 Muslims in the first six months. A high percentage continued on to completion and advanced courses. Significant numbers evidenced new-found faith in letters and testimonies. Yet the Church is barely exploiting the tremendous opportunity of the Muslim world. There are about 500 North American Protestant missionaries engaged in Muslim evangelization, a bare 1 percent of the missionary force for 25 percent of the world’s unreached population.
3. Secret believers and Christian sympathizers have multiplied. Muslim followers of Jesus still hesitate to take any step such as public baptism since it would send all kinds of wrong signals to their own people. Islam has formidable social and economic barriers for anyone leaving its fold. Apostasy is the supreme betrayal. Yet there are thousands secretly believing in Jesus who long for some new, creative form of Christian movement that would not appear to be treason to their own people and blasphemy to God.
4. New strategies are being explored to see if a “Muslims for Jesus” movement could not be a viable reality in a manner similar to the “Jews for Jesus” movement. Just as the Apostle Paul suggested that he be a Greek to the Greeks and a

Jew to the Jews, so such principles might suggest being a Muslim to the Muslims. Some evangelical evangelists to Islam are saying that Muslims might truly become believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord without calling themselves Christian, even as the “Messianic Jews” did. In some situations what may be needed is the encouragement of new Christian congregations with a Muslim cultural orientation, churches centered on Jesus Christ but with Islamic cultural forms, where, in fact, the word “Christian” is not even employed.

5. The old malaise and paralysis characteristic of Christian attitudes toward Muslim evangelization seems to be vanishing. Quiet conferences and consultations are forging new concepts and organizations. Hundreds of turned-on mission candidates ought to reconsider the enormous gap between the opportunity and the actual staffing of culturally sensitive approaches to Muslims. The believing followers of Christ are now at the very edge of what could be the most significant advance in reaching unreached Muslims in history—especially if we don’t think we have to make them into “Christians” any more than Paul felt he had to make Greeks into Jews. In several places around the world there are movements running into the thousands which consist of blood-washed followers of Christ, whose Koran is now the Christian’s Bible, but who do not refer to themselves as Christians.

We are at the edge of what could be the most significant advance in reaching unreached Muslims in history.

6. Some scholars feel that illuminating parallels can be drawn between the major cultural streams flowing out of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: Islam being an Arabic movement, but then there are the cultural synergies of Russian Orthodoxy, Greek Orthodoxy, Ethiopian Orthodoxy, Eastern-Rite Roman Catholicism, Latin-Rite Roman Catholicism, German Lutheranism, English Anglicanism, the variety of American sects. As well, thousands of even more strange cultural traditions have

evolved among the mission field believers of the world.

In each case, the gospel has put on “native” dress. The pre-Christian English sunrise service in honor of their spring goddess of fertility, named Eostre, is now our Easter service (which benefits only if we keep our minds and hearts on the biblical meaning assigned to it).

The pagan Roman practice of giving and receiving gifts on the 25th of December caught on in Latin-speaking countries but not in the Greek and Russian speaking countries, understandably. But the Christian adaptation of this pagan holiday, although the same day of the year, does not

say anything about the meaning of Saturn, after which this day in the Roman pagan calendar was named (the Saturnalia).

The Assyrian Church of the East (hundreds of thousands of these Christians live in Iraq) had an interesting custom of praying seven times a day. It was borrowed by Mohammed for Islam (but he cut it down to five times a day so as to avoid awaking believers in the dead of night).

Even the Christian Syriac and Arabic word, Al-lah, which Christians had been using for God for centuries was adopted by Mohammed for Islam. It is still the word for God in the Christian Bibles in those languages.

20. *From this brief review of Muslim evangelization, summarize the thrust of the most successful strategies for provoking larger movements of Muslims to Christ.*

Bethlehem's star over China

The attics of Western memory are stuffed with an incredible array of pictures of China: weather-beaten junks, pagodas with upturned eaves on mist-enshrouded mounts, Dr. Fu Manchu, firecrackers and gaudy dragons, Kung Fu, Stillwell and Chiang Kai Shek, missionary graves, hordes of fanatics waving little Red Books. China has been one of the great obsessions of the West.

And well she might be! The major tides of history indicate that a major wave of the future may be from China. Across the centuries she has been weak only to have the tide of affairs reverse and carry her back to preeminence as the most advanced, powerful, albeit isolated nation on the face of the earth, a position she has held more often and longer than any other society. Christianity will have to sail that tide if she is to be part of China's future.

The church contemplates her more than a billion citizens as the largest single unified bloc of humanity, one which has a very widespread Christian element. At the height of missionary activity in Mainland China, nearly 10,000 Catholic and Protestant missionaries were active. When the Communists took over in 1949, one tangible result of a century and a half of effort was a formal Christian community of 3.2 million Catholics and 1.8 million Protestants, a bare 1 percent of the whole of China.

The Christian movement under the People's Republic has experienced a radical change and some shrinkage due to the loss of nominal members, some martyrdom, and minor migration. The pressures of successive waves of repression interspersed with brief periods of toleration for many years robbed the church of its more visible organized expressions.

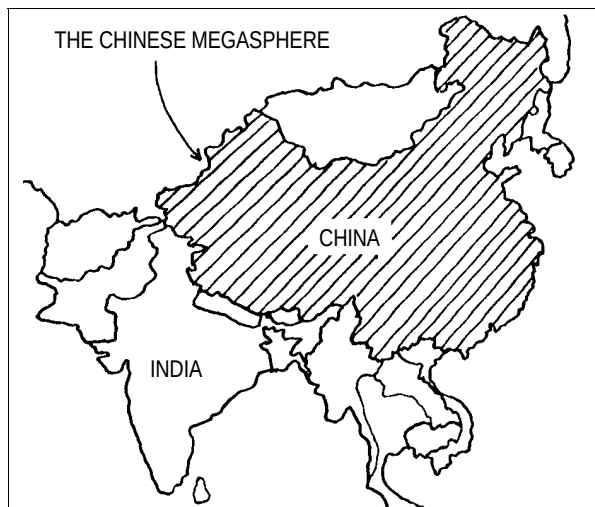


Figure 7-10. The Chinese MegaspHERE

“Institutionless” Christianity is what began expanding at an astounding rate. The Communists tried to rid China once and for all of Christians during the dread 10-year “Cultural Revolution,” but only succeeded in refining and spreading the faith. Due to many factors, the government began to allow certain buildings to reopen as “official” churches, where the government could monitor events. One hundred were allowed. They were immediately but unexpectedly packed. Then, a few more, and more, and soon it was over 6,000 “official” churches. No one can hazard a guess at the church’s real size, though one frequent figure quoted is that there may be more than 50 million believers and more than 50,000 “house” churches. The latter are without full-time clergy, denominational structure, church buildings, budgets, or seminaries. Their meetings are informal and semi-clandestine.

Some have held out hope that this scattered church under pressure will repeat the story of the early church, gradually leavening the whole of China. And the church is experiencing some growth through healings and exorcism, moving along the latticework of family relationships with which a Chinese screens himself in a hostile world.

Restrictions continue to be stringent so that open proclamation is forbidden. Those who believe missionaries or Chinese evangelists as such will soon enter the People’s Republic cannot easily conclude

this from current events in 1992. Millions of people go in and out of China each year but not openly as evangelists or Christian witnesses.

Radio waves do reach behind the Bamboo Curtain. Government presses actually print Bibles—perhaps due to outside pressures and the sheer economic profit from the world’s most sought book. There are reports of greater Christian freedom and activity in southeast China and conversions in areas such as northern Thailand where crossing the border is possible. Despite the tightening following the Tienanmen Square incident, there is nothing so sure, so extensive, so durable, as Christianity in China.

Outside Mainland China the picture is even more hopeful. Overall 5 to 7 percent of some 40 million profess faith in Christ. Of course there are striking variations. In some cases there is burgeoning growth. Six hundred churches serve the one of eight in Hong Kong who follow Christ. Taiwan’s AD 2000 Movement committee, the first to unite all of Taiwan’s Protestants, has determined to go from 2,000 churches to 10,000 by the year 2000. About 10 percent of the 600,000 Chinese in the U.S.A. are Protestant or Catholic. In other instances the Christian presence has only begun to penetrate Chinese populations. Thailand’s 3.6 million Chinese have only a tiny church among them with only 4,000 Protestants. Restaurant workers in Europe, such as those in the 50 Chinese restaurants of Vienna, are virtually without a Christian fellowship.

More importantly, there are indications that the Chinese church is taking major strides as a maturing body. Rapid and soaring increases are reported in many of the 70 countries with significant Chinese minorities. With that growth has come a new awareness of world mission. From Chinese churches and sending agencies there are now over 300 Chinese missionaries throughout the world. The majority of them, however, are not in cross-cultural ministry but are serving Chinese churches.

It may well be that this new movement of God’s Spirit will equip the Christians of the diaspora for an as yet unforeseen opportunity to reach into Mainland China sometime in the near future, but it may also be that when that day comes, as in the case of the opening of the U.S.S.R., it will be a two-way

street, as the believers whose faith has endured hardship become a blessing to those outside of their former prisons.

If the door to China were to open next year, what would happen? Many American-born Chinese Christians no longer speak any Chinese dialects. To evangelize in traditional fashion would require a relearning of their roots, their languages and cultures. English-speaking Chinese would be in real demand to again enter their homeland and through

language teaching be ambassadors for Christ. Other parts of the Chinese diaspora are similar. Seventy percent of Indonesia's 3.6 million Chinese are Indonesian born. They speak Indonesian and live like Indonesians.

It is clear that China now contains one of the world's largest numbers of devout, praying Christians. Probably no people group, unreached or not, is very far removed, culturally, from another Chinese group within which the gospel is now strong.

21. Keeping in mind the factor of cultural distance, who is most likely to evangelize the unreached peoples of China? Why?

Any hope, India?

Remember "Wrong Way Corrigan"? He took off in a small plane from the New York airport and flew across the Atlantic in the repetition of Lindbergh's feat. He had filed a legal flight pattern to some nearby spot in the U.S. and then calmly flew across the Atlantic, pretending he had gone the wrong way. "They let Lindbergh do it. Why not me?"

God played a trick something like that with William Carey, that brilliant young rural schoolteacher in England in the late 1700s. He had plotted and planned for years to go to those islands in the Pacific newly discovered by Captain Cook. (Those islands today are 75 percent Christian in at least nominal church membership.) He landed instead in India, which is still 97 percent non-Christian. God had the best idea because East India is the closest thing to a crossroads of the world's great blocs of non-Christians—Chinese, Hindus, and Muslims. Hindus alone are over 750 million in 1992 and are mainly in India, that amazing country.

Why is India so amazing? Although smaller in size than Argentina, it has 25 times the population (more than the whole world in the days of Columbus), plus 800 distinct languages and dialects, and the world's largest democracy. It is the largest non-Christian country that is at all open to the gospel.

India is also amazing to even exist as a functioning nation. When the British were forced out in 1947, and literally millions were killed in the bloodshed that later separated Pakistan from a reduced India, many despaired that India could ever pull itself together and survive. Yet today India is in many ways doing magnificently. Only 25 percent literate, it nevertheless has 50 times as many radios as it did at independence and for many years has boasted the world's largest motion picture industry.

India is the largest non-Christian country that is at all open to the gospel.

What staggers the imagination is the human diversity of India. Most countries are stratified with layers of people ranging from the downtrodden to the aristocracy. But India is not merely vertically stratified by the world's most rigidly defined social caste system, it is also horizontally cut up due to the linguistic and racial differences that chop India into at least a thousand pieces. Nowhere in the world are cultural differences more difficult to ignore. The most astonishing thing of all is that the Christian church of India has valiantly tried to ignore those

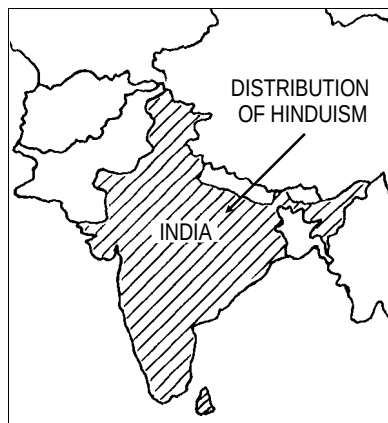


Figure 7-11.
The Distribution of Hinduism

distinctions. The church lives outside the caste system but almost entirely on the bottom level of society. Therefore, most Indians who join a Christian church must virtually part ways, downward from all their social and family relationships. Instead of determinedly taking the gospel into the thousands of social compartments of India, the prevailing strategy, insofar as there is one, at the grass roots level is to tear down the social fabric, not just the prejudices embodied therein.

Some estimates indicate that about 100 million Hindus would become Christians tomorrow if someone would take the necessary pains to establish a believing fellowship within their own social grouping.

Thus the Church of South India braved all prejudices by sending a lower class bishop to an upper class segment of their church in Kerala, thereby tweaking the nose of the caste system in India. This is all right for a bishop at his level, but the practical requirements of evangelism at the grass roots level of local churches are something else. This is a very delicate subject since at first glance there seems to be a collision between the demands of Christian unity and the freedoms of Christian liberty.

But do Hindus want to become Christians, if they are *not* forced to join a different caste? Some esti-

mates indicate that about 100 million Hindus—people who have been in contact with Christians of other castes for many years—would become Christians tomorrow if someone would take the necessary pains to establish a believing fellowship within their own social grouping. Isn't that a fantastic challenge?

What, pray tell, are missionaries and Indian Christians doing if they are not trying to penetrate one by one the thousands of subcultures of India? The answer is, they are doing other things. Aren't they evangelizing at all? Wouldn't it be great if the 25 million Christians in India would get out there and really evangelize? Yes, certainly, but two-thirds of the Christians in India need themselves to be evangelized, just as is true in America today. The real shocker is that according to one study 98 percent of the evangelism in India is devoted to rewinning nominal Christians rather than to penetrating the frontiers that effectively wall off 500 million people.

One of the great marvels of history is the impact of missions on the course of India. While less than 3 percent of the population is Christian, over half of all the nurses are Christian (it was once 90 percent); 600 hospitals are there because of missions, and thousands of schools of all kinds. Hinduism itself has significantly changed. The subtle impact of the missionary movement is a story that may never fully be told. Missionaries introduced not just hospitals and schools, but invented khaki colored clothing (it wouldn't show the village dust) and a special and superior kind of tile roofing used now all over India. They brought an end to the custom of widow burning. And the fact that many states of India even today prohibit all liquor is mute testimony of an impact far larger than church statistics. In south India, where most of the Christians are to be found, their presence is felt strongly. In the states of north-east India, where 50 to 70 to 95 percent of the population of the mountain peoples are Christians, the transformation is even more spectacular—from being headhunters as late as 1934, now to being devout Christians, some with Ph.D.'s. The stories behind all of these achievements almost defy comparison for sheer excitement.

For many years it was rare when mission agencies sprouted from Indian soil itself. Now there is the

India Mission Association which includes over 60 different mission agencies, although many others also exist to make India one of the leading countries for “Two Thirds World” mission societies.

The Indian Missionary Society followed by the National Missionary Society and then the Indian Evangelical Mission and the Friends Missionary Prayer Band (in 1903, 1905, 1965, and 1968, respectively) were early examples of the simple fact that Indians who believe the gospel are willing and able to do both home and foreign mission work. Three of these four early societies determinedly refuse to accept any foreign funds (one was offered a million dollars

of foreign money), feeling that the development of sacrificial outreach among their people is as important as the outreach itself. India’s strict rules against sending currency out of the country may require collaboration with other countries in order for some opportunities to be grasped. But the Friends Missionary Prayer Band sends its missionaries from south India to north India where there are very few Christians. Indeed, north India contains by far the largest bloc of reachable non-Christians. Pioneer missionary techniques are by no means out of date where the world’s largest presently reachable mission field is still to be found.

22. *What are the significant social and cultural barriers that will have to be overcome if Indians are to become Christian in great numbers?*

Tribes: An endangered species

The race is on! Tribes are vanishing faster than we are succeeding in translating Scripture into their languages. Technology is leveling the tropics, immobilizing the nomads, dispossessing the weak, deculturizing the alien, and decimating the primitive. Tribes fall prey to epidemics, economic exploitation, modern weaponry, and nationalism. In Brazil alone an Indian population of 3 million in 1500 A.D. at the first European contact was reduced to 200,000 by 1968 and to 80,000 since then.

In many areas of the world the strongest, most aggressive churches are found among tribal peoples.

Yet, in many areas of the world the strongest, most aggressive churches are found among tribal peoples. At present, even excluding Africa, thanks in part to the world’s largest mission, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, there are at least 10,000 Protestant missionaries who focus on tribal peoples.

It is virtually impossible to generalize about over 3,000 cultural groups ranging from several million people to minuscule groups of a few dozen individuals. Living in every imaginable habitat, following a mind-boggling array of different customs, and experiencing radically different fates, tribal groups vividly express the range and complexity of the unfinished task. But there are several patterns that are apparent from a broad, sweeping overview.

Receptivity

In general, tribal groups are refugees, living in perpetual fear of aggression from other tribes or more powerful civilizations. Often they are able to survive by finding out how to live where no one else would want the land, in incredibly mountainous areas as in west Cameroon, or south China, or north-east India, or the precipitous highlands (or gigantic swamps of the coastlands) of the great island of New Guinea, the tiny atolls of the South Pacific, or the swamps and jungles of the upper Amazon.

CHAPTER 8

To Reach the Unreached

In the last chapter we looked at the mission task remaining. We understand that only by considering the world in light of the biblical definition of nations can we get an accurate picture of what remains to be done. Such a view shows us a world with thousands of culturally defined nations or *people groups* which have not yet been discipled. It also shows us the priority of cross-cultural, *pioneer* missions in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Our previous study gave us a general idea of how to approach groups within the Buddhist, Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, and tribal megaspheres. Now we begin to focus on the specifics of strategy. To do this, let us consider what factors must be evaluated in targeting a people to be reached, how to define our objectives, and how to determine what methods we should use to reach those objectives.

The first part of this chapter looks at the general framework in which strategy must be formulated. Peter Wagner points out four major considerations, while Donald McGavran drives home the need to think in terms of reaching specific people groups. Next, we will look at an approach to formulating a strategy for reaching an unreached people. Finally, we will illustrate these principles through case studies of successful church planting efforts.

I. Strategic Considerations

In his popular book, *Stop the World, I Want to Get On*, Peter Wagner points out four areas for consideration when discussing strategy.* He lists these as:

1. The Right Goals
2. The Right Place at the Right Time
3. The Right Methods
4. The Right People

* Wagner, C. P. (1974). *Stop the world, I want to get on* (pp. 77-87). Glendale, CA: Regal Books.

We will use this helpful outline to summarize Wagner's thoughts and to lay out some other strategic considerations in choosing a people to "engage" and putting together a missionary team.

The Right Goal

In order for any endeavor to be counted successful, it must aim at the right goal. The achievement of misunderstood or wrong goals counts for little. To understand what the goal of missions is, we must look at Christ's foremost mission command known as the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18-20). In these verses we find not only the principal goal we seek, but also a suggestion of the methods and people to use in reaching that goal.

Although several verbs are used in the translation of the Great Commission (go, make, baptize, and teach), only one of them is imperative in the original Greek—"make disciples." Going, baptizing, and teaching are participles in the Greek and suggest activities by which disciples are made.

The first of these activities is "going." Remember that this command was given to "apostles," men who were already "sent ones." To reach the "disciple" goal, the disciple maker must continually be on the move, not in a random fashion, but towards the "all nations" parameters of the command. Witness must be extended beyond the circle of those who already know the gospel.

The second activity, "baptizing," represents the act of bringing people to repentance and faith in Christ as symbolized by the exercise of water baptism. Obedience to the whole command of disciple making implies starting with unbelievers.

The third activity is "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," which is the life-long endeavor of "discipling" as popularly understood. Wagner contends that even this activity is aimed primarily at unbelievers, who must be made to understand that "observing" Christ's commandments, i.e., obedience, is at the heart of becoming a disciple.

In Wagner's judgment, "The greatest error in contemporary missionary strategy is the confusion of *means* and *end* in the understanding of the Great Commission." Wagner's point is well taken. Many missionaries confuse the activities related to making disciples with the goal. Tract distribution may be a *means* of gospel proclamation, but if it does not result in disciples, the goal has not been reached. We cannot measure the success of mission simply by the fact that workers have blanketed an area with tracts, broadcast so many hours of gospel messages, held so many evangelistic campaigns, or engaged in a quantity of other good and measurable activities. Only as these methods can be demonstrated to work effectively with others, leading to the *making of disciples*, can the work be evaluated.

There is a tremendous amount of activity being done in the name of the Great Commission. Most of it is good, sound enterprise carried out by sincere people. In the final analysis, however, by Great Commission standards, much of the activity is focused on the methods and not the goal. This is reflected in the fact that less than 10 percent of the total resources allocated to missions is spent on reaching beyond the present boundaries of Christianity, i.e., to the "uttermost parts."

How do we know if a mission is measuring up? Wagner suggests the following criteria:

If a mission society moves into a pagan village one year and moves out three years later leaving a group of 250 people who declare that Christ is their Lord, who meet together regularly for worship, who read the Bible and pray—they have made 250 disciples and to that degree have fulfilled the Great Commission.

1. *What is the goal of the Great Commission? How should this goal affect our choice of a people to engage in mission?*

The Right Place at the Right Time

Related to the right goal is the concept of planning activities so as to be in the *right place* at the *right time*. Wagner illustrates this point with the analogy of a farmer.

No farmer works his field for the fun of it—he works for the payoff, which is the fruit. A man buys a farm with the anticipation that it will produce fruit. He may enjoy mechanics, but he works on his machinery only because it will help him get the fruit. He sows his seed and cultivates his crops, not because he thinks it’s fun to ride tractors, but because if he doesn’t there will be no fruit. “He that soweth and he that reapeth rejoice together” (John 4:36). Why? Because they gather fruit together.

Sound missionary strategy never loses the vision of the fruit. In missionary work this fruit is *disciples*. Keep this vision foremost in sowing, pruning, and reaping.

The vision in sowing

The Parable of the Sower appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The briefest summary is in Luke 8:4-15. It tells of a farmer who sowed seeds on four different parts of his farm, but got fruit on only one.

Anyone with the vision of the fruit will instantly ask, “Why?” Jesus’ disciples undoubtedly asked the same thing when they first heard it.

According to Jesus’ interpretation, the variable factor was not the sower, nor was it the seed (which is described as the “word of God”), nor was it the method. It was the soil. No matter how good the seed is, any farmer knows it will not bear fruit on roadways, on rocky soil, or among thorns. In order to produce fruit, good seed must be sown in fertile soil.

The obvious lesson for missionary strategy is that the seed of the Word must be concentrated on fertile soil if fruit is to be expected. Some peoples of the world are receptive to the gospel while others are resistant. The world’s soils must be tested. Concentrating, come what may, on rocky soil, whether or not any disciples are made, is foolish strategy. Farmers who have the vision of the fruit do not make that mistake too often, but some missiologists unfortunately do. This is the “right place” aspect of strategy.

2. *How does the vision in sowing apply to targeting unreached peoples?*

The vision in pruning

The Parable of the Fig Tree in Luke 13:6-9 is seen as a threat by some missionaries. If they are guided by the vision of the fruit, however, it should not be.

The farmer who came along and saw a beautiful fig tree was forced to look a little deeper. The problem there was comparable to many mission fields. The fig tree had grown well, but there were no figs! Much missionary “work” has likewise developed to a high degree, but there is no fruit—there are no disciples. The farmer in the parable is a good strategist. When there is no fruit after much work and a prudent time lapse, he says cut it down—change your program. He operates on the basis of the vision of the fruit. His hired man does not share the vision because his income depends not so much on the

harvest as on a salary. His strategy is to continue the work as long as he can. He, like many missionaries, is program-centered, not goal-centered.

Missionaries who are comfortably settled into a certain “program” or “missionary work” would do well to examine what they are doing in terms of the vision of the fruit. It is not easy to change a program, especially when you have been hoping against hope that in a year or so it will begin bearing fruit. But too often these years have stretched out into lifetimes. Missionaries who could have spent 10 years making disciples spend the same 10 years simply doing “mission work” because they lack the courage to cut the barren fig tree down and change their program.

3. How does the vision in pruning affect our methods as we seek to make disciples?

The vision in reaping

When Jesus talks to His disciples about reaping, for the first time He mentions the need for praying that the Lord of the harvest will “send forth laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38). When the “laborers are few,” the farmer runs the risk of losing some of the harvest. The strategy aspect in this case is the “right time.” Laborers are not needed when the harvest is still green, nor are they needed when the harvest has passed. Timing is of utmost importance in any harvest.

No one who takes strategy seriously would advocate a massive labor force in green fields.

Suppose, for example, that you owned an apple orchard. In Field A, a worker could harvest five bushels in an hour. In Field B, it would take him five hours to harvest just one bushel. In Field C, he couldn’t harvest anything because the apples are all

still green. If you had 30 workers today, where would you send them? I think I would send 29 of them to Field A so as not to lose the fruit there. I would send the other one to do what he could in Field B and also to keep his eye on Field C. His job would be to let me know when those fields were ripe so I could redeploy the personnel.

Parallel situations arise time after time in missionary work. Some peoples are ready to be harvested today, some are not yet ready. These “unresponsive peoples” should not be neglected—someone should be there who is expert enough to tell when they are becoming ripe for the gospel. In one sense you need the very finest workers in the unresponsive fields. But no one who takes strategy seriously would advocate a massive labor force in green fields. Jesus wouldn’t. He does not tell us to pray for more laborers to go to green fields or to fallow fields. The laborers are needed for the *ripe* harvest fields.

Right after Jesus says that in Matthew 9, He sends His own harvesters out in Matthew 10. There were three fields in those days: Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans. Only the Jews were ripe at the time. Jesus specifically tells His disciples not to go to the Gentiles and Samaritans (Matt. 10:5, the green fields), but to go to the Jews (Matt. 10:6). Later on, both the Gentiles and the Samaritans ripened and bore much fruit, but not at that time.

Granted, it is not always the easiest thing to tell which soil is most fertile or just when a particular

harvest is going to ripen in missionary work. Agricultural testing methods are much more advanced today than missiological testing methods. But missiologists are improving their methods all the time and making encouraging advances. A good deal is now known about testing peoples as to their degree of resistance or receptivity to the gospel. Up-to-date missions will take full advantage of such expertise, thus applying these aspects of strategy—the right place at the right time.

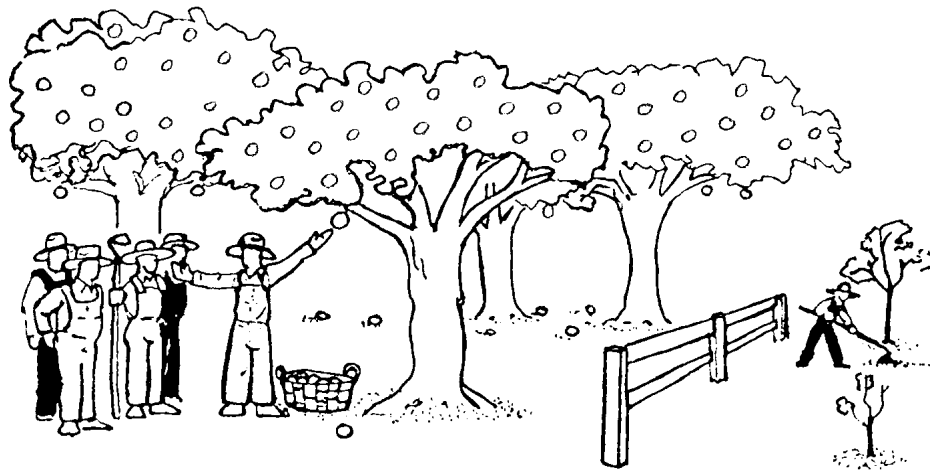


Figure 8-1. The Vision in Reaping

4. *How is the vision in reaping related to strategy?*

The Right Methods

Wagner continues his discussion of strategy by emphasizing the importance of using appropriate methods for making disciples.

When there is much work and little or no fruit, something is wrong. Careful analysis will usually pinpoint the trouble as either working in unripe fields or working in ripe fields but using wrong methods. You can go into a perfectly ripe field of wheat and work your head off, but if you are using

a cornpicker, you will get nothing. Potato diggers are useless in apple orchards.

Around the world there are peoples who would gladly receive the gospel and become Jesus' disciples, but missionaries among these people are not

making disciples because they are using inappropriate methods.

The wrong language is one of the common methodological mistakes. In many cases on record, the missionary thought that preaching in the trade language would be adequate for making disciples. Only when he switched to the local dialect, the language of the heart, however, did the fruit begin to come. If he had refused to change his methods, no amount of hard work would have done the job.

Mixing peoples has often proved to be another wrong method. For many years, for example, the Oregon Friends were reaping a great harvest among the Aymaras of Bolivia, while others working equally as hard were not. It was then discovered that the Friends insisted on keeping their churches

purely Aymara, while others thought it well to mix mestizo believers with Aymaras. Missiologists call this *the principle of homogeneous unit churches*. Churches of one kind of people only are more effective in winning others of the same people. In Bolivia the method made the difference.

Methods must be selected on largely pragmatic factors, since the Bible does not pretend to give 20th century instruction. Therefore, it is good strategy not only to set measurable goals, but also to build in from the start of the effort instruments for measuring its success or failure. Only by doing this will it be possible to look back and know which methods God has blessed and which methods He has not blessed. One of the most curious facts in modern missions is that this simple procedure is so seldom carried out.

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5. *Why is it so important that an evaluation of the methods used in trying to make disciples be undertaken before writing off a people as “unresponsive”?*
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The Right People

The last strategic consideration Wagner presents is the need for Spirit filled workers.

Some things God does by Himself; some things He does by using human beings.

It seems, for example, that the difference between fertile and barren soil is basically a matter of divine providence. The ripening of certain harvest fields at certain times can be attributed only to the sovereignty of God. “I have planted, Apollos watered,” writes Paul, “but *God gave the increase*” (1 Cor. 3:6).

God brings the harvest to ripeness, but He does not harvest it. He uses Christian people to accomplish that task, and He is glorified when His people “bear much fruit” (John 15:8). He is particularly interested

in “fruit that remains” (John 15:16). But how does this fruit come? The servant of God can only bear fruit if the branch abides in the vine. Jesus is the vine, and Christian people are the branches.

This strategy, then, stresses the right people. The right person is the person entirely filled with the Holy Spirit. He abides in Jesus. He is fully committed. He takes up his cross daily and follows his Master. Without this strategy, the first three strategies are dead letters. That is why Jesus insisted that His disciples not begin their missionary work until they were “endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

6. *Why does the success of the first three strategies hinge on the fourth strategic consideration?*

The right people are those who go, baptize, and teach with the clear goal of making disciples of the nations. The promise is that Christ will be with those who do this till the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).

Unreached Does Not Mean Unreachable

Because some megaspheres of unreached peoples have developed a reputation for being resistant, it is easy to conclude that these peoples represent “unripe” fields, and therefore should be bypassed for riper fields. The assumption is that the right strategies have always been used in attempting to reach such people. Well documented cases have shown, however, that failure to reap a harvest has often had more to do with wrong goals, methods, or personnel than with lack of a receptive target group. Frequently, a conscious effort to employ the right strategy among people believed to be “unreceptive” has resulted in a fruitful harvest.

One such case was an outreach effort to the Tonga tribe in Zambia, Africa. In 1967, Phil and Norma Elkins along with two singles and two other couples determined to target an unreached people group. They spent three years in study and preparation before being sent out in 1970 by their church. The following describes the results of their efforts.

Early decisions and convictions *

As the team searched for an unreached people (two years), they concluded the Holy Spirit was leading them to a segment of the Tonga tribe (one of the largest in Zambia, numbering over 300,000) called the Toka-Leya. Ninety-five percent of these people were adherents of an ethnic, or localized, folk religion (some would use the term animistic). Within a 12-mile radius of where the team settled (the primary target area) were 100 villages with four small congregations that had not grown for several years (a total of 75 Christians).

The team spent most of the first two years (1970-71) learning the language and culture, without engaging in overt evangelistic activities. By the end of 1973 there were four times as many churches (16) and six

times the membership (450). Beyond this immediate 12-mile area, completely new movements were started. For example, in the Moomba chieftaincy, 70 miles to the north, newly trained national Christians planted six churches with 240 members within a few months. This was done in 1973 and involved winning the chief, a third of all the village headmen, and both court judges.

I mention this early rapid response to show that we were indeed led to a “ripe pocket” in God’s mosaic of peoples. We knew that the national church, motivated and trained, had to be the vehicle to gather the harvest. By 1974 we felt most of the American team could pull out. By 1979, the last two “foreign” families felt they could responsibly move on to

* Elkins, P. (1992). A pioneer team in Zambia, Africa. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D163-D164). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

another new people to begin the process again. Today a national church continues the process of winning and discipling “to the fringes.”

“Methods,” “approaches,” and “strategy” may be “unspiritual” words in some Christians’ vocabulary. I feel in the context of this effort there was validity in the strategy and specific methods followed by the team. In addition to what has been described, I think the first two years in which we were involved as in-depth “learners” of the Tonga world view (language, lifestyle, values, politics, social structure, beliefs, educational systems, and other aspects of culture) were essential to our efforts as church planters. My wife and I lived in a village of 175 people and followed a lifestyle closely identified with that of other Toka-Leya families. We learned to “hurt” where they hurt and “feel” what they felt. We identified, not so much to be “accepted,” though that is important, but to understand and appreciate their

culture for its finest and best dimensions. We had to know what parts were already functioning positively within the will and purpose of God. We needed to know what had to be confronted and changed to fit the demands of the kingdom of God.

Perhaps most critical was the need to learn where people had “felt needs” through which God’s message of redemption could be accepted as good news. The message that had been proclaimed as “gospel” by earlier Christian efforts was in fact perceived as “bad news.” The gospel was perceived as God calling men to have one wife and not to drink beer. Though Christians were saying many other things, this was perceived as the “banner” of the message. Because missionaries showed a major interest in setting up schools for children, the adult population found the message all right for children but almost unthinkable for adults.

7. Why was the Tonga Team's approach to reaching the Tongas more effective than previous efforts?

People Movements

We have stated that the goal of the Great Commission is disciple making. It is clear that correctly applied strategy may produce results even among people who are considered unresponsive by some. As we conclude this section, we want to consider a subject which is often misunderstood, the “homogeneous unit principle” as defined by Donald McGavran.

McGavran spent many years in India serving as a missionary and mission executive. From what he observed in India and subsequent travel to many fields around the world, he concluded that even when the right goal is attempted, a fundamental ignorance of *how churches grow* has relegated many missions to sterile efforts. In the following excerpts, McGavran outlines several important concepts related to this important subject.

❑ **A Church in Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject ***

Donald A. McGavran **

In the last eight years of the 20th century, the goal of Christian mission should be to preach the Gospel and by God's grace to plant in every unchurched segment of mankind—what shall we say—a *church* or a *cluster of growing churches*? By the phrase “segment of mankind” I mean an urbanization, development, caste, tribe, valley, plain, or minority population. I shall explain that the steadily maintained long-range goal should never be the first but should always be the second. The goal is not one small sealed-off conglomerate congregation in every people. Rather, the long-range goal (to be held constantly in view in the years or decades when it is not yet achieved) should be *a cluster of growing congregations in every segment*.

As we consider the question italicized above, we should remember that it is usually easy to start one single congregation in a new unchurched people group. The missionary arrives. He and his family worship on Sunday. They are the first members of that congregation. He learns the language and preaches the Gospel. He lives like a Christian. He tells people about Christ and helps them in their troubles. He sells tracts and Gospels or gives them away. Across the years a few individual converts are won from this group and that. Sometimes they come for very sound and spiritual reasons; sometimes from mixed motives. But here and there a woman, a man, a boy, a girl do decide to follow Jesus. A few

employees of the mission become Christian. These may be masons hired to erect the buildings, helpers in the home, rescued persons, or orphans. The history of mission in Africa is replete with churches started by buying slaves, freeing them, and employing such of them as could not return to their kindred. Such as chose to could accept the Lord. A hundred and fifty years ago this was a common way of starting a church. With the outlawing of slavery, of course, it ceased to be used.

The long-range goal should be a cluster of growing congregations in every segment.

One single congregation arising in the way just described is almost always a conglomerate church—made up of members of several different segments of society. Some are old, some young, orphans, rescued persons, helpers, and ardent seekers. All seekers are carefully screened to make sure they really intend to receive Christ. In due time a church building is erected, and lo, “a church in that people.” It is a conglomerate church. It is sealed off from all the people groups of that region. No segment of the population says, “That group of worshipers is *us*.” They are quite right. It is not. It is ethnically quite a different social unit.

* McGavran, D. A. (1992). A church in every people: Plain talk about a difficult subject. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D100-D105). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

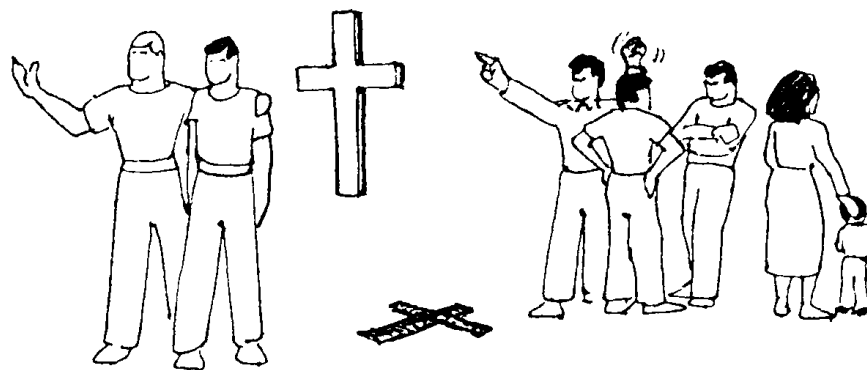
** Known worldwide as perhaps the foremost missiologist of his generation, Donald McGavran was born in India of missionary parents and returned there as a third-generation missionary himself in 1923, serving as a director of religious education and translating the Gospels into the Chhattisgarhi dialect of Hindi. He also founded the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary. McGavran died in 1990 at the age of 93. He is the author of several influential books, including *The Bridges of God*, *How Churches Grow*, and *Understanding Church Growth*.

8. From the point of view of the target people, what is the problem with the conglomerate church?

If we are to understand how churches grow and do not grow on new ground, in untouched and unreached peoples, we must note that the process I have just described seems unreal to most missionaries. "What," they will exclaim, "could be a better way of entry into all the unreached peoples of that region than to win a few individuals from among them? Instead of resulting in the sealed-off church you describe, the process really gives us points of entry into every society from which a convert has come. That seems to us to be the real situation." Those who reason in this fashion have known church growth in a largely Christian land, where men and women who follow Christ are not ostracized,

are not regarded as traitors, but rather as those who have done the right thing. In that kind of a society, every convert usually can become a channel through which the Christian faith flows to his relatives and friends. On that point there can be no debate. It was the point I emphasized when I titled my book *The Bridges of God*.

But in tightly structured societies, where Christianity is looked on as an invading religion, and individuals are excluded for serious fault, there to win converts from several different segments of society, far from building bridges to each of these, erects barriers difficult to cross.



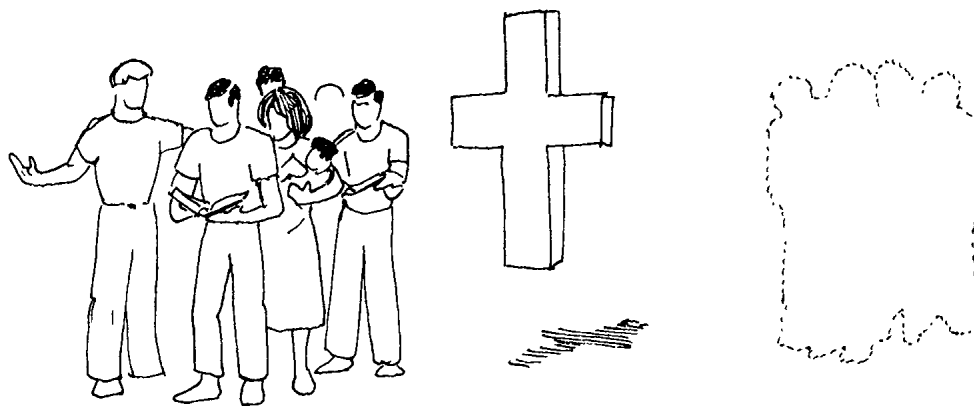
9. On what grounds might some people try to defend the concept of the conglomerate church?

The concept of the conglomerate church is defended heatedly by some who feel a targeting of a specific element of society implies making distinctions among people. It is true that in Christ no differentiation is made between male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free. Thus, some have labeled the *homogeneous unit principle* as discriminatory and unbiblical.

To achieve a balanced perspective, it is important to understand that McGavran espouses this approach only where Christianity is considered a foreign religion and is heavily stigmatized. In many societies, where the church has achieved a certain level of maturity and Christianity has gained an acceptable status, this principle may be counter-productive.

The homogeneous unit principle emphasizes the need to be *focused on a specific target group* so that the gospel enhances the natural relationships in the society. This principle is an element of strategy to be applied when targeting specific unreached peoples. McGavran outlines seven steps to follow in applying this important concept:

1. Be clear about the goal. The goal is not one single conglomerate church in a city or a region but a cluster of growing churches.
2. The national leader, or the missionary and his helpers, should concentrate on one people, caste, tribe, or segment of society.
3. Encourage converts to remain thoroughly one with their own people in most matters, following their traditions and customs. Believers should not flaunt their new-found freedom in Christ. They should continue to eat what their people eat, dress as they dress, and follow socially correct conduct. They should strive to be better sons or daughters, better husbands or wives, better fathers or mothers, better employees or employers, etc., than they were before. They should be taught to bear cheerfully any exclusion, oppression, and persecution they are likely to encounter. While believers should be encouraged to remain loyal to their people, there may be areas in which they will have to take a stand. They cannot participate in idolatry, drunkenness, or other obvious sins. Where they can, though, new believers should make every effort to continue to identify with their people.
4. Try to get *group decisions* for Christ. Don't baptize a lone convert immediately. Instead, say, "You and I will work together to lead another five, or 10, or God willing, 50 of your people to accept Jesus Christ as Savior so that when you are baptized, you will be baptized with them." Remember that ostracism is very effective against one individual. However, when exercised against a dozen people, ostracism loses its power, and when exercised against 200 it has practically no force at all.



5. Aim for scores of groups of that people to become Christians in an ever-flowing stream across the years. This principle requires that from the very beginning the missionary keeps on reaching out to new groups instead of becoming entrenched in a teaching role. A church dependent on missionary teaching soon becomes ingrown and sealed off from its own

- people. Risky as it sounds, the primary responsibility for teaching must be left to the Holy Spirit if spontaneous, ongoing growth is to occur.
6. The converts, five or 5,000, should feel that they are the vanguard of their segment of society. They are pioneers, showing their relatives and neighbors a better way of life. They are leading their people into the “promised land.”
 7. Constantly emphasize brotherhood. In Christ there is no Jew, no Arab, no slave, no free, no barbarian, no sophisticated person. We are all one in Christ Jesus. The way to achieve this unity is not by attacking all imperfect social institutions. Paul did not denounce slavery; he told the slave to be a better slave and the slave owner to be a better slave owner. The most effective way to achieve brotherhood is to lead ever-increasing numbers of men and women from every *ethnos*, every tribe or segment of society into an obedient relationship to Christ.
10. *What might we expect if the previous seven principles are applied faithfully in evangelizing a people?*
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Planning for People Movements

Historically, most observable people movements seem to have happened almost by accident. Sometimes a missionary “accidentally” stumbles on a key cultural concept whose long-awaited fulfillment is embodied by his own coming and presenting the gospel. This happened to Albert Brant, sent to the Dorsa tribe in Ethiopia. Upon arrival, he decided to camp under a certain sycamore tree. Little did he know that Dorsa tradition stated that someday God the Creator would send a messenger who would camp under that very tree, a fact which established immediate credibility for Brant’s gospel message. Within a few years, hundreds of churches were established among the Dorsas.

Other people movements have been started by a convert who is won through the “one by one” approach. Then, quite apart from the missionaries’ efforts, the convert returns to his own people with a message presented in a manner uniquely suited to the people’s needs. The story of pioneer missionary Adoniram Judson is a perfect example of this. While Judson struggled to win the Burmese, his houseboy, who was a member of a tribal group, was converted and quietly began to lead his tribe’s people to a knowledge of Christ. Within a few decades, the vast majority of his tribe had become Christians.

God desires that the nations be discipled. People movements reflect the fulfillment of that desire. In recent years, missionaries have begun to pray, plan, and purposefully work towards starting people movements among specific peoples. The results have been rewarding. Without minimizing the patient work of evangelism which has already been accomplished through a “one by one” approach, let us trust God for people movements among those peoples who have yet to be reached.

II. The Unique Solution Strategy

Our mission objective has a profound effect on the methods we employ for evangelization. If our objective is to see a people movement for Christ, we must understand that each group is unique and will therefore require a unique approach. How do we go about formulating a unique strategy? Edward Dayton has outlined a five-step process which should help us begin to answer that question.

□ *How Do We Reach Them? **

Edward R. Dayton

The world we are concerned with is the world of unreached people. Some of these groups are large. Some are small. The point is that we need to discover God's strategies, His best way for reaching these people. Certainly if the God of the universe is capable of being concerned with each individual in the world, He is just as concerned for the peoples of the world.

How do we reach them? Through their need.

- By trying to know them as God knows them.
- By attempting to meet their need as they see it.
- By communicating the saving power of Jesus Christ in their language and in their cultural understanding and in terms of where they are.

Too often some forms of evangelism have been carried out by people who had a solution and were looking for a problem. In other words, they assumed that there was one particular evangelistic method that would be appropriate in every setting. Evidently, God has not ordained it so. God's great love for humanity is expressed by His willingness to accept people wherever He finds them.

In order to communicate to people, we have to begin where they perceive their need. We have to reach them through their need. We need to know them as God knows them and to begin by attempting to meet their need as they see it. When we have done this, we will have the potential for communicating the saving power of Jesus in their language, and their

cultural understanding, and in terms of where they find themselves. Understanding a people through their need is basic to the strategy that we are presenting here, a strategy that is useful anywhere in the world.

In order to communicate to people, we have to begin where they perceive their need.

How do we discover their needs? What do we need to know about them?

- Where they are.
- Why they should be considered a people group.
- Where they are in their movement toward Christ.
- Their potential receptivity to the gospel.
- Their perceived spiritual needs.

Where they are geographically is, of course, of first importance. But we need to go further and understand why they should be considered a people group. We need to put some boundaries around them.

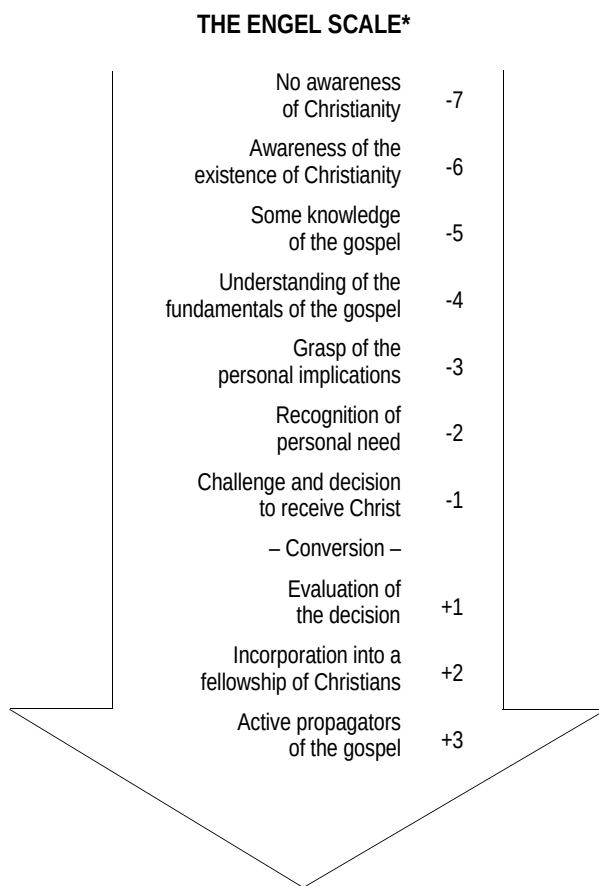
A group of people is not static. Even in so-called traditional societies there is always movement. So we need to understand where this people is in terms of their movement toward Christ. Are they on the brink of receiving Him, or are they completely

* Dayton, E. R. (1978). To reach the unreached. In C. P. Wagner & E. R. Dayton (Eds.), *Unreached peoples '79* (pp. 25-31). Elgin, IL: David C. Cook.

unaware of His existence? The situations within which people find themselves will have a great deal to do with their receptivity to new things and thus their receptivity to the gospel. We need to make some statements about that.

Finally, we need to understand their perceived spiritual needs. Jesus Christ is the answer to everyone's needs. But people have different needs at different times, and we must begin where they presently are.

11. Why are the needs of a people the key to developing a strategy for reaching them?



* This scale was originally proposed by Dr. James Engel of the Wheaton Graduate School in 1973.

Figure 8-2.
Where Is This People in Their
Movement Toward Christ?

The Engel scale

In recent years some new tools have been developed to help us to better describe and thus better understand a people. One of these tools helps us to understand where people are in their movement toward Christ.

Notice that this scale shows a progression from no awareness of Christianity to being an active propagator. The scale is not special or peculiar to religion or Christianity. All of us, in making major decisions, go through some steps like this. And if we think back on our own conversion experience, we will discover that there were different people, different situations that moved us toward Christ.

There was a day when, either because of ignorance or because of our extreme youth, we had absolutely *no awareness of Christianity* (-7 on this scale).

Most Westerners are aware or have some *awareness of Christianity* (-6 on our scale), and most Americans have *some knowledge of the gospel* (-5). The day came when some of us had an *understanding of the fundamentals of the gospel* (-4). What happened next and in what sequence is very difficult to tell. It varies tremendously from individual to individual. But in addition to an intellectual understanding, each of us had to understand that this gospel was meant for us; we had to *grasp the personal implications* (-3). But even that is not enough. We must also have a *recognition of personal need* (-2) that we think the gospel can meet. Only then are we ready to have a *challenge and decision to receive Christ* (-1).

What takes place next is, in purely religious terms, called “conversion.” In more biblical terms we would call it regeneration, a new birth.

But as is the case in most major decisions, there is almost always an *evaluation of the decision* (+1). Research has shown that this is the key time in the life of a new Christian. How we minister to people as they go through this evaluation will have a major impact on their future.

Once this decision is past, people move on to being *incorporated into a fellowship of Christians* (+2) and then become *active propagators* (+3).

We have described this decision-making process in terms of individuals. Actually, groups of people go through this same type of group process, and so this scale becomes even more useful to us. Let’s look at some examples, using the following illustration.

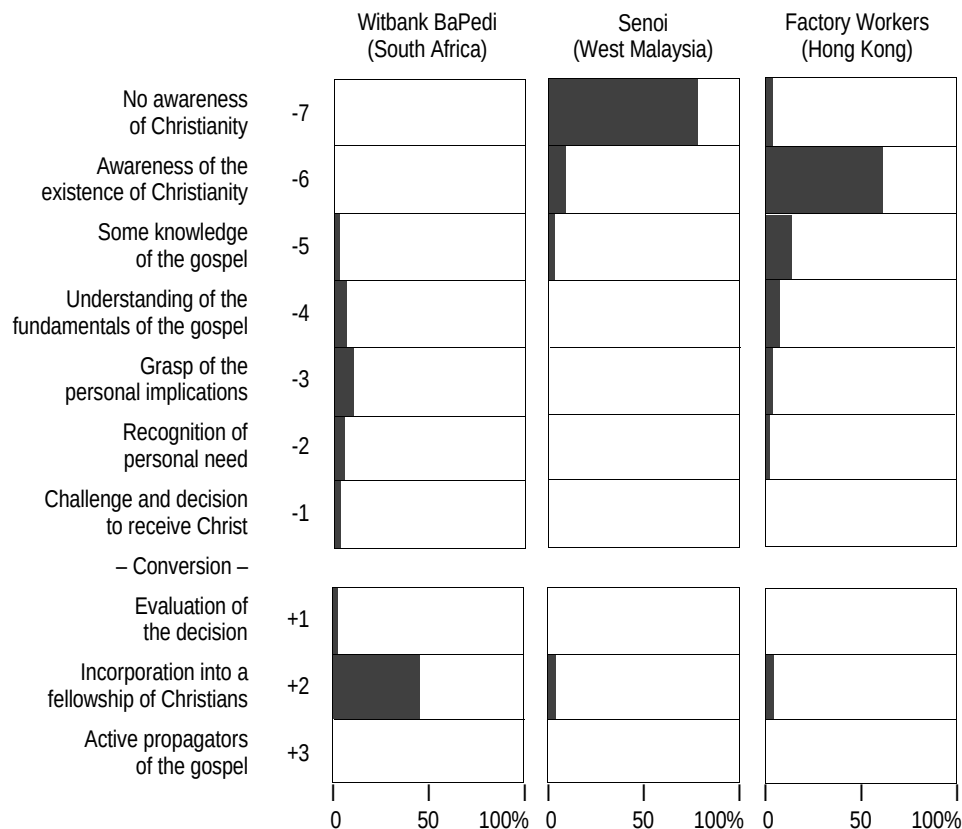


Figure 8-3. Example of the Use of the Engel Scale

Here are three different groups of people: Witbank BaPedi in South Africa, the Senoi in West Malaysia, and factory workers in Hong Kong.

The people in the first group are almost all Christians. Only a small percentage are still back in that category of having not moved beyond some knowledge of the gospel (-5). Approximately 45 percent of them have been incorporated into a fellowship of Christians (+2). This is a *reached people*.

The Senoi are at the other extreme. As best we can tell, about 80 percent of them are absolutely unaware of any existence of Christianity. True, there is a very small church (+2), but there is very little movement towards Christ.

The factory workers of Hong Kong, on the other hand, are surrounded by Christian symbols. Large numbers of them have an awareness of Christianity (-6). But the church is very small, although it ap-

pears that there are numbers of people who are moving towards Christ.

Now the advantage of these descriptions of people is that it helps us to *tailor our message*. We are much like the manufacturer of a product or a provider of

a service. They have to know where the people are in order to do a good job of marketing. In the best sense of the word, we want to be outstanding marketers of the gospel! But still another factor must be considered. What is the *potential receptivity of a people to the gospel*?

12. Why is the Engel scale useful in planning strategy?

The resistance / receptivity scale

Missionary research all over the world has shown us that there are many indications of a people's potential receptivity or resistance to the gospel. For example, we know that people who are undergoing a great deal of economic stress or upheavals in their way of life are more open to a new understanding of the world.

The *resistance/receptivity scale* helps us know how much research we are going to have to do in order

to reach a particular people. Although it is a generalization, we can say that people who are highly receptive will probably respond to almost any evangelistic method, while people who are highly resistant are going to need a great deal of special care.

There are tremendous opportunities for the gospel around the world! These are listed on the next page.

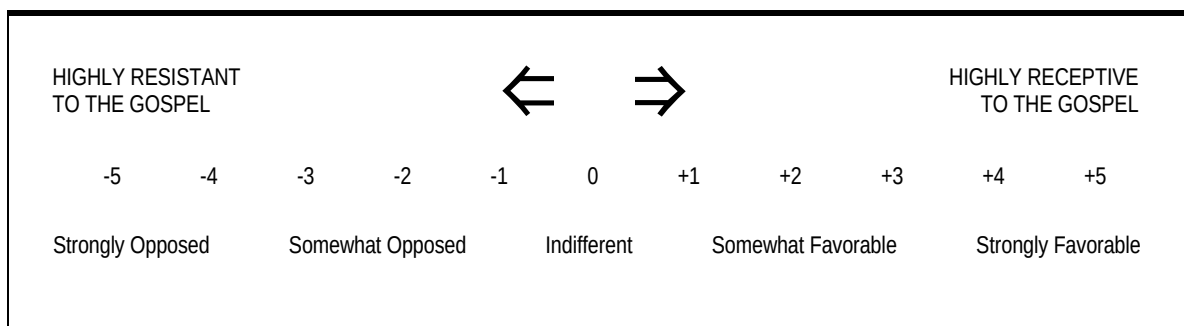


Figure 8-4. The Resistance/Receptivity Scale

COUNTRY	GROUP	POPULATION	PERCENT CHRISTIAN
CHINA (TAIWAN)	HAKKA	1,750,000	1%
INDIA	KOND	900,000	3%
PHILIPPINES	COTABOTO MANOBO	10,000	1%
THAILAND	LEPERS OF NORTHEAST	390,000	0.5%
INDONESIA	SUNDANESE	25,000,000	1%
BENIN	BOKO	20,000	2%
ETHIOPIA	SHANKILLA	500,000	1%
KENYA	FISHING TURKANA	20,000	4%
GERMANY	KOREANS	10,000	8%
U.S.A.	RACETRACK RESIDENTS	50,000	10%
MEXICO	AZTECA	250,000	2%
BELIZE	BLACK CARIBS	10,000	1%
COLOMBIA	COREGUAJE	500	1%
GUATEMALA	QUICHE	500,000	7%

Figure 8-5. People Known to Be Open to the Gospel

13. How will the resistance or receptivity of a people to the gospel affect our strategy?

Designing keys and unlocking doors

There are peoples all over the world who are “locked out” from the gospel; they are hidden people, because no one has really found a key to open the door of their understanding to Christ’s love for them. They will be reached only when they are approached as unique people groups with their own culture and sense of unity.

With God’s help you can design keys which will unlock the door for a particular people to whom God has called you.

There are some obvious questions that can be asked that will enable the Holy Spirit to give us the mind of Christ:

1. What people does God want us to reach?
2. What is this people like?

3. Who should reach them?
4. How should we reach them?
5. What will be the result of reaching them?

These five steps can be thought of as a planning process. The emphasis is placed on asking the right questions, for as each people is unique before God, so will be the answers to the questions.

The five steps we have just listed are all intertwined: what people we want to reach, what the people are like, the means and methods we would use to reach them, and who should reach them are not questions that can be asked one at a time. That is just not the way we think. Obviously, our ability to reach a people will have something to do with which people we try to reach. If we cannot discover God’s way of

reaching them, then we will have to search for a different people.

A much better way to think of these questions would be to see them arranged in a circle. Each question leads to the next, with the last leading back to the first. It is a process that needs to be repeated over and over.

So although the questions are presented in a sequence, you will discover that you will often be asking many different questions at the same time. Don't let the sequence of the questions keep you from allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your mind and heart.

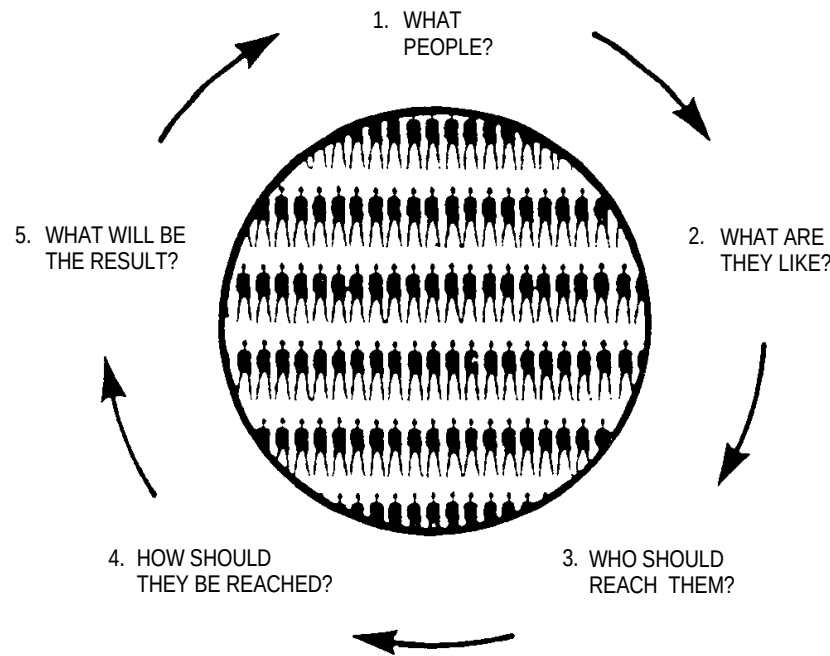


Figure 8-6. Steps for Reaching a People Group

14. *Why are the five questions in this section better placed in a continuous circle than in a list?*

The mystery of evangelization

Planning strategies for evangelization is no substitute for the powerful presence and action of the Holy Spirit! If anything, the more carefully and prayerfully we try to think through the evangelization of a specific group, the more keenly we feel our dependence upon God.

There is a *mystery* to evangelization. The Spirit moves as He sees fit (John 3:8). It is God who is at work to do His perfect will. In ways that we cannot understand, He uses imperfect, sinful men and women to communicate His love and the good news of salvation through His beloved Son to all who will receive Him.

There is a *mystery* to what happens as the Holy Spirit transforms lives of individuals and nations. We can many times see only the results of the Spirit's work. The finger of God writes across the pages of history, and we can see what He has done. But so often we are unable to understand fully what has happened.

But there is *mystery* too in the fact that God has charged His church to go into all the world to preach and make disciples, trusting Him for results and yet at the same time praying, dreaming, anticipating, longing into the future. And as we respond to the command of God's Word and the prompting of His Spirit within us, we are expected to bring our *total being* to bear on the task before us, to think, to pray, and to plan. Jesus spoke to this when He said that a man should not start to build a tower or engage an enemy without first considering the possible outcomes (Luke 14:28). It was said of the early church that they outlived, outdied, and outthought the Roman Empire.

There is a *mystery* about God's action in society through the society itself. Many times God uses

changes in the society to prepare people to receive His Word.

Finally, there is *mystery* about the person of the evangelist. The Word of God has as much to say about what we are to be as what we are to do. The gospel is proclaimed through the spoken word. People cannot come to a knowledge of the Savior unless they hear (or read) that He is. But they are often attracted to Him by the love they find among His disciples.

The more carefully and prayerfully we try to think through the evangelization of a specific group, the more keenly we feel our dependence upon God.

Remember, each disciple is called upon to see himself or herself as part of a larger body (1 Cor. 12:12). Within that body each has a special place, and in the process of evangelization different persons play their special role at different times. "I sowed, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6, RSV).

Let us then use all the gifts that God has given us, both individually and corporately. Let us try to think God's thoughts after Him. Let us attempt to uncover God's strategy—to think about the people to whom we may be called, to earnestly consider their needs, to take into account all that God might do to reach them. Let us make certain that we are clean vessels, fit for His use. And then let us go forward believing that God will be faithful, and GIVE HIM THE GLORY.

15. How should the "mystery of evangelization" affect our attitude towards planning strategy?

The Tonga Team in Zambia used an approach similar to the one Edward Dayton suggests to determine the best way to present the gospel to the Tongas. They spent two years learning the language and culture in an effort to understand the people and their view of the world. During this time they discovered that Tonga culture is permeated by fear of evil spirits. The Tongas feared the *isaku* in particular, evil spirits commanded by humans who had won their allegiance through a gruesome ritual involving, among other things, the head of a human corpse.

In the following excerpt, Phil Elkins describes how presentation of the gospel from an understanding of the people's needs produced the desired result.

***Responding to felt needs* ***

From all of the above insights a picture of *felt needs* emerged to which God could speak meaningfully. The first *Good News* from God for the Tonga was that He had given to us a *Holy Spirit*. The Tongas knew nothing of a good spirit, much less a *Holy Spirit* from God Himself as a gift. We shared that we were not afraid, as they were, of *isaku* spirits because we had residing in us continually a *Spirit* that would not tolerate other spirits. The Spirit in us was more powerful than any other spirit. This explained the lack of fear they had seen in our lives, the joy, the confidence, and hope.

The Word is not confined to the printed page. The Word was communicated daily by a God who was willing to reveal Himself in the people's lives.

The second part of our *Good News* was that the God, which they already knew by name, had *not abandoned them*. The Tonga had left God, but He was willing to live among them again. He had already proved His willingness by sending a Son who lived as a human and showed humans how to really live. We explained that one can now talk directly to God about their needs and that this *Son* also serves as a person's special advocate before God. We further explained that God's Son was so concerned to remove the sin and guilt for all of the offensive ways that we live that He Himself accepted the punishment on our behalf.

The Tongas began to realize the verification and proof of what we said was the *Holy Spirit* which lived in us. Lest I be misunderstood by a reader of this, I am not talking about a special gift of speaking in tongues. I am speaking of that which every Christian receives at his *new birth*.

We also spoke of the verification that would come from knowing the Bible. This had little immediate impact, as most of the people could not read. However, the Word is not confined to the printed page. The Word was communicated daily by a God who was willing to reveal Himself in their lives. He revealed Himself one day as we went to a village where we were stopped by a drunken woman who forbade us to come into her village. She said they followed Satan and not God. That night she died and the next day hundreds of people came wanting to know more of God's will for their lives.

The major political leader of our area had been leading the people to the graves of their ancestors annually to solicit rain. When he accepted the *Good News*, he demonstrated his faith by leading his people in a new way. When the first drought occurred he called the people together to spend a day calling to God to give them rain. This was a bold move which exceeded the faith of some of the missionaries. But God honored the boldness, and before the sun set the earth was drenched in rain.

In the village where we made our home, almost half of the adult population accepted baptism. At their

* Elkins, P. (1992). A pioneer team in Zambia, Africa. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D167-D168). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

initiative we all spent a night in prayer before going out as a group to share our faith with another village.

As our team of American missionaries saw more and more churches planted, we began to modify our role as leaders in evangelism and church planting. I believe it was a good strategy for us to identify with the Tongas physically and to provide a physical and spiritual model for evangelism. I know this is a concept that is considered “past” in many circles, but I feel it should still be an emphasis in pioneer mission efforts.

To train an indigenous leadership we set up 16 extension centers for training every Christian in the basics of the Christian faith and instituted a special course for those who emerged as church leaders. This was done with the new Christians bearing the cost of the courses. We followed the practice of not subsidizing the construction of buildings or providing funding for those who entered the preaching ministry.

16. In the preceding account, why was understanding the people’s felt needs essential to effective communication of the gospel?

III. Putting It All Together

In the final section of this chapter, we will look at three case studies which have applied to some degree their own versions of the “unique solution” strategy. As you read these, try to pick out the application of the principles set forth by Wagner, McGavran, and Dayton in the previous readings. At the end of each case study, you should be able to discuss what elements of strategy were used in each case.

❑ **South Asia: Vegetables, Fish, and Messianic Mosques ***

Shah Ali with J. Dudley Woodberry **

My Muslim father tried to kill me with a sword when I became a follower of Jesus after comparing the Qu’ran and the Bible. He interpreted my decision as a rejection not only of my faith, but of my family

and culture as well. Historically, Christians were largely converts from the Hindu community and had incorporated Hindu words and Western forms into their worship.

* South Asia: Vegetables, fish, and Messianic mosques (1992, March). *Theology, News and Notes* (pp. 12-13). Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary.

** Shah Ali is the pseudonym of a follower of Christ from a Muslim family in South Asia. His identity is being concealed—currently, there is persecution of Christians in his country. He translated the New Testament into his national language using Muslim terms and is training leaders of Messianic mosques. J. Dudley Woodberry is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies and Dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has wide experience in church and mission work and has served as a government consultant on Middle East matters. He is the third generation of his family to serve in missions.

In trying to express my faith, I encountered two sets of problems. First, as indicated, Christianity seemed foreign. Secondly, attempts by Christians to meet the tremendous human need in the region had frequently led to the attraction of opportunistic, shallow converts and the consequent resentment of the Muslim majority.

Christian faith in Muslim dress

I was able to start dealing with the foreignness of Christianity when a missionary hired me to translate the New Testament using Muslim rather than Hindu vocabulary and calling it by its Muslim name, the *Injil Sharif* ("Noble Gospel"). Thousands of *injils* were bought, mostly by Muslims, who now accepted this as the "Gospel" of which the Qu'ran spoke. This approach may be supported not only pragmatically by the amazing results but, more importantly, theologically as well. Unlike the Hindu scriptures, the Qu'ran shares a lot of material with the Bible. In fact, most Muslim theological terms were borrowed from Jews and Christians.*

Subsequently, a graduate of Fuller's School of World Mission asked me to train 25 couples to live in villages and do agricultural development. Only one couple was from a Muslim background. All the others had problems. Muslims would exchange visits with them but would not eat their food until they began to shower in the morning, hence were ceremonially clean by Muslim law after sleeping with their spouses.

The Christian couples were called angels because they were so kind, honest, and self-sacrificing, and they prayed to God. However, they were not considered truly religious because they did not perform the Muslim ritual prayer five times a day. Thereafter, we only employed couples who followed Jesus from a Muslim background, and we developed a ritual prayer that retained all the forms and content that Muslims and Christians share but substituted Bible passages for Qu'ranic ones. Little adaptation was necessary, because early Islam borrowed so heavily

from Jewish and Christian practice in the formulation of the "pillars" of religious observance (the confession of faith, ritual prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage).**

Our Muslim neighbors defined "Christianity" as "a foreign religion of infidels"; so we often referred to ourselves as "Muslims" (literally, "submitters to God"). The necessity of submitting to God is certainly Christian (see James 4:7), and Jesus' disciples call themselves "Muslims" according to the Qu'ran (5:111). In this context, however, they demonstrated their submission by believing in God and His apostle (apparently Muhammad, who had not yet been born).

Our Muslim neighbors defined "Christianity" as "a foreign religion of infidels"; so we often referred to ourselves as "Muslims" (literally, "submitters to God").

When villages have decided to follow Christ, the people continued to use the mosque for worship of God but now through Christ. Where possible, the former leaders of mosque prayers (imams) are trained to continue their role as spiritual leaders.

Persuasion, power, and people

God used other means as well as contextualization to bring Muslims to faith in Christ. On several occasions I have had public discussions with Muslim teachers (*malvis*) and have been able to show that, contrary to popular belief, the Qu'ran does not name Muhammad as an intercessor. Rather, it states that on the judgment day "intercession will not avail, except [that of] him to whom the Merciful will give permission, and of whose speech He approves" (5:109 Egyptian ed./108 Fluegel ed.). But the *Injil* ("Gospel"), which is from God according to the Qu'ran (5:47/51), not only states that God approves

* See Jeffery, A. (1938). *The foreign vocabulary of the Qu'ran*. Oriental Institute.

** For the details of this argument see Woodberry, J. D. (1989). Contextualization among Muslims: Reusing common pillars. In D. S. Gilliland (Ed.), *The Word among us* (pp. 282-312). Waco, TX: Word.

of Jesus (e.g., Matt. 3:17), but that He is the *only* intercessor (1 Tim. 2:5).

God has also shown His power through answered prayer—the recovery of a three-year-old girl who, the doctors said, would die in a few hours; the sending of rain and the stopping of flooding; and the appearance of an unknown man to stop a crowd bent on killing an *imam* who followed Christ.

A conscious effort has been made to foster the movement of groups rather than just individuals to Christ. People have only been baptized if the head of the family was baptized. Effort was made to see that leaders understood the message. A Muslim mystic (Sufi) sheikh, upon learning that the veil of the temple had been rent from top to bottom, threw down his Muslim cap, followed Christ, and brought his followers with him.

Since illiteracy is high, the Bible and training materials are recorded on cassettes, and inexpensive cassette players are made available to the villagers.

There has been persecution. Our training center was closed down. A court case was made against me and three fellow workers. Likewise, there has been friction between the leaders and misunderstanding by other Christian groups. But the movement of people to Christ continues. Most new believers remain in independent Messianic mosques, but some contextualized congregations have joined the major denomination, while still other individuals are absorbed into the traditional, Hindu-background church.

Toward responsible self-help

Besides trying to express our faith in meaningful cultural forms, we have been trying to meet the tremendous human need around us. We want to proclaim the Kingdom and demonstrate its values. Trying to do both presents certain problems. First, there is the problem of using human need for evangelistic purposes—of manipulating people and attracting the insincere. Consequently, we help all the villagers despite their religious affiliation and give no financial help to Jesus mosques or their *imams*.

Secondly, the former colonizer-colonized dependency easily gets transferred to donor-recipient dependency. Thirdly, even the distribution of donated

food from abroad may only help in the city, because of the difficulty of distribution, while giving little incentive to the peasants to produce more because of the artificially reduced price. Fourthly, the introduction of technology may only help those with the skills or the finances to make use of it, while the poorest can just watch the gap between the haves and have-nots widen.

Trying to proclaim the kingdom and demonstrate its values presents the problem of using human need for evangelistic purposes—of manipulating people and attracting the insincere.

To deal with these problems, we have followed such common development practices as loaning planting seed to be replaced at harvest time and providing pumps that are paid for from increased productivity. Now, however, we are adapting a program developed in Southeast Asia which should express holistic Christian concern, deal with the problems outlined, and ensure that the indigenous church remains self-supporting.

The program is training national workers in contextualized church planting and an integrated fish and vegetable cultivation system. The workers are, in turn, sent to needy districts where they are responsible for training local farmers in the easily transferable technology so that they can become self-sufficient. Increased population means less land is available for cultivation, and a poor transportation infrastructure means food must be produced near its consumption.

The intensive food production system was developed elsewhere. In that system, fish ponds are dug and the excavated dirt used for raised vegetable plots. Excess stems and leaves from the vegetables are used to feed the fish, and the waste from the fish is used as fertilizer for the vegetables. These food production centers are within walking distance of regional urban centers for daily sales and provide space for training of regional farmers and leaders of the Jesus mosques.

The concept of Messianic mosques and completed Muslims (following the model of Messianic synagogues and completed Jews) still causes considerable misunderstanding among other Christians. The combining of evangelism and humanitarian ministries by the same people also raises concerns among those who feel Christian agencies should only focus on one or the other. Nevertheless, the models we are

developing have been used by God in the raising up of many new disciples and expressing His concern for total persons with physical and spiritual needs. Likewise, the Messianic Muslim movement has spilled over into a neighboring country through the normal visiting of relatives; when colleagues and I visited a Southeast Asian country recently, a whole Muslim village began to follow Jesus.

17. What strategic principles were used in this case study?

In the case study just considered, the context was a mixed Hindu, Muslim, and Christian society in which Muslims were being targeted for evangelization. In the following case, it is a predominantly Roman Catholic society where social stratification is very strong. Consider how the Lord led in this movement to reach members of the traditionally unresponsive upper class.

An Upper Class People Movement *

Clyde W. Taylor

In recent months I have become acquainted with a fascinating movement in Latin America where the Gospel is spreading by a pattern as close to the New Testament pattern as I have ever seen. I'll not name a country, for the leaders do not want any publicity. But what is happening is to the glory of God and represents a quite significant breakthrough.

I learned of it when I was invited to hold a missionary conference in that country a couple of years ago. I was not prepared for what I encountered. I understood the missionary involved had a small work, but I discovered the Gospel was spreading in a way that Dr. McGavran would call a "people movement."

The unusual aspect of this movement is that its faith is spreading almost exclusively among the upper middle and upper classes of the nation. Furthermore, the number of converts involved is relatively high

for the size of the segment of society involved. Since the movement is intentionally not highly structured, it is difficult to get accurate statistics; but my extensive conversation with leaders lead me to conclude that a minimum of 2,000 converts were actively involved. The number could easily be as high as 5,000 or more.

Beginnings

The work of the missionary, whom I'll call "John Swanson," began in the 1950s in somewhat typical fashion as he witnessed and evangelized among the responsive lower classes. After several years of ministry in the capital city, he had some 20 to 25 converts whom he was training in his home. He came to realize that he was really not a pastor and preacher—his skills were in music and teaching and so asked another mission to shepherd his little flock.

* Taylor, C. W. (1980). An upper class people movement. *Global Church Growth Bulletin*, 17(2).

In 1962, Swanson moved to the second largest city in the nation where—after studying the methods of Paul in the book of Acts—he changed his approach. He went to the university and started witnessing to students. Within a few months he won 12 of these to Christ, whom he then began to train in discipleship. For seven years he led them in their spiritual growth and trained them also in theology, church history, books of the Bible, and so on.

While Swanson was writing, translating, and mimeographing materials for the daily sessions with his disciples, they were out witnessing to other students. By 1964 they had won and disciplined about 300 others. These were all baptized in and some became members of various churches in the city. (At present about a dozen of these early converts are full-time workers in some of these churches.) The movement at this point was focused in small groups meeting in private homes and university lounges.

Churches grow and multiply

These early converts, it should be remembered, were all students and therefore single. In time, when some of them graduated and got married, they began thinking in terms of their own church. In 1969, therefore, the first church with five couples was organized in a home, and a second church was organized three years later.

In 1977 the first house church, which had grown to 120 members, divided into two separate churches of 60 members each. The second church grew to 160 members and in 1978 divided into two congregations of 80 each. In February of that year, another church was formed bringing the total to five house churches with a combined membership of about 500.

This gives a partial picture only of the work, for, in addition to the many who joined existing churches, the leaders of this new movement to Christ estimate that at least 50 percent of their members have scattered to other sections of the country and even the U.S. In many cases they begin the process of witnessing, training new converts, and establishing house churches all over again.

Furthermore, cells of believers have been established in many of the universities of the region. I was told, for instance, of a type of church meeting for 35

medical students, another for 15 in the biology department, and another for 12 in the technical institute of one university.

In 1964 one of the original 12 leaders graduated and returned to the capital city and began a work along the same lines he had come to know the Lord in and been trained in. Swanson followed him a few years later.

