Common Ground Journal

Perspectives on the Church in the 21st Century

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The Social Philosophy of the Christian Educator

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Executive Director: Linda M. Cannell
Journal & Web Design: Mark E. Simpson

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About the Common Ground Journal

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Mission Statement

Common Ground Journal (CGJ) is a publication of the CanDoSpirit Network and is published twice annually as a resource for Christian congregations seeking to understand and faithfully live out their calling as the people of God in the world. The primary audience for CGJ is thoughtful Christians in congregations who are catalysts for growth within their own churches.

CGJ is devoted to the development of strong, faithful churches whose life and ministry grow out of the church's nature as the people of God. They are organized and led in a manner consistent with their nature and mission. They continually ask, "What does it mean to be a sign of the Kingdom of God in the world today?"

CGJ is a resource for congregational development. We invite scholars and thoughtful Christians in congregations around the world to stimulate inquiry, reflection and action around issues central to the life and ministry of the gathered community of faith. We invite those who serve as leaders in congregations, mission agencies, parachurch organizations, relief and development work, higher education, and non-traditional leadership development to apply their scholarship and expertise in these fields to the context of the local church. We encourage members of congregations to address the broader church with insights grounded in a thoughtful examination of Scripture, and in their own experiences as part of communities of faith in the world.

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The *Common Ground Journal* welcomes articles from scholars and discerning Christians. Each issue will feature invited articles around a theme, as well as articles received through open submissions. Open submission articles are reviewed by members of the Editorial Review Committee who make recommendations to the editor regarding their publication.

General Guidelines

Common Ground Journal seeks to stimulate Christian churches to thoughtful action around their calling to be the people of God in the world. All articles should be grounded both in theology and the life of the church. Writers are encouraged to write to and about their own cultures and contexts. CGJ invites submissions in the following categories:

- Articles that stimulate thinking and reflection on the nature of the Church
- Articles that link the nature of the Church to its life and work in the world
- Articles that explore the integration of theology and social sciences in relation to life and work of the Church
- Essays on truths gleaned from the interplay of theory and practice, theology and experience in the active life of faith
- Articles that present insights from congregations attempting to live out their identity as the people of God in world

- Articles based on responsible qualitative research designed to inform a local congregation's understanding of its life and ministry
- Articles that raise questions that the Christian community needs to explore in becoming the people of God in the world
- Reviews of books, journals, programs, web sites and related resources

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Articles should be approximately 2500 to 3500 words in length. Book reviews and essays should be shorter.

Language and Foreign Languages

Articles should be written in clear narrative prose. Readers can be expected to be familiar with the language of the Bible and theology, but will not necessarily have formal education in these fields. Please avoid academic language and discipline specific terms. Provide clear definitions and examples of important terms not familiar to a general audience. Use explanatory footnotes sparingly; explanations and examples in the text of articles are preferred.

The best articles are clear and focused, developing a single thesis with examples and application. The successful writer translates complex ideas into everyday language without talking down to the readers. All articles should use inclusive language.

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The following contacts can be used for any questions or recommendations for the *Common Ground Journal:*

Journal Editor:	editor@commongroundjournal.org
Webmaster:	webmaster@commongroundjournal.org
Mailing Address:	Common Ground Journal c/o Linda M. Cannell 5250 Grand Avenue Suite 14-211 Gurnee, IL 60031-1877 USA

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

From the Editor

Linda M. Cannell

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The Social Philosophy of the Christian Educator

In this issue we present sixteen articles culled from a substantial collection of Ted Ward's writings that deal with the social context of Christian ministry. Much of Ted's writing from the 1980s and 1990s reflects concerns that are common today: the nature of international service, implications for organizations when 'doing business' in international contexts, the need for international Christian workers to be aware of foreign policy matters, research perspectives in multicultural situations, the need to be clear about "relief" in relation to "development," and family concerns in international contexts.

The first section presents articles dealing with issues organizations confront when involved in different cultural arenas:

- "Repositioning Mission Agencies for the 21st Century" – This article provides an overview of various issues that preoccupied Ted's thinking as he reflected on the challenges that inevitably would confront serving agencies in international contexts in the 21st century.
- "Mission Toward the 21st Century" – This article and the article, "Turning the Corner in Missions," expand on themes in the "repositioning" article. They are more specific treatments of several issues that Christians confront in international service.
- "Lone Ranger to Barnabas: Over and Out" – Two persisting concerns are addressed in this article: the need for missionaries and other international workers to be aware of political realities in their contexts—as well as the foreign policies of their sending nations; and the persisting tendencies toward forms of colonialism.
- "Healer, Teacher, Evangelizer or Revolutionist" – This paper continues themes in "lone ranger" (and to some extent the "repositioning" article) and expands upon them.
- "Christian Missions—Survival in What Forms? – The changing contexts of international work challenge older models of organization and management. Ted argues that agencies working in other cultural contexts will need to change many of their practices in order to survive.
- "Coping with Cultural Difference" – This article and the article, "The Church in the Intermediate Future" stress the need to see the church's mission as international in scope and multicultural in function. Without this understanding the mission of other international agencies makes little sense.

The second set of articles deals with international community development and, in particular, offers important distinctions between "relief" or "aid" and "development:"

- "Involvement or Interference" – An article that presents a better way to look at "needs" and how culture workers "determine" needs.
- "The Impossible Dream" – This article builds on "involvement or interference" but deals more specifically with the problems that arise when concepts of relief and development are confused.

- "Key Concepts of Development" – As a summary of this section, this article provides definitions of the various aspects of development.

The final section of this issue deals with focused matters in Ted's writings related to the social philosophy of the Christian educator:

- "Possibilities, Paradigms and Paralysis" – In this article, and "Options for Overseas Service," Ted suggests that greater international interdependence has opened up various career options for Christians. He challenges Christians to consider these careers when making life decisions.

- "The Anxious Climate of Concern for Missionary Children" – During his career, Ted developed a personal interest in "missionary kids." Of the many papers he wrote on this topic, this one presents the concern as recruitment and deployment concern.

- "Pejorative Presumptions about Missing Missionaries" – Ted's experience in overseas missions and his background in research come together in his gentle critique of this classic study. His analysis of the methods and assumptions in this research motivate his concerns and suggestions. His warnings are still timely.

- "Beyond the Pith Helmet" – Finally, in light of stereotypes that still stick to Christian missionaries and other culture workers, this article is a generous call to get past the stereotypes to more appropriate images those who serve in international contexts.

Even though these articles were written a decade or more ago, the issues Ted addresses and the perspective he provides are relevant today. In some articles, specific examples relate to the context of the time; but comparable examples can be found today.

About the Editor

Linda Cannell retired as the Academic Dean at North Park Theological Seminary in December 2011. Formerly, she was Lois W. Bennett Distinguished Professor of Educational Ministries at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, and professor of Educational Ministries and director of the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. She directs the Ward Consultation, a dialogical forum for leaders internationally to exchange ideas related to issues of local concern; and serves as the managing editor of the *Common Ground Journal* (www.commongroundjournal.org).

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Preparing and Equipping the Leaders of Leaders

Ted W. Ward

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The central concern of social philosophy lies in one's concern for others. A reasoned and coherent view of life—from origins to awareness, to concerns, to values, to purpose, to responsibility, and ultimately to truth itself, is dependent on a person's view of others. How we see ourselves in reference to others, those who have gone before us, those who are affected today by what we do and say, those who support us, those who contribute ideas that affect the future of our understanding, and those whose values interact with ours and contribute to the flow of history, constitute the framework for our self-consciousness and thus for the meaning of our lives. For the Christian, these meanings will be best perceived in the beliefs we hold, the goals we set, and the outcomes we value. Thus we understand the purposes of the Christian in the world in terms of the meaning of the Gospel, the tasks of its mission, and the responsibilities of the church. This journal, and especially the series of articles in this issue, is particularly focused on the educational mission of the church. The Christian educator views mission in terms of its responsibilities for teaching and learning. We are preparing and equipping the leaders of leaders.