When I visited there in 1979, I was told that there may be as many as 100 Christian cell meetings among the upper classes in the city. These seem to be spreading on their own. The churches (cells) directly identified with Swanson and his workers, however, have grown to 15 with a total membership approaching 1,000. They told me about a number of similar house churches in other cities as well.

An inside view

One of the unique features of these house churches is that they are made up of members from the upper middle and upper classes of people. The churches in the capital city in particular are made up primarily of those from the highest circles of society. This is not to say that they are unconcerned about the poor and less educated. They have evangelized among them and gained many converts. They discovered, however, that as soon as people from the lower and middle classes began attending their churches, ingathering from among the upper class ceased.

They concluded that if they were going to win upper class people, they were going to have to win them with Christians who were likewise from the upper classes.

Taking Paul's statement that he became all things to all men, they concluded that if they were going to win upper class people, they were going to have to win them with Christians who were likewise from the upper classes. As soon as they gain enough converts from the lower classes, therefore, they organize separate churches for them. For these leaders, it is not a matter of not wanting to associate with those on lower rungs of society, but a matter of how

best to win the most people to Jesus Christ on all levels.

The growth of this cluster of congregations looks a lot like that of New Testament congregations. The converts meet in homes where they worship, fellowship, study the Word, and are sent out to bring others to Christ. Each convert is not so much “followed up” but receives the Gospel in a very personal context to begin with. For example, the group has printed and distributed millions of tracts, but none of them have a name and address printed on them. Instead, the one passing out the tract gives his own name and address. When someone comes to know the Lord, he is immediately given training in discipleship.

I talked with one girl, for example, who meets with four new converts at six a.m. They pray, have fellowship, and study the Word until breakfast at seven. She meets for lunch with three other girls who are older Christians. They pray and discuss problems together.

Each church is completely independent, though they all carry the same name. They do not keep any membership lists, but they do seem to know everyone who belongs. They baptize, serve communion, and train and ordain their own pastors, whom they call “elders.” They are not highly structured, but their high level of caring and training binds them together.

It is an interesting paradox that these converts are wealthy, but they can expand indefinitely with almost no funds, since they meet in their large homes and ordain their own lay and unpaid elders (pastors). But they do give 20 percent of their incomes on the average. With these funds they send out missionaries to other parts of Latin America and even Europe.

Money is never mentioned until someone is ready to go to the field and needs support. Then it is not uncommon for someone to say, “I’ll give \$200 a month” and another to say, “I’ll give \$150,” and so on. Support is thereby raised very quickly.

I heard of one missionary lady who is supported by four of her friends, all executive secretaries. They give her full personal support which is equal to what she would earn as an executive secretary in her home country. They also pay her transportation to and from the field and her ministry needs as well. One of the girls gives 80 percent of her salary, another 60 percent, another 50 percent, and another 30 percent. Altogether, the fellowship of house churches fully supports 16 missionaries.

Disciple making and church planting are now spreading quickly through a segment of society that has been heretofore unreached. If it can happen in one nation of Latin America, it can happen in others.

The exciting thing about this Christward movement is not just that millionaires, government officials, and leading businessmen are becoming believers. The Lord loves the poorest beggar, and his conversion is no less precious in His sight. It’s significant that disciple making and church planting are now spreading quickly through a segment of society that has been heretofore unreached. If it can happen in one nation of Latin America, it can happen in others. The Lord of the harvest—of all kinds of crops—will be pleased when it does.

18. Identify at least five distinctives of the church described above and explain how these qualities are beneficial for evangelizing others.

In this final case study, we will look at a strategy used to reach a nomadic Muslim tribal group, one of the most challenging of all missions scenarios.

❑ **Ann Croft and the Fulani ***

Fatima Mahoumet

Although Ann Croft's father had planted many churches in the U.S. Midwest during her childhood, she wasn't thinking of herself as a missionary when she went to Nigeria. She was simply a teacher of English as a Second Language.

She was able to get to know some of them better, joining them for some meals, and eventually reading and discussing stories from the Bible. One student expressed an extraordinary interest in the Bible.

Open doors

As their friendship grew, her student opened doors for her into the labyrinth of extended family life among the Fulani people in her area. He had many sisters who had married into a number of families in the area. When her student visited them, Ann accompanied him and met each family member.

As a teacher, Ann was also respected by the male leaders of the community. At their request, she spent many hours answering their questions about the Bible, helping them to understand more fully the biblical events and characters, including Jesus, which they had encountered in the Quran. In preparation, she had done a comparative study of the Quran and Bible, noting their uniqueness, differences, and similarities. She used their folk tales as bridges for discussing Scripture.

Soon, Ann had access to every part of the Muslim community. As a woman, she was able to meet the women related to all of her male contacts, even those in the strictest *purdah* (seclusion) who would otherwise be well beyond the sphere of married, let alone single, Christian men. One of the women was especially drawn to Ann. She took her to all the special ceremonies, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. She helped her with the language and

provided many needed bridges of communication and explanations as Ann continued to learn about the Muslim way of life. Ann also learned the traditional stories of her new people and grew to deeply love and appreciate the rich fabric of their lives.

She discovered that being a single woman had its advantages too. In response to questions as to why she was not married, Ann referred to 1 Corinthians 7 and a comparable passage in the Quran about single women being able to be totally involved in the work of the Lord. She added that the Bible, unlike the Quran, allowed her to do so well past her 20th birthday. Besides, she remarked, how could she otherwise teach their children and always be available to them any time they were having trouble, day or night? She wasn't subject to the demands of marriage or the constraints of *purdah*. She was always free to help.

Caring for cattle

Ann continued her efforts among the Fulani people of northern Nigeria.

The Fulani are a largely nomadic people, whose search for good pasture for their cattle has scattered them throughout sub-Saharan West Africa. Strong clan fidelity and six centuries of Muslim evangelism have made them the most effective champions of Islam in West Africa. Of 6.7 million Fulani, only 400 are known Christians.

As Ann studied more about the people to whom God had sent her, she discovered ways of showing the Fulani cattle-herders that they are very special to God. In the Bible she found numerous references to nomadic cattle-herding peoples who played special roles in biblical history.

* Mahoumet, F. (1992). Ann Croft and the Fulani. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D198-D199). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Knowing the great importance of cattle to them, Ann began to help upgrade the health of the cattle with veterinary medicine and so helped the Fulani begin to cope with some of the economic problems they faced with the growing pressure of urbanization.

Caring for cattle was the way to the Fulani heart. On one occasion she helped a Fulani elder get tuberculosis medicine for his son and worm medicine for himself. But it was not until she gave him medicine for his cows that he said, “Now I know you really love us!”

Ann was able to join forces with another mission agency in a distant city that was planning an evangelistic three-day “conference” especially for Fulani. Fulani people were told that it would be a religious conference studying one of the prophets—Abraham, a super-herdsman who had cows and sheep and donkeys and goats and camels. This was a big event for the Fulani, not accustomed to special events just for their people.

At the end of the evangelistic conference, the chief of the area said to Ann that he wanted his people to become part of the Christian community. He had

seen that Christians and their Holy Book cared about the needs of his people. Some of the greatest prophets, after all, like Abraham, were cattle-herders too! He also told her that to get a lot of people interested in the Christian faith, one of the best things she could do would be to continue to show a real, genuine interest in every aspect of their culture.

Caring for cattle was the way to the Fulani heart.

Gathering new believers into viable fellowships is proving to be a tremendous challenge. It is hard enough for some Fulani youth to settle down for Bible school. A permanent location for a tribe would unravel nomadic life. But Ann feels that perhaps now is the time for the Fulani people as they move towards a future that is economically, politically, and socially uncertain. She will be there with them, loving and caring for them, believing that God will transform them into a people “gathered... accepted... to the honor of the Lord your God” (Isa. 60:7).

19. *Why was Ann Croft's “strategy” effective? Would it be effective in other situations? Why or why not?*

Summary

How do we go about reaching an unreached people group? There are several factors which affect the development of our strategy. First, we must fully understand the goal. Secondly, we must keep clear the vision of harvest, pruning, and reaping. Thirdly, we must develop the right methods to reach the people. Last but not least, we must make sure we understand the qualifications required of those who are sent to perform the task.

Although we may have in mind the immediate goal of making disciples, consideration of the long-term goal of evangelization will greatly affect the methods we use. “One by one” methodology is sometimes appropriate where the church is an accepted part of the culture, but where the church is still

considered a foreign entity, a “people movement” approach is most desirable. Such an approach will require that new strategies be developed for each people because many traditionally applied methods will not be effective.

We must evaluate each people on the basis of their needs in order to discover how to evangelize them. This approach will lead us to an in-depth understanding of the people and their culture. The use of newly developed tools such as the Engel scale and the resistance/receptivity scale can also help us assess a people’s spiritual condition and determine how the gospel should be presented in order to meet felt needs. By asking basic questions such as what people God wants us to reach, what these people are like, who should reach them, how we should reach them, and what the results of reaching them will be, we can fine tune the process of targeting an unreached people with the gospel. However, this planning must be balanced with the recognition that the Lord often works in mysterious ways to bring about His purposes. We must remain flexible in our planning and must give God the freedom to work as He sees fit in each situation.

Integrative Assignment

The following is the second worksheet of your unreached peoples assignment. Once you have determined what people you are targeting, you will want to answer the question: *What are the people like?*

WORKSHEET #2: PEOPLE GROUP DESCRIPTION

A. General Physical Description

1. What is the name or descriptive title of this people group?

2. What is the approximate size of this people group?

3. Of what race, class, caste, nationality, etc. are the people members?

4. What is their first language? What other languages do they speak?

5. Where do these people live? What is their environment like?

6. What is the economic situation of this people group? Is there a specific profession which characterizes them?

7. What other physical distinctives are part of these people's cultural boundaries?

B. Religious Background

8. Describe the religion or religions to which these people adhere.

9. What percentage adhere to each religion? How many people are nominal in their faith, and how many are sincere practitioners of their religion?

10. Do the people seem satisfied with their religion and its practices? How does their religion cope with issues of illness and death?

11. In light of the people's religious practices, what is the greatest spiritual need which the gospel can address?

C. External Influences on Evangelization

12. Are there government-imposed restrictions on evangelizing these people? If so, what are they?

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-
13. Are there sociological or economic factors inhibiting the evangelization of these people? If so, what are they?

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-
14. Describe any sociological, economic, or political factors that can be used to advantage in the evangelization of these people.

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-
15. Using the Engel scale, determine where these people are in their Christward movement.
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WRITTEN REPORT

Write a short descriptive paper of your people. Also address the questions regarding the factors that may influence their conversion to Christ. You will be building your strategy on this information, so try to be as thorough as possible.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER 9

Entry Strategies, Evangelism, and Church Planting

Now that we have targeted a people and found out as much as possible about them, we must face the question of how to go about reaching them. There are three strategic aspects to this question. The first is to determine an *entry strategy*, that is, the best way of penetrating the area where the people live with the forces for evangelization. The second aspect is the specific *evangelistic tactics* which will be used in approaching the people with the gospel. The final aspect deals with *church planting strategies* which will allow for a cluster of culturally relevant churches to grow spontaneously throughout the people group.

In the first section of this chapter, we will consider two approaches to meeting the challenge of the apparent inaccessibility of some people groups. Next, we will look at different methods of evangelism and examples of effective and not-so-effective strategies. In the final section, a system for the spontaneous multiplication of churches will be examined. As you read, keep in mind the people group you have selected for your unreached peoples research paper. You will want to apply the principles presented to develop a strategy for reaching your “adopted” people.

I. Entry Strategies

Certain dynamics in the current world situation complicate the pioneer missionary’s task. Four interrelated and opposing forces stand out.

1. The *resurgence of the traditional religions* of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam is being fomented internally by segments of each group. These groups are also attempting to extend their religions to other geographic areas. Increasingly, the missionary is being faced with people who have an awakened sense of their traditional religion.
2. The *rising tide of nationalism* has tended to bias populations against Christianity because Christianity is perceived to be a form of cultural imperialism.

3. The *revolutionary contexts* in which many unreached peoples exist creates some extremely sensitive situations for missionaries, who are often pressured to express allegiance to one faction or another. Compliance or non-compliance to these requests brings real physical dangers.
4. Due to the first three of these obstacles, *government restrictions to traditional missionary work* are now the norm, not the exception.

Creative Access Countries

Most of the unreached peoples of the world live in countries which have severe government restrictions on missionary activity. These countries do not grant visas to missionaries whose primary activities are evangelism and church planting. In some cases, visas may be granted for medical missionaries or others involved in relief and development. In these instances, the document may be granted on the strict condition that the missionaries confine their activities to their professional obligations and not be involved in “proselytizing.”

Under these conditions, missions strategists have increasingly recognized the importance of using alternate strategies for entering the country or area where the target group lives. These *creative access strategies* often employ *tentmakers*, missionaries with secular occupations which they use to enter and remain in the target area.

In the following article, Ruth Siemens explains who tentmakers are and the practical reasons for employing this strategy.

Tentmakers Needed for World Evangelization *

Ruth E. Siemens **

Recent events that have radically altered the world’s landscape of nations have multiplied the opportunities and the need for tentmakers!

A vast new global job market began to emerge even before the Soviet Union (last of the European colonial empires) began crumbling into independent republics. Its nearby satellite nations and its client states on every continent, bereft of Soviet subsidies, and with no superpowers to play against each other, were already struggling to meet the tough new

demands for international aid: market economics, multiparty politics, and improved human rights. The worldwide trend toward disassociation, the cross-currents of association (the new European Community, the united Germanys, Yemens, Chinas, and Koreas, a Western Hemisphere bloc, Pacific Rim bloc, etc.), and a new vitality in Arab countries—are reshaping the international job market to provide more openings in more locations than ever before.

* Siemens, R. E. (1992). Tentmakers needed for world evangelization. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D246-D248, D252-D253). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Ruth E. Siemens served for 21 years in Peru, Brazil, Spain, and Portugal for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). During six of those years she funded her ministry with tentmaking efforts in education. She is Founder and Director of Global Opportunities, an agency which helps to counsel and link Christian witnesses and international employment opportunities. She also lectures and writes extensively on the subject of tentmaking.

What are tentmakers and how do they serve?

Historically, tentmakers are missions-committed Christians who, like Paul, support themselves in secular work, as they engage in cross-cultural ministry on the job and in their free time.

At the other end of the scale are regular missionaries, who receive church or individual donor support, and are usually perceived as religious workers (even if they do nursing or teaching in a mission institution). In between, is a continuum of combinations of the two options—all valid and biblical. A tentmaker may supplement salary with donor gifts, and a missionary may take a part-time job to augment donor support, or for more contact with non-believers. God leads people to alternate between the modes at different stages of life.

It is important to note that most evangelical expatriates are not tentmakers, because they have little or no commitment to missions or to ministry, unless to their own compatriots. Maybe one percent evangelize citizens of their host country and qualify as tentmakers.

It is important to note that tentmakers are in full-time spiritual ministry, even when they have full-time employment. The secular job is not an inconvenience, but the God-given context in which tentmakers live out the gospel in a winsome, wholesome, nonjudgmental way, demonstrating personal integrity, doing quality work, and developing caring relationships. Because they are under the daily scrutiny of non-believers, they deal with their failures in an open, godly way.

Verbal witness is essential because without words, their exemplary lives merely confuse. Tentmakers do low-key, “fishing” evangelism. Their appropriate comments about God, inserted casually into secular conversations, are “bait” that draw nibbles. They “fish out” the seekers—those “with ears to hear”—without attracting the attention of spiritually hostile listeners around them. The seekers’ questions help pace the conversations, as they are ready for more, and show the Christian what to say—the truth they lack, their misconceptions, felt needs, hurts, hang-ups, and obstacles to faith.

This approach reduces evangelism largely to answering questions (Col. 4:5, 6 and 1 Pet. 3:14-16), which is easier and more effective than more confrontational approaches. Even veteran Christians can say, “I’m still learning about my faith, but would you like to see what Jesus said?” and take out a pocket Testament for a one-on-one lunch break Bible study. It grows into a weekly home study group, and then into a house church! Natural contact with colleagues, students, patients, clients, neighbors, and other social acquaintances make tentmaking ideal for church planting.

Tentmakers are in full-time spiritual ministry, even when they have full-time employment.

Tentmakers’ free-time ministries vary widely. While I worked and evangelized in secular schools, God helped me also to pioneer IVCF-IFES university student movements in Peru and Brazil. A tentmaker couple translated the New Testament for five million Muslims while he did university teaching and she tutored English! A science teacher evangelized his students in rural Kenya and preached every third Sunday in the local church. A symphony violinist in Singapore had Bible studies with fellow musicians. A faculty person and an engineer set up a Christian bookstore in the Arab Gulf region. A theologically trained graduate student did campus evangelism and taught part-time in an Asian seminary. Some start needed ministries for men, women, children, professional people, prisoners or slum dwellers, literacy or publishing work—or whatever is needed. But evangelism on the job continues to be of major concern.

It is important to note that many tentmakers have theological and missiological training, even though God leads them to work as tentmakers—as lay people rather than as formal missionaries. But in this spiritual struggle for control of the world, not everyone needs officer’s training. Foot soldiers must know how to do spiritual battle through prayer and how to use the “sword of the Spirit”—God’s Word.

They need good personal and small group Bible study skills—for evangelism, discipling, training, and worship. All need a brief course on missions and cultural orientation for their target country.

It is important to note that tentmakers work together in fellowship and accountability groups. At home their churches and friends pray for them, and over-

seas they work in tentmaker teams, or with a local national church, or as members of a tentmaker sending agency, or as field partners or full members of a regular mission agency, some of which now have tentmaker programs. An English language expatriate church overseas can be helpful, if it does not distract the tentmaker from concentrating on local citizens.

1. Is a tentmaker really a missionary? Why or why not?

2. What is the major ministry concern of the tentmaker? What does this involve primarily?

The term *tentmaking* as a missionary strategy is derived from the Apostle Paul's allusions to his secular trade. In Corinth, he joined himself to Aquila and Priscilla, who were of his same occupation—tentmaking (Acts 18:1-3). Several times throughout the epistles, Paul makes reference to the fact that he supported himself through his labors. Why did he do this when he probably could have received support from the churches and dedicated himself fully to ministry? Ruth Siemens elaborates on several of Paul's reasons.

Paul's reasons for tentmaking

Credibility

Paul says twice (1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 6:3ff) that he works in order not to put an "obstacle" in the way of the gospel in the Gentile world. He makes sure his message and motivation will not be suspect. He is not a "peddler of God's Word," not a "people pleaser" preaching to gain fatter profits. He does not want to be confused with the unscrupulous orators who roamed the empire, exploiting audiences. He is "free from all men"—owes no favors.

Identification

Paul adapts culturally to people, in order to win them—to the Jews as a Jew, to the Greeks as a Greek (an educated Gentile), and to the "weak" (the lower classes) as an artisan (1 Cor. 9:19ff). As a highly educated upper class person, Paul had no trouble making friends with the Asiarchs in Ephesus. But manual labor helps him identify with the lower classes, because most of the people in the empire were at the bottom of the economic scale. His iden-

tification with them is not phony—he earns his living (1 Cor. 4:11-12). This costly, incarnational service is not original with Paul. He imitates Jesus, whose identification with us cost Him everything (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 2:5-11).

Modeling

Paul shows how to live out the gospel in this idolatrous culture, because no seeker or convert had ever seen it before. He also models a Christian work ethic. In 1 Thessalonians 3:8 he says, “With toil and labor, we worked night and day that we might not burden any of you, and to give you an example to follow.” Work is not optional for Christians. He transforms newly converted thieves, idlers, and drunkards into good providers for their families and generous givers to the needy (1 Cor. 6:10-11; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8). Imagine how these transformed bums affected observers! Paul gives much space in his brief letters to work, because without a strong work ethic, there cannot be godly converts, healthy families, independent churches nor productive societies.

More important, he establishes a pattern for lay ministry. Every convert is to be a full-time, unpaid evangelist—from the moment of conversion. They were to answer the questions of all who asked about their changed lives and new hope. Each convert represented a new beachhead into enemy territory, so they shouldn’t usually move or change employment (1 Cor. 7:17-24). Nothing matures new believers like evangelism. Hundreds of homes and workplaces could be reached in a few days.

From the start, Paul’s churches were self-reproducing—everyone evangelized. They were self-governing, not dependent on foreign leadership. They were self-supporting, not dependent on foreign funds (he taught Christians to give, but to the poor in their neighborhoods and in Jerusalem). Paul’s church planting was only a means to his goal of producing a great worldwide missionary lay movement!

Self-support is a planned part of Paul’s pioneering strategy, as a “skilled master builder,” who warned others to heed how they built upon his foundation (1 Cor. 3:1ff). Local house church leaders who were appointed almost immediately were to keep their

secular jobs. By the time growing congregations needed stronger leadership, it was clear which leaders had the respect of local Christians and non-believers, local funds were available for their support, and the pattern of unpaid evangelists was well established. Paid ministry was the exception. Paul never allowed his churches to become dependent on foreign funds or leadership.

How did Paul’s strategy work out? Although Paul’s evangelists were from unsavory, uneducated, pagan backgrounds, with neither anthropological nor missiological training, most had received the Lord at enormous risk, and they risked their lives to take it to others.

Paul establishes a pattern for lay ministry. Every convert is to be a full-time, unpaid evangelist—from the moment of conversion.

In 10 years (the three journeys took a decade), Paul and his friends (one small team), without support (no donor funds), evangelized six whole provinces, in a hostile environment. They did it by winning and mobilizing the largely uneducated, unpaid converts. In just over 20 years, Paul could say, “From Jerusalem to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.... I no longer have any room for work in these regions” (Rom. 15:19-24). He had evangelized the Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire and now turned to the more Latin half—including Rome and Spain.

But how can he claim to be through with the Greek half, when neither he nor his team seem to have left the main cities? Paul said he was debtor to all classes, including the barbarians—those who were not native Greek speakers (Rom. 1:14-16). The Empire was never more than a chain of city colonies and military outposts, each with its own customs, local laws, and deities, respected by Roman authorities. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans had ever tried to integrate or to educate the hinterlands. Many languages were used, even in the cities—by the lower class laborers. (Remember Lystra in Acts 14?)

By turning these multi-lingual, lower class converts into unpaid evangelists, Paul virtually guaranteed the evangelization of the hinterlands, as converts ran to share the gospel in their home towns, and village people located their friends in the city. Converts took the gospel home, clothed in their own language and culture. After a few months in Philippi, Paul speaks of Macedonian churches. Paul's first follow-up letter to the Thessalonians says the gospel has already sounded out from them through the whole region! Corinth spreads the gospel through Achaia. Paul stays in Ephesus three years, but Luke writes that after two, "all Asia had already heard"—the

whole province! It was indigenous, exponential growth!

Speed matters in hostile cultures. The gospel spread so quickly that by the time the opposition had geared up, it was too late to put out the fire.

We need to give much more attention to the different aspects of Paul's pioneering strategy and see how to apply it today—for example, by sending both models together. Donald McGavran said that church growth requires a large group of unpaid evangelists. But it is not easy to produce them, if the only models are missionaries on full donor support.

3. *Why was tentmaking so important to establishing a dynamic, evangelizing first century church?*

Nonresidential Missionaries

A second strategic approach which is being given increasing importance today is the *nonresidential missionary*, that is, a person who resides outside the primary geographic region of the target group but carries out a number of focused activities to reach the group. The following information on this new approach is excerpted from an article by V. David Garrison.

❑ ***An Unexpected New Strategy: Using Nonresidential Missions to Finish the Task ****

V. David Garrison **

Herein lies the great promise of nonresidential missions. By definition it utilizes every evangelization resource and method in existence and concentrates them directly on an unevangelized population target.

The resources already exist for evangelizing the world. The nonresidential missionary's arsenal, so to speak, is well-stocked. His is merely the task of redeploying these resources to their greatest strategic advantage. It is for this reason that the nonresi-

* Garrison, V. D. (1990). An unexpected new strategy: Using nonresidential missions to finish the task. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 7(4), 107-115.

** V. David Garrison has served as a foreign missionary in Hong Kong. He is currently Director of Nonresidential Missions for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and is the author of *Missions Beyond Boundaries*.

dential missionary is never in competition with any other missionary approach; his approach both includes and presupposes these other ministries as the key resources for accomplishing his own objectives.

Thus, the healthier and more diverse the world of Christian missionary resources becomes, the more vital the nonresidential missionary approach will be.

4. *What important underlying assumption does the author build on in suggesting a nonresidential mission strategy? Are there others he doesn't mention?*

Essential characteristics

Nonresidence

The nonresidential missionary operates fundamentally from a nonresidential base. This means the missionary does not reside among the unevangelized segment he intends to evangelize. While it may be possible and even beneficial for the nonresidential missionary to locate among or near his population target for purposes of language acquisition

and investigation, the real work begins after the nonresidential missionary withdraws to an unrestricted setting in a world-class or crossroads urban center. The primary reason for nonresidence is due to restrictions that would be placed on a missionary living and working residentially among the people.

5. *Why is it preferable for a nonresidential missionary to live outside the main target area?*

Networking

Unlike an itinerant missionary or a gospel smuggler, the nonresidential missionary is not necessarily committed to living as close as possible to the borders of his target population. Instead, he is looking for a place of residence which will allow maximum networking capabilities with other Great Commission Christians. Some important factors to consider in this regard are: (1) free flow of information (computers, telephone, postal, etc.), (2) locations where a diaspora population of the target segment reside (refugees, migrant workers, etc.), (3) location along

a key travel route in and out of the region (for airplanes, trains, etc.).

It is inconceivable for a nonresidential missionary to attempt either a "lone ranger" approach to evangelizing his population target or even a "mono-denominational" approach. By utilizing every possible Great Commission Christian contact, rather than a single, limited evangelistic contact, the nonresidential missionary is able to catalyze hundreds and thousands of evangelizing agents in a concerted effort at reaching his target assignment.

6. What is essential to effective networking?

Specific targeting

By limiting the nonresidential missionary to a single unevangelized population segment, the task is kept both manageable and strategic. Unevangelized population segments are those which have yet to receive an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This should not be confused

with a closed country, which may or may not be evangelized. Nor should it be equated with a population segment which, though non-Christian, has numerous options for receiving the gospel within its own context.

7. Why is a specific target necessary to this approach?

Four functions

Researching

Research is the first stage. It prepares the way for all subsequent nonresidential mission work. There are two worlds which the nonresidential missionary must master: (1) the world of his targeted population segment, and (2) the world of evangelization resources. The ultimate goal is to bring these two worlds together in a dynamic interaction which will lead to the evangelization of the population target in a manner that will result in a healthy, multiplying church.

Strategizing

After investigating the two worlds, the nonresidential missionary begins developing a comprehensive strategy for the segment's evangelization. As much as possible, this strategy should utilize the entire spectrum of evangelization options. Four fundamental categories of evangelization strategy have been identified: (1) prayer, (2) Scriptures, (3) media ministries, and (4) Christian presence.

Prayer. The least evangelized countries, cities, and peoples on earth have long been under the spiritual domination of Satan. Only prayer can break this oppressive control.

Scriptures. There is no limit to the effectiveness of God's Word once it is available to an unevangelized people. A crucial part of the nonresidential missionary's initial research is to determine the status of Scripture translation or accessibility and devise plans for making it available to the people. In many

There is no limit to the effectiveness of God's Word once it is available to an unevangelized people.

cases, the population target may not even have a literate language. There are today numerous ways to present the Bible to the people apart from the written page. Radio broadcasts, audio cassette ministries, and even video formats such as the "Jesus" film are all capable of delivering God's Word to a people who can understand the spoken though not the written message.

Media ministries. Few societies today are without radio receivers, and virtually all nonresidential missionaries depend on radio broadcasts to transmit the gospel into unevangelized hinterlands. Other means

of media communication include correspondence evangelism, utilizing both personal correspondence and mass mailings into restricted settings. In addition, the remarkably effective “Jesus” film can now be delivered into highly restricted countries.

Christian presence. Every nonresidential ministry, if it is to be effective, must identify opportunities for a witnessing Christian presence among the population target. Since traditional missionary presence is not formally allowed, the nonresidential mission strategist must rely on other avenues of Christian presence. Figure 9-1 shows the types of Christian presence and their lengths of service that a typical nonresidential missionary would seek to place in his targeted area.

Implementation

Implementation of this strategy requires careful coordination of goals and action plans with dozens of

other Christian agencies and individuals. The nonresidential missionary has only the power of persuasion at this crucial juncture in his ministry. But he also has at his disposal literally hundreds of agencies and thousands of individuals from which to recruit.

Evaluating

The work of the nonresidential missionary is not complete without careful monitoring and evaluation of the segment to determine to what extent the various methods are proving effective. Evangelistic effectiveness, i.e., the production of viable self-sustaining and reproducing churches, of course, is the ultimate goal. To monitor effectiveness, the nonresidential missionary is expected to continually examine the conditions of the target segment using a range of indicators to measure evangelization.

CHRISTIAN WITNESSING PRESENCE			
TYPE	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-LENGTH	LONG-TERM
Mission related	English teachers	Exchange students	Tentmakers
Relief and development	Crisis surveys	Two-year relief workers	Agricultural development, health care, holistic community development
Third World missionaries	Tourist evangelists	Itinerant evangelists	Immigrants
Indigenous	Lay volunteers	Church planters	Pastors
Total Number	100 Short-Term	40 Medium-Length	10 Long-Term

Figure 9-1

8. How important is each of the four functions to reaching a people successfully?

9. *What qualities and characteristics should a person have in order to be a nonresidential missionary?*

10. *Could a local church serve as a nonresidential mission's "nerve center"? Why, why not, or under what conditions?*

II. Evangelism

The resurgence of traditional religions and heightened nationalism make it difficult at best for a pioneer missionary to communicate effectively a gospel which is culturally appropriate. Under these pressures, it may seem best to exercise a benign presence rather than pursue aggressive evangelization of a people. In the following excerpt, Herbert Kane helps clarify some of the issues surrounding the evangelization of the unreached.

The Work of Evangelism *

J. Herbert Kane **

Purpose of evangelism

Evangelism has a twofold purpose, one immediate and the other remote. The immediate purpose is the conversion of the individual and his incorporation into the Christian church. The remote purpose is the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ over all creation and the extension of the kingdom of God throughout the earth. The first is emphasized in Mark's account of the Great Commission. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every

creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:1-16, KJV). The second is found in Matthew's version of the Great Commission. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach [*make disciples of*] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:18-19, KJV).

* Kane, J. H. (1980). Life and work on the mission field (pp. 246-250). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

** Drawing on 15 years of missionary experience in central China with the China Inland Mission, J. Herbert Kane taught for many years in the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and was Professor Emeritus until his death in 1990. Kane has authored a number of missions textbooks, among them *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* and *A Global View of Christian Missions*.

It is quite impossible to exaggerate the importance of conversion. One of the strongest statements on the subject comes from Stanley Jones, who gave 60 years to the evangelization of India.

We divide humanity into many classes—white and colored, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Americans and non-Americans, East and West... But Jesus drew a line down through all these distinctions and divided humanity into just two classes—the unconverted and the converted, the once-born and the twice-born. All men live on one side or the other of that line. No other division matters—this is a division that divides, it is a division that runs through time and eternity.*

Unfortunately, “conversion” is a dirty word in some circles. It is anathema among the Hindus of India. Gandhi inveighed against the missionaries for attempting to convert Hindus to the Christian faith. “If you come to India to make us better Hindus, fine; but don’t try to convert us to Christianity.” During the 1960s, two states in India passed anti-conversion laws; they were later repealed by the Supreme Court. Others in the Third World regard conversion as an act of cultural imperialism—all right for the 19th century but completely out of keeping with the more sophisticated mood of the 20th century.

Even in the West we find an aversion to the idea of conversion. Some theologians are embarrassed by the term and would like to get rid of it. J. G. Davies says: “I would be glad if the term conversion could be dropped from the Christian vocabulary.”** Those who believe in baptismal regeneration obviously have no need of conversion; baptism has already made them a “child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of God.” Others regard conversion as a spiritual experience appropriate to skid row but hardly acceptable in more refined circles.

Some equate conversion with proselytism, which has always been in disrepute in respectable circles. Missionaries in India, Uganda, and other places

have been accused of “buying” converts by giving them money, famine relief, educational advantages, and medical services, or by according them other kinds of preferential treatment. Because of the humanitarian character of their work, these charges seem to be substantiated. If a government wanted to press charges, it could easily produce the required “evidence.” Some governments have forbidden young people under the age of 18 to accept Christian baptism.

The Christian missionary has no choice. His aim is to make converts. At the same time, he would vigorously deny that he engages in proselytizing.

In spite of the difficulties and dangers involved, however, the Christian missionary has no choice. His aim is to make converts, and if pressed to do so, he would have to acknowledge that such is the case, even in Muslim countries. At the same time, he would vigorously deny that he engages in proselytizing. Such reprehensible conduct is beneath the dignity of the Christian missionary. He will not use force, nor will he offer inducements. He will present the claims of Christ and hope that the listener will voluntarily acknowledge Jesus Christ as his Savior. Beyond that he will not go; to do so would be to violate the freedom and integrity of the individual.

Conversion, to be genuine, must involve a complete change of heart and life. The root meaning of the word is “to turn.” It was said of the Thessalonian believers that they “turned to God from idols” (1 Thess. 1:9, KJV). It is therefore a threefold turning: from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from idols to God. It is morally impossible to embrace sin and righteousness at the same time. Paul asks: “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (2 Cor. 6:14-15, KJV). By conversion the person becomes a “new creature, old things are

* Jones, E. S. (1959). *Conversion* (p. 5). New York: Abingdon Press.

** Davies, J. G. (1967). *Dialogue with the world* (p. 54). London: SCM Press.

passed away; all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17, KJV). The convert is then a “new man,” with a new center of gravity, a new system of values, a new standard of morality, a new frame of reference, and a new purpose in life. The outstanding example of conversion in the New Testament is Zacchaeus in Luke 19. When this dishonest tax collector had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, he was immediately and completely turned around. His confession is noteworthy. “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” That is genuine conversion.

Following conversion, the convert does not remain in isolation. He becomes a member of the universal church, the Body of Christ, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By an act of his own he joins a local

congregation and becomes part of its fellowship, work, and witness.

The second purpose of evangelism is the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation and the extension of the kingdom into all parts of the world. The church’s earliest creed was, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:11, KJV). There is a direct connection between the Lordship of Christ and the world mission of the church. This comes out clearly in Matthew’s account of the Great Commission. It is precisely because all authority in heaven and on earth has been given by God the Father to God the Son that the church has the responsibility to make disciples of all nations. The kingdom of God becomes a reality only as the peoples of the world respond to the gospel and become part of the kingdom (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13).

11. What is the true biblical meaning of conversion?

12. Why is the term “conversion” important to Christian vocabulary?

Varieties of evangelism

There are three kinds of evangelism: presence evangelism, proclamation evangelism, and persuasion evangelism. The first is the kind most strongly advocated in ecumenical circles. The second is most widely practiced by evangelicals. The third has supporters and detractors in both camps.

Presence evangelism

In spite of widespread aversion to this kind of evangelism on the part of evangelicals, it is a valid, even

a necessary, kind to use. We dare not preach a gospel that we are not prepared to live by. Bishop Azariah of Dornakal attributed the mass movement in the Telugu country to the quality of life manifested by the Christians.

It is universally admitted by all missions and churches that the reason most often given by the converts for accepting the Christian way of life is the impression produced upon them

by the changed lives of the Christian community.*

Not all Christians have this kind of testimony. Dr. Ambedkar was for many years the leader of the Untouchables in India. Realizing that Hinduism had nothing to offer his followers, Ambedkar decided to study the other religions with a view to joining one of them. After examining the claims of Christianity with Bishop Pickett, he remarked: "When I study the life of Christ in the Gospels, I think that I and my people should become Christians; but when I see the lives of the Christians here in Bombay, I say to myself, 'No, Christianity is not for us.'" Some time later, at an open-air service in Nagpur, Dr. Ambedkar and 70,000 of his followers renounced Hinduism and became Buddhists.

Let no one say that presence evangelism is not important. We have the same problem here in the West. It was the German philosopher Nietzsche who said: "I could more readily believe in your Savior if I could find more people who had been saved by Him."

If we insist on talking about the transforming power of the gospel, we had better be sure that we and our converts have really been transformed. Otherwise our words will have a hollow ring.

Proclamation evangelism

In spite of its importance, presence evangelism is not enough to lead a person to saving faith in Christ. At best it can only create within him a desire to know more. To be really effective, it must be accompanied by proclamation evangelism.

This is the form most frequently referred to in the New Testament. John the Baptist came "preaching," Jesus came "preaching." The apostles in the book of Acts preached; Paul said: "Jesus Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach" (1 Cor. 1:17, KJV). Certain things belong together. You ride a horse, you play a game. You preach the gospel. God has ordained that men should be saved through preaching (1 Cor. 1:21).

The gospel contains certain propositional truths that must be understood before saving faith can be exercised. These include the truths concerning God, man, sin, and salvation, and the facts concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. These truths must be preached with all the clarity we can muster.

It is rather strange that proclamation evangelism, which occupied such a large place in the preaching and teaching of the early church, should have fallen into disrepute. The Billy Graham type of evangelism, which is based on "the Bible says" and directed to the salvation of the individual, is totally unacceptable in certain quarters today. When Billy spoke to the National Council of Churches in Miami several years ago, he was chided for his simplistic approach to the complex problems of present-day society. They said, "Billy, you'll have to give up this kind of preaching. You're taking us back to the 19th century." To which Billy replied, "I thought I was taking you back to the first century."

Presence evangelism is not enough to lead a person to saving faith in Christ. To be really effective, it must be accompanied by proclamation evangelism.

Alan Walker, a well known Australian evangelist, does not share their point of view. He said: "I confess I cannot understand the current depreciation of the preaching ministry. Some protest against an over-verbalizing of the gospel is justified, but the effectiveness of a man, a woman standing up to preach with conviction is undoubted."**

Persuasion evangelism

Persuasion goes one step beyond proclamation and tries to induce the hearer to believe the message for himself. There are those who repudiate this method, declaring that the evangelist is not responsible for results. He should be content to preach the gospel and leave the results with the Lord.

* Padilla, C. R. (Ed.) (1976). *The new face of evangelism* (p. 80). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

** Evangelism. (1939). *The Madras Series*, 3:42. New York: International Missionary Council.

There is something to be said for both sides. It is possible to overstep the bounds of propriety and bring undue pressure to bear until the person accepts the gospel under duress. It should be categorically stated that this approach is both wrong and harmful. The results of such a method can be disastrous. It has no sanction in Scripture and should be studiously avoided.

On the other hand, the word “persuasion” is not foreign to the New Testament; Paul said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11, KJV). The New English Bible refers to Paul as “trying to convince Jews and Greeks”

(Acts 18:4, NEB). In Ephesus, before moving over to the school of Tyrannus, Paul spent three months in the synagogue, “using argument and persuasion in his presentation of the gospel” (Acts 19:8, NEB). Preaching the gospel is serious business, fraught with eternal consequences for good or evil (2 Cor. 2:16). Paul was never guilty of presenting the gospel on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. He pled with men to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). The apostles did not use force to win converts, but they did call for a response. Moreover, they expected results and when they did not get them they turned to other people more willing to receive the message (Acts 13:46).

13. *Some claim that evangelism is a matter of style and personality of the presenter. That is, some people prefer presence evangelism, others are “preachers,” and still others are aggressive persuaders. To what extent is this claim true?*

14. *Is there any relationship between our expectations and the actual results of our evangelism? What implications do results have for mission strategy?*

If indeed we must evangelize, the way we go about proclaiming the gospel has a significant effect on the response to the message. Instead of “good news,” the gospel may be interpreted as “bad news.” What the messenger does and how he lives are often more important than what he says. The following article demonstrates the importance of using methods of evangelism which truly present the gospel as “good news.”

❏ **Evangelization of Whole Families ***

Chua Wee Hian **

Year: 1930

Locality: Northwest China

Case studies:

1. The approach and strategy of two single European lady missionaries.
2. The approach and strategy of the Little Flock Assembly of Chefoo, Shantung.

Objectives: Identical—to plant local churches and to engage in extensive village evangelism.

Case study 1

Two gifted and dedicated lady missionaries were sent by their missionary society to Northwest China. Their mandate was to evangelize and plant congregations in a cluster of villages. They spoke fluent Chinese; they labored faithfully and fervently. After a decade, a small congregation emerged. However, most of its members were women. Their children attended the Sunday School regularly. The visitor to this small congregation would easily detect the absence of men.

In their reports and newsletters, both missionaries referred to the “hardness of hearts” that was prevalent among the men. References were made also to promising teenagers who were opposed by their parents when they sought permission for baptism.

Case study 2

In 1930 a spiritual awakening swept through the Little Flock Assembly in Shantung. Many members sold their entire possessions in order to send 70 *families* to the Northwest as “instant congregations.” Another 30 *families* migrated to the Northeast. By 1944, 40 new assemblies had been

established, and all these were vitally involved in evangelism.

Contrasts between approaches

Now, in terms of dedication and doctrinal orthodoxy, both the Europeans and the Little Flock Assembly shared the same commitment and faith. But why the striking contrasts in results and in their strategies of church planting?

Consider the case of the two single lady missionaries. Day by day, the Chinese villagers saw them establishing contacts and building the bridges of friendships with women, usually when their husbands or fathers were out working in the fields or trading in nearby towns. Their foreignness (dubbed “red hair devils”) was enough to incite cultural and racial prejudices in the minds of the villagers. But their single status was something that was socially questionable. It was a well-known fact in all Chinese society that the families constitute basic social units. These units insure security. In Confucian teaching, three of the five basic relationships have to do with family ties—father and son, older brother and younger brothers, husband and wife. The fact that these ladies were making contacts with individual women and not having dialogues with the elders would make them appear to be foreign agents seeking to destroy the fabric of the village community. A question that would constantly crop up in the gossip and discussion of the villagers would be the fact of the missionaries’ single state. Why aren’t they married? Why aren’t they visibly related to their parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and other relatives? So when they persuaded the women or the youth to leave the religion of their forefathers, they were regarded as “family breakers.”

* Hian, Chua Wee. (1975). Evangelization of whole families. In J. D. Douglas (Ed.), *Let the earth hear his voice* (pp. 968-971). Minneapolis: World Wide Publications.

** Chua Wee Hian is General Secretary Emeritus of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). An Asian from Singapore, he has served as an associate secretary for IFES in East Asia and as editor of *The Way*, a quarterly magazine for Asian students.

By contrast, the Little Flock Assembly in sending out Chinese Christian families sent out agents that were recognizable socio-cultural entities. Thus the 70 families became an effective missionary task force. It is not difficult to imagine the heads of these families sharing their faith with the elders of the villagers. The grandmothers could informally transmit the joy of following Christ and of their deliver-

ance from demonic powers to the older women in pagan villages. The housewives in the markets could invite their counterparts to attend the services that were held each Sunday by the “instant congregations.” No wonder 40 new assemblies were established as a result of this approach to church planting and evangelism.

15. *Why were the two women missionaries perceived as a threat to Chinese social structure?*

16. *What built-in success factors did the missionaries from the Little Flock Assembly have?*

Evangelizing families in other cultures

The strategy of evangelizing whole families is applicable not only in Chinese communities. It is also effective in other Asian communities, African villages and tribes, and Latin American *barrios* and societies. Writing on the rapid spread of the Christian faith in Korea, Roy Shearer observed:

One most important factor governing how the church grew is the structure of Korean society. In Korea, we are dealing with a society based on the family, not the tribe. The family is strong even today. The soundest way for a man to come to Christ is in the setting of his own family.*

He went on to relate repeated situations when heads of families returned to their clan villages and were successful in persuading their relatives and kinsmen to “turn from idols to serve the living God.” He concluded:

The gospel flowed along the web of family relationships. This web is the transmission line for the current of the Holy Spirit that brought men and women into the church.**

In her book *New Patterns for Discipling Hindus*, Miss B. V. Subbamma categorically asserted that the Hindu family might be the only social institution through which the gospel could be transmitted and received. Not all would agree with this assertion, because there are evidences of university students who have professed faith in Christ in the great university centers of India. Some could take this step of faith because they were free from parental pressures. However, as a general rule, Miss Subbamma’s observation and deduction are correct.

Evangelizing whole families is the pattern of current missionary outreach in parts of Latin America. There in the Roman Catholic culture of web rela-

* Shearer, R. E. (1966). *Wildfire: Church growth in Korea* (p. 146). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

** Shearer (p. 150).

tionships, family structures are strong. Exploiting this social pattern, the Chilean Pentecostals, like the Little Flock Assembly in Shantung 40 years ago, dispatch families from among their faithful to be agents and ambassadors of church expansion. Through these evangelizing families, many assemblies and congregations have been planted in different parts of that continent. The phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America reflects the effectiveness of using families to evangelize families.

At times it is difficult for individualistic Westerners to realize that in many “face to face” societies religious decisions are made corporately. The individual in that particular type of society would be branded as a “traitor” and treated as an outcast if he were to embrace a new religious belief. After the Renaissance, in most Western countries, identity is expressed by the Cartesian dictum, *Cogito ergo sum*: I think, therefore I am. Man as a rational individual could think out religious options for himself and is free to choose the faith that he would like to follow. This dictum does not apply in many African tribal communities. For the Africans (and for many others) the unchanging dictum is, *I participate, therefore I am*. Conformity to and participation in traditional religious rites and customs give such people their identity. So if there is to be a radical change in religious allegiance, there must be a corporate or multi-individual decision.

This is particularly true of Muslim families and communities. The one-by-one method of individual evangelism will not work in such a society. A lecturer friend of mine who teaches in the multi-racial University of Singapore once made this significant remark, “I’ve discovered that for most Malay stu-

dents (who are nearly all Muslims) Islam consists not of belief in Allah the supreme God—it is *community*.” Ambassadors for Christ in Islamic lands should cope not only with theological arguments concerning the unity and nature of God; they should consider the social and cultural associations of Muslims. Where sizable groups of Muslims had been converted, their decisions were multi-individual. An excellent illustration would be that of Indonesia. During the past 15 years, wise missionaries and

Conformity to and participation in traditional religious rites and customs give many people their identity. So if there is to be a radical change in religious allegiance, there must be a corporate or multi-individual decision.

national pastors had been engaging in dialogues and discussions with the elders and leaders of local Muslim communities. When these decision-makers were convinced that Christ is the only way to God and that He alone is the Savior of the world, they returned to their villages and towns and urged all members to turn to Christ. So it was not surprising to witness whole communities being catechized and baptized together.

Such movements are termed as “people movements,” and many years before the Indonesian happening, Ko Tha Byu, a remarkable Burmese evangelist, was instrumental in discipling whole Karen communities and villages to Jesus Christ. Today the Karen church is one of the strongest Christian communities in Southeast Asia.

17. *What is the basic difference between Eastern and Western perceptions of the relationship between an individual and the group?*

18. *What strategy for evangelism is needed to penetrate cultures which highly value “family” and “community”? Why?*

The biblical data

When we turn to the biblical records, we shall discover that families feature prominently, both as the recipients as well as the agents of salvation blessing.

To begin with, the family is regarded as divinely instituted by God (Eph. 3:15). In fact, all families owe their descent and composition to their Creator. By redemption, the church—God’s own people—is described as “the household of God” (Eph. 2:19) and the “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

In the Pentateuch, great stress is laid on the sanctity of marriage, the relation between children and parents, masters and slaves. This emphasis is underscored in the New Testament (see Col. 3:18–4:1; Eph. 5:22–6:9; 1 Pet. 2:18–3:7).

It is the family or the household that pledges its allegiance to Yahweh. Joshua as head of his own household could declare, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). Through Joshua’s predecessor Moses, Yahweh had taught His people to celebrate His mighty acts by sacred meals and festivals. It is interesting to observe that the Feast of the Passover (Ex. 12:3–4) was a family meal. The head of the family was to recite and reenact the great drama of Israel’s deliverance at this family gathering. Through Israel’s history, even until New Testament days, family feasts, prayer, and worship were regularly held. Thus the Jewish family became both the object of God’s grace and

the visual agent of His redemptive actions. Their monotheistic faith expressed in terms of their family solidarity and religion must have created a tremendous impression on the Gentile communities. One of the results was that large numbers of Gentiles became proselytes, “associate members” of the Jewish synagogues. Jewish families made a sizable contribution to the “missionary” outreach.

The apostolic pattern for teaching was in and through family units (Acts 20:20). The first accession of a Gentile grouping to the Christian church was the family of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:7, 24). At Philippi, Paul led the families of Lydia and the jailer to faith in Christ and incorporation into His church (Acts 16:15, 31–34). The “first fruits” of the great missionary apostle in Achaia were the families of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15), Crispus, and Gaius (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16; Rom. 16:23). So it was clear that the early church disciplined both Jewish and Gentile communities in families.

It was equally clear that households were used as outposts of evangelism. Aquila and Priscilla used their home in Ephesus and Rome as a center for the proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5). Congregations met in the homes of Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19) and Nymphas (Col. 4:15).

As the above article demonstrates, the Bible strongly supports the concept of family. Where family and community are highly valued, the gospel does not need to be perceived as a threat to the social structure. In fact, it can actually be presented in such a way that it strengthens this structure. Due respect for the head of the household or the elders of the community should be shown by communicating and discussing the gospel first with them. If a household accepts the gospel, then worship and religious ceremony should incorporate the family unit.

19. What tactical changes might the two women missionaries discussed in the preceding article have made, had they better understood the importance of the family to the Chinese?

The above case studies could lead one to the conclusion that unmarried women should not have been sent into the situation described. The only practical tactical change might seem to be for the women to have gotten married or to have returned to their homeland. The women in question, however, might have found the situation beyond their control or perhaps had chosen singleness as a preferred state for godly service, as Scripture advises (1 Cor. 7:32-35).

The dilemma of the missionaries' "inexplicable" singleness might have been solved, had these women realized the problem it caused in the minds of the Chinese. It is probable, however, that their Western orientation prevented them from recognizing the problem, since being single in the West is acceptable, particularly for those devoted to religious work. Perhaps the first failure of the women, then, was not understanding that they, as messengers, would be perceived in such a way that their message would be discredited. Later, when young people became Christians and were baptized against their parents' wishes, the missionaries transitioned from being a cultural enigma to an absolute threat!

Understanding this problem would perhaps have led the women to seek a creative solution. One such solution would have been "adoption" into a Chinese family. When confronted with similar situations, other single missionaries have occasionally placed themselves under the authority and protection of the head of a family. By doing this, they have eliminated some of the mystery surrounding their presence, and an acceptable niche has been found for them within the existing society. Still other missionary women have faced the problem by seeking respectable roles in teaching, tutoring, or some other profession. By providing a needed service, they have done much to gain acceptance in the life of the society.

The main point is that whatever the social structure, it is of utmost importance to present the gospel in such a way that it is not perceived unnecessarily as a threat to that society. When the messenger cannot be understood, it is likely that the message will not be understood either.

A comprehensive mission strategy should consider who is best able to reach a given people group. If the national church in that country, at E-1 or E-2 distance, is able to reach them, then every effort should be made to encourage them to do so before an E-3 effort is initiated from the outside. Unfortunately, missions are often launched without a real attempt to understand who is in the best position to reach a particular people. The national church may be considered too weak or unmotivated to do mission work, so the foreign mission society takes it upon itself to enter the new field. Unfortunately, through this process the national church is often circumvented, reinforcing harmful patterns.

Every church planting agency is obligated, through obedience to Christ, to teach missions to its young constituency. The emerging churches in newly evangelized nations have suffered from a lack of vision for and understanding of the missionary task. Once enlightened by the Word of God and missions advocates, these churches have demonstrated themselves to be capable and creative in reaching the unreached.

Some missions are finally awakening to such problems and neglect and are starting to support the development of mission agencies among young churches. Expatriate mission personnel are being loaned to the young agencies in support roles. Training programs, sponsored by older missions, are being offered to national believers who are seeking to enter cross-cultural mission work. If we are to take the remaining task of world evangelization seriously, it is imperative that we see much more of this international and inter-agency cooperation.

20. In the above case studies, who was in the best position to reach the Chinese of the Northwest? In what ways could the two missions possibly have combined efforts?

The initial strategy for evangelism needs to incorporate more than just “preaching.” It also requires sensitivity to the target culture, some identification with the people, and an understanding of the best way to communicate the gospel within the cultural context, since the way the messenger is perceived determines to a large extent the effectiveness of the gospel penetration. A comprehensive strategy will also consider who is best suited to minister the gospel to a particular people. It will evaluate how the Spirit of God is leading individuals to commit themselves to the evangelization of a people, and it will reinforce that vision and leading.

III. Church Planting

Let us now project ourselves beyond the initial stages of evangelization. Let us assume that we have worked hard at understanding the people. We have learned their language and culture, gained their acceptance, understood their felt needs, applied our skills to communicate Christian love, and seen families come to Christ and organize into a church. How do we go about seeing these initial results multiplied throughout the people group?

In the following article, veteran church planter George Patterson outlines the principles behind the spontaneous multiplication of churches.

❑ *The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches* *

George Patterson **

Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to look on the fields that are ready for harvest (John 4:35). So—let’s do it. How many men and women and children, persons with feelings like ours, still know nothing of Jesus’ sacrificial death and life-giving resurrection? At least 2.2 billion persons! To shake their

hands, at a rate of 60 a minute or 3,600 an hour, for 8 hours each day of the week, would take over 200 years! How painful to see so many unaware of God’s pardon!

Our Lord sends us to disciple every “nation” (people group) by training them to obey all His com-

* Patterson, G. (1992). The spontaneous multiplication of churches. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D76-D94). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** In 1965 George Patterson began working in northern Honduras with the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society. He adapted theological education-by-extension to “obedience oriented discipling.” He trained Honduran pastoral students on the job as they raised up and pastored over 100 churches. Patterson continues to work with the CBHMS and now trains missionaries for church reproduction. He also directs a ministry called Cultural Adaptation Training (CAT).

mands—which include, of course, discipling *others* (Matt. 28:18-20). This means that we disciple a “nation” only when it is permeated by obedient disciples who also disciple other unevangelized peoples. So we don’t simply go and start a church among a people. We, or those we send, must start the kind of church that grows and reproduces spontaneously as churches will, in daughter churches, granddaughter churches, great-granddaughter churches, and so on. *Spontaneous* reproduction of churches means the Holy Spirit moves a church (yours?) to reproduce daughter churches on its own, without outsiders pushing it (Acts 13:1-3).

Spontaneous reproduction of churches means the Holy Spirit moves a church to reproduce daughter churches on its own, without outsiders pushing it.

I began training pastors in Honduras in a traditional theological institution and had the traditional problems for the traditional reasons. I assumed the bright young men I trained were dedicated because they came to our resident Bible school. Our plan was for them to return to their home towns as pastors. But the graduates found the gold lettering on their diplomas did not go well with the white-washed adobe walls back home. It enabled them, however, to earn more in the office of the Dole Banana Co.

My raspy supervisor had the gall to blame us teachers; he told us, “Close the school; start discipling the people.”

“No,” I argued, “they’re too hard.”

“Excuses! They’re poor, semi-literate, subsistence farmers, but you teach as though they were educated, middle class Americans.”

I wrote my missionary buddies from language school, now spread all over Latin America, fishing for sympathy. They had the same problem!

“I’m a teacher without a classroom!” I complained.

“So,” my supervisor rasped, “teach by extension.”

“What’s that?”

He handed me a smelly old saddle, explaining, “You’re promoted. This is the Chair of Evangelism and Church Planting in your new extension Bible institute.”

After a few weeks of blisters on my south side, I learned to communicate with the mission mule and announced, “Hey, I can do this TEE stuff. It’s great.”

My supervisor warned me, “Then your students had better raise up and pastor their own churches or we’ll close down this Theological Education by Extension, too.”

I took the pastoral studies to family men (biblical “elder” types) in the poverty-ridden villages, mountains, and cities. Unlike their single young sons, they had crops, jobs, or family responsibilities that kept them from going off to our resident Bible school. They also lacked the education to absorb its intensive teaching. But these older men, with roots in their villages and barrios, could begin pastoring with the respect of their people easier than the single young men could. By God’s mercy I slowly learned to evangelize and disciple these *elders* in a way that enabled them to raise up and pastor their small village churches. As will be the case in many of today’s remaining unreached fields, we began to see growth not through any one church growing big or fast, but through the slow, steady reproduction of many small churches.

I could have avoided years of sour stomach groping for principles of church reproduction had I looked first in the operator’s manual. New Testament discipling principles, conscientiously applied, are enabling churches to reproduce in Honduras and many other fields. We must distinguish between these general *principles* and culture-specific *applications*. Some of the methods cited below, for example, will not fit in your golf bag if you work in Tokyo. But the biblical principles themselves, if applied with culturally relevant methods, should enable churches to reproduce wherever there is plenty of “good soil.” Theologically speaking, good soil for the gospel seed to take root in and multiply is *bad people*, and lots of them (Rom. 5:20-21; Matt. 13:18-23; Eph. 2:1-10). Field testing of programs based on these principles gives consistently good results in Latin America and Asia, including hostile fields where evangelism is illegal.

The simplicity of the principles disappoints some educators. They expect something more sophisticated, at least new or expensive. Missionary or not, one can multiply disciples doing these four simple things:

1. Know and love the people you disciple (just as Jesus emptied Himself of His heavenly glory and power to become a man, take on Jewish culture, and draw near to the publicans and sinners).

2. Mobilize your disciples immediately to edify those they are discipling. (Don't just educate for some vague future.)
3. Teach and practice obedience to Jesus' basic commands in love, before and above all else.
4. Organize your church or program by building loving, edifying, accountability relationships between disciples and churches.

21. *Why can't the mission objective stop at the planting of a church or even the planting of several churches?*

Know and love the people you disciple

We must know and love a people before we can disciple them. When Jesus told His disciples to "Look at the fields," they were finding it hard to love the Samaritans around them; they could not see them receiving God's grace.

Limit your area of responsibility to one people or community

We must focus on one people group, the one God has given us. Paul knew his area of responsibility before God (2 Cor. 10:12-16; Acts 16:6-10; Gal. 2:8). He knew what kind of churches to plant and where. For a *movement of church reproduction*, a church planting team needs a clear focus from God. My area was "the Spanish speaking people of the Aguan Valley and surrounding mountains." It helps to be exact.

At home or abroad every discipler needs to ask: "For whom am I responsible?" If a missionary fails to do this, the geographic and ethnic limits of his ministry remain blurred. He will jump from opportunity to opportunity. I asked one of these wandering gold prospectors in Central America what his area of responsibility was. "Oh," he said, "I am winning the country for Christ." He goes from city to city preaching in prisons and army camps; he bombs

villages with tracts from his Cessna. It's fun and folks back home eagerly finance it. But he will never plant a reproductive church until he learns to hold the people of a community in his heart.

Choosing your people in a new field needs study and prayer. Confer with other missionaries, nationals, and God Himself for guidance. I found a map of my area made by Texaco (I don't know why; the average town only had two cars, one of which ran). But it showed where the villages were and kept me from getting lost so often. So, find the population centers, where you can buy safe milk, where others are not discipling, and—even before the milk—where folks want to know God and enjoy Him forever.

Knowing a people means touching the heart of individuals.

Knowing a people means more than finding how many tons of figs they exported last year, that the average adult male has 7.4 children, or that their legislature has two chambers. It means touching the heart of individuals. Laughing with those who laugh. Weeping with those who weep. Playing marbles with two-year-old Chimbo and checkers with

his grandpa (or whatever they play in the town square). It may help if you let him beat you. This applies to arguing religion, too. It's dangerous always to be "right" when you're the new kid on the block. Learn to appreciate the people and their ways, even the toothless old men. Listen and learn until you have discovered those things in their folk religion or culture that help communicate the gospel.

Once you know your area and people, discern which segment among them is most receptive to you and to Jesus Christ. To penetrate a restricted, resistant

field, aim *first* at the working class or an oppressed minority. This contradicts some popular church growth theories. We are not dealing with second generation growth in Pasadena, California, however, but the *initial beachhead* where people get a curved blade in their ribs for witnessing. Jesus did not begin His public ministry among the influential middle class and natural leaders in the political nerve centers of Rome or Jerusalem, but with the working class upriver in Galilee where they spoke Hebrew with a backwoods accent—otherwise He would have been crucified prematurely.

22. What is the most important reason for focusing on one specific target people?

Let the church be of the people

Like most inexperienced church planters, I started "preaching points" at first instead of genuine New Testament churches. Someone went every week to a community where a group gathered to hear their pulpit oratory and sing (well, at least to sing). Converts were not baptized. Local leaders were not trained. The Lord's Supper was neglected. No one knew for sure who were Christians. Obedient, sacrificial discipling gave way to entertaining (a tradition brought by American missionaries). Preaching points develop a personality of their own; they stubbornly refuse to evolve into obedient, giving, reproductive churches. They become sponges soaking up the time and efforts of outside workers and producing nothing—except where God's sheer mercy overrides our routine.

Find what a church's people can do and plan that, before planning its structure, forms, and organization. I hope it takes you less time than it took me to learn that formal pulpit preaching is ineffective (often illegal) in many of today's remaining unreached fields. You can preach the Word with power in many other ways, if you know your people. We used dramatic Bible reading, songs with music and lyrics composed by nationals, poems, symbols, and story telling. They sang with more enthusiasm when they composed songs in the local style. Bach would

have croaked (so would the average director of contemporary church music). But the music was *theirs*. I'd spend days preparing an evangelistic sermon for our first trip to a distant village. They'd listen politely. Then I learned to let them dramatize Bible stories in their own way (one rehearsal 15

Preaching points develop a personality of their own; they stubbornly refuse to evolve into obedient, giving, reproductive churches.

minutes beforehand). They let local non-Christians play the fatted calf and other minor roles in the Prodigal Son, and the whole community complained for weeks. Not about the terrible acting but about the jerk who was too greedy to wait for his old man to die, to get his hands on his inheritance! Which all led to more conversions than a year of my sermons.

Let the new church's self-identity be evident. Know exactly what you are aiming at within the community: a well defined body of obedient disciples of Jesus Christ. Once I made the mistake of allowing more outside helpers to be present than members of

the community during the first baptism and celebration of the Lord's Supper. The church died at birth. There must be a majority from the community itself, especially at the first baptism or worship meetings, or the church is not born as a distinct entity within the community. Our converts felt that they had

simply been added to some organization of the outsiders. I robbed them of the thrill of looking at each other and saying, "We are now the church here!" They must see the new church being born as a part of their community.

23. List at least three lessons Patterson learned about letting the people be the church.

List what you will do to reproduce disciples among a people

What you do first often determines the direction of your work, for good or bad, for years to come. Will it lead to reproductive churches? The right steps will vary for each field but will always include teaching the converts first to obey Jesus' basic commands (Matt. 28:18-20). Take the shortest route possible to start a real church: a group of believers in Christ dedicated to obey His commands. In a pioneer field let it start small, perhaps with only three or four members. It will grow if you disciple the people as Jesus said.

The first question you ask about an unreached people group is, "Who can best reach them?" The answer is often, "Church planters from a people that is culturally closer than we." You, or the missionaries you send, may need to train and mobilize church planting team members from another people group that is more similar to your target group in race, politics, economic level, educational level, lifestyle, and worldview.

Let's assume you research well all the factors: race, culture, logistics, urban versus rural backgrounds, language similarities, education and economic levels, etc. You learn the language. Then you go in a crowded bus to your new field, with a team of church planters as similar to the local people as possible in every aspect. Some or all of them may be from another developing country. You are happy because they do not have to make that long cultural leap that delays church planting by years (the less

responsive the people are to missionaries, the more crucial this cultural fit). Now you finally arrive, unpack your toothbrush, take a deep breath, pray, step out the door, and find 50 thousand people living around you who think Jesus was John Wayne's cousin. Now what?

Churches dependent on charitable institutions are almost always dominated by the foreign missionary and seldom reproduce.

Avoid institutions if possible at this beachhead stage (community development programs unrelated to church planting, schools, clinics, etc.); they will come later. In Honduras we developed community development work, but it grew out of the churches, not vice versa. We taught obedience to the great commandment of loving our neighbor in a practical way. A poverty program can aid church planting if the two are integrated by the Holy Spirit. But churches dependent on charitable institutions are almost always dominated by the foreign missionary and seldom reproduce. Your local missiologist may point to celebrated exceptions here and there, perhaps in a southern suburb of outer Myitkyina, or some place where a freak with 15 fingers was also born in 1967. But we don't build broad movements for Christ on exceptions.

To start a church that will multiply in the normal way in a *pioneer* field with no experienced pastors nor organized churches, take the following steps (change them where local circumstances require it):

1. Witness first to male heads of households. We often told them Bible stories they could pass on immediately, even before saved, to their own family and friends. We went with them to show them how. But why *male* heads of families? We worked in a *macho* culture (right where the word *macho* came from—where men carried sharpened machetes and used them readily). Female leadership, right or wrong, limited the outreach of brand new works. Later, when a church was established with male pastor and elders, women could take a higher profile. Be sensitive to your community's norms, especially in the first impressions you give of the church.
2. Baptize all repentant believers without delay (entire families when possible). At first, I acted as though a big buzzard were perched on my shoulder just waiting to pounce on our converts that fell away; I delayed baptism to make sure they were "safe." But I soon saw that the very reason many fell away was my distrust. That's the funny thing about God's grace; He wants us to let it slop over on the unworthy (Rom. 5:20-21).
3. Provide a style of worship that new elders-in-training can lead and teach to others. Don't invite the *public* until local leaders can lead the services. Celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly as the center of worship, especially until local men are mature enough to preach in an edifying, humble way.
4. Organize a provisional board of elders as soon as mature men are converted. Show them how to win and pastor their own people right away. Remember, this is for pioneer fields with no experienced pastors or well organized churches. We, like Paul, must use the best men God gives us as the churches multiply, or the new disciples have no leadership at all (Acts 14:23).
5. Enroll these new elders in pastoral training on the job. Don't remove them from their people for training. Meet with them every two or three weeks (more often if possible until they are mobilized).
6. Provide a list of activities planned for the congregation, starting with the commands of Christ and His apostles. Let everyone know where he is going and what he needs to learn for each activity. Use this as a checklist to monitor the progress of the elders you train, in both their studies and pastoral work, as they mobilize their own people in ministry.

24. *Why does Patterson give the advice he does regarding starting up a reproducible church?*

***Decide how you can best use
your ministry gifts with the people***

Define your own ministry. What spiritual gifts has the Holy Spirit given you? Before I turned over leadership to the Honduran nationals, my own job was: *To help the Honduran churches train their own leaders*. I could say it in one sentence. My ministry now is: "To train missionaries to reproduce churches in pioneer fields." What is your ministry?

Be concise. If you don't know, ask for help. You may work in a field for a year or two before you can pin it down. If you have been working hard in the same church for several years and still cannot briefly define your ministry, you probably have taken on too much. Trim your job down so that you can't help but do it well; then God may open new doors.

Since my preparation came primarily from books and classrooms, I failed to use my gift of teaching in proper harmony with other spiritual gifts. Like most recent seminary graduates, I used my superior knowledge of God's Word to "pull rank" on those who knew less. My teaching stifled their use of the

gifts of servant leadership, evangelism, and other gift-based ministries. I had to do some painful repenting before I could work in harmony with a ministry team in which the Holy Spirit harmonized the use of several spiritual gifts.

25. *According to Patterson, what steps must be taken in defining church planting tactics?*

Mobilize your disciples immediately to edify those they are discipling

To build up the church as a living, reproducing body, Paul instructs pastors and teachers to train the members of the church for the ministry, to edify the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

Build edifying relationships with the leaders you disciple

Like most new missionaries, I took myself too seriously. I worried about what my disciples were up to. It took me years to learn to sit back with my coconut milk, laugh at my own goofs, and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work in my students. How can we enable the leaders we train to edify each other and their people through personal, loving relationships?

Paul left his pastoral disciple Timothy behind to work with the elders in newly planted churches with these instructions: "The things you have heard from me... these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). How dynamic and reproductive this loving "Paul-Timothy" relationship between teacher and student! If you have not yet tried to teach the way Jesus and His apostles did, you are in for a blessing. If it frightens you, start with just one or two potential leaders. Train them on the job; take responsibility for their effective ministry. Personal discipling does not mean "one on one" (Jesus taught twelve), nor is it just to deal with personal needs (Jesus spent most of His time personally discipling the top level leaders of the church, the very apostles).

In Honduras I usually taught from one to three students, in a way they could imitate and pass on to others immediately. I helped each one have an effective ministry. I taught and modeled what he would pass on to his own people and his own pastoral trainees in the daughter or granddaughter churches. These taught other elders who taught still others as Paul instructed Timothy. The chain grew to over a hundred pastors in training, all elders of churches. As soon as a new church was born, the

Personal discipling does not mean "one on one," nor is it just to deal with personal needs.

outside worker enrolled a local leader, normally an elder highly respected by his people, and began passing on to him the same doctrine and materials as he was receiving himself. This new "Timothy" taught the rest of the new elders in his young church. It kept multiplying as long as each discipler did *everything* in a way his students could imitate immediately. I stopped teaching and preaching in the professional way in which I was used to (they admired it, but could not imitate it). I stopped using electronic equipment including movies, and anything else that was not available to all our workers. That's hard on a gadget-oriented Westerner used to

gadgets, conditioned to using the very latest technology for the glory of Christ.

Once we developed loving, Paul-Timothy discipling relationships, we seldom had to discuss church planting. The Holy Spirit channeled the Word of God through these relationships to mobilize the Timothies, and church reproduction took care of itself. At first, I failed to trust the Holy Spirit and pushed the men myself. I dictated rules and prerequisites to keep the doctrine and the church pure and to make sure the men did their job. It stifled the work; one bitter failure followed another. I prayed, "Lord, I don't want a big ministry of my own; just let me help the Hondurans have a good ministry." God answered this prayer. I also learned through disappointments to let the people themselves decide on their own leaders, using 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

We learned not to plant the churches first, then train the leaders for them; nor did we train the leaders first, then tell them to raise up their churches. We married the two efforts in one ministry. My American culture pushed me at first to compartmentalize our organization, isolating its ministries. But I learned to let the Holy Spirit integrate diverse ministries and gifts in the united body (1 Cor. 12:4-26).

I also began with education objectives that focused on educating the man. But according to Ephesians 4:11-16, our education should seek only to edify the *church* in love. I had to discipline myself to keep my student's people in view as I taught, and not focus only on my student and the teaching content.

Before I learned to imitate the way Christ and His apostles disciplined, I was satisfied if my student answered test questions correctly and preached good sermons in the classroom. I neither saw nor cared what he did in his church with what he was

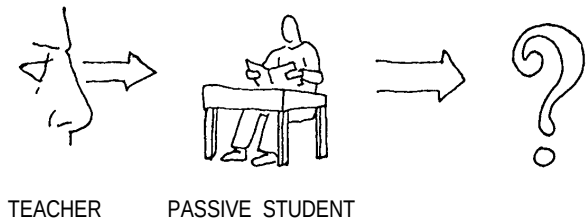


Figure 9-2. The Traditional Teacher

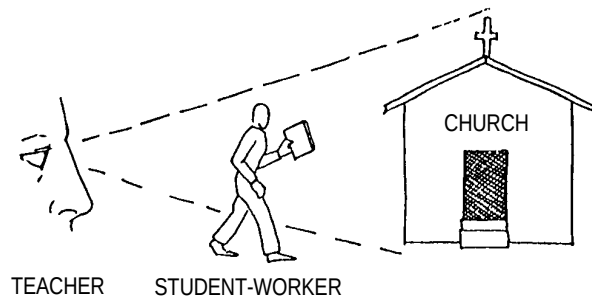


Figure 9-3. The Obedient Teacher

learning. I slowly learned to see beyond my student to his ministry with his people. I responded to the needs of his church by listening at the beginning of each session to the reports of my students. Then I often set aside what I had prepared and taught rather what each student's people needed at that time.

It was hard at first to let the developing churches' needs and opportunities dictate the order of a functional curriculum. In time, much of my discipling, like the teaching of the Epistles, became *problem solving*. Yes, if we start reproductive churches we will have problems. The apostles did, too. To avoid problems, don't have children and don't have churches.

26. *Why is Patterson so insistent about the urgency of on-the-job training that focuses on practical obedience?*

**Build edifying teaching relationships
between elders and disciples**

The pastor or leading elder sets the example for all the leaders. They in turn enable all the members of an infant congregation to minister to each other in love. A weak pastor dominates his congregation. He tries to do everything, or delegates it in a demanding way. He herds rather than leads (both Jesus and Peter prohibit herding in a demanding way: Matt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Where do you suppose pastors on the mission field pick up the bad practice of herding others? It's not all cultural; they learned it from us missionaries. I furnished the only model the new pastors had in our pioneer field. Because of my superior education and resources, I made the decisions for my less educated colleagues. At the same time, like most new missionaries, I felt insecure and overprotected the first churches. A strong missionary, like a strong pastor, does not fear to give authority and responsibility to others. He does not force gifted, willing workers into existing slots in his organization, but rather builds ministries around them.

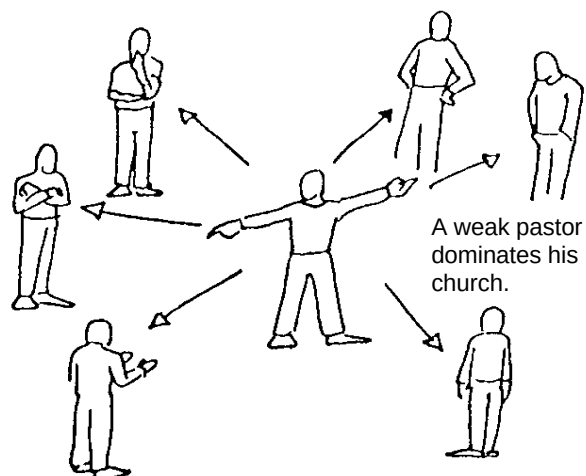


Figure 9-4. A Passive, Pastor-Centered Church

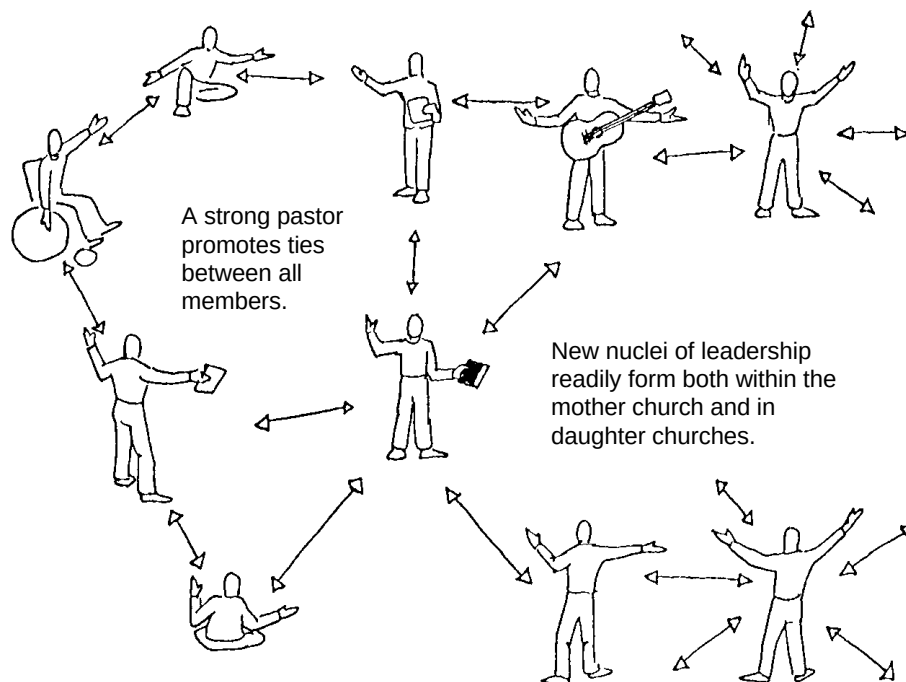


Figure 9-5. Interaction in a Dynamic Church

Teach your converts from the beginning to edify one another in love. Building a network of strong relationships provides for the large number of ministries required in the local church in order for it to grow and reproduce daughter churches.

27. *Why is the development of church-to-church relationships and the continuous development of leadership essential to sustaining an ongoing church planting movement? How might a missionary keep these things from happening?*

Teach and practice obedience to Jesus' commands in love, above and before all else

Jesus, after affirming His deity and total authority on earth, commissioned His church to make disciples who obey all His commands (Matt. 28:18-20). So His commands take priority over all other institutional rules (even that hallowed *Church Constitution and Bylaws*). This obedience is always in love. If we obey God for any other reason, it becomes sheer legalism; God hates that.

Start right out with loving obedience to Jesus' basic commands

To plant churches in a pioneer field, aim for each community to have a *group of believers in Christ committed to obey His commands*. This definition of a church might get a D minus where you studied theology; but *the more you add to it, the harder it will be for the churches you start to reproduce*. We asked our converts to memorize the following list of Christ's basic commands:

1. Repent and believe: Mark 1:15.
2. Be baptized (and continue in the new life it initiates): Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-11.
3. Love God and neighbor in a practical way: Matt. 22:37-40.
4. Celebrate the Lord's Supper: Luke 22:17-20.
5. Pray: Matt. 6:5-15.
6. Give: Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 6:38.
7. Disciple others: Matt. 28:18-20.

Memorize them; you can neither be nor make obedient disciples, unless they are basic to your Chris-

tian experience. They are the ABC's of both discipling and church planting.