Our most pressing responsibility is to critically separate two images of that task. The first image is unfortunately common, that preparing people who will be grounded in formal theology, able to preach and to officiate in the modes and ceremonies of religious activity he or she believes to be most common, based on his own experience and fitting as he or she has experienced most common in the nation or region in which their own religious experiences occurred. The second image is much closer to the Biblical mandate, that of developing leaders who are grounded in biblical truth and skilled in cultural and linguistic adaptation, so that their lifestyles, language patterns, and interactional skills are flexible, sensitive, and responsive. Toward this end, the missioner's experience will need to grow larger and more diverse in order to accommodate and embrace religious practices common to Christians of the less familiar culture. This sort of expansion and transformation of cultural perspective will require human interactions, including hours, days, and weeks of comprehensive dialogues with a wide variety of new friends.

The material in this volume reflects my commitment to the second of these two images of the educational task. I have come through experiences and have lived in close affiliation with elegant exemplars of this image. For their wisdom, choices, and mentoring I thank God. Nevertheless the road has not been easy; it has often been lonely and uncomfortable but ever so profoundly rewarding!

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Repositioning Mission Agencies for the Twenty-First Century

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

This article addresses the reality of change and presents several implications for mission agencies as they approach the twenty first century. The author identifies inadequate responses to change and offers recommendations in a variety of areas, including organizational development, recruitment, evaluation, and so on. *Reprinted from: Ward, Ted. 1999.* International Bulletin of Missionary Research *v23 n4 (October): 146-153.*

Since the steady crescendo of expansion after World War II, American mission agencies have been awash in an environment of change. Most mission agencies have experienced one or more rise-and-fall cycles of available candidates, funds, and deployment opportunities. There are general patterns and similarities from one organization to another, although far more often the ebb and flow must be explained by the particulars of local churches' motivations, denominational policies, characteristics of given overseas fields, and the vagaries of sociopolitical climate, natural climate and disasters, and the increasingly turbulent patterns of intertribal tension and ethnic warfare. Some mission work is stimulated by disaster and wanes during periods of relative calm. One missionary organization will be inspired to undertake creative ventures by the very same political circumstances that will drive another organization into withdrawal or diversion.

In an attempt to draw some useful generalizations, this essay reflects on the purposes most commonly undertaken by missionary organizations, especially those historically described as sending agencies; describes the ways in which these purposes relate to current situations in our shrinking world, and examines the changing characteristics of the socio-cultural contexts of missions. These issues are then submitted to at least three tests:

1. Do our organizational patterns, management styles, and strategies of mission reflect the lessons learned from colonial and postcolonial experiences?

2. Is the church's global scope, its international partnerships in mission, and the necessity for a serving posture adequately reflected in the managerial decisions about missionary deployment?

3. Are our organizations taking adequate account of the upsurge of local-church participation and ad hoc missionary initiatives?

Since very early in the modern missionary movement, the mission agency has taken on the role of the business and communications secretary for the missionary, representing and advocating for the best interests of the mission of the church, the missionary, and the agency itself. Following is a list of the tasks and the needs commonly fulfilled by the mission agency. The items are sequentially listed, in general, from the earliest and most common tasks up to the more recently identified roles and needs that have been added to the mission agency's work list.

Sending

The sending of missionaries is not a single process. It involves at least three tasks.

Recruiting. Perhaps the most important part of the recruitment task is determining what sources will be emphasized. At first, local churches and denominational councils were the primary arena for the recruitment of missionary candidates. Having moved away during this century from the local approach because of the need for large-scale coordination, the pendulum is now swinging back as local churches, especially larger ones, take a more direct hand (sometimes unilaterally).

> *In selecting missionaries, agencies have shifted from literal biblical criteria to measurable competencies.*

Selecting. The steadily more assertive posture of mission agencies has centered on the issue of appropriateness for given sorts of missionary service. Across the past 200 years, and especially as mission agencies have come to be seen more in their managerial and technological functions, screening of potential personnel has become much more common. The difficulty of assessing spiritual gifts and the pressure to deploy younger missionaries have caused a shift from literal biblical criteria in favor of measurable competencies and traits.

Deploying. Formal corporate decision making about locations and situations wherein missionaries may be productive, over against the more open approach ("wherever God calls"), has long been a tension in mission management. To a greater extent than many missionaries are prepared to accept, the mission agency usually has a determinative role in the decisions about where missionaries will be stationed, what work is to be done, and how project funds and technical support will be allocated. As the role of the mission agency has become steadily more proactive and determinative, this source of conflict has created a sharp division between those who make choices pragmatically and those who rely on intuitive and inspirational feelings about the leading of God.

Overseeing

Accountability. Affixing accountability of the missionary, by urging or requiring some sort of periodic review of financial and job-related performance, has been a long-standing function of the mission agency. While some missionaries resent any accountability other than directly to God, the experiences of totally independent and free-lance missionaries have demonstrated the need for accountability to wise and knowledgeable referees. But tensions today are increasing, particularly over the increasingly technological and bureaucratic nature of managerial oversight, represented by standardized report forms, formal travel reports (rarely used by leaders as a basis of informed interaction with the missionary), and busywork procedures such as requiring preapproval of events and expenditures.

Management. Managing missionaries and mission projects is a prerogative usually assumed by the mission agency and often delegated to selected missionary councils or leadership groups on the field. In general, the larger the financial exposure or risk, the more likely the agency is to take dominant responsibility.

Reporting. Communications fall into two categories: from the missionary to his or her own immediate supporters, and from the agency to these same supporters plus the agency's own list of contributors and churches, corporate sponsors, and large-scale donors. In recent years many agencies have moved more directly into campaigning for funds through various sorts of centrally distributed devices (e.g., coin banks, pledge cards, and book sales).

Intermediacy

Establishing communications between mission and supporting constituencies emerged very early as a task for the mission agency. Especially in the earlier days, limited communications and the time it took to travel great distances left a great load on someone, and the mission agency became the continuing carrier of this burden. One aspect is the need to represent the mission and its missionaries to governments and regulatory agencies. Everything from immigration and naturalization regulations to passports, visas, residency permits, taxes, school loans, and the many dozens of other hidden tasks require time and skill, which, realistically, are best provided by the agency.

Support

The word 'support,' in the language of missions, is used in two ways. When used alone, it means primarily financial support. When used with a modifier, usually 'prayer,' the emphasis is on emotional and spiritual support. Mission boards and executive officers have almost always taken seriously their responsibility to assist in encouraging prayer support and to exhort the immediate constituencies to maintain and expand their financial support. Individual missionaries participate in this process with more or less help from their mission agencies. In some cases, almost the entire responsibility is carried by the agency, especially within the larger denominations.

Centralization

While centralization rarely has been a stated purpose or intention, it has, *de facto,* been at the heart of the mission board idea. Both denominational missions and other organizational modes have embraced the idea of unification and organizational centralization of the missionary enterprise. Thus the mission agency's executive officers and board are afforded a substantial span of authority in decision making, a determining control of communications, and command of the criteria-setting for recruitment and deployment. The result is unification and sometimes a higher degree of managerial coherency. Cost savings and increased access to services are also affected as centralized purchasing and centralized service personnel or service contracts (e.g., for counseling, missionary children's education, continuing education needs, retirement plans, insurance, and tax advisement) make available the variety of resources expected by people in a highly specialized technological society.

Impact of a Shrinking World

Of the vast array of influences toward change in the mission of the church across the past two centuries, three seem especially important as the twenty-first century approaches.

Mass technologies. Although now familiar and well understood, modern transportation and communication technologies have not yet been fully taken into account in terms of mission organization and management.

The most obvious changes across the two centuries of the modern missionary movement have resulted from mass technologies. The speed and convenience of travel have dramatically transformed the functional size of the world. Similarly, innovations in communications and the significant slashing of communication costs have reduced the primary effects of isolation and decision-to-implementation lag. It is much easier to come and go and for much less reasoned purposes. Frequency of supervisory contacts is more common, and interactions with colleagues, distant family, and supporters are more frequent and more engaging. Although this factor has not been carefully examined, it is possible that being more continuously reminded of things going on back home, yet being out of reach for personal drop-in contact, increases the stress of missionaries. E-mail from the children at college brings every dormitory turmoil,

campus incident, and car repair emergency to the missionary parents' breakfast table. Similarly, constant and prompt news of the ups-and-downs of the health of aging parents now brings the are-we-needed-more-back-home question into weekly reassessment.

Wider access to missionary experience. The more recent pressure for change is only partially understood and certainly is not yet well integrated into a positive role.