Define evangelism objectives in terms of obedience

Do not simply preach for "decisions"; make obedient disciples. Only disciples produce a church that multiplies itself spontaneously within a culture. Consider the two commands: "Repent and believe" and "Be baptized." In Western culture a man stands alone before his God and "decides" for Christ. But in other cultures sincere conversion needs interaction with family and friends. Faith, repentance, and immediate baptism of the entire family or group—no invitation to make a decision—is the norm (Acts 2:36-41; 8:11; 10:44-48; 16:13-15, 29-34; 18:8). Repentance goes deeper than a decision; it is a permanent change wrought by God's Spirit. We are born all over again. Few purely intellectual decisions in any culture lead to permanent, obedient discipleship.

Do not simply preach for "decisions"; make obedient disciples.

We found that when we baptized repentant believers reasonably soon, without requiring a long doctrinal course first, the great majority then responded to our training in obedient discipleship. The detailed doctrine came later. Teaching heavy theology *before* one learns loving, childlike obedience is dangerous. It leaves him assuming that Christianity is having scripturally correct doctrine, and he leaves it at that.

He becomes a passive learner of the Word rather than an active disciple. Balanced discipling activates mind, heart, and hands. It integrates word, care, task. It learns, loves, serves. Emphasizing one of the three at the expense of the others yields spiritually unbalanced believers, not disciples.

The new members of the first New Testament church in Jerusalem obeyed all of the basic commands of Christ from the very beginning. After repentance and baptism they learned the apostles' doctrine (word), broke bread, prayed, and fellowshiped (care), and gave and witnessed, adding new members every day (task) (Acts 2:41-47). We also must teach each new convert from the very beginning to obey all these commands in love (John 15:15). Don't wait to start obeying Christ! The first few weeks of their new life in Christ are the most impressionable; these weeks will determine more than any other time of teaching whether or not they are (and make) Bible centered, active, loving *disciples*.

Define theological education objectives in terms of obedience

God does not bless methods; He blesses obedience. How can we help a student to train his congregation to do the things Christ orders us to do? One way is to combine *Theological Education by Extension with biblical discipling, orienting it to loving obedience to Jesus' commands*. Many criticized our TEE in Honduras because it violated their institutional rules (not on biblical grounds).

God's Word commands the pastor to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). A pastor does many other things, but evangelism is basic. Education and evangelism married to each other in one extension ministry became an effective church planting tool for us; one reinforced the other. Isolating pastoral training from the other ministries of the body violates Scripture. God teaches that all spiritual gifts (including teaching) *must edify the body in loving harmony with the exercise of the other gifts* (Rom. 12:3-11; Eph. 4:1-16; 1 Cor. 12-13).

Orient your teaching to loving obedience

We taught our pastors to orient all church activity to New Testament commands. As they taught the Word of God, they accustomed their people to dis-

cern three levels of authority for all that they did as a body of disciples:

- 1. *New Testament commands.*** These carry all the authority of heaven. They include the commands of Jesus in the Epistles which apply only to baptized, more mature Christians who are already members of a church. We don't vote on them nor argue about doing them. They always take precedent over any human organization's rules.
- 2. *Apostolic practices (not commanded).*** We cannot enforce these laws because Christ alone has authority to make laws for His own church, His body. Nor can we prohibit their practice because they have apostolic precedent. Examples include: holding possessions in common, laying hands on converts, celebrating the Lord's Supper frequently in homes using one cup, baptizing the same day of conversion, Sunday worship.
- 3. *Human customs.*** Practices not mentioned in the New Testament have only the authority of a group's voluntary agreement. If it involves discipline, the agreement is recognized in heaven (but only for that congregation; we do not judge another congregation by the customs of our own: Matt. 18:15-20).

Nearly all church divisions and quarrels originate when a power hungry person seeking followers puts mere apostolic practices or human customs at the top level as law.

Nearly all church divisions and quarrels originate when a power hungry person seeking followers puts mere apostolic practices or human customs (levels 2 or 3 above) at the top level as law.

We developed a "Congregation Activities Register" listing 49 activities for churches, based on the seven general commands of Christ listed above, and other commands in the Epistles. Under each activity in this chart we listed related studies. It became our pastoral training curriculum guide. We brought all major areas of Bible, doctrine, and church history

precisely where they best aided a church activity. Theological education paralleled church development. The activities, besides the basic commands of Jesus, include: counsel, mobilize youth for ministry, train elders in the daughter church, develop public worship, etc. Each activity includes reading in the relevant areas of Bible, doctrine, church history, and pastoral work (all the essential elements of a traditional pastoral training curriculum), as well as questions to verify that the practical work was done. (An example of materials using this functional discipling curriculum is SEAN's *Train and Multiply* program, Casilla 561, Viña del Mar, Chile.)

Extension teachers use this chart every two weeks or so when they meet with their pastoral student, to register his progress and decide which of the activities they should begin next. In each leadership discipling session we do the following (to remember it, think of LEAP—Listen, Evaluate, Assign, Pray):

- L Listen as each student reports his field work done and plans what to do next. Write down his plans with a carbon copy to review at the next session when he reports his work; always listen first to

his report: he will have something good or bad to tell you (either way, he will not listen well to your teaching or counsel until he has mentioned it).

- E Evaluate what he has learned. Ask questions about the content of reading he has done, scan his written answers in workbooks, listen to a brief talk on the subject just studied (especially to help him prepare to give it to his church or group).
- A Assign reading related to his pastoral work plans. Assign chapters in the Bible or other books (use only books on the level of his people, even if you have to write summaries of the essentials of a subject). Do not assign so much reading that he lacks time for his pastoral work. Do not lecture on things that you expect him to learn from his reading (enable him to be an active learner and doer rather than a passive listener: James 1:22).
- P Pray. Each participant prays for the work of another.

Don't forget. LEAP!

28. What are the basis and objective of the obedience oriented curriculum?

Organize your church or program by building loving, edifying, accountability relationships between individual disciples and churches

Healthy daughter churches need loving, edifying discipling relationships within themselves and with the mother church (Acts 11:19-30; 14:21-28; 15:12, 28-31). If your church, church planting, or training organization is already formed, add this personal discipling to it; don't insist on ruthless changes.

Help each new church to reproduce

Each church should send extension workers to reproduce daughter churches, as did the Antioch

church (Acts 13:1-3). The longer you wait to mobilize a church for multiplication, the harder it is to reprogram its thinking. Teach your elders the joy of sacrificing to separate their strongest tithers and leaders, in the power of the Holy Spirit as in Antioch, to extend Christ's kingdom. After prayer, perhaps fasting, hold a formal separation service with laying on of hands, as they did. Remember, it is not the individuals that reproduce, but *congregations* that pray and are moved by the Holy Spirit. Let each

new church be a link in the chain. The individual extension worker is only an arm of his church.

Ask the new church leaders to chart their own plans. They must take the initiative (don't push your plans on them; simply teach them what the Word says about their task and let them respond). For example, we asked our pastors to draw a large map, with arrows to the villages which they planned for their church to reach directly or through their daughter or granddaughter churches. Their church workers then signed their names by those towns or neighborhoods for which they would pray and plan.

Show each new believer how to witness to friends and relatives

The Holy Spirit flows readily through the bonds that exist between family members and close friends (Acts 10:24, 44). Keep new converts in a loving relationship with them (don't pull them out of their circle to put them in a safe Christian environment, or those very bonds which aid the spread of the gospel become barriers).

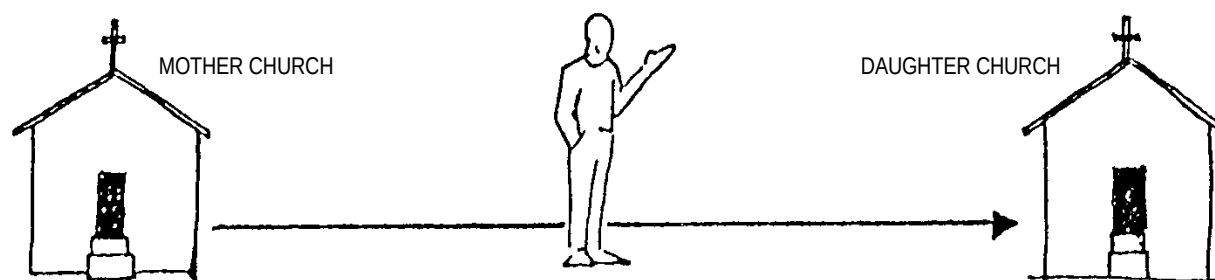
We prepared simple gospel studies (mostly Bible stories) that even illiterates could use at once to share their new faith. We accompanied them to show them how to do it, modeling it all in a way they could immediately imitate.

Build edifying inter-church discipling relationships

At first I applied church "body life" only to local congregations. Then I learned to build inter-church discipling relationships with accountability. Elders in one church sacrificially disciplined less experienced pastors in the daughter or granddaughter churches.

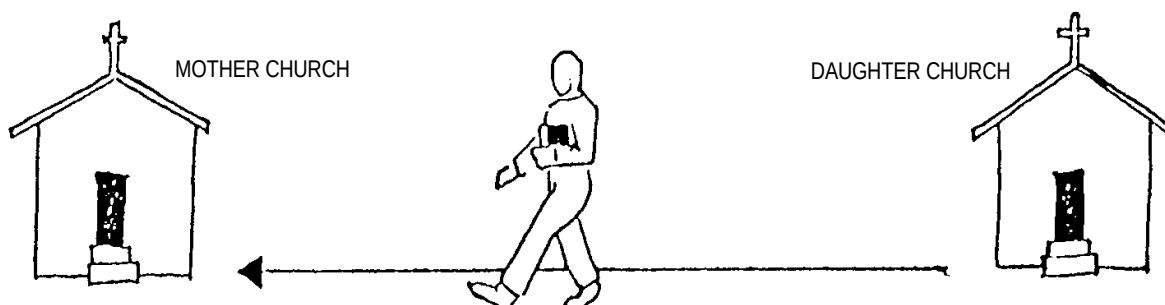
Sometimes travel was difficult for an older elder, and the main worker from the daughter church rode his horse to the mother church every two weeks or so.

Where the churches were one or two days' walk apart, the teacher and student took turns slogging through the muddy trails.



Extension worker from the mother church holds classes in the daughter church.

Figure 9-6



Extension student worker from the daughter church studies in the mother church.

Figure 9-7

Beware of the bad strategy of a mother church sending workers to several daughter churches at once, as though she were the only church with God's reproductive power.

The "hub" strategy illustrated below wears out the workers and discourages the mother church. God's power, inherent in all churches in which His Spirit dwells, enables a mother church to start a daughter church and train its new elders to help it develop and reproduce in granddaughter churches. Just disciple the discipled and watch it happen! The primary

links in the chain of churches in Honduras were volunteer extension teachers from the mother church.

The chain was not a hierarchy to control; volunteer teachers with no organizational authority worked with volunteer students. It took sweat and guts to build these loving ties between churches, helping men to know, love, and train each other for immediate pastoral ministry. In the process men were shot, put to death by machete, weakened by disease, and almost drowned. It was worth it.

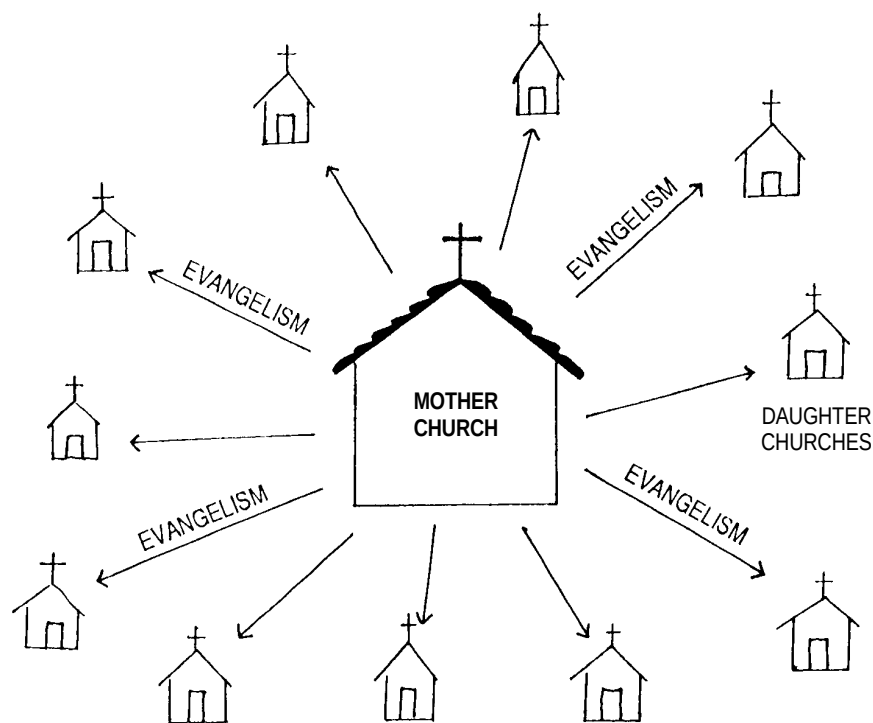


Figure 9-8. An Ineffective Strategy

29. *Why is the way a church is conceived and structured (organized) so crucial to its ultimate effectiveness?*

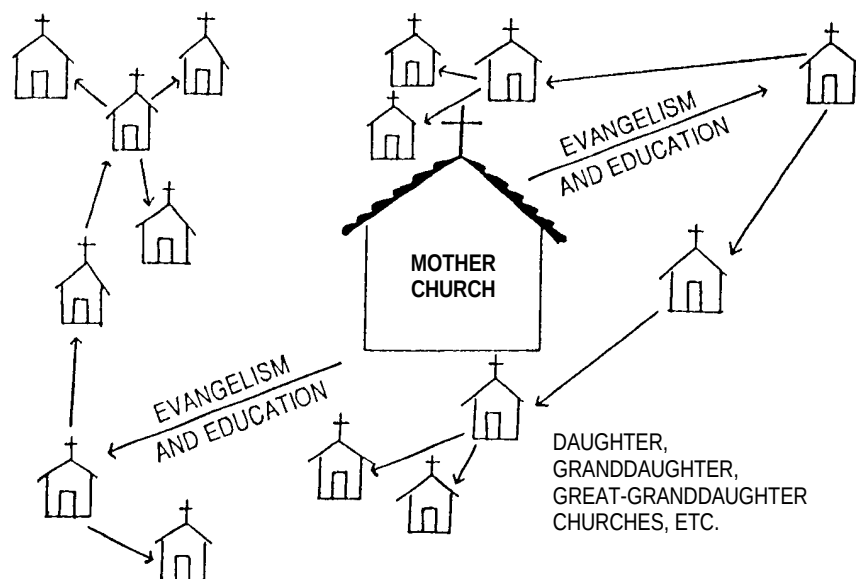


Figure 9-9. An Effective Strategy

The modern Western missionary's most common sin is controlling the national churches. I had to learn to keep out of the way and let the Spirit's power inherent in the churches produce the ministries by which the churches were edified and reproduced. I guided, encouraged, taught the Word, and counseled, but I no longer pushed. Then we saw the chain reaction; one of the extension networks produced five generations and over 20 churches.

We met occasionally to reaffirm our plans and decide which church would reach certain villages or communities. We divided our entire area of responsibility into nine regions and planned the steps to start a daughter church that would reproduce in each region. The pastoral students of the Honduras Extension Bible Institute have for many years been starting an average of five new churches a year, each of which has from one to three new pastors in training. After turning the leadership of this program to Hondurans, it has continued to reproduce in spite of other missionaries' pressure to revert to traditional pastoral training methods.

Pray for reproduction power

Christ's parables in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and John 15 compare the growth and reproduction of His churches to that of plants. Like all other living creatures God has created, the church has her own

seed in herself to reproduce after her own kind. Every time we eat, we eat the fruit of God's tremendous reproduction power given to plants and animals. Look around out of doors; it's everywhere—grass, trees, birds, bees, babies, and flowers. All creation is shouting it! This is the way God works! Reproduction is His style. Pray for it! (God in His infinite wisdom acts a bit lazy when we don't ask Him to move; He limits His absolute power to our weak faith!) We ourselves don't make the

An obedient, Spirit-filled church has to reproduce at home or abroad. It's her very nature; she is the body of the risen, life-giving Son of God.

church grow or reproduce, any more than pulling on a stalk of corn would make it grow. Paul plants, Apollos waters, God gives the growth. We sow, water, weed, fertilize, and fence the crop, but rely on the church's own God-given potential to reproduce. An obedient, Spirit-filled church has to reproduce at home or abroad. It's her very nature; she is the body of the risen, life-giving Son of God.

Each new church in a chain, like a grain of wheat, has the same potential to start the reproduction all over again. When a chain gets too long for good

communication, simply reorganize the teaching relationships. Don't assume that doctrine will get watered down the longer the chain. Each Spirit-filled teacher in the chain has the same love for the Word and will rejuvenate the flow. I discovered that the strongest churches were usually one or two links removed from me, the foreign missionary. The key to maintaining the chains is loving communication in both directions. Accurate student reports from each daughter church are essential for his teacher to respond applying the Word accurately to its life, needs, and opportunities.

An almost universal impediment to reproduction is missionary subsidies that stifle nationals' own giving and build a dependent spirit.

Pray for protection from traditions that hamper this spontaneous reproduction. We have mentioned teaching that neglects discipleship, and failure to mobilize newly repentant converts to obey beginning with baptism. Another almost universal impediment to reproduction is missionary subsidies that stifle nationals' own giving and build a dependent spirit. Don't rob poor believers of the blessing of sacrificial giving! God multiplies their mite by special celestial mathematics that will prosper them now and for eternity. Paying national pastors with outside funds nearly always stifles spontaneous reproduction and eventually leads to deep resentment when the source no longer equals the demand.

Most impediments come from rules that well meaning men make, who in weakness of faith fear the spontaneous and won't let the Holy Spirit surprise them:

"But our By-laws state clearly that our church must wait at least five years and have 100 members to start its daughter church."

"We need a strong home base before we can send missionaries."

"We can't do it until it's gone through the committee and budgeted."

"We can't baptize you even though you've met the Bible requirements of repentance and faith, until you take our six months' disciple's course; baptism is the graduation ceremony."

"You can't officiate Holy Communion; you're not duly ordained."

"What? Jesus commands it? Well, we'll vote on it and see."

"We can't allow everything the apostles did; times have changed."

"Discipling is for lay leaders; a real pastor needs seminary."

"You can't train other pastors until you finish the whole program."

"You must get your pastoral training in a formal seminary."

"We more experienced pastors will run our Association of churches."

"You can't obey Christ until you know the whole Word of God."

Sooner or later all such "can't do" laws without biblical basis replace simple obedience to Christ and stifle reproductive discipleship. They sound spiritual but contradict what the Spirit of God did in Scripture and does today where men do not limit Him. Our weak faith fears the spontaneous; we don't want God to surprise us.

30. What procedure does Patterson suggest for planning field objectives?

Planning a strategy leading to the spontaneous multiplication of churches requires much more than simply hoping that the Holy Spirit will do His work. Our plans must count on the Spirit's work and then allow it to happen. Using obedience to the commands of Christ and His apostles as a yardstick for measuring progress, we can combine evangelism and training to initiate and maintain church planting momentum. Under this strategy, new leadership is mobilized early. Training focuses on the developing church, not on the student. Paul-Timothy relationships are fostered between individuals and mother-daughter-granddaughter relationships between churches. Recognizing the principles of spontaneous growth, the wise missionary helps orchestrate the effort through encouragement, planning, and allowing the Holy Spirit to move as He wills to guide and control the work.

Summary

The complexity of our world and major forces opposing Christian witness are forcing mission strategists to look for creative ways of accessing unreached populations. Two such innovative approaches are the use of tentmakers and the use of nonresidential missionaries.

Once a people group is accessed, missionaries must use cultural sensitivity in order to evangelize the people so the gospel is really “good news” to them. Missionaries must pursue culturally appropriate evangelistic methods, while being careful not to fall into passive, non-persuasive activities. They must never forget that making disciples is the ultimate objective. They must also recognize that their effectiveness depends largely on how they are perceived. Before undertaking E-3 evangelism, missionaries should consider who can best reach an unreached group and should mobilize that person or group for the task.

Once the gospel has penetrated a culture and the initial group of believers has been gathered into a church, the missionaries should plan for ongoing spontaneous reproduction of churches among the people. By stressing obedience as the principal channel of discipleship, evangelism and training can be combined in raising up new leadership and congregations. Extension chains can be developed to sustain an ongoing church planting movement within the people group until the entire group is evangelized.

Integrative Assignment

As you complete this worksheet, you will be answering the following question: *Who should reach the targeted people group?*

WORKSHEET #3: THE FORCE FOR EVANGELIZATION

Who should reach them? In this worksheet, you will first evaluate the existing force for evangelization, including nearby churches, individuals from the group, and mission agencies. Try to determine *who* is in the best position to reach the targeted people group. If you don't have access to the information needed to answer this question accurately, assume that an E-3 effort is needed, which will be provided through the initiative of your church in partnership with an existing mission agency. If you think that existing converts from the group or a church at E-2 distance is best suited to reach this people, create your strategy based on how you might provide the initiative necessary to persuade and support this group in their effort to evangelize the targeted people.

A. Identify the Force for Evangelization

1. Is a viable church (comprised of any people group) present in the country or region where the targeted people live? If so, rate its potential as a primary evangelizing force.

2. If there are individuals within the group who have become Christians, rate their potential as a force in evangelizing their people.

3. List any mission agencies which have targeted this group. If there are none, what agencies might be most interested in targeting this group for church planting?

4. Are there translated portions of Scripture, Christian medical work, schools, radio, or other aids to evangelism that are present among your targeted people due to other Christian efforts?

5. What additional specialized agencies (Bible translation, radio, etc.) might be engaged to help in reaching these people?

6. What is the potential contribution you and/or your church can make to reach this group?

B. Mobilize the Force for Evangelization

7. Who will sponsor this mission effort? If it is your church, will it relate to a mission agency? Which one?

8. How can each of the forces for evangelization be mobilized to its fullest potential? List possible obstacles and solutions. Would a strategic partnership be helpful?

C. Personnel

9. What kinds of missionaries or *combinations* of missionaries will be involved in this effort (regular, tentmakers, nonresidential)? How and where will they be recruited?

10. What skills and qualifications will the missionary team need? Will they receive training? What, where, and how?

11. What leadership structure will exist on the field? How and where will this be developed?

12. How will the missionaries be supported or support themselves?

Questions for Reflection

It may seem presumptuous to predict how God might work in reaching a people group with the gospel. It is true that there is much we cannot know, but we must move forward by making plans based on what we do know, in accordance with God's will as revealed in Scripture. We can trust God to straighten our plans as we go along. Consider the wisdom found in Proverbs 16:9 and 16:3. What important principles related to strategy are contained in these verses? Write your thoughts below.

CHAPTER 10

Evangelism and Social Action: Two Partners in Mission

Thus far in our study, we have learned basic principles which form the backbone of our approach to the remaining task of mission. We have attempted to see the world as God sees it, people by people. We know that there are thousands of people groups needing a specific cross-cultural strategy if they are to be reached.

The unreached peoples, for the most part, are also the world's poorest and most oppressed groups. Attempting to meet their needs is not only a good activity, but also an indispensable component of Christian mission. A starving man cannot hear the gospel clearly because his need for food overrides any other possible interest.

The Protestant church, until the early 20th century, tended to keep social action integrated with evangelistic outreach. Social action was seen as a natural overflow of gospel outreach. The first missionaries to follow William Carey overseas were actively engaged in a wide range of holistic ministries, including medical care, Bible translation which led into literacy and schooling, child care, printing, agricultural assistance and reform, animal husbandry, food production, orphanages, and campaigns against social evils such as widow burnings and child destruction.

Evangelicals retreated from Two Thirds World development ministries during the first half of this century. The "great divorce" between evangelism (as proclamation) and social action (as demonstration) came in reaction to a larger nationwide theological debate which arose in American Protestantism in the 1900-1930 period between the "liberals" and the "fundamentalists." In reaction to dangerous slippages in doctrine and as a backlash against liberalism, the evangelical church went into a period of retreat and separatism resulting in what has been called the "Great Reversal." All progressive social concern was nearly eliminated among evangelicals by 1930.

The social gospel (which was strongly identified with theological liberalism) emphasized Christian obligation to respond to physical need and oppression, the priority of social concern, and the task of establishing the kingdom of God on earth now through human efforts. The fundamentalists rejected these concerns and emphasized spiritual need, evangelism, and the future heavenly aspects of the kingdom of

God. Theological conservatives began to rigidly dichotomize and separate evangelism and social concern—word and deed.

The social discontent in America of the 1960s and '70s demanded evangelical involvement in social concern.* With the advent of “on the spot” television coverage and a whole series of natural disasters, worldwide attention has been drawn to the physical needs of our globe’s poor. Drought, cyclones, earthquakes, floods, and the plight of refugees have received substantial coverage. This exposure has aided immeasurably the flow of funds to evangelical agencies which are involved in relief and development assistance. It has also resulted in dramatic increases in evangelical attention toward social concern and Two Thirds World needs. The Lausanne Covenant, a major evangelical missions document produced during the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, directly addressed the relationship of evangelism and social concern, bringing this issue squarely into current evangelical missions dialogue.

In this chapter, we will attempt to discover a balanced approach to social action and evangelism. In the second section, we will survey the state of human need, defining who the needy are and where they are found. The last section will be devoted to examining a holistic framework for evangelization through Christian community development.

I. Holistic Mission

The debate over evangelism vs. social action in mission has been a polarizing subject for Christians. It seems that the issues have been couched in terms that demand that believers choose one side or the other. This dilemma is poignantly brought out and dealt with in the following article.

Do We Have to Choose? **

Bryant L. Myers ***

It was a beautiful evening in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana. The heat of the day was slipping away. The sounds of the bush surrounded us. The Han clan we were visiting had eaten, the evening fire was lit. In the sky there were more stars than I ever knew were there.

Anna, a German missionary from South Africa, was talking quietly in Afrikaans to a Tswana who then spoke in Tswana to another man who spoke the

Han’s melodic language of soft clicks. He in turn spoke to the Han men, women, and children. In the Han culture, everyone has a voice around the fire.

The Han also are called Bushmen. They were the original inhabitants of Southern Africa. They were there before the black Africans invaded from the north and long before the first Europeans set foot in the Cape. They are the only hunter-gatherers left on our planet. Living in complete harmony with the

* One of the most significant of many evangelical books in the 1970s for Two Thirds World attention was Ron Sider’s *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*.

** Myers, B. L. (1992, September). Do we have to choose? *MARC Newsletter*, 92-3, 3-4.

*** Bryant L. Myers is Vice President for Research and Development at World Vision International and the Executive Director of MARC (Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center). He serves on the board of Evangelicals for Social Action and chairs the Strategy Working Group of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

desert, for centuries they moved from water to water, living off desert plants and animals, always giving thanks to each animal they killed for giving them a meal.

The Han have always been despised by everybody. The warrior tribes of Tswana, Zulu, and Xhosa always despised the gentle Han. For centuries they killed the Han for “stealing” cattle, and when the whites came to Southern Africa it was more of the same. To the Han every animal was a gift of god for the purpose of food. The idea of someone owning a cow was something they could not understand.

Their oppression was complete. A Han woman’s only value was as a slave, a nanny for young children, or a concubine for the men. Han men were good for nothing, often hunted for sport, until they became “domesticated” and were used as cheap farm hands, army scouts, and a market for alcohol.

Today the Han are almost gone. There’s very little room left in the desert anymore. For the most part, they huddle in desert outposts, begging and drinking. Everywhere they are forced to be like someone else. Their culture is not valued. The Han are the poorest of the poor in Southern Africa. There is no room for them in the human inn.

A long time ago, I read several books by Laurens Van Der Post in which he told the Bushman story. He recounted the intense harmony their culture shared with the earth, their ability to share without owning anything. Van Der Post’s message to anyone who would listen is that the Han story is an important part of our story for the simple reason that, as hunter-gatherers, theirs was the first chapter of the human story, one we no longer can remember. Since then, I’ve always been fascinated by the Han.

Years later, because of a good friend who had heard my stories about the Han people, I found myself in the Kalahari Desert sitting beside a Bushman fire. I was full of wonder and excitement. I watched in-

tently as Anna tried to share the gospel with the Han squatting around the fire. I couldn’t understand much since the conversation was being translated from Afrikaans to Tswana to the Han language. But, I could understand its music. The conversation was quiet and gentle, everyone listening intently.

Suddenly, the only young woman at the fire burst into an angry series of clicks and gestures. I turned to my Afrikaans-speaking friend, “What was that all about?” “I’m not sure,” he said, “the translation wasn’t clear.”

Later that night, sitting in Anna’s simple house, I asked her the same question, “What did the young woman say when she became so upset?” Anna shook her head wearily. “It’s always the same. I’ve heard it many times before. I have no answer,” she sighed sadly. We knew from earlier conversations that, in her lifetime of missionary work in the Kalahari, only three Han had become Christians.

“What did she say?” I persisted.

“I had just finished explaining to them that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had died and was raised from the dead so that our sins could be forgiven. The young woman didn’t believe me. She said, ‘I can believe the Son of God was willing to die for a white man. I might even be able to believe that the Son of God would die for a black man. But, I could never believe that the Son of God would die for a Bushman.’” We wept together in the silence that followed.

What does one do with such a story? How does one think about Christian mission to people for whom centuries of oppression, neglect, and systematic dehumanization are so deeply internalized and reinforced? What is the good news to those whose poverty and alienation are so deeply rooted? I have no answers. This experience has haunted me for many years.

1. What was the fundamental barrier to belief for the Han woman?

Understanding poverty

Recently, from another part of World Vision's world, some ideas have begun to emerge which helped me move forward a little. The following is based on the reflections of my Indian friend and colleague, Jayakumar Christian.

As a Christian organization committed to empowering the poor in the name of Jesus Christ, we spend a lot of time trying to deepen our understanding of the causes of people's poverty. This is not an academic exercise and it's not for our benefit. Helping poor people understand why they are poor is a critical element in their being able to work for their own development. Sadly, understanding the causes of poverty is a very complex and nuanced task.

Most poor people believe they are poor either because they understand themselves to be in some way responsible or because God or the gods mean for them to be poor.

We have to begin with the fact that most poor people believe they are poor either because they understand themselves to be in some way responsible or because God or the gods mean for them to be poor. This is a result of two different processes. The first is an internalization of their own powerlessness and poverty—the psychological process of blaming oneself. The second is a process of socialization whereby they are being taught, by the rich and powerful (and sadly, sometimes the church), that their poverty is part of the natural order of things.

Historically, evangelicals have seized on the first reason and have tended to overlook the second. The first lends itself to understanding mission as simple proclamation: "You are a sinner, but God has sent His Son for the forgiveness of sin. If you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved. Jesus Himself promised life abundantly." This missiological point of departure leads to ministries like

proclamation, personal discipleship, and inner healing. For the Han woman, this promise simply was not believable.

The problem with this is that ignoring the impact of society and the accompanying socialization means that chronically unjust contexts are never confronted. The society, whose systems of economics, politics, and law sustain poverty and marginalize people (doing what the Bible calls "grinding the faces of the poor"), continues to be unaware of its own sin and complicity. By ignoring this reality, the call to repentance is directed only at the poor. Those who sustain unjust relationships are overlooked.

Ecumenical folk tend to go at this problem the other way around. They often limit their mission focus to the socialization issue. "No, the God of the Bible did not and does not want you to be poor. You are poor because the rich and powerful have created systems of politics, economics, and laws which are designed to keep you poor and to protect their wealth and power. Jesus came to liberate the powerless and bring down the rich and powerful." This missiological point of departure leads to ministries of "conscientization," community organization, and working for justice.

The problem with an approach that challenges only the social reinforcement of poverty is that the end point of ministry becomes access to power and resources. While the poor desperately need access to power and resources in the social arena, they also need to hear the news about the possibility of being rightly related to God.

This approach is also inadequate from the perspective of the rich and powerful. While it exposes their sin, it does not deal with whatever it is the rich have internalized, which allows them to be unaware of or to rationalize their oppressive behavior. They are not told that God has good news for them as well. They are simply demonized. Yet, if the rich are not transformed, nothing changes for the poor.

2. *In what two ways do most of the poor understand their poverty?*

3. *Why does the author feel it is an error simply to focus on the poor in attempting to alleviate poverty?*

The question of identity

Thinking about the causes of poverty in this way gave me another perspective on the story of the young Han woman. I began to realize she is captive to her own processes of internalization and self-blame as well as to her socialization from the context in which she lives. The good news of Jesus Christ, presented solely in terms of sin management and restoring her relationship with God, could not get through to her, for the simple reason that her context so strongly reinforced her sense of unworthiness that the good news was not believable. While it is true that she needs to hear the good news Jesus brings for her inner self, it is also true that her profound sense of alienation cannot be relieved without also transforming the poverty-sustaining oppression of the world in which she lives. If the way white and black folk live with and value the Han isn't seen to change, it's hard to see how her view of herself and her people can change.

Once again we arrive at the conclusion that Christian mission must be holistic. It must include both the interior and the exterior, the forgiveness of sins and the fullness of life, evangelism and justice. The whole message of Jesus must be for both the life inside oneself and the world in which one lives and from which one learns. The reason for this is that there is a deeper, underlying issue which links both self-blame and oppression. This issue is identity, both individually and in relationship. The questions, "Who am I?" and "Who are we?" are answered both from within oneself and by one's context.

This of course is precisely the question the gospel of Jesus Christ is trying to answer. The gospel tells us who and whose we are. The good news is that, through Jesus Christ, we can be sons and daughters of God and heirs to His emerging kingdom on earth. We no longer have to live under bondage either to ourselves or our societies. This is good news for both the Han woman and for the white and black people who inhabit the structures which oppress her so profoundly.

Christian mission must be holistic. It must include both the interior and the exterior, the forgiveness of sins and the fullness of life, evangelism and justice.

Understanding the question of identity as the heart of the matter is the key to enlarging our missiological playing field. Now one does not have to choose between what has been presented by some as two incompatible or mutually exclusive frameworks for understanding human need. In fact, choosing one over the other reduces the gospel either to proclamation or to the pursuit of just relationships. Those evangelicals or ecumenicals who insist on a choice are both wrong, but for different reasons.

4. *How does the concept of holistic mission attempt to reconcile the debate over evangelism vs. social action in mission?*

Holistic mission demands that Christian mission minister both to man's spiritual needs *and* to his physical, emotional, and social needs. It must be a "both/and" approach, not "either/or." In principle, most contemporary evangelicals would not argue this point. The debate continues, however, in relation to what proportion of Christian mission each need should occupy. In the following excerpt, Peter Wagner defines the parameters of the current debate.

On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy *

C. Peter Wagner

The mission—no options here!

The definition of mission has been a topic of constant debate for the past 100 years. It revolves chiefly around the relationship of what have been called the *cultural mandate* and the *evangelistic mandate*.

The *cultural mandate*, which some refer to as Christian social responsibility, goes as far back as the Garden of Eden. After God created Adam and Eve, He said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:21). As human beings, made in the image of God, we are held accountable for the well-being of God's creation. In the New Testament we are told that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). The concept of neighbor, as the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches, includes not only those of our own race or culture or religious group, but all of humanity. Doing good to others, whether our efforts are directed toward individuals or to society as a whole, is a biblical duty, a God-given cultural mandate.

The *evangelistic mandate* is also first glimpsed in the Garden of Eden. For a period of time, whenever God went to the Garden, Adam and Eve were waiting for Him and they had fellowship. But sin entered into the picture. The very next time that God went to the Garden, Adam and Eve were nowhere to be found. Fellowship had been broken. Humans had been alienated from God. God's nature, in light of the events, was made clear by the first words which came out of His mouth, "Adam, where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). He immediately began seeking Adam. The evangelistic mandate involves seeking and finding lost men and women, alienated from God by sin. Romans 10 tells us that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But they cannot call if they have not believed, and they cannot believe if they have not heard, and they cannot hear without a preacher. "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15). Bearing the gospel which brings people from darkness to light is fulfilling the evangelistic mandate.

Both the cultural mandate and the evangelistic mandate are essential parts of biblical mission, in my

* Wagner, C. P. (1992). On the cutting edge of mission strategy. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D45-D47). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

opinion. Neither is optional. There is a growing consensus on this point in evangelical circles.

This was not true as early as 22 years ago when the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism was held in 1966. Not only was virtually no mention made there of the cultural mandate (Paul Rees of World Vision was a minor exception), but such a prominent evangelical spokesman as John R. W. Stott defined mission as including only the evangelistic mandate, and not the cultural mandate—although he did not use that precise terminology. One of the first evangelicals to stress the cultural mandate in a public forum was Horace Fenton of the Latin America Mission at the Wheaton Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, also held in 1966. Following that, the social consciousness generated by the social upheavals of the 1960s brought the cultural mandate to prominence, until it was given a relatively high profile on the platform of the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974. By then John Stott himself had changed his views, recognizing that mission included both the cultural and the evangelistic mandates. The Lausanne Covenant makes a strong statement on the cultural mandate in Article 5, and on the evangelistic mandate in Article 6.

The current debate involves four positions: (1) those who would prioritize the cultural mandate over the evangelistic, (2) those who would give equal weight

to both—even arguing that it is illegitimate to divide them by using such terminology, (3) those who would prioritize the evangelistic mandate, and (4) those who would hold the pre-Lausanne view that mission is the evangelistic mandate, period.

While we must not neglect our Christian social responsibility, it must never get in the way of soul-winning evangelism.

My personal view is that of the Lausanne Covenant. But I spend little time fussing with those who hold that mission should be understood as evangelism and that social ministry should be termed a Christian duty or an outcome of mission rather than part of mission itself. I see either of these positions as contributing more positively to the evangelization of the world than the other options. But I do not accept the prioritization of evangelism solely on pragmatic grounds. I believe it best reflects the New Testament doctrine of mission. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 10:10), and we move out in Jesus' name to do the same. While we must not neglect our Christian social responsibility, in my opinion, it must never get in the way of soul-winning evangelism.

5. *In your own words, define the cultural mandate.*

6. *Which of the four positions mentioned by Wagner are the only viable ones in his thinking? Do you agree? Why or why not?*

It seems that somehow, the church's mission must reconcile polarized positions on evangelism and social action. This implies a balanced viewpoint which is not dominated by one side or the other. The vision of this kind of ideal "partnership" between these two approaches to mission is clouded, however, by a pragmatic issue: which approach should act as the "leading partner"? In the following article, Samuel Moffett articulates his views on this matter of key strategic importance.

Evangelism: The Leading Partner *

Samuel Moffett **

The New Testament uses the word *evangelize* in what seems to be a shockingly narrow sense. A whole cluster of verbs, actually, is used to describe evangelism: "preaching the word" (Acts 8:4), "heralding the kingdom" (Luke 9:2), "proclaiming the good news" (Luke 4:18; 8:1). But in essence, what all these words describe is simply the telling of the good news (the gospel) that Jesus the Messiah is the saving King. Evangelism was the announcement of Christ's kingdom. It was more than an announcement. It was also an invitation to enter that kingdom, by faith and with repentance.

What evangelism is not

Evangelism, therefore, is not the whole of the Christian mission. It is only a part of the mission. Jesus and the disciples did many other things besides announce the kingdom and invite response. Evangelism is not worship or sacraments. "Christ did not send me to baptize but to evangelize," said Paul (1 Cor. 1:17).

And it is not church growth or church planting. The planting and growth of the church are surely goals of evangelism and its hoped-for results. But evangelism does not always produce a church or more members for it. Neither is evangelism confined to apologetics. Paul says, "We try to persuade" (2 Cor. 5:11), but insists that he was sent to tell the good news "without using the language of human wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:17, 20).

Finally, evangelism in the New Testament was not confused with Christian service, or Christian action and protest against the world's injustices. A revealing and disturbing incident in the book of Acts tells how Greek speaking Jews among the early Christians rose as a minority group to complain of discrimination in the distribution of funds. The reply of the apostles seems almost callously narrow: "We cannot neglect the preaching of God's word to handle finances" (Acts 6:1-2, TEV). Of course, they did immediately proceed to do something about the injustice. But they did not call it evangelism.

In kingdom context

In the context of the kingdom, however, the evangelistic proclamation was never so narrow that it became isolated from the immediate pressing needs of the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, and the oppressed.

Here I am reminded of Korean evangelism. I asked a pastor in the Philadelphia area why his church was growing so fast. "When Koreans come in," he replied, "first I get them jobs; I teach them some English; I help them when they get in trouble with their supervisors. I invite them to church. And then I preach to them the gospel." That is putting evangelism into context.

But if there is anything worse than taking the text out of context, it is taking the context without the

* Moffett, S. (1992). Evangelism: The leading partner. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D207-D209). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

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text. Just as Christ's salvation is never to be isolated from the immediate, real needs of the people, neither is it to be identified with those present needs. When Jesus quoted the Old Testament about "good news to the poor" and "freedom for the oppressed," He did so on His own terms. His salvation is not Old Testament *shalom*, and His kingdom is not Israel.

There is nothing quite so crippling to both evangelism and social action as to confuse them in definition or to separate them in practice. Our evangelists sometimes seem to be calling us to accept the King without His kingdom; while our prophets, just as narrow in their own way, seem to be trying to build the kingdom without the saving King.

More than balance

There was a time when most Christians believed that evangelism was the only priority. They were wrong. Then the Church swung too far the other way. The only Christian priority for some has been social justice through reconstruction. That, too, is an important priority. But it is not the only one. And when they made it the only clear mission of the Church, the result was a disaster. In trying to speak to the world, they almost lost the Church.

Others tried to restore the balance by pointing out that "Christ mediates God's new covenant through both salvation and service.... Christians are called to engage in both evangelism and social action." But even that is not enough. What the Church needs for the future in mission is more than balance. It needs momentum. Not an uneasy truce between faith and works, but a partnership.

Now in most practical working partnerships, there must be a leading partner, a "first among equals," or nothing gets done. Which should be the leading partner in mission? Evangelism or social action?

I submit that what makes the Christian mission different from other commendable and sincere attempts to improve the human condition is this: in the Christian mission our vertical relationship to God comes first. Our horizontal relationship to our neighbor is "like unto it," and is just as indispensable, but it is still second. The leading partner is evangelism.

This is not to exalt the proclamation at the expense of Christian action. They belong together. But it does insist that, while without the accompanying deeds the good news is scarcely credible, without the Word the news is not even comprehensible! Besides, the real good news is not what we in our benevolence do for others, but what God has done for us all in Christ. Evangelism, as has been said, is one beggar telling another where to find bread.

The supreme task of the Church, then, now and for the future, is evangelism. It was the supreme task for the Church of the New Testament. It is also the supreme challenge facing the Church today.

Half the world unreached

The determining factor in developing evangelistic strategies, I believe, is that evangelism moves always in the direction of the unreached. It must focus on those without the gospel. More than one-half of the world's people are still without the simplest knowledge of the good news of God's saving love in Jesus Christ. There is no greater challenge to evangelism in mission than that.

Christians are rightly concerned about the grievous unbalances of wealth and food and freedom in the world. What about the most devastating unbalance of all: the unequal distribution of the light of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ?

In this connection it may be useful to note that for general strategic evangelistic planning, some missiologists suggest as a rule of thumb that "a group of people are classified as unreached if less than 20 percent claim or are considered to be Christian." Christians are rightly concerned about the grievous unbalances of wealth and food and freedom in the world. What about the most devastating unbalance of all: the unequal distribution of the light of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ?

I am not overly addicted to statistics. But what does it say about a "six-continent approach to evangelism," for example, to find that most of our church mission funds still go to ourselves on the sixth

continent, which is between 70 percent and 80 percent at least nominally Christian? Africa, however, is perhaps 40 percent Christian by the same rough and imprecise standards. And Asia, which holds more than one-half of all the people in the world, is only three percent to four percent even nominally Christian.

In the next 10 years, the number of non-Christians which will be added to the population of Asia will be greater than the entire present population of the United States multiplied almost three times (650 million, compared to 220 million). Treating all six continents as equals for strategic purposes is a selfish distortion of the evangelistic realities of the world.

One last thought. There is an unexpected bonus to keeping the definition of evangelism simple. It means that anyone can get into the act. One of the

happiest lessons I ever learned about evangelism came not from a professional evangelist, but from a watermelon vendor.

It was in a Korean village, and my wife came up to ask him how much a watermelon cost. He was so surprised at finding a long-nosed foreigner who spoke Korean that at first he was struck dumb. He even forgot to tell her the price. There was something more important he wanted to say. He asked, "Are you a Christian?" And when she replied, "Yes," he smiled all over. "Oh, I'm so glad," he said, "because if you weren't I was going to tell you how much you are missing."

If more of us were so happy about what we have found in the Lord Jesus Christ that we couldn't wait to tell those who have not found Him how much they are missing, we would need to worry no longer about the future of evangelism.

7. Why must evangelism be placed in the "context of the kingdom"?

8. What primary scriptural justification does the author make for recognizing evangelism as the "leading partner"?

9. If evangelism is indeed the leading partner, how will this affect our overall mission strategy?

There are both scriptural and pragmatic reasons for developing a holistic view of missions. A framework which includes both aspects of ministry is important to contemporary missions. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that one of the primary distinctives of evangelical mission is its recognition of evangelism as the leading partner in this alliance. With this in mind, we will now shift our thoughts to the current state of world needs.

II. The World's Needy

We live in a desperately hurting world. The horrors of wars, famines, and natural disasters are brought into our homes daily through mass media. Refugees stream across borders into precariously built camps, while AIDS ravages entire populations of some nations in Africa and Asia. Hundreds of thousands of abandoned children roam the streets in South America. Poverty is the norm in many parts of the globe, and starvation is a common occurrence. In more affluent sectors of society, drug abuse and a general breakdown of the family and its values have produced a sense of perpetual crisis. Everywhere we go, we are met with devastating physical, social, and spiritual need.

In attempting to evangelize a specific unreached group, we have learned that one of the key steps in planning an effective strategy is attempting to determine people's perceived needs. It is often these needs that give readiest access to the people and that allow us to demonstrate God's love in ways that are tangible and real. In essence, the major emphasis in our getting to know a people group and identifying with them is this understanding of their needs in order to minister to them effectively.

Who are the most needy? The following definition of the needy and where they are found is excerpted from the video script *Is There Good News for the Poor?*

❏ *Is There Good News for the Poor?* *

Tom Houston and Eric Miller

Tom Houston: In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus visits the synagogue in Nazareth immediately after He had resisted the temptations to use popularity, publicity, or power to accomplish His mission.

Standing, Jesus read from Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to announce the year when the Lord will save His people (Luke 4:18-19, TEV).

Later, when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask about His credentials as the Messiah, Jesus healed many people of their sickness, diseases, evil spirits, and gave sight to many blind people. He answered John's messengers:

Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind can see, the lame can walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf can hear,

the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor (Luke 7:22, TEV).

Clearly for Luke, bringing or preaching Good News to the poor is central to Jesus' understanding of His mission. The poor are to be special beneficiaries of His Good News. As I studied Luke's Gospel, I was puzzled because Luke sees the poor as central to the mission of Jesus and then seems to say little about the poor as such. I felt I was missing something that was there.

As I looked more closely, I noticed something similar in both places where Luke talks about Good News for the poor. In Jesus' announcement of His mission in Luke 4:18-19 (TEV), He proclaimed:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to announce the year when the Lord will save His people.

* Miller, E. (Producer). *Is there good news for the poor?* [Videotape]. Madison: IVP Missions/2100 Productions.

Could it be that Jesus was including the captives, the blind, and the oppressed among those whom He calls poor?

Then I looked at Luke 7:22 (TEV), at the evidence Jesus gives that He is the Messiah:

Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind can see, the lame can walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf can hear, the dead are raised to life.

Perhaps the blind, the prisoners, the oppressed, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf are examples of the poor that Jesus is speaking of.

In other words, the Good News is preached to the poor. Perhaps the blind, the prisoners, the oppressed, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf are examples of the poor that Jesus is speaking of. Blind and lame people in the Gospels were often beggars. Prisoners were often in jail for debt or theft and did not come out until they had paid the last penny. Lepers were outcasts from society and were cut off from all means of making a living. If “the year when the Lord will save His people” was a reference to the Year of Jubilee, that year was intended to benefit debtors, slaves, and those dispossessed of their land.

The two words used for “the poor” in the New Testament are *penes* and *ptochos*. *Penes* refers to the person who is oppressed, underpaid, the working poor. *Ptochos* refers to the person who has no work to do and thus has to beg. It is sometimes translated “poor” and sometimes “beggar.” The basic idea is dependence on others for the essentials of life, like food, clothes, shelter, and health.

With that in mind, when we read Luke and Acts with this linguistic clue, we discover many references to the poor:

1. The hungry and their children, that Mary says will be filled with good things (Luke 1:53);
2. The people, and their children, who are oppressed by tax collectors who take more than their due, and by soldiers and policemen who

take their money or bring false charges against them (Luke 3:12-14);

3. The disabled blind, deaf, lame, paralyzed, lepers, and demon possessed, and their children, who cannot work for a living and are cut off from society (Luke 3-7);
4. The widows, like the one in Nain, whose only son died, leaving her with no breadwinner in her home (Luke 7:11-17);
5. The widows who cannot get justice from judges (Luke 18:2-5), whose houses are expropriated by hypocritical religious leaders (Luke 20:47);
6. The women with medical problems who have spent all their money on doctors (Luke 8:43);
7. The victims of famine in Judea, and their children, who were helped by the Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30).

It is evident in Luke and Acts that the poor to whom Jesus and the early church brought Good News included the naked, the hungry, the disabled, the oppressed, the imprisoned, the sick, the bereaved widows, and orphans. But the question remains, *What kind of Good News was needed by all these people?*

What was the Good News?

It was the kind of Good News that brought a prostitute to wash Jesus’ feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair, and then hear Jesus say, “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:36-50, TEV).

It was the kind of Good News that brought the leper to kneel and say, “If you want to, you can make me clean,” and feel Jesus’ touch and hear Him say, “I do want to.... Be clean!” (Luke 5:12-15, TEV).

It was the kind of Good News that prompted a disabled man’s friends to bring him to Jesus and have their faith rewarded by hearing Jesus say, “Your sins are forgiven you, my friend.... Get up, pick up your bed, and go home” (Luke 5:17-24, TEV).

It was the kind of Good News that challenged a prominent religious leader to think about inviting the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, who

could not repay him, to a banquet as the true way to blessing (Luke 14:1-14).

The Good News of the kingdom of God is that sin, disease, and oppression are never the last word. Where Jesus is King, He brings forgiveness, healing, and liberation.

Because evangelism and social concern were inseparable in the mind of Jesus, they must be inseparable in our minds and ministry.

Jesus expected—and it should be expected today—the preaching of the Good News to bring help and hope to the sinner, help and hope to the poor. Because evangelism and social concern were inseparable in the mind of Jesus, they must be inseparable in our minds and ministry.

As representatives of Jesus, we must ask, *Who are the poor today who are desperately calling for Good News?*

Who are the poor—today?

Young voices: We are the blind.

Narrator: Two hundred fifty thousand children will become permanently blinded this year for lack of a 10-cent vitamin A capsule or a daily handful of green vegetables.* And that is only one instance where people become blind because they are poor.

Young voices: We are the lame.

Narrator: Each year 230,000 children are struck by polio because they do not receive the immunization which has virtually eliminated polio in the West.

Female voices: We are the mothers who lose our children before they are five years old.

Narrator: Fourteen million children will die this year from common illnesses and malnutrition. Most could be saved by relatively simple, low-cost methods. Two and a half million of them die from dehy-

dration due to diarrhea, yet a solution of eight parts sugar and one part salt in clean water could save their lives.

Male and young voices: We are the husbands who lose their wives, and the children who lose their mothers and become orphans from preventable deaths in childbirth.

Narrator: In the next 24 hours more than a thousand young women will die because of something going wrong at childbirth. As long as the nutrition of girls is placed second to that of boys, as long as women eat last and least and work hardest and longest, as long as half of the babies in the developing world are delivered with no trained person in attendance, child bearing will remain 150 times as dangerous as in the West.

Mixed voices: We are the people who cannot read.

Narrator: Many are poor because no one has taught them to read. They are cut off from much that could enrich their lives.

Young voices: We are the children who cannot go to school.

Narrator: In the last few years, governments of the 37 poorest nations have cut spending on health by 50 percent and on education by 25 percent, in order to pay the West the interest that they owe on their huge debts.

Mixed voices: We are the refugees who have lost our homes.

Narrator: Today 14 million displaced people have lost citizenship, homeland, relationships, and the opportunity to work, and much that gives life meaning.

Young voices: We are the orphans.

Narrator: Thousands of children are orphaned by war, civil strife, revolution, and terrorism. Millions more are being abandoned by their parents. There are 3 million of these in Brazil alone.

Women's voices: We are the prostitutes.

* *The state of the world's children 1989* (p. 40). London: Oxford University Press.

Narrator: To provide for their children, many women are forced to turn to prostitution. Many children in cities like Bangkok are sold by desperate parents as slave labor or for sexual exploitation.

Young voices: We are the children of the streets.

Narrator: One hundred million children living in the streets of our great cities are drawn inevitably into a life of crime and corruption.

Young voices: We are teenagers, losing our future.

Narrator: The future of many teenage boys and girls in our cities has been taken captive by drug pushers, violence, and promiscuity; they end up as unmarried

mothers, victims of drug violence, or wasting away from AIDS.

Mixed voices: We are the prisoners.

Narrator: The world's prisons are overcrowded. Some are in prison for crimes, some for conscience, others are the victims of unjust legal systems. All their families suffer.

Mixed voices: We are the destitute.

Narrator: There are nearly one billion people who are defined as "the absolute poor," whose existence is characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, and disease, and is beneath any reasonable definition of human decency.

10. How do the authors define the poor?

11. What signifies "good news" to these poor? Is that the same "good news" we have to offer them?

12. Why is Christian witness so closely linked to ministry to the poor?

We don't have to travel far to come in contact with the poor and destitute. In a world full of need, how do we determine where to focus our attention? Even the cities of the affluent West are filled with homeless and indigent peoples, as well as working poor, drug abusers, and others with desperate needs. In the following article, Bryant Myers seeks to present some criteria for application to mission strategy.

❑ **Where Are the Poor and the Lost? ***

Bryant L. Myers

The issue is strategy. The place is the world. The primary problem is how to allocate the limited resources available for sharing the good news with those who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ. The second question is, What strategy might be most effective?

Who? Where? How? Hard questions, loaded questions. Even theological questions. What information might help us begin to struggle toward some answers?

When we use the phrases, “most needy peoples” and “poorest of the poor,” we intend to include those who have both great physical need, as well as the need to hear the good news.

In recent times, the phrase “the poor and the lost” has been used to communicate our meaning more explicitly.

World Vision recently undertook a research effort to gather demographic and socio-economic information which covers both the spiritual and the material dimensions of need in the world.

Traditional sources of information on poverty do not include the spiritual dimension. Don Brandt, a research specialist in World Vision International, worked with staff from MARC (Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center) and developed four indices, made up of a number of indicators. The four indicators attempt to approximate the need for and the openness to the good news in a variety of ways. These indices must be used with a great deal of care. They do not stand up fully to the rigorous tests one normally associates with sociological research. They are rough measures designed to be applied loosely and with discretion by managers who are facing decisions about the allocation of resources.

There are four different ways in which we can view the world in answer to the question: Where are the

poor and the lost in the world? We have combined one spiritual index with one index of physical need.

1. Which countries have the highest child mortality rates and the highest constraints to evangelism?
2. Which countries are the highest on the human suffering index and have the largest percentage of non-Christians in their population?
3. Which countries are highest human suffering and highest constraints to evangelism?
4. Which countries have the highest numbers of people living in absolute poverty and the largest non-Christian population?

When we screen the countries of the world through these evangelization indices and six socio-economic indices, 14 countries show up on all of them. We can consider them the most needy in terms of both poverty and the need for hearing the good news.

Eleven of these countries are primarily Muslim: Afghanistan, Algeria, Chad, Indonesia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Two are Buddhist: Vietnam and Cambodia. Nepal is Hindu. Eight are in Africa, four in Asia, and one in the Middle East.

The most dominant impression one gains from looking at the world in this way is that the lost are often materially poor. Whether one approaches the data from a desire to learn where the good news needs to be heard, or a desire to find the poorest of the poor, the answer is the same.

The second dominant impression one gains from looking at the world this way is that those who are poorest and in greatest need of hearing the name of Jesus live in Muslim or Buddhist contexts. Both religions tend to be highly resistant to the good news of the gospel for different reasons. Islam understands Christians as being expressions of the ancient

* Myers, B. L. (1989). Where are the poor and the lost? In F. K. Jansen (Ed.), *Target earth* (pp. 94-95). Pasadena: University of the Nations/Global Mapping International.

enemy, Christendom—a source of secularism, Westernization, and a very suspect spirituality. Buddhism evades the truth encounter by offering to assimilate Jesus as just another god, while labeling Christianity as an unwanted foreign intrusion from the West. People, in both contexts, not only have not had an opportunity to hear the gospel, but they live in environments that are not open to having it proclaimed.

Both of these general conclusions lead up to some interesting thoughts about missions in the years ahead. If those with whom we desire to share are poor and closed to the good news, what kind of strategy would make the most sense?

It would seem that the place to begin is with the second of the two great commandments singled out by Jesus: Love your neighbor as yourself. A ministry of love, care, compassion, and ultimately of transformation seems the only right place to begin.

At the same time, one could hardly claim to love one's neighbor if one did not feel compelled to share one's valuable possession—the news about the person who saves and transforms. Furthermore, when

one begins by sharing the worth of the gospel through signs and deeds of love and mercy, it is likely that the people will become increasingly willing to listen to words about the truth of the kingdom of God and its King.

If the lost are often poor, then a holistic ministry—one in which compassion, social transformation, and proclamation are inseparably related—would seem to be the strategy for this time in human history.

What does this suggest? If the lost are often poor, then a holistic ministry—one in which compassion, social transformation, and proclamation are inseparably related—would seem to be the strategy for this time in human history. If incarnation is the model practiced by the One who ministered to such as these, then holistic practitioners, people whose lives are eloquent concerning the values and worth of the gospel, would seem to be the messengers of the hour.

13. *What two primary indexes are combined to determine strategic countries for world evangelization? Do you agree with this approach?*

14. *What religious affiliation do the most needy groups tend to hold? What is their general response to the gospel? Why?*

15. *Answer the author's question: "If those with whom we desire to share are poor and closed to the good news, what kind of strategy would make the most sense?"*

If it is true that “the poor and the lost” are primarily found in countries that are severely restricted to Christian witness, how does God open the doors of opportunity? Many Christian relief and development organizations work among these peoples and offer opportunities for service.* While they focus primarily on alleviating human suffering and poverty rather than on church planting, they often support spiritual ministry to the extent they are able.

The poor, oppressed, and war ravaged have always sought to alleviate their condition by moving to locations where their lot could be improved. With little to lose in their traditional countries or areas of residence, they set out to escape their circumstances. While reaching people through their needs is a basic principle of successful evangelization, refugees are particularly open to spiritual influence. These people are often uprooted suddenly from their homes and cut off from the traditions and filial pressures that have kept them isolated and in spiritual darkness. They are ready to hear a new message, particularly if that message is ministered with practical love which addresses their displacement and also their felt need for a new identity.

The following excerpts from an article by Paul Filidis explain the dynamic opportunity these migrating populations represent for those who wish to reach the least reached.

❑ **Worldwide Migration: Phenomenon and Opportunity****

Paul Filidis

Many mission fields have arrived at our doorsteps!

Millions of people worldwide are on the move. Their reasons for packing up are diverse; the effect on their new host societies considerable. Communication media are said to have made the world a global village, but immigration and emigration—both voluntary and involuntary, legal and illegal—all amalgamate and internationalize the world’s community on a face-to-face level and scale never witnessed before.

The plight of war refugees is usually the most newsworthy and thus most evident. The United Nations reports that there are currently over 16 million refugees who have had to flee their country, while at least the same number of people are displaced within their own country’s borders.

But migration is not only due to war. While many seek to escape disaster and starvation, or are forcibly relocated by their governments, huge numbers are drawn by the glitter of ever-expanding urban centers. According to U.N. estimates, nearly 500 million people will have moved to the city during the last decade of this millennium.

Great numbers of job seekers (mostly from the southern hemisphere) come to claim their share in the (often-flaunted) prosperity of the North. For many, their dreams either remain elusive or are achieved at a cost—the loss of home, family, and cultural identity.

* Some of the more prominent Christian organizations involved in relief and development include Church World Service, Compassion International, Food for the Hungry International, Inter-Church Aid, Lutheran World Federation, Mennonite Central Committee, Tear Fund, World Concern, World Relief, and World Vision.

** Filidis, P. (1991, August). Worldwide migration: Phenomenon and opportunity. *World Christian News*, 4(2), 1-3.

Foreign study opportunities also contribute tremendously to international relationships. Millions of foreign students are conveyors of their home culture as well as of the values assimilated abroad.

Are immigrants today's conquerors?

Some observers interpret these demographic developments in a more threatening light. They comment that today's conquerors, unlike the past, are less likely to come in the form of invading military armies. Instead, the "takeover" of a nation occurs more slowly from within as millions of immigrants alter the fabric of the host societies. Other observers paint a more positive image, majoring on the opportunities to share with the less well-off, to provide refuge, and to be enriched by other peoples' cultures.

As economic conditions worsen, attitudes toward foreigners deteriorate as well. They are then seen as a threat to the society, causing changes to the character of a nation, competing for jobs and social benefits.

During economic booms, immigrants are often welcomed, filling job areas deemed less desirable by the locals. As economic conditions worsen, however, attitudes toward foreigners deteriorate as well. They are then seen as a threat to the society, causing changes to the character of a nation, competing for jobs and social benefits. Here are just a few examples of diverse migration cases:

- The racial composition of the U.S. population changed more dramatically in the past decade

that at any time in the 20th century. Largely due to immigration (about 700,000 immigrants are permitted into the U.S.A. annually), Asians increased by 107 percent, and Hispanics by 53 percent.

- Tens of thousands of Hong Kong Chinese, dreading the future prospect of Chinese rule, are buying their way into new home countries.
- Millions of Afghan refugees, suspicious of developments at home, are staying put; many have begun a new existence elsewhere.
- Until the recent Kuwait crisis, millions of South and East Asians had been employed in the Middle East.
- Millions of North Africans and Middle Easterners have made their home in Western Europe. Some analysts anticipate 25 million more during the next three decades.
- Khomeini's era has led 3 million Iranians to begin a new life in exile.
- The Chinese rural work force of 400 million is double what the country needs. Hundreds of thousands are migrating to the big cities. Guangzhou, a city of about 4 million, has had an estimated 30,000 migrants descend on it daily in recent weeks.
- Asylum requests for Europe and North America have increased from an annual average of 25,000 during the '70s to 70,000 in the '80s. In 1990 the number exploded to over 500,000, with the majority from the Two Thirds World.
- In the U.S.A. alone, an estimated 350,000 foreign students—future potential leaders in their home countries—study in any given year.

16. How many kinds of "migrations" does the author describe? List these.

17. *With what two perspectives can today's "invasions" be viewed?*

A strategic development and opportunity

The internationalization and mingling of the world community has of course many ramifications. From a missions point of view, it constitutes a significant trend. Many peoples that were hitherto less approachable because of political, geographical, cultural, and linguistic barriers are now more accessible.

People who formerly may never have listened to the gospel message now consider it with interest—at least for a season. They do so, often, because they are in a vulnerable state, detached from the sway of their traditional socio-cultural context. Although the occasion may be tragic, as in the case of war refugees, similar dynamics apply to immigrants, guest workers, urban migrants, and to those who study abroad.

An estimated 1,000 largely non-Christian ethno-linguistic peoples from the Two Thirds World are now represented in sizable numbers in “Christianized” countries. About 200 of these peoples are from the “World A” (constituting the world’s *least evangelized* population segments).

Besides the basic biblical injunction to show kindness to strangers, Christians in these host societies frequently have a unique opportunity to declare and demonstrate the gospel to those belonging to *unreached people groups*. Numerous stories of Christians extending helping hands in a context of hospitality and friendship evangelism have proven this strategic development to be a very rewarding opportunity.

18. *How does what we know about both forced and voluntary migrations contribute to our understanding of mission strategy?*

Much of what has been discussed in this section supports strategies which use aid and relief to access unreached populations. There is, however, a proactive side of social action which focuses on helping others help themselves. In the following section, we will focus on community development as a strategic framework for mission strategy.

III. Community Development

Development is not a new concept. Since the middle of the 20th century, as a matter of policy, Western governments have attempted to aid poorer nations through various large-scale economic strategies. Based on theoretical models of economic development, massive infusions of dollars have been aimed at raising per capita income levels. Billions of dollars later, the general conclusion is that these large-scale development efforts have been ineffective in alleviating poverty, while contributing to serious problems such as the mass migration to cities.

Interestingly, development economists have come to similar conclusions about strategizing for development as missiologists have about reaching the unreached. There are no “standard” solutions to development. While economists don’t speak of a “unique solution” strategy, they do admit that there is a need to incorporate institutional and cultural variables more fully into the equation. In the following article, Edward Dayton draws some further conclusions about development based on its history and points out why Christians are best prepared to implement successful strategies.

❏ *Evangelism as Development* *

Edward R. Dayton

Development is a many-meaning word. For some it has a sense of Western imperialism: the “developed” country is attempting to impose their own values and desires on “lesser developed” countries. “Developed to what?” they ask. For what? There is a built-in assumption that things are better when they are “developed.”

Development has about it the ring of human progress. *Human* progress. It can find its roots in the Age of Enlightenment, when for the first time in history, a large segment of society began to believe that they really could control their destinies. The humanists of the 17th and 18th centuries were stimulated in their thinking by the great discoveries (for the West!) of the Americas and the African Continent. What we can now see were often coincidences of history worked together to convince them that by dint of hard work and high ideals man could triumph over his situation. The stories of Horatio Alger became the everyday coin of our belief. The Calvin-inspired Protestant ethic became an end in itself. “Progress” was measured by acquisition.

Once the West was won, those who were a part of the grand adventure naturally concluded that what

they had been able to accomplish should be a possibility for others. They looked with compassion, mixed with a good degree of superiority, at their neighbors in less “developed” countries and set about to help them develop. Failures outnumbered successes at every turn. The American State Department’s Agency for International Development finally concluded that there was little hope for replicating the developed West through massive doses of Western technology. It was a somber, but wise, conclusion.

The assumption is that if we can deal with an entire community that is still intact in its community setting, that development is possible.

We are now involved in a fall-back situation of operating on the principle that our mistake was one of scale. To attempt to develop an entire nation was beyond our scope, but there still remains the possibility of *community* development. The assumption is that if we can deal with an entire community that is still intact in its community setting, that develop-

* Dayton, E. R. (1979, March). Evangelism as development. *MARC Newsletter*, 4-5.

ment is possible. There are many who agree that this is the right approach. We do too.

Now, the goal of community development always was and still remains to bring a group to a place of self-reliance or self-sufficiency: they find within themselves all that is needed to maintain life at a desired level. The fly in the ointment is the underlying premise of those involved in micro-development, namely, given the right circumstances and resources, mankind is capable of creating for himself a *good* society. The premise is false.

The premise is wrong because man's values are flawed. The natural man is turned in on himself, concerned for himself and his own welfare. Given a choice between his own welfare and the welfare of his society, he will usually erroneously conclude that his own best ends are served by serving himself. This is particularly true if he follows the model of the West. For the model of the West is, "*You can do it! Look at me. I did it!*" Or, to put it in the title of a not-so-old popular tune, "*I Did It My Way.*"

And so it is quite easy for us to become involved in valueless community development. We can look with Christian compassion on a group of people living on the edge of poverty and conclude that if they had a better water system, better farming methods, and basic preventive medicine, they would be all right. Community development is possible. But, along with those changes in material standards, there needs to be a change in spiritual standards. There needs to be the announcement of the gospel of the kingdom, the possibility of a radical change at the core of one's being.

Don't miss the point: It's not a question of material development that is accompanied by the gift of eternal life found in Christ. It's a question of the basic motivation to want to change, to want to find a new relationship with one's neighbor, to want to put spiritual values before material values. Evangelism is at the core of true development. It is the catalyst that makes the rest of the mix take form and endure.

Perhaps an extreme example will make the point. World Vision is currently involved in an area of the world which has recently been resettled by the government. Each family has been given a plot of

ground, half of which is to be used for a cash crop controlled by the government and the other half of which can be used for personal use. People have come from many different settings to take advantage of this offer. They each have a means of livelihood. Their material needs are met, but there is a great deal of unrest, strife, and social upheaval. Our "development" solution is to support the establishment of a Christian community center that will bring a common value system to the community. The anticipation is that as people become one in Christ, they will relate to one another in a new way. Helping to plant a church that will provide the missing values turns out to be the key element of development.

Evangelism is at the core of true development. It is the catalyst that makes the rest of the mix take form and endure.

Christians have been uniquely equipped to do development. First, we come to the task with the right motivation. The love of Christ constrains us. The demands of righteousness and justice are upon us. It is not a question of can we, but first a question of *should* we.

Second, Christians come to the task with a balanced sense of the times in which we live and an ability to work out our lives in the midst of the tension that, while we believe we are called upon to work against the forces of evil we find in our world, at the same time we believe that only in Christ's return will that evil be permanently defeated.

But Western Christians live in the midst of what a recent writer has called the Culture of Narcissism, a culture in which the individual is turning in on himself to find a fulfillment or self-understanding or self-awareness or a host of other "in" words. We tell ourselves that the society is out of control. Our leaders are found incompetent or corrupt. Our technology threatens to overcome us rather than save us. History loses its meaning for us. What was right 70 years ago is no longer important. Today's problems, we reason, are so different that we will have to make up the rules as we go along. And without recognizing what is happening, we Christians easily follow the same path. We adjust our theology to fit the circumstances we can't change. And therefore it

becomes easy for us to conclude that what one values, what one holds most important, probably varies for everyone. And who are we to tell someone else how to live? And that's about the way non-Christian development approaches the task.

The message of the gospel is a radical message. It not only says, "Change your mind about things," it also demands, "Let Christ change your life—think

about your sister and your brother. What's important is not how much you acquire but how you live out your life." Salvation is not just eternity. Salvation begins now with a new mind in Christ.

Let's listen again to that message—daily. And if we really believe that Christ changed our life, let's believe that evangelism is a key part of development.

19. What approach have experts concluded should be used for development? How does this differ from previous approaches?

20. Why is secular community development bound to fail?

21. What unique qualities do Christians possess that allow us to believe that we can succeed in community development?

Christians are in a unique position to implement community development. Indeed, it is a "natural" instinct which has drawn countless missionaries into innumerable "projects." Unfortunately, many of these projects have failed, not for lack of good intentions, but because of inadequate understanding and resources to carry out the plans. The following excerpt from "Helping Others Help Themselves" more fully explains the nature of community development and the team approach which can most adequately ensure the success of development projects.

❑ **Helping Others Help Themselves: Christian Community Development ***

Robert C. Pickett and Steven C. Hawthorne **

Many factors point to the need for “Community Development.” In the Third World the poorest and those unreached by development are mostly (80 percent plus or minus) in remote rural areas which suffer from lack of transportation and communication. There is little hope for them to enter into the international trade and buy their basic needs—they must be shown how to produce and meet their own needs themselves in the context of Christian sharing. Development seldom continues well or far if the spiritual needs are not simultaneously being met.

Evangelism is the key to community development, when people are freed from their fears or indifference—or even hate—to truly help one another.

Many people in developing countries become defeatist or fatalistic and think of themselves as poor and incapable. They think their country or area is also poor and lacking in resources. The challenge for the Christian (who ideally is also a developer) is to help the local people see hope—for the abundant

life here on earth as well as for the life eternal. After hope comes the need for the local people to become motivated to contribute to their own development. Then comes the adequate assessment of their own personal talents, abilities, and resources as well as the natural resources about them. This can bring release from the syndrome of, “We’re a poor people in a poor country and cannot improve.”

Another factor hindering development is the tendency of many people to look at factors limiting food production, for example, and then blame the lack of adequate programs or performance on the “flood, drought, pests, diseases, etc.” The challenge is to adequately assess these problems, make plans to overcome them, and begin adequate production on a renewable basis. The tendency to “find a scapegoat” must be overcome if adequate development is to take place.

Christian community development is the key. Evangelism, in turn, is the key to community development, when people are freed from their fears or indifference—or even hate—to truly help one another. Community development begins where there are hearts of love and hope in a community.

22. *What are the primary factors hindering development?*

* Pickett, R. C., & Hawthorne, S. C. (1992). Helping others help themselves: Christian community development. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. D216-D219). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Robert C. Pickett is a professor in community development at William Carey International University in Pasadena, California, and was for 22 years a professor of agronomy at Purdue University. He has worked as a consultant for crop improvement and community development projects in over 100 countries.

Steven C. Hawthorne is part of Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas, and serves with the Antioch Network, helping churches with practical vision to plant new churches among the world's least evangelized peoples. He has led on-site research projects in Asia and the Middle East.

23. What is the key to successful Christian community development?

Physical development factors

Christian community development efforts must address themselves to the whole need complex of a community. Care must be taken to work with the cultural “givens” of the community. Changes must be proven to be desirable. The survival patterns of many communities are so fragile that unforeseen side effects of improvements can prove disastrous. The risk of doing things differently often appears too great to those at or under a subsistence level of living. Any tools, foods, and new technology must be carefully studied to insure that they are appropriate culturally and are renewable and sustainable physically. But most community development is a simple matter of a partnership of strengths and common sense of different cultures. Several basic development factors should be coordinated for holistic development:

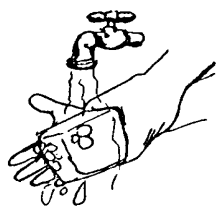
1. Water

Pure drinking water is a daily necessity, and water for at least garden irrigation is desirable. Nonpotable water is perhaps the greatest purveyor of human physical misery. Diseases and parasites from the water lead to lethargy. Pure water can often be provided by constructing protected wells. Communities can be instructed on how to boil, filter, or chemically treat their water.



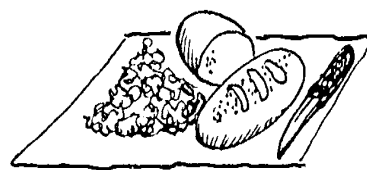
2. Sanitation

The prevention of contamination of water and food by diseases and parasites is largely a matter of education. Simple instruction in proper washing of hands and food and the proper disposal and isolation of human and animal wastes can make a great difference.



3. Food

Both the amount of food, i.e., total calories, and the nutritional balance are important. Many people



do not have enough to eat, but many more suffer from nutritional deficiencies of protein, vitamins, and minerals not present in the usual basic diet of cereals, or in roots and tubers which are high in carbohydrates and starch but deficient in the other necessities. Thus, improvements must be made both in amount of food and in a proper balance of protein, vitamins, and minerals. These nutrients can be provided by such foods as grain legumes (beans, peas, etc.), green leafy vegetables, and other fruits and vegetables that can be grown in intensive home gardens, if not generally available. Simple plans for crop rotation and storage can alleviate the “feast or famine” syndrome.

4. Fuel

Wood is by far the number one cooking fuel in the world, particularly in the “hungry half.” Native forests are rapidly being cut down in many developing areas and are long gone in more ancient areas of civilization.



The hope for renewable firewood production lies in several promising species of fast growing tropical trees including Eucalyptus, Leucaena, Melina, and Pinus species. Several of these are already widely used and are being replanted on hundreds of thousands of acres each year.

5. Health

Westerners are conditioned to think of health as a gift. Health care then is focused on curing diseases with expensive hospital and clinic complexes. In community development efforts, the stress should be in preventive medicine. Important components are teaching sanitation and public health, inoculations, parasite and disease control, and nutrition training. These should be added to whatever curative medicine is present.



6. Shelter and clothing

These should be designed and provided by making maximum use of local crops, e.g., cotton for cloth and bamboo for buildings. Many other plant materials can be used in addition to rock, clay bricks, etc., where available for buildings.



7. Income production

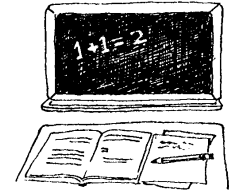
Cash crops are the primary exports and cash earners for most developing countries (except oil-exporting countries). Typical cash crops include coffee, cocoa, sugar cane, rubber, tea, and palm oil, as well as some of



the very food crops developing countries need most, such as beans. "Cottage" industries and village co-operatives can be encouraged. Using local labor and materials, these arrangements hold great promise with good marketing technique.

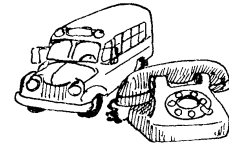
8. Education

In many needy countries there is insufficient education, and literacy rates are very low. Thus literacy often gets first attention in education improvement. Next comes the choice between so-called classical education toward skills useful only at government desks (the biggest employer in many countries) or education toward meeting the needs of the people. The latter desperately needs expansion.



9. Communication and transportation

These two interacting factors are almost unbelievable in their negative effects on the welfare of the people in remote areas. The majority of the people in developing countries live in these areas. Regional or national programs are often necessary to make improvements, but the possibilities for local action should be thoroughly studied.



24. *Why must great care be taken when introducing innovations in a community where people live at a subsistence level?*

25. *For each of the general areas above, list possible trained resource people who could be used to meet these needs (e.g., water—well driller, water analyst, water systems engineer).*

A team strategy

There are three kinds of gifts that are needed in Christian community development. One is the gift of bringing others to Christ and planting churches. Another is a gift in a needed technical area like food production, health care, literacy, or vocational training. The third is a gift of administration in order to design, implement, and evaluate programs to help the people.