As the laity of the sending churches has much wider access to missionary experience today, the mystique of mission service has fallen profoundly. At the same time, the nominal period of service for a full-time career missionary is substantially shrinking. As the variety of people and the variety of motivations they represent increase, the length of service and the predictability of commitment to mission service decreases. The full-time career missionary resents the come-and-go folks who take home half-truths. They resent the time that they are expected to give to making the wanderers comfortable. They resent the feeling that they must explain over and over why there are servant-employees in their homes.

Along with wider access through travel and mission field visits has come a sort of industrial-strength approach to specialized recruitment and management. The spiritual grounding of the missionary

> *In today's world constraint is far more important than exuberance in the deployment of missionaries.*

call has been largely overwhelmed by advertisements for missionaries and descriptions of the mission fields that are almost as job-specific as commercial recruitment.

Greater involvement of local churches. The newest and already the most problematic influence toward change is the pressure for closer involvement of local churches. Effectively dealing with this and the increased access for the laity could become the foundation for the emergence of a revitalized mission of the church in the twenty-first century.

Almost everyone in the mission establishment sees closer involvement of the local churches as a mixed blessing, but the trend is picking up intensity. Local churches are taking greater initiatives and expect to be treated at least as equal partners with the mission agency. They demand a stake in recruitment; they want some measure of authority in the overseeing of the missionaries whom they support, and their views of stewardship and management must be taken into account by the mission agency. After several generations of virtual autonomy, mission agencies are finding these adjustments rather difficult. The missionary executive is being pulled in so many directions that maintaining a coherent approach to the purposes and the standard procedures of the mission is almost impossible.

Colonialism Lives

Warning against recurring colonial assumptions is still needed. The assertion that Christianity is a white man's religion, heard earliest from the Chinese, is a fundamental stumbling block wherever the Gospel is carried. Unless the cultural baggage of western philosophy, democracy, materialism, militarism, and racism is laid aside the western role in the international and intercultural mission of the church will very likely wane in the next century.

The insidious colonial assumptions that inhabit and inhibit Christian missions include the following: *Missionaries can go anywhere they wish.* Yes, in the modern era missionaries can go anywhere, even if it means taking on a cover or disguise. But this assumption is based squarely in the ethos of colonialism; it is based on the presumed rights and the actual power of people from a dominant society to enter wherever

and whenever they choose within the empire. To some mission agencies and churches, any resistance or delay is interpreted as evidence of satanic works against the Gospel. When will it become clear that resistance to outsiders and their agendas is an ordinary characteristic of a people's sense of dignity and humanity? Even Christians do it! Why do those who carry the Gospel message assume that they have a right to do to others what they would not allow others do to them?

Rediscovery of the importance of frontier missions in the past twenty-five years has stimulated the assumption that missionaries can go anywhere. Indeed, some of the more valuable deployments of missionaries are on the frontiers of evangelization and church planting. But the limits on these open frontiers are often more severe than in the past. The easier frontiers are used up and gone. The new frontiers are in situations and among people who are the hardest ever to reach, especially among the urbanized subcultures, rich and poor. Appropriate background, experience, education, and motivation for these frontiers are sadly lacking among American missionaries. Indeed, many American missionaries cannot go just anywhere without some fundamental changes in themselves that lie far deeper than willingness.

Missionaries can do anything. 'Missionary' is a term loosely applied to people who go from one place to another with the intention of furthering the Gospel. This breadth of definition, combined with an increasing willingness to travel to seek a clearer view of God's will in one's own life, has led to all sorts of unnecessary investment and misdirected effort. In today's world constraint is far more important than exuberance in the deployment of missionary resources. Doing things that local people should be doing, doing things that really don't need to be done, and doing things in ways that are culturally inappropriate and even resented are just a few of the unfortunate consequences of this very western assumption about willingness, eagerness, and omni-functional competency.

The presumption of the versatility of missionaries is another of the foundational assumptions underlying the bad habit of sending unprepared and inept people into situations that demand greater expertise, insight, and interpersonal sensitivity. The work of missions in the twenty-first century is apt to be at least as demanding as anything seen in the twentieth century. There will be fewer places to hide the inept. One of the toughest tasks of missionary managers in the years ahead will be selection and assessment of readiness in people who want to become missionaries. Western nations cannot send their second best. Heretofore it has been an unwritten rule that recruitment is more important than critical screening. No more.

We are here to build things for God. Founding and building properties for institutions that are assumed to serve the church is a long-standing western contribution to mission. Brick-and-mortar projects, including the infrastructure for individual churches, denominational office complexes, clinics, hospitals, and schools of various sorts (primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, Bible colleges and theological seminaries), can sometimes help. In the past they were usually greeted with enthusiasm. Today both the mission agencies and the established churches in many regions are aware that they can also hurt the church in the long run, creating deeper dependency, saddling local churches with embarrassments that they cannot afford to maintain, coming into conflict with government plans for education or health services, and actually inhibiting evangelization and the development of effective relationships between the churches and their communities.

Using stewardship as an excuse for seizing a controlling posture in every partnership. The habit of insisting on the rights of authorizing the budget and monitoring the expenditures has destroyed many relationships between the mission and the church-on-the-field. As local western churches are becoming more directly involved in fiscal and personnel support for overseas projects, this budgetary tyranny has become stronger than ever. Surely, responsible handling of resources dedicated to God requires vigilance,

but God is not honored when control is a stronger value than trust. Part of the solution is avoiding the sort of flimsy joint project that clearly lacks responsible management on the field.

Flying high the denominational banner. No longer does a Baptist name on a church assure that it is substantially different from the church down the road that calls itself Assemblies of God. No longer does every Wesleyan church hold tightly to a grounding in Wesley or every Calvinist church assert its several points of historical Calvinism. Observers overseas are noticing that denominational names are more commonly used by the outsiders (missionaries) than by those who constitute the emerging Christian communities. Local Christian leaders often point out that regardless of the historical divisions and designations within the church at large, there is more that makes us distinctive and gives us identity under the name of Jesus Christ than any distinction that denominational designations can suggest. When the contrast between Christian and Muslim or Christian and Buddhist is at stake, the label 'Presbyterian' does not help much. In today's world many Christians find it far more important to identify with other Christians precisely because they need to stand together as Christians.

This trend toward minimizing historical distinctives and categories imposed from western church history has been hard for many missionary organizations to swallow. They feel threatened because for many in the western churches missions as a category of social activity is an extension of the fondness for competitive team sports. We cheer for the Cubs, not the White Sox; the Cowboys, not the Broncos; the Free Church, not the Nazarenes. When we cannot wave our own home-team banner, we lose interest in the game.

SOP, PDQ, ETC, and FYEO

SOP: Standard Operational Procedure. Once an organization has established its norms for operation, almost every management detail settles into dull uniformity. Employees—and usually clients—are expected to operate by the standard operational procedures. It is assumed that standardization will make doing business simpler, more predictable, and more easily communicated, especially to newcomers.

This assumption creates havoc among new missionaries whose distrust of the ways of the past underlines their sense of their own creative possibilities (sometimes exaggerated). At a deeper level, the mission that persists in blindly perpetuating habituated practices is doomed to a decline because of the resultant non-responsiveness to nuance and change. Furthermore, there are many essential competencies and sensitivities that those leading the missionary enterprise blithely assume are well in place, when in fact their functional absence creates raw sores. For many missionary organizations standard operational procedures are a millstone around the neck.

PDQ: Pretty Darn Quick. The cult of efficiency has made deep inroads into the churches of the west; it determines the causes these churches are willing to support. When lay leaders discuss missions, the negative side of the conversation very often focuses on costs and outcomes: Why does it take missionaries so long? Why does it cost so much? Why can't they just decide what to do and get out there and do it?

Communicating the realities of today's world and the requirement for careful and graciously non-manipulative (usually slow) agreements across cultural lines is more difficult than ever before. Willingness to help is surely a desirable attribute for a missionary, but perhaps in today's world of missions it is equally important to show willingness not to help when that is more appropriate. The assumption that one should hit the ground running produces an overeager, often overbearing, posture. Getting the picture, letting others tell about what is happening and why, and avoiding the temptation to dump ideas all over people demand patience and time.

How can the supporters of missions be brought to understand the realities of intercultural and interchurch relationships? Whatever the answer, it must come to grips with the preference in many western churches for doing things PDQ.