A key strategy is to organize teams that have people with special gifts in these three areas of church planting, needed technical expertise, and management. While all these gifts may be found in one person, it would be more advisable to have these tasks assigned to specific members of a team.

Each committed Christian should strive to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ as his first priority. Each member of a team is best trained first as a “generalist” in addition to being trained as a specialist in a specific task. General training can be given to teach basic and practical skills and information that can

be shared with the people. This can be on witnessing for Christ, small-scale family food production, health promotion, disease prevention, first aid, and simple treatment. Each member can also be trained to be more effective in planning and organizing his or her own work, in leadership, and in controlling (or getting the desired results). The latter means getting information on how the program is doing in order to improve areas that are not doing well.

The hungry half and the hidden people

Community development holds the most promise for the Christian worker desirous of promoting fundamental change in human societies. Community development is consistent with the posture of humility and involvement that Jesus modeled for His disciples. Community development revolves around vigorous yet sensitive evangelism. And the “hungry half” that are most in need of community development are more often than not the “hidden peoples” that are justly receiving increased attention by the church of Jesus Christ today.

26. *Why should an “unreached peoples” team seek to include the three basic types of gifted people mentioned above?*

The Bible strongly supports the concept of expressing Christian love through meeting basic human needs. Matthew 25:31-40 hardly allows us to treat this practice as “optional.” The fact that meeting human need through Christian community development can also open the doors to unreached people should stimulate the church to actively pursue this channel for evangelization. It is not unreasonable to expect missionaries to develop a profession or skill of direct use in community development, in addition to obtaining Bible and church related training.

As we conclude this section (and this volume on strategy), we want to emphasize that mission is essentially God centered, not man centered. In the following article, Bob Moffitt eloquently brings us back to this focus with a biblical perspective of development.

□ **Biblical Development ***

Bob Moffitt **

What is development? How is it defined? What are its characteristics? Secular and Christian development provide different answers to these questions.

Secular development is designed to improve living conditions. It supports and encourages a higher quality of life. It believes that people, individually and corporately, can improve their quality of life through intentional human effort. In the Two Thirds World, secular development works primarily to meet physical and social needs—health, water, housing, agriculture, economic enterprise, education, etc. Good secular development has two key characteristics: it helps people help themselves, and it is sustainable (it can be continued without ongoing external support).

Biblical development is God centered: from God, seeking to honor God, and relying on Him as the principal participant in the development process.

Biblical development affirms much of this, but with a radically different orientation. This difference is critical. Secular development is man centered: for man, by man, limited to what man can do for him-

self. Biblical development is God centered: from God, seeking to honor God, and relying on Him as the principal participant in the development process. Biblical development does not exclude man, but sees him cooperating under God in the process of man's healing.

In biblical development, “quality of life” is determined by God's intentions for His people. It is not limited to the tangible and visible arenas of man's need, but includes the healing of areas of emotion and spirit. It is not limited to what man can do for himself, but is as limitless as God's power, love and mercy.

The goal of development is God's intentions

Development must have a goal, an objective, an agenda. The Christian objective and agenda is directed by God's intentions. Secular development asks, “What are your needs?” Biblical development asks, “What are God's intentions for you and this particular need?” The answer sets the goal for biblical development.

Felt needs are legitimate concerns in development works, but they are not the only concern. Heroin addicts feel the need for heroin. Some women ex-

* Moffitt, B. (1992). *Leadership development training curriculum*. Tempe, AZ: Harvest Foundation.

** Bob Moffitt is the founder and president of Harvest Foundation, an organization which is involved in curriculum development for leadership training in Two Thirds World churches. He is the author of *Adventures in God's Kingdom* and the *Leadership Development Training Program*.

press a felt need for abortion on demand. A teenager may express a need for a car. These represent real feelings; however, responding to them may actually hinder development. Therefore, the question must be, “What is the root need beyond the felt need?” Unless the felt need is life-threatening, such as food for a starving child, development work is best directed toward the root need.

Christians realize root needs are related to underlying spiritual causes. Scripture describes the relationships between all these needs, and God’s solutions. Before setting goals, Christians ask, “Father, what is your perspective of this need, its root, and your solution?”

Jesus’ development models God’s intentions

Jesus, though divine, was also man, and He is our model for development. To understand God’s intentions, Luke 2:52 is a good starting point. Luke, a medical doctor, described Jesus’ development in four domains—wisdom, physical, spiritual, and social. “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (NIV).

If Jesus needed to develop in all these areas, so do all men. God is concerned about the *whole man*. Development must reflect this *holistic* or *balanced* concern to represent God’s intentions. The purpose of Jesus’ development was to honor God, to serve and give His life for others. Man also should grow in order to love and honor Him, to love and serve others. Biblical development will promote this.

It is well to note that Jesus’ development was in the context of *adequacy* rather than *affluence*. God insured Jesus the necessary resources to grow in wisdom—a simple synagogue school in which the study of God’s law was the focus. He had the necessary resources to grow physically—shelter, clothing, food, water, sanitation, physical labor, etc. He had the necessary resources to grow spiritually—a God-fearing home and ability to read the Scriptures. And, He had the necessary resources to grow socially—a loving, functional family who modeled appropriate relationships in the family and community. Jesus’ development took place in an

environment of *adequacy*, or even relative poverty, rather than in an affluent, technically advanced environment.

The primary resource for development is God

God is the originator of development. He created all things. He sustains all things. All resources come from Him. As stewards of talents and resources God provides, development workers prayerfully and courageously invest them to advance God’s goals.

As Creator, God deals in the supernatural. He is not limited to the existing material world. His principles can and do produce blessing and change. Because development workers are servants of the Living God, they are not limited to visible material resources. In the face of insurmountable difficulties, they can take confidence in the biblical principle God has promised those who walk in His righteousness, that He will heal the people and their land.

Ten years ago I visited an impoverished village in central Mexico. Village leaders, recently converted, committed to live God’s way. They weren’t particularly interested in development. Yet, the village has been transformed from a place where families were killing each other in blood feuds to one where they serve one another in love. In a place where pigs once freely walked through mud huts, there are now tidy wooden houses. (The first seven houses were built for village widows.) In a place with a small stream and not one latrine, there is now running water and sanitation. In a place with an empty, deserted schoolhouse, children now go to school.

Ten years ago, the prospect for development in this village looked bleak. However, God’s intervention was not limited to visible resources. The people of this village entered into a pact of righteousness with God—a pact in which they sought and followed His intentions. Leaders in the village regularly went to the forest to study Scripture and pray for several days. They stayed till they reached agreement on what God wanted them to do. Then they put their convictions into practice. I marveled as He moved to “heal their land.”

27. *Why isn't it enough for development to deal with "felt" needs?*

28. *Why is the primary resource for development God Himself?*

The local church should be an active participant in development

The local church is the most visible and permanent representation of God's kingdom in any community. More than any other institution, it can reflect God's concern in each domain of man's need. Other Christian institutions have a particular focus—evangelism, education, health, economic development. They are limited by organizational mandate in their ability to represent God's concern for the whole person.

Where there is a local church, it should be actively involved in servant leadership in development. Thereby, local churches grow their ability to proclaim and demonstrate God's intentions for the people of their respective communities. The potential for sustainability of the work will increase, as well.

Development is required of the poor as well as the wealthy

The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) teaches that *no one* is exempt from the responsibility to courageously risk their resources for the kingdom of God. Damage results if the poor are regarded as too poor to play a part. Unless the issue is survival, the appeal to outside resources often reinforces a sense of powerlessness. If provided before local people learn to value and invest the resources God had entrusted to them, long-term dependency on outside financial, material, and technical aid may occur. The history of modern development is replete with examples of well intended effort which inhibited rather than advanced development.

God multiplies the gifts of the poor. In biblical accounts of the widow of Zarephath, the feeding of

the 5,000, and the widow's mite, God acted in response to sacrificial commitment of resources. Even the poor must demonstrate God's love to those around them. This is their gift from God.

In India, a village church realized they had a responsibility to invest the little they had to demonstrate God's love to their Hindu neighbors. They went out to see what needs existed. They discovered that some Hindu women owned only one sari. Every other day, when the sari was being washed, they could not leave their homes for shopping or other necessities.

No one is exempt from the responsibility to courageously risk their resources for the kingdom of God.

The pastor asked if any in the congregation with three saris would give one to the Hindu women's need. The result? All the saris needed (about 12) were given and delivered. At the same time, Hindu women requested Christians to come and pray for the protection of their unborn children. Matching needs with resources has become part of the Sunday worship experience of these Indian Christians. A church which had seen itself as too poor to make a difference, now entered a much fuller dimension of outreach.

Encouraging sacrificial stewardship for the poor in no way exempts those whose resources are abundant. In John 12:28 Jesus says, "You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me" (NIV). This is often quoted to excuse indifference to the plight of the poor. In fact, Jesus

was quoting Deuteronomy 15:11, which gives a very different conclusion: “Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land” (NIV).

God requires compassionate and liberal sharing with those in need. *All* people are to risk their resources for the kingdom. Isaiah 58, Matthew 25, Luke 10:25-37, James 2:14, and 1 John 3:16-18

make it clear that it is impossible to love one’s neighbors without being open to promote all God’s intentions for them.

The responsibility exempts no Christian. If the poor are held accountable for this, how much more will the rich be expected to use all they have to bless others, honor God, and expand the kingdom. Lovingly done, this is biblical development.

29. What is the role of the church in development?

30. Why should poor Christians as well as the rich participate in community development?

Summary

The 20th century evangelism vs. social action debate has moved evangelicals steadily towards a reconciliation of the two positions. While balance has been sought, evangelism is still recognized as the “leading partner.” Notwithstanding, the biblical and practical reasons for engaging in social action are numerous and essential to contemporary mission strategy.

The breadth and intensity of human need around the globe are beyond comprehension. War, famine, and pestilence affect whole segments of humanity. All of these crises offer Christians a chance for involvement. The poorest of the poor socially are also the poorest spiritually. They also tend to be located in the most restricted access countries for Christian witness. Their needs, however, may become the open door to reaching them. Often, these same people become more accessible through migrations intended to escape their circumstances. Initially, these immigrants and refugees are particularly open to the good news shared by loving Christians.

Improving the lives of the poor in under-developed countries is a mission which has been attempted on a large scale by Western governments. Readdressing the issue through community development is only viable if the beneficiaries can also be transformed in their basic motivations. Only Christ can do that, and He must be the center of Christian community development. Christians are uniquely suited to engage in this activity, but they should recognize that teams with adequately equipped resource people provide the best framework for achieving holistic mission. God-centered development will encourage dependence on Him as the ultimate resource and will allow all the participants, rich and poor, to risk sharing their resources to the benefit of all.

Integrative Assignment

In this assignment, you will be drawing up a basic plan for implementing a mission to your targeted people group. You will attempt to answer the question: *How shall they be reached?*

WORKSHEET #4: THE PLAN

The Goal

Based on your previous research, you are now ready to attempt to formulate a *strategy* for reaching your targeted people group. Your planning must be based on a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve. We assume you have the “right” goal and plan to establish a “cluster” of reproducing churches within your people group. All plans and objectives must contribute to this end.

1. State your goal succinctly and in measurable terms. (Example: One thousand baptized believers in at least 20 viable groups in key locations throughout the Tbuli region by the year 2000.)

The Process

You must now try to envision the steps that are required to reach your goal. These steps should be sequential and should be stated in general terms, such as, “recruit and equip a nonresidential missionary,” “establish a missionary presence among the people,” “train the emerging leadership,” etc. Each step, in turn, may have its own objectives and may require an individual plan. Keep in mind, however, that an objective is not an end in itself but part of a harmonized process which leads to the final goal. This suggests a logical sequencing which begins with initiation of the mission and ends when the goal has been reached.

2. Based on what you know about the accessibility of these people and their felt needs, what general approach or methods will you use?

3. What “partnerships” must be forged with others from the force for evangelization? What role does each partner play?

4. How will you know when the first “church” is established?

5. How will the leadership be selected (qualifications) and trained (process)?

6. What needs to happen to initiate and support a “spontaneous multiplication” of churches in this region (and beyond it to unreached groups)? How will you support this movement?

7. List your general objectives in sequential (chronological) order.

The Resources

Through your research, you should have identified people, churches, agencies, funding sources, and other resources for the evangelization of the targeted people. You will be using these resources to achieve your objectives. *The key to implementing your plans successfully is to anticipate the resources needed to carry out your plans, to pray faithfully, and to work towards applying the resources in achieving your goal.*



8. What resources will you need to carry out each of the general objectives you've listed above? Think in terms of people, tools, and money.* List your resource needs next to each objective.

9. Which "partner" will fill each of the resource needs? Tag each resource need with the initials of the source or sources that may meet this need.

* This exercise does not replace prayer or dependence on the Holy Spirit. It does, however, help us to be specific in our prayer requests and hope in faith for expressed needs to be met.

Questions for Reflection

Have you developed a personal philosophy for meeting human need? Many Bible-believing Christians work harder at avoiding the issue than dealing with it—even missionaries! They may cross the street to avoid a beggar or not answer the door when such a person comes knocking. Fear of creating dependence or of being “overrun” by the needy often obscures Christ’s simple injunction to “give to everyone who asks of you” (Luke 6:30). What “policy” will you follow when confronted with human need on a personal basis in your day-to-day activities? Define your thoughts; you may be tested in this area today!

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WORLD MISSION

An Analysis
of the World Christian Movement

SECOND EDITION
Full revision of the original work

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Part Three of a Manual in Three Parts

Jonathan Lewis, Ph.D., Editor



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Jonathan Lewis, Editor
January 1994

Other Course Materials by the Editor

- *World Mission Leader's Guide*. An aid to those who want to organize and conduct a study group utilizing these manuals. It includes suggestions for promotion and organization of the course, as well as sample answers to each of the questions in the texts. An appendix gives useful helps on group dynamics. Available from William Carey Library.
- *Misión Mundial: Un Análisis del Movimiento Cristiano Mundial* (3 volumes).
- *Guía para el tutor del grupo de estudio de: Misión Mundial* (3 volumes).
- *Video de Misión Mundial* (3 videos, 5 hours total).

The Second Edition of the Spanish manuals, accompanying leader's guide, and the lecture videos are available from Unilit, 1360 N.W. 88th Ave., Miami, FL 33172.

Please contact the publisher for other language editions under production.

- *Working Your Way to the Nations: A Guide to Effective Tentmaking*. A 12-lesson course for use by local churches in guiding the preparation of cross-cultural "tentmaking" missionaries. Available from William Carey Library. Editions of this strategic course in Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese are under production.

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Preface to the Second Edition

We live in a rapidly changing world. These changes affect the way the advancing World Christian Movement perceives its mandate and carries out its task. The Second Edition of *World Mission* has tried to analyze these trends and incorporate their discussion into the text. Two Thirds World missions, reaching rapidly expanding cities, mission to the world's poor and destitute, the 10/40 window, strategic partnerships, church/mission tension—these and other current issues are woven into the discussion of the biblical, historical, strategic, and cross-cultural foundation of missions, improving and strengthening these basic themes.

The editors have worked closely with the *Perspectives* office at the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, to assure that these manuals are suited for students participating in their extension courses. Questions have been improved, and the research assignment has been redesigned to enhance the application of the end-product. Useful indexes and an appendix have also been added.

Organization and Use of This Manual

World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement is a manual that can be used by study groups in a formal or informal educational setting. The manual is in three parts, each being a separate unit.

- **Part One, The Biblical/Historical Foundation**, examines the roots of world mission, including its origin and its development through the ages.
- **Part Two, The Strategic Dimension**, defines the remaining mission task and the strategies necessary to reach the unreached.
- **Part Three, Cross-Cultural Considerations**, explores the challenge of cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

Each of the 15 chapters of this manual is divided into three study units. Each unit develops a distinct concept and relates it to the material studied in preceding units. Questions interspersed throughout the text direct the reader's attention to key points and stimulate reflection on the readings.

Each chapter ends with two sections of questions. The first section, **Integrative Assignment**, is designed to help the reader assimilate the material studied. The questions invite the student to do further research and encourage the development of the student's abilities to communicate what is learned. Study groups should use these questions for group discussion. In Part Two of the manual, an "Unreached Peoples" research project is incorporated into the Integrative Assignment. This fascinating project will require extra time and effort from the student.

The second section of questions, **Questions for Reflection**, asks for a response to personal and spiritual issues raised by the readings. We recommend that each student enter his or her thoughts either in the workbook or in a personal diary. We also suggest that a devotional time be provided during each group session to share these comments.

CHAPTER 11

Mission and Culture

In order to have an effective cross-cultural ministry, missionaries must first of all be students of culture—that is, of the way a particular people organize their world. *Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful, and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values, and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.**

Effective missionaries identify with the culture. Through an intimate knowledge of the people, missionaries see the world as the people see it and experience life as they do. We have no better example of this identification than Jesus Christ Himself. He left His home in glory to become a vulnerable, dependent human infant. He knew hunger and thirst, poverty and oppression. He experienced rejection, anger, and loss. He wept. His experience of human nature gave Him the tremendous insight He manifested during His earthly sojourn (Heb. 2:17) and provided a relational platform for powerful ministry.

Like Christ, cross-cultural missionaries must seek to understand the people they hope to reach with the gospel. They must strive to gain the people's perspective on life and to identify wholeheartedly with them. In a unique way, cross-cultural missionaries stand as intercessors and advocates for the unreached group with whom they are identified (1 Pet. 2:9). This chapter will address issues surrounding successful identification and other aspects of cross-cultural interaction. We will also consider how missionaries function as “agents of change” within a culture.

* Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. (1978). *The Willowbank report: Gospel and culture* (Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 2, p. 7). Wheaton, IL: Author.

I. Identification

When we think of identification, images of Hudson Taylor in native Chinese dress and a braided pigtail come to mind. Heart-to-heart identification, however, is much more than adopting dress and customs. It is the result of a sequence of actions based on attitudes. Entering a culture with an open, trusting, and accepting outlook is the first step. Responding to the inevitable cultural differences with humility, as a learner, is a second step.

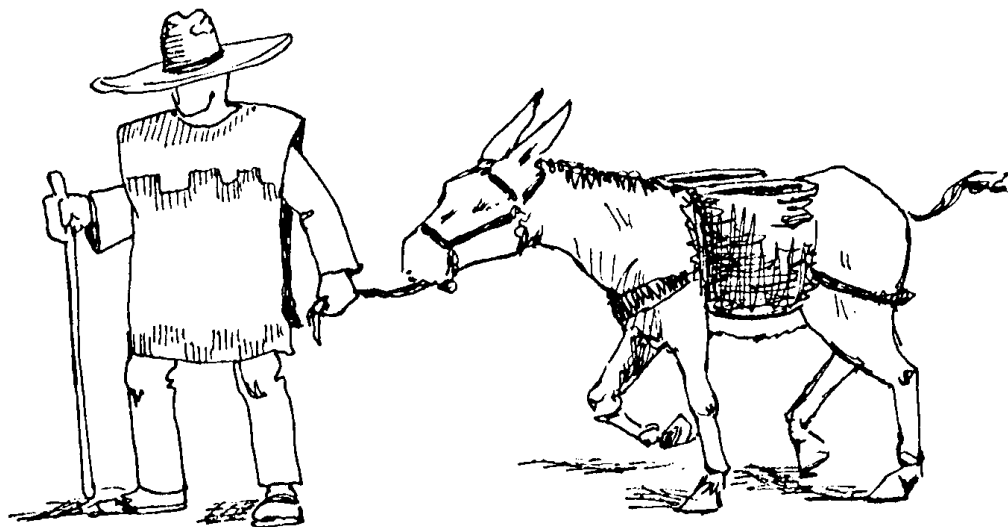
There are three dimensions to this work: (1) We must come to a knowledge of all aspects of the people's culture; (2) we must participate with them in their lifestyle; and (3) we must demonstrate genuine empathy with them. *The ultimate goal of identification is not to see how much like the other culture one can become, but how profoundly and effectively one can learn to **communicate** with those of the other culture.* In the following article, anthropologist William D. Reyburn shares additional insights which he has gained through his personal quest for genuine identification.

❑ *Identification in the Missionary Task* *

William D. Reyburn **

A steady downpour of rain had been falling from late afternoon until long after dark. A small donkey followed by a pair of men slowly made its way down the slippery sides of the muddy descent which wound into the sleepy town of Baños, high in the Ecuadorean Andes. No one appeared to pay any

attention as the two dark figures halted their burro before a shabby Indian hostel. The taller of the two men stepped inside the doorway where a group of men sat at a small table drinking *chicha* by candle light. No sooner had the stranger entered the room than a voice from behind the bar called out, “*Buenas*



* Reyburn, W. D. (1978). Identification in the missionary task. In W. A. Smalley (Ed.), *Readings in missionary anthropology II* (pp. 746-760). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

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noches, meester." The man in the rain-soaked poncho turned quickly to see a fat-faced woman standing half concealed behind the counter. "*Buenas noches, señora,*" he replied, lifting his hat slightly. Following a short exchange of conversation the man and barmaid reappeared outside and led the donkey through a small gate to a mud stable. The two men removed their load and carried it to a stall-like room beside the stable where they were to spend the night.

I sat down on the straw on the floor and began pulling off my wet clothes. I kept hearing the word *meester* which I had come to dislike intensely. Why had that funny little woman there in the semi-darkness of the room addressed me as *meester*? I looked at my clothes. My hat was that of the poorest *cholo* in Ecuador. My pants were nothing more than a mass of patches held together by still more patches. On my dirty mud-stained feet I wore a pair of rubber tire *alpargatas* the same as any Indian or *cholo* wore. My red poncho was not from the high class Otavalo weavers. It was a poor man's poncho made in Salcedo. It had no fancy tassels and in true *cholo* fashion there were bits of straw dangling from its lower edge, showing that I was a man who slept with his burro on the road. But why then did she call me *meester*, a term reserved for Americans and Europeans? At least she could have addressed me as *señor*, but no, it had to be *meester*. I felt as though my carefully devised disguise had been stripped from me with the mention of that word. I kept hashing it over and over in my mind. It wasn't because she detected a foreign accent, because I had not as yet opened my mouth. I turned to my Quechua Indian companion, old Carlos Bawa of Lake Colta. "Carlos, the lady knew I am a *meester*. How do you think she knew, Carlitos?"

My friend sat huddled in the corner of the room with his legs and arms tucked under his two ponchos. "I don't know, *patroncito*." Looking up quickly at Carlos, I said, "Carlos, for three days I have been asking you not to call me *patroncito*. If you call me that, people will know I am not a *cholo*." Carlos flicked a finger out from under the collar of his woolen poncho and touching his hat brim submissively replied, "I keep forgetting, *meestercito*."

Disgusted and aching in my rain-soaked skin, I felt like the fool I must have appeared. I sat quietly watching the candle flicker as Carlos dozed off to

sleep in his corner. I kept seeing the faces of people along the road we had walked for the past three days. Then I would see the face of this woman in Baños who had robbed me of what seemed like a perfect disguise. I wondered then if perhaps I hadn't been taken for a European even earlier. I was hurt, disappointed, disillusioned, and to make things worse I was dreadfully hungry. Reaching into our packsack I pulled out the bag of *machica* flour my wife had prepared for us, poured in some water, and stirred the brown sugar and barley mixture with my finger and gulped it down. The rain was letting up now, and from a hole in the upper corner of the room I could see the clouds drifting across the sky in the light of the moon. A guitar was strumming softly out in the street, and in the stall next to us a half dozen Indians had just returned from the stable and were discussing the events of their day's journey.

I asked myself again and again what it meant to be identified with this old Quechua Indian who was so far removed from the real world in which I lived.

Blowing out the candle, I leaned up against the rough plank wall and listened to their conversation, then eventually fell asleep. It was some hours later when I was startled awake from the noise of our door creaking open. I got to my feet quickly and jumped behind the opening door waiting to see what was going to happen. The door quietly closed and I heard old Carlos groan as he settled down onto his mat to sleep. Carlos was returning, having gone out to relieve himself. My companion had been warning me for several days that Indians often rob each other and I should always sleep lightly. It was quiet now, deathly silent. I had no idea what time it may have been, as a watch was not suitable for my *cholo* garb. I lay on the floor thinking about the meaning of identification. I asked myself again and again what it meant to be identified with this old Quechua Indian who was so far removed from the real world in which I lived.

I was traveling the Indian markets of the Ecuadorean Andes in order to know what really lay hidden in the hearts of these Quechua Indians and Spanish-speaking *cholos*. What was the real longing in their

hearts that could be touched? I wanted to know what it was that drunkenness seemed to satisfy. Was the Quechua Indian really the sullen withdrawn personality that he appeared to be before his *patrón*? Was he so adjustable to life conditions that his attitude could incorporate most any conflict without upsetting him seriously? Was he really a good Catholic, a pagan, or what kind of a combination? Why underneath was he so opposed to outward change? What was he talking about and worrying over when

A major aspect of the missionary task is the search for a connection or point of contact.

he settled down at night in the security of his own little group? I was after the roots that lay behind the outward symbols which could respond to the claims of Christ. The answer to questions like these would form the basis for a missionary theology, a relevant communication to these people's lives. I could see no purpose in putting the Christian proposition before a man unless it was made in such a way that it forced him to struggle with it in terms of surrender to the ultimate and most basic demand that could be

placed upon him. In order to know what had to be addressed to the depths of his being, I had to wade down to it through what I was convinced were only outward displays of a deeper need in his heart.

A major aspect of the missionary task is the search for a *connection* or *point of contact*. The proclamation of the gospel aside from such a contact point is a proclamation which skirts missionary responsibility. This is simply the process in which the one who proclaims the good news must make every effort to get into touch with his listener. Man's heart is not a clean slate that the gospel comes and writes upon for the first time. It is a complex which has been scrawled upon and deeply engraved from birth to death. The making of a believer always begins with an unbeliever. Clearly this is the job of the Holy Spirit. However, this does not remove man from his position of responsibility. It is man in his rational hearing and understanding that is awakened to belief. It is the conquering of man's basic deceit that allows the Holy Spirit to lay claim to him and to make of him a new creature. A man must be aware that he stands in defiance of God's call before he can be apprehended by God's love. Before an enemy can be taken captive he must stand in the position of an enemy.

1. *Why wasn't the author's attempt to pass as a cholo successful?*

2. *What does the author identify as a major responsibility of the missionary in communicating the gospel?*

The forms of identification

Missionary identification may take on many different forms. It may be romantic or it may be dull. It may be convincing or it may appear as a sham. The central point is that identification is not an end in itself. It is the road to the task of gospel proclamation. Likewise the heart of the controversial matter of missionary identification is not how far one can go but rather what one does with the fruits of identification. Going native is no special virtue. Many missionaries in the humdrum of their daily routine about a school or hospital have awakened men's hearts to the claim of the gospel.

Identification is not an end in itself. It is the road to the task of gospel proclamation.

Some so-called identification is misoriented and tends to create the impression that living in a native village or learning the native tongue is automatically the "open sesame" of the native's heart. It is not the sheer quantity of identification that counts; it is rather the purposeful quality that comprehends man as a responsible being seeking to be in touch with his reality. The limitations for knowing what is this contacted reality are great. The practical obstacles for missionary identification are many. In the pages that follow we shall attempt to outline some of these as we have lived in them and to evaluate the effects of the lack of missionary identification and participation.

The force of unconscious habit

Without doubt the nature of the obstacle to identification is the fact that one has so well learned one's own way of life that he practices it for the most part without conscious reflection. In the case described above, the old Quechua Indian Carlos Bawa, the donkey, and I had been traveling across the plateau of the Andes spending the days in the markets and the nights cramped into tiny quarters available to itinerant Indians and *cholos* for approximately 10 cents U.S. We had made our way from Riobamba to Baños, a three-day trek by road, and no one except an occasional dog appeared to see that all was not quite normal. It was not until stepping into the

candle-lit room of the inn at Baños that I was taken for a foreigner (at least it so appeared). I suspect that it bothered me a great deal because I had created the illusion for a few days that I was finally on the inside of the Indian-*cholo* world looking about and not in the least conspicuous about it. When the innkeeper addressed me as *meester*, I had the shock of being rudely dumped outside the little world where I thought I had at last gained a firm entrance.

The following morning I went to the lady innkeeper and sat down at the bar. "Now, tell me, *señora*," I began, "how did you know I was a *meester* and not a local *señor* or a *cholo* from Riobamba?" The fat little lady's eyes sparkled as she laughed an embarrassed giggle. "I don't know for sure," she replied. I insisted she try to give me the answer, for I was thoroughly confused over it all. I went on. "Now suppose you were a detective, *señora*, and you were told to catch a European man dressed like a poor *cholo* merchant. How would you recognize him if he came into your inn?" She scratched her head and leaned forward over the counter. "Walk outside and come back in like you did last night." I picked up my old hat, pulled it low on my head, and made for the door. Before I reached the street she called out, "Wait, *señor*, I know now what it is." I stopped and turned around. "It's the way you walk." She broke into a hearty laugh at this point and said, "I never saw anyone around here who walks like that. You Europeans swing your arms like you never carried a load on your back." I thanked the good lady for her lesson in posture and went out in the street to study how the local people walked. Sure enough, the steps were short and choppy, the trunk leaning forward slightly from the hips and the arms scarcely moving under their huge ponchos.

Knowing that the squatting position with the poncho draped from ears to the hidden feet was more natural, I squatted on the street corner near a group of Indians and listened to them chat. They continued with their conversation and paid no attention to my presence. Two missionaries whom I knew very well emerged from a hotel doorway nearby. I watched them as they swung their cameras about their shoulders and discussed the problem of over-exposure in the tricky Andean sunlight. A ragged *cholo* boy sitting beside me scrambled to his feet, picked up his shoe-shine box, and approached the pair. He was

rebuffed by their nonchalant shaking of the head. As they continued to survey the brilliant market place for pictures, the shoe-shine boy returned to his spot beside me. Sitting down he mumbled, "The señores who own shoes ought to keep them shined." I leaned toward the boy and beckoned for his ear. He bent over his shoe box as I whispered to him. The boy then jumped back to his feet and started after the pair who were crossing the street. On the other side they stopped and turned to him as he said, "The evangelicals are not respected here unless we see their shoes are shined." One man lifted a foot and rubbed his shoe on his pants cuff, while the other settled down for a toothbrush, spit and polish shine.

I arose, passed within three feet of my friends, and took up a listening post in the heart of the busy market, where I sat until my legs began to ache. As I got up to my feet I yawned and stretched, and as I began to walk away I noticed I had drawn the attention of those sitting about me. Again I had behaved in a way that felt so natural but in a way

which was not like the local folks do. In front of me an old woman dropped a bag of salt. I unthinkingly reached down to help her, and it was only by a bit of providential intervention that I was saved from being hauled off to jail for attempting to steal.

This extremity of identification or disguise may appear as one way of overdoing a good thing. However, only a missionary among the withdrawn highland Quechuas can really appreciate how difficult it is to talk with these people in a situation of equality. I simply could not accept the Quechua's response as being valid and representing his real self as long as he was talking to the *patrón*. I wanted to hear him without a *patrón* present, and I wanted to be addressed stripped of that feudal role which I was sure completely colored our relationship. I found that the submissive, sluggish Indian whom I had known in my role of *patrón* became a scheming quick-witted person who could be extremely friendly, helpful, or cruel depending upon the situation.

3. What did the author learn about the Quechuas which he might not have learned if he had not pursued an extreme identification with them?
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Limits of identification

Perhaps the most outstanding example in which I was reminded of the limitations of identification occurred while we were living in a mud-and-thatch hut near Tabacundo, Ecuador. We had moved into a small scattered farming settlement near the Pisque River about a kilometer from the United Andean Mission for whom we were making a study. My wife and I had agreed that if we were to accomplish anything at the UAM we would have to settle among the people and somehow get them to accept us or reject us. We were accepted eventually but always with reservations. We wore nothing but Indian clothes and ate nothing but Indian food. We had no furniture except a bed made of century plant stalks covered with a woven mat exactly as in all the Indian houses. In fact, because we had no agricultural

equipment, weaving loom, or granary, our one-room house was by far the most empty in the vicinity. In spite of this material reduction to the zero point, the men addressed me as *patroncito*. When I objected that I was not a *patrón* because I owned no land, they reminded me that I wore leather shoes. I quickly exchanged these for a pair of local made *alpargatas* which have a hemp fiber sole and a woven cotton upper. After a time had passed I noticed that merely changing my footwear had not in the least gotten rid of the appellation of *patroncito*. When I asked again the men replied that I associated with the Spanish townspeople from Tabacundo. In so doing I was obviously identifying myself with the *patrón* class. I made every effort for a period to avoid the townspeople, but the term

patroncito seemed to be as permanently fixed as it was the day we moved into the community.

The men had been required by the local commissioner to repair an impassable road connecting the community and Tabacundo. I joined in this work with the Indians until it was completed two months later. My hands had become hard and calloused. One day I proudly showed my calloused hands to a group

of men while they were finishing the last of a jar of fermented *chicha*. “Now, you can’t say I don’t work with you. Why do you still call me *patroncito*?” This time the truth was near the surface, forced there by uninhibited alcoholic replies. Vicente Cuzco, a leader in the group, stepped up and put his arm around my shoulder and whispered to me. “We call you *patroncito* because you weren’t born of an Indian mother.” I needed no further explanation.

4. *What limit to identification confronted the author? Can you think of other limits which may be beyond a missionary’s control?*
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Ownership of a gun

Living in an African village caused us to become aware of the effect of other formative attitudes in our backgrounds. One of these in particular is the idea of personal ownership. While living in the south Cameroun village of Aloum among the Bulu in order to learn the language, we had been received from the first day with intense reception and hospitality. We were given Bulu family names; the village danced for several nights, and we were loaded with gifts of a goat and all kinds of tropical foods.

We had been invited to live in Aloum, and we were not fully prepared psychologically to understand how such an adoption was conceived within Bulu thinking. Slowly we came to learn that our possessions were no longer private property but were to be available for the collective use of the sublcán where we had been adopted. We were able to adjust to this way of doing because we had about the same material status as the others in the village. Their demands upon our things were not as great as their generous hospitality with which they provided nearly all of our food.

Then one night I caught a new vision of the implication of our relation to the people of Aloum. A stranger had appeared in the village, and we learned that Aloum was the home of his mother’s brother. It

was the case of the nephew in the town of his maternal uncle, a most interesting social relationship in the patrilineal societies in Africa. After dark when the leading men in the village had gathered in the men’s clubhouse, I drifted over and sat down among them to listen to their conversations. The fires on the floor threw shadows which appeared to dance up and down on the mud walls.

Slowly we came to learn that our possessions were no longer private property but were to be available for the collective use of the sublcán where we had been adopted.

Finally silence fell over their conversations, and the chief of the village arose and began to speak in very hushed tones. Several young men arose from their positions by the fires and moved outside to take up a listening post to make sure that no uninvited persons would overhear the development of these important events. The chief spoke of the welcome of his nephew into his village and guaranteed him a safe sojourn while he was there. After these introductory formalities were finished, the chief began to extol his nephew as a great elephant hunter. I was

still totally ignorant of how all this affected me. I listened as he eulogized his nephew's virtue as a skilled hunter. After the chief finished, another elder arose and continued to cite cases in the nephew's life in which he had displayed great bravery in the face of the dangers of the jungles. One after another repeated these stories until the chief again stood to his feet. I could see the whites of his eyes which were aimed at me. The fire caused little shadows to run back and forth on his dark face and body. "Obam Nna," he addressed me. A broad smile exposed a gleaming set of teeth. "We are going to present our gun to my nephew now. Go get it."

I hesitated a brief moment but then arose and crossed the moonlit courtyard to our thatch-covered house, where Marie and some village women sat talking. I

kept hearing in my ears: "We are going to present our gun... our gun...." Almost as if it were a broken record stuck on the plural possessive pronoun, it kept repeating in my ears, "*ngale jangan... ngale jangan....*" Before I reached the house I had thought of half a dozen very good reasons why I should say no. However, I got the gun and some shells and started back to the clubhouse. As I reentered the room I caught again the sense of the world of Obam Nna. If I were to be Obam Nna, I should have to cease to be William Reyburn. In order to be Obam Nna, I had to crucify William Reyburn nearly every day. In the world of Obam Nna I no longer owned the gun as in the world of William Reyburn. I handed the gun to the chief and, although he didn't know it, along with it went the surrender of a very stingy idea of private ownership.

5. *How did the Bulu concept of ownership differ from the author's?*

6. *What had to happen to "William Reyburn" in order for him to become "Obam Nna"? Why?*

Symbolic value of food

Another problem in village participation is the matter of food and water. However, this is not the problem most people think it is. We found while living in Paris that our French friends were often scandalized at the things which we ate. One of the most offensive of these was cheese with pie. I have seen Frenchmen grimace as if in agony upon seeing us combine these two foods.

I have stayed among the Kaka tribe on the open grasslands of the eastern Cameroun and have made studies among them. The life of these people is quite different from the jungle Bulu of the south. Life on

the savanna is more rigorous and results in a different adjustment to natural conditions. Food is much less abundant, and cassava is the main staple. Unlike the Bulu who have adopted many European ways, the Kaka are more under the influences of Islam, which filter down from their cattle-raising Fulani neighbors to the north.

I had gone into the village of Lolo to carry out some studies relative to the translation of the book of Acts and had taken no European food, determined to find what the effects of an all-Kaka diet would be. I attempted to drink only boiled water, but often this

was entirely impossible. I found that the simple mixture of cassava flour and hot water to form a mush was an excellent sustaining diet. On one occasion over a period of six weeks on this diet I lost no weight, had no diarrhea, and suffered no other ill effects. All of this food was prepared by village women, and I usually ate on the ground with the men wherever I happened to be when a woman would serve food. On several occasions when I was not in the right place at the right time, it meant going to bed with an empty stomach. I carefully avoided asking any woman to prepare food especially for me, as this had a sexual connotation which I did not care to provoke.

Once I had been talking most of the afternoon with a group of Kaka men and boys about foods people eat the world over. One of the young men got his Bulu Bible and read from the 10th chapter of Acts the vision of Peter who was instructed to kill and eat "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." This young Kaka who had been a short while at a mission school said, "The Hausa people don't believe this because they won't eat pigs. Missionaries, we think, don't believe this because they don't eat some of our foods either." I quite confidently assured him that a missionary would eat anything he does.

That evening I was called to the young man's father's doorway, where the old man sat on the ground in the dirt. In front of him were two clean white enamel pans covered by lids. He looked up at me and motioned for me to sit. His wife brought a gourd of water which she poured as we washed our hands. Then flicking wet fingers in the air to dry them a bit, the old man lifted the lid from the one pan. Steam arose from a neatly rounded mass of cassava mush. Then he lifted the lid from the other pan. I caught a glimpse of its contents. Then my eyes lifted and met the unsmiling stare of the young man who had read about the vision of Peter earlier in the afternoon. The pan was filled with singed caterpillars. I swallowed hard, thinking that now I either swallowed these caterpillars, or I swallowed my words and thereby proved again that Europeans have merely adapted Christianity to fit their own selfish way of life. I waited as my host scooped his shovel-like fingers deep into the mush, then with a ball of the stuff he

pressed it gently into the caterpillar pan. As he lifted it to his open mouth I saw the burned and fuzzy treasures, some smashed into the mush and others dangling loose, enter between his teeth.

My host had proven the safety of his food by taking the first portion. This was the guarantee that he was not feeding me poison. I plunged my fingers into the mush, but my eyes were fixed on the caterpillars. I wondered what the sensation in the mouth was going to be. I quickly scooped up some of the creeping things and plopped the mass into my mouth. As I bit down the soft insides burst open, and to my surprise I tasted a salty meat-like flavor which seemed to give the insipid cassava mush the ingredient that was missing.



We sat silently eating. There is no time for conversation at the Kaka "table," for as soon as the owner has had his first bite male hands appear from every direction and the contents are gone. As we sat eating quickly the old man's three wives with their daughters came and stood watching us from their kitchen doorways. They held their hands up and whispered busily back and forth: "White man Kaka is eating caterpillars. He really has a black heart." The pans were emptied. Each one took a mouthful of water, rinsed his mouth and spat the water to one side, belched loudly, said, "Thank you, Ndjambie" (God), arose and departed into the rays of the brilliant setting sun. My notes on that night contain this one line: "An emptied pan of caterpillars is more convincing than all the empty metaphors of love which missionaries are prone to expend on the heathen."

7. *Why was it important that the author eat the caterpillars?*

Ideological insulation

There are other obstacles to missionary participation in native life which arise from background as well as local Christian tradition. It does not take a folk or primitive people long to size up the distance which separates themselves from the missionary. In some cases this distance is negligible, but in others it is the separation between different worlds. Missionaries with pietistic backgrounds are prepared to suspect that everything the local people do is bad

and that therefore, in order to save them, they must pull them out and set up another kind of life opposed to the original one. This process seldom if ever works, and when it does the result is the creation of a society which consists of converted souls but no converted life. The missionary under these circumstances takes the path of least resistance, keeps himself untouched by the world, and of course does not get into touch with the world in order to save it.

8. *What negative effect can an insulated or "sheltered" Christian background have on identification?*

Freedom to witness

The Christian church sealed off from the world becomes unintelligible to the world it attempts to reach. It is like the father who can never remember how to be a child and therefore is looked upon as a foreigner by his children. Missionary participation and identification are not produced by a study of anthropology but by being freed through the Spirit of the Lord to witness to the truth of the gospel in the world.

Christianity calls men into a brotherhood in Christ, but at the same time Christians often negate that call by separating mechanisms which run the gamut from food taboos to racial fear. The Christian gospel is foreign enough to the self-centeredness of man's view of the universe. However, before this misconception of the self can be corrected, there is a barrier that must be penetrated. In Christian terminology it

is the cross which leads man from his walled-up self out into the freedom for which he was intended. There is yet another foreignness which must be overcome through sacrifice of one's own way of

The Christian church sealed off from the world becomes unintelligible to the world it attempts to reach.

thinking and doing things. Christianity cannot be committed to one expression of civilization or culture. The missionary task is that of sacrifice. Not the sacrifice of leaving friends and comfortable situations at home, but the sacrifice of reexamining one's own cultural assumptions and becoming intelligible to a world where he must not assume that intelligibility is given.

A missionary theology asks this question: “At what points in this man’s heart does the Holy Spirit challenge him to surrender?” The missionary task is to ferret out this point of contact through identification with him. The basis of missionary identification is not to make the “native” feel more at home around a foreigner nor to ease the materialistic conscience of the missionary but to create a *communication* and a *communion* where together they seek out what Saint Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5 calls the “argu-

ments and obstacles”—“We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” This is the basis for a missionary science, the biblical foundation of a missionary theology, and the *raison d’être* of the missionary calling in which one seeks, even in the face of profound limitations, to identify oneself in the creation of new creatures in a regenerate communion.

9. What is the ultimate purpose of identification?

We don’t have to be cross-cultural missionaries to appreciate the value of identification in Christian witness. Even within the context of our home churches, identification is an essential element for growth. Unfortunately, little importance is given to this dynamic. The new believer usually goes from having almost exclusively non-Christian friends to having almost all Christian friends within six months of conversion. Seldom are the natural bridges of identification exploited to bring those other friends to Christ.

Among the many reasons for this phenomenon is the fact that people gravitate toward those with whom they feel most comfortable. Without a conscious effort to reverse this trend, evangelism becomes a difficult and confrontive experience for most. Rather than being based on genuine interest and friendship, evangelism easily turns into an impersonal rhetorical (even combative) exercise with strangers.

For the missionary, this problem may be compounded. The missionary must not only break out of the evangelical subculture and accompanying Christian jargon, but also overcome the barriers encountered in reaching another culture. Without successful identification, the missionary runs the risk of failure in communicating the gospel.

II. Understanding Culture

One of the dimensions of identification is knowledge of the target culture. In order to gain such knowledge, one needs a basic understanding of the conceptual tools used in *cultural anthropology* (the study of cultures). Learning about a culture doesn’t guarantee acceptance into it, but it does help to promote the process of identification and adaptation.

The following article by Lloyd E. Kwast describes a method of viewing a culture by visualizing it as four concentric layers. As with an onion, each layer must be peeled back to reveal the layer beneath. The author applies an interesting “man from Mars” technique to peel back the layers of culture found in a North American classroom setting.

□ Understanding Culture *

Lloyd E. Kwast **

What is a culture, anyway? For the student just beginning the study of missionary anthropology, this question is often a first response to a confusing array of descriptions, definitions, comparisons, models, paradigms, etc. There is probably no more comprehensive word in the English language than the word “culture” or no more complex a field of study than cultural anthropology. Yet a thorough understanding of the meaning of culture is prerequisite to any effective communication of God’s good news to a different people group.

The most basic procedure in a study of culture is to become a master of one’s own. Everyone has a culture. No one can ever divorce himself from his own culture. While it is true that anyone can grow to appreciate various different cultures and even to communicate effectively in more than one, one can never rise above his own or other cultures to gain a truly supracultural perspective. For this reason, even the study of one’s own culture is a difficult task. And to look objectively at something that is part of oneself so completely is nearly impossible.

One helpful method is to view a culture, visualizing several successive “layers,” or levels of understanding, as one moves into the real heart of the culture.*** In doing so, the “man from Mars” technique is useful. In this exercise one simply imagines that a man from Mars has recently landed (via spaceship) and looks at things through the eyes of an alien space visitor.

Behavior

The first thing that the newly arrived visitor would notice is the people’s *behavior*. This is the outer and most superficial layer of what would be observed by an alien. What activities would he observe? What is being done? When walking into a classroom, our visitor may observe several interesting things. People are seen entering an enclosure through one or more openings. They distribute themselves throughout the room seemingly arbitrarily. Another person enters dressed quite differently than the rest, moves quickly to an obviously prearranged position facing the others, and begins to speak.



Figure 11-1

* Kwast, L. E. (1992). Understanding culture. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. C3-C6). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Lloyd Kwast taught for eight years in a college and theological school in Cameroon, West Africa, under the North American Baptist General Missionary Society. He has been the Chairman of the Department of Missions at Talbot Theological Seminary. He is currently a Professor at the Biola University School of Intercultural Studies and is Director of the Doctor of Missiology Program there.

*** This four-layer model was first introduced by G. Linwood Barney in an unpublished manuscript entitled *The supracultural and the cultural: Implications for frontier missions*. For the original version of this manuscript, see Barney, G. L. (1973). The supracultural and the cultural: Implications for frontier missions. In R. P. Beaver (Ed.), *The gospel and frontier peoples* (pp. 48-55). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

As all this is observed, the question might be asked, “Why are they in an enclosure? Why does the speaker dress differently? Why are many people seated while one stands?” These are questions of *meaning*. They are generated by the observations of behavior. It might be interesting to ask some of the participants in the situation why they are doing things in a certain way. Some might offer one explanation; others might offer another. But some would probably shrug and say, “It’s the way we do things here.” This last response shows an important function of culture, to provide “the patterned way of doing things,” as one group of missionary anthro-

pologists defines it. You could call culture the “super glue” which binds people together and gives

Culture is the “super glue” which binds people together and gives them a sense of identity and continuity which is almost impenetrable.

them a sense of identity and continuity which is almost impenetrable. This identity is seen most obviously in the way things are done—behavior.

10. What is the “most basic procedure” in the study of culture? Why?

Values

In observing the inhabitants, our alien begins to realize that many of the behaviors observed are apparently dictated by similar choices that people in the society have made. These choices inevitably reflect the issue of cultural *values*, the next layer of our view of culture. These issues always concern choices about what is “good,” what is “beneficial,” or what is “best.”

If the man from Mars continued to interrogate the people in the enclosure, he might discover that they had numerous alternatives to spending their time there. They might have been working or playing instead of studying. Many of them chose to study because they believed it to be a better choice than play or work. He discovered a number of other choices they had made. Most of them had chosen to arrive at the enclosure in small four-wheel vehicles, because they view the ability to move about quickly as very beneficial. Furthermore, others were noticed hurrying into the enclosure several moments after the rest had entered and again moving out of the room promptly at the close of the meeting. These people said that using time efficiently was very important to them. Values are “pre-set” decisions

that a culture makes between choices commonly faced. They help those who live within the culture to know what “should” or “ought” to be done in order to “fit in” or conform to the pattern of life.

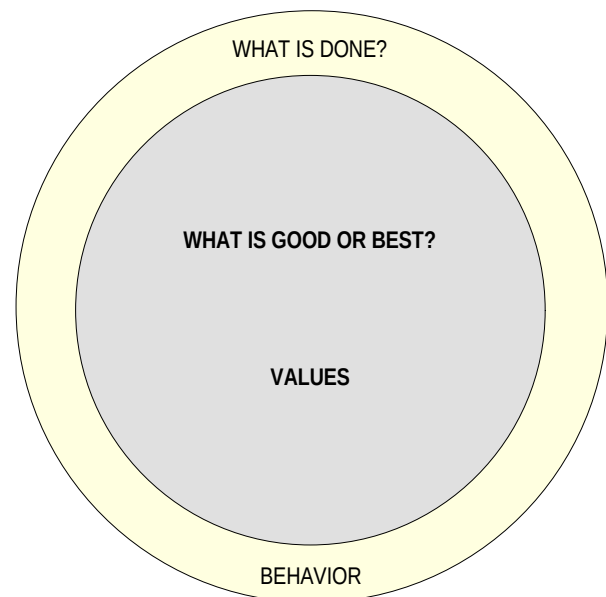


Figure 11-2

Beliefs

Beyond the questions of behavior and values, we face a more fundamental question in the nature of culture. This takes us to a deeper level of understanding, that of cultural *beliefs*. These beliefs answer for that culture the question: “What is true?”

Values in culture are not selected arbitrarily, but invariably reflect an underlying system of beliefs. For example, in the classroom situation, one might discover upon further investigation that “education” in the enclosure has particular significance because of their perception of what is true about man, his power to reason, and his ability to solve problems. In that sense culture has been defined as “learned and shared ways of perceiving” or “shared cognitive orientation.”

Interestingly, our alien interrogator might discover that different people in the enclosure, while exhibiting similar behavior and values, might profess totally different beliefs about them. Further, he might find that the values and behaviors were opposed to the beliefs which supposedly produced them. This problem arises from the confusion within the culture between operating beliefs (beliefs that

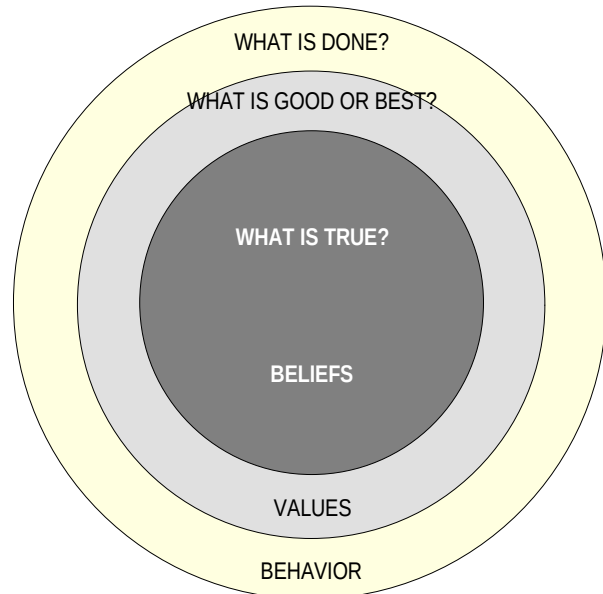


Figure 11-3

affect values and behavior) and theoretical beliefs (stated creeds which have little practical impact on values and behavior).

11. How do values affect one's behavior? How do they interact with beliefs?

Worldview

At the very heart of any culture is its *worldview*, answering the most basic question: “What is real?” This area of culture concerns itself with the great “ultimate” questions of reality, questions which are seldom asked but to which culture provides its most important answers.

Few of the people our man from Mars questions have ever thought seriously about the deepest assumptions about life, which result in their presence

in the classroom. Who are they? Where did they come from? Is there anything or anyone else occupying reality that should be taken into consideration? Is what they see really all there is, or is there something else or something more? Is right now the only time that is important? Or do events in the past and the future significantly impact their present experience? Every culture assumes specific answers to these questions, and those answers control and

integrate every function, aspect, and component of the culture.

This understanding of worldview as the core of every culture explains the confusion many experience at the level of beliefs. One's own worldview provides a system of beliefs which are reflected in his actual values and behavior. Sometimes a new or competing system of beliefs is introduced, but the worldview remains unchallenged and unchanged, so values and behavior reflect the old belief system. Sometimes people who share the gospel cross-culturally fail to take the problem of worldview into account and are therefore disappointed by the lack of genuine change their efforts produce.

This model of culture is far too simple to explain the multitude of complex components and relationships that exist in every culture. However, it is the very simplicity of the model which commends it as a basic outline for any student of culture.

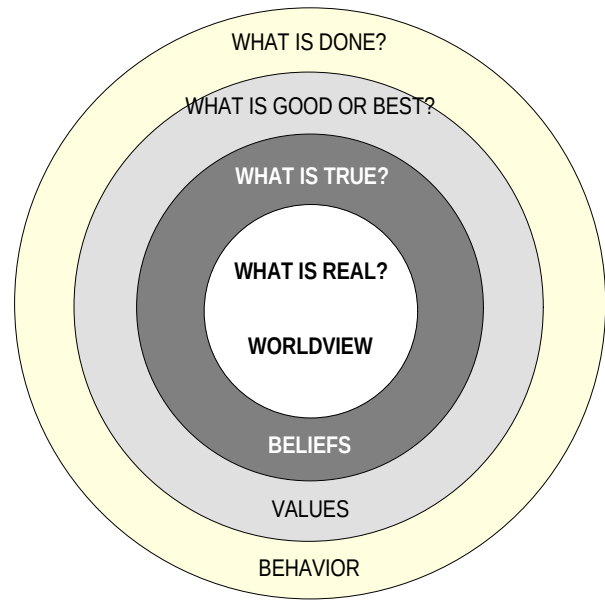


Figure 11-4

12. What is at the core of a culture and what is its impact on the society as a whole?

Understanding the concept of “layers” of culture can be a valuable tool in understanding a particular culture. The model provides a skeleton upon which the missionary can build in studying a people. Using this guide, the missionary can peel back the layers and can identify points of contact where the gospel may have a significant impact.

Culture Shock

It's inevitable. To one degree or another, those who work overseas experience *culture shock*. This feeling of disorientation is *normal* and should be anticipated by the cross-cultural worker. In the following article, Stephen Hoke gives us some insight into this phenomenon.

❑ **Coping With Culture Shock**

Stephen T. Hoke *

We are all creatures of our own culture. As we grow up, we nail together a raft of familiarity that helps us ride the waves of change in our own society. Year after year, plank by plank, we develop a coping strategy for life. It may be a rough-hewn vessel, but we have each mastered the cultural cues for our own sea of life. We even enjoy scanning the broad horizons as long as our feet are firmly planted on the raft of what we have come to know as “normal.”

Culture shock sums up all the complicated emotions that we feel when the pieces of our raft begin to separate. Up until this time, the planks of the familiar were so firmly fastened together that we were unconscious of them. Now, as they float away, we look longingly after each one.

Culture shock can make most missionaries feel like quitting, but when understood, it can become a positive learning experience. There are four stages to this phenomenon: Romance, Reaction, Recognition, and Resolution. If we know what to expect, we can creatively deal with our own feelings and the new world that confronts us.

Romance

At first, adjusting to a new culture looks easy. In the first weeks, there are a few discomforts, but nothing a little flexibility can't handle. You're mainly an enthusiastic spectator, absorbing the sights and forming impressions. You find yourself saying things like, “This raw fish isn't so bad—you just have to have a positive attitude” ... and you almost believe you're telling the truth.

Reaction

The second stage can best be described as a reaction to reality. It is a time of growing—growing irritation

and hostility! Daily activities that you used to take for granted now seem like insurmountable problems. The frustration leads to a potential crisis when you realize that it's not going to be “like home.” At this point, you may cling desperately to your own cultural norms, or the opposite—“go native” and completely renounce your own culture and values. Neither response is healthy, but the difficulty in seeing a third alternative just adds to your frustration.

Recognition

The first sign of your recovery from the *reaction* stage is a return of your sense of humor. As you enter the third stage, this returned sense of humor is accompanied by a recognition of communication cues in people's faces, actions, and tones. Developing some language facility, you can communicate more effectively. You begin to build a new raft of familiarity. Having become more accustomed to the food, sounds, and nonverbal behaviors, you have fewer headaches and upset stomachs, and you feel less confused, uncertain, and lonely.

Resolution

The fourth stage is one of nearly complete recovery and adjustment. Some call it becoming “bicultural.” You are able to function in two cultures with confidence. You may even find that there are many customs, sayings, and attitudes which you enjoy and, in fact, call your own. You possess an awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider. You almost forget that you were once a foreigner.

* Dr. Stephen T. Hoke has a lifetime of experience in cross-cultural ministry and Christian missions. Raised by missionary parents in Japan for 15 years, he has taught missions at Seattle Pacific University, was Associate Director of Training for World Vision, and served as President of L.I.F.E. Ministries (Japan). He has authored 30 popular articles on missions and has been involved in the training of over 1,000 people for cross-cultural service in 11 countries. He is presently Vice President of Training with Church Resource Ministries in California.

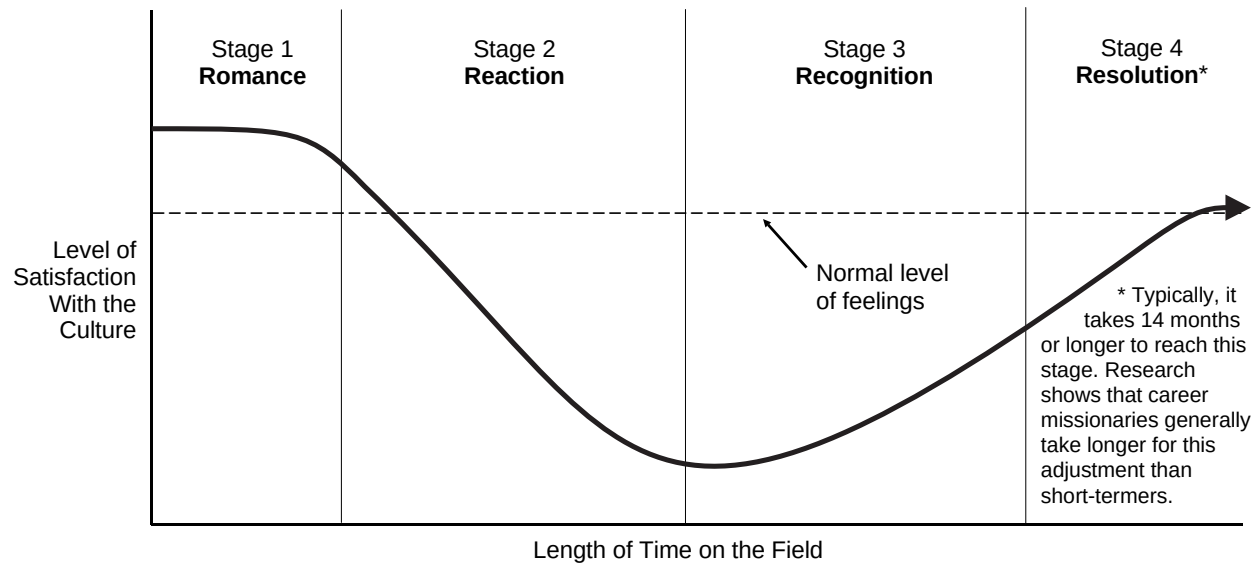


Figure 11-5. Stages of Culture Shock

13. How can understanding culture shock and its symptoms help an individual overcome the problem?

Becoming Bicultural

When one adapts to a new culture, he or she becomes a bicultural person. Sometime during this process, the concept that there is really only one way to live is shattered. One begins to deal with cultural variety—with the recognition that people build cultures in different ways and that they invariably believe in the superiority of their own ways. We call this attitude *ethnocentrism*. One understands that aside from showing some curiosity, people are generally not interested in learning other culturally determined ways of doing things. Bicultural individuals have moved from a philosophy which assumes uniformity, to one that recognizes and affirms diversity. Their outlook in relating to others begins to change, and they may find they feel most comfortable with other bicultural people.

Bicultural people really live in two worlds. They are part of two cultures and are never fully adjusted when they are in one or the other. They may eventually feel more comfortable in their adopted culture than in their native one, but inside they are still part of both. No matter which culture they are in, they will always seek little details, such as food or news, which reaffirm the other part of themselves. Their happiest moments may come when they are moving from one culture to the other after a long absence.

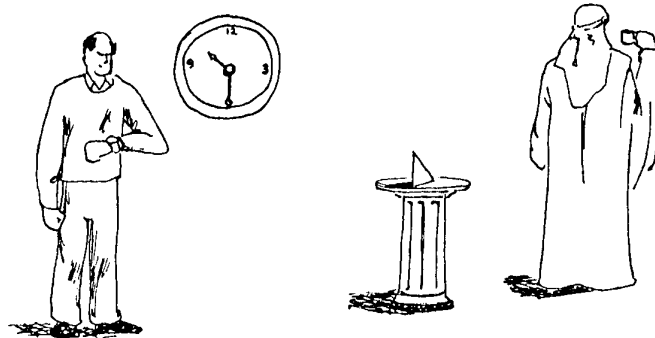
14. Most long-term missionaries become bicultural and raise bicultural children. What kind of stress are these missionary kids likely to experience due to their biculturalness?
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Cross-Cultural Differences*

Anthropologists have discovered that profound differences exist between cultures. Not only are these differences noted on the superficial behavioral level of dress, food, language, and actions, but at every level these differences are marked. Values, beliefs, and worldview vary greatly from culture to culture.

This variation can be graphically illustrated by the confusion and conflict which may ensue when persons from distinct cultures establish a meeting time. When a North American makes an appointment for 10:00 a.m., he expects the other person to show up within five minutes of that time. If the person shows up at 10:15, he is “late” and an apology is in order. If he is 30 minutes late, he had better have a very good excuse. If he is 45 minutes late, he might as well not show up, and he has committed a rather serious offense.

In parts of Arabia, people have a different concept of time. When an appointment is made for 10:00 a.m., only a servant is expected to show up at that time—in obedience to his master. The proper time for others to meet is from 10:45 to 11:15, demonstrating independence and equality. This system works well since equals would expect the meeting to take place about 10:45. The problem occurs when a North American sets up a meeting with an Arab, and neither one is sensitive to the other’s concept of time. If the American is left waiting, he will be offended. At the same time, the Arab will probably think that the American is acting like a servant.



* This section is summarized from Hiebert, P. G. (1976). Culture and cross-cultural differences. In A. F. Glasser et al. (Eds.), *Crucial dimensions in world evangelization* (pp. 45-60). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Paul G. Hiebert is Professor of Missions and Anthropology and Chairman of the Missions and Evangelism Department at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He previously taught anthropology and South Asian studies at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission. Hiebert served as a missionary in India with the Mennonite Brethren Board and has also been a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is the author of *Cultural Anthropology*, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, and *Case Studies in Mission* with Frances H. Hiebert.

15. *How could conflicts over time, such as the one described above, be avoided?*

Cross-Cultural Misunderstandings

When people from two distinct cultures come into contact with each other, conclusions about one culture are often drawn based on the other person's cultural assumptions. The North American may think that the Arab has no sense of propriety or time when he shows up 45 minutes "late" for an appointment, but this, obviously, is not true.

Cultural misunderstandings often arise out of actions done subconsciously. This principle is illustrated in the way people use physical space when they stand talking to each other. North Americans usually stand at a distance of about a meter and a half when discussing general matters. When they want to discuss a more personal matter, they usually approach to within one meter's distance and lower their voices. Latin Americans generally stand within one meter's distance in discussing general matters and closer for personal ones.

Misunderstandings arise when a North American meets a Latin American. The Latin may move within a meter's distance in order to converse. The North American, feeling a bit uneasy at this distance, may move back a step. The Latin, feeling that he is now having to talk "across the room," steps within his range again. As the conversation progresses (or breaks down), the Latin may get the impression that North Americans are cold and distant, and the North American may get the impression that Latin Americans are pushy and too familiar.

16. *What assumptions should we make about the behavior of people from another culture?*

The primary task in entering a new culture is to become an observer of its ways. Behavior should never be judged on the basis of our own cultural assumptions and background. We should assume that what is being done in another culture is normal and should seek to understand why. Misunderstandings arise out of ignorance of another culture.

Ethnocentrism

Each of us grows up in the center of our own world. We are "egocentric" by nature. Only as we mature do we begin to cross the gap between "me" and "you" in order to understand another's viewpoint. We also grow up in the center of a particular culture and learn its "right" ways. We look with suspicion on other practices and customs, believing them to be improper or inferior. This *ethnocentrism* is based on the natural tendency to judge the behavior of people on the basis of our own cultural assumptions.

Westerners generally believe that the “proper” manner of eating is with forks and spoons. They may be repulsed by people in India and the Middle East when they eat with their fingers. This “improper” manner of eating is viewed quite differently from the Indian’s perspective. As one Indian put it, “You see, we wash our hands carefully, and besides, they have never been in anyone else’s mouth. But look at these spoons and forks and think about how many other people have already had them inside their mouths!”

If cross-cultural misunderstandings are based on a lack of knowledge about another culture, ethnocentrism is based on feelings and values. It is not enough just to understand the other culture. If identification is to take place, the feelings which distinguish “them” from “us” must be dealt with. When “they” become part of the circle we consider “our kind of people,” then we have successfully dealt with our ethnocentrism.

17. *How do you think one can best deal with the feelings produced by ethnocentrism?*

Bible Translation

Missionaries are often called to do Bible translation work, particularly when attempting to reach an unreached people group. Translation is a difficult task because there is no word in one culture that carries exactly the same meaning in another culture. The same forms do not carry the same meaning from language to language. Words are symbols to which cultural values and meaning are always attached. We may find words which represent the same object, but the underlying meaning of that object will vary from culture to culture.

Hiebert illustrates a typical problem of Bible translation with the following example:

How do you translate “lamb of God” (John 1:29) into Eskimo in which there is no word for or any experience of animals we call sheep? Do you make up a new word and add a footnote to describe the creature that has no meaning in their thinking? Or do you use a word such as “seal” that has much the same meaning in their culture as “lamb” does in Palestine?

Obviously cultural differences raise problems when we translate a message from one language and culture to another.*

Translators in the past have not always understood the problem of meaning, and the result has been translations which are poorly received. More recently, when translating Scripture, translators have been concerned with producing “dynamic equivalent” translations which attempt to preserve the meaning, even if the form must be different. In some cases, when a translation problem arises, other forms with an equivalent meaning in that culture can be substituted. At other times, it may seem wisest to create a new word and teach its meaning. Both alternatives have their drawbacks. If a term is substituted, the translator runs the risk of distorting the Scripture message in some way. If a new word is created, it will not be understood right away and may require generations before its meaning is clearly assimilated.

* Hiebert, P. G. (1976). Culture and cross-cultural differences. In A. F. Glasser et al. (Eds.), *Crucial dimensions in world evangelization* (p. 54). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Translation work requires a great deal of technical skill. The translated Word, however, is essential to the long-range building of the church. If the church is to mature and establish firm roots, its leadership must become intimately acquainted with God's Word and shape their worldview by it.

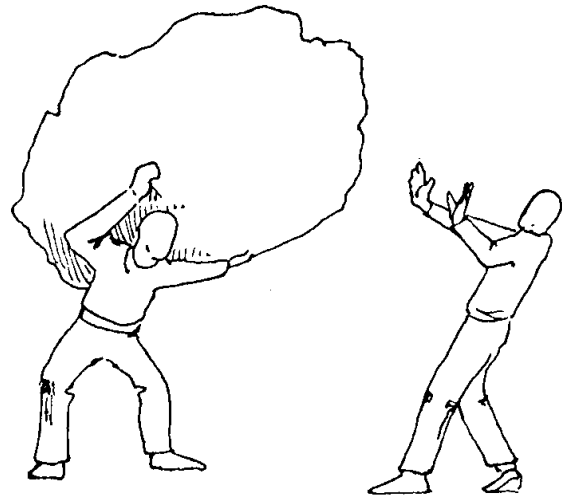
18. *In the Hindu worldview, gods often become men. This belief presents a problem in speaking of Christ's incarnation. The choice of a Hindu word for incarnation could be interpreted to mean that Christ was the incarnation of one of their pantheon of gods. How would you deal with this problem?*
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Cultural differences are of importance to the missionary, who must go through culture shock, learn to overcome misunderstandings and ethnocentric feelings, and translate the message so that it is understood. There are several other implications of cultural differences on the missionary task as well.

The Gospel and Culture

A clear distinction between the gospel and *culture* must be made. If this distinction is not made, one runs the risk of making one's culture the message. Democracy, capitalism, pews and pulpits, organizational systems and rules, and formal dress on Sundays are some of the cultural "baggage" which has often been attached to the gospel message. Rejection of Christianity is often based on rejection of the foreign cultural load that is placed on the message, rather than the message itself.

This distinction is not easily made. People cannot think without conceptual categories and symbols, so the message must be put in some cultural form in order to be understood and communicated. However, we must be careful not to add our own cultural expressions to the biblical message. Forms and symbols must be adapted from the target culture instead.



Failure to distinguish between biblical and cultural messages can lead to confusion. Different cultures will give differing moral values to certain behaviors and, even within the culture, these values may change with time. At one time in North America, for example, the practice of coloring the lips with lipstick was considered "sin" by many in the church. Today there are few North Americans who consider this widespread cultural practice sinful. In this case, the culture has changed, and so has its moral evaluation of a certain practice. We need to recognize that each culture defines certain behaviors as sinful, and that as a culture changes, so do its definitions of which behaviors are sinful.

This does not mean that there are no moral absolutes. The Bible is definite and prescriptive about many moral issues, and these principles must be made clear. However, a word of caution is in order. There are some biblical norms, such as greeting one another with a holy kiss (1 Thess. 5:26), which seem to be directed at specific cultural situations and may not apply to cultures universally.

19. *How can the attachment of cultural “baggage” to the gospel be minimized?*

Syncretism vs. Indigenization

Syncretism occurs when a cultural form or symbol has been adapted to Christian expression in a culture but carries with it attached meanings from the former belief system. For example, a traditional heathen feast may be adapted for use by Christians, but some of the forms may continue to carry occult connotations. The old meanings can severely distort or obscure the intended Christian meaning. The fear of syncretism has been one of the reasons missionaries have not always been open to adapting cultural forms to the gospel.

When the adaptation of cultural forms is done carefully, indigenization rather than syncretism occurs. Indigenization is successful when a culture finds ways of expressing Christian meaning through the adaptation or creation of forms which are consistent with the culture. Meaning is preserved without the burden of foreign cultural baggage.

20. *Each of the following cultural practices could be assimilated successfully by an indigenous church, yet each one has the potential to lead to syncretism. In each case, what signs of syncretism would you look out for?*

- a. Traditional sacrifice of a pig or chickens before a wedding ceremony.*
 - b. Using native rhythms and dances in worship.*
 - c. Painting pictures of Christ that look like one's ethnic race.*
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Conversion and Unforeseen Side Effects

Cultural traits are always linked together. Changes in one or more of these traits can lead to unforeseen changes in other areas of the culture. For example, the people in one African village let their village become dirty when they became Christians. When they accepted Christ as Lord, they no longer feared the

evil spirits that they believed hid in refuse. They felt, therefore, that there was no longer any need to keep the village clean.

Most cultural traits fill a need or perform an important function within a culture which contributes to the culture's existence. When a cultural trait is altered or eliminated, care must be taken that a vacuum is not left. A cultural substitute must be found, or the results can be tragic. Where polygamy has been practiced, for example, believers have often been asked to give up all but one wife. Generally, no arrangement has been made for the abandoned wives. The only recourse left to these women is to enter a life of prostitution or slavery. These are ethical questions which must be taken into consideration.

We have seen that during the process of acculturation, missionaries face a number of challenges. They must pass through culture shock, deal with ethnocentric feelings, overcome misunderstandings, and translate the message in such a way that it is understood with the meaning that is intended. Later on, they must make sure they do not attach cultural baggage to the message, guard against syncretism, and anticipate cultural side effects of conversion. No occupation is more challenging!

III. Missionary: Agent of Change

Missionaries have come under severe attack by secular humanists, anthropologists, and the media for "destroying" cultures. Are they guilty as charged? The following article by Don Richardson was written in response to the widely diffused notion that missionaries are agents of cultural imperialism.

Do Missionaries Destroy Cultures? *

Don Richardson **

When Fray Diego de Landa, a Catholic missionary accompanying Spanish forces in the New World, discovered extensive Maya libraries, he knew what to do. He burned them all, an event, he said, the Maya "regretted to an amazing degree, and which caused them much affliction." The books, in his opinion, were all of "superstition and lies of the devil." And so, in 1562, the poetry, history, literature, mathematics, and astronomy of an entire civilization went up in smoke. Only three documents survived de Landa's misguided zeal.

Magnificent totem poles once towered in Indian villages along Canada's Pacific coast. By 1900 vir-

tually all such native art had been chopped down, either by missionaries who mistook them for idols, or by converts zealously carrying out the directives of missionaries.

These incidents and many more show that we missionaries have sometimes acted in a culture-destroying manner. Whether through misinterpreting the Great Commission, pride, culture shock, or simple inability to comprehend the values of others, we have needlessly opposed customs we did not understand. Some, had we understood them, might have served as communication keys for the gospel!

* Richardson, D. (1992). Do missionaries destroy cultures? In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. C137-C143). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Don Richardson pioneered work for Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU) among the Sawi tribe of Irian Jaya in 1962. Author of *Peace Child*, *Lords of the Earth*, and *Eternity in Their Hearts*, Richardson is now Minister-at-Large for RBMU. He speaks frequently at missions conferences and Perspectives Study Program classes.

The world has been quick to notice our mistakes. Popular authors like Herman Melville, Somerset Maugham, and James Michener have stereotyped missionaries as opinionated, insensitive, neurotic, sent to the heathen because they were misfits at home.

Michener's austere Abner Hale, a missionary in the novel *Hawaii*, became the archetype of an odious bigot. Hale shouts hellfire sermons against the "vile abominations" of the pagan Hawaiians. He forbids Hawaiian midwives to help a missionary mother at the birth of "a Christian baby." The mother dies.

Hale even forbids Hawaiians to help his wife with housework lest his children learn the "heathen Hawaiian language." His wife works herself into an early grave.

When Buddhist Chinese settle in Hawaii, Michener has Hale barging into their temples to smash their idols.

Interesting literary grist, to be sure.

Unfortunately for naive readers, "Abner Hale" came to mean "missionary." We've been carrying him on our backs ever since.

Anthropologist Alan Tippet of the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission once researched hundreds of early missionary sermons stored in the Honolulu archives. None had the ranting style Michener suggests as typical. Critics seem to suggest, naively, that if only missionaries stayed home, primitive people would be left undisturbed to fulfill the myth of Rousseau's "noble savage."

Impact of secular forces

The fact is, commercial exploiters or other secular forces have already wrought havoc with indigenous cultures on an awesome scale. Livingstone was preceded by Arab slave traders. Amy Carmichael was preceded by victimizers who dragged boys and girls away to temples, where they faced the terrors of child prostitution.

Secular forces such as these have sometimes destroyed entire peoples. In North America not only the famous Mohicans but also the Hurons and possibly as many as 20 other Indian tribes were pushed into extinction by land-hungry settlers. Pioneers on

one occasion sent a tribe wagonloads of gift blankets known to be infected with smallpox.

In Brazil only 200,000 Indians remain from an original population estimated at 4 million. In the past 75 years more than one tribe per year has disappeared.

Readers may assume that Brazil's missing tribes have been absorbed into society, but this is not the case. Thousands have been brutally poisoned, machine-gunned, or dynamited from low-flying aircraft. Other thousands succumbed to a slower, more agonizing death by apathy. As encroachment caused their cultures to disintegrate, Indian men have even been known to cause their wives to miscarry. They refused to bring children into a world they could no longer understand.

Concern is widespread today—and justly so—for endangered animal species. But hundreds of our own human species are in even greater danger!

Prior to 1858, India's Andaman Islands were the home of at least 6,000 pygmy negritos. Then the British established a penal colony in the islands and victimization began. Today a scant 600 negritos remain.

Similar tragedies are unfolding throughout the Philippines, Asia, and Africa.

Concern is widespread today—and justly so—for endangered animal species. But hundreds of our own human species are in even greater danger! A yearly loss of 10 linguistically distinct tribes may be a conservative figure.

Only a few of the world's governments have established agencies to protect their ethnic minorities. Brazil, the Philippines, and India are three examples.

Secular agencies, however, suffer from severe budget restrictions. Furthermore, other arms of government may interfere with the programs.

For example, not long after Brazil's National Foundation for the Indian established Xingu National

Park as a reserve for endangered tribes, roadbuilders obtained permission to blast a modern highway through the center of it! As a result two of Xingu's "protected" tribes were destroyed by measles and influenza introduced by construction crews.

Clearly, the "enlightened" policy of "leave-them-alone" isn't working.

What then can halt their march toward extinction?

Grants, land, and secular welfare programs may help on the physical level (though sometimes godless officials introduce alcoholism or other vices, undermining whatever good their programs may accomplish).

But the greatest danger to aboriginals is one that such programs cannot deal with—the breakdown of the aboriginal's sense of "right" relationship with the supernatural. Every aboriginal culture acknowledges the supernatural and has strict procedures for

"staying right" with it. When arrogant outsiders ridicule a tribe's belief, or shatter its mechanisms for "staying right," severe disorientation sets in.

The greatest danger to aboriginals is one that secular welfare programs cannot deal with—the breakdown of the aboriginal's sense of "right" relationship with the supernatural.

Tribesmen believe they are under a curse for abandoning the old ways. They become morose and apathetic, believing they are doomed to die as a people.

Materialistic social workers or scientists cannot help such people. The tribesmen sense even an unspoken denial of the supernatural, and become even more depressed.

21. What is the greatest current threat to indigenous cultures?

Effects of spiritual encouragement

Who then can best serve such people as spiritual ombudsmen?

None other than the very ones popularly maligned as the number one enemy: the Bible-guided, Christ-honoring missionary.

Consider some case histories:

The Wai Wai

Less than a generation ago, according to Robert Bell of the Unevangelized Fields Mission, Brazil's Wai Wai tribe had been reduced to its last 60 members. This had come about largely through foreign diseases, and by the Wai Wai custom of sacrificing babies to demons to try to prevent those diseases.

Then a handful of UFM missionaries identified themselves with the tribe, learned their language, gave it an alphabet, translated the Word of God, and

taught Wai Wai to read. Far from denying the supernatural world, the missionaries showed the Wai Wai that a God of love reigned supreme over it. And that God had prepared for them a way of "staying right" on a far deeper level than they had ever dreamed of.

The Wai Wai now had a rational—even delightful—basis for not sacrificing babies to demons, and the tribe began to grow. Today the Wai Wai are fast becoming one of Brazil's most populous tribes. And optimistic Wai Wai Christians are teaching other dwindling groups of Indians how to cope with the 20th century through faith in Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ can solve many of the survival problems of endangered peoples.

The help given to the Wai Wai, furthermore, is only a very recent example of a long heritage of helping beleaguered peoples.

Native Americans

Near Stockbridge, in what is now Massachusetts, early American missionary John Sargent and his associates established a community to preserve Indian rights, preparing them for survival among encroaching Europeans.

Before ethnocentrism was named as a social evil, and before the birth of anthropology as a science, Sargent and his helpers unpatronizingly tilled the soil side by side with their Indian friends. Practicing what anthropologists now call “directed change,” they also shared their Christian faith. The Indians received it as their own.

That faith, and the love of their spiritual paracletes, sustained the tribe through more than a century of suffering. Greedy settlers soon decided that the land was too good for “mere Indians” and evicted them. After protesting unsuccessfully, Sargent obtained guarantees of land further west.

A few years later the community was uprooted again by other settlers. And again. Fifteen times they were forced to move. Each time the missionaries moved with them, wresting concessions for new land and holding the community together.

At last the community settled in Michigan, where it was allowed to rest, and survives to this day. As a side benefit, such missionary experiments helped convince scholars that a science of anthropology was necessary.

In both cases just cited, missionaries introduced culture change, but not arbitrarily and not by force. They brought only changes required by the New Testament or required for the survival of the people. Often the two requirements overlap (for example, the cessation of Wai Wai child sacrifices).

The Sawi

Once an interviewer regaled me (perhaps facetiously) for persuading the Sawi tribe in Indonesia to renounce cannibalism.

“What’s wrong with cannibalism?” he asked. “The Sawi practiced it for thousands of years. Why should they give it up now?”

I replied, “Can a people who practice cannibalism survive in the world today? No, they cannot. The Sawi are now citizens of the Republic of Indonesia. The Indonesian Republic does not permit its citizens to eat other people. Therefore, part of my task was to give the Sawi a rational basis for voluntarily renouncing cannibalism before the guns of the police decided the issue.”

On another level Sawi culture entertained a dark compulsion to venerate dead relatives by handling, or even eating, the rotting flesh of their corpses. Yet when the Sawi received the Christian teaching of the resurrection, they immediately abandoned such procedures, almost with a sigh of relief. The gospel cured them of this strange compulsion.

The Sawi are among perhaps 400 black-skinned Melanesian tribes just emerging from the stone age in Irian Jaya. Thirteen years ago the Netherlands ceded Irian Jaya (then New Guinea) to Indonesia. Today, an estimated 100,000 Indonesians have migrated to Irian Jaya. Will the tribal people be prepared to cope with their more enterprising migrant neighbors? Or will they become extinct?

Ethnic crises of this magnitude are far too sensitive to be left to the dubious mercy of purely commercial interests. Missionaries whose hearts overflow with the love of Christ are the key.

Scattered throughout Irian Jaya, more than 250 evangelical missionaries (all too few) are ministering the gospel to both races. Knowledgeable in Indonesian as well as many of Irian’s 400 tribal languages, they are helping members of clashing cultures understand each other. With the sympathetic help of the Indonesian government, they are optimistic that major culture shock may be averted.

Already, through faith in Christ, tens of thousands of Irianese have begun a smooth transition into the 20th century.

Surely ethnic crises of this magnitude are far too sensitive to be left to the dubious mercy of purely commercial interests. Missionaries whose hearts overflow with the love of Christ are the key.

22. In what ways do Christian missionaries act as benign agents in cultural transition?

The issue is not whether missionaries do or should change cultures. Missionaries, by the very nature of their work, are agents of change. They are but one of many political, ideological, and economic forces which are continually exerting influence on societies around the world. The more relevant question is, Which of these many agents has the people's best interest at heart?

In the following article, David Hesselgrave demonstrates why Christianity is the only world force which has at heart the preservation of the best in human cultures.

❑ **Christ and Culture ***

David J. Hesselgrave **

When God created man and man's environment, He pronounced everything "very good" (Gen. 1:31). God gave man a *Cultural Mandate* which entailed certain rulership over his environment (Gen. 1:26-30). God, however, did not withdraw from the scene. Nor did He cease to be God. Rather, He continued to provide for and fellowship with His creatures. How long that blissful state continued we do not know, but it was interrupted by the fall. And the fall left its mark on creation, creature, and culture (Gen. 3:14-19). Man's hope rested on the promise of the "seed of woman" who would bruise the serpent's head.

Subsequently, mankind collectively failed as miserably as Adam and Eve had failed individually, with the result that God pronounced judgment upon man, beast, and land (Gen. 6:6-7). Following the flood, Noah and his family received promises and a *Social*

Mandate that was to apply to them and their progeny down through the generations (Gen. 8:21-9:17).

The significance of this simple and sublime story in the first chapters of Genesis must be carefully probed but can never be completely fathomed. It forms the basis of a theology of culture that is amplified throughout sacred Scripture. Man's relationship to God precedes and proscribes all other relationships. In this sense true religion is prior to culture, not simply a part of it. In listening to the usurper and choosing to disobey God, man invited the impress of sin upon all that he was and all he touched. The fall did not result in the eradication of the image of God in the creature nor in the countermanding of all cultural prerogatives. But it did interpose another and false authority over man, and it did mar man's person and productions. Only under Christ can man be redeemed and his culture renewed.

* Hesselgrave, D. J. (1978). *Communicating Christ cross-culturally* (pp. 80-82). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

** After 12 years of service in Japan under the Evangelical Free Church, David J. Hesselgrave became Professor of Missions at the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He later served as Director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism, and is now the Professor Emeritus of Mission. He is also the Executive Director of the Evangelical Missiological Society. Hesselgrave is the author of *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* and *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*.

23. How was human culture affected by the fall?

The *Gospel Mandate* (Matt. 28:18-20) requires that missionaries teach other men to observe all that Christ has commanded. In teaching, missionaries touch culture—and happily so—for *all culture needs transformation in motivation if not in content*. If anything at all is apparent in our world, it is that God has ordained culture but has not been allowed to order culture. Satan is indeed “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, as Calvin insisted, believers must work to make culture Christian (i.e., under Christ) or at least conducive to (i.e., allowing the maximum opportunity for) Christian living. As J. H. Bavinck puts it, the Christian life *takes possession* of heathen forms of life and thereby makes them new:

Within the framework of the non-Christian life, customs and practices serve idolatrous tendencies and drive a person away from God. The Christian life takes them in hand and turns them in an entirely different content. Even though in external form there is much that resembles past practices, in reality everything has become new, the old has in essence passed away and the new has come. Christ takes the life of a people in His hands, He renews and reestablishes the distorted and deteriorated, He fills each thing, each word,

and each practice with a new meaning and gives it a new direction.*

The missionary is involved in this process directly and indirectly. He may attempt to stay above the culture line and deal only with matters of the soul. But that effort is as hopeless as is the effort of the social scientist to eliminate God from his world and explain Christianity in cultural terms only. In the

The missionary cannot communicate Christianity without concerning himself with culture because, though Christianity is supracultural in its origin and truth, it is cultural in its application.

first place, the missionary cannot communicate without concerning himself with culture because communication is inextricable from culture. Just as Christ became flesh and dwelt among men, so propositional truth must have a cultural incarnation to be meaningful. In the second place, the missionary cannot communicate *Christianity* without concerning himself with culture because, though Christianity is supracultural in its origin and truth, it is cultural in its application.

24. In what way is Christianity supracultural?

* Bavinck, J. H. (1960). *An introduction to the science of missions* (D. H. Freeman, Trans.) (p. 179). Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Only Christ can heal cultures. The missionary's role is to be an agent of that healing. By carrying out Christ's redemptive mission, the missionary stimulates change which allows a people to experience their greatest fulfillment within their own culture. In the following excerpt, Dale Kietzman and William Smalley offer an explanation of the role of the church and the missionary in culture change.

❏ **Introducing Cultural Change ***

Dale W. Kietzman and William A. Smalley **

The important thing for the missionary to note is that change is almost always initiated by someone within the cultural community. Even though the idea may have been sparked by contact with another culture, it still must be introduced from within to be accepted. The alternative to this scheme is change forced upon a people through superior might, whether moral or physical. This is the sort of change that missions have often been responsible for and that resulted in such unfortunate reaction.

The real agent of the Holy Spirit in any society for the changes in the culture of that society is the church, the body of believers (*not* necessarily the organized church of any particular denomination). The church is the salt working through the whole dish. It is that part of the society which has a new relationship to God—yet it reacts in terms of the attitudes and presuppositions of that society. It understands, in an intuitive, unanalyzed way, motives and meanings as the missionary cannot. It must make the decisions.

25. *Who are the real agents of Christian change within a culture?*

The missionary's basic responsibility is to provide the material upon which the native Christian and church can grow "in grace and knowledge" to the point where they can make reliable and Spirit-directed decisions with regard to their own conduct

within the existing culture. This involves a complete freedom of access to the Word of God, with such encouragement, instruction, and guidance in its use as may be necessary to obtain a healthy and growing Christian community.

* Kietzman, D. W., & Smalley, W. A. (1978). The missionary's role in culture change. In W. A. Smalley (Ed.), *Readings in missionary anthropology II* (pp. 527-529). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Dale W. Kietzman, a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators since 1946, worked with the Amahuaca Indians of Peru. He served in a number of administrative roles, including United States Division Director. He also served as President of World Literature Crusade/Every Home for Christ and more recently as Chairman of the Communications Division at the William Carey International University. Kietzman is author of numerous articles and books on mission subjects and on the Indians of South America.

William A. Smalley is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota. He worked for 23 years for the United Bible Societies and continues as a consultant to the Bible Societies in his retirement. He was also active in the formation of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics. He was editor of the journal *Practical Anthropology* from 1955 to 1968 and is editor of *Readings in Missionary Anthropology* and numerous other articles.

The missionary's role in culture change, then, is that of a catalyst and of a source of new ideas, new information. It is the voice of experience, but an experience based on his own culture for the most part and therefore to be used only with care and understanding. Part of the value of anthropological study, of course, is that it gives at least vicarious experience in more than one cultural setting, for by study in this field the missionary can gain awareness

of the much wider choice of alternatives than his own culture allows.

It is the church which is the legitimate agency in which the missionary should work. It is the people who must make the decisions based on the new ideas which they have received. It is they who must reinterpret old needs and expressions, examined now in the light of their relationship to God and to their fellow men in Christ Jesus.

26. *What is the missionary's role in culture change?*

Missionaries are agents of culture change, and no one should be under the illusion that they are not. Neither should anyone think that missionaries are the only ones who occupy that role. Rather, there are several competing forces contributing to change in societies all over the world. Missionaries are God's agents of redemption, and as such, they can introduce the healing presence of Christ into cultures that have been twisted by the fall of man. They function as catalysts, stimulating the true agent of change within the culture—the church—to initiate the changes which are necessary.

Summary

As Christ found it necessary to identify with mankind in order to minister salvation and become our high priest, so missionaries must seek to identify with those to whom they go in order to minister to them effectively. The objective, however, is not to see how much missionaries can identify, but to use that identification to find points of contact within the culture whereby the gospel can take root. Identification, then, is the means by which missionaries can discover effective ways to communicate the gospel.

The first task missionaries have upon entering a new culture is to become students of that culture. A basic knowledge of anthropology will help them penetrate the four levels at which cultures are organized, i.e., the people's behavior, values, beliefs, and worldview. In the process of acculturation, missionaries will experience culture shock, will need to deal with their ethnocentrism, must overcome misunderstandings, and must translate the message in a way which preserves the intended meaning while being understood. They must not attach cultural baggage to the message. While striving for indigenization, they must guard against syncretism and negative cultural side effects.

Recognizing that they are agents of culture change, missionaries must understand their proper role. This is a key to the successful indigenization of the church. Missionaries act as catalysts within the culture. They are resource persons to the church, and the church is the real agent of the Holy Spirit in bringing change to a culture.

Integrative Assignment

In this assignment, you will develop an entry strategy for those who will be establishing a presence among the unreached group. You will also try to answer the question: *What will be the result?*

WORKSHEET #5: IDENTIFYING WITH THE TARGET GROUP

A. Establishing a Presence

1. How will you establish a presence among your target group? What entry strategy will the team use?

2. What is the most appropriate language to use for evangelization of these people? Why?

3. How will the team go about learning the language and culture?

4. How will they identify with the people?

5. What need(s) will you be addressing? How will the love of Christ and the power of the gospel be demonstrated to the target group?

B. Proclaiming the Good News

6. What cultural values, structures, or practices are the greatest hindrances to the gospel?

7. What cultural values, beliefs, structures, or practices might provide a bridge for the gospel?

8. What social structures will influence your evangelistic efforts?

9. What will precede your sharing of the gospel message? How and with whom will you first share it?

10. What will characterize the corporate expression of this people group's faith in Christ? Are there cultural practices or structures which could be reinterpreted and incorporated into Christian lifestyle or worship?

11. What culturally appropriate media (literature, audio or video cassettes, radio, etc.) will you use for evangelism and for teaching converts?

CHAPTER 12

Becoming a Belonger

The task of cross-cultural evangelism is challenging! The missionary must first deal with personal adjustment to the new culture and identify with the people. The gospel must then be presented in such a way that the people not only understand it, but can respond to the message. When a young church emerges, the missionary must assume the role of mentor and guide, encouraging the church to develop its own cultural expression while guarding against syncretism. Not all missionaries succeed.

Getting off to a good start is extremely critical to long-term effectiveness. The first few days among the target people can determine the course of a missionary's ministry for years to come. Attitudes are formed, and pivotal emotional ties are often made during this beginning period. In this chapter, we will examine the importance of entry strategies, the significance of initial roles, and expectations regarding these roles. We will also explore how lifestyle and related attitudes affect the missionary's acculturation and long-term effectiveness.

I. Bonding

The first few weeks in a new country or among a different people are critical to a missionary's adaptation. Intellectual preparation is important to meet the challenges of a new situation, but there is a critical emotional process in those first days which will indelibly stamp the response of the missionary to the target people. In the following article, Thomas and Elizabeth Brewster explain what this process entails and make suggestions for the successful initiation of a new missionary.

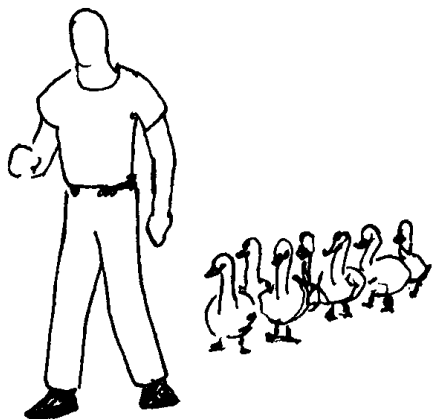
❑ **Bonding and the Missionary Task: Establishing a Sense of Belonging ***

E. Thomas Brewster and Elizabeth S. Brewster **

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”
(John 1:14).

We have a new little boy who was born into our home just a few months ago. In preparing for his natural childbirth at home, we were introduced to the concept of bonding.

In the animal world it is called imprinting. Most of us remember the picture in our college psychology books of the psychologist Konrad Lorenz being followed by ducklings. At the critical time, right after hatching, Lorenz and the ducklings were alone together and, from then on, they responded to him as though he were their parent. The imprinted duck experiences a sense of belonging to the man.



More recent studies supporting the concept of bonding have been carried out with a variety of animals, including goats, calves, and monkeys. In each case,

the infant and mother have an early period of sensitivity right after birth. If mother and infant are together at that time, a close bond results which can withstand subsequent separations.

But if infant and mother are separated immediately after birth, the infant can become attached to a surrogate—a cloth doll, a different adult animal, or even a human. If infant and mother are later reunited, one or both may reject the other or at least not respond to the other with normal attachment.

Studies of human infants and mothers show the importance of bonding. Apparently, just after birth, divinely designed psychological and physiological factors in the newborn uniquely prepare him to become bonded with his parents. Certainly the excitement and adrenaline levels of both the child and his parents are at a peak. The senses of the infant are being stimulated by a multitude of new sensations. The birth is essentially an entrance into a new culture with new sights, new sounds, new smells, new positions, new environment, and new ways of being held. Yet, at that particular time, he is equipped with an extraordinary ability to respond to these unusual circumstances.

People who support home birth are concerned about the bonding process between parents and the infant. An important collection of research studies by Klaus and Kennell*** is widely read. It is pointed out that the non-drugged newborn is more alert during the first day than at any time during the next week or two. This was our experience, as our son was full of

* Brewster, E. T., & Brewster, E. S. (1982). *Bonding and the missionary task: Establishing a sense of belonging*. Pasadena: Lingua House.

** E. Thomas and Elizabeth S. Brewster have been a husband-wife team specializing in helping missionaries develop effective techniques for learning any language and adapting to the broader culture of which the language is a part. Tom was teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary when he died in 1985. Betty Sue is part-time Assistant Professor for Language and Culture Learning at Fuller's School of World Mission. Their work has taken them to more than 75 countries, and they have helped train over 2,500 missionaries. Their textbook *Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP)* has been widely acclaimed for its innovative approach and pedagogical creativity.

*** Klaus & Kennell. (1976). *Maternal infant bonding*. St. Louis: Mosby Co.

interest and curiosity for his first six hours, then, after sleeping, he continued very alert for a few more hours.

These alert hours are the critical time for bonding to occur—for a sense of belonging to be established.

Typical American hospital birth is not conducive to normal bonding for two reasons. Hospital-born babies are usually drugged—groggy from a variety of medications typically given to the laboring mother. Neither the baby, nor mother then, has an opportunity to experience the period of acute alertness immediately after birth.

The other reason normal bonding does not occur within the hospital establishment is that the baby is

typically snatched away from his family and straightway placed in the isolation of the nursery.

When normal bonding does not occur, rejection can result. It has been demonstrated, for example, that child abuse occurs far more frequently with children who were born prematurely and then isolated from the mother for even a few days while being kept in incubators.*

Our desire to be intimately together as a family and away from institutional commotion in order to maximize the bonding opportunity for all three of us (father included) was a major reason for choosing home birth.

1. What is the main point the authors make about “bonding”?

The missionary analogy

There are some important parallels between the infant’s entrance into his new culture and an adult’s entrance into a new, foreign culture. In this situation the adult’s senses, too, are bombarded by a multitude of new sensations, sights, sounds, and smells—but he, too, is able to respond to these new experiences and even enjoy them. Just as the participants in the birth experience, his adrenaline is up and his excitement level is at a peak. Upon arrival, he is in a state of unique readiness, both physiologically and emotionally, to become a believer in his new environment. But then....

Just as the infant is snatched away by the hospital establishment and put into the isolation of the nursery, so the newly arrived missionary is typically snatched away by the expatriate missionary contingency and, thus, isolated from his new language community.

He is ready to bond—to become a believer with those to whom he is called to be good news. The timing is critical. Ducklings do not become imprinted at any old time. Imprinting occurs at the critical time. Bonding best occurs when the participants are uniquely ready for the experience.

The way the new missionary spends his first couple of weeks in his new country is of critical importance if he is to establish a sense of belonging with the local people.

The way the new missionary spends his first couple of weeks in his new country is of critical importance if he is to establish a sense of belonging with the local people.

* Klaus & Kennell. (1976). *Maternal infant bonding* (pp. 2-10). St. Louis: Mosby Co.

It is not uncommon for a baby to become bonded with hospital personnel instead of with his own parents. The baby then cries when with the mother and is comforted by the nurse. New missionaries, too, tend to become bonded to the other expatriates rather than to the people of the new society. It happens subtly, maybe while the newcomer is subject to the hospitality of an orientation time.

When his sense of belonging is established with the other foreigners, it is then predictable that the missionary will carry out his ministry by the “foray” method—he will live isolated from the local people, as the other foreigners do, but make a few forays out into the community each week, returning always to the security of the missionary community. Without bonding he does not have a sense of feeling at home

within the local cultural context. Thus, he does not pursue, as a way of life, significant relationships in the community. When normal bonding is not established, rejection of the people, or even abuse, can

When normal bonding is not established, rejection of the people, or even abuse, can occur.

occur—it is often reflected in the attitude behind statements like, “Oh, these people! Why do they always do things this way?” or, “Somebody ought to teach them how to live!” or, “Won’t these people ever learn?”

2. What kind of ministry approach may the non-bonded missionary have?

Implications of bonding for the missionary task

A missionary is one who goes into the world to give people an opportunity to belong to God’s family. He goes because he himself is a believer in this most meaningful of relationships. His life should proclaim: “I belong to Jesus who has given me a new kind of life. By my becoming a believer here with you, God is inviting you through me to belong to Him.”

The missionary’s task thus parallels the model established by Jesus, who left heaven, where He belonged, and became a believer with humankind in order to draw people into a belonging relationship with God.

We are convinced that the normal missionary newcomer is ready physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually to become bonded with the people of his new community. Fulfillment of this unique readi-

ness must be initiated at the time of arrival. The timing is critical.

During his first couple of weeks, the newcomer is uniquely able to cope with and even enjoy the newness of a foreign country and its language. There have been months or even years of planning, and his anticipation, excitement, and adrenaline are now at a peak.

The newcomer who is immediately immersed in the local community has many advantages. If he lives with a local family, he can learn how the insiders organize their lives, how they get their food and do their shopping, and how they get around with public transportation. During the first couple of months, he can learn much about the insiders’ attitudes and how they feel about the ways typical foreigners live. As he experiences an alternative lifestyle, he can evalu-

ate the value of adopting it for himself and his own family. On the other hand, the missionary whose first priority is to get settled can only settle in his familiar Western way, and once this is done he is virtually locked into a pattern that is foreign to the local people.

Culture shock is predictable for the missionary who has not bonded with the local people of his new community but is much less likely for the bonded person. The one who feels at home does not experience culture shock.

In our first culture it comes naturally for us to do things in a way that works. We know which way to look for traffic as we step off the curb, how to get a bus to stop for us, how to pay a fair price for goods or services, how to get needed information, etc., etc.

But in a new culture, the way to do things seems to be unpredictable. As a result, newcomers experience a disorientation which can lead to culture shock.

The new missionary who establishes his sense of belonging with other missionary expatriates has his entry cushioned by these foreigners. It is generally thought that this cushioning is helpful for the adjustment of the newcomer, whose arrival is often planned to coincide with a field council pow-wow.

We would like to suggest, however, that this cushioning is an unfortunate disservice, because during the first two or three weeks the newcomer would have been especially able to cope with the unpredictable situations encountered in the new culture. Indeed, he might even revel in all the variety. But the critical first few days are the only time such a response is likely. The way these days are spent is, therefore, of crucial importance—and cushioning is the last thing he needs.

The first prayer letter the cushioned missionary sends from the field will typically describe his airport meeting with the local missionaries, the accommodations provided by them, and the subsequent orientation by these expatriates. After writing about how he has been accepted by the other missionaries (one of his high priorities), he will invariably close

with something like: “Our prayer request at this time is that we will be accepted by the local people.” A noble desire, but a concern that is being expressed about three weeks too late!—and now without a viable strategy to achieve the goal. The initial blush of life in the new environment is now gone.

The individual who hopes to enter another culture in a gradual way will probably fail to do so, and he may never enjoy the experience of belonging to the people or having them care for him.

Better to plunge right in and experience life from the insiders’ perspective. Live with the people, worship with them, go shopping with them, and use their public transportation. From the very first day it is important to develop many meaningful relationships with local people. The newcomer should communicate early his needs and his desire to be a learner. People help people who are in need! Then, when potentially stressful situations come up he can, as learner, secure help, answers, or insight from these insiders. (The one who is being cushioned gets outsiders’ answers to insiders’ situations, and his foreignness and alienation are thereby perpetuated.)

The individual who hopes to enter another culture in a gradual way will probably fail to do so, and he may never enjoy the experience of belonging to the people or having them care for him.

A couple who have chosen to be isolated from Western people during their first months in a Muslim context wrote us about the victories they have experienced:

My husband and I knew before we left that we would have different types of adjustments. I knew the hardest time for me would be at first, and he felt that his hard times would occur after he had been here a while. So it has been. I really had a hard time leaving our family. But after I started getting out with the people here, my homesickness faded. The

local community has so warmly received us. At Christmas, 125 of these friends came to our Christmas celebration. And during that season, the closeness of our interpersonal relationships amazed us.

The Lord has blessed our work here, and my husband is discipling two Muslim converts. We really have been alone in many ways. We supported each other, but at times the burdens seemed so big, and we didn't have anyone else to talk to or look to for advice. But I suppose that is why we have such good national friends.

Bonding is the factor that makes it possible for the newcomer to have "such good national friends." Of course there will be stressful situations, but the bonded newcomer, experiencing the wonder of close relationships, is able to derive support from the network of the local friendships he has developed. This, in turn, facilitates the acquisition of the insiders' ways and gives a sense of feeling at home. The one who feels at home may feel discouraged or even melancholy for a time, and some cultural stress is to be expected, but it may not be necessary to experience culture shock. Culture shock, like severe post-partum blues, may be a problem of the structure more than a problem of individuals.

3. Why does bonding help minimize culture shock?

It is significant to note that the new Muslim converts mentioned in the letter above are the result of the ministry of relative newcomers. At a time when other missionaries might typically be experiencing the cushioning and isolation of a language school, those who are bonded and carrying out their language learning in the context of relationships in the new community also have the opportunity to pursue the development of their new ministry from the earliest days of language learning. A few years ago the authors supervised the initial language learning for a team of 11 newcomers in Bolivia. We published an article describing that project in the April 1978 Evangelical Missions Quarterly:

... Over 30 people came to know Christ as a result of the involvement ministry that these new language learners were able to develop during those (first) three months. Many of these were either members of families with whom we were living, or were on a route of regular listeners. In both cases, as a result of the personal relationships that they had developed, they were able to follow up and

disciple the new believers. Little wonder that this was a fulfilling experience for these new language learners (p. 103).

Insights gained through relationships can help to ensure, right from the beginning, that the wheels of ministry are not only turning but that they are on the ground and moving in a direction that makes sense to the local people.

Bonding and effective interpersonal ministry are realistic even for short-termers, and should be encouraged and facilitated.

Bonding and effective interpersonal ministry are realistic even for short-termers, and should be encouraged and facilitated. (The rapid international expansion of Mormonism is virtually all being carried out by short-termers, most of whom immediately move in with a local family and become believers in the community. We were recently told

by a Cantonese man from Hong Kong that the missionaries there who have learned the language best are Mormons!)

Only a minimum of the target language is needed to initiate bonding relationships. For example, we recently received a letter with the following comment:

The best thing that happened to me was on the first day when you challenged us to take the little we knew how to say and go talk with 50 people. I didn't talk with 50; I only talked with 44. But I did talk with 44.

(The "text" she was able to say that first day was limited to a greeting and an expression of her desire to learn the language; then she could tell people that she didn't know how to say any more but she would see them again. She then closed with a thank you and a leave-taking.) The ice was broken on her very first day, and from then on, she was able to begin to feel at home in her new community.

Having local friendships is essential for feeling at home. A report developed by a mission for whom we recently consulted on a language learning project compared the 18 maximumly involved learners with a control group of missionaries who had been through language school. The report revealed that the individuals of the control group (the resident missionaries) each had an average of one close national friend, while each of the learners—after only 11 weeks—had a minimum of 15 close local friendships. Since each learner had had contacts with dozens of local people, there were at least 1,000 nationals who had had positive experiences with the learners during the weeks of the project. The report continued: "Who knows how all of this low-level public relations will ultimately benefit [the mission]; it is highly improbable that it will be detrimental. 'Maximum involvement' language learning is where it's at."

4. *Why does bonding offer great potential for immediate ministry?*

Normal language acquisition is essentially a social activity, not an academic one. As a result, gaining proficiency in the language is normal for the person who is deeply contexted and has his sense of belonging in the new society. But language study will often be a burden and frustration for the one who is bonded to other foreign missionaries. It is therefore important to facilitate an opportunity for new missionaries to become bonded with (and hence belongers in) their new community. New missionaries should be challenged with the bonding objective and prepared to respond to the opportunity to become a believer.

Preparation should include an orientation to the importance of bonding, with a commitment to do so. A few sentences of the new language that will be helpful for entry purposes could be learned. Also, skills should be developed in how to carry on language learning in the context of community relationships.*

Then, most important, from his first day he should be encouraged to totally immerse himself in the life of the new community. He should be permitted to choose to remain in isolation from other missionaries for his first few months. He should seek to

* A recent study by Stephen M. Echerd (an in-house mission report) included a comparison between learners who had been trained in advance and others who developed skills after arriving in the country: "Those in the group who had previous exposure to LAMP (Language Acquisition Made Practical) made 11.78 time units of progress compared to 5.82 time units of those who had no previous exposure—more than double!"

worship with the people, away from churches where missionaries lead or congregate.

Our observation is that experienced but non-bonded missionaries can be a primary obstacle to the new missionary who wishes to pursue the bonding goal. We have, therefore, occasionally even recommended that a new missionary arrive about three weeks before the other missionaries expect him.

Experienced but non-bonded missionaries can be a primary obstacle to the new missionary who wishes to pursue the bonding goal.

One learner wrote:

The bonding concept motivated me to fly into Singapore early with no prior contacts or housing set up. This is what I wrote in my journal: I discovered it was actually good to be alone when breaking into a new culture—it especially adds to the expectation of what God will do! Even though I was fearful and lonely at times, I was much hungrier and eager and able to hear His voice and discern His will. And, of course, I found many who were willing to help me.

If a newcomer is going to successfully establish himself as a believer, live with a local family, and learn from relationships on the streets, a prior decision and commitment to do so is essential. Without such a prior commitment it doesn't happen.

When we have accompanied missionary learners at the time of their entry into other countries, we have found that a prior preparation of perspectives and expectations is helpful. We therefore expect all participants in projects we supervise to meet four conditions:

1. Be willing to live with a local family.
2. Limit personal belongings to 20 kilos.
3. Use only local public transportation.
4. Expect to carry out language learning in the context of relationships that the learner himself is responsible to develop and maintain.

A willingness to accept these conditions tells a lot about an individual's attitude and flexibility.

With a prepared mentality, a newcomer is freed to creatively respond to the bonding and learning opportunities that surround him. We have seen that with a prior decision to do so, it is almost always possible to live with a local family (although non-bonded senior missionaries are typically pessimistic). Our experience is that the new missionary—whether single, married, or even with children—can successfully live with a local family immediately upon arrival. (Live-in options may be multiplied with sleeping bags.) We have seen newcomers find their own families by learning to say something like: "We want to learn your language. We hope to find a family to live with for about three months, and we will pay our expenses. Do you know of a possible family?" It would be unusual to say this "text" to 50 people without getting at least some positive response—a mediator to help you or a family to live with.

5. Why is bonding important for the language learner?

We do not intend to imply that immediate and total immersion in a new culture is without risk. There is no other time with so much stress and danger as

birth; and entry into a new culture has its own accompanying stress and risk factors. It is likely, however, that the stress and risk components them-

selves are essential to the formation of the unique chemistry that makes imprinting and bonding possible.

And there is another side to the risk question. If one doesn't take the initial risk and seek to establish himself comfortably with the new society, then he is opting for a long-term risk. It seems that one or the other cannot be avoided. The problem of missionary casualties suggests that there is a heavy price to be paid by those who fail to become believers. Probably half do not return for a second term, and some who stay, despite ineffectiveness, may be greater casualties than those who go back home.

Indeed it is not easy to live with a family, make friends with numerous strangers, and learn the language, but neither is it easy to continue as a stranger without close friendships and without knowing cultural cues, living a foreign lifestyle with all the time, effort, and alienation that that entails.

Once the new learner is securely established as a believer, he need not relate exclusively with the local people—he has not rejected either America or Americans. The bonded missionary will probably continue to live and minister with the local people, but after the first few weeks it might not be detrimental from the bonding perspective for him to participate in occasional activities with other expatriates. It might even be helpful for him to spend Saturday evenings with other learners or a supervisor (and, of course, he may seek to listen to the Super Bowl with other Americans).

The question has been raised: "What about missionaries who go to the field as a team?" A team is a team because its members share certain commitments. As a group they can decide that each will become bonded in the local culture, and they can encourage each other in the pursuit of that goal. For the initial months, a sharing time each week or so should be sufficient to maintain their commitments to each other.

The concept of bonding implies a bicultural individual with a healthy self-image. Bonding and "going native" are not the same thing. "Going native" generally implies the rejection of one's first culture—a reaction which is seldom seen and which may not

be possible for normal, emotionally stable individuals. Nor is being bicultural the same as being schizophrenic. The schizophrenic is a broken, fragmented self. But the bicultural person is developing a new self—a new personality.

The bonding strategy and the development of this new acculturated personality can be symbolized and greatly facilitated by taking on a new name, preferably an insider's name. For each of us our name is closely associated with our view of who we are—our self-image. As we join a new culture our goal is to develop a new self—a bicultural self. We need a new self that will feel at home with the people of our new culture. We need a "self" that is relatively free of our adult inhibitions, a self that will free us to fill the potential of our new roles and responsibilities.

The bonding strategy and the development of this new acculturated personality can be symbolized and greatly facilitated by taking on a new name, preferably an insider's name.

In the Scriptures we have the record of many people whose names were changed to fit their changed circumstances. The Lord changed some: Abram, Sarai, Jacob to Israel, Solomon to Jedidiah, Pashhur to Magor-Missabib ("The man who lives in terror," Jer. 20:3), and Simon to Cephas which translated means Peter. Daniel and his friends were given Babylonian names: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Naomi chose to be called Mara, and Saul became Paul.

We too experience the significance of changed names in various ways: Women symbolize the belonging relationship of marriage by taking on the husband's name (we know a couple who both took a new last name—Doulos, the Greek word for servant—when they were married); movie stars develop a new image behind a new name; in orthodox churches, vows to God are often accompanied by the novitiate receiving a new name. Even cities and countries are changing their names as they become free from colonialism or choose to identify with a different perspective.

Recent changes include Zaire, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Istanbul, and Harare. The English world calls the islands Falklands, while they are Malvinas to Spanish speakers.

Names mean a lot. Some missionaries used to require converts to take on “Christian” names: Fred, Mary, etc.! Mzee Jomo Kenyatta’s first name was Kamau Ngengi. As a child in a Christian school he was required to choose a Western name. He wanted John Peter but was forbidden to choose two, so he ingeniously chose for himself Johnstone, and got the “Peter” in anyway. The name “Kenyatta” came later and served him well as the father of his newly independent country.

The new name with its newly developing personality does not have an established self-image to protect, and it can therefore be free to behave in uninhibited, creative, and childlike ways; it can make mistakes and try, try again.

It will be much easier to develop a bicultural self-image if a new name is adopted, around which the new personality can grow. We personally know many missionaries who have been given a local name as a result of talking about it with the people: Rafik (Friend) in Urdu, Dimakatso (Wonderful Surprise) in Tswana, and “Sara Child” (One who belongs to us) in Sara. Often an adaptation of one’s own name is sufficient if it is appropriate as an insider’s name in the new society: Tomas, Marcos, etc. In some societies the use of a local kinship name might be best.

The new name with its newly developing personality does not have an established self-image to protect, and it can therefore be free to behave in uninhibited, creative, and childlike ways; it can make mistakes and try, try again. With his newly developing personality the individual can feel at home in his second culture. For the Christian mis-

sionary, the process of becoming bicultural can begin with the recognition that God in His sovereignty does not make mistakes in creating us with our first ethnicity. Yet in His sovereignty He may step in and touch us on the shoulder, as it were, and call us to go and be good news to a people of a different ethnicity.

To become a believer in a legal sense, through formal immigration, might also be considered by some serious missionaries. Immigration need not imply a rejection of one’s first country, but rather acceptance of a new one. Throughout history, people have immigrated for political, economic, religious, and marriage reasons. The challenge of reaching a people for Christ should have the potential to similarly motivate some of Christ’s bond-servants. The missionary’s heavenly citizenship should lift him above the provincialism and ethnocentrism of a continuing allegiance to a country where, in obedience to Christ, he no longer lives. This “recovered pilgrim spirit” was the challenge presented by Joseph F. Conley in a recent *Regions Beyond* editorial (December, 1979):

For most North American missionaries, North America is home. That is where he goes when he’s sick, and when the going gets too rough he can always return to blend in with the scenery. Tomorrow the quick retreat may be cut off. We may be forced to relive those days when missionaries went abroad, never expecting to return. Many governments which refuse entry to missionary expatriates, hold the door open to naturalized citizens of colonizing communities. The Moravians led the way in this as they set up Christian colonies around the world.

Surrender of treasured national citizenship admittedly calls for a rare variety of commitment. But is that unthinkable? To such our Lord’s words will find new and glowing exegesis, “He that hath forsaken lands... for My sake... shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.”

6. *What are the risks involved in bonding? How do these compare to the risk of not becoming bonded?*

The bonded missionary, because he is a believer, has the opportunity to gain an empathic understanding of insiders' ways, their feelings, desires, attitudes, and fears. He can listen with sensitivity to their otherwise hidden values, concerns, and motives. Thus he can acquire insights and adopt habits of lifestyle and ministry that will enable him to be good news from the perspective of local people in order to draw them into a belonging relationship with God.

Bonding is therefore a perspective many missionaries may choose to value and a goal they may choose

to pursue. Making this kind of significant cultural adjustment is not easy, but it is possible, especially if initiated at the critical time for bonding.

In summary, we have observed that the newcomer goes through a critical time for establishing his sense of identity and belonging during his first few weeks in a new country. If he becomes a believer with expatriates, he may always remain a foreigner and outsider. But at this crucial time has the unique opportunity to establish himself as a believer with insiders, in order to live and learn and minister within their social context.

The bonding approach suggested by the Brewsters is certainly not the norm for missionaries. The more typical approach includes a period of language study at a language school or institute, followed by introduction to the culture by fellow expatriate missionaries, and finally settling in at the site of future ministry. Although this approach is "standard" and may be more secure initially, it has long-range consequences which may handicap the effectiveness of the missionary. Without bonding, identification will tend to be superficial, and effective communication of the gospel will suffer.

The quote by Joseph Conley in the preceding article suggests that it may be time for North Americans to consider emigration as an avenue for mission involvement. Missionaries from developing nations may also want to consider this option. In fact, the sending of colonizing Christian communities, like those of the Moravians, may very well be one of the most viable options for missions from countries with weak economies.

II. Roles and Expectations

We have spoken of the need to approach the missionary task with flexibility, innovation, and right attitudes. Now let us consider viable missionary roles in the approach to learning language and culture. In the following article, Donald Larson provides a straightforward description of practical and effective roles the missionary can assume.

❑ ***The Viable Missionary: Learner, Trader, Story Teller****

Donald N. Larson **

When my interest in the mission of the Christian church first awakened, I was too old to be acceptable to my denomination as a candidate. But for the past 20 years I have worked behind the scenes in mission, helping people to deal with the problems of language and culture learning. From this position off-stage, I have observed missionaries, sending agencies, local missionary communities, and national Christians and non-Christians in several fields. From these observations I have concluded that there is often a wide gap in the missionary's conception of his role and how it is viewed by the non-Christians of his adopted community. The purpose of this paper is to examine this gap and propose ways and means of closing it.

By way of example, I recently met a young man heading for a short term of missionary service in Southeast Asia and asked him what he was going to be doing there. He replied in all seriousness that he

was "going to teach the natives to farm." I pressed him with a question: "Don't they know how to farm there?" He thought for a moment and then replied, "Well, I really don't know. I haven't got a very clear picture of things yet." Imagine what the non-Christian of his adopted community would think of him if they should hear him say such things! Whether this young man knows it or not, these Asians were farmers long before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock and even long before there were Christians anywhere.

Unfortunately, such statements as those made by the young man are not limited to short-termers. Career missionaries are sometimes unaware of the experience, background, and worldview of the members of their host communities and how they themselves are viewed. This gap between missionaries and non-Christians in their local communities generates communication problems of many different kinds.

7. *What attitude was reflected by the young man who was going to Southeast Asia "to teach the natives to farm"?*
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* Larson, D. N. (1978, April). The viable missionary: Learner, trader, story teller. *Missiology: An International Review*, 6, 155-163.

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Typical encounter models

In an encounter with the missionary, whom he views as an outsider, the local non-Christian tends to view their relationship in one of three ways. He uses the schoolhouse, the marketplace, and the courtroom as backdrops to his encounters with the missionary. As if they were at school, he sees the missionary as teacher and himself as student. The purpose of their encounter is to transmit information to be learned. As if they were in the marketplace, he sees the missionary as seller and himself as buyer. The purpose of their encounter is to buy and sell something. As if in the courtroom, he sees the missionary as an accuser and himself as the accused. Their encounter deals with judgment. In the schoolhouse the teacher says, "I will teach you something." In the marketplace the merchant says, "I have something to sell you." In the courtroom the judge says, "I will measure you by this standard." Depending on the scene, the national views his need differently. In the

schoolhouse he asks himself whether he needs to learn what the teacher has to teach. In the marketplace he asks himself whether he needs to buy what the merchant has to sell. In the courtroom he asks himself whether he needs to take the judge's accusation seriously.

But can an outsider teach or sell or accuse an insider? Does the non-Christian need what the missionary presents? Is the missionary able to communicate the gospel through the roles of seller, teacher, or accuser? Are they effective? These are serious questions.

Of course, there are other ways to look at the non-Christian's encounter with the missionary than through the three analogies used above.

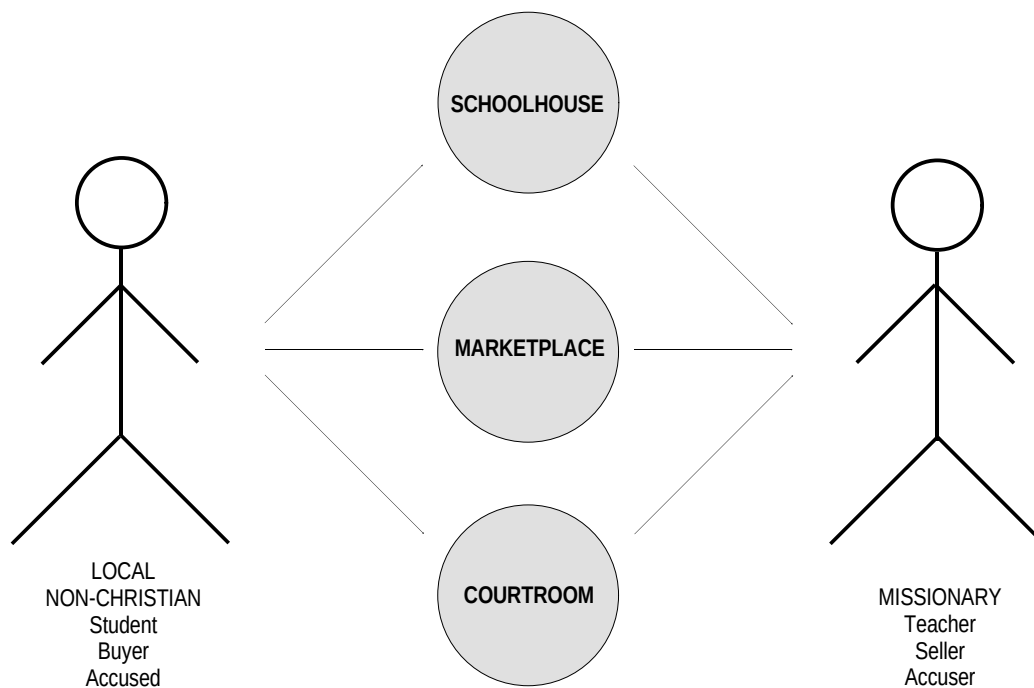


Figure 12-1. Typical Encounter Models

8. *Why do you think the effectiveness of the typical encounter models is limited? On what premise are they based?*

Viable role dimensions

The typical missionary today may be paying too little attention to the viability of his role. If I were volunteering for missions today and hoped to be productive and happy, I would make certain that my role were viable from four perspectives: (1) the community in which I reside, (2) its missionary residents, (3) the agency that sends me, and (4) myself.

The new missionary must look for roles that are simultaneously legitimate to these four parties: me, my host community, its missionary community, and the sending agency.

To elaborate, my role must allow me to be myself, to be my own person. It must also be viable in the local missionary community. If the local missionary community doesn't recognize my role and its importance, I won't be able to survive for long. My role must also be viable from the standpoint of the sending agency. I need their support and encouragement. I cannot survive for long if they do not give me an important place in their community. Finally, my role must be viable from the point of view of the local community. I do not want to parade myself around in this community as some kind of a freak, or a misfit, or a spy, or useless. This matter of community viability is often overlooked. It should not be. It is important, for I must have positive experiences in order to continue. Local residents must feel good about my presence in their community. My contribution must reinforce and complement the ongoing

missionary program. The sending agency must have a solid rationale underlying its programs and the opportunities it provides for me.

So the new missionary must look for roles that are simultaneously legitimate to these four parties: me, my host community, its missionary community, and the sending agency.

To the non-Christian, the roles of teacher, seller, or accuser may or may not be viable. The non-Christian may expect the outsider to learn the insider's viewpoint before he can teach effectively about the outside. He may expect him to survive on the level of insiders and depend on the local market before he can sell important goods. He may expect him to measure himself by their own laws before he accuses insiders in terms of an outside standard.

A principle of order seems to be important: learner before teacher, buyer before seller, accused before accuser. An outsider may have to follow this order before he can be viable in these roles to the insider.

Outsiders cannot live on the edge of a community without coming to the attention of insiders in a negative way. The term "outsider" has negative connotations. So the missionary must become an insider, at least to some extent, if he hopes to avoid these negative reactions to his presence and become a valuable person in the community.

If the insider is reluctant to learn from an outside teacher or buy from an outside seller or accept the accusations of an outside accuser, the outsider cannot hope to accomplish much until he finds new roles or redesigns the old ones.

9. *Why is it important that the missionary's role be "viable" from the standpoint of the four parties mentioned above?*

Three roles

As I see it, there are three roles that the missionary can develop in order to establish viability in the eyes of the national non-Christian: learner, trader, and story teller. I would first become a learner. After three months I would add another: trader. After three more months, I would add a third: story teller. After three more months, while continuing to be learner, trader, and story teller, I would begin to develop other roles specified in my job description.

From his position as an outsider, the missionary must find a way to move toward the center if he hopes to influence people.

Let me elaborate. From his position as an outsider, the missionary must find a way to move toward the center if he hopes to influence people. Some roles will help him to make this move. Others will not. His first task is to identify those which are most appropriate and effective. Then he can begin to develop ways and means of communicating his Christian experience through these roles in which he has found acceptance.

1. Learner

More specifically, as learner, my major emphasis is on language, the primary symbol of identification in my host community. When I try to learn it, they know that I mean business—that they are worth something to me because I make an effort to com-

municate on their terms. I learn a little each day and put it to use. I talk to a new person every day. I say something new every day. I gradually reach the point where I understand and am understood a little. I can learn much in three months.

I spend my mornings with a language helper (in a structured program or one that I design on my own) from whom I elicit the kinds of materials that I need to talk to people in the afternoons. I show him how to drill me on these materials and then spend a good portion of the morning in practice. Then in the afternoon I go out into public places and make whatever contacts are natural with local residents, talking to them as best I can with my limited proficiency—starting the very first day. I initiate one conversation after another, each of which says both verbally and nonverbally, “I am a learner. Please talk with me and help me.” With each conversation partner, I get a little more practice and a little more proficiency, from the first day on.

At the end of my first three months, I have established myself with potentially dozens of people and reached the point where I can make simple statements, ask and answer simple questions, find my way around, learn the meaning of new words on the spot, and most importantly, experience some measure of “at-homeness” in my adopted community. I cannot learn the “whole language” in three months, but I can learn to initiate conversations, control them in a limited way, and learn a little more about the language from everyone whom I meet.

10. *How does Larson suggest that afternoons be spent? Why does the “learner” role require more than just a structured classroom experience?*

2. Trader

When my fourth month begins, I add a role—that of trader, trading experience and insight with people of my adopted community—seeing ourselves more clearly as part of mankind, not just members of different communities or nations. I prepare for this role by periods of residence in as many other places as I can, or vicariously, through course work in anthropology and related fields. I also come equipped with a set of 8” x 10” photos illustrating a wide range of ways to be human.

During the second three months I spend mornings with my language helper learning to talk about the photos in my collection. Thus I build on the language proficiency developed in the first months. I practice my description of these pictures and prepare myself as best I can to answer questions about them. Then in the afternoon I visit casually in the community, using the photos as part of my “show and tell” demonstration. I tell as much as I can about the way others live, how they make their livings, what they do for enjoyment, how they hurt, and how they struggle for survival and satisfaction.



At the end of this second phase, I establish myself not only as a learner but as one who is interested in other people and seeks to trade one bit of information for another. My language proficiency is still developing. I meet many people. Depending upon the size and complexity of the community, I establish myself as a well-known figure by this time. I become a bridge between the people of the local community and a larger world—at least symbolically.

3. Story teller

When I begin my seventh month, I shift emphasis again to a new role. Now I become a story teller. I spend mornings with my language helper. Now my object is to learn to tell a very simple story to the people whom I meet and respond to their inquiries as best I can. The stories that I tell are based on the wanderings of the people of Israel, the coming of Christ, the formation of God’s new people, the movement of the church into all the world and ultimately into this very community, and finally, my own story of my encounter with Christ and my walk as a Christian. During the mornings I develop these stories and practice them intensively. Then in the afternoon I go into the community, as I have been doing for months, but now to encounter people as story teller. I am still language learner and trader, but I have added the role of story teller. I share as much of the story with as many people as I can each day.

At the end of this third phase, I have made acquaintances and friends. I have had countless experiences that I will never forget. I have left positive impressions as learner, trader, and story teller. I am ready for another role, and another and another.

11. What does Larson “trade”? What is the key concept of the trader role?

12. Why are the “learner” and “trader” roles essential to development of the “story teller” role?

Viability reconsidered

With this profile in mind, let’s examine this activity in the light of our earlier discussion of viability. Figure 12-2 helps to focus on the issues. In this figure, the plus sign (+) means that the role is unquestionably viable. The question mark (?) means that some further discussion and clarification are probably necessary before viability can be established.

From the standpoint of local residents, an outsider who is ready, willing, and able to learn probably has an entree. Furthermore, the average person in these communities probably has a natural curiosity about people in other places. This curiosity can probably be tapped and traded by a sensitive approach. Finally, story telling and the reporting of incidents is common in every community. Everyone does it. Of course, there are rules which must be respected. I

assume that someone who has already established himself as learner and trader can share stories and experiences of his own with other people. Local residents will probably listen and perhaps even help him to get it told.

From the standpoint of local residents, an outsider who is ready, willing, and able to learn probably has an entree.

I find these roles viable. I enjoy learning and know how to go about it. I have a general understanding of different ways that people live and appreciate the possibilities inherent in the trader role. I love to tell stories and enjoy listening to them, especially when the teller is deeply involved in them himself.

ROLES	DIMENSIONS			
	LOCAL RESIDENTS	MISSIONARY COMMUNITY	SENDING AGENCY	MISSIONARY
LEARNER	+	?	?	+
TRADER	+	?	?	?
STORY TELLER	+	+	+	+

Figure 12-2. Viability of Roles of Learner, Trader, Story Teller

But from the standpoint of the sending agency and the local community, these roles may be questionable. Of the three, the story teller role is perhaps the easiest one to develop, though one often finds missionaries to be sermonizers, theologizers, or lecturers—not story tellers. The viability of the learner role is open to question. A new missionary, expected to be a learner as far as the affairs of his local missionary organization are concerned, is not always given the time or encouraged to get to know local residents intimately. The viability of the trader role is largely untested, though I believe that sending agencies and local missionary communities should consider its importance carefully.

Why not exploit the learner role to the fullest? Most people who live as aliens sooner or later realize its importance. Why not get the new missionary off on the right foot—especially if it has increasing payoff in his second and third phases? Furthermore, the learner role symbolized a number of important things to local residents that are important in the communication of the gospel. The learner's dependence and vulnerability convey in some small way the messages of identification and reconciliation that are explicit in the gospel. Coming to be known as a learner can certainly do the local missionary

community no harm. It may be able to do some good.

The viability of the trader role is perhaps more difficult to establish—partly because of its newness. It seems to be too “secular.” Yet from the community's standpoint, a secular role may be much more natural and acceptable for the alien. Coming as some sort of “sacred specialist,” the outsider generates all sorts of questions, objections, and barriers. But there is still another consideration: this role reinforces the idea of the gospel as something for all people. Except for anthropologists, demographers, and a few other specialists, Christians probably have a wider understanding of human variation than any other group of people, simply because of our multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-lingual characteristics. The trader role complements the more formal presentation of the gospel through the sharing of essentially “secular knowledge” about people of the world.

There are obvious implications here for the selection, orientation, and evaluation of missionaries. A discussion of them, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

13. As the missionary pursues “learner” and “trader” roles, which of the four parties mentioned earlier will need to be convinced of the viability of these roles?

14. Which role has an assumed viability in everyone's eyes? Why?

Conclusion

We face a difficult situation today as the star of colonialism continues to fall and as the star of maturing national churches continues to rise. Missionaries become more and more frustrated as the viability of their role is questioned. We must take this situation seriously. The biblical mandate challenges the Christian to become one with those to whom he brings the Word of Life. Furthermore, history shows that vulnerability and flexibility are themselves powerful witnesses to the working of the Spirit within man. Finally, if the mission movement is to continue, new roles must be added and old ones must be redesigned.

Any new missionary can prepare himself in rather simple and straightforward fashion to meet the demands of these three roles. Insofar as these roles are viable from the point of view of the local community, the new missionary should begin with them. Unfortunately, sending agencies and local missionary communities may not be ready to buy these ideas. The let's-get-on-with-the-job mentality militates against getting bogged down in learning, trading, and story telling. But this get-on-with-the-job mentality needs to be challenged; for if it implies roles that insulate the missionary from local residents, alternatives must be developed.

Some months ago, at a language and culture learning workshop in East Africa, a missionary asked me if

I knew anything about elephants. When I replied that I did not, she asked more specifically if I knew what happens when a herd of elephants approaches a water hole that is surrounded by another herd. I replied that I did not know what would happen. She then proceeded to explain that the lead elephant of the second group turns around and backs down toward the water hole. As soon as his backside is felt by the elephants gathered around the water hole, they step aside and make room for him. This is then the signal to the other elephants that the first herd is ready to make room for them around the hole.

This get-on-with-the-job mentality needs to be challenged; for if it implies roles that insulate the missionary from local residents, alternatives must be developed.

When I asked what point she was trying to make, she stated simply and powerfully, "We didn't back in." The continuing movement of mission in the world today may require missionaries to "back in" to their host communities. The roles of learner, trader, and storyteller may not be appropriate in a headfirst approach, but they may be necessary in an approach which emphasizes "backing in."

15. Why would some consider "backing in" a waste of time? What is your opinion?

The LAMP Approach

For most missionaries, the first activity on the mission field will be language learning. Since most of the world's 5,000+ languages are not taught formally, many missionaries will need to use an alternative method. This may be a blessing in disguise, since the alternative to formal study is learning the language directly from the target people—an activity which is conducive to bonding.

Drs. Tom and Elizabeth Brewster have tackled the challenge of structuring field language learning. Over the years, they have developed an approach known as Language Acquisition Made Practical

(LAMP). This system enables most missionaries to acquire a language using lay helpers. The Brewsters have personally helped missionaries in over 75 countries learn languages in a way which also aids their overall adaptation to the culture. Rather than focusing on a specific language, the approach adapts principles of language learning that are universal, enabling the user to learn any language.

The Brewsters published their approach in a manual called *Language Acquisition Made Practical: Field Methods for Language Learners* (available from Lingua House, 135 North Oakland, P.O. Box 114, Pasadena, CA 91101). We, of course, cannot outline the entire manual. However, we would like to provide you with some of the theory behind the approach. If you or your missionaries need to use field methods for language learning, it is advisable to contact Lingua House directly for the LAMP manual and other resources. The following quotation is from the preface of LAMP:

It can be done!

You can successfully learn a new language if three conditions are met:

- a. You live where the new language is spoken.
- b. You are motivated to learn the new language.
- c. You know how to proceed with language learning, step by step and day by day.

The first condition can be met simply by moving to an area where the language is spoken. An even more ideal situation would be for you to live in the home of a family that speaks the language.

Motivation—the second condition—is an act of the will. Some language learners make the mistake of equating motivation with enthusiasm. For them, when their enthusiasm is up, their “motivation” is up. But enthusiasm is an emotion. It ebbs and flows in relation to how you feel or how the world is treating you. In reality, motivation is not an emotion, so don’t tie it to your emotions. Motivation is a determination which results in a decision of the will—“I will learn.”*

The LAMP manual attempts to provide the learner with the step-by-step, day-by-day procedure for acquiring the target language. It assumes that the first two conditions have been met, that is, that the learner is able to live where the language is spoken by a native population and that sufficient internal and external motivation is sustained throughout the language learning process. If the first two conditions are met, then by properly implementing the methods prescribed in the manual, the language learner will be guided in successful acquisition of the language.

The Nature of Language Learning

The main activity usually associated with learning a language is study. This intellectual activity is often centered in a classroom where the structure of the language is analyzed and learned, vocabulary is memorized, and the language learner gradually learns to produce phrases and sentences. Students using this approach often feel frustrated when they are put in a situation where they must actually use the language. Although they may have studied for several years, they often find they can’t carry on a conversation with a native speaker.

* Brewster, E. T., & Brewster, E. S. (1976). *Language acquisition made practical: Field methods for language learners* (p. 1). Colorado Springs: Lingua House.

That language “study” is not essential to language learning is evidenced by the fact that millions of illiterate people throughout the world speak two or more languages fluently. These people often cannot even read their own names, but they have learned second and third languages because they have used them. Their “school room” has been the marketplace, the streets, and the homes of the community. Thus it can be seen that language acquisition is more a performance skill than a cognitive skill. As an activity, it is more closely related to practicing football than to studying history. Mastery of a language can only be achieved through disciplined, consistent practice and use.

The Fun of Language

Millions of people around the world learn second languages in a “natural” way. In fact, all of us learned our first language apart from any conscious effort. Children learn language through experimentation and play. In their first efforts, they produce sounds which they repeat over and over, often to the delight of their parents. This practice carries over to the first objects they learn to identify and their first experimentation with putting a string of words together. Their early attempts are seldom “correct” from an adult’s standpoint, but children are not self-conscious about their “mistakes” and usually receive much positive reinforcement for their efforts.

Children seem to make a game of learning language. Besides repeating sounds, words, and phrases over and over, they experiment with different ways of saying the same thing. They seem to talk just for the pleasure of hearing themselves. When they learn the question forms, they seem to ask questions just for the joy of getting a response (which often drives their parents to distraction). Fascination with language and the lack of self-consciousness are the greatest assets in acquiring a language. These motivate the learner to practice and use what is acquired in a natural and unforced manner.

16. How are the greatest assets a child brings to language learning inhibited by adult behavior?

Most adults subconsciously resist the idea of becoming “childlike” to learn a language. Yet, for the missionary, this role may be unavoidable. Immersion in a new culture and its accompanying “culture shock” are often associated with feelings of “being more stupid than a child.” Ability to communicate effectively is such an integral part of our self-concept that when this is taken away, the disorientation can lead to negative emotions and depression. It is healthier to accept the “childlike” learner role and enter into it fully.

Make a game of language learning. Become fascinated with the new sounds you are producing. Enjoy getting a response to your efforts, even when others get a laugh out of your attempts. You’ll find that native speakers will not only be forgiving of your mistakes, but will like and appreciate you the more for your efforts and willingness to become vulnerable.

Getting Started

Children seem to learn language randomly. As adults, we can greatly aid our language learning efforts by using a methodology which allows systematic skill building. The system described in LAMP consists of four daily parts:

- Prepare what you need for the day.
- Practice what you prepare.
- Communicate what you know.
- Evaluate your needs and your progress so you will know what to prepare for the next day.

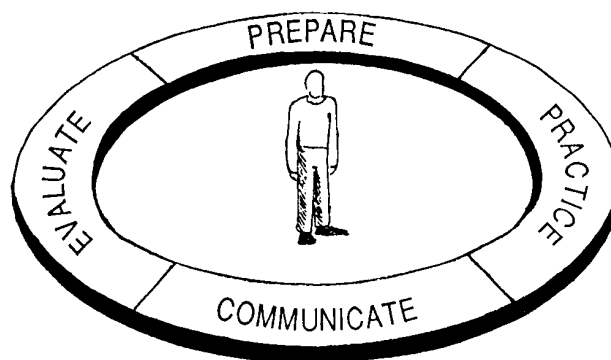


Figure 12-3. The Learning Cycle

These four parts function in an integrated, cyclical fashion. By following these steps in sequence, the learner begins to acquire language competency, little by little. The manual recommends that the language learner should initially budget about six hours a day to go through the cycle, gradually tapering this time commitment down to two or three hours daily.

The heart of the learning cycle is the third part. It is also the most difficult component for many language learners. From the first day, learners should be using what they learn, practicing and interacting with people. Without this vital element, language learning will be reduced to an exercise in memorization. Effective communication is the goal. The first tentative steps toward achieving that goal are taken the first day of learning a language.

At the beginning, the learner depends heavily on memorized texts to communicate. To learn these texts, a native speaker of the target language (who has some understanding of the learner's language) is needed. This person becomes the learner's language "helper" or "coach." He or she shows the learner how to say what is needed to communicate and how to pronounce the phrases correctly. The language helper should not be a professional teacher, because such a person is more likely to try to teach about the language than to help the learner practice it. In fact, it is a good idea to avoid using the term "teacher" altogether. The language assistant is the learner's helper. Even when the LAMP approach is used to supplement a more formal language study program, it is wise to develop a relationship with a helper who can coach the learner.

17. *What are the main philosophical and practical points which distinguish the LAMP approach from more conventional language study?*

III. Occupational Identity and Lifestyle

Meeting role expectations is not simply a matter of philosophical orientation. For those targeting unreached people groups, occupational identity is an increasingly important issue. Most of the world's unreached are in countries which do not allow foreign missionaries. Cross-cultural workers must assume occupational roles to obtain residence. Stated roles must match lifestyle, or suspicion and mistrust are created. In the following excerpt, Jonathan Cortes addresses these issues.

□ *Exploring the Whos and Hows of Tentmaking* *

Jonathan Cortes **

"What's your *real* work here?" the customs official said with a scowl. Bill glanced quickly at what the official was examining. With horror he saw what some well-meaning person from his church had written on his baggage: "For missionary use only."

Bill is a tentmaker. After going through a short course in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), he had obtained a job in a "creative access" country in Asia. What was the official to believe? Was Bill an English teacher or a missionary? In fact, he was both.

The uncomfortable situation in which Bill found himself illustrates the difficulty experienced by churches as they make the transition to sending tentmakers—missionaries who use lay credentials as a means of serving in countries which restrict access to regular career missionaries. The situation also reflects the dilemma in which these church-sent tentmakers find themselves as they grapple with their own identity under prevailing security measures in restricted situations.

Bivocational dilemmas

The story of Bill does not end here. Although he eventually got his visa to stay and teach in the country, the questions kept coming. Bill only teaches a couple of hours a week, and outside of his classes he is asked how and why he is living in the country. He is often pressed further with repeated questions of increasing intensity. Although he is on a teaching visa, he knows that he would never have come to this country only to teach English. He is really in the country to be a missionary. He can't say this, however. His evasive answers bother his conscience and create an atmosphere of mistrust, which is hindering his ministry opportunities.

Without much prefield orientation to help him avoid or resolve some of these conflicts beforehand, Bill feels tremendous pressures. These pressures produce stress on his conscience, on his body, on his family (who face the same questions in their everyday lives), on his host organization, on his sending agency, and on the nationals he wants to relate with and serve.

* Cortes, J. (1993). Exploring the whos and hows of tentmaking. In J. Lewis (Ed.), *Working your way to the nations: A guide to effective tentmaking* (pp. 5-1 – 5-5). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Jonathan Cortes is a frontier missions facilitator for The Navigators. Based in Singapore, he is responsible for preparing the way for tentmakers from developed Christian ministries throughout the world to go to the least evangelized and disciplined countries of Asia.

18. *What are the possible consequences of such a stressful situation?*

Facing the Pressures

The author identifies both external and internal pressures that Bill is facing. There is pressure from external sources as the local people try to figure Bill out. Internally, Bill is experiencing pressure from his conscience, which is beginning to accuse him. Like many tentmakers, Bill didn't have to deal with these issues before he left his own country. Now the pressures seem ready to overwhelm him.

The issue of true identity is one of the most critical to a tentmaker's success. Many tentmakers have failed because they have not dealt with this issue before going to the field. When a tentmaker adopts an occupation simply as a cover, there is a lot of pressure from external sources in trying to reconcile what others see as a contradiction. When a tentmaker's position is untenable, suspicion is a natural reaction. A case in point might be a 35-year-old man with a family, who has been enrolled in the local university for years without making much progress towards a degree. Other examples are a businessman who never seems to do business and a teacher who only teaches a few hours a week.

Most of the unreached areas of the world are poor, and many have repressive governments. It doesn't make sense to the people of such a host country for someone to leave a more developed country—leave family, leave freedom, and leave opportunity—to take up residence in their land. This lack of understanding creates a feeling of distrust. When tentmakers can't be completely open and declare their Christian mission, the situation can wear them down psychologically, no matter how dedicated they may be.

Questions come relentlessly. "Why did you come here to work? This is a poor country with few opportunities. Why would you want to live here instead of in your own country, where there is more freedom and it's easier to earn a living? What about your parents and relatives? Don't you miss them? How much do you make? How can you live as well as you do when you only teach a few hours each week? What is your real reason for being here? Are you a spy, a drug dealer, a subversive, a missionary...?"

The second kind of pressure Bill is facing is internal. Like many tentmakers, he didn't take time back home to deal with what, once on the field, he began to feel was a dishonest lifestyle. Prompted by his evasive answers to people in the host culture, his conscience accused him of being a fake, a fraud, and un-Christian. How could he live a lie? These accusations involved some real ethical questions. In the following sections, our tentmaker author discusses how to face some of these issues.

The obligation to witness

The Christian's ultimate authority to be a witness to and of the gospel is derived from Jesus Christ, to whom all authority has been given in heaven and on earth. Because all authority belongs to Him, we

cannot accept the concept of a "closed land." Every land is open to Him who holds the key of David, who opens and no one can shut, who shuts and no one can open (Rev. 3:7).

Satan's power, on the other hand, is both limited and derived, and it is subject to Christ's supreme authority. Though Satan uses others to "close" countries, this prohibition is in direct contradiction to and is invalidated by Jesus Christ's commands to "go into all the world" (Mark 16:15) and to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18-20). We must obey God's commands above all others (Acts 4:1-20).

We have an obligation, therefore, to be witnesses for our Lord, even when "proselytizing" is forbidden. This is neither easy nor simple. There are some general principles, however, for thought and prayer. These should be considered in the light of the need for discretion, tact, and care, and they should be balanced with Gideon's warning to those who fear: "Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early" (Judg. 7:3).

Most cultures have a deep respect for an attitude that says, "I am not ashamed of this message." The "silent witness" is often despised and at best is misunderstood.

The spoken word of witness was normative in New Testament times. Jesus commissioned His disciples to "herald" the gospel to every creature. This implies spreading the good news by word of mouth. This emphasis links the message with the messenger. God is delighted and honors a witness who says, "I am not ashamed of this message." In fact, most cultures have a deep respect for such an attitude. It is one with which they can identify. The "silent witness" is often despised and at best is misunderstood. As tentmakers invest their lives in the Great

Commission, they need to have wisdom and discretion about what they are communicating both verbally and nonverbally.

Witnessing without proselytizing

There is no human law that says you cannot be open in your personal belief in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said, "I spoke openly to the world" (John 18:20). Paul said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable to you" (Acts 20:20). We are to walk in the light and never lie or deceive. Yet it is also clear in Scripture that not everything needs to be revealed.

The main reason governments officially ban proselytism is that, in the past, proselytism has involved attacking or insulting the country's main religion, leading men astray from their social and religious groupings, polluting their high moral standards, weaning people away from nationalism, or subverting the state by producing a Western subculture. All of these activities can produce social disorder and problems for the government.

It is possible, by God's grace and wisdom, to be a child of God, a worshiper of Christ, and still be a contributing member to the socio-economic welfare of even an atheistic nation. It is possible to be a servant of Christ and not be a blasphemer of other gods or a traitor to the best interests of another country's government. Indeed, if biblical Christians let the Word become flesh in their lives (John 1:14), if they are able to teach gently as humble servants of Christ (2 Tim. 2:24-26), and if they have a message of *agape* love (John 3:16), they do not come to disrupt the established order. They come to bring Christ, to introduce fellow sinners to a Savior and Redeemer who loves them and who cared enough to die for them.

19. What is the best solution to the external and internal pressures of the bivocational dilemma?

One obvious way to alleviate external pressures is to make certain that the tentmaking occupation isn't simply fabricated as a cover. A relatively well-paying or prestigious position helps affirm this sense of authenticity, as does affiliation with a government or with an international development agency or company. The internal pressures can only be mitigated when a deep conviction of calling and a clear understanding of spiritual authority and spiritual warfare are present. Missionaries are God's agents in enemy-held territory. In these situations, they truly need the cunning of serpents and the innocence of doves (Matt. 10:16).

Lifestyle Implications

Missionaries' lifestyles will be conditioned by a variety of factors, including financial resources, target group, and, for tentmakers, secular employment. Again, what counts in determining lifestyle issues are the attitudes which condition decisions, rather than the affluence or poverty demonstrated. In the following article, Phil Parshall presents his views on the lifestyle issues from his ample background and experience.

God's Communicator in the '90s *

Phil Parshall **

It is a great calling and privilege to be a missionary. It is my joy to have rubbed shoulders with hundreds of foreign missionaries over the past three decades. By and large, they impress me very positively.

The missionary calling has unique features. The missionary must be reasonably well-educated, cross geographical boundaries, leave loved ones behind, sacrifice financially (though not always), adjust to another language and culture, and work on a closely knit team. At the same time, missionaries must open themselves to criticism, from both friend and foe. They must be willing to reevaluate sacrosanct methodology. "Change" must not be a dreaded word, as we consider the qualifications and methods of missionaries for the coming decade. I speak from a heart of love and concern—from within the camp.

Dr. Saeed Khan Kurdistani was an outstanding Iranian Christian who died in 1942. In 1960, a man went to the area where Dr. Saeed had lived and ministered. An aged man of the community was asked by the visitor if he had known Dr. Saeed. The

elderly man caught his breath and whispered: "Dr. Saeed was Christ Himself!" Reverently, it can be said that this is our goal. But as we head into the 1990s we need to take a hard look at such practical matters as missionary finances, housing, intellectual life, and ministry with churches.

Finances

There is an overwhelming difference of opinion on this subject. Some feel it is imperative to "go native" and to denounce all who do not meet their standard. Others feel strongly that they must live on a Western standard for the sake of their family's mental and physical health. They defend their position by saying the nationals will understand their needs. Between these two extremes will be found every conceivable view.

Many Third World countries are economically depressed. This fact sets the stage for the conflict between the living standard of the Western mission-

* Parshall, P. (1992). God's communicator in the '90s. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. C131-C136). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Phil Parshall is a missionary in the Philippines serving as Director of SIM's Asian Research Center. He has authored five books, the latest of which is *The Cross and the Crescent*.

ary and the national. Chaeok Chun, a Korean missionary in Pakistan, comments on this tension.

I think it is significant that today's image of the Christian missionary endeavor from the Asian receptor's point of view is an image of comfort and privilege. Hence, Asians tended to reject the missionary and misunderstand his message.*

The Irish monks of the seventh and eighth centuries were well-known for their asceticism. Their entire outfit consisted of a pilgrim's staff, a wallet, a leather water bottle, and some relics. When they received money from the wealthy, they quickly gave it away to the needy.** Is this a proper model for the contemporary missionary? In this vein, Dr. Donald McGavran suggested that "the missionary from affluent countries lives on a standard far higher than he needs to. What is called for—if we are to meet this problem head on—is an order of missionaries, celibate or married without children, who live in Bangladesh on 300 rupees a month (i.e., \$10.00). But any such move is at present unthinkable, alas."***

I would, at the risk of being controversial, like to pull some thoughts together on this very important issue.

1. It does matter what nationals think about the financial profile of the missionary community. Generally, they are appalled at the gap between the living standard of themselves and the Western missionary. If we turn away from this concern with indifference, we are in danger of being insensitive to Paul's clear teaching about being a stumbling block to others.
2. Singles and couples without children can more easily make the adjustment to a simple lifestyle. This should be encouraged but not legislated.

3. Experimentation should be allowed. One couple with a newborn infant is living in a bamboo hut with a mud floor in a Muslim rural village. They should be supported, but at the same time, not made to feel embarrassment when at any time they feel withdrawal advisable.
4. Each family should be open before the Lord on this subject. They should prayerfully evaluate their own physical and emotional needs. The goal is to live as closely as possible to the style of life of their target people without adverse results to anyone in the family. Balance is a key word.

The goal is to live as closely as possible to the style of life of their target people without adverse results to anyone in the family. Balance is a key word.

5. Often the missionary can reside in stark simplicity in a rural area and then take an occasional weekend trip to a nearby city for relaxation and necessary shopping. This accommodation to our cultural backgrounds is not, in my view, an act of hypocrisy. We must be realistic concerning our needs and various levels of capacity to endure deprivation within foreign culture.
6. It is permissible to consider this a moot issue with missionaries, but idle criticism, a judgmental attitude, and self-righteousness must be studiously avoided. Often, missionaries living in extreme poverty or those living in great affluence are the most opinionated and self-defensive. For the sake of unity in the body, it may be wise to avoid entering into heavy discussions with these particular missionaries on this subject.

* Chun, C. (1977). *An exploration of the community model for Muslim missionary outreach by Asian women*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena.

** Just, M. (1957). *Digest of Catholic mission history* (p. 22). Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll Publications.

*** McGavran, D. (1979, March). Letter to author.

20. How do decisions relating to one's financial "profile" on the mission field affect ministry potential?

Housing

The day of the "mission compound" is by no means over. These Western enclaves are still found throughout the developing world. They are often misunderstood and, in some cases, despised by the nationals. A convert questioned their existence by asking, "Am I wrong if I say that mission bungalows are often a partition wall between the hearts of the people and the missionaries?"*

It is my personal conviction that remaining mission compounds should be dismantled. This would free the missionary to move into the community and share his incarnational testimony among them, rather than being shut off in a large plot of land that has a very negative appraisal in the minds of the people. It is preferable also for the Christians to scatter out among their non-Christian townspeople rather than live in a sealed-off community. Light must be diffused to be of any benefit.

Our first five-year term living in a small town in Bangladesh was a great learning and sharing experience. Just outside the bedroom window of our rented home lived a Muslim lady who was separated from her husband. Her two young daughters lived with her. Quickly we became very intimate friends. The girls were always coming over to borrow a spice or an egg. We felt free to do the same. When the youngest daughter had a raging fever, we brought her over and nursed her. From our bedroom window, we learned more about Muslim culture than scores of books could ever have taught us. A mission compound experience would not have made such a lifestyle and involvement in the community possible.

There needs to be some latitude as regards city, town, or village life. The main concern is to relate to the group with whom one is working. Student work in a university area would demand facilities quite different from a rural village setting.

Intellectual life

Missionary work has undergone a radical transformation since the end of the colonial era. New approaches and attitudes have been demanded. Pioneers like Dr. Donald McGavran have popularized the science of missiology. Hundreds of case studies and textbooks are now on the market that can be utilized as resource material. Outstanding graduate schools with mission studies include Fuller, Trinity, Columbia, Dallas, Wheaton, and Asbury. Extension study for the missionary on the field is offered through Fuller, Columbia, and Wheaton. Journals like *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and *Missiology* keep the missionary abreast of fast-breaking concepts and practical outreaches around the world.