ETC: Et Cetera, Et Cetera. Some organizations bravely outlive their purposes. One of the oddest moments in mission's history was the closing of one of America's first missionary agencies, the Sandwich Islands Mission. This group had been formed in Boston early in the nineteenth century for the purpose of evangelizing the people of the Sandwich Islands. Before forty years passed, the members of this organization deemed their mission accomplished, and thus they dissolved the corporation.

Today's mission agencies, apparently wishing to avoid that precedent, have grasped immortality by creating ever larger and more complex goals. There is a sort of *et cetera* habit in contemporary organizations, whether the corporation is for profit or nonprofit. The overextending caused by unbridled expansion and diversification has been the downfall of notable manufacturers, service corporations, and merchandisers. Missions are not immune.

FYEO: For Your Eyes Only. As the world has polarized into geopolitical camps, the tendency toward secrecy, manipulative cleverness, and distrust has been deeply embedded into intercultural relations. In the interests of truth and trust, it is time for Christians to become more trusting of one another, regardless of ethnicity or nationality, and for Christian organizations, especially mission agencies, to minimize the sort of suspicious privacy and secrecy that causes far too many documents to be stamped FYEO. This is a costly habit because far too many decisions are made without bringing the issues into the fresh air. Cooperation is enhanced by openness; overuse of confidentiality breeds distrust. Competitive secretiveness in the service of the Prince of Peace is out of place and unbecoming.

New Circumstances, Emergent Forms

Today the global environment in which Christian mission operates includes increased resistance to missionaries who represent old images and models and who have 'missionary' as their visa identity. Mission agencies may find themselves beating their heads against the wall and wasting strong human and physical resources in order to preserve traditions and old habits. Clearly, new models of 'missionary' are demanded. New understandings of the relationships and roles of outsiders in a more tribalized world are needed. What is even more needed is for mission agencies to face up to the all-too-common ineffectiveness of their missionaries. It is unwise to resist, ignore, or explain away the evident needs for changing recruitment standards, deployment practices, missionary description, and presumptions about styles of evangelization and church planting.

There is also a notable openness on the part of non-Christians to helpers from outside, even if such helpers are Christians. Some mission agencies are so tied to their own past that a visit to Vietnam, for example, attracts them, like moths to a flame, back to their former properties. Soon they start nagging their hosts to hand back the old land deeds. The old ways, the old uses of property, the acquisition of stuff, and the claims of rights jeopardize the future with the very people who are now open enough (often at some risk to themselves) to invite and relate to former missionaries and mission agencies. If we were to react more sensitively to these now frequent offers of friendship and relationship, God's hand would be far easier to see. In China, for example, agencies that have been willing to broaden their definition of 'missionary' and to accept identification and registration as a language-education agency or a resource development group are discovering important new sectors of openness to the Gospel. But agencies that stubbornly insist on their old designations, agenda, and methods are sitting at the border pouting.

Another hard-to-miss development is the increased willingness of North Americans to undertake short mission experiences. Thousands of North Americans are pouring into the arena of international and intercultural missions through various forms of short-term missionary events ranging from agency-sponsored tours of the mission field to work teams building bunkhouses for church-related camps. Although in the case of some of these people, at least in the short run, such experiences may be a waste of the time and resources of the mission agency, for many of these western adventurers such oversees junkets are the spark that ignites mission consciousness and awakens a concern for more effective forms of missionary presence.

For slow-minded mission agencies the short-term phenomenon will be an increasing nuisance. But for creative agencies, ways are already being found to encourage and support these activities as additional species and types of Christian relationship and development. Procedures are being developed for dealing with the issue of how the on-site missionaries can be assisted in handling the stress caused by the floaters.

The underlying problem from the start of the current short-term missionary avalanche has been an oversimplification, namely that there are two kinds of missionaries, *short-term* and *real.* The rediscovery of the short-term category—the book of Acts suggests that the apostle Paul was probably the first short-termer—has brought many more Americans into firsthand contact with the overseas ministries of the church. The trend is likely a consequence of the need to redress the remoteness of missions from the churches and the increased affluence of American Christians. As a result, there are more and more local mission committees in churches that include at least a half-dozen members who have *been there.* All in all, more good than harm has resulted, though in the years ahead, missionary organizations that do a more thorough and thoughtful job of articulating the workings of long-term and the short-term missionaries will set the path toward a more effective use of resources