One relevant bit of advice to missionaries is that they should "keep an open mind, realizing that times change and one must make adjustments. Tactics of 10 years ago will not work and even those of five years ago are outdated."** It is always sad to see older missionaries become rutted and inflexible. Their orientation and allegiance to traditional methodology make it seem to them to be almost a denial of truth to move carefully into new areas of sensitive experimentation. Younger missionaries arriving on the field become frustrated. Their ideas and zeal are often lost in a patronizing, "Keep it under your hat for a few years. Experience will mellow you and

* Chowdhury, D. A. (1939). The Bengal church and the convert. *The Moslem World*, 29, 347.

** McCoy, J. A. (1962). *Advice from the field* (p. 144). Baltimore: Helicon Press.

mature your input.” There must develop a fresh and non-threatening relationship between the senior and junior missionary. One adds experience, and the other brings the latest in theory and enthusiasm. United, they are almost unbeatable. Divided, they are a catastrophe, not only to the inner team of missionaries, but also to the perceptive onlooking national community.

Our commitment to Jesus Christ means that we want to be the best servants possible for His glory. It means stretching, not only in spirit, but also in intellect. True academic excellence leads to greater effectiveness, not to pride or snobbery. We must beware of vegetating on the mission field. Both our hearts and our minds must stay alive and alert.

21. *What should be the predominant guiding principle in selection of housing? What guiding principle applies to intellectual life?*

Attitudes

Still fresh in my mind are the words that Harold Cook, Professor of Missions at Moody Bible Institute, told his missions class in 1959:

Students, the single most important area of your life and ministry will be in the realm of attitudes. It is here you will either succeed or fail as a missionary. Attitudes touch every nerve end of life. Your relationship to Christ, fellow missionary, national believer, and non-Christian will be deeply affected by proper or improper attitudes.

Attitudes touch every nerve end of life. Your relationship to Christ, fellow missionary, national believer, and non-Christian will be deeply affected by proper or improper attitudes.

There are a number of ingredients to a positive attitude toward nationals. One is empathy. Let me illustrate. Each morning at sunrise, a Hindu neighbor in our village would rise up, wash, and go out and stand near his cow. He would then look up at the sun, fold his hands, and go through a ceremony which involved worship of both the sun and the cow. I watched our Hindu friend perform this ritual scores

of times. One day the cow became ill and died suddenly. Grief struck the Hindu household. It was indeed a tragic loss to them. I personally disagreed with worshiping a cow, but I had somehow entered into the worldview of that Hindu. He hurt and I hurt. Quickly I learned a few appropriate phrases (as we were new in the country) and went along to his shop. I stuttered out a few incorrectly pronounced words about being sorry that his cow had died. My Hindu friend was deeply touched. Though we were worlds apart in culture and religion, yet I cared. I had for a brief moment stepped into his life.

There is an old adage that contains a great deal of truth. “The gift without the giver is bare.” Missionaries are giving people. Their job demands that role. They may be engaged in relief, teaching, medical work, or some other ministry that necessitates the act of sharing. But the act of giving is inadequate in itself. What is the force behind the action? Is there love? Is there a deep concern for the other person? Has giving become a professional obligation? Have the poor or the heathen become a product to sell? These are heavy questions.

Ministry

It is time now to consider the ministerial focus of the missionary. When we turn to New Testament missions, we find that Paul’s involvement was exceedingly temporary. He came, stayed a few

weeks or months, or at most a few years, and left to go into new areas. The churches he planted did not remain in his control. Even if a heretical influence came into the churches, Paul could only exhort the Christians to walk in truth. He had no funds to cut off. The believers were totally free. Certainly the contemporary picture of missions is different from Paul's day.

The missionary must move on as soon as possible after worshiping groups have been established.

Leslie Newbegin writes of Paul totally entrusting leadership into local hands. He pungently comments that Paul didn't do what modern missionaries have done, "He does not build a bungalow."* George Peters maintains Paul could have rightfully said, "Here is enough work for me to do. This is where I am." Paul resisted the temptation and kept on the move.** Roland Allen points out that Paul didn't neglect the churches. He continued to visit and correspond with them. But the basic leadership responsibility was all put in local hands.***

Now, Western missionaries have a very difficult time completely turning over control to the younger churches. At times, missionaries may be withdrawn as denominational budgets flounder. Even in these cases, funds continue to go directly to the churches, thus perpetuating dependence. And worst of all, the missionaries are not deployed in a virgin area in the task of church planting. Rather, they are brought home under the camouflage that now the emerging church can take care of its own evangelistic responsibility.

In other situations, missionaries have been content to be resident in one mission station working among a small cluster of churches for a full missionary

career of 35 years. In many ways, the ministry is fulfilling. One experiences joy in seeing children born, later becoming Christians, getting married, and on to settling into good professions. There is a continuity and routine about such a life. National Christians, too, feel good about having a foreign missionary around to assist them in their times of need. However, this is inadequate strategy for the '90s.

The missionary must move on as soon as possible after worshiping groups have been established. Converts must not transfer their dependence onto the missionary and away from the Lord.

Having travailed, given birth, and cared for young churches, the missionaries (whether TAMILIAN or Naga or American or Australian) should turn over authority to indigenous leaders. Travail must not go on too long. It must be followed by weaning and pushing out of the nest. Then the missionary goes on and repeats the process.****

The missionary must keep before him constantly the imperative of pressing out to new frontiers.

Conclusion

I am an optimist concerning the decade of challenge that lies just before us. There will surely be opening doors, closing doors, and revolving doors within the great challenge of reaching the nations for Christ in the '90s. A beautiful picture of a ship on an ocean in the midst of a storm graces my bedroom door. The inscription reads, "A ship in a harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." The front line of a battle is risky, but no victory has ever been registered in the annals of history as having been won solely by those supportive people who linger far behind the range of enemy gunfire. Our task calls for reflection, decision, and engagement.

* Newbegin, L. (1978). *The open secret* (p. 144). London: SPCK.

** Peters, G. W. (1977). *Evangelical missions tomorrow* (p. 162). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

*** Allen, R. (1962). *Missionary methods: St. Paul's or ours?* (p. 151). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

**** McGavran, D. (1979). *Ethnic realities and the church* (p. 130). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

22. How do attitudes affect ministry focus?

Summary

“Bonding” achieves true identification with people in another culture. Much depends on this time of initiation. The attachments made during the first few days will have a critical influence on the whole process of acculturation. The unconscious attitudes formed in this early stage could well determine the effectiveness of missionaries during their entire career.

As a missionary enters a new culture, there are several roles which may be assumed. These conform to expectations created by the missionary, the sending agency, the missionary community, and the local residents. Three encounter models—the schoolhouse, the marketplace, and the courtroom—provide the response environment for new missionaries as they assume the roles of student/teacher, buyer/seller, and accused/accuser. Any of the roles taken may disappoint the expectations of one or more of the primary groups involved. The initial roles of student, buyer, and accused may provide the best environment for cross-cultural adaptation. Also affecting this process is the approach to language learning. The most effective way to learn language is to use it. The LAMP approach suggests a field method by which any language can be acquired.

The phenomenon of “closed” countries dictates that missionaries increasingly are called on to equip themselves with secular occupations to enter these areas. These vocations must be legitimate in order for missionaries to avoid external pressures, which are created when the stated reasons for being in the country do not make sense to the host population. Internal pressures are produced by ethical questions which may arise in “closed” countries. A legitimate role, a firm calling, and a clear understanding of spiritual authority are necessary to minimize these pressures. As missionaries settle into appropriate roles, issues must be resolved regarding approaches to finances, housing, intellectual life, attitudes, and ministry. A balanced approach which meets family and ministry needs, along with acceptance by the culture, must be achieved.

Integrative Assignment

This is the last assignment in the series related to the unreached people you have targeted. Imagine you have been asked to present a proposal to the leadership of your church or mission agency for launching a mission to your targeted group. In the proposal you will want to present the people and their need, suggest a process for reaching them, present a plan to implement the project, and appeal to your audience for the resources to carry out the plan. If you have completed the previous assignments, you have already done most of this work.

Your proposal should be as succinct as possible. In written form, it should be no more than three to five pages long. If you are presenting your proposal orally, limit yourself to 15 to 20 minutes. Presenting your ideas concisely, whether in written or oral form, will require considerable refinement, but such polishing is essential for an effective presentation.

WORKSHEET #6: PEOPLE GROUP PROPOSAL

Goal Statement

Write your goal succinctly and in measurable terms. Let your audience know what your proposal intends to do.

State the Need

Describe the group briefly and present their need in terms of the reached/unreached paradigm. Also state their specific felt needs which you will be using as a bridge for reaching the people. For this section, you will use the information from *Worksheet # 1* (Chapter 7) and *Worksheet # 2* (Chapter 8).

Describe the Mission Process

List and describe the specific steps needed to reach the people. This is similar to what you did in *Worksheet # 3* (Chapter 9) and *Worksheet # 4* (Chapter 10). You may want to use the following outline or create one which better suits your own purposes.

1. Mobilizing the force for evangelization.
2. Establishing a presence among the people (entry strategy).
3. The identification phase (pre-evangelistic).
4. Evangelism and church planting phase.
5. Leadership development phase.
6. Maintaining a spontaneous church planting movement.
7. Closure (finishing the task and moving on).

In describing these process steps, state specific objectives which must be reached.

Present a Plan

In this section, you will want to demonstrate how you intend to implement your plan. Project what needs to happen in the next three to five years to initiate the process. This section should focus primarily on the first part of the process: mobilizing the force for evangelism. You may want to outline your plan in table form as in the example on the next page:

Three-Year Plan to Mobilize Our Church for Reaching the Tbuli

<u>Date</u>	<u>Objectives</u>
June 1994	– Contact mission agencies which may be interested in this proposal. – Ask for addresses of missionaries in the target area.
August	– Evaluate missions by their responses. – Solicit application materials. – Initiate correspondence with missionaries in the area and the established national church. – Evaluation of project by missions committee.
September	– Present project at the church's annual missions conference and begin recruiting a tentmaker team. – Write first prayer letter to friends and prospective supporters of the project.
October	– Begin weekly prayer and orientation meeting with prospective team members.
etc.	

Appeal for Resources

In this section, you will want to appeal to your audience for the resources (prayer, personnel, funds, etc.) they can provide in reaching the target group. List what you expect to receive from your audience, as well as resources which may already exist or which you are expecting from other sources such as other churches or missions, employment, friends, investors, etc. It should be clear that the resources are needed to implement the plan you have just presented.

Conclusion

Conclude your proposal with a faith statement about what you hope for if your proposal is accepted. Describe the church which will emerge (by faith), using the information from *Worksheet #5* (Chapter 11).

Questions for Reflection

1. "Let this attitude be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

Much of what we've spoken about in this chapter has to do with our attitude towards others. Meditate on Philippians 2:1-12. What kind of attitude have you been developing towards others? Have you learned to regard others as more important than yourself? Humility of mind is not an easy quality to develop. Yet it is the only way to greatness in the kingdom of God. Are your attitudes keeping you from becoming "great"? If so, consider asking God to change you. To reach a lost world, God needs "great" kingdom citizens. Write your thoughts below.

2. Look up Romans 1:14-16. What was Paul's basic attitude towards the gospel? Why? How should this attitude be expressed in the missionary's life?

CHAPTER 13

Keys to Communication

Our examination of cultural considerations in mission has shown us that to be effective communicators, missionaries must not only become students of the culture, but also belongers in that culture. When missionaries fail to achieve genuine identification, their ministries are often limited to areas which don't require an insider's performance. It is all too easy for missionaries to perform technical skills in missionary institutions without giving much effort to becoming belongers. Their services are useful, but as the old adage puts it, "The gift without the giver is bare."

In this chapter, we will consider the challenge that belongers face, once they have found their place in the culture. Remember, the goal of identification is to be an effective communicator. An essential part of this process is learning the language and culture, but there is more to communication than simply relating the message in understandable terms. There are keys within each culture which, if discovered, can greatly aid in the acceptance of the gospel message.

How do missionaries who have their own cultural orientation discover what makes the people of a different culture "tick"? How do they come to understand the people's "worldview," and how do they go about "contextualizing" the message? How do they discover "keys" which will make the gospel more easily accepted by the people?

I. Intercultural Communication

In the following article, David Hesselgrave presents a basic model for intercultural communication. He reviews some points already made in earlier chapters, but such review is helpful in getting a good grasp of the process involved in communicating biblical truth from culture to culture. Read this article carefully.

❑ **The Role of Culture in Communication ***

David J. Hesselgrave

There was a time in the history of man (and it was not long ago!) when the barriers between the earth's peoples seemed to be mainly physical. The problem was one of transporting men, messages, and material goods across treacherous seas, towering mountains, and trackless deserts. Missionaries knew all too well how formidable those challenges were. Today, thanks to jumbo jets, giant ocean vessels, and towering antennae, those earlier problems have been largely resolved. We can deliver a man or a Bible or a sewing machine anywhere on the face of the earth within a matter of hours, and we can transmit a sound or a picture within seconds. This does not end the matter, however. To quote Robert Park:

One can transport words across cultural boundaries (like bricks), but interpretation will depend on the context which their differ-

ent interpreters bring to them. And that context will depend more on past experience and present temper of the people to whom the words are addressed than on the good will of the persons who report them.**

Park goes on to assert that the traits of material culture are more easily diffused than those of non-material culture. He illustrates his point by citing the example of the African chief whose immediate response upon seeing a plow in operation was, "It's worth as much as 10 wives!" One wonders how much prayer and how many hours of study and patient instruction would have been necessary to convince that chief that Christ is infinitely more valuable than plows or wives or fetishes and false gods! Yes, the barriers are, after all, very real and challenging. But they are no longer essentially physical—if, indeed, they ever were.

1. *Why has mission emphasis changed from crossing physical barriers to crossing cultural barriers?*
-
-
-

The cultural barrier to missionary communication

There is a very real danger that, as our technology advances and enables us to cross geographical and national boundaries with singular ease and increasing frequency, we may forget that *it is the cultural barriers which are the most formidable*. The gap between our technological advances and our communication skills is perhaps one of the most chal-

lenging aspects of modern civilization. Western diplomats are beginning to realize that they need much more than a knowledge of their message and a good interpreter or English-speaking national. Many educators have come to the position that cross-cultural communication is a *sine qua non* (absolute prerequisite) for citizenship in this new world. Missionar-

* Hesselgrave, D. J. (1978). *Communicating Christ cross-culturally* (pp. 67-78). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

** Park, R. (1966). Reflections on communication and culture. In B. Berelson & M. Janowitz (Eds.), *Reader in public opinion and communication* (2nd ed.) (p. 167). New York: Free Press.

ies now understand that much more than a microphone and increased volume is involved in penetrating cultural barriers.

Unfortunately, intercultural communication is as complex as the sum total of human differences. The word "culture" is a very inclusive term. It takes into account linguistic, political, economic, social, psychological, religious, national, racial, and other differences. Communication reflects all these differences, for, as Clyde Kluckhohn says, "Culture is a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the group's knowledge stored up for future use."*

Or, as Louis Luzbetak writes:

Culture is a design for living. It is a plan according to which society adapts itself to its physical, social, and ideational environment. A plan for coping with the physical environment would include such matters as food production and all technological knowledge and skill. Political systems, kinships and family organization, and law are examples of social adaptation, a plan according to which one is to interact with his fellows. Man copes with his ideational environment through knowledge, art, magic, science, philosophy, and religion. Cultures are but different answers to essentially the same human problems.**

Missionaries must come to an even greater realization of the importance of culture in communicating Christ. In the final analysis, they can effectively communicate to the people of any given culture to the extent that they understand that culture (language being but one aspect of culture). Before mis-

sionaries go to a foreign country the first time, they tend to think primarily of the great distance they must travel to get to their field of labor. Often it means traveling thousands of miles from their homes. But once they arrive on the field, they begin to realize that in this modern age it is nothing to travel great distances. The great problem to be faced is the last 18 inches! What a shock! The missionary has studied for many years. He has traveled 10,000 miles to communicate the gospel of Christ. He now stands face to face with the people of his respondent culture, and he is unable to communicate the most simple message! Ask experienced missionaries about their frustrating experiences on the field, and most of them will respond by telling of their problems in communication.

In the final analysis, missionaries can effectively communicate to the people of any given culture to the extent that they understand that culture.

Missionaries should prepare for this frustration. They have been preoccupied with their message! By believing it, they were saved. By studying it, they have been strengthened. Now they want to preach it to those who have not heard it, for that is a great part of what it means to be a missionary! But before they can do so effectively, they must study again—not just the language, but also the audience. They must learn before they can teach and listen before they can speak. They need to know the message for the world, but also the world in which the message must be communicated.

* Kluckhohn, C. (1949). *Mirror for man* (p. 23). New York: Whittlesey.

** Luzbetak, L. J. (1963). *The church and cultures* (pp. 60-61). Techny, IL: Divine Word.

2. Missionaries have a message to deliver, but what must happen before they can deliver it effectively?

A three-culture model of missionary communication

Eugene Nida of the American Bible Society has made important contributions toward an understanding of the communication problems of the missionary. The discussion and diagram in his chapter on “Structure of Communication” furnish the basis for our consideration of a “three-culture model” of missionary communication.*

As a communicator, the missionary stands on middle ground and looks in two directions (see Figure

13-1). In the first place, he looks to the Scriptures. The message is not really his. He did not originate it. He was not there when it was first given. His own words are not “inspired” in the biblical sense. He cannot say as could the apostle:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life—and the life was manifested

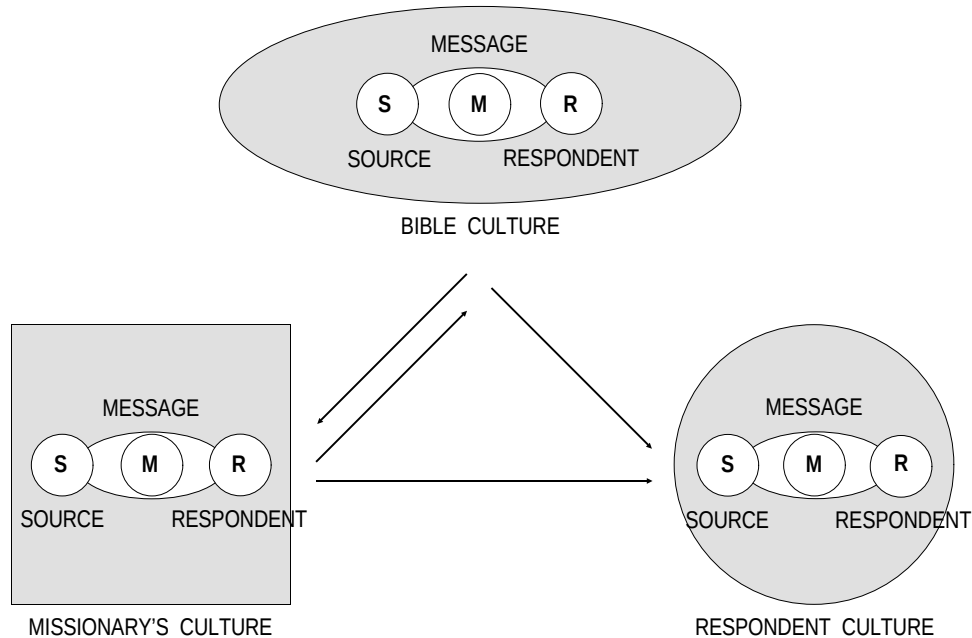


Figure 13-1. A Three-Culture Model of Missionary Communication

* Nida, E. A. (1960). *Message and mission: The communication of the Christian faith* (pp. 33-58). New York: Harper & Row.

and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us (1 John 1:1-2).

He knows that he must be diligent to present himself “approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). He knows that he must study and obey the Word of God. He is aware that there are some very solemn warnings to be absolutely faithful to that original message:

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

In summary, in relationship to the biblical message, the missionary is simply a messenger, an ambassador—a secondary, never a primary source.

In the second place, when the missionary lifts up his eyes and looks to the fields, he sees people—millions of them—who need the message. If only they could understand their real need! If only their worship were directed to the true God! If only their faith were to be placed in the one Savior and Lord. If only they could be reached, instructed, and persuaded to repent. It is these of whom his Lord spoke when He said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:18-20). But looking at his respondent culture, he realizes that he will never be an indigenous source. The language of that culture will always have an element of strangeness. That culture will always be his adopted culture, never his native culture.

It is this intermediate position, this looking in two directions, that constitutes the special challenge and unusual opportunity of the missionary as an ambassador of Christ. It is a special challenge because of the comprehensive and demanding nature of the task. It is an unusual opportunity because it means

giving the one needful message to those who have not understood or believed it.

Let’s take another look at what is involved from the perspective of communication. At the primary level, the missionary message is the message of the Bible. It was given by God through the apostles and prophets in the languages and cultural contexts of the Bible. For the sake of simplification we will say that “Bible culture” includes all cultural contexts in which the message of the Bible was originally given, whether Judah at the time of Ezra, Jerusalem at the time of Christ, or Athens at the time of Paul. In those cultural contexts there were sources (Ezra, our Lord Christ, or Paul), messages, and respondents. The sources of the messages were identified with the cultures we have labeled “Bible culture.” They encoded the messages in forms that were understandable in those cultures to respondents who were members of those cultures.

In relationship to the biblical message, the missionary is simply a messenger, an ambassador—a secondary, never a primary source.

At the secondary level, the missionary is a citizen of a quite different culture, whether his home address is in London, Chicago, or even Tokyo. He has been brought up in his own culture and has been schooled in its language, worldview, and value system. He has received the Christian message in the context of culture as it was communicated by a source who most likely was a citizen of the culture. We will label that culture the “missionary’s culture.”

At the tertiary level, there are people in still another culture with its own sources, messages, and respondents. We will label this third culture the “respondent culture” (and, occasionally, the “target culture”). In relationship to this respondent culture, the missionary has immediate and ultimate objectives. First, he desires to communicate Christ in such a way that the people will understand, repent, and believe the gospel. Second, he wants to commit the message to “faithful men who will be able to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2) in culturally relevant terms that only they, in the final analysis, can command.

3. *How are three cultures involved in communicating the gospel cross-culturally?*

4. *What must the missionary be able to do in order to transfer the message successfully from the source culture to the respondent culture?*

The missionary task can now be seen in clearer perspective. Starting from the missionary's culture, cultural boundaries must be traversed in two directions. The missionary's first responsibility is to study the Scriptures, in the original languages if possible, but always in terms of the "Bible culture" context. Any sound system of hermeneutics must take into account the cultural context in which the message was originally communicated, the background and syntax and style, the characteristics of the audience, and the special circumstances in which the message was given. This process is essential to Bible exegesis. The important thing, after all, is not what the Bible reader or interpreter feels the meaning to be; the important thing is what the source intended that his respondents should understand by his message! The Bible interpreter is constantly tempted to project the meanings of his own cultural background into the exegetical process with the result that the original meaning is missed or perverted. This temptation is heightened by the fact that, for the most part, all of us learn our own culture quite unconsciously and uncritically. Therefore, there is the ever-present tendency to generalize from our own experience.

Most Bible readers and interpreters will find sufficient reason for confessing to their weakness in this area. For example, a friend of mine recently joined a tour group in Palestine. While walking under a tree in the Jordan Valley, the guide reached up, picked some fruit, peeled away the husk, and ate the fruit. As he did so, he turned to the group and said,

"According to the Bible, John the Baptist's diet consisted of this fruit and wild honey. This is the locust." Almost to a person the members of the group expressed astonishment. They had always supposed that the locusts mentioned in Matthew and Mark were grasshoppers! As a matter of fact, they probably were correct. The point is that they had not thought of this second possibility because in their own culture "grasshopper locusts" are prevalent while "locust fruit" is not!

Another example of this tendency to interpret the Word of God through cultural glasses related to the Authorized Version's translation of our Lord's instructions to His disciples at the Passover meal, "Drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27, KJV). Perhaps most Protestant congregations in America (and not a few ministers) understand this to mean that all the wine is to be consumed, though little significance is attached to the phrase in view of the fact that the elements usually come in such miniscule proportions that consuming all is not a very challenging task! How much more significant is the original meaning which, properly translated, would be: "Drink from it, all of you" (NASB) or, "All of you drink some of it" (Williams). Two facts of American culture militate against this original meaning, however. First, most of us do not drink from a common cup in the manner to which the disciples were accustomed. And second, the syntax of the English language as spoken by most Americans makes it unlikely that they will decode the message in accordance with the original meaning.

5. Describe the problem one's own cultural background produces in trying to understand the original meaning of Bible texts. How is this problem overcome?

Proper exegesis, however, is but the beginning of missionary responsibility. The missionary must now look in another direction—the direction of the respondent culture with its own worldview, value system, and codes of communication. He must remember that respondents in that culture have imbibed as deeply of its particular ideas and values as he has of his. It is likely that they will be more ignorant of the “Bible culture” than non-Christian members of the “missionary’s culture” are. Further, they will exhibit the same tendency to generalize and project their own cultural understandings into the message of the Bible culture. The missionary task, therefore, is to properly exegete (decode) the biblical message. With minimal intrusion of his own cultural understanding, he must encode the message in a culturally relevant form in the target culture so that the respondents will understand as much as possible of the original message. This is not the simple task that many have supposed. Consider what is involved in translating Revelation 3:20 in terms which are meaningful to the Zanaki people.

One cannot say to the Zanaki people along the winding shores of sprawling Lake Victoria, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20). This would mean that Christ was declaring Himself to be a thief, for in Zanaki land thieves generally make it a practice to knock on the door of a hut which they hope to burglarize; and if they hear any movement of noise inside, they dash off into the dark. An honest man will come to a house and call the name of the person inside, and this way identify himself by his voice. Accordingly, in the Zanaki translation it is necessary to say,

“Behold, I stand at the door and call.” This wording may be slightly strange to us, but the meaning is the same. In each case Christ is asking people to open the door. He is no thief, and He will not force an entrance; He knocks and in Zanaki “He calls.” If anything, the Zanaki expression is a little more personal than our own.*

The missionary task is to properly decode the biblical message. He must encode the message in a culturally relevant form in the target culture so that the respondents will understand as much as possible of the original message.

Or, consider the strangeness of the phrase “devours widows’ houses” in a still different respondent culture:

To understand a strange culture one must enter as much as possible into the very life and viewpoint of the native people. Otherwise, a person will not realize how ridiculous it is to talk to Indians of southern Mexico about scribes who “devour widows’ houses” (Mark 12:40). Their houses are often made with cornstalk walls and grass roofs, and farm animals do eat them when fodder gets scarce, so that people guard against hungry cows breaking in to eat down a house. “Devouring widows’ houses” is no bold metaphor in some places but a real danger. Hence the native

* Nida, E. A. (1952). *God's Word in man's language* (pp. 45-46). New York: Harper & Row.

reader wonders, “What were these ‘scribes’ anyway? Was this just a name for starved, ravenous cattle?” In such cases one must translate “destroy widows’ houses.”*

There remains still another important aspect of missionary communication. The ultimate goal of the missionary is to raise up effective sources of the Christian message from within the target culture. Missionary communication that does not keep this goal in mind is myopic. The world mission of the

For the most part, missionaries have not communicated Christ’s concern for the people of still other respondent cultures.

church has been greatly weakened by lack of vision at this point. It is not so much that missionaries have been remiss in encouraging the emergence of Christian leadership in the Third World. But it has been all too easy to encourage (perhaps unconsciously) those leaders to become Western in their thinking and approach. After a course in cross-cultural communication, a national pastor of five years of experience confessed that throughout his ministry he had

preached “Western sermons” to Asian audiences. After all, he had learned the gospel from American missionaries: he had studied his theology, homiletics, and evangelism from English and German textbooks; and the great percentage of his Christian training had been in the language and other patterns of Western culture. No wonder his Christian communication lacked “respondent cultural relevance” even though the respondent culture in this case was his own culture!

Furthermore, for the most part, missionaries have not communicated Christ’s concern for the people of still other respondent cultures. As a result, many Christians in Hong Kong have little vision for Indonesia, and many Christians in Venezuela exhibit little concern for unbelievers in Peru. When missionary vision is born (and it has been born in many churches in the Third World), it seldom occurs as a result of the ministry of the North American or European missionary. Though the state of affairs is ironic and deplorable, it is understandable. The missionary’s own missionary concern has been expressed in terms of *his* target culture. Unless he keeps his eyes on the fields, unless he sees the whole world as the object of God’s love, and unless he communicates this to national Christians, *their vision will tend to be limited by his own!*

6. *What is the ultimate goal of missionary communication, and how is this goal most often frustrated?*

7. *The author points out that for the most part missionaries have neglected to communicate Christ’s concern for the people of still other respondent cultures. What is the negative result?*

* Nida, E. A. (1952). *God’s Word in man’s language* (p. 45). New York: Harper & Row.

Decoding and encoding the gospel message are complex tasks and require a great deal of technical skill. In the following excerpt, Hesselgrave outlines seven dimensions of the holistic process of cross-cultural communication.

❑ **Seven Dimensions of Cross-Cultural Communication ***

David J. Hesselgrave

1. Worldviews: Ways of perceiving the world

No one sees the world exactly as it is. Each one sees it through the tinted glasses of his own worldview. Most people neither carefully evaluate their own particular worldview, nor meticulously interpret messages that come to them from sources with other worldviews. In other words, few people take off the glasses of their own worldview to examine them. And perhaps still fewer people decode “cross-worldview” messages in the light of—or by “putting on the glasses of”—the message source. If *respondents* are not disposed to exchange glasses in order to decode cross-cultural messages correctly, *sources* must assume the responsibility of encoding messages with the worldview of the respondents in mind.

2. Cognitive processes: Ways of thinking

Studies show that the ability to think clearly is a function of social or educational opportunity rather than of ethnic origin. All normal people of all cultures have the ability to think. But they think differently. People in different cultures tend to arrive at conclusions through differing thought processes.

For example, most missionaries will agree with the Hindu notion that the mystery of divine reality eludes the mystery of speech and symbol. But the fundamental question is not whether there is a sense in which that notion is true. Rather, the question is this: Does true knowledge of God come primarily through subjective experience or objective revelation?

Here again, the missionary must *help* the Hindu understand. But, humanly speaking, that is possible only as he himself takes the Hindu way of thinking into account when communicating Christ.

3. Linguistic forms: Ways of expressing ideas

Of all the seven dimensions of cross-cultural communication, language is the one that is the most obvious and the one with which the missionary is best prepared (in terms of awareness) to cope. But language is more important than many missionaries realize.

Languages tend to reflect that which is important in a given culture. For example, European languages reflect the primary importance of time in Euro-American culture. A man was, is, or will be sick. Languages that by virtue of their grammatical structures do not require this distinction between past, present, and future may seem strange to Westerners. But they are instructive at the very point of their strangeness. “Learning the language,” then, means more than learning enough of the receptor language to transliterate English sentences into it. Languages constitute veritable gold mines of information about the people and cultures that employ them.

4. Behavioral patterns: Ways of acting

William S. Howell has asserted that “the Ugly American award is won more often by failing to meet expectations of appropriate behavior than by misusing the local language.” Whether the newcomer to a neighborhood visits others or waits for them to visit him, the ways in which one receives

* Hesselgrave, D. J. (1978). *Communicating Christ cross-culturally* (pp. 164-168). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

guests and gifts, public behavior vis-à-vis members of the opposite sex—thousands of such items are matters of cultural definition. Since they are learned informally for the most part, they are seldom pondered and justified. They simply constitute ways in which people “ought” to act.

To be sure, as a Christian the missionary cannot accept all the behavior patterns of any given culture. But there is nothing inherently wrong with the great majority of cultural ways of doing things. “Christian” or “un-Christian,” correct or incorrect—an inventory of cultural behavior, therefore, is essential for the missionary who would communicate Christ.

5. Social structures: Ways of interacting

Men and women not only have ways of *acting* according to accepted codes of conduct, they also have ways of *interacting* on the basis of where they fit in the social structure. The conventions of social structure dictate which channels of communication are open and which are closed; who talks to whom, in what way, and with what effect; and when one communicates which type of message.

By way of example, consider the familiar story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4. Given some knowledge of the societal arrangements and relationships in that time and place, we can understand why they met at a well, why the woman

Missionaries should no more think of communicating Christ in a society without a societal map than they would think of motoring through a country without a road map!

expressed surprise when Jesus spoke to her, and why it was particularly unusual that he would ask a favor of her (cf. v. 9). Moreover, we can make some educated guesses as to why the woman went to the men in the city and invited them to investigate the claims of Christ (cf. v. 29).

A “map” of societal arrangements is also a guide to communication. Missionaries should no more think of communicating Christ in a society without a societal map than they would think of motoring through a country without a road map!

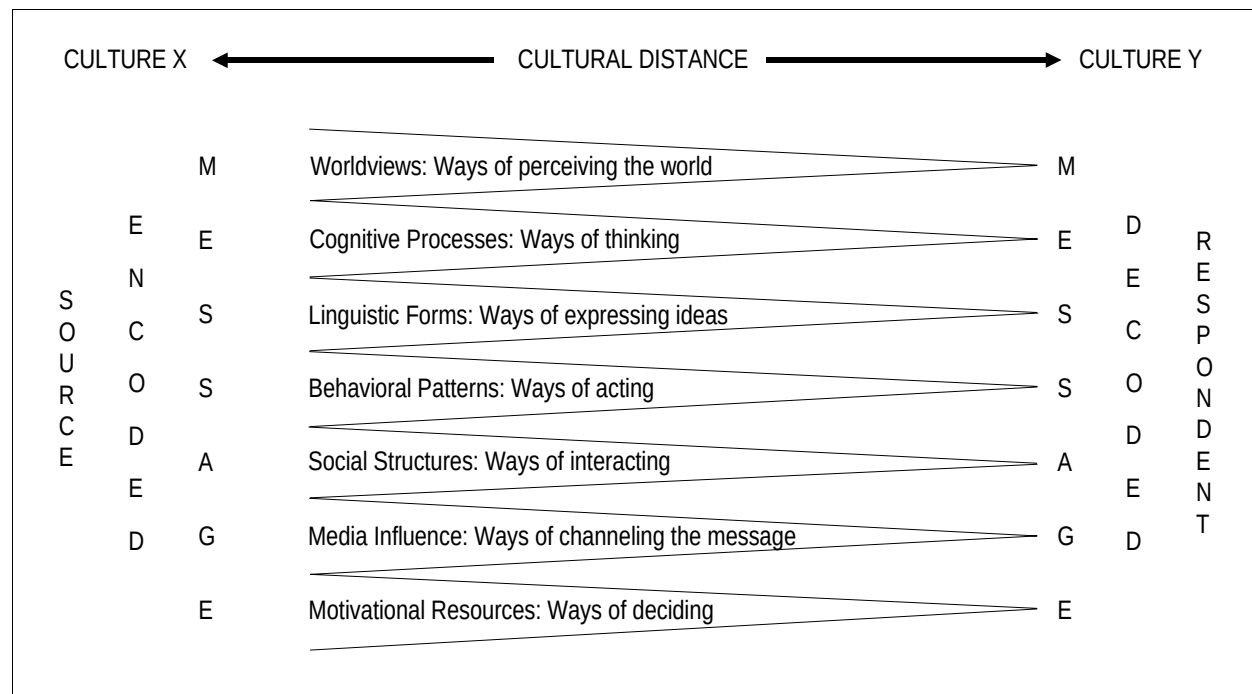


Figure 13-2. Dimensions of Cross-Cultural Communication

6. Media influence: Ways of channeling the message

In times past, the emphases in communication have been on sources and respondents, the contexts in which messages are sent and received, and the messages themselves—their content, organization, and style. Recently we have become increasingly aware of the fact that the media that are used to transmit messages are by no means neutral. First, they affect the message in the transmission of it. Second, in one sense, they themselves constitute messages.

Take, as an obvious example, the case of a missionary who enters an illiterate society with the objective of reducing the language to writing, teaching literacy, translating the Bible, and establishing a Christian church. Very little imagination is required to realize that the difference between the spoken and the written word will be a major factor in communicating Christ in that culture. But beyond that, think of the tremendous changes that will be set in motion with the introduction of written messages!

Missionaries tend to think of media in simplistic terms such as message availability, audience size, and interest factors. But far more is involved.

7. Motivational resources: Ways of deciding

The missionary who communicates Christ presses for a verdict as did his first-century counterparts, the apostles. Of course, people of all cultures have to make many decisions. But again, the ways in which people of various cultures think of decision making and the ways in which they arrive at decisions are very diverse.

Think, for example, of the case of the American missionary who presents a Chinese with the opportunity to receive Christ. If the decision is *for* Christ, the missionary will be elated and grateful. But imagine his disappointment when sometime later, the Chinese convert does an about-face and evidences a lapse of faith. The response of the missionary is predictable. But it never occurs to him that his Chinese “disciple in the rough” may be simply reflecting the philosophy of Confucius (not because he is Confucian but because he is Chinese) who said, “The superior man goes through his life without any one preconceived course of action or any taboo. He merely decides for the moment what is the right thing to do.” To point out the problem is not to argue for the correctness of Confucian, or Chinese, or American approaches to decision making. Rather, it is a plea for understanding and preparedness.

8. What must a missionary do and/or be in order to demonstrate “understanding and preparedness” as a cross-cultural communicator?

II. Putting on Worldview Glasses

In this section, we return to Hesselgrave's writings, this time to deepen our understanding of worldview and its critical importance to the missionary endeavour.

❑ *Fitting Two Thirds World Believers With Christian Worldview Glasses* *

David J. Hesselgrave

Every day it becomes more apparent that millions of Christians worldwide still see the world through glasses that distort and discolor it. They profess Christianity but do not possess a Christian worldview. At the same time there is mounting evidence

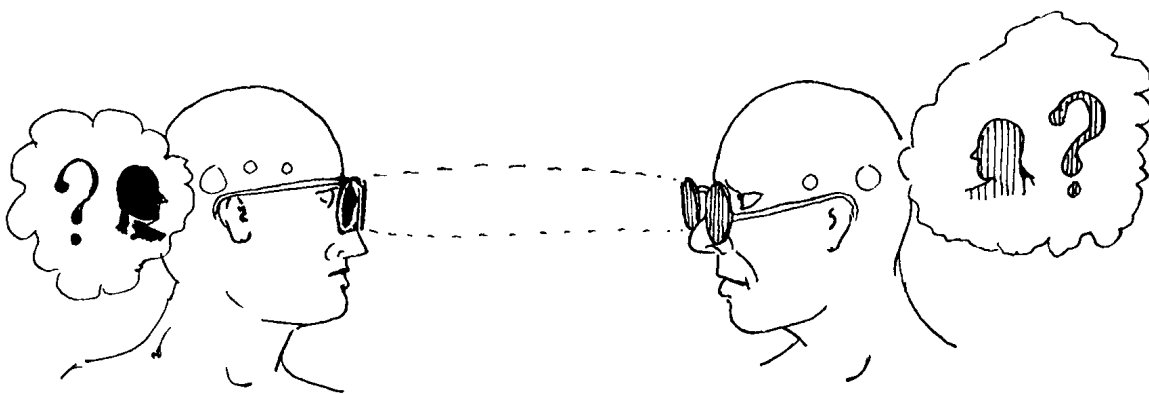
Millions of Christians worldwide still see the world through glasses that distort and discolor it.

that some Christian leaders at least are becoming aware of the problem and are trying to do something about it—trying to fit Two Thirds World Christians with Christian worldview glasses, so to speak.

That sounds a bit cryptic. What do we mean?

Worldview glasses

The metaphor is that of Christian philosopher Norman Geisler.** He says that in the process of learning one's culture (the technical term is "enculturation"), one obtains worldview glasses. In other words, one comes to perceive the world—God, man, nature, history, values, and so forth—in a way prescribed by one's own culture and/or subculture. Thus the majority of Asian Indians will grow up to think of the world as inhabited by many gods, of birth and rebirth as being the destiny of man as determined by his *karma*, and of history as an almost interminable cyclical series progressing toward re-absorption into the *Brahman* or ultimate reality. As Indians study and mature, the nuances, values, and obligations of this Hindu worldview will be elaborated and clarified.



* Hesselgrave, D. J. (1987, June). Fitting Two Thirds World believers with Christian worldview glasses. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 215-222.

** Geisler, N. L. (1978). Some philosophical perspectives on missionary dialogue. In D. J. Hesselgrave (Ed.), *Theology and missions: Papers given at Trinity Consultation No. 1* (pp. 241-258). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

The same process of worldview acquisition occurs in all cultures. Everyone everywhere receives worldview glasses. The problem is that, for the most part, their worldview glasses do not reflect the world as it actually is but nevertheless determine how the wearer will actually perceive it.

There is something else that we must understand about culturally prescribed worldview glasses: They are exceedingly difficult to remove and re-

place. Once put on, it is as though they were secured by super glue. An attempt to remove one's original worldview glasses and try to put on the glasses of a different worldview will necessarily involve considerable effort and even pain. From a Christian perspective, the tragic result of this fact is that without replacing old glasses it is impossible to see in a Christian way, no matter how sincere one may be in his or her determination to be a Christian.

9. What is meant by the term "worldview glasses"?

Worldview and contextualization

Traditionally we missionaries have carried on our mission by introducing the gospel in a rather piecemeal fashion: translating this or that New Testament Gospel, preaching on this or that Bible passage, teaching from one or another Bible book as we see fit. Even when we have attempted to be more systematic, we have usually divided up Christian teaching in a topical fashion dealing with God, sin, salvation, the Christian life, and so forth. This approach is endemic in Western instruction, but it is not well-suited to the rest of the world. (And perhaps it is not nearly so effective in the West as we have thought previous.) As a matter of fact, our Western approaches are so ingrained in us that the reader may wonder what alternative would be superior.

In a tremendously insightful little book, H. R. Weber provides us with an illustration of how Christian communicators can go about the business of teaching the Bible in a way that better equips believers to adopt a truly Christian worldview.*

Weber's account takes us to Luwuk-Banggai, Indonesia. Very remote, the area was almost untouched until this century. Then in 1912, Muslim traders

tried to convert to Islam some of its 100,000 scattered natives. Partly in response to the pleas of the Dutch government, the Reformed State Church sent a minister to the area. Over a few years he baptized thousands without giving them proper instruction or follow-up.

Converts were of three types: (1) Some were sincere, (2) some felt under obligation to adopt the religion of the rulers, and (3) some became Christians in order to remain pagan. (Explanation: They thought that they had to accept either Christianity or Islam, and only the former would allow them to keep the pigs and dogs that were so important to their animistic sacrifices.)

After World War II there were 30,000 nominal Christians in numerous churches in Luwuk-Banggai. They were Christians and congregations without the Word of God, and most of them were nonliterates. In 1952, Weber, who was an experienced missionary with a knowledge of the local language, was asked to go and teach the basics of the Bible. He was given no money and no helpers except indigenous personnel.

* Weber, H. R. (1957). *The communication of the gospel to illiterates: Based on a missionary experience in Indonesia*. London: BCM.

The church was already divided into seven districts. It was decided to hold short Bible courses in each district. A team of district evangelists and ministers was chosen, and each congregation was invited to send some leaders to a five-day Bible course in a central village. They were to pay for this course in money or in kind. Those who attended had, on the average, three years of elementary education. The format was simple but profound. By way of introduction, Weber stressed the importance of the Bible

in the life of the individual Christian and local congregation. The first evening, the travel route to be taken through the Bible was sketched: from creation in Genesis to the kingdom of God in Revelation with Christ at the center of the whole, and including the fall, the covenants with Israel, the church, and the second coming. The four succeeding days highlighted Genesis 3:1, Exodus 19:1-6, Luke 2:18-48, and Acts 1:6-11.

10. How did the format of Weber's Bible "course" differ from the typical Western approach?

Each day began with worship, the reading of the Scripture passage for the day, and prayer for guidance. Then the passage for the day was studied in small groups (making sure it was linked with preceding studies). Each group reported its findings, and a summary was drawn up. (Later this was to be given to each student to aid him as a catechist.) Afternoons were spent in discussing community life, the meaning of baptism and communion, evangelism, and so forth. The evenings were devoted to a discussion of Christians in a tribal community, modern Islam, and the world.

Weber began to look upon the nonliterate as artists. He began to see himself as a stunted intellectual with but one method of communication—pallid, abstract ideas.

On the last evening the witnessing theme was exemplified by inviting the whole village to a special gathering. The temple in Jerusalem was "created," and Psalms 24 and 100 were recited antiphonally by a "priest" and "Levite" on one side and a chorus of men and women on the other. Parables such as Luke 10:30-37 were mimed, and people were asked to guess the meaning. Then the parable was read from Scripture and explained, and a challenge was given. This was followed by hymns and tea-time. Finally,

the Genesis 1 lesson of the first evening was balanced with Revelation 21 with its vision of a recreated world of peace and righteousness.

Weber himself made a great discovery as time progressed. He kept hearing about tremendous Christians who would like to attend the studies but could not do so because they were *buta kuruf* ("blind with regard to letters"—that is, nonliterate). Realizing that the great majority came in that category, Weber started talking to some nonliterate and discovered that, though he spoke their language, communication was very difficult. When he asked the meaning of a word, they would not respond with a synonym or an abstract description. Instead they would use words to paint a picture that gave the exact meaning. When describing a person, they would not talk about his character but rather would tell a few experiences that pointed up the kind of person he was. Weber began to look upon the nonliterate as artists. He began to see himself as a stunted intellectual with but one method of communication—pallid, abstract ideas. He became a pupil in order to learn how to communicate picturesquely and dramatically rather than intellectually and verbally.

Weber then tried out his discovery in the nonliterate village of Taulan. There the whole village assembled. Weber asked the heathen priest to tell the story of creation as the tribe knew it. Then he used simple drawings on a blackboard to illustrate the Genesis

story. He did the same with the fall and other biblical events. Finally Weber instituted Bible study courses for nonliterates on the model above but modified by his discovery. Later in Java and Bali he added the

use of symbols—contrasting the Buddhist *zoetrope*, the Taoist sign, and the hammer and sickle with various Christian symbols such as the cross and the crown.

11. *What can we learn from Weber's "discovery" regarding his own communication style and his response to it?*
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Principles to be observed

If we can bring ourselves to the difficult admission that we have contributed to the problem of tainted glasses (and that Weber's approach certainly has much to commend it), we are in a position to review some essential principles. In a unique way, Weber takes us back to the way God Himself communicated His truth to us when He gave us the Holy Scriptures. The Bible, after all, is not primarily a book of systematic theology. Neither is it a series of disconnected episodes without meaningful arrangement or continuity. It is a divine record that (even

of biblical theology that follows the unfolding of God's will and way to mankind, the low level of Bible literacy in many of our churches—all of these factors conspire to teach us the following principles.

1. *It is a mistake to concentrate on only one book of the Bible in translating the Bible into new languages.* It is better to select certain specially important passages—passages that can be used to tell the larger story of God's dealings with people over the course of time—and translate them. I am aware of the fact that some translators are now adopting this approach. It is to be hoped that still more of them will do so in the future, for in so doing translators lay the groundwork for the kind of instruction being advocated here.
2. *Instead of choosing disconnected Bible stories or even logically connected Bible topics in order to reach the Christian faith, the continuity and progressive nature of biblical revelation should be preserved in initiating Christian instruction.*

The Bible is the revelation of all that is necessary—and nothing that is superfluous—for the manufacture and fitting of new, Christian worldview glasses.

allowing for human instrumentality in the arrangement of its books) progresses from essential beginnings through all-important events and divine disclosures to a prophetic ending and new beginning. In short, it is the revelation of all that is necessary—and nothing that is superfluous—for the manufacture and fitting of new, Christian worldview glasses.

With that in mind, what should we avoid and what should we incorporate into our discipling approaches? Missionary experiences, criticisms coming from Two Thirds World theologians, the pattern

In giving us the Bible that He gave us and in the way He gave it to us, God accomplished some very important objectives that we tend to forget. First, He kept doctrine in the context of life situations and in the context of history. Second, He provided us with the big picture into which the small scenes fit. Third, He provided us with a progression in which more complex and advanced teachings are built upon those that are more elementary.

We forget all this at our peril. People in the Two Thirds World are capable of mastering large quantities of material when it is presented in narrative and pictorial forms. They identify with the Old Testament readily because it speaks to their situation. The sacrificial system of Genesis and Leviticus has special relevance. The idolatry of heathen tribes—and even Israel’s tendency to take and make false gods—do not require lengthy explanation and careful redefinition. Ancestors, ancestral spirits, witchcraft, and the like are aspects of daily life. Polygamy is seen as a biblical problem as well as a contemporary one. Abraham’s resort to cohabitation with Hagar in order to secure a son and realize God’s promise is seen in a new light. So are God’s prohibitions against intermarriage with heathen tribes and the evil consequences of, for example, Solomon’s disregard of that prohibition. The refusal of Daniel and his friends to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s image speaks to a fundamental issue in the Two Thirds World. And the distinction between true and false prophets is of the essence.

3. *As one teaches, it is important to compare and contrast biblical history and truth with cultural myths and errors.* Of course this must be done accurately and sensitively. But the old mythological framework must be shattered (even though it likely contains some important elements of truth) if the biblical worldview is to predominate. Once the biblical worldview is in

The old mythological framework must be shattered (even though it likely contains some important elements of truth) if the biblical worldview is to predominate.

the ascendancy, the commitment of Two Thirds World Christians will take on an entirely new configuration. A person’s ability to cope with the common trials of life, to say nothing of life’s unexpected catastrophes, is in large part determined by his or her ability to integrate those trials

and tragedies into an all-encompassing worldview and thereby find some meaning for them.

The importance of worldview can hardly be overstated. Hindus are able to live with monstrous inequalities and inequities because they can be meaningfully related to *karma* and *samsara* (the wheel of birth and rebirth). Tribalists counter “bad medicine” with “good medicine” and cope with tragedy and death by ascertaining and avenging their cause. Similarly, Christians can confront evil and overcome temptation, not only because of the indwelling Spirit, but also because they understand how God deals with evil in history and how He will deal with it in the future.

At one time or another most of us have had the experience of putting a jigsaw puzzle together—not just the simple one designed for children but the complex one designed to challenge adult ingenuity for seemingly endless hours. If so, we have probably discovered that the saving factor in the situation was the small reproduction of the completed picture on the cover of the box. By observing the subject, outline, and shadings of the completed picture, we were aided in discovering how to fit miniscule pieces into the whole. Ultimately we were able to put them in just the right place and experience a significant degree of satisfaction in doing so.

In like manner, Christians quite naturally relate new experiences—particularly those experiences that cry out for an understandable explanation and an appropriate response—to whatever worldview they know best. In terms of the jigsaw analogy, they fit their experiences into the picture that is most familiar to them. To return to our earlier metaphor, they perceive their experiences in a way dictated by the worldview glasses they happen to be wearing at the time, and they respond accordingly.

In the light of our present knowledge of our Two Thirds World churches, missionary and national teachers who are serious about discipling the nations by baptizing and “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:20) will want to give careful attention to ways of fitting Two Thirds World believers with Christian worldview glasses.

12. *Why does the author suggest that the sequence and essential nature of biblical revelation be preserved in teaching new Christians?*

13. *Why is it so critical that new believers understand the Christian worldview? What can happen if they continue to function with their previous worldview?*

Hesselgrave has eloquently argued for the need to contextualize the gospel message and, in so doing, to establish a firm basis for the developing Christian worldview in the new believer. In the following section, he outlines four fundamental elements in the process of contextualizing the message.

❏ *Worldview and the Substance of the Missionary Message* *

David J. Hesselgrave

The Christian message is universal. It is for all men irrespective of race, language, culture, or circumstance. Some have therefore naively assumed that this ends the matter. If one knows what the gospel is, all that remains is the motivation to deliver it. There is, of course, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:5-6). But without betraying that unique message in any way, the gospel writers and preachers of the New Testament demonstrated a remarkable variegation in their communication of it, not only in style but in substance.

It would seem that in the New Testament, missionary communication involved either making a case for Christian claims from the Old Testament, in the case of those who held to the Judeo-Christian world-

view, or filling in the information concerning God, His world, man, and history which the Old Testament affords, in the case of those who had non-Judeo-Christian worldviews. Notice that in the partially recorded discourses of Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) and on Mars Hill (17:22-31), Paul begins with the Creator God who was unknown to those Gentile polytheists. Paul’s approach is elaborated in the first chapters of Romans.

We conclude, therefore, that while certain general statements can be made concerning the substance of the gospel (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:1-9) and the spiritual need of man as a sinner (e.g., Rom. 3:9-18), the communication of these truths in specific situations involves a contextualization process which includes *definition, selection, adaptation, and application*.

* Hesselgrave, D. J. (1978). *Communicating Christ cross-culturally* (pp. 134-140). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Definition

One of the disastrous aspects of man's sin was that he did not retain God in his knowledge. As a result, man's understanding has been perverted in precisely those areas where divine revelation is crystal clear. The true God is excluded, but false gods abound. Men distinguish between good and evil in some way but not in accordance with the biblical view. A majority of men believe themselves to be immortal in some sense of the term, but the forms of immortality vary greatly with worldviews. Geoffrey Bull's reflections on presenting Christ to Tibetan Buddhists illustrates the point well:

The expansion of the Tibetan language came with the growth of Buddhist philosophy; thus, words used often represent two distinct concepts. We take up and use a word in Tibetan, unconsciously giving it a Christian content. For them, however, it has a Buddhist content. We speak of God. In our minds this word conveys to us the concept of the Supreme and Eternal Spirit, Creator and Sustainer of all things, whose essence is love, whose presence is all holy, and whose ways are all righteous. For them, the Tibetan word god means nothing of the kind. We speak of prayer, the spiritual communion between God our Father and His children. For them prayer is a repetition of abstruse formulae and mystic phrases handed down from time immemorial. We speak of sin. For them the main emphasis is in the condemnation of killing animals.

When I was at Batang I saw an open-air performance of a Buddhist play. One of the chief sins depicted there was the catching of fish. When I asked the special significance of the "transgression," I was told, "Oh, fishes mustn't be killed, they can't speak," meaning, I presume, that they utter no sound. It is a common sight to see a man, when killing a yak, at the same time muttering his "prayers" furiously. Gross immorality is also condemned by the most thoughtful lamas, but

rarely publicly. We speak of the Savior. They think of Buddha or the Dalai Lama. We speak of God being a Trinity. They will say: "Yes, god the Buddha, god the whole canon of Buddhist scripture, and god the whole body of the Buddhist priesthood." We speak of man's spirit being dead in sin and his thus being cut off from God. They cannot understand. A person, they say, is only soul and body. What do you mean by the third concept, a man's spirit? When a man dies, they believe his soul escapes by one of the nine holes in his body; we know nothing of his spirit, they say. We speak of a revelation from God, His own Word which we are commanded to believe, and they know no word but the vast collection of Buddhist sayings, which only one in a thousand even vaguely understands. Those who have studied them believe that only in the exercise of the human intellect, in meditation and contemplation over a very long period, can one begin to enter into the deep things of the "spirit." What "spirit" though, perhaps few of them realize.

We, of course, speak of the Holy Spirit as a gift of God to the believer in Christ. They say, "What nonsense! As if a man could obtain the Holy Spirit as easily as that." Of course, I would point out the other aspect; that it is not so much our possessing the Spirit as the Spirit possessing us. On acceptance of Christ, the believer is born of the Spirit, yet it may be but slowly that He will obtain full sovereignty of the heart and will. This is dismissed as being contrary to the concept of God being a Spirit. We speak of the Almighty power of God and yet of man being responsible to Him, particularly in his acceptance or rejection of His way of salvation. I was told this was a "lower doctrine," cause and effect as a fatalistic law being widely propounded by the lamas.*

The missionary who takes the fall seriously, then, must stop to define his terms, as we have seen.

* Bull, G. T. (1967). *When iron gates yield* (pp. 97-99). London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Which terms? He must define those terms dictated by the distance between divine truth and cultural error. The definitional process must proceed by comparison and contrast. If this process seems too painstaking for the Western missionary who is used to instant everything—from instant cake to instant coffee to instant conversion—so be it. But he should

know that to build Christian conversion on non-Christian worldviews is like building skyscrapers on sand. The mission fields are well populated with men and women who have been ushered into the heavenlies without knowing why they got on the elevator. Once back on earth they have no intention of being taken for another ride.

14. Why are definitions so important to effective contextualization?

Selection

The previous point may become more understandable if we realize that the missionary must always give a partial message in the particular situation. Christ commanded us to teach men to observe all things which He commanded (Matt. 28:20), but certainly He did not intend that we deliver everything in one sitting! As a matter of fact, Christ never did that Himself, nor did the apostles. The world could not contain all the books that could be written about Christ and truth of God (John 21:25). Selection has always been necessary! Thus, while the missionary communicates nothing but the truth, he communicates the whole truth only over a period of time. Priorities are essential. Understanding comes with precept taught upon precept and line upon line.

The missionary must always give a partial message in the particular situation.

It was an awareness of the need for selection that prompted many early missionaries to avoid Old Testament passages concerning the wars of the Israelites. Their rationale was that the people were already too warlike. Of course, it would be both fallacious and faithless to think that the exploits of Israel could be forever neglected. But in every case care should be exercised in selecting culturally appropriate expressions of God's message to man. Let the polytheist be told of the power of Christ, not just

to save souls, but to subdue all things to Himself. Let him hear that the "unknown God" has revealed Himself to men. Let the Confucianist know that the only superior Man is the Son of God and Savior of men who recreates men and makes them into better husbands, wives, children, friends, and citizens. Let the Muslim see that God is love and hear why God can be just and the Justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. Let our Jewish friends hear once again that Christians believe that God still has a great future for them as a people and that a new day will dawn for any Jew who will look long enough at Jesus of Nazareth to see who He really is. All of this is, of course, oversimplified and somewhat redundant. But if it is also suggestive, it serves a purpose.

Adaptation

The sensitive missionary as a source of gospel communication defines his terms and makes a careful selection of content from the larger revelation of God. He also carries on a closely related and continual process of adaptation. He notes the special concerns occasioned by the particular worldview and adjusts to those concerns.

For example, in the Hindu-Buddhistic or Taoist contexts, there is little point in attempting to demonstrate the sinfulness of man initially by showing that men are liars. Where all propositional statements (and especially those of a religious nature) are mere approximations, lying becomes in one sense a necessary concomitant of communication itself!

But selfishness and covetousness are already matters of great concern. Is there any *biblical* ground for labeling these fundamental human weaknesses as sin? There most assuredly is such a basis. Then we can *all* agree that selfishness and covetousness are indeed evil. And we can point out how God looks upon these evils and deals with them.

The missionary does well to answer problems posed but not answered in the false systems.

The missionary does well to answer problems posed but not answered in the false systems. When problems of an other-worldly nature were put to Confucius, he answered very matter-of-factly that he hardly understood this world and should not be expected to know about another world. On the basis of their own worldview, Communists are hard pressed to give a satisfactory answer as to why extreme sacrifices should be made by the present generation of men for the generations yet unborn. Many Hindus must recoil in utter despair when faced with the seemingly numberless existences required to effect their final emancipation from the wheel of existence. Christ has real answers for these problems if only His ambassadors will deliver them.

Adaptation also requires that we answer objections that respondents can be expected to raise vis-à-vis the Christian message. The literature of Nichiren Buddhism, for example, makes much of the point that a man who knows the truth will die peacefully and with happiness apparent in his very facial expression. That Christ died on a cross while raising the anguished cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, KJV) raises for these Buddhists a serious question as to whether Christ Himself knew the truth. A brief apologetic *before* the problem is articulated will go far to disarm the objector.

Finally, the missionary should also be alert to watch for special entries to these non-Christian systems. Confucius said:

A holy man I shall not live to see; enough could I find a gentleman! A good man I shall not live to see; enough could I find a steadfast one! But when nothing poses as something, cloud as substance, want as riches, steadfastness must be rare.*

Lao-tze said, "He who bears the sins of the world is fit to rule the world."*** These quotations furnish the Christian communicator with communication opportunities that should not be overlooked.

15. What kinds of opportunities should a missionary look for in adapting the message to the culture?

* Selections from the Analects. (1963). In O. M. Frazier (Ed.), *Readings in Eastern religious thought: Vol. 3. Chinese and Japanese religions* (p. 74). Philadelphia: Westminster.

** McHovec, F. J. (Trans.). (1962). *The book of Tao* (Sutra 78, p. 17). Mt. Vernon, NY: Peter Pauper.

Application

As is the case in all communication, the missionary message becomes most compelling when it ceases to be general and becomes personal. We are not, in the final analysis, speaking to worldviews but to the minds and hearts of men of flesh and blood who live out these worldviews in their decisions and actions. Can we make the message of Christ compelling to them? We can and we must. It is in application that we say, “Thou art the man” (2 Sam. 12:7, KJV).

The missionary message becomes most compelling when it ceases to be general and becomes personal.

Of course, ultimately the Holy Spirit must apply the Word. Geoffrey Bull illustrates that truth in his illustration of a Tibetan Buddhist military governor who refused to be moved by the most obvious refutation of his own faith.

I was surprised how even a man like the Dege Sey believed in reincarnation. There was rather an amusing incident. He was saying to me how they had to be very careful, for even

one of the domestic animals might be his grandmother. I was about to make some mildly humorous comment as to the general treatment of dogs in Tibet, when the words were taken out of my mouth and far more eloquent sounds fell on our ears. From the courtyard came the piercing squeals of some pitiful canine, which had just been either kicked or battered with a brick bat. The Dege Sey, generally quick to see a joke, sat quite unmoved. Incarnation as a doctrine itself is readily accepted by the Tibetans, but when we assert there is but one incarnation of the Living and True God, “The Word made flesh,” it is totally unacceptable to them.*

If application is a function of knowledge, it is also a function of faith. It is not according to the usual bent of human nature to admit that one is wrong or to agree with God that we are sinners—especially helpless sinners whose only hope is in divine grace. When God’s truth is faithfully and lovingly applied, however, there will be a response throughout Adam’s race if that truth is presented intelligently and in dependence upon the Spirit.

16. What is the objective in application of the message?

Worldview and the style of the missionary message

A “contextualized content” requires the accompaniment of a “contextualized style.” Style can best be thought of as the personal imprint of the source upon his message. Its ingredients vary with the communication code, whether linguistic or nonlinguistic, and therefore we can speak of style as it relates to

sermons, lectures, magazine articles, books, drawings, or films, and even to the way in which one lives out his Christian faith before other people. It can be studied in relation to the source, message, code, and respondents. It should be evaluated as to correctness, clarity, and appropriateness. Style is that part

* Bull, G. T. (1967). *When iron gates yield* (p. 63). London: Hodder & Stoughton.

of missionary communication in which the source's understanding of his respondent culture, his powers of imagination, and his skill in the manipulation of symbols are given most reign and can be put to great service for the kingdom. At the same time, a style that is out of keeping with the respondent culture does the kingdom a disservice.

A style that is out of keeping with the respondent culture does the kingdom a disservice.

Think for a moment in terms of the respondent culture the author knows best—Japan. To contemporary Japanese, much missionary communication (as reflected not only by missionaries but by national pastors and workers who often simply duplicate Western patterns) must seem to exhibit a great

lack of style, though it is not so much a lack of style as a foreignness of style that is at the root of the problem. There are numerous aspects of the Judeo-Christian worldview as it has come through the Western mold that must stamp missionary communication as un-Japanese. Some of these would be directness, brusqueness, matter-of-factness, lack of awe and a sense of mystery, oversimplification, narrow scope of interest, aloofness from everyday concerns, and insensitivity to the feelings of the audience.

On the other hand, the missionary who by his demeanor and speech communicates the greatness and holiness of God, a deep appreciation for the beauty of God's world, and the mystery of Christian teachings such as the Trinity, the incarnation, and the atonement will find that his audience will be much more "at home" with his message.

17. Of what importance is "style" to the missionary message?

In summary

The Christian message is, indeed, abiding and universal. It is for all men of every time in history and of every culture on earth. But the cultural contexts in which God revealed it and the missionary delivers it are distinct and different. They cannot be superimposed upon one another. If Christian meaning is

not to be lost in the communication process, contextualization is required. There are many facets of contextualization, but at the very least it involves appropriate responses to cultural differences in local perceptions of the missionary source and in the substance and style of the missionary's message.

Hesselgrave's articles set before us the challenge and magnitude of the task of communicating the gospel message in the context of those whose worldview is much different from our own. His insights are especially valuable to those making the transition from "outsider" to "insider" or from "trader" to "story teller." Missionaries would do well to review these elements of contextualization often as they face the challenge of communicating the gospel.

III. Finding the Keys

Don Richardson successfully applied the principles of contextualization in communicating the gospel to the Sawi tribe of Irian Jaya. The thrilling story of his discovery of the key to the Sawi's assimilation of the gospel message is told in his book *Peace Child* and has been made into a film viewed worldwide. In the following article, Richardson graphically illustrates how the missionary can be aided tremendously in his communication of the gospel through insights into the respondent's worldview.

❑ **Concept Fulfillment** *

Don Richardson

When a missionary enters another culture, he is conspicuously foreign, and that is to be expected. But often the gospel he preaches is labeled foreign. How can he explain the gospel so it seems culturally right?

The New Testament way seems to be through concept fulfillment. Consider:

- The Jewish people practiced lamb sacrifice. John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as the perfect, personal fulfillment of that sacrifice by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

This is concept fulfillment.

- Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher, knew that Moses had lifted up a serpent of brass upon a pole, so that Jews when dying of snakebite could look at it and be healed. Jesus promised: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This, too, is concept fulfillment.

- A Jewish multitude, recalling that Moses had provided miraculous manna on a six-day-a-week basis, hinted that Jesus ought to repeat His miracle of the loaves and fishes on a similar schedule. Jesus replied, "Moses gave you not the true bread from heaven. The true bread from heaven is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.... I am that Bread of Life!"

Once again, concept fulfillment.

When some charged that Christianity was destroying the Jewish culture, the writer to the Hebrews showed how Christ actually fulfilled all the central elements of Jewish culture—the priesthood, tabernacle, sacrifices, and even the Sabbath rest. Let's call these redemptive analogies—looking for their fulfillment in Christ. Their God-ordained purpose was to pre-condition the Jewish mind to recognize Jesus as Messiah.

18. Identify and briefly describe the principle illustrated by Richardson's biblical examples.

* Richardson, D. (1992). Concept fulfillment. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. C59-C63). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Application today

The strategy of concept fulfillment can be applied by missionaries today—if only we learn to discern the particular redemptive analogies of each culture.

Consider the advantage: When conversion is accompanied by concept fulfillment, the individuals redeemed become aware of the spiritual meaning dormant within their own culture. Conversion does not deny their cultural background, leaving them disoriented. Rather they experience heightened insight into both the Scriptures and their own human setting and are thus better prepared to share Christ meaningfully with other members of their own societies. See how concept fulfillment has worked in other cultures:

Examples in other cultures

The Damal and “hai”

Less than one generation ago, the Damal people of Irian Jaya were living in the Stone Age. A subservient tribe, they lived under the shadow of a politically more powerful people called the Dani.

What hope could there be, you may ask, of finding a redemptive analogy in such a Stone Age setting?

And yet the Damal talked of a concept called *hai*. *Hai* was a Damal term for a long-anticipated golden age, a Stone Age utopia in which wars would cease, men would no longer oppress one another, and sickness would be rare.

Mugumenday, a Damal leader, had yearned to see the advent of *hai*. At the end of his life, Mugumenday called his son Dem to his side and said, “My son, *hai* has not come during my lifetime: now you must watch for *hai*. Perhaps it will come before you die.”

Years later, Gordon Larson, John Ellenburger, and Don Gibbons and their wives entered the Damal valley where Dem lived. After tackling the Damal language they began to teach the gospel.

The people, including Dem, listened politely. Then one day....

“O my people!” Dem, now a mature adult, had risen to his feet. “How long our forefathers searched for

hai. How sadly my father died without seeing it. But now, don’t you understand, these strangers have brought *hai* to us! We must believe their words, or we will miss the fulfillment of our ancient expectation.”

A breakthrough began. Virtually the entire population welcomed the gospel. Within a few years congregations sprang up in nearly every Damal village.

But that was not the end.

The Dani and “nabelan-kabelan”

The Dani, haughty overlords of the Damal, were intrigued by all the excitement. Curious, they sent Damal-speaking representatives to inquire. Learning that the Damal were rejoicing in the fulfillment of their ancient hope, the Dani were stunned. They too had been waiting for the fulfillment of something they called *nabelan-kabelan*—the belief that one day immortality would return to mankind.

Was it possible that the message which was *hai* to the Damal could also be *nabelan-kabelan* to the Dani?

By then Gordon and Peggy Larson had been assigned to work among the Dani. Dani warriors now recalled that they often mentioned “words of life” and a man named Jesus who not only could raise the dead but also rose again Himself.

Suddenly everything fell into place for the Dani as it had for the Damal. The word spread. In valley after valley the once barbarous Dani listened to the words of life. A church was born.

Concept fulfillment.

The Karen and a black book

The Karen tribe in Burma had a legend that one day a teacher of truth would appear, and he would carry a black object tucked under his arm. The first missionary to come among them always carried a black, leather-covered Bible tucked under his arm. The Karen listened with rapt attention every time he took the Bible out from under his arm and preached.

Triggered by this catalyzing cultural element, a great moving of the Spirit of God soon swept thousands of Karen into the church of Jesus Christ. Yet

some studies of the phenomenal growth of the church among the Karen fail to mention this detail.

The Asmat and a new birth

When Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again, Nicodemus was astounded. Even though he was well educated, he met Jesus' assertion with a naively literal, almost childish objection:

"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

Surely if a theologian like Nicodemus had that hard a time comprehending the meaning of "new birth," then a naked, illiterate, Stone Age cannibal would have a thousand times more difficulty.

On the contrary, one part of Irian Jaya's Asmat tribe have a way of making peace which requires representatives from two warring villages to pass through a symbolic birth canal formed by the bodies of a number of men and women from both villages. Those who pass through the canal are considered reborn into the kinship systems of their respective enemy villages. Rocked, lullabied, cradled, and coddled like new-born infants, they become the focus of a joyful celebration. From then on they may travel freely back and forth between the two formerly warring villages, serving as living peace bonds.

For no one knows how many centuries, this custom has impressed deeply upon the Asmat mind a vital concept: True peace can come only through a new birth experience!

Suppose God called you to communicate the gospel to these Asmat people. What would be your logical starting point? Let us assume you have learned their language and are competent to discuss the things dear to their hearts.

One day you visit a typical Asmat man—let's call him Erypeet—in his longhouse. First you discuss with him a former period of war and the new birth transaction which brought it to an end. Then....

"Erypeet, I too am very interested in new birth. You see, I was at war with an enemy named God. While I was at war with God, life was grim, as it was for you and your enemies.

"But one day my enemy God approached me and said, 'I have prepared a new birth whereby I can be born in you and you can be born again in Me, so that we can be at peace....'"

By this time Erypeet is leaning forward on his mat, asking, "You and your people have a new birth too?" He is amazed to find that you, an alien, are sophisticated enough to even think in terms of a new birth, let alone experience one!

"Yes," you reply.

"Is it like ours?"

"Well, Erypeet, there are some similarities, and there are some differences. Let me tell you about them...."

Erypeet understands.

What makes the difference between Erypeet's and Nicodemus's responses? Erypeet's mind has been pre-conditioned by an Asmat redemptive analogy to acknowledge man's need for a new birth. Our task is simply to convince him that he needs spiritual rebirth.

Do redemptive analogies like these occur by mere coincidence? Because their strategic use is foreshadowed in the New Testament and because they are so widespread, we discern the grace of God working. Our God, after all, is far too sovereign to be merely lucky.

But has anyone found a culture lacking concepts suitable for redemptive analogies?

The Yali and "osuwa"

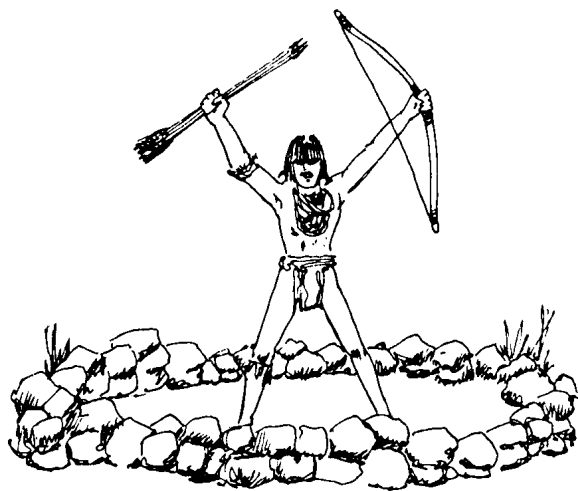
A formidable candidate for this grim distinction was the cannibal Yali culture of Irian Jaya. If ever a tribe needed some Christ-foreshadowing belief a missionary could appeal to, it was the Yali.

By 1966 missionaries of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union had succeeded in winning about 20 Yali to Christ. Priests of the Yali god Kambu promptly martyred two of the 20. Two years later they killed missionaries Stan Dale and Phillip Masters, driving about 100 arrows into each of their bodies. Then the Indonesian government, also threatened by the Yali, stepped in to quell further uprisings. Awed by the power of the government,

the Yali decided they would rather have missionaries than soldiers. But the missionaries could find no analogy in Yali culture to make the gospel clear.

Last year another missionary and I conducted a much belated “culture probe” to learn more about Yali customs and beliefs. One day a young Yali named Erariek shared with us the following story from his past:

“Long ago my brother Sunahan and a friend named Kahalek were ambushed by enemies from across the river. Kahalek was killed, but Sunahan fled to a circular stone wall nearby. Leaping inside it, he turned, bared his chest at his enemies, and laughed at them. The enemies immediately lowered their weapons and hurried away.”



I nearly dropped my pen. “Why didn’t they kill him?” I asked.

Erariek smiled. “If they had shed one drop of my brother’s blood while he stood within that sacred

stone wall—we call it an *osuwa*—their own people would have killed them.”

Yali pastors and the missionaries working with them now have a new evangelistic tool. Christ is the spiritual *Osuwa*, the perfect place of refuge. For Yali culture instinctively echoes the Christian teaching that man needs a place of refuge. Ages earlier they had established a network of *osuwa* in areas where most of their battles took place. Missionaries had noticed the stone walls but had never ferreted out their full significance.

Redemption and resistance

Concepts like the Damal’s *hai*, the Dani’s *nabelan-kabelan*, the Asmat new birth, and the Yali *osuwa* form the very heart of their cultural life. When outsiders obliterate distinctives like these, something dies within the hearts of the people. But the gospel preserves these concepts. Converts among such tribes then find, along with their personal redemption, that they become resistant to apathy, the great destroyer of indigenous peoples overcome by culture shock.

Sensitive culture probes may discover undreamed-of possibilities for spiritual penetration through concept fulfillment.

Hundreds of areas remain where response to the gospel has been unsatisfactory or even non-existent. In many of these areas, sensitive culture probes may discover undreamed-of possibilities for spiritual penetration through concept fulfillment. Discouraged missionaries or national pastors may gain fresh confidence in their ability to make the gospel understood.

19. *How would you attempt to apply the principle of redemptive analogies as you enter a new culture?*

Finding redemptive analogies within a culture has often made the difference between an indifferent or hostile reception to the gospel and its whole-hearted acceptance. In the next article, Richardson demonstrates how this principle works not only cross-culturally, but also in everyday witness.

❑ *Finding the Eye Opener* *

Don Richardson

In Acts 26:17-18, the Apostle Paul articulated before King Agrippa the formula that Jesus Christ—appearing to Paul in a vision on the road to Damascus—gave as a basis for ministering the gospel. Follow carefully to see if I quote it correctly. I might make a mistake.

Jesus said to Paul, "... I am sending you to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Notice that I omitted an entire phrase: "... to open their eyes." At first glance, the formula seems complete without the missing phrase. And indeed many missionaries have set out without ever thinking of the importance of opening people's eyes so that they can see the difference between darkness and light. "Opening their eyes" means establishing a beachhead for the truth in the understanding. It's the equivalent of getting to first base in the game of baseball. Of course, getting to first base doesn't count as a run, but it is a necessary first step if a run is to be scored.

In baseball, it's not enough merely to touch all four bases. You have to touch them in the right order, first base first, second base second, third base third. I know of some missionaries who have gone out full

of zeal into cross-cultural situations and have started in right away rebuking people for their sins. They were intent upon turning people from darkness to light but without first having opened their eyes to see the difference between darkness and light.

Often, when eyes are not opened first, people get their back up; they take offense and they start trying to avoid this obnoxious foreigner with his ministry of rebuke. The missionary soon finds he is not getting anywhere. Years pass and no church is established. There will be some who will take it and respond, but usually the majority will not. And then he will say, "Lord, what am I doing wrong? You want me to preach against sin, don't you? They need to be turned from darkness to light, don't they? I've preached faithfully against sin. I've rebuked evil. I upheld that which was good, and the people don't respond."

But there is a missing element. He has not found the eye opener that clears the way for that sort of ministry. What, then, do we need to "open their eyes"? You don't know? What do you need to open a tin can? A can opener! What do you need to open someone's eyes? An eye opener! And don't you think that the God who commands us to open people's eyes is responsible to provide the eye openers we need to fulfill His command?

20. *What point does Richardson make with his baseball illustration?*

* Richardson, D. (1992). Finding the eye opener. In R. D. Winter & S. C. Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A reader* (rev. ed.) (pp. C64-C70). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

The example of Jesus

In chapter 4 of John's Gospel, the Lord Jesus Himself "touched first base first." In John 4 He's experienced what you might call a "close encounter of a cross-cultural kind." Jesus came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there.

That well was to Sychar what Valley Forge is to Philadelphia. If you had gone to visit someone in that town back in those days, you wouldn't have been in the home of your host and hostess very long before they would take you around to show you Jacob's Well. And they would give you the "tour guide's pitch" concerning how their forefather Jacob had dug it himself. So Jesus sat down by that very significant well, the thing that put Sychar on the map more than probably anything else.

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. A Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" The Samaritan woman said to Him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan." There's that cultural chasm. She was ever so much aware of the cultural barrier between Him and her. "How can you ask me for a drink?" And here is the parenthesis—"for Jews do not associate with Samaritans." Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who asked you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons, flocks, and herds?" That's the tour guide's pitch. Hear her civic pride coming through! She was determined that this strange Jew should be duly impressed with the fact that that was actually Jacob's Well and that it was given to her forefathers. But notice that Jesus made her civic pride in the well to be His ally.

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. Even though your forefather Jacob dug it himself and drank from it, as did his children and his herds and his cattle, it is still ordinary water. You drink it and you get thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water that I give him will

never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become inside him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!"

Now, how many wells are in the picture? Two. The external, physical, historically significant well and the internal, eternal, spiritually satisfying well of living water! He used this object of her civic pride as an analogy to talk about a well that can be inside a person. That was His eye opener! And it worked!

"Sir," the woman said, "give me this water so I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she said. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

The conversation has turned in a new direction! He used the eye opener to reach first base by awakening spiritual thirst. But what stood in the way of her receiving that living water? The sin in her life; thus, He had proceeded now towards "second base," turning her from darkness to light! The problem of her loose morals had to be dealt with early. He was following the same formula He would outline later for the Apostle Paul in that remarkable vision on the road to Damascus.

And notice how positive the Lord is! When she said, "I have no husband," some of us, if we had the insight into her history that Jesus had, would have pounced at once, saying, "You liar! You are hiding your sin behind a half-truth! The fact is, you are living with a man out of wedlock." But Jesus said—so positively, gently, and delicately—"What you have just said is quite true. You have had five husbands. The man you have now is not your husband. So you are quite right when you say you have no husband." He could have crushed her, but He didn't.

I think that's the kind of spirit He wants us to have. And I've seen many missionaries fail for lack of that kind of a spirit of love. At the same time, you must be careful not to become sentimental. The sentiments of human nature can easily revert to the sediments of fallen human nature. You may have

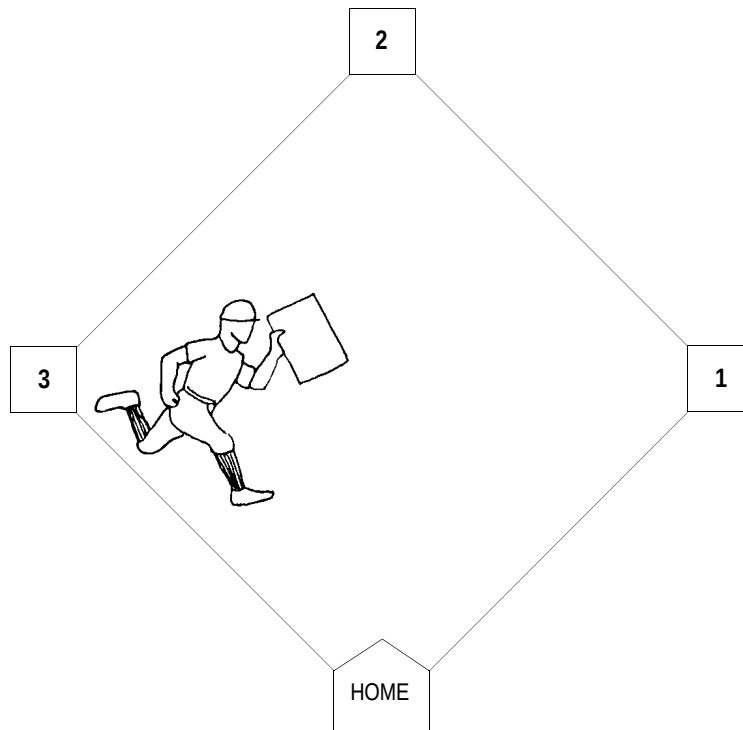
been through a secular university or college course where you have been told that there is no such thing as guilt or real evil. If someone goes out and shoots somebody else or rapes somebody's wife or burns down somebody's house, he does it because society hasn't treated him right; you have to correct society and then the behavior of the individual will be corrected.

That philosophy is humanistic, not theistic. There is real evil out there, and it lies within human nature. And you have to be against it, and if you are not against it, the Spirit of God will not be for you. You will lose His blessing. The Son of Man has come to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver people from sin in whatever form it occurs.

You need to maintain this crucial balance of loving the sinner while hating the sin. And it's not always going to be easy to come into confrontation with evil without becoming obnoxious, unloving, or unwise in your approach to people. On the other hand, there is a danger of finding the eye opener and securing a

beachhead of understanding in the minds of the people who need Christ and then be so delighted when they tell you that they understand that you stop right there and think that your job is done. It isn't! You've still got to "round first" and "head for second." They've got to be turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, etc.

Yes, even then, when the person begins to see that he needs to make certain changes in his lifestyle in order to live consistent with the will of God, he's going to find that there is a power trying to keep him from making those changes. This is the power of the evil one himself and of his hosts of demons. Winning the victory against the unseen forces who are "behind the sins" in a person's life will bring you around to "third base." But a run is not scored until he himself "touches home plate." And that occurs only when that person receives from God the forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Him. What a beautiful formula—if only we can remember it! Touch all four bases!



21. *What was the “eye opener” that Jesus used with the Samaritan woman? Why was it effective?*

22. *What can we learn from Christ’s example about rebuking those who are living in sin?*

The example of Paul

I want to look at yet another example of an eye opener, found in Acts 17. First, here is some historical background to this story of Paul at Mars Hill:

Three ancient Greek writers, Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus, and Pausanias, referred to a plague that struck the city of Athens and began to decimate the population around 600 B.C. The people of Athens offered sacrifices to their thousands of gods, asking them to intervene and halt the plague. You would think that 30,000 gods could do something, but the sacrifices were futile. The plague persisted.

In desperation, the elders of the city sent messengers to summon a Greek hero known as Epimenedes. He came in response, and they said to him, “There is terror in our city. No one knows who will be struck down next. We have done all that we know to do. We have offered thousands of sacrifices to our gods, and the plague persists. Will you please apply your wisdom to our desperate situation and save our city? We have heard that you have rapport with the gods.”

Epimenedes took stock of the situation and then took a course of action based on two premises. First, he reasoned that there must be another god who did not consider himself represented by any of the thousands of idols in the city but who was hopefully good enough and great enough to do something about the plague. They had to contact him and enlist his help.

For those who replied, “What if we don’t know his name? How can we contact him?” Epimenedes was

ready with premise number two: Any god who is great enough and good enough to do something about the plague is probably also great enough and good enough to smile upon us in our ignorance if we openly acknowledge our ignorance of him.

Epimenedes called for the people to bring a flock of sheep to Mars Hill, a plot of sacred ground in the city of Athens. He specified that the sheep had to be of more than one color, reasoning that since they did not know which color of sheep that god might prefer, they would give him a choice. Then he commanded that this multicolored flock be released on Mars Hill.

Sheep so released on a grassy knoll will normally begin to graze. But as the sheep meandered, grazing across the hill, Epimenedes, first commanding the men of the city to follow the sheep, called upon any god concerned in the matter of the plague to cause the sheep to lie down on the spot where that god wanted that sheep offered as a sacrifice to him. This they would take as a sign of the god’s willingness to help.

We do not know how many sheep lay down upon the ground, but at least one and perhaps several did so. Wherever a sheep lay down upon the ground, the Athenians built an altar there and inscribed upon its side, “To an Unknown God.” And then those sheep were offered as sacrifices to the unknown god.

All three writers confirm the plague was lifted immediately. The city was delivered. The people of Athens quickly returned to the worship of those thousands of futile gods, but they left at least one of those altars standing on Mars Hill.

Six centuries later, while the Apostle Paul was waiting for his friends in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. If I can read between the lines a little bit, I can imagine what had happened. If six centuries earlier they had 30,000 gods, probably by Paul's time they had 40,000, still equally as futile, but still drawing the attention of the people away from the true God.

This glut of gods in the city of Athens is confirmed by another writer named Patronius, who visited Athens in ancient times, came away shaking his head, and wrote sarcastically in one of his books that in Athens it was easier to find a god than it was a man! Athens was a byword in the ancient world for this surfeit of gods.

We cannot go forth on a mission energized by the Holy Spirit without feeling anguish over evil and sin.

And what is Paul's emotional reaction at the sight of thousands of Athenians prostituting the image of God that is in them by bowing down to false gods? He was greatly distressed and obviously determined to do something about it.

I fear for anyone who can go out to the mission field and confront such things as widows flinging themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands, or little children being forced into prostitution in temples, or ritualized wife trading as we find in some cultures in the southern part of Irian Jaya, or whatever else and not feel something of the distress, the anguish that Paul felt over the idols in Athens. We cannot go forth on a mission energized by the Holy Spirit without feeling anguish over evil and sin. We must be able to look upon sin with something of the perspective that God has.

Paul was in anguish. So he reasoned day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babblers trying to say?" and you can hear the scorn behind the words. Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." In other words, Paul, whoever you are, we already have 30,000 gods here in Athens, and you are bringing us the message of still another god? We need another god like we need a hole in our heads! We've got so many gods here in Athens we can't keep track of them all!

Who would have the audacity to proclaim another god in that context? Paul, of course. And how does he respond to the charge that he's advocating some superfluous or nuisance god in the city already afflicted with 30,000 or more of them? He stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus, another name for Mars Hill, and said, "Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. (Doesn't that remind you of Jesus at the well, saying to the woman, 'You're quite right when you say you have no husband'?) For as I walked around and observed your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription, 'To the Unknown God.' Now what you worship as someone unknown, I am going to proclaim to you." Paul, in effect, was saying: "Foreign God? No! The God I proclaim is that God who did not consider Himself represented by any of the idols in the city so many hundreds of years ago, but who delivered your city from the plague when you simply acknowledged your ignorance of Him. But why be ignorant of Him any longer, if you can know Him?"

In this way Paul used that familiar Athenian altar as an eye opener to get to first base. Then he went on to try to turn his listeners from the darkness of idolatry to the light of God's truth. He reminded the people of their gross ingratitude to that delivering, prayer-answering God. He found a residual testimony, didn't he, in this unexpected form? And he appropriated it. That was part, at least, of the testimony that God had reserved to Himself in that pagan context. And this unknown God has left a witness to Himself in hundreds of other cultures around the world.

23. What did Paul use as an “eye opener” in Athens?

24. How did he demonstrate that he understood the importance of finding a positive launching point for witness?

The principle defined

The principle that I have been talking about comes down to this: The reason that an analogy based upon a “peace child” ideal in the Sawi culture works for the Sawi, or a reference to a place of refuge has special appeal to a Yali mind, or new birth attracts an Asmat mind is because the people of each of these respective cultures cherish that particular idea or concept or ceremony. They see these things as the best in their world. When you start talking about something new in reference to this cherished, familiar thing, you have an automatic interest.

When you start talking about something new in reference to this cherished, familiar thing, you have an automatic interest.

So we need to ask ourselves, what is it that my neighbor, my fellow student on campus, my professor, my associate in business, or my friend of another culture cherishes in this world? You may know someone who has no time for God at all. But he loves his wife. There are some unsaved men who really do love their wives. They find meaning in the marriage relationship. Doesn't the Bible have a lot to say about the parallels between marriage and redemption?

You may find someone else who doesn't love his wife and who may be on the edge of divorce, but see if he loves his children. The parent/child relationship has often been paralleled with redemption. Or he may neglect his kids or be a child abuser, but perhaps he really cherishes his job.

You just never know what sort of a spiritual chain reaction you are going to be a part of, maybe today or tomorrow or the next day, maybe in your own culture or in another culture, as you ask God to make you a communicator of good news. God can give us an instinct, an ability to sniff out, to sense in the hearts and minds of people that which they are committed to, and which may yield an analogy which will give us a handle on their hearts. And if you try it and get rebuffed, don't give up; try again. It takes time to learn, doesn't it?

You're like a law student: the more case histories you can absorb and meditate on, the more your imagination will be stretched to anticipate what God may be waiting to do. And sometimes it will not so much be what you say, it will be the timing. And God will arrange the timing.

So don't ever allow yourself to say, “This is an absolutely impossible situation; there is no way.” God is the God who makes ways where there are no ways. And he is the One, after all, who is sending you out there and going ahead of you.

25. *How does the principle of redemptive analogies apply to our daily walk and witness?*

Summary

In any mission venture, the gospel moves through at least three cultures—the “Bible culture,” the missionary’s culture, and the respondent’s culture. Missionaries play a key role in this process, and for this reason it is not sufficient for them merely to know the message; they must also communicate and proclaim it. In doing so, they must be sensitive to the cultural context of the original message, to its assimilation into their own culture, and to the context of those who are recipients of the message.

In order to touch the heart of a people, missionaries must gain insight into the people’s worldview. They must accept that worldview as valid in the context of the people’s world. They must then use their knowledge not as a basis for ridicule, but as a cultural bridge for the gospel. The good aspects of the culture can be used as a launching point for contextualization of the gospel. The process of contextualization is then undertaken through definition, selection, adaptation, and application of the message. In addition to contextualizing the message, missionaries, through their sensitivity to the culture, also learn to deliver that message in the appropriate “style.”

From the evidence of Scripture and mission history, it is apparent that God does not leave cultures without their own witness of Him. By carefully examining the traditions of a culture, missionaries may find redemptive analogies which serve as vessels for the gospel message. The gospel’s fulfillment of a cultural concept not only serves as a vehicle of communication, but also provides an immediate and profound context for the gospel. It serves as an “eye opener” in terms of the people’s understanding, permitting missionaries to move forward in the process of turning the people from darkness to light. Not only does this principle have a wide cross-cultural application, it is critical to effective witness in our daily lives.

Integrative Assignment

1. *Select a passage of Scripture such as I Corinthians 7:17-19 or Matthew 22:17-21, whose context has obvious cultural features. Then, using the “Three-Culture Model of Missionary Communication” as a basis, describe the contextualization process in each of three cultures as follows:*
 - a. *First, define the principle being illustrated, commanded, or taught.*
 - b. *Second, show how the principle has been “contextualized” in the particular “Bible culture” in which it is found.*
 - c. *Third, show how the principle is or could be contextualized in your own cultural situation.*
 - d. *Fourth, show how the principle is or could be contextualized within a recipient culture such as the one you described for your Unreached Peoples Project (Chapters 7-12).*

2. *Every religious tradition has commendable features. Select a belief system with which you are somewhat familiar (besides evangelical Christianity) and analyze it for good points. Then, using this background as a launching point, create a bridge for the gospel message. Write a short paper describing the religion's strong points, the bridge you would use for the gospel, and the response you might expect from a devotee when using this approach.*

Questions for Reflection

An excellent way to learn how to understand another culture is to observe our own. Much in our lives is regulated by cultural norms of which we are largely unaware. Such things as what, how, and when we eat, how we dress, and how we greet each other are obvious behaviors based on cultural assumptions. Even more subtle are things such as eye contact, posture, and how we walk. On the deepest level, the concepts we use to define reality and even our rational processes are shaped by our cultural background. If we expect to understand other cultures, we need to begin by understanding our own. These same principles have a personal application. A healthy amount of introspection is a vital part of understanding ourselves. By understanding ourselves as God sees us, we begin to understand others. And only by understanding other people can we discover the “eye openers” by which we can share Christ with them. The meditative application of scriptural principles to our own walk is a method God has chosen for His children to lead them in an understanding of themselves and of others. It is the insights God gives us through this process which provide a basis for exhortation and mutual encouragement. If we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, He will show us points of empathy with believers and unbelievers whereby we can minister Christ to them.

Have you learned to apply God's Word to your life through meditation? What has God shown you? Have you learned to empathize with others in order to encourage them through word or deed? Read Psalm 1:1-3. Write your thoughts below.

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CHAPTER 14

Church Growth and Social Structures

In the preceding chapters, some of our cultural nearsightedness was stripped away, and we began to catch a glimpse of “other worlds.” We saw how important it is for the missionary to gain an appreciation and understanding of the host culture.

When a worldview permeates a people group and is generally accepted by all, we refer to the group as *homogeneous*. Many tribal societies function in this manner. All the members of the society participate in a common way of life. The society is essentially an integrated whole and not an aggregate of subcultures.

Most societies, however, are too complex to describe as homogeneous. We label them *heterogeneous*, indicating that within them exist several levels, classes, or ethnic groupings, each with its own distinctive. Large cities are heterogeneous in their social composition. A comprehensive analysis of any large city will reveal upper class, lower class, and middle class neighborhoods. In addition to this stratification by economic level, we are likely to find ethnic enclaves, where members of a minority group live in proximity to each other. These groups often maintain the customs and language of their national origin. Most cities are therefore a complex mosaic of homogeneous people groups.

Without a doubt, people gravitate towards groups which express their own cultural and social norms. When the church is homogeneous, the potential for growth increases because more consistent and socially appropriate expressions of the church can emerge to meet the standards and needs of each group. Where significant social and/or cultural barriers have to be crossed for individuals to be incorporated into the group, growth will be inhibited.

In this chapter, we will explore roles and social structures as they affect communication. Special attention will be given to reaching the cities—a monumental challenge for the church. We will also look at the difficult question of church contextualization and its implication for missionary work.

I. Status, Roles, and Communication

Successfully crossing cultural barriers and effectively communicating the gospel are not ends in themselves. There are limits to a missionary's witness, and the true objective is to see a cluster of reproducing churches established within the target group. The missionary's link to this goal is the innovator—the national who will initiate change. From this beginning, the message must flow throughout the people group. Social structures and the flow of communication through those structures are of key significance at this stage of mission work. In the following article, Paul G. Hiebert discusses the concepts of status and roles as they affect missionaries in their relationships to the national workers and others.

❏ *Social Structure and Church Growth* *

Paul G. Hiebert

People are social beings, born, raised, married, and usually buried in the company of their fellow humans. They form groups, institutions, and societies. Social structure is the ways in which they organize their relationships with one another and build societies.

Societies can be studied on two levels: that of interpersonal relation and of the society as a whole. A study of missions at each of these levels can help us a great deal to understand how churches grow.

Interpersonal relationships: The bicultural bridge

When a missionary goes overseas and settles down, what does he do? Whatever his specific task, he is involved in interpersonal relationships with a great many people. Many of these are not Christians, but, most likely, he will spend much of his time with Christian converts. He will go to the market or preach in the village square, but his closest relationships will be with national pastors, evangelists, teachers, and other Christians. What are the characteristics of these various relationships?

It is clear that in most cases communication across cultures is multi-stepped. The missionary received the message in his family, church, and school. He communicates it to national Christian leaders who in turn pass it on to local Christians and non-

Christians in the cities and villages. With few exceptions, the greatest share of the mission work in a country is done by these unheralded nationals.

Here, in order to see how a structural analysis is used, we will look at one link in this chain of communication—the relationship between the missionary and his national counterpart. This has sometimes been called the bicultural bridge and is the critical step in which much of the translation of the message into a new culture occurs.

The bicultural bridge is the critical step in which much of the translation of the message into a new culture occurs.

The bicultural bridge is a set of relationships between people from two cultures. But it is more. It is itself a new culture. The missionary rarely can “go native.” He will set up housing, institutions, and customary ways of doing things that reflect his home culture, in part, and, in part, are adapted from the culture in which he finds himself. His national counterparts do the same. It is true that they have not moved out of their own culture, but their interaction with the missionary exposes them to a great many foreign influences that can potentially alienate them from their home culture.

* Hiebert, P. G. (1976). Social structure and church growth. In A. F. Glasser et al. (Eds.), *Crucial dimensions in world evangelization* (pp. 61-67, 70-74). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

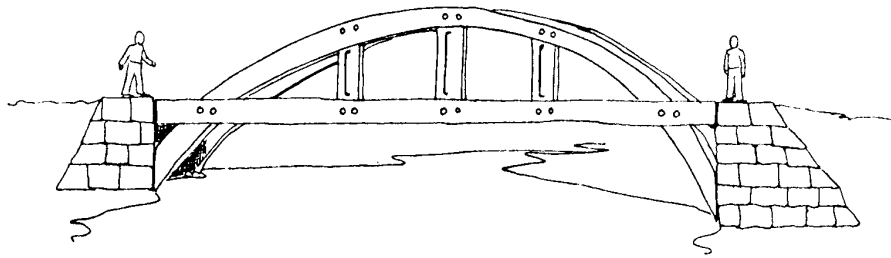


Figure 14-1. The Bicultural Bridge

A great deal of energy in the bicultural setting is spent on defining just how this new culture should operate. Should the missionary have a car in a society where most of the people do not? If so, should his national counterparts have them too? Where should the missionary send his children to school—to the local schools, to a school for missionary children, or to those in North America? What food should the missionary eat, what dress should he wear, and what kind of house should he and the national workers have? These and a thousand more questions arise in the bicultural setting.

Status and role

The term “status” has a number of common meanings, but anthropologists use it in a specific sense, defining it as the “positions in a social system occupied by individuals.” At the level of interpersonal relationships, a social organization is made up of a great many such positions: teachers, priests, doctors, fathers, mothers, friends, and so on.

Each status is associated with certain behavioral expectations. For example, we expect a teacher to act in certain ways towards his students. He should show up for class and lead it. He should not sleep in class or come in a dressing gown. A teacher should also act in certain ways vis-à-vis his administrators, the parents of the students, and the public.

All interpersonal relationships can be broken down into complementary role pairs: teacher/student, pastor/parishioner, husband/wife, etc. The nature of the relationship between two individuals is based very much on the status they choose.

The missionary and the nationals

“What are you?” This question is repeatedly asked of a person who goes abroad to settle. The people ask because they want to know how to relate to the newcomer.

Missionaries generally answer, “We are missionaries.” In stating this they are naming a status with its associated roles, all of which are perfectly clear to themselves. They know who “missionaries” are and how they should act. But what about the nationals, particularly the non-Christians who have never met a missionary before? What do they think of these foreigners?

The nature of the relationship between two individuals is based very much on the status they choose.

Here we must come back to cultural differences again. Just as languages differ, so also the roles found in one culture differ from those found in another culture. “Missionary” is an English word, representing a status and role found in the West. In most other cultures it does not exist. When a missionary shows up in these cultures, the people must observe him and try to deduce from his behavior which of their roles he fits. They then conclude that he is this type of person and expect him to behave accordingly. We, in fact, do the same thing when a foreigner arrives and announces that he is a *sannyasin*. From his looks we might conclude he is a hippie, when, in fact, he is a Hindu saint.

How have the people perceived the missionaries? In India the missionaries were called *dora*. The word is used for rich farmers and small-time kings. These petty rulers bought large pieces of land, put up compound walls, built bungalows, and had servants. They also erected separate bungalows for their second and third wives. When the missionaries came they bought large pieces of land, put up compound walls, built bungalows, and had servants. They, too, erected separate bungalows, but for the missionary ladies stationed on the same compound.

When the missionary chooses a role, he must remember that the people will judge him according to how well he fulfills their expectations of that role.

Missionary wives were called *dorasani*. The term is used not for the wife of a *dora*, for she should be kept in isolation away from the public eye, but his mistress whom he often took with him in his cart or car.

The problem here is one of cross-cultural misunderstanding. The missionary thought of himself as a “missionary,” not realizing that there is no such thing in the traditional Indian society. In order to relate to him, the people had to find him a role within their own set of roles, and they did so. Unfortu-

nately, the missionaries were not aware of how the people perceived them.

A second role into which the people often put the missionary in the past was “colonial ruler.” He was usually white, like the colonial rulers, and he sometimes took advantage of this to get the privileges given the rulers. He could get railroad tickets without waiting in line with the local people, and he could influence the officials. To be sure, he often used these privileges to help the poor or oppressed, but by exercising them, he became identified with the colonial rulers.

The problem is that neither of the roles, rich landlord or colonial ruler, permitted the close personal communication or friendship that would have been most effective in sharing the gospel. Their roles often kept the missionaries distant from the people.

But what roles could the missionary have taken? There is no simple answer to this, for the roles must be chosen in each case from the roles in the culture to which he goes. At the outset he can go as a “student” and request that the people teach him their ways. As he learns the roles of their society, he can choose one that allows him to communicate the gospel to them effectively. But when he chooses a role, he must remember that the people will judge him according to how well he fulfills their expectations of that role.

1. *What are the possible implications, in terms of status and role expectations, of declaring oneself a missionary?*

The missionary and national Christians

The relationship between a missionary and national Christians is different from that between him and non-Christians. The former, after all, are his “spiritual children” and he their “spiritual father.”

This parent/child relationship is vertical and authoritarian. The missionary is automatically in

charge. He is the example that the people must imitate and their source of knowledge. But people soon become tired of being children, particularly when they are older and in many ways wiser than their parents. If not permitted to be responsible for themselves, they will never mature, or they will rebel and leave home.

The missionary is also imprisoned by this parental role. Not only is it difficult for him to form close relations with the people, with them as his equals, but also he feels he can admit to no wrong. If he were to confess personal sins and weaknesses to the people, he fears that they will lose their faith in Christ. But he is also their model for leadership roles, and they soon come to believe that no leader should admit to sin or failure. Obviously the missionary and the national leaders do sin, and because of their roles, they have ways of confessing sin and experiencing the forgiveness of the Christian community without destroying their ministry.

Another role into which missionaries can slip, often unawares, is that of “empire builders.” Each of us needs to feel that we are part of an important task. From this it is only a small step to seeing ourselves as the center of this task and indispensable. We gain personal followers and build large churches, schools, hospitals, and other institutions that prove our worth.

However, this role, like the first, is not the best for effective communication. From a structural perspective, it is a vertical role in which communication proceeds from the top down. There is little feedback from the bottom up. People below comply with the orders from above but often do not internalize the message and make it their own. From a Christian perspective, this role does not fit the example of Christ. On the contrary, it can lead to an exploitation of others for our own personal gain.

What roles can the missionary take? Here, because the missionary and the nationals are Christians, we can turn to a biblical model—that of brotherhood and servanthood. As members of one body we must stress our equality with our national brothers and sisters. There is no separation into two kinds of people, “we” and “they.” We trust the nationals just as we trust our fellow missionaries, and we are willing to accept them as colleagues and as administrators over us. Assignments of leadership within the church are not based on culture, race, or even financial power. They are made according to God-given gifts and abilities.

The missionary is most dispensable of all, for his task is to plant the church and to move on when his presence begins to hinder its growth.

There is leadership in the church, just as there must be in any human institution if it is to function. But the biblical concept of leadership is servanthood. The leader is one who seeks the welfare of the others and not himself (Matt. 20:27). He is dispensable, and in this sense the missionary is most dispensable of all, for his task is to plant the church and to move on when his presence begins to hinder its growth.

2. *In relating to national Christians, into what dangerous roles can a missionary unconsciously fall? What is his proper role?*
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-
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Identification

Good relationships involve more than choosing suitable roles. Within a role the individual expresses different attitudes that show his deep feelings toward the other person.

If we feel that somehow we are a different kind of people from those with whom we work, this will be communicated to them in a number of subtle ways. We may live apart from them, allow them only into

our living rooms which are public space, and not permit our children to play with theirs. Or we may allow no nationals on mission committees.

When we identify with the people, we will do so in formal ways—at an annual feast given to the staff of the school or hospital, in their homes, but only on formal invitation, and on the committees by allowing a few to participate. We may even wear the native dress on certain occasions. But formal identification is identification at arm's length. It stresses the basic difference between people, even as it demonstrates their superficial oneness.

The real test of identification is not what we do in formal, structured situations. It is how we handle our informal time and our most precious belongings.

The real test of identification is not what we do in formal, structured situations. It is how we handle our informal time and our most precious belongings. When the committee meeting is over, do we go aside with fellow Americans to discuss cameras and thereby exclude our national colleagues by our use

of space and the topic of discussion? Do we frown on our children playing with the local children?

But is it possible for a missionary ever to “go native”? Obviously not. It takes immigrants from Northern Europe three or four generations to assimilate into American culture, and where the cultural differences are greater, it takes even longer.

The basic issue in identification is not formal equivalence—living in the same houses, eating the same food, and wearing the same dress. We can do so and still communicate to people the mental distinction we make between them and us. The issue is one of mental maps and basic feelings. If we, indeed, see and feel ourselves to be one of them, this message will come through, even if we have different lifestyles. A national gives us his best food, lets us sleep in his guest room and use his oxcart, and we share with him our best food, guest room, and car. The principle is not formal equality but true love and mutual reciprocity.

A sense of oneness with the people creates in us an interest in learning more about them and in sharing in their culture. Our example is Christ who, because of His love, became incarnate among us in order to bring us God's good news.

3. Why isn't it enough to identify just on a physical and material level?

The organization of societies and church growth

Another way of looking at social structures is to see how societies as wholes are put together. What are the various social groups and institutions within a given society, how do these articulate with one another, and how does change occur? Here, again, two or three illustrations can show best the application and usefulness of the concept.

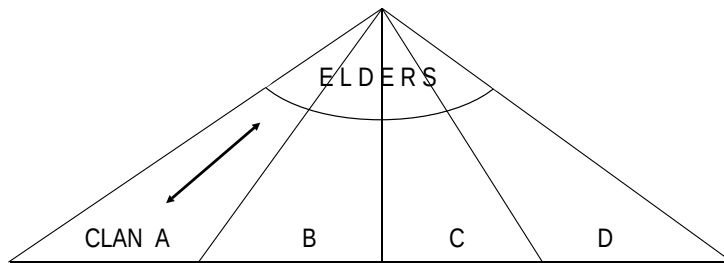
Tribal societies

In many tribes, social groups play an important role in the life of an individual, more so than they do in our own society with its strong emphasis on individualism and freedom. In a tribe a person is born and raised within a large kinship group or lineage made

up of all the male descendants of some remote ancestor, plus all the families of these males. To get something of a feel for this type of society, imagine for a moment, living together with all of your relatives who share your last name, on a common farm, and sharing responsibilities for one another. All the men one generation older than you would be your “fathers” responsible for disciplining you when you deviate from the tribal rules and customs. All the women of that generation would be your “mothers” who care for you. All in your lineage of your own age would be “brothers” and “sisters,” and all the children of all your “brothers” would be your “sons” and “daughters.”

In some tribes, a lineage is made up of all the female descendants of a remote ancestress, together with their families. But, again, the authority of and responsibility to the group remains central in the life of the person.

Strong kinship groups in a tribe provide the individual with a great deal of security. They provide for you when you are sick or without food, support you when you go away to school, contribute to your purchasing a field or acquiring a bride, and fight for you when you are attacked. In turn, the group makes many demands on you. Your lands and your time are not strictly your own. You are expected to share them with those in your lineage who need them.



- Stress on kinship as basis for social bonding.
- Strong group orientation with mutual responsibility and group decision-making processes.
- Minimal social hierarchy.
- Vertical communication.

Figure 14-2. Tribal Societies

4. What is the primary decision making structure in tribal societies?

Important decisions in these tribes are generally made by the elders—the older men who have had a great deal of experience with life. This is particularly true of one of the most important decisions of life, namely, marriage. Unlike our society, where young people are all too ready to get married when they “fall in love” (analogous to “falling into a mud puddle”?) without carefully testing the other person’s social, economic, mental, and spiritual qualifications, in most tribes weddings are arranged by the parents. From long experience they know the dangers and pitfalls of marriage, and they are less

swayed by the passing emotional attachments of the present. The parents make the match only after a long and careful examination of all the prospective partners. Love grows in these marriages as in any marriage by each partner learning to live with and to love the other.

Lineage and tribal decisions are also made by the elders. Family heads have their say, but they must comply with the decisions of the leaders if they want to remain a part of the tribe.

This type of social organization raises serious questions for Christian evangelism. Take, for example, Lin Barney's experience. Lin was in Borneo when he was invited to present the gospel to a village tribe high in the mountains. After a difficult trek he arrived at the village and was asked to speak to the men assembled in the longhouse. He shared the

Group decisions do not mean that all of the members of the group have converted, but it does mean that the group is open to further biblical instruction.

message of the Jesus Way well into the night, and, finally, the elders announced that they would make a decision about this new way. Lineage members gathered in small groups to discuss the matter, and then the lineage leaders gathered to make a final decision. In the end they decided to become Christians, all of them. The decision was by general consensus.

What should the missionary do now? Does he send them all back and make them arrive at the decision

individually? We must remember that in these societies no one would think of making so important a decision as marriage apart from the elders. Is it realistic, then, to expect them to make an even more important decision regarding their religion on their own?

Should the missionary accept all of them as born again? But some may not have wanted to become Christian and will continue to worship the gods of their past.

Group decisions do not mean that all of the members of the group have converted, but they do mean that the group is open to further biblical instruction. The task of the missionary is not finished; it has only begun, for he must now teach them the whole of the Scriptures.

Such people movements are not uncommon. In fact, much of the growth of the church in the past has occurred through them, including many of the first Christian ancestors of most of the readers of this book.

5. What is an appropriate response to group decisions for Christ?

Peasant societies

The social organization of peasant societies is quite different from that of tribal societies. Here we often have the weakening of extended kinship ties and the rise of social classes and castes. Power is often concentrated in the hands of an elite that is removed from the commoners.

We can turn to India for an illustration of how peasant social structure influences church growth. Villages are divided into a great many *jatis* or castes. Many of these, such as the Priests, Carpenters, Ironsmiths, Barbers, Washermen, Potters, and Weavers, are associated with certain job monop-

lies. Not only does a person inherit the right to perform his caste's occupation, he must marry someone from within his own caste. A rough analogy would be for American high school teachers to marry their children to other high school teachers, for preachers to marry their children to other preachers' children, and for each other occupation to do the same. One can see, therefore, the need to begin marriage negotiations early.

Castes are also grouped into the clean castes and the Untouchables. The latter are ritually polluting and their touch, in the past, polluted clean-caste folk

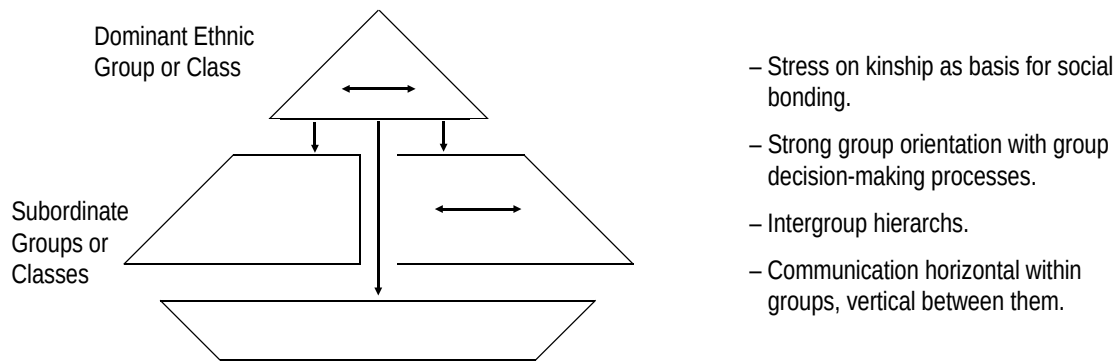


Figure 14-3. Peasant Societies

who had to take a purification bath to restore their purity. Consequently, the Untouchables formerly had to live in hamlets apart from the main villages, and they were forbidden to enter the Hindu temples.

When the gospel came, it tended to move in one of the group of castes or the other, but not in both. Some of the first converts were from the clean

castes. But when many of the Untouchables accepted Christ, the clean-caste people objected. They did not want to associate with the folk from the wrong part of town. The missionaries continued to accept all who came and required that they all join the same church. Consequently, many of the clean-caste people reverted back to Hinduism.

6. What has been an inhibiting factor to the growth of the church in India composed of members from diverse castes?

The problem here is not a theological one. Many of the high-caste converts sincerely believed the gospel, and even today many are secret believers. It is a social problem. The high-caste folk did not want to associate with the Untouchables. Before we judge them, let us stop and look at the churches and denominations in America. In how many of them do we find a wide mixture of people from different ethnic groups and social classes? How long has it taken them to break down the last remnants of racial segregation? In how many of them have differences in wealth, social class, and political power become unimportant in the fellowship and the operation of the churches?

The dilemma is that theologically the church should be one, but, in fact, people are socially very diverse. Moreover, they find it hard to associate closely and intermarry with people markedly different from themselves. Can we expect people to change their deep-seated social ways at the moment of their conversion—in other words, should we expect them to join the same church? Or is changing our social customs a part of Christian growth—should we allow them to form different churches with the hope that with further teaching they will become one? The question is similar to one many American churches face; is giving up smoking or drinking alcohol or any other behavior defined as sinful es-

sential to salvation, or is it a part of Christian growth?

There have been some in India who have held that the peoples' salvation is not tied to their joining a single church, and they have, therefore, started

different churches for the clean castes and the Untouchables. They have had much greater success in winning people from the clean castes, but they have also faced a great deal of criticism from those who argue that this is contrary to the will of God.

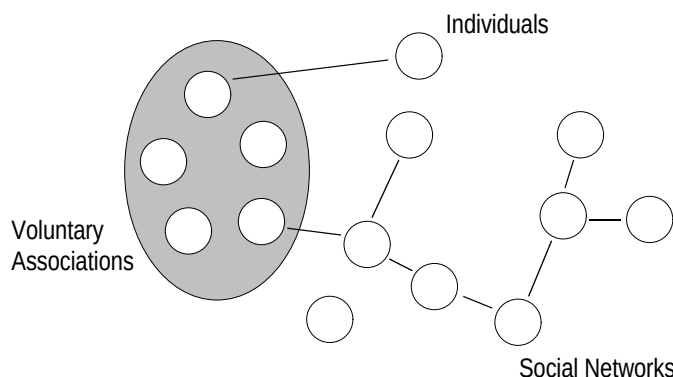
7. Why has starting churches for the "clean castes" been a point of controversy?

The urban scene

The recent growth of cities has been phenomenal. In 1800, no city in the world had a population of 1 million, and fewer than 25 had more than 100,000 inhabitants. By 1950, 46 cities had more than 1 million residents. The New York metropolitan area, which had over 15 million people in 1970, may reach 22 million by 1985.

This rapid urbanization of the world raises many questions for those concerned with church growth. What is the social structure of a city, and how does this structure influence communication and decision making? How do changes take place in the highly mobile and varied city society?

The social processes affecting church growth in tribal and peasant societies are less evident in urban societies. Large people movements in which people come to Christ on the basis of group decisions, or in which the message is shared through caste and kinship ties, seem almost absent. On the other hand, there are new forces at work. City folk are often caught up in rapid change. Their ideas are molded by mass media, educational institutions, and voluntary associations. Communication often follows networks of people who are mutually acquainted—in other words, a friend tells a friend, who, in turn, tells another friend.



- Stress on individualism and personal decision making.
- Organization on basis of voluntary associations, networks, and geographical groupings.
- Heterogeneous and hierarchic.
- Use of mass media in addition to networks.

Figure 14-4. Urban Individualistic Societies

What methods should missions use in the city? So far no clear-cut strategy has emerged. Mass media, friendship, neighborhood and apartment evangelism, large educational and medical institutions, and mass rallies have all been tried, and with mixed success. There is no simple formula that will bring success—there never has been. Building churches is a difficult and long-range task.

Cities also offer tremendous opportunity. They are the centers for world communication, and the source from which ideas spread to the countryside. One reason for the rapid spread of early Christianity was its movement through the cities. We desperately need to look more closely at modern urban dynamics in order to understand how change takes place, and then to apply these insights to today's mission planning.

8. Why do cities defy any simplistic strategy for reaching them?

II. Reaching the City

There is no doubt that the trend towards urbanization of the world's population is one of the most challenging issues facing present-day missions. In the following article, Tim Monsma addresses this question by applying an understanding of sociological principles to this complex consideration.

□ *The Intersecting Veins of the City* *

Timothy Monsma **

Veins of gold lie buried deep in the earth in places scattered around the globe. The gold is there for the taking, but one must dig for it in order to obtain it!

There is gold for the Lord in the cities of the world. But one must work for it too! Strip mining is not sufficient. One must locate the veins, which are the various kinds of people groups in a city. These veins run in many directions and often intersect. The missionary's challenge is to know enough about each vein to mine it appropriately and extract the priceless ore of human souls to add to the treasury of the King.

Cities are complicated. One or two levels of analysis are not sufficient to understand them. But cities are not incomprehensible. Some guidelines can be given to urban missionaries, along with the promise that their labors will be worth the effort. The gold in the cities of the world is precious in God's sight. And our labors in the city have implications beyond its boundaries. We must remember that as the city goes, so usually goes the nation.

* Monsma, T. M. (1990). The intersecting veins of the city. In Greenway & Monsma (Eds.), *Cities: Missions' new frontier* (pp. 112-125). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

** Dr. Timothy Monsma is a former professor of missions and noted author on urban ministries. He currently serves as Director of Cities for Christ Worldwide, Escondido, California.

Ethnic groups

Ibu is a young man in his early 20s. He left his home in Ghana to seek work in Abidjan, the capital of the Ivory Coast. Because of his limited knowledge of French, no firm was willing to hire him. But he found work in the home of a wealthy lawyer whose wife works as a part-time teacher. Ibu cares for the yard, mops the floors, and runs errands. He hopes that someday he will become a chauffeur and find a wife to live with him in Abidjan.

Ibu is one of about 200,000 Ghanians who have moved to the Ivory Coast to take advantage of Abidjan's relative prosperity. They are three steps removed from the average resident of Abidjan: their ethnic group is different from any of the ethnic groups of the Ivory Coast, they are not citizens, and they do not speak the national language, French. If they know French at all, it is only conversational French.

People like Ibu have been neglected by the traditional missions in Abidjan. Protestant missionaries and evangelists have had all they can do to reach the French-speaking population. This has left them no time for a concerted outreach to smaller groups, such as the one from Ghana.

Ethnic groups constitute some of the veins of gold awaiting discovery by urban missionary-miners. It is vital to identify which ethnic groups living in a city are being reached with the gospel and which are not. In most major cities today, even those that appear to have many churches, there are pockets of people who are neglected because of their ethnic identity, linguistic problems, or other cultural barriers.

In one predominantly Muslim country, there is a city of 1 million people with 70 churches. On the surface it appears that Christianity is making great strides there. But when one examines the ethnic composition of these churches, one discovers that their members are not indigenous to the area. There is one small denomination for the two indigenous ethnic groups, and that church is shrinking rather than growing. Until a city is analyzed in terms of its ethnic composition, such information does not come to light, and the missionary may be misled by appearances.

Recent missiological thinking has emphasized the need to identify "unreached people groups." Frequently these are ethnic groups. A group is considered unreached if in its midst there is no vigorous church capable of bringing the gospel to the other members of the group. As soon as a vigorous and growing church has been planted in the midst of a group, it is considered reached.

Many have thought that the emphasis on unreached people groups is an emphasis on rural evangelism, for it appears to focus on isolated tribes to whom no missionary has yet been sent. But there are unreached peoples in cities as well. Members of many isolated tribes have already made their way to the cities. And this raises a new question: Is it better to approach a people group in the city first or in the hinterlands? The answer will depend on the circumstances of each individual group. In some cases, groups that are highly resistant to the gospel in their homelands may be very open to the gospel in an urban environment.

In some cases, groups that are highly resistant to the gospel in their homelands may be very open to the gospel in an urban environment.

Most urban immigrants preserve numerous ties with their kin back in the countryside. There is travel back and forth for holidays and other special occasions. Food is sent from the rural area to relatives living in the city, while those in the city send items that cannot be purchased in the village except at a very high price. Public transportation is continually used to convey children, money, animals, food, and manufactured goods back and forth between town and country.

Public transportation between town and country also conveys the news, sometimes very rapidly. After a church service in Lagos, for example, someone said to me, "I hear that a child of one of your missionaries died yesterday in Gboko." Gboko is 800 miles away, but the overnight bus service between Gboko and Lagos had already carried the news.

Because of such relationships, the symbiosis between city and hinterland extends beyond the realm of formal business matters. For the social ties between the members of a particular ethnic group who live in the country and those in the city also help to

spread new ideas, including religious ideas. It is not preposterous, therefore, to evangelize the countryside by evangelizing the city or, conversely, to evangelize the city by evangelizing the countryside.

9. In what ways are urban ethnic populations tied to the traditional homelands?

In the city there are various social groupings other than ethnic—people of one ethnic group may be separated from one another by class distinctions. Nonetheless, they often have a sense of cohesion and unity that transcends social barriers. This is especially true of relatives. Those within an extended family feel obligations toward one another in spite of social barriers. I have observed illiterate peasants staying with wealthy and cultured relatives in the city, at least temporarily, simply because they were family.

As we seek to measure the progress of the gospel among various groups, the most natural approach to the city is to classify its residents on the basis of their ethnicity. But for the cities of Japan and Korea, where virtually everyone is of the same ethnic stock, such a division is not useful. And in cities where an ethnic group is so small that its members prefer to worship with some other group or groups, the ethnic criterion also loses its value. But in most cases, ethnic divisions are most useful for evaluating the progress of evangelism in the city.

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, is a city of churches. Out of a total population of 8 million, about 1 million identify themselves as Protestant Christians. Someone might argue that there are enough Christians in Jakarta to evangelize the rest of the city. And from a strictly numerical point of view, this argument seems valid. But if we think of Jakarta as a gold mine with many intersecting veins, we will realize that there are numerous Christians in

some veins, while other veins contain virtually no Christians at all.

We can identify the ethnic groups among whom Christians are few and far between. There are, for example, the Sundanese, a group 20 million strong living on the western end of Java. The Sundanese are committed Muslims and not very willing to give the Christian faith serious consideration.

In most cases, ethnic divisions are most useful for evaluating the progress of evangelism in the city.

The Javanese form another large ethnic group in Jakarta. They make up the bulk of the population of Java, a heavily populated island of almost 100 million people. The Javanese are more willing than the Sundanese to consider various religious options. Some of them in Jakarta profess faith in Christ, but a strong Javanese church has not yet arisen.

Then there are those groups that have migrated to Jakarta from the outlying islands. Some of these islands are predominantly Christian, and it is from there that the majority of the Christian population of Jakarta have come. But other islands, such as Sumatra, are predominantly Muslim, and their people have also moved to Jakarta in large numbers. People from the island of Bali remain Hindu.

One ethnic group in Jakarta that has been reached with the gospel is the Chinese. Although the majority of them are still Buddhists, there is a vigorous and growing Christian church among them. Indonesians of Chinese descent are busy evangelizing their own people, and God is blessing their efforts.

By dividing the population of the city into ethnic groups, we get a better idea of the evangelistic task that remains. It probably will not be possible for foreign missionaries to spread the gospel to the as yet unreached groups in Indonesia, because the government is not granting visas to new missionaries. But Indonesian Christians are able to shoulder this burden. They have already made some efforts in this direction, and they will become more vigorously

involved in cross-cultural evangelistic activity as fellow Christians from outside the country remind them of these God-given opportunities.

This writer is convinced that ethnic groups in the cities of the world must be identified by the Christian community. If someday every tribe, tongue, people, and nation are to be gathered before God's throne (Rev. 5:9), then they must hear and believe the good news about Jesus before He returns. Mission scholars have identified many ethnic groups that do not yet have a church in their midst. When these groups have been identified, missionaries and evangelists can prepare to go to them with the gospel.

10. Why is it important to analyze cities in terms of ethnic composition?

Increasingly, unreached ethnic groups are represented in cities. In some cases, they have traveled such a distance that they form a totally new group within their chosen city. This happens especially when they cross international borders. But whether they constitute a newly formed group in a foreign country or have remained in their homeland, every urban ethnic group must be reached with the gospel.

Anyone who wishes to investigate a specific city is advised to draw up a list of ethnic groups within that city and to identify those that already have living, growing churches in their midst. In this way one will, by a process of elimination, be able to target those groups still in need of a vital witness. A person who has lived in a city for some time will have contacts who can assist in drawing up the list. But someone who is new to a city will have to prevail upon Christians who are already there to help in this effort. They will probably be willing to do so, provided one does not take up too much of their time.

Once the list has been drawn up, one must determine which of those ethnic groups still in need of a vital

witness constitute what missions literature calls "people groups." An urban ethnic group is a people group if one can contemplate planting a church or a worshiping congregation just for them. A given ethnic group may be so similar to other ethnic groups that one church can serve them all in culturally appropriate ways. Or an ethnic group might have so few members in a given city that it would be preferable for them to worship with other Christians in a common language or in the national language of the land.

There is a special advantage in identifying people groups in cities, especially groups that have been resistant to the gospel in rural areas. Sometimes village life is woven so tightly that no one is able to step out of line. No one dares accept a new faith such as Christianity. In extreme cases, those who do may be killed. But in the city there is greater freedom. The social controls of the village are gone. There is less danger of losing one's job when one changes religions in the city. Here there is often a community of Christians who can help new converts make the necessary adjustments.

11. *What advantages are suggested for reaching an ethnic group through a city-based strategy?*

Social groups

At the beginning of this article, the city was called a gold mine with many intersecting veins, some of which are the ethnic groupings we have been discussing. We might picture them as vertical veins running through the city. Just as important in many cases are social distinctions, which we might picture as horizontal veins.

We were in a crowded upper room of a warehouse in Jakarta. The men and women in the room were of all ages and various skin colors. When the chairman asked for a show of hands to determine the islands from which these people had come, it became apparent that there was great ethnic diversity in the room. Yet they all had one thing in common: they were all seamen or the relatives of seamen, and they were all comparatively poor.

Now it is a fact that schooling, occupation, and wealth (or lack of it) tend to determine one's social status. But within the broad categories of upper, middle, and lower class, there are subcategories that group people in terms of how they view themselves or how others view them. The seamen of Jakarta are a case in point. While many others might have an income in the same range as theirs, they would not feel an affinity for each other because their lives revolve around entirely different occupations. That street vendors and seamen have the same level of income does not automatically place them in the same sociological group. In the case of the seamen, the method of earning a living determines the cohesiveness of the group. As a matter of fact, their shared occupation appears more important than their ethnic identity. This, then, is their primary group, the people group among whom we may expect a church to arise.

In the city there are other such occupational groupings that appear to bind their members so closely to one another that they override all ethnic considerations. These occupational groupings tend to cluster both at the top and at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. Thus, corporation executives, actors, top-level civil servants, and high ranking military officers might feel an affinity for one another that overrides the ethnic pull. Toward the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, pimps and prostitutes, drug dealers, beggars, thieves, and scavengers might feel close to one another and rather distant from their own ethnic groups.

In the city there are occupational groupings that appear to bind their members so closely to one another that they override all ethnic considerations.

We may need a different evangelistic strategy for each one of these groups, for each group may have its own set of needs and interests (although they all need salvation through Christ). For example, what evangelistic strategy would one use with prostitutes? We sense immediately that it will have to differ from that used with women who are wives and mothers, or that used with women who are office workers, nurses, telephone operators, or attorneys.

Simply to tell prostitutes that they are sinners will not make much of an impression, because they know that without being told. Those who have worked with prostitutes in various countries tell us that a holistic approach is needed. Many became prostitutes because they were desperate to find work or

because they were duped by someone. Now they cannot get out even if they want to.

Prostitutes must be shown that there is a viable way out. They must be protected from the pimps and brothel owners who may try to reclaim them. Commitment to Jesus Christ must become for them the beginning of a period of cleansing and renewal in body and spirit. It may also involve further education so that they can find their places as useful members of society once again.

Within every people group there are subgroups requiring special evangelistic strategies.

The fact that prostitutes require a special evangelistic strategy, however, does not mean that they are a people group so distinctive that a church can and ought to be planted just for them. If every occupational class were a people group as that term is presently used in missions literature, then there

would be virtually no end to the number of people groups in the world, for new occupations are always appearing. Then, too, the people group concept could not be used effectively as a measure to determine the progress of the gospel in the world. It is better to recognize that within every people group there are subgroups requiring special evangelistic strategies. From the point of view of good evangelism, each subgroup, and finally each person, must be taken into account.

The cities of Japan, Korea, and Sweden are, except for foreigners in their midst, made up of people of one ethnic group speaking the same language. In such cities the sociological groupings become very important, for ethnic distinctions are virtually nonexistent. Christian workers will classify such urbanites on the basis of income, education, status in society, and possibly the neighborhoods in which they live. People with similar income levels might be placed in different groups if their occupations and lifestyle so warrant. The number of groups found will reflect the number of different churches needed to minister effectively to all of them.

12. What are two primary influences in social grouping, and in what ways do they affect church planting?

Cities contain areas for the wealthy, the middle class, and the poor—although sometimes middle-class people are mixed in with the wealthy or the poor. While in Western cities, the poor tend to congregate in the inner cities and those with means tend to flock to the suburbs, in the developing world these tendencies are often reversed. Those with means live in the central city not far from the downtown area, while the poor live in shantytowns built on the hills and in the ravines that surround the city. In the West, the poor generally live in slums (formerly good housing that has deteriorated over time). There is slum housing in cities of the Southern

World as well, but in addition, there are shantytowns built by people who have recently moved to the city. The residents often experience upward mobility as they find meaningful work and as city governments, recognizing their existence, provide them with electricity, water, schools, and other services.

Many Southern World cities are experiencing chaotic growth, and shantytowns are multiplying. Alongside some upward mobility there is also desperate poverty. Fernando Silva Pontes, who is both a physician and a priest, reports concerning a shantytown of Itapipoca, a city of northeastern Brazil:

All they have is farinha and beans, and some mothers are too sick to supply milk. In one house a baby was crying and crying. The mother was in tears. I told her to give the baby milk, but she didn't want to and I almost forced her. And then I saw the baby suck blood from the mother's breast.*

Viv Grigg describes his similar experiences as a Protestant missionary in a Manila shantytown.**

These examples are mentioned to highlight the fact that in most of the metropolises of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, there are extensive residential areas for the very poor. These areas continue to grow rapidly as the poor are forced out of rural regions and into the cities. We must carefully plan our approach to this large group of people. Will we plant churches among them that cater to their ethnic origins, or is their poverty so pervasive that it is the chief determinant of the type of church which will arise in their midst? On-site research, city by city and area by area, is needed to determine the type of people group most significant to the poor and the shape of the church which will emerge among them.

In compiling a list of the people groups within a city, there is the possibility of including the same individuals twice: first as members of an ethnic group and then as members of some sociological group. For example, a person (P) might be viewed as a member of ethnic group Y and social group X (see

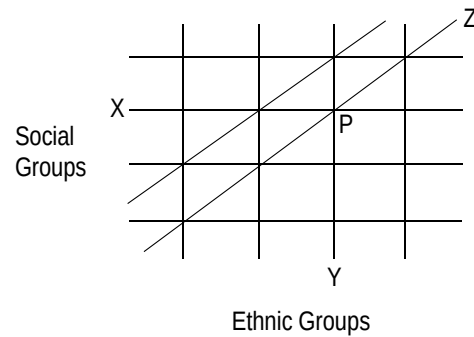


Figure 14-5. People Groups Within a City

Figure 14-5). To complicate matters further, P might also be a member of group Z, which intersects with the others diagonally. Group Z might be a veterans' organization, a mothers' group in a specific neighborhood, or a religion.

For the purpose of measuring the progress of the gospel, P should be regarded primarily as a member of ethnic group Y unless there are very good reasons for identification with a sociological group. In general, we will assign persons to the group whose church we expect them to attend after conversion to Jesus Christ. But evangelistic strategies may differ widely, depending on people's interests and needs when they are first approached.

13. To the church planter, what is the primary concern when attempting to identify a person's "group"?

* Vesilind, P. J. (1987). Brazil: Moments of promise and pain. *National Geographic*, 171(3), 258, 360.

** Grigg, V. (1984). *Companion to the poor*. Sutherland, Australia: Albatross.

The city as an organism

The city is a gold mine. It has prominent ethnic (vertical) veins. It has prominent sociological (horizontal) veins. And it has other veins that run at will in all directions. This image is useful in helping us schematize and also simplify in our own thinking a complex evangelistic task. But there is yet another level of complexity to be examined. The city and its suburbs are more than a static entity to be charted in one way or another. The city is also an organism that is constantly on the move. This movement is not random like the movement of atoms within a molecule. It is concerted and interconnected, like that of an animal or a human body. Without losing sight of the intersecting veins, we need also to see the city as a giant organism pulsing with life.

Urban life breeds interdependence, whether urban residents like it or not.

As the first rays of sunlight stretch across the eastern sky, every city is like a giant arousing from deep slumber. In house after house, the lights go on. Soon the streets are filled with people on their way to work. As the sun rises higher, children make their way to school; trucks, trains, and airplanes ply their routes; and shoppers begin to crowd the markets and stores.

The various occupational groups that live in the city are dependent on one another. This interdependence might be called the essence of urban life. Teachers depend on cobblers to repair their shoes, who call on mechanics to repair their cars, who buy food from women at the market, who need nurses when they are sick, who are licensed by the government, which

uses secretaries and computer operators to keep track of all its business. One could go on and on.

The point is this: Urban life is the opposite of life in isolated and self-contained societies where virtually every member does all the tasks traditionally assigned to his or her sex. Urban life breeds interdependence, whether urban residents like it or not.

In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 the Apostle Paul compares the Christian congregation to the human body. Each member of the body has its own unique function that the other members cannot perform—be it seeing, hearing, talking, or walking. The members depend on one another and cooperate with one another so that the body achieves its goals. It would be ludicrous for the members of the body to fight with one another.

The congregation is an organism because all its members are joined to Christ and find unity in Him. The city is an organism because all its residents depend on one another for their well-being. The city is an organism in spite of all the ethnic and sociological diversity described earlier in this chapter.

While evangelism must take urban diversity into account, spiritual care leading to growth in Christ must work for Christian unity. It can do so by keeping in view biblical passages like Paul's description of the church as a body. In addition, the very structure and interrelationships of the city can be used as a model for Christians of various ethnic groups and social strata to follow in developing spiritual interdependence. If there is interdependence in the workplace, surely there is need for interdependence within the body of Christ.

14. What parallels exist between the composition of the city and the composition of the body of Christ?

Social networks

When one thinks of the city as an organism, one can't help noticing that most people who live in the city interact with one another through a web of interlocking relationships. This web of relationships is called a network by social scientists. The following account, which is a composite story drawing on my firsthand observation of urbanization in Nigerian cities, will serve to illustrate.

When George Aduku graduated from secondary school and did not pass the university entrance exam, he decided to go to a city in order to find work. He had an uncle living in Kaduna, over 400 miles from his home. So George took a passenger truck to Makurdi and from there traveled by train to Kaduna.

When George arrived in Kaduna, his uncle and aunt welcomed him into their home and provided both food and lodging at no charge, because George was their nephew. The next day George went out looking for work. For an entire week he searched for a job. He could have taken temporary work cleaning up the market at the close of the day, but felt that such a job was too low-paying and demeaning for a high school graduate. In any case, he was looking for permanent employment.

After one week, George's Uncle Samuel came home with good news. A fellow worker at the textile mill had told him that the ordnance factory in Kaduna would be hiring clerks and supervisors the following day. A cousin who worked in the personnel office would put in a good word for George if Uncle Samuel recommended him without reservation.

As a result, George Aduku found meaningful work in Kaduna before many others with the same qualifications. By the time he received his first paycheck, he had sensed that his aunt was growing weary of having him around the house and that it would be good for him to move into an apartment. A workmate from his own ethnic group invited George to move into the apartment he shared with another young man. Although this workmate was Catholic and George was Protestant, he felt that their shared tribal identity would prevent any problems.

George and his new friend were now both workmates and roommates. They sometimes played to-

gether as well, although George slowly developed other friends whose tastes in recreation were more similar to his. He began saving money for the time several years away when he would be able to pay the price for a bride from his ethnic homeland and bring her to live with him in Kaduna.

To accomplish his goals, George and his uncle made use of several networks. George started with the network already in place when he arrived in the city, his relatives. His Uncle Samuel in turn activated another network, that of his workmates. Once George had work, he also could use this network to find a place to live. And when he had a place to live, a third network emerged, that of his neighbors. From his workmates, his neighbors, and possibly other relatives in the city, he could develop his playmates, those with whom he pursued recreation.

Notice that we have already mentioned four networks: relatives, workmates, neighbors, and playmates. The members of George's church or his fellow believers might constitute a fifth network. The term fellow believer is used because if George were a Muslim, he might find help at the mosque rather than at church.

I was in the city of Zaria in Nigeria when a Christian man was hit by a triple tragedy. First he lost his job, and then his 10-year-old daughter died while his wife was in the hospital with a terminal illness. His wife was so sick that no one dared tell her about the death of the daughter. Fellow Christians rallied around the man; many attended the daughter's burial, at which I was asked to officiate.

When the wife also died, the Christian community put forth more strenuous efforts to help. One church member arranged for the wife's body to be kept refrigerated in the hospital morgue, while another, who was with the police force, used the police radio to notify relatives back home. This made it possible for them to arrive in Zaria in time for the burial. Generous gifts were also donated to the widower to tide him over until new work could be found. He had a network that sustained him in time of tragedy—the members of his church.

15. What are networks, and what social function do they perform?

Such networks could be called homogeneous networks because the people involved in them have something in common. They are joined to one another by (usually) several webs of common interests and mutual benefits.* Donald McGavran wrote and spoke about “homogeneous units” and “webs of relationships” long before the term “network” became common among social scientists. Such relationships do not disappear in the city. In some cases they are strengthened there. The fact that they are informal and are often invoked in an ad hoc manner to deal with specific problems does not detract from their helpfulness.

When people recommend Jesus Christ to other members of their networks, it is a potent endorsement.

Both flexible and productive, these networks can be used as an avenue for the spread of the gospel. People tend to trust those who are members of their networks, not only for information about where to find work, medical help, or good housing at a reasonable price. They also lean on network members for advice on deeper needs, such as whom to marry, how to deal with marital problems, and how to handle depression. Among these deeper needs is one’s religious allegiance. When people recommend Jesus Christ to other members of their networks, it is a potent endorsement.

Networks can facilitate the spread of the gospel within a people group. For example, Tiv people living in the cities of Nigeria have used their networks to spread the Christian faith. During the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), many Tiv young men

who had been involved in Christian work as laymen went off to join the army. In the army they continued to witness to their fellow Tiv about Jesus Christ, even though they now received no payment for this witness and no church was supervising them. Workmates (in this case soldiers) witnessed to their fellows and thus spread the gospel. The wives and children of married soldiers also became involved. And so the network of workmates was extended by adding a network of relatives. The result was the spread of the gospel among Tiv soldiers and their families both during and, most notably, after the war.

In addition, a network of workmates often becomes a bridge for the gospel to pass from one people group to another. When the Nigerian civil war was over, I spoke to Tiv soldiers and their families at the Rainbow Army Camp at Port Harcourt. Hausa-speaking soldiers were also present, and whatever I said in Tiv was translated into Hausa. Tiv soldiers who were Christians had told their fellow Hausa soldiers that a missionary was speaking in the army chapel that evening. They too came to participate. Joint service in the Nigerian army created a bridge from one group to another.

But the same networks that serve as a bridge for the gospel can also present obstacles to its spread. Some people may hesitate to declare faith in Christ because they fear ridicule from others in their networks. Others may fear the loss of the support of their networks if they make a firm Christian commitment. Or one might feel free to talk with fellow workers about Jesus Christ, but be reluctant to approach relatives, who may disparage anything having to do with Christianity. Playmates might not disparage Christianity, but they might present so

* For a fuller discussion of homogeneous networks, see the June 1987 issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, pp. 45-52.

many tempting alternatives to the Christian life that the growing seeds of faith are choked.

Christian workers who recognize and understand these networks will wish to utilize them for the spread of the gospel, and will try to minimize any detrimental effects. They may also assist new Christians in finding new networks if this is necessary.

In addition to networks, there are what Kenneth Little describes as “voluntary associations.” Voluntary associations differ from networks in that they are more formalized. They are organizations that one can join. By joining, one comes to participate in both the benefits and the obligations of membership. Little mentions tribal associations, mutual aid societies, recreation societies, Christian clubs, syncretis-

tic cults, and cultural societies, all of which seek to benefit both their members and others in various ways. Scholarships, funeral expenses, and civic improvement in the home area are among the common benefits provided by such associations. Although Little wrote about West Africa, evidence suggests that helpful voluntary associations are a worldwide urban phenomenon. Together with networks, they help to ease the stress of urban life and even to make such life enjoyable.

The church as an institution (formalized and organized under officers) is like a voluntary association; the church as the people of God out in the world is more like a helpful network of fellow believers. It is often difficult, however, to tell where the voluntary association stops and the network starts.

16. *Why is an understanding of networks so important to the discussion of urban church planting?*

III. The Church in Culture

It is not enough that the gospel be communicated in strategic ways. What emerges once the church is conceived is of fundamental importance also. As the *Willowbank Report* states, “If the gospel must be contextualized, so must the church.” In January, 1978, a group of 33 anthropologists, linguists, missionaries, and pastors met in Willowbank, Somerset Bridge, Bermuda, for a consultation on “Gospel and Culture.” Seventeen written papers were circulated among the participants before the consultation, and a comprehensive report was produced, part of which follows. The report’s provocative message challenges all missions to integrity in allowing the church to be “real” to its own culture.

❑ **Church and Culture ***

In the process of church formation, as in the communication and reception of the gospel, the question of culture is vital. If the gospel must be contextualized, so must the church. Indeed, the subtitle of our Consultation has been, “The Contextualization of Word and Church in a Missionary Situation.”

Older, traditional approaches

During the missionary expansion of the early part of the 19th century, it was generally assumed that churches “on the mission field” would be modeled on churches “at home.” The tendency was to produce almost exact replicas. Gothic architecture, prayer book liturgies, clerical dress, musical instruments, hymns and tunes, decision-making processes, synods and committees, superintendents and archdeacons—all were exported and unimaginatively introduced into the new mission-founded churches. It should be added that these patterns were also eagerly adopted by the new Christians, determined not to be at any point behind their Western friends, whose habits and ways of worship they had been attentively watching. But all this was based on the false assumptions that the Bible gave specific instructions about such matters and that the home churches’ pattern of government, worship, ministry, and life were themselves exemplary.

In reaction to this monocultural export system, pioneer missionary thinkers like Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson in the middle of the last century and Roland Allen earlier in this century popularized the concept of “indigenous” churches, which would be “self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.” They argued their case well. They pointed out that the policy of the Apostle Paul was

to plant churches, not to found mission stations. They also added pragmatic arguments to biblical ones, namely, that indigeneity was indispensable to the church’s growth in maturity and mission. Henry Venn confidently looked forward to the day when missions would hand over all responsibility to national churches, and then what he called “the euthanasia of the mission” would take place. These views gained wide acceptance and were immensely influential.

A more radical concept of indigenous church life needs to be developed, by which each church may discover and express its selfhood as the body of Christ within its own culture.

In our day, however, they are being criticized, not because of the ideal itself, but because of the way it has often been applied. Some missions, for example, have accepted the need for indigenous leadership and have then gone on to recruit and train local leaders, indoctrinating them (the word is harsh but not unfair) in Western ways of thought and procedure. These Westernized local leaders have then preserved a very Western-looking church, and the foreign orientation has persisted, only lightly cloaked by the appearance of indigeneity.

Now, therefore, a more radical concept of indigenous church life needs to be developed, by which each church may discover and express its selfhood as the body of Christ within its own culture.

* Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (1978). *The Willowbank report: Gospel and culture* (Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 2, Sec. 8). Wheaton, IL: Author.

17. *Why have the three “self” criteria for church planting failed to produce truly contextualized churches?*

The dynamic equivalence model

Using the distinctions between “form” and “meaning” and between “formal correspondence” and “dynamic equivalence,” which have been developed in translation theory and on which we have commented, it is being suggested that an analogy may be drawn between Bible translation and church formation. “Formal correspondence” speaks of a slavish imitation, whether in translating a word into another language or exporting a church model to another culture. Just as a “dynamic equivalence” translation, however, seeks to convey to contemporary readers meanings equivalent to those conveyed to the original readers, by using appropriate cultural forms, so would a “dynamic equivalence” church. It would look in its culture as a good Bible translation looks in its language. It would preserve the essential meanings and functions which the New Testament predicated of the church, but would seek to express these in forms equivalent to the originals but appropriate to the local culture.

We have all found this model helpful and suggestive, and we strongly affirm the ideals it seeks to express. It rightly rejects foreign imports and imitation and rigid structures. It rightly looks to the New Testament for the principles of church formation, rather than to either tradition or culture, and it equally rightly looks to the local culture for the appropriate forms in which these principles should be expressed. All of us (even those who see limitations in the model) share the vision which it is trying to describe.

Thus, the New Testament indicates that the church is always a worshiping community, “a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5), but forms of worship (including the presence or absence of different kinds of liturgy, ceremony, music, color, drama, etc.) will be developed by the church in keeping with indige-

nous culture. Similarly, the church is always a witnessing and a serving community, but its methods of evangelism and its program of social involvement will vary. Again, God desires all churches to have pastoral oversight, but forms of government and ministry may differ widely, and the selection, training, ordination, service, dress, payment, and accountability of pastors will be determined by the church to accord with biblical principles and to suit the local culture.

A “dynamic equivalence” church would preserve the essential meanings and functions which the New Testament predicated of the church, but would seek to express these in forms equivalent to the originals but appropriate to the local culture.

The questions which are being asked about the “dynamic equivalence” model are whether by itself it is large enough and dynamic enough to provide all the guidance which is needed. The analogy between Bible translation and church formation is not exact. In the former the translator controls the work, and when the task is complete it is possible to make a comparison of the two texts. In the latter, however, the original to which an equivalent is being sought is not a detailed text but a series of glimpses of the early church in operation, making the comparison more difficult, and instead of a controlling translator the whole community of faith must be involved. Further, a translator aims at personal objectivity, but when the local church is seeking to relate itself appropriately to the local culture, it finds objectivity almost impossible. In many situations it is caught in

“an encounter between two civilizations” (that of its own society and that of the missionaries’). Furthermore, it may have great difficulty in responding to the conflicting voices of the local community. Some clamor for change (in terms of literacy, education, technology, modern medicine, industrialization, etc.), while others insist on the conservation of the old culture and resist the arrival of a new day. It is asked whether the “dynamic equivalence” model is dynamic enough to face this kind of challenge.

The test of this or any other model for helping churches develop appropriately is whether it can

enable God’s people to capture in their hearts and minds the grand design of which their church is to be the local expression. Every model presents only a partial picture. Local churches need to rely ultimately on the dynamic pressure of the living Lord of history. For it is He who will guide His people in every age to develop their church life in such a way as both to obey the instructions He has given in Scripture and to reflect the good elements of their local culture.

18. What is the application of a dynamic equivalence model supposed to achieve?

The freedom of the church

If each church is to develop creatively in such a way as to find and express itself, it must be free to do so. This is its inalienable right. For each church is God’s church. United to Christ, it is a dwelling place of God through His Spirit (Eph. 2:22). Some missions and missionaries have been slow to recognize this and to accept its implications in the direction of indigenous forms and an every-member ministry. This is one of the many causes which have led to the formation of independent churches, notably in Africa, which are seeking new ways of self-expression in terms of local culture.

Although local church leaders have also sometimes impeded indigenous development, the chief blame lies elsewhere. It would not be fair to generalize. The situation has always been diverse. In earlier generations there were missions which never manifested a spirit of domination. In this century some churches have sprung up which have never been under missionary control, having enjoyed self-government from the start. In other cases missions have entirely surrendered their former power, so that some mission-founded churches are now fully autonomous, and many missions now work in genuine partnership with churches.

Yet this is not the whole picture. Other churches are still almost completely inhibited from developing their own identity and program by policies laid down from afar, by the introduction and continuation of foreign traditions, by the use of expatriate leadership, by alien decision-making processes, and especially by the manipulative use of money. Those

Although local church leaders have also sometimes impeded indigenous development, the chief blame lies elsewhere.

who maintain such control may be genuinely unaware of the way in which their actions are regarded and experienced at the other end. They may be felt by the churches concerned to be a tyranny. The fact that this is neither intended nor realized illustrates perfectly how all of us (whether we know it or not) are involved in the culture which has made us what we are. We strongly oppose such “foreignness,” wherever it exists, as a serious obstacle to maturity

and mission and a quenching of the Holy Spirit of God.

It was in protest against the continuance of foreign control that a few years ago the call was made to withdraw all missionaries. In this debate some of us want to avoid the word “moratorium” because it has become an emotive term and sometimes betrays a resentment against the very concept of “missionar-

ies.” Others of us wish to retain the word in order to emphasize the truth it expresses. To us it means not a rejection of missionary personnel and money in themselves, but only of their misuse in such a way as to suffocate local initiative. We all agree with the statement of the Lausanne Covenant that “a reduction of foreign missionaries and money... may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church’s growth in self-reliance....” (para. 9).

19. How can missionaries and their money interfere with church freedom?

Power structures and mission

What we have just written is part of a much wider problem, which we have not felt able to ignore. The contemporary world does not consist of isolated atomic societies, but is an interrelated global system of economic, political, technological, and ideological macro-structures, which undoubtedly results in much exploitation and oppression.

What has this got to do with mission? And why do we raise it here? Partly because it is the context within which the gospel must be preached to all nations today. Partly also because nearly all of us either belong to the Third World, or live and work there, or have done so, or have visited some countries in it. So we have seen with our own eyes the poverty of the masses, we feel for them and with them, and we have some understanding that their plight is due in part to an economic system which is controlled mostly by the North Atlantic countries (although others are now also involved). Those of us who are citizens of North American or European countries cannot avoid some feeling of embarrassment and shame, by reason of the oppression in which our countries in various degrees have been involved. Of course, we know that there is oppression in many countries today, and we oppose it everywhere. But now we are talking about ourselves, our own countries, and our responsibility as Christians. Most of the world’s missionaries and

missionary money come from these countries, often at great personal sacrifice. Yet we have to confess that some missionaries themselves reflect a neo-colonial attitude and even defend it, together with outposts of Western power and exploitation.

So what should we do? The only honest response is to say that we do not know. Armchair criticism smacks of hypocrisy. We have no ready-made solutions to offer to this worldwide problem. Indeed, we feel victims of the system ourselves. And yet we are also part of it. So we feel able to make only these comments:

First, Jesus Himself constantly identified with the poor and weak. We accept the obligation to follow in His footsteps in this matter as in all others. At least by the love which prays and gives, we mean to strengthen our solidarity with them.

Jesus did more than identify, however. In His teaching and that of the apostles, the corollary of good news to the oppressed was a word of judgment to the oppressor (e.g., Luke 6:24-26; James 5:1-6). We confess that in complex economic situations it is not easy to identify oppressors in order to denounce them, without resorting to a shrill rhetoric which neither costs nor accomplishes anything. Nevertheless, we accept that there will be occasions when it is our Christian duty to speak out against injustice

in the name of the Lord who is the God of justice as well as of justification. We shall seek from Him the courage and wisdom to do so.

Thirdly, this Consultation has expressed its concern about syncretism in Third World churches. But we have not forgotten that Western churches fall prey to the same sin. Indeed, perhaps the most insidious form of syncretism in the world today is the attempt to mix a privatized gospel of personal forgiveness

with a worldly (even demonic) attitude of wealth and power. We are not guiltless in this matter ourselves. Yet we desire to be integrated Christians for whom Jesus is truly Lord of all. So we who belong to or come from the West will examine ourselves and seek to purge ourselves of Western-style syncretism. We agree that “the salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead” (Lausanne Covenant, para. 5).

20. *Why can't the controversial issue of power structures be ignored by Christian mission?*

The danger of provincialism

We have emphasized that the church must be allowed to indigenize itself and to “celebrate, sing, and dance” the gospel in its own cultural medium. At the same time, we wish to be alert to the dangers of this process. Some churches in all six continents go beyond a joyful and thankful discovery of their local cultural heritage and either become boastful and assertive about it (a form of chauvinism) or even absolutize it (a form of idolatry). More common than either of these extremes, however, is “provincialism,” that is, such a retreat into their own culture as cuts them adrift from the rest of the church and from the wider world. This is a frequent stance in Western churches as well as in the Third World. It denies the God of creation and redemption. It is to proclaim one’s freedom, only to enter another bondage. We draw attention to the three major reasons why we think this attitude should be avoided:

First, each church is part of the universal church. The people of God are by His grace a unique multi-racial, multinational, multicultural community. This community is God’s new creation, His new humanity, in which Christ has abolished all barriers (see Ephesians 2 and 3). There is therefore no room for racism in the Christian society or for tribalism—whether in its African form or in the form of European social classes or of the Indian caste system.

Despite the church’s failures, this vision of a supra-ethnic community of love is not a romantic ideal but a command of the Lord. Therefore, while rejoicing in our cultural inheritance and developing our own indigenous forms, we must always remember that our primary identity as Christians is not in our particular cultures but in the one Lord and His one body (Eph. 4:3-6).

Our church should never become so culture-bound that visitors from another culture do not feel welcome.

Secondly, each church worships the living God of cultural diversity. If we thank Him for our cultural heritage, we should thank Him for others’ also. Our church should never become so culture-bound that visitors from another culture do not feel welcome. Indeed, we believe it is enriching for Christians, if they have the opportunity, to develop a bicultural and even a multicultural existence, like the Apostle Paul, who was both a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a master of the Greek language, and a Roman citizen.

Thirdly, each church should enter into a “partnership... in giving and receiving” (Phil. 4:15). No

church is, or should try to become, self-sufficient. So churches should develop with each other relationships of prayer, fellowship, interchange of ministry, and cooperation. Provided that we share the same central truths (including the supreme Lordship of Christ, the authority of Scripture, the necessity of conversion, confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the obligations of holiness and witness), we should be outgoing and not timid in seeking fellowship; and we should share our spiritual gifts and ministries, knowledge, skills, experience, and financial resources. The same principle applies to cultures. A church must be free to reject alien cultural forms and develop its own; it should also feel free to borrow from others. This way lies maturity.

One example of this concerns theology. Cross-cultural witnesses must not attempt to impose a ready-made theological tradition on the church in which they serve, either by personal teaching or by literature or by controlling seminary and Bible college curricula. For every theological tradition both contains elements which are biblically questionable and have been ecclesiastically divisive and omits elements which, while they might be of no great consequence in the country where they originated, may be of immense importance in other contexts. At

the same time, although missionaries ought not to impose their own tradition on others, they also ought not to deny them access to it (in the form of books, confessions, catechism, liturgies, and hymns), since it doubtless represents a rich heritage of faith. Moreover, although the theological controversies of the

A church must be free to reject alien cultural forms and develop its own; it should also feel free to borrow from others.

older churches should not be exported to the younger churches, yet an understanding of the issues and of the work of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding history of Christian doctrine should help to protect them from unprofitable repetition of the same battles.

Thus we should seek with equal care to avoid theological imperialism or theological provincialism. A church's theology should be developed by the community of faith out of the Scripture in interaction with other theologies of the past and present and with the local culture and its needs.

21. In what way do theological imperialism and theological provincialism provoke the same kind of error?

The danger of syncretism

As the church seeks to express its life in local cultural forms, it soon has to face the problem of cultural elements which either are evil or have evil associations. How should the church react to these? Elements which are intrinsically false or evil clearly cannot be assimilated into Christianity without a lapse into syncretism. This is a danger for all churches in all cultures. If the evil is in the associa-

tion only, however, we believe it is right to seek to "baptize" it into Christ. It is the principle on which William Booth operated when he set Christian words to popular music, asking why the devil should have all the best tunes. Thus many African churches now use drums to summon people to worship, although previously they were unacceptable, as being associated with war dances and mediumistic rites.

Yet this principle raises problems. In a proper reaction against foreigners, an improper flirtation with the demonic element of local culture sometimes takes place. So the church, being first and foremost a servant of Jesus Christ, must learn to scrutinize all culture, both foreign and local, in the light of His Lordship and God's revelation. By what guidelines, therefore, does a church accept or reject culture traits in the process of contextualization? How does it prevent or detect and eliminate heresy (wrong teaching) and syncretism (harmful carry-overs from the old way of life)? How does it protect itself from becoming a "folk church" in which church and society are virtually synonymous?

The church, being first and foremost a servant of Jesus Christ, must learn to scrutinize all culture, both foreign and local, in the light of His Lordship and God's revelation.

One particular model we have studied is that of the church in Bali, Indonesia, which is now about 40 years old. Its experience has provided the following guidelines:

The believing community first searched the Scriptures and learned from them many important biblical truths. They then observed that other churches (e.g., around the Mediterranean) used architecture to symbolize Christian truth. This was important because the Balinese are very "visual" people and value visible signs. So it was decided, for example, to express their affirmation of faith in the Trinity in a Balinese-style three-tiered roof for their church buildings. The symbol was first considered by the council of elders who, after studying both biblical

and cultural factors, recommended it to local congregations.

The detection and elimination of heresy followed a similar pattern. When believers suspected an error in life or teaching, they would report it to an elder, who would take it to the council of elders. Having considered the matter, they in their turn passed their recommendations to the local churches who had the final word.

What was the most important safeguard of the church? To this question the answer was, "We believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Master of all powers." By preaching His power, "the same yesterday and today and forever," by insisting at all times on the normative nature of the Scriptures, by entrusting elders with the obligation to reflect on Scripture and culture, by breaking down all barriers to fellowship, and by building into structures, catechism, art forms, drama, etc., constant reminders of the exalted position of Jesus Christ, His church has been preserved in truth and holiness.

Sometimes, in different parts of the world, a cultural element may be adopted which deeply disturbs oversensitive consciences, especially those of new converts. This is the problem of the "weaker brother" of whom Paul writes in connection with idol-meats. Since idols were nothing, Paul himself had liberty of conscience to eat these meats. But for the sake of "weaker" Christians with a less well-educated conscience, who would be offended to see him eat, he refrained, at least in specific situations in which such offense might be caused. The principle still applies today. Scripture takes conscience seriously and tells us not to violate it. It needs to be educated in order to become "strong," but while it remains "weak" it must be respected. A strong conscience will give us freedom, but love limits liberty.

22. What is the most effective safeguard against syncretism?

The church's influence on culture

We deplore the pessimism which leads some Christians to disapprove of active cultural engagement in the world, and the defeatism which persuades others that they could do no good there anyway and should therefore wait in inactivity for Christ to put things right when He comes. Many historical examples could be given, drawn from different ages and countries, of the powerful influence which—under God—the church has exerted on a prevailing culture, purging, claiming, and beautifying it for Christ. Though all such attempts have had defects, they do not prove the enterprise mistaken.

We prefer, however, to base the church's cultural responsibility on Scripture rather than on history. We have reminded ourselves that our fellow men and women are made in God's image and that we are commanded to honor, love, and serve them in every sphere of life. To this argument from God's creation we add another from His kingdom, which broke into the world through Jesus Christ. All authority belongs to Christ. He is Lord of both universe and church. And He has sent us into the world to be its salt and light. As His new community, He expects us to permeate society.

Thus we are to challenge what is evil and affirm what is good; to welcome and seek to promote all that is wholesome and enriching in art, science, technology, agriculture, industry, education, community development, and social welfare; to denounce injustice and support the powerless and the oppressed; to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, which is the most liberating and humanizing force in the world; and to actively engage in good works of love. Although in social and cultural activity, as in evangelism, we must leave the results to God, we are confident that He will bless our endeavors and use them to develop in our community a new consciousness of what is "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable" (Phil. 4:8, TEV). Of course, the church cannot impose Christian standards on an unwilling society, but it can commend them by both argument and example. All this will bring glory to God and greater opportunities of humanness to our fellow human being whom He made and loves. As the Lausanne Covenant put it, "Churches must seek

to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God" (para. 10).

Nevertheless, naive optimism is as foolish as dark pessimism. In place of both, we seek a sober Christian realism. On the one hand, Jesus Christ reigns. On the other, He has not yet destroyed the forces of evil; they still rampage. So in every culture Christians find themselves in a situation of conflict and often of suffering. We are called to fight against the "cosmic powers of this dark age" (Eph. 6:12, TEV). So we need each other. We must put on all God's armor, especially the mighty weapon of believing

The church cannot impose Christian standards on an unwilling society, but it can commend them by both argument and example.

prayer. We also remember the warnings of Christ and His apostles that before the end there will be an unprecedented outbreak of wickedness and violence. Some events and developments in our contemporary world indicate that the spirit of the coming Antichrist is already at work not only in the non-Christian world, but both in our own partially Christianized societies and even in the churches themselves. "We therefore reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that man can ever build a utopia on earth" (Lausanne Covenant, para. 15) and as a groundless fantasy that society is going to evolve into perfection.

Instead, while energetically laboring on earth, we look forward with joyful anticipation to the return of Christ and to the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness will dwell. For then not only will culture be transformed, as the nations bring their glory into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24-26), but the whole creation will be liberated from its present bondage of futility, decay, and pain, so as to share the glorious freedom of God's children (Rom. 8:18-25, TEV). Then at last every knee will bow to Christ and every tongue openly proclaim that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

23. Contrast “Christian realism” with “naive optimism” and “dark pessimism.”

Having considered some of the cultural factors in Christian conversion, we come finally to the relations between culture and Christian ethical behavior. For the new life Christ gives His people is bound to issue a new lifestyle.

Christ centeredness and Christlikeness

One of the themes running right through our Consultation has been the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is Lord of the universe and the church; He is Lord of the individual believer also. We find ourselves gripped by the love of Christ. It hems us in and leaves us no escape. Because we enjoy newness of life through His death for us, we have no alternative (and desire none) but to live for Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Our first loyalty is to Him, to seek to please Him, to live a life worthy of Him, and to obey Him. This necessitates the renunciation of all lesser loyalties. So we are forbidden to conform ourselves to this world’s standards, that is, to any prevailing culture which

fails to honor God, and are commanded instead to be transformed in our conduct by renewed minds which perceive the will of God.

God’s will was perfectly obeyed by Jesus. Therefore, “the most outstanding thing about a Christian should not be his culture, but his Christlikeness.” As the mid-second century Letter to Diognetus puts it: “Christians are not distinguished from the rest of

The most outstanding thing about a Christian should not be his culture, but his Christlikeness.

mankind by country or by speech or by customs... they follow the customs of the land in clothing and food and other matters of daily life, yet the condition of citizenship which they exhibit is wonderful... in a word, what the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world.”

Summary

Societies can be analyzed from the standpoint of interpersonal relationships and from communication patterns between social groupings in the overall structure. On a personal level, the bicultural bridge is a set of relationships between people from two cultures. As this “bridge” is created, many personal and lifestyle decisions are made. These decisions affect missionaries’ relationships with nationals, as well as the role and status with which the missionaries are perceived. Communication patterns are also affected. An appropriate role involves effective identification with the people. How different societies function in terms of decision making is also crucial to effective communication of the gospel. Group decisions present a challenge to individualistic Westerners. The “homogeneous unit principle” applied to church planting may stimulate church growth, but it is controversial.

Social links within cities can be described as “veins” with multiple intersecting points. Most cities contain ethnic groupings which should be identified and targeted for church planting if the Great Commission is to be fulfilled. These strategies may be a link to reaching groups in the hinterland. Social groupings can be identified by economic level as well as occupation. Ethnicity is a primary consideration in identification of social groupings, but these other social factors are also critical. City dwellers develop complex webs of relationships which link them to others in “networks.” Communication travels along these lines, and an awareness of this fact can be of great help to church planters.

The objective of mission work should be “indigenous” churches, which are “self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.” Even when the three “selfs” are espoused, however, Western missions have inhibited the development of contextualized churches through indoctrination of the national leadership and other controls. Dynamic equivalence models are called for, which will allow the church to develop along culturally sensitive lines. Each church should be free to seek this indigenous expression. Complicating these issues are the sensitive areas of power structures and the missionary’s role in denouncing corruption and injustice. A call to balance in unity is needed to combat the errors of provincialism and theological imperialism. Adaptation of cultural forms must be analyzed in terms of the potential for syncretism. The church is a proactive agent in bringing about positive cultural change through submission to the Lordship of Christ.

Integrative Assignment

- 1. Describe the steps you would take in building a bicultural bridge. What criteria would you establish for making decisions regarding lifestyle choices? Project yourself into a cross-cultural situation, and from your imagination, write a descriptive narrative of your experience in building a bicultural bridge.*
- 2. How many different networks are you a part of? How do you respond to each one in terms of your faith in Christ? How can each of these be “mined” for the Lord? Write a paper entitled, “Insights on Reaching Others Within My Own Networks.”*
- 3. Is the church of which you are a part contextualized? Analyze its forms and structures (i.e., worship, government, building, programs, etc.) and explain why you think each element is contextualized or not.*

[illegible]

CHAPTER 15

World Christian Teamwork

All Christians have a responsibility towards fulfillment of the Great Commission. Not all can or should go as missionaries, but for everyone who does go, many must stay behind in coordinated, active support roles. There are no “solo” performers. Where war is being waged, the success of the front lines depends largely upon the support received from the rear. The teamwork needed calls for a clear understanding of the mission by those who are sent *and those who send them*.

World Christian teamwork, however, is more than the interaction between goers and senders. If the war is to be won, we must know our allies and enter into strategic partnership with them. During World War II, the Normandy invasion for the liberation of France required the Allied forces to combine and coordinate their efforts. The armies of several autonomous nations were involved, but each one worked in a coordinated fashion towards the common objective. Reaching the nations, particularly in “restricted access” countries, will require a level of interaction which has been uncommon in missions. Recognizing our one Commander-in-Chief and His objectives, we must coordinate our efforts across national, denominational, and mission boundaries.

In this final chapter of our study, we will explore the different components of world Christian teamwork. We begin with an individual’s personal covenant with God to be involved in fulfilling His world mission. This basic commitment is expressed outwardly in joining forces with other “World Christians.” Teamwork begins to happen at the local church level through prayer groups and missions committee work. It enlarges and gathers force with enabling structures such as foreign mission agencies and ministries with international students. It reaches its maximum potential through interagency cooperation and strategic alliances targeting specific nations. With world Christian teamwork, the task can be completed.

I. Teaming Up With God

Most people who claim to be Christians recognize Christ as Savior; relatively few recognize His authority as Lord of their lives. Christ's sovereignty is usually a vague and generalized notion. Christ is a benign ruler whose laws should be obeyed in gratitude for salvation and other blessings. Commitment to God means going to church and maintaining a reasonably decent code of behavior.

We know differently. God's purpose is our purpose. He calls His people to engage in spiritual warfare to the ends of the earth. If the scriptural mandate is so clear, why is mission so unheralded in the church today? In the following article, Bill and Amy Stearns share their thoughts on this troubling question.

The Catch *

Bill and Amy Stearns **

Through our study, you might have wondered: If the biblical mandate is so clear, if the big picture of what God is doing in our world today is so exciting, if the 12,000 remaining people groups could be reached within a few years' time, if millions are dying without God and without hope, if we can push back the powers of darkness over whole nations near to the heart of God, why isn't all Christendom buzzing with the news that we can finish the task?

The cost for Christian organizations is to give up small ambitions, to selflessly cooperate, not needlessly duplicate efforts and compete for funds.

What's the catch?

Here's the easy answer: There is a cost involved.

That's the catch. Obedience costs. Real discipleship costs. The price? Giving up our small, personal agendas that detract from God's global cause. For-saking our comfortable lives, giving up claims of ownership to affluence, to security.

The challenge today is exactly that of Francis Xavier, who 500 years ago dreamed of returning to Paris from his mission work in India, China, and Japan. Why? So he could "go shouting up and down the streets to tell the students to give up their small ambitions and come eastward to preach the gospel of Christ!"

The cost for Christian organizations is to give up small ambitions, to selflessly cooperate, not needlessly duplicate efforts and compete for funds. Paul McKaughan of the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies says to these organizations:

It is important that we as leaders begin to interact together and find out what God's will is for us collectively.... We may be talking about surrendering some of our prerogatives. We may be talking about applying some of our computer skills. We may be talking about some of our unreached peoples ground forces.

We are all accumulating a body of knowledge, and we're all trying to do everything. We can't do everything in the world in which we live. And we're going to have to begin to

* Stearns, W., & Stearns, A. (1991). *Catch the vision 2000* (pp. 157-160). Minneapolis: Bethany House.

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trust one another enough to use the tools and the abilities and the giftedness of the various members of our community in order that the

body of Christ can move with an expeditious and a decided tread toward this goal of world evangelization.*

1. What is the “price” of obedience to the mandate in both personal and organizational terms?

Obedience means giving up our small, personal ambitions. Obedience means shifting our expectations to becoming a blessing instead of merely being blessed. The price of being a part of God’s historic, global purpose is losing your life for His sake. Denying your old self. Taking up your cross—which in Jesus’ day meant you wouldn’t need to

Obedience means shifting our expectations to becoming a blessing instead of merely being blessed.

worry much about things that most people worry about. Taking up your cross is a picture of your standing with a noose around your neck; you’ve put yourself at God’s disposal so thoroughly that you have nothing left to lose.

An old parable often told among believers across Africa pictures just how tough it is to give up our own ambitions:

One day Jesus asked each of His disciples to pick up a stone to carry for Him. John took the biggest one he could find, while Peter picked a small one. Jesus took them up to the top of a mountain and commanded the stones to be bread. Each was allowed to eat the bread he found in his hands, but of course Peter did not have much to eat at all. John then shared some of his with Peter.

On another occasion Jesus again asked the disciples to carry stones for Him. This time, instead of leading them to a mountaintop, He took them to the River Jordan. “Cast the stones into the river,” was His command this time. The disciples looked at one another in bewilderment. What could be the point? They had lugged those stones all this way. (And you know who picked the big one this time, don’t you?) Throw them into the river? Why? But they obeyed.

Jesus turned to them and said, “For whom did you carry the stone?”

2. What does this old African parable teach us about our natural tendencies even when we want to obey Christ?

* McKaughan, P. (1990, May-August). A.D. 2000 and beyond. *A.D. 2000*, 5-9.

Sometimes the Christian disciplines of denial of self, of facing afflictions, of solid prayer and study in the Word seem pointless. What's the purpose of denying self and taking up your cross daily? A nicer life? Success? Or is discipleship a discipline with purpose: To become a closer follower of Christ, to live in obedience, to "make disciples of all *ethne*."

Jesus didn't pander to our lazy, self-seeking instincts:

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:37-39).

And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Mark 10:21).

And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61-62).

"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33).

There are many fine expositions and Bible studies published on these and other "hard" passages concerning the disciplines of true discipleship. But even the most earnest attempts to soften these stringencies of following Jesus must conclude that the price of selling yourself as a bonds slave for the Master's use can be high. In the Bible, a life sold out to His purpose is compared to the rigors of the lifestyle of an athlete in training, a hard-working farmer, a combat soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-10).

Can we visualize—can we ever forget—the fact that since the time of Christ, 40 million believers have been martyred for faith in Jesus Christ? In recent times, the total number of Christians killed for their faith is 300,000!

Perhaps too many of us Christians have been led to believe that Christianity is supposed to be nice—respectable, predictable, and smooth. We are deceived into thinking that being the people of God means lots of meetings and lots of blessings.

God's big purpose for leaving you on this earth is not to put you through a spiritual health spa regimen to make you feel better. Life on earth is war. And war is never nice.

But God's big purpose for leaving you on this earth is not to put you through a spiritual health spa regimen to make you feel better. He'll do all that in heaven in the twinkling of an eye. Life on earth is war. And war is never nice.

God says that Satan's world system is out to get us (John 15:18-19). He suggests that humans dedicated to the satanic counter-kingdom can destroy us. For example:

A king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power. And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will; he will destroy mighty men and the holy people (Dan. 8:23-24).

Why isn't all of Christendom humming with the excitement of finishing the task? Because it's not exactly going to be a breeze. Since it's global war, there are going to be casualties and body counts. Living out your part in God's great purpose won't be easy.

3. *In light of God's purpose, what is the real meaning of the Christian life?*

Becoming a World Christian

World Christians are ordinary believers whose lives have been transformed by an extraordinary vision. As David Bryant puts it:

World Christians are day-to-day disciples for whom Christ's global cause has become the integrating, overriding priority for all that He is for them. Like disciples should, they actively investigate all that their Master's Great Commission means. Then they act on what they learn.

By taking three steps, we become World Christians. First, World Christians *catch* a world vision. They see the cause the way God sees it. They see the full scope of the Gap. Next, World Christians *keep* that world vision. They put the cause at the heart of their life in Christ. They put their life at the heart of the Gap. Then World Christians *obey* their world vision. Together, they develop a strategy that makes a lasting impact on the cause, particularly at the widest end of the Gap.*

4. *What impact does becoming a World Christian have on a believer's lifestyle?*

Obeying the Vision

How does one obey the vision? Going is one way, but it is certainly not the only way. *Praying, giving,* and *sending* are the most accessible roles for most World Christians.

Prayer

The most powerful and direct avenue for obedience to the Great Commission is through prayer. By using this mighty spiritual weapon, the most ordinary of Christians has the opportunity to be directly involved in winning the nations. Harold Lindsell describes prayer this way:

* Bryant, D. (1979). *In the gap* (pp. 73-74). Madison: InterVarsity Missions.

Distance is no bar, space no barrier, to reaching the remotest place on earth. Nor is the power of prayer diminished by the distance between the person who prays and the person prayed for. Men and nations can and do have their destinies decided by God's praying people who, through intercessory prayer, wield power greater than the armed might of the nations of earth.*



5. Why is prayer the key to mission success?

Few can go, but all can pray. Let us not be deceived into thinking that prayer is the lesser of the two roles. Prayer is still the most effective weapon there is for penetrating the last barriers to the gospel, for with it we pierce the darkened hearts of men and shackle the powers of Satan. As we consider this theme, we return to the writings of Bill and Amy Stearns.

Soldier Priests **

Bill and Amy Stearns

God says to His people,

“I have called you in righteousness... as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the Lord; that is My name” (Isa. 42:6-8).

Jesus spoke of the principle that you can't “enter the strong man's house and carry off his property”—to rescue the perishing—“unless [you] first bind the strong man.” The wording in the original Greek here emphasizes the article “the”; Jesus is referring to a particular “strong man”—Satan. *Then*, Jesus said, you can “plunder his house” (Matt. 12:29). Now, Satan and his organized hierarchy of principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness are spiritual entities.

They are creatures of “the heavenlies.” How can we, with our feet on the ground, “bind the strong man” to bring out prisoners (those under the bondage of Satan) from Satan's dungeon?

Christ entrusted to God's people the incredible priestly duty of agreeing together to bind and loose: “Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18; see also Matt. 16:18-19). Our struggle, Paul clearly insists, is not against humans—flesh and blood—but against the powers that manipulate them in Satan's world system: “Our struggle is... against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

* Lindsell, H. (1969). *When you pray* (pp. 52-53). Wheaton: Tyndale.

** Stearns, W., & Stearns, A. (1991). *Catch the vision 2000* (pp. 161-164). Minneapolis: Bethany House.

What do we do in this struggle? “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” or strongholds—even if the structure of those strongholds is buttressed on nothing more tangible than world-system ideas: “speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). (The 70-year domination of millions under Communism should tell us what effect a satanically backed idea can have.)

Agreeing in prayer is, of course, a primary weapon:

- *Pray to pull down satanic fortresses over unreached people groups* (2 Cor. 10:3-4). Go ahead, vent your anger in prayer against the powers of evil that hold 12,000 people groups under the cruel, ugly, destructive god of this world. It’s not fair! Life under the domain of darkness is not just. Innocent people are caught in its trap. If we accept their condition as “just the way it is,” we’ve given in to the world-system’s status quo. Someone has suggested that prayer is the ultimate rebellion against the status quo.* It’s all right to be angry; refuse to accept the injustice, the horrible destitution, the preventable illnesses. And, as the poor widow persisted in presenting her case because of the injustice done her (Luke 18:1-8), persist in prayer until victories are won in the heavenlies.

Even if you can’t work up your own anger against Satan’s domain, take God’s side in the matter. God’s wrath against evil never cools.

Intercede—refusing to accept the way things are in the world. That is the very nature of spiritual warfare in prayer.

Intercede—refusing to accept the way things are in the world. That is the very nature of spiritual warfare in prayer.

- *Pray for the saints involved in reaching the captives.* Listen to Paul’s clear plea for prayer that closes his warning to put on the whole armor of God: “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:18-19).
- *Pray for new laborers.* You’ve been looking at the fields that are ripened for harvest. Now “beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:38). Remember that the term for “send out” is more correctly translated “thrust out.” It is the same word used when Jesus thrust out the money changers from the temple’s Court of the Gentiles, the same New Testament term used for casting out spirits. Being “thrust out” may even be a bit uncomfortable for those God sends into His harvest. But pray!

6. How do these three applications of prayer work together with strategic planning in missions?

* Wells, D. F. (1979). Prayer: Rebelling against the status quo. *Christianity Today*, 17(6), 32-34.

Another weapon of our warfare in the heavenlies is a strong testimony—one that means business, that says we are willing to go to extremes in obedience to Christ. The blood-bought authority with which Christ directs His harvest of making disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:18-19) empowers our testimony to break the grip of Satan, “who deceives the whole world.” John writes:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying,
“Now the salvation, and the power, and the
kingdom of our God and the authority of His

Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren [the meaning of Satan’s name] has been thrown down.... And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death” (Rev. 12:10-11).

Though a testimony may seem a vague weapon in spiritual warfare, accept it as fact: A surrendered life cleansed by the blood of Christ can break through Satan’s barriers to bring light to the captives!

7. Why is a strong testimony of purity and righteousness an essential component of being a World Christian?

Another weapon used to defeat Satan’s minions is a combination of faithful prayer and fasting; Christ said that some powerful spirits of the counter-kingdom don’t give up their rulership “except by prayer and fasting” (see Matt. 17:14-21).

A more obvious weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). It is an offensive weapon to be used against the forces of the evil one. Jesus used it skillfully in the incident

recorded in Matthew 4:1-11. But it is important to note that abiding in the Word isn’t just head knowledge of Scripture. No mere intellectual compilation of the Bible’s information daunts Satan—he can quote Scripture too, and answer trivia questions about the Bible probably long before you can! The weapon that defeats the deception of the enemy is truth; and Christ said that the Word is truth (John 17:17). Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

8. What does it mean to “abide in the Word”?

Prayer, a strong testimony, and the indwelling Word of God are the Christian’s greatest weapons in combating the spiritual forces of darkness. The Word is the eternal source, our testimony a fortress, and our prayers arrows launched at the enemy near and far. “God’s army advances on its knees.”

Serving as Senders, Mobilizers, and Welcomers

Commitment to God's cause will drive us to look for practical ways to support the effort. In the following article, Patricia Moore and Meg Crossman give an overview of the many ways World Christians can seek involvement in God's global cause.

❏ *Company of the Committed*

*Patricia Moore and Meg Crossman **

"The share of the man who stayed by the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle" (1 Sam 30:24, NIV).

David recognized a critical fact about warfare: support troops are as essential as those who go into battle. He ruled that their reward be the same. The Lord had earlier ordered that the Israelites were to divide the spoils between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community who made it possible for them to go (Num. 31:27). No army, regardless of their strength, can long survive without support and supply.

All Christians are called to participate in the Great Commission, but not all are called to go out cross-culturally. A zeal for the spread of the gospel can be lived out in many ways. When we strategize to complete the task, the focus of our attention must go beyond missionary concerns at the front lines. It must extend to support and supply as well. Unless these support roles are filled, worldwide missions programs quickly grind to a halt.

Each person must discover which role God has equipped him to play effectively. Paul's examples of the interdependence of the body in 1 Corinthians 12 show the essential and unique part everyone fills. This is as applicable to God's worldwide plans as it is to a local church. Nothing is more energizing to the entire body than dedicated senders, mobilizers, or welcomers fulfilling their ministry with intensity, focus, perseverance, and sacrifice. Clearly, they too,

are full participants in the company of the committed.

Senders

...As you Philippians know, in the early days... when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.... You sent me aid again and again when I was in need (Phil. 4:15-16).

Without a team of committed senders—both churches and individuals—no missionary will ever win his target people group.

Paul deeply valued his partnership with the Philipian believers who acted as senders—backing his missionary endeavors with prayer, concern, involvement, and provision, while they actively ministered at home. Paul and the church at Philippi thought of themselves as a team. Without a team of committed senders—both churches and individuals—no missionary will ever win his target people group. The U.S. Center for World Mission estimates that it takes a team of six to 30 active senders to make it possible for one person to go.

In the days of the Student Volunteer Movement, more than 100,000 volunteered to go to the field. Only about 20,000 actually got there, largely be-

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cause of a lack of committed senders. Senders are often unaware of the critical importance of their task. They usually do their work behind the scenes, isolated from one another. Thanks and public recognition seldom come the sender's way. Effective senders, therefore, operate on an inner conviction that their investments in the gospel grow out of God's specific call on their lives. They also recognize that sending requires as much discipline and commitment as going.

Clearly, in kingdom economy, investment precedes heart involvement, not the other way around.

Two key ingredients combine in the ministry of most senders: *generosity* and *intercession*. There is constant pressure in our culture to conform lifestyle to income, but senders strive to resist this. Many have chosen to adopt a lifestyle comparable to that of missionaries on the field, in order to free more income for support. Some dedicated senders are known to quietly give away half of their income or more for the spread of the gospel.

Prayer flows out of giving. In Matthew 6:21, Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Clearly, in kingdom economy, investment *precedes* heart involvement, not the other way around. Those who invest in others' ministries find it natural to lift these supported needs and concerns to the Father in an ongoing way. Countless missionaries affirm that the resultant prayer is even more vital to their work than funding.

Senders' generosity of heart often includes other significant roles, such as research and supplies. One whole ministry focuses on shipping needed materials to the field. Others serve as backup to field workers by doing much-needed research in various realms. A group of computer experts in Florida has developed a ministry to use their skills both in training missionaries to use computers and in finding donated computers and software suitable for missionaries' special needs. Accountants, teachers, and business consultants use their proficiencies in their vacation time for mission undertakings, freeing up the full-time workers to do their mission specialties.

9. Explain the relationship between giving and praying.

Mobilizers

The Lord said to Moses, "Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and having them set out" (Num. 10:1-2).

Sending is not the only way to participate in the Great Commission from home base. Someone must sound the rallying call. Those who desire to see others trained, prepared, and released to ministry are known as *mobilizers*. Mobilizers stir other Chris-

tians to active concern for reaching the world. They coordinate efforts among senders, the local church, sending agencies, and missionaries on the field.

Awakening the church, providing the facts and the motivation for her to take joy in involvement, and encouraging her on her journey are the responsibilities of mobilization. In World War II, only 10 percent of the American population went to the war. Only 1 percent were actually on the firing lines.

However, for that to happen, the entire country had to be mobilized! Completing our task will call for serious, persevering mobilizers.

Mobilizers are energized by a desire to help people find their calling and enter into significant service. They are often networkers and trainers. Rather than focusing on a single ministry, they delight to make known a full spectrum of possibilities from which each person can choose. Often, they are involved in providing training, practical help, and encouragement, both motivating the church and helping her get underway.

Welcomers

“The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt” (Lev. 19:34).

God prepared His own people to be sensitive to the needs of strangers by their sojourn in Egypt. Even His own Son lived as a refugee in Egypt. Welcomers are those stirred by the needs of ethnic groups who reside in the welcomers’ home country. Welcomers seek opportunities to touch the lives of thousands of internationals who come to study, work, or emigrate permanently. They are especially strategic in reaching populations whose home countries restrict mission work.

Much of this ministry grows out of the gift of hospitality (Greek: *philoxenia*, meaning “love of strangers”). Welcomers befriend people, demonstrating the love of Christ in very practical ways. They may work with university students, diplomats, refugees, military personnel, or immigrants. Instead of viewing new ethnic groups as a threat, Christians see their coming as a strategic opportunity for love and witness.

Welcomers develop special strategies, appropriate to each group. A ministry in Chicago works with churches to present each new refugee family with a “Welcome to America” packet within a week after they arrive. Elsewhere, in a Chinatown setting, classes teaching English use Ann Landers columns. They read the advice to discuss American idioms and present Christian values (often by disagreeing with Ann!).

Effective welcomers learn all they can of the culture and language of their target people. Guest workers from Turkey are being reached in Germany. Christians in The Netherlands work with Indonesians who have relocated there. While they were students in Hungary, Mongolians were won to the Lord. Both language and cultural sensitivity contribute to these ministries.

Effective welcomers learn all they can of the culture and language of their target people.

This highly convenient and fruitful form of cross-cultural ministry also provides sensible connections for anyone preparing for field service. A small college-age team wanted to explore the possibilities for getting into a closed country in North Africa. They got to know as many students from that country as possible. When they were turned down for entry visas, the father of a student they had befriended was the key to getting them permission to enter for a year!

To discover whether sending, mobilizing, or welcoming best utilizes your gifts and abilities, simply try them out. Often, in reality, they will overlap and strengthen one another. One of the real advantages of these ministries is that you don’t have to get permission from anyone to become involved!

10. How do sending, mobilizing, and welcoming roles “overlap and strengthen” each other? For which are you best suited?

II. Teaming Up in the Local Church

Finding World Christians in your congregation to “team” with depends on your circumstances. If you are taking this course with others from your own church, it may be simply a matter of arranging to meet together for discussion, prayer, and encouragement. Your church may already have an active missions group. If you are the only one in your fellowship who has caught the vision, your personal mission challenge will be to communicate that vision to others. Begin to pray that God would give you others with whom to team.

There are two basic kinds of missions groups which function at the local church level—prayer groups and administrative committees. Prayer groups are the simplest kind of group to organize and lead. They take on the nature of a discipleship group as the World Christian leads others into *catching, keeping, and obeying* the vision. There are several ways to organize this kind of group. The suggestions which follow are easy to implement and will help keep the group fresh and dynamic.

World Christian Prayer Fellowship

The World Christian Prayer Fellowship is based on relational, weekly encounters. Commitment to each person in the group is built as the Lord builds commitment to His cause. One-hour sessions can be used, although more time can easily be utilized if available. The time may be distributed in the following suggested manner:

Opening
(10 minutes)

- Introduce any new participants and present the agenda.
- Praise the Lord together through the reading of a psalm or through singing choruses.
- Commit your time to the Lord in prayer.

Missions Mini-Lesson
(15 minutes)

- Present a mini-lesson (7 minutes) on a key concept you have learned in your study of *World Mission*. Use a Bible text or read a portion from *World Mission** (or other appropriate source) and comment on it.
- Allow discussion of the lesson presented (8 minutes).
- Offer prayer for application of the teaching to each one’s life.

* We suggest you begin with Volume 1, *The Biblical/Historical Foundation*, and progressively present key concepts. Many mini-lessons can be prepared from each chapter.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Nation Focus
(15 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a geographic, political, economic, and spiritual description of a selected nation or unreached people.* • Pray for the needs presented. |
| Missionary Focus
(10 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uphold missionaries from your church in prayer. Request information from your church's missions committee, or glean requests directly from missionary prayer letters or mission agency publications. |
| Testimony
(10 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have one member of the group, who has been previously assigned, share a testimony from his or her "spiritual pilgrimage" (5 minutes). • Pray for the person and close the meeting (5 minutes). |

The above outline is a proven format for a World Christian Prayer Fellowship meeting. The ideal size for the group is six to 12 members. Large groups should be split into smaller ones after the opening and missions mini-lesson. The system works best when responsibilities are shared on a rotated basis among members of the group. Figure 15-1 offers a practical model of a "Planning Guide" to help you organize your group. Make sure to keep a group roster with addresses and phone numbers.

Planning Guide for World Christian Prayer Fellowship			
Week: 1		Week: 2	
Moderator: Ann Bishop		Moderator: Ann Bishop	
ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Opening	Ann Bishop	Opening	Ann Bishop
Mini-Lesson:		Mini-Lesson:	
WM, pp. 1-2 and 1-3	Phil Bishop	WM, pp. 1-3 and 1-4	Phil Bishop
Nation Focus:		Nation Focus:	
Afghanistan	Fred Andrews	Albania	Bill Peterson
Missionary Focus	Alice Smith	Missionary Focus	Mary Fowler
Testimony	Bill Peterson	Testimony	Fred Andrews

Figure 15-1

11. Does your church have an organized missions prayer fellowship? If not, what would it take to organize one?

* For the most complete and nearly inexhaustible resource for a Nation Focus, see Johnstone, P. (1993). *Operation world*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. Available mail-order through O.M. Lit, 1-800-733-5907.

Missions Administrative Committees

The involvement of local congregations in world missions is fundamental to completion of the Great Commission. Without them, missions would be devoid of their primary resources: prayer support, personnel, and finances. The vast majority of local churches, however, do little or nothing for cross-cultural outreach. In North America, where the missions enterprise is most developed, it is estimated that less than 20 percent of the churches have a group (missions committee) to administrate their missions matters. Less than 5 percent have any kind of significant program which emphasizes missions to the whole congregation.

Why aren't more local churches involved? William Carey addressed that question 200 years ago:

It seems as if many thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, He will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them.*

Apparently, the excuses for non-involvement have not changed. Many church leaders dwell under the illusion that the spread of the gospel is sufficiently advanced that no further mission initiatives are required. Others see their local parish as their “mission field” and feel no compunction to apply the “uttermost parts of the earth” portion of the Great Commission to their ministries. Still others have rationalized through their theology that God will ultimately save those whom He wills and that their congregation's efforts are superfluous.

All of these issues have been addressed throughout the chapters of this study. God's mission purpose is central to the biblical message. He has and He will use His people to carry out His purpose. He has left us the mandate, the message, the model, and the power to act. He has also established a specific ministry in the church to “equip the saints” for this important work of service.

Ephesians 4:11 names five basic equipping ministers in the church—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. By interpreting this passage in terms of ministry function, rather than in terms of personalities or any particular hierarchy, it is easy to see how each ministry serves to fulfill God's purpose. The word *apostle* in Scripture is of Greek origin and denotes *one who is sent*. Apostle (or missionary) could be listed first in this passage because without sent ones, Christ's Great Commission mandate to the nations cannot be *initiated*. Each of the other ministries follows this one in fulfilling specific functions, such as bringing people to a point of spiritual conviction (prophecy), leading them to a knowledge of Christ (evangelism), helping them grow spiritually (pastoring), and bringing them to a full knowledge and understanding of the Word (teaching).

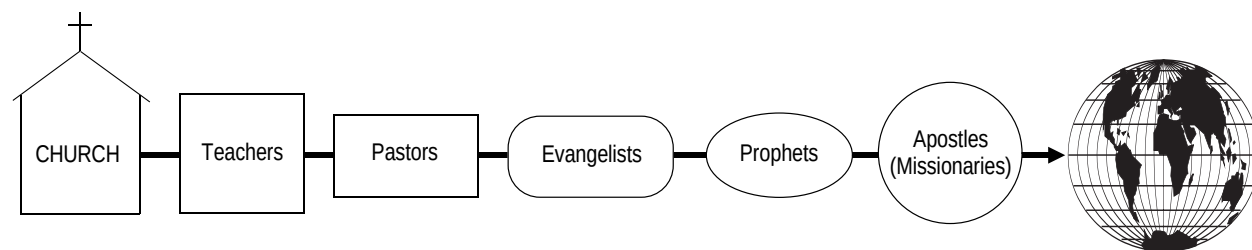


Figure 15-2. Missions, the Leading Ministry

* Carey, W. (1962). *An enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathens* (New Facsimile ed.). London: Carey Kingsgate Press. (Original work published 1792)

12. Why should missions be one of the fundamental ministries of each church?

In order to mobilize and equip a local church for missions, the “apostolic” ministry needs to be activated. Each church needs a group of World Christians to administer a missions program. Such a group is often called a “missions committee.” No organization has done more for the promotion and strengthening of these groups than ACMC (Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment). The following is excerpted from their brochure, *The ACMC Guide to Growing a Missions-Minded Church*.

Planting Ahead *

World missions would die on the vine without local churches who think beyond local boundaries. Large or small, highly organized or loose-knit, well-funded or broke, your church’s missions program plays a crucial role in filling that gap between you and the outside world.

Whether its progress in missions has been remarkable or restrained, every church would readily admit it could do better. And helping you to grow and improve is what this practical guide is all about.

When you plant a garden, you first take inventory of the materials you’ll need: Do I have a suitable location? Plenty of sunlight and good soil? What plants will grow best in this climate? Is there a source of water nearby?

Much the same thought must go into “growing” a missions-minded church. Which individuals seem to be most concerned about missions? What efforts to evangelize—or support evangelization—have met with success? Is the church leadership open to change in this area?

Begin by sitting down with your pastor or missions coordinator to pinpoint where your church’s missions program has been and where it’s headed. List your observations on paper and study them carefully. Be as specific as possible. For example, calculate the percentage of church giving set aside for missions in the past year, or name the new missionaries sent out from your church in the past five years. You’ll soon have a good picture of the “missions mindedness” level of your church.

13. Why is this first step important to the success of growing a missions-minded church?

* *The ACMC guide to growing a missions-minded church*. Used by permission of ACMC, P.O. Box ACMC, Wheaton, IL 60189. For other missions committee resources, call 1-800-798-ACMC.

Your next step is to help organize the leadership. Pastors and lay leaders need to be encouraged to teach and preach about missions, to set the pace for the congregation. If you have a functioning missions committee, offer your assistance to them, meeting individually with each of the committee members to express your concern. But be sensitive to their feelings; listen, cooperate, and don't expect too much overnight.

Once a strong core of leaders has been developed, their vision for missions will inevitably be "caught" by other believers in your church. Only half the people in the world today have a reasonable opportunity to hear the gospel. Helping the congregation see their missions responsibility can be a creative, challenging ministry. Bulletin inserts, missionary prayer items, and exposition of key biblical passages are some of the tools which will stimulate the vision of your people.

After acquiring a genuine heart for missions, your church can develop a deeper understanding and stronger commitment to the task of world evangelization. Here are a few of the most important ways you can put its vision to work:

- Draw up a clear-cut missions organizational policy, one that embraces the unique framework and *modus operandi* of your church. Set specific goals against which your progress can be measured.
- Become acquainted with your missionaries and their needs. A compassionate, caring church will make a significant impact not only abroad, but also here at home. Your church's vision will be stretched to even higher limits as God provides the resources to support His programs.
- Encourage aspiring individuals in your congregation to seek long-term or short-term assignments with sending agencies. Maintain good working relationships with these agencies—they can be a rich source of ideas and advice.
- Above all, turn prayer into your primary tool for accomplishing the task that lies ahead. And take courage! Christ wouldn't have given you the command to "go and make disciples of all nations" without also promising to be "with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

14. *What are the primary tasks involved in growing a missions vision in the local church and administering it?*

Church/Mission Partnership

The missions committee is responsible for communicating missions vision, keeping it fresh, and maintaining a high commitment in prayer, finances, and personnel for the mission enterprise. Over the years, methods have been developed which have proven effective in carrying out these ends. One of the best known and most practiced is the *Faith Promise Plan*. More than just a fundraising scheme, the Faith Promise Plan is a comprehensive plan for helping the congregation grow in faith and keeping it involved and excited about missions. In the following excerpt, veteran missions mobilizer Norm Lewis outlines the elements of this plan.

❑ **The Marks of a Faith Promise Church ***

Norm Lewis

If a church is looking for the best way to implement Faith Promise giving, there are three essentials:

1. *Hold an annual missions event.* Make this the most significant happening of the entire church calendar. Plan it well. Obtain qualified speakers. Teach the basic meaning of missions. Build it on the Bible. Have missionaries and appointees present. This is crucial for maximum spiritual impact.
2. *Set a missions goal each year.* A financial goal calls for commitment. Many churches suffer from aimlessness. A missionary event without a goal is pointless. The church can be like a car with the motor running but going nowhere. Sunday after Sunday the same routine unfolds. But set a missionary goal! All is changed. People are lifted, challenged.

3. *Use the Faith Promise Plan.* It is based both on money people have and on what they trust God to provide. Its focus is faith in the integrity of God and costly commitment by the believer. It encourages the giver to determine by prayer the sum he believes God will enable him to give on a regular basis during the year for world evangelization. Faith is its dynamic.

The promise is made to God; it is not a pledge to a church. There is no individual solicitation. The plan is spiritual, scriptural; it embarrasses no one. It encourages regular giving for world evangelization and tells the church in advance the amount available for missions for the coming year.

15. *Why is faith such an important element in keeping the church motivated towards involvement in missions?*

Current Trends in Church/Mission Partnerships

The faithful support of individuals and local churches has always been the “fuel” that drives evangelical missions. The term “faith missions” applied to many agencies describes this vital dependency on God’s people in local churches for resources. These organizations usually depend entirely on voluntary contributions to carry out their ends. Although denominational missions often work with percentages of overall giving and may have a more stable budget, this giving is not always “automatic.” All missions rely on working partnerships with churches.

Fifty to 100 years ago, these partnership relationships were fairly straightforward—agencies were an obvious necessity. A window to the world wasn’t sitting in each living room, and jet planes weren’t providing daily access to every country of the globe. Instant credit card transfers hadn’t been invented.

* Lewis, N. (1992). *Faith promise: Why and how?* Available mail-order from O.M. Lit, 1-800-733-5907.

The pastor's week-long tour of the field was unheard of, and congregations were thrilled by slide shows of exotic places. Today's technology, however, puts the world at our fingertips. Fax machines, telephones, and electronic mail give us ready contact with our missionaries. Visits to the field are common, and the camcorder spontaneously records the happenings. With this new sense of power, some congregations are asking, "Why work through mission agencies at all? Can't we save money and maintain control by doing the job ourselves?"

Other issues also cloud the relationship. Accountability is one of the largest. Are mission agencies really getting the job done? Progressive vision, clear goals, and measurable objectives are not always evident. Communication seems to be reduced to continual appeals for funds. Missionaries' pastoral needs have at times been neglected, and churches feel their people are used, abused, and hurt. While espousing "partnership" in the task, mission agencies may be perceived by some as simply seeking people and money from churches.

There is no question that these problems need to be addressed by mission agencies if the agencies are to remain viable partners with churches. There are many good reasons why mission agencies and churches still need each other. In the following excerpt, Samuel Metcalf, president of Church Resource Ministries in Fullerton, California, points out why this partnership must continue.

❏ *Resolving Church/Mission Tensions* *

Samuel F. Metcalf

In 1973, Ralph Winter gave a landmark address to the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul on "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission." He argued that God's purposes have been carried out via two main structures—modalities (the local church) and sodalities (mobile, task-oriented agencies). He claimed that both are ordained by God,

At the heart of the issue, regardless of its particular practical manifestation, lies an inadequate grasp of missiological structures and a lack of understanding of the historical and biblical dynamics that exist between local churches and mission teams sent out for specific purposes.

In light of Winter's thesis, I propose the following:

The church in local form is only partially able to fulfill the Great Commission.

1. Local churches are not expected by God, nor do they have the structural capability, to carry out the missionary mandate by themselves. The church in local form is only partially able to fulfill the Great Commission. This is the clear pattern of the New Testament and the overwhelming verdict of history.

legitimate, and equally "church." Their healthy interdependence is necessary for the progress of the gospel. He outlined a functional, or structural, understanding of ecclesiology that is critical if we are to grasp the current tensions with mission agencies and local churches.

Local churches need agencies because agencies have:

In the November, 1990, issue of *Mission Frontiers*, Winter again addressed the issue of the local church's control of missions:

- Vision and a narrow, task-oriented focus.
- Administrative personnel with long-term, career commitment.

* Metcalf, S. F. (1993, July-August). Resolving church/mission tensions. *Missions Frontiers Bulletin*, 28-29.

- Selectivity with personnel who join.
 - The ability to respond rapidly to field opportunities.
 - Expertise and professionalism in accomplishing their task.
2. Agencies are not expected by God, nor do they have the structural capability, to meet the missionary mandate by themselves. Agencies need local churches because churches have:
- Human resources.
 - Finances and material aid.
 - A broad base of intercessory prayer.
 - Healing and training capabilities for personnel.
 - Stability.

Historically, when local churches have dominated or controlled agencies, they thwart the agencies' efforts and, in severe cases, kill or render them impotent. If mission efforts are organized and sent

under the supervision of one local church, they have the greatest chance for success when a separate entity is created (or contracted) to carry on this work.

If we are to continue to advance the gospel, the dynamic of healthy interdependence between local churches and mission agencies must increase.

Local church and mission agency interdependence works best when leaders of both cooperate on the basis of shared values and vision. If we are to continue to advance the gospel, the dynamic of healthy interdependence between modalities and sodalities—local churches and mission agencies—must increase. Anything less will result in the kind of abortive, wasteful efforts that have periodically hindered the worldwide expansion of the church.

16. Why is it important that churches and missions continue to work together in carrying out the missions enterprise?

Mission agencies are an important bridge to the unreached. They have the long-term commitment to a focused, cross-cultural task, which a church can rarely sustain over time. They can often tap into a wider range of the body of Christ for critical human, spiritual, and financial resources. There is safety in this kind of diversity.

Shopping for a Mission

Let us assume you or your church are looking for a mission agency with which to team. How would you evaluate your options? In the following excerpt, Jim Reapsome, seasoned editor of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, outlines a procedure which will help you ask the right questions.

❑ **Choosing a Mission Board ***

Jim Reapsome

Doctrinal compatibility

Before joining a team, you should know what it believes. Examine the published doctrinal statement carefully. Be sure that it fits your own convictions. Life on the mission field is tough enough without bashing your head against coworkers with whose doctrines you don't agree.

In your initial conversations with agency representatives, try to find out if the agency is broad or narrow in its doctrinal convictions. That is, do they strive for strong internal consistency around some low-key points, such as baptism, eschatology, church government, and relations with other churches and missions? Or do they allow for different opinions?

The agency may say it is "interdenominational," for instance, but over the years it may have developed some distinctives of its own. Find out what churches and major theological groups are represented among missionaries. Find out what the unwritten doctrines of the mission are—its traditions that have been elevated to orthodoxy. You can best do this by talking not only with recruiters, but also with veterans of the agency.

Compatible goals and objectives

You want a team that you not only agree with doctrinally, but also one with whom you can throw in your lot 100 percent because you share common goals and objectives. Find out what the mission's purposes are. Why does it exist? What is it trying to accomplish? How well has it been succeeding according to its own goals?

Try to get your hands on the agency's annual plan and its five-year plan. Is it going where you want to go with your life? Would you risk everything to reach these goals? As you understand your temperament, gifts, and goals, do they fit the mission?

Has the mission ever reassessed its purposes and goals? No organization can do well by standing pat on traditional goals. Is there a regular process for internal reevaluation and long-range planning? What new goals and strategies have appeared recently to show that the mission is adapting to changes around the world and in U.S. culture?

Policies and principles

These documents must be thoroughly checked and discussed with missions representatives. Question everything that you don't understand or don't agree with. Many missionary casualties arise because assumptions about missions policies were made prior to going overseas.

Never assume that for the sake of going overseas you will assent to some policy you don't agree with, and then fight it throughout your missionary career.

These policies cover the basics of finances, field administration, mission government, personnel, rules of behavior, children's education, cars, retirement, insurance, and so on. Go over them with a fine-tooth comb. Ask reasons. Talk about applications. Are there exceptions? Try to assess the spirit behind the laws. Some missions are authoritarian; others are freewheeling. Find out in advance and see where you fit best. By all means, never assume that for the sake of going overseas you will assent to some policy you don't agree with, and then fight it throughout your missionary career.

Opportunities and scope for ministry

Look for a mission that invites and encourages you with the kind of opportunities you are looking for. Does their planning reflect creativity and active searching for new ways to effective ministry? Or do

* Reapsome, J. (1988). Choosing a mission board. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 24(1).

you suspect you might feel cramped, or locked into traditional ways of doing things? Mission leaders should impress you with fresh ideas and with an enlarged vision for “new worlds to conquer,” so to speak.

Track record where you want to serve

Check the fields where you might be headed. Are the people there upbeat, or do you find a steady dropout rate, people giving up in defeat? Do this field and the mission’s ministry there show the undeniable marks of God’s Spirit at work there? What about relations there, mission to mission, missionary to missionary, mission to church? Are they rife with problems and conflicts, or is there harmony, unity, interdependence, and trust? Beware of the field booby-trapped with dissension and locked into sterility and repetition of past mistakes.

Lifestyle

Probably the most difficult matter to probe is the lifestyle, or ethos, that develops around a mission. It is shaped over the decades by veterans and their traditions. Lifestyle grows around unwritten codes, not written ones. Put on your spiritual radar. How does the mission treat people? Do they put people ahead of programs? What happens to dropouts, for example? How does the mission care for its people when they come home on furlough, or when they come home for the sake of elderly parents, or for their children’s education?

Is there a warm family spirit? Check out how missionary wives and children feel. How does the mission treat women, single people, those who may not fit the customary mold? Are there women in places of responsibility?

Choose a mission the same way you would a wife or husband. Go beyond the romantic attachment and poke around the family tree. See what kind of a personality your mission has. How does it respond to crisis? How does it show itself to the public? Ask

a missionary, “If you had it to do over again, would you join the same mission?”

Written history

Start with current articles and reports in missions publications. Get your hands on as many missionary prayer letters as you can. If the agency is old enough, it should have a published history. Pore over its pages. You should come away with excitement and pleasure about the prospect of working with such a team.

Quality of people

Most of us are attracted to organizations because someone has ministered to us and because their people show top quality all around. That’s the most impressive recommendation you can find—happy, satisfied, fulfilled people who know what they’re about. They are confident about God’s call and excited to be a part of His world mission. They are culturally aware, sensitive, and experts in their profession. You would find it a great privilege to work alongside them.

Look for a mission board that has the best people you can find—not perfect, to be sure, but those who serve as a model of the kind of missionary you would like to become.

Find a mission like that. Listen to their people, not just from the pulpit, but in small groups. Grab them in informal settings and plague them with questions. If you sense you’re being stiff-armed, make a note of that. If your questions, no matter how naive, are answered sincerely and profoundly, that’s a welcome sign. Look for a mission board that has the best people you can find—not perfect, to be sure, but those who serve as a model of the kind of missionary you would like to become.

17. *Why is it important to thoroughly investigate the mission agency with which you or your church propose to work?*

III. Global Partnerships

Partnering in getting workers to the field is crucial, but it doesn't stop once they get there. Interagency partnerships are also a critical need, particularly if the church is to be planted successfully among unreached groups. In the following article, Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz present an overview of interagency partnership issues.

Testing the Waters *

Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz **

The “Valley of Blessing,” headquarters of the Antioch Mission, led by Rev. Jonathan dos Santos, a Brazilian pastor and visionary, is located in the verdant hills 35 miles from São Paulo, Brazil. Here missionary candidates from Brazil and other Latin American countries are trained to serve cross-culturally. Founded in 1975, the mission has sent out more than 45 missionaries to such faraway places as Israel, Angola, India... and Albania!

Facilities at the Valley are simple: cement block dormitories where a dozen students crowd into a room which should house four. Before the new dining hall was built this year, only a fraction of the staff and students could be seated at one time, which made mealtimes on rainy days a challenge. Every-

one lives “by faith,” trusting God to supply their needs week by week.

But this is just the kind of missionary training Santos values. He knows the Brazilian church will not be able to provide high allowances, nor will the government allow transfers of large sums of money out of the country. “Brazilian missionaries already know how to live the simple lifestyle,” Santos explains.

Coming from a position of powerlessness, as Jesus chose to do, might be just one of the unique advantages missionaries from the Two Thirds World have as they fan out across the world. Western values of advanced educational opportunities and financial

* Bush, L., & Lutz, L. (1990). *Partnering in ministry: The direction of world evangelism* (pp. 112-125). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

** Luis Bush grew up in Argentina and Brazil. He studied at the University of North Carolina and then earned a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary. He pastored in San Salvador for seven years, was the director of the COMIBAM '87 conference in Brazil, served as President of Partners International, and is currently the Director of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement.

Lorry Lutz and her husband, Allen, worked 20 years in South Africa as missionaries. She currently heads the publications department for Partners International. She has authored several books, including a novel, *The Soweto Legacy*.

and political power have often built a wall between the church and the missionary.

In spite of limitations of such resources, non-Western missionaries have grown from 13,000 in 1980 to 36,000 in 1988. Larry Pate, author of *From Every People*, projects that at current rates of growth, an estimated 86,500 missionaries from Two Thirds World countries will be serving cross-cultur-

ally by 1995, and there will be almost 2,000 non-Western mission agencies by the year 2000. At present there are some 85,000 Western missionaries serving in foreign countries, but 42 percent of them are short-termers. Non-Western career missionaries are growing at five times the rate of Western missionaries and will surpass them in numbers before the turn of the century.*

18. *What are some of the advantages Two Thirds World missionaries may have over their Western counterparts? What are some of the disadvantages?*

Will history repeat itself?

The leaders of these Two Thirds World agencies have not sprung up overnight. Many have attended the international congresses and consultations, have studied in the West, and have worked with Western missionaries. They've heard the partnership rhetoric and, indeed, are promoting it.

In an article for *Missionasia*, Filipino leader Dr. Met Castillo writes:

The natural and logical outcomes of inter-linking the various Asian mission agencies and boards are concrete forms of mission partnerships. The vast number of unreached peoples in Asia and the complexity of the mission task, compounded by the chain of

mission problems, call for the pooling of mission resources and personnel. But though there are many commendable instances of partnership in the West, Two Thirds World leaders can still point to the proliferation of Western mission agencies, more than 700 at latest count, and duplication of efforts. Rather than cooperating with existing bodies, Westerners continue to develop new independent mission organizations.

It will come as no surprise to learn that cooperation and partnership are just as difficult to implement among Two Thirds World agencies as they are in the West.

19. *What alternatives are there to the proliferation of new Western missions?*

* Pate, L. (1989). *From every people* (pp. 50-52). Monrovia, CA: MARC.

Will they partner with the West?

In his 1980 survey of Two Thirds World agencies, Dr. Larry Keyes asked to what degree these missions desired to cooperate with other Two Thirds World agencies and with the West. Mission leaders from all regions answered they would like to cooperate with others, but particularly with other non-Western agencies.*

Experience has taught these Two Thirds World mission leaders that Western missionaries tend to take control and that non-Westerners may too easily accept structures and teaching that are foreign in their society because of their poor self-image and/or lack of training.

Western missionaries tend to take control, and non-Westerners may too easily accept structures and teaching that are foreign in their society because of their poor self-image and/or lack of training.

Reacting to these dangers, Dr. David Cho, former president of the Asia Missions Association and the newly formed Third World Missions Association, declared:

We must boldly remove the obstacles hindering Christian mission. We must remove all remnants of Western culture, Western colonialism, Western methodology, and Western thought from Asian theology, doctrine, churches, structures, and methods.**

Though Dr. Cho has expressed disappointment in the lack of cooperation on the part of Western missions, he values the gifts and abilities of Western Christian leaders. He asked Dr. Ralph Winter to share the platform with him at the very conference where Cho spoke on “De-Westernizing the Asian Christian Movement.” His concern is to solidify and

strengthen the Asian, African, and Latin American mission base, not “to form an anti-Western force.”

His fear is rather that the Two Thirds World missions will lose their self-identity and become even less acceptable to the masses of people who have resisted the message of missions for so long. He stresses that Paul made it clear in his epistles that the church must be rooted in the culture and ethos of the people.

Wade Coggins, executive director of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) for many years, recalls watching the tenuous steps of growth and partnership between Two Thirds World missions and their Western counterparts. While meeting with representatives of fledgling Brazilian missions in the mid-’70s, he realized:

We weren’t talking about the control of the mission over the church or the church’s control of the mission. We were talking as people both committed to the concept of world evangelization. And that the old missions and the new missions ought to talk about what they could do together.

This was in contrast to most discussions between church and mission leaders in those days. Coggins said: “I realized that the way out of the church/mission dilemma that had been with us so long was an outward look.”

But having lived through the church/missions tensions of the ’60s and ’70s, Coggins also understands the reticence of Two Thirds World agencies to trust us, for fear we’ll take over and impose our methods and values. “Talking about partnership is easy,” Coggins says. “We’ve come through the euphoria—‘Man, this is marvelous.’ The tough questions are ahead of us. Most of it’s going to be two organizations sorting it out for themselves.”

* Keyes, L. (1983). *The last age of mission* (p. 85). Pasadena: William Carey Library.

** Cho, D. (1982). The third force. In D. Cho (Ed.), *The official report of the third triennial convention of the Asia Missions Association*. Seoul, Korea.

And the task of educating the churches and missions candidates is far from over. Our ethnocentricity clings to us like a wetsuit, and the deeper the differences between cultures, the “colder” we seem to become.

One wonders at the audacity of an American college student going overseas for a short term “to train native pastors.” It is this self-confidence and assurance that we have all the answers that frightens people like Dr. Cho.

20. What are the main issues confronting partnerships between Western and non-Western missions?

Western and non-Western agencies partner

In the mid-19th century, the Karen Christians in Myanmar (formerly Burma) formed one of the early non-Western mission agencies, the Bassein Home Mission Society. With help from the American Baptist missionaries, they sent Karen missionaries to work among the Kachins, a tribe living several hundred miles away.

More than 100 years later, John and Helen Dekker, missionaries with the Regions Beyond Missionary Union in Irian Jaya, encouraged the fledgling church among primitive Danis to take the message of Christ to neighboring and often hostile tribes. Within a few years, 65 Dani couples, fully supported by the gifts and prayers of Dani Christians, were in service. Though nobody even thought about formal partnership arrangements, Dekker provided the complementary encouragement, training, and counsel the Danis lacked.

With little cash income, the Danis needed to develop a means of funding their growing missionary force. Dekker introduced peanuts, and the income from the crop financed much of the church’s missionary outreach. Without peanuts, the missionary effort would have been hopelessly strapped.

Today some Western mission agencies are developing more formal partner relationships with Two Thirds World agencies. For example, SIM has

drawn up an agreement with the Indian Evangelical Mission and others to work together to recruit and support missionaries in Africa and Latin America where SIM serves.

The Indian missionaries are expected to raise funds and prayer support within India for outgoing airfare, baggage allowance, equipment needs, and so on, as well as furlough and medical expenses while in India. SIM arranges deputation for prayer and financial support for the balance of their needs, and while on the field the missionaries come under the direction of SIM.

Such co-sponsoring will become more and more urgent as the numbers of Two Thirds World missionaries grow. Larry Keyes discovered that 35 percent of these missionaries do not receive their promised salary. Part of the problem is due to poor administration and distribution and part to a need for better stewardship education in the churches.

A very real part of the problem is the lack of a strong financial base—in fact, bankrupt economies—in many of the countries where mission vision is growing fastest. And though Two Thirds World missionaries may “know how to live simply,” according to Jonathan dos Santos, the cost of living may be much higher in the country of service than at home. A Brazilian missionary working among Muslims in

Germany could not live on his Brazilian allowance, no matter how simply he or she lived!

When the Iglesia Nazaret and El Escalon, two mission-minded churches in San Salvador, partnered to form the Salvadoran Evangelical Mission, the civil war was at its height. Over 40 percent of the population was without work, and the economy was in shambles.

But the SEM determined to send its first missionary couple to Spain to begin a church-planting ministry there. People gave sacrificially but could not pro-

vide all that their missionaries, the Bustamantes, needed to live in Spain. They approached Partners International to form a co-sponsoring relationship, whereby donors in the United States matched SEM's contributions.

Such financial partnership not only enabled SEM to send the Bustamantes, but encouraged Christians to give sacrificially so that within a few years several other missionaries had been sent to an Indian tribe in Guatemala, and the first school for the deaf in El Salvador (a totally unreached segment of the population) was opened.

21. What criteria should be used in putting together successful financial partnerships?

Other ways to partner

In spite of the difficulties and fear of repeating past experiences, Two Thirds World agencies realize that working together with Western agencies can better help them reach their mutual goal. Following are other forms of partnership which are emerging:

Training partnerships

As the Africa Inland Church Mission Board (AICMB) grew, the need for training African missionaries in mission strategy and methods became more urgent. Bible school and seminary training did not prepare their missionaries for the challenges of cross-cultural and church-planting ministries. Yet the AICMB did not have trained and experienced teachers to run such a school. So it turned to its parent organization, the Africa Inland Mission, to partner in establishing a missionary training school. The school remains under the leadership and control of the AICMB, but AIM missionary teachers help staff it.

As more and more non-Western missionaries volunteer to serve cross-culturally, creative training partnerships will have to develop in order to avoid sending inexperienced and untrained non-Western

missionaries to repeat the same mistakes Western missionaries subconsciously made earlier.

But Western trainers will have to be willing to adjust their philosophies and methods to adapt to the cultures where they are teaching. To avoid repeating the North American models of Bible schools and seminaries, which have not necessarily been effective, a lot of hard questions have to be asked and a teachable spirit demonstrated.

As more and more non-Western missionaries volunteer to serve cross-culturally, creative training partnerships will have to develop.

Excellent training programs have developed in various parts of the Two Thirds World, and interchanges of faculty and students offer an exciting potential for the future of missions training.

On a less formal level, Jonathan dos Santos, pioneer in training Two Thirds World missionaries, responded to the urgent need for training in Eastern

Europe after the political changes allowed for freedom to travel and communicate. When he learned of the dearth of trained leadership for the Romanian Church, he offered to care for and train six Romanians at the Valley of Blessing if they could get to Brazil.

Research partnerships

Where will all these new non-Western missionaries serve? How will they avoid the endless duplications of the past, such as establishing a Baptist church, a Bible church, and a Presbyterian church in one small town?

The mission world has adapted the tools of research to discover where the churches are and where the unreached can be found. And agencies in the Two Thirds World are quickly taking advantage of the benefits of research as they plan their evangelism and church planting strategies.

Research is an area where Western agencies can make their expertise and equipment available, without the temptation to manipulate or interfere with the use of the data.

But research is expensive and exacting and requires sophisticated equipment if done on a large scale. Here is an area where Western agencies can make their expertise and equipment available, without the temptation to manipulate or interfere with the use of the data.

In the months preceding COMIBAM (Congress on Missions in Ibero-America), the continent-wide missions congress held in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1987, hundreds of researchers fanned out across Latin America asking questions to analyze the state of the church. Each country had its own COMIBAM committee which was responsible for finding researchers and for getting the data together.

But without the Global Mapping Project located at the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, these data could never have been analyzed and made available. With highly trained personnel and sophisticated equipment, Global

Mapping Director Bob Waymire and his associates were able to put all the major data on computerized four-color maps which visibly illustrated the concentrations of unreached people, the major language groups, and the evangelical population.

Working under tremendous deadlines, the COMIBAM team in Guatemala was able to deliver the "Atlas de Comibam" in time to be distributed to the more than 3,000 delegates at the conference.

This was indeed a partnership on a massive scale which yielded immediate and visible results and enabled each national group of churches to inspire and challenge their own constituencies and plan their mission outreach.

Other national research agencies, such as the Church Growth Research Center in Madras, India, and the Ghana Evangelism Committee in Ghana, partner with denominations and missions to help them plan their outreach programs.

Partnering through conferences

In May, 1990, the Latin American Consultation on Muslim Evangelism (CLAME 90) met in Miami, Florida. This consultation grew out of the Latin American church's growing interest in Muslim evangelism, as evidenced at COMIBAM. The Holy Spirit seemed to convict Christians in different parts of the continent that Latins could have a special advantage working among Arabs.

Because of 400 years of Moorish domination of Spain, Latin Americans share many of the same physical characteristics, cultural traditions, and even language similarities with the Arabs. Politically, Latin Americans hold no threat or historical animosity for the Arab nations.

Since COMIBAM, Latin American missionaries have gone to Pakistan, India, the Middle East, and Europe to work with Muslims.

CLAME 90 met to discuss the feasibility of sending 100 Latin American missionaries to the Arab world by the year 2000.

The conference was unique in its representation. Co-sponsored by the COMIBAM office in São Paulo, and Project Magreb, an indigenous Latin American mission in Argentina, a good proportion

of the 95 delegates came from the Southern Hemisphere.

North America was represented by delegates from the Zwemer Institute and from Frontiers, both of which are involved in Muslim ministries and already work together closely at the U.S. Center for World Mission.

A number of leading Arab Christians from Middle Eastern and European countries added their insights to the conference. At the conclusion, one Arab brother stated: "This meeting is historical. This is the first time anybody has asked our opinion about coming to our part of the world, and we welcome it, and we welcome you, the Latins."

The lack of training to reach Muslims was recognized as one of the main obstacles, and training

seminars across the continent were initiated. The North American delegates indicated their willingness to help where needed.

As a closing challenge, the Arab delegates commended the cooperative spirit and urged the Latins to send people who are "willing to make mistakes." But before sending missionaries, they want leaders to come and look over the situation, to know what training and ministries are already functioning, and to base their plans on what they've learned.

"Design a vision group," they recommended. "Send people on tours, and we will help them understand our situation and our people." This kind of partnering through conferences should certainly pave the way for more effective long-term partnering in future ministry.

22. Besides financial partnership, what other arenas present opportunities for partnership? What will be needed to make these succeed?

Two Thirds World partnerships

On the other hand, the breakdown of long-term relations in missions has paved the way for new partnerships.

When the Indian government began denying visas to missionary medical doctors and other medical personnel, mission hospitals in India began closing down, for they had limited funds to hire national staff. It was at this time that the Emmanuel Hospital Association was formed, bringing together almost 20 Christian hospitals into a partnership for survival. The association offers administrative and financial assistance by serving as a channel for foundations and other agencies to provide funds.

John Richard, former executive director of the Asia Evangelical Association, believes, "It's one of the best patterns of partnership in my limited experience."

More and more Two Thirds World partnerships are emerging, as Christian leaders realize that chances of survival along with effectiveness increase as they close ranks.

The breakdown of long-term relations in missions has paved the way for new partnerships.

Dr. Bong Rin Ro, dean of the Asia Graduate School of Theology, defines another reason for partnership in the area of theological education:

We are trying to train Asians in Asia, within the Asian context, because of the high percentage of brain drain. Among Chinese from Taiwan, the brain drain has been 86 percent

in the last 20 years; among Indian theological students it has been about 90 percent.... For various reasons they don't go back. Asia has lost a large number of church leaders. We have 1,000 seminaries and Bible schools in Asia, but we don't have enough lecturers. To confront this need, the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST), a consortium of 17 graduate seminaries in four countries, was formed in 1984. Accredited by the Asia Theological Association, these schools offer four degrees, including the Doctor of Ministry. By banding together and allowing for interchangeable credits and exchange of students and lecturers, Asia Graduate School can offer degrees which are internationally recognized and of a high quality.

Through the cooperation among evangelical seminaries, we are able to offer this post-

graduate school. Otherwise, not many people would recognize the post-graduate degrees offered by the individual schools.

In 1989, the Alliance Biblical Seminary in Manila, a member of the AGST, graduated its first doctoral students. The seven graduates came from Indonesia, Taiwan, the Philippines, New Zealand, and one from America—a missionary.

Dr. Ro recognizes that each Asian country has its own culture, and it would be preferable to study within the students' own cultural context. But he explains, "We can't afford to set up doctoral programs in each country. We don't have the professors or the research materials." However, he admits that the AGST program is more culturally relevant than a Western education because of the common ground shared by the Asian cultures.

23. *What are some of the ways Two Thirds World mission institutions can partner with each other?*

Korean missionaries partner with Thais

It's this "invisible cultural link" which has drawn missionaries of the Korean International Mission to partner with the Church of Christ in Thailand in evangelism and church planting.

Koreans and Thais share the same Confucian/Buddhist background. They think similarly, believing that everything that happens has a spiritual cause. They share the virtue of conformity and filial respect ingrained for centuries. Thus the pastor carries enormous authority. Both cultures value the courtesy of saving face and seek to avoid offense by confrontation.

The Korean International Mission (KIM) began working in Thailand in 1956. But in recent years missionaries have sought to work in partnership with the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), which

is an ecumenical body representing a number of denominations and parachurch agencies.

In preparation for working together, the joint committee planned a unique exchange program. A Thai evangelist was brought to Korea to study at the East West Center for Mission Research and Development for one year. Later a group of Thai Christian leaders attended the World Evangelism Crusade in 1980 and visited many Korean churches and projects. As a result, one of the Thai leaders established a prayer mountain for 24-hour prayer vigils and fasting, based on the Korean model he had seen.

KIM board members and Korean pastors visited Thailand for a week to see the work firsthand and get to know the people better, while the CCT execu-

tive committee visited Korea and also attended church growth seminars there.

Korean missionary Jung Woong Kim observed: "The more pastors, elders, and women leaders visit the mission field, the better the Korean church's understanding of the Thais and missionary work."*

Cultural imperialism is just as likely to tarnish Two Thirds World missionaries working in other cultures as it has Western missions.

Koreans are learning the meaning of *cha cha* ("slowly, slowly"), as they find church growth does not respond as rapidly in Thailand as it has in Korea.

Both Korean and Thai workers are recognizing some of the following principles that will have to be applied as Two Thirds World mission agencies around the world develop partnerships:

- Cultural imperialism is just as likely to tarnish Two Thirds World missionaries working in other cultures as it has Western missions. It should be remembered that North American missionaries share cultural roots with Europeans, but they are not immune from this accusation even there.
- Two Thirds World missionaries need to be wary of pride of accomplishment. For exam-

ple, the rapid Korean church growth and well-documented early-morning prayer meetings could cause Korean missionaries to look down upon churches in other cultures that do not experience these.

- Two Thirds World agencies and their supporting churches will have to understand the extent of the responsibility they assume when sending out missionaries, so that they are faithfully and consistently backed by finances and prayer. Some of the high rate of fallout among Two Thirds World missionaries is due to the lack of adequate and regular support from their home base.
- Constant shift of missionaries and changing strategies weaken the effectiveness of the ministry. Kim writes: "Missionaries change their areas and adopt different approaches, depending on the missionary's interest and concerns. There is often no connection between a missionary's work and his successor's."**

As Two Thirds World boards become more experienced, such problems should become less common. They will no doubt face many of the same obstacles Western agencies have faced. But hopefully they will learn more rapidly than the West has, that the right kinds of partnership will serve as cords of victory to strengthen their impact on the lost around them.

24. What are some dangers of disregarding the experience and wisdom which Two Thirds World mission agencies could obtain through partnering with older Western agencies?

* Kim, J. W. (1985). *Third World mission/church relationship: A Korean/Thai model* (p. 163). Unpublished dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.

** Kim (p. 121).

It is a decisive moment for partnership. The Holy Spirit seems to be impressing this fact on the hearts of missions leaders around the world. In the following excerpt, Phill Butler, International Director of Interdev, documents this trend.

❑ **Partnership Is a Growing Movement** *

Phillip Butler with Clyde Cowan

Partnership in missions is an idea whose time is now. Consider the topics of the world's great missions organizations in recent conferences.

The Lausanne Movement, long a catalyst in cooperative efforts, emphasized partnerships at the historic conference in Bad Boll, Germany in 1992. Participants from 36 countries met there, and following the conference, the European Lausanne Committee called for a pan-European working conference on partnership.

The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement recently established a Partnership Development Task Force, chaired by Interdev's International Director, Phill Butler. The goal is to encourage practical cooperation and integration of ministry at the grass roots level for evangelism among unreached people. AD 2000 wants its specialized tracks and regional cooperation to bear fruit at the field level.

The Missions Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) focused its 1992 triennial meeting in Manila on the theme "Toward Interdependent Partnerships." Plenary sessions, working papers, and small group meetings all wrestled with the practical implications of partnership, especially in the growing number of alliances between Western and non-Western mission agencies.** WEF is promoting partnership of all kinds through its network membership in 75 countries, 500,000 churches, and 100 million evangelicals, as well as through its six major commissions.

In North America, APMC (Advancing Churches in Mission Commitment) chose the theme "Renewal for Global Partnering" for its 1992 conference. The APMC represents nearly 1,000 churches in the United States, and is on the cutting edge of missions strategy and helping local churches translate that into effective missions policies.

Besides all these, a Partnership Network is growing, linking innovators together for fellowship, information, and further training. Interdev contributes to this with its Partnership Effectiveness Program (a training course for Partnership Facilitators), regional meetings, and a newsletter called *Partnership Report*.***

Major donors, churches, foundations, and individuals are beginning to consider partnerships as a significant factor in giving. Many donors are asking mission agencies if they coordinate their efforts with others in their area. Such donors are clearly indicating they want the greatest spiritual return on their giving, through cooperative effort. No one wants to see his resources diluted through a duplicated project or one whose timing conflicts with another worthy project.

Churches want to be active partners. More and more churches on the leading edge of missions are seeking ways to become partners in the evangelism of specific people groups. They aren't content merely to supply resources of people, money, and prayer. They want to be active partners.

* Butler, P., with Cowan, C. (1993). *Partnership: Accelerating evangelism in the '90s* (pp. 14-16). Seattle: Interdev.

** For the WEF conference papers, see Taylor, W. D. (Ed.). (1994). *Kingdom partnerships for synergy in missions*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

*** For information about these resources, contact Interdev, P.O. Box 30945, Seattle, WA 98103.

Strategic Evangelism Partnerships hold the brightest hope for reaching the 2 billion unreached people on earth. Of the many ways churches and missions can work together, this particular kind of partnership emphasizes the big picture, yet fits the details in place. It offers a comprehensive plan and coordination of resources, with the goal of seeing a viable

national church developed among unreached people. It is an effective, strategic approach to fulfilling the Great Commission. The goal for Strategic Evangelism Partnerships is to reach the most people, in the shortest time, at the lowest cost, among people who have the least chance to hear of Christ.

25. *In the drive to complete the Great Commission, why are Strategic Evangelism Partnerships so important?*

Summary

Becoming a World Christian begins with one's own commitment to Christ and His global cause. This commitment seems obvious, once one has been caught up in the vision of what God is doing and the exciting part Christians can play. The fact that not all Christendom is alive with this vision speaks to the "catch"—the call to sacrificial obedience. Becoming a World Christian demands that we give up our petty ambitions. It involves catching the vision, keeping it, and obeying it. Praying, giving, and sending are key ways most World Christians will get involved. Of these, prayer is the most strategic spiritual weapon. Basic to becoming a sender are giving and praying. Mobilizers and welcomers are two other proactive roles World Christians can take.

The involvement of the local church in missions is fundamental to the success of this enterprise. Two kinds of missions groups are needed—prayer fellowships and missions committees. The easiest to organize is the prayer fellowship. In addition, local congregations must understand the primary importance of the missions ministry and must implement such a ministry. This involves "growing" the vision and administrating it. Proven methods for doing this, such as the Faith Promise Plan, have been developed and tested over the years. Local churches should also consider partnering with missions in carrying out Great Commission objectives. Although tensions have arisen in partnerships, they must be worked through. A thorough assessment of a mission agency is encouraged as individuals and churches look to team up with a mission.

Partnership doesn't stop once workers have arrived on the field. Interagency cooperation is also fundamental to the success of mission ventures, particularly in reaching the unreached. Instead of proliferating missions, Westerners need to learn to use existing structures. Non-Westerners legitimately are looking for a fuller role when partnering with Western agencies and are finding the power available in cooperating with each other. There are many challenges and complex issues, but there is no doubt that partnership is on the Holy Spirit's agenda in these exciting days for world evangelization.

Integrative Assignment

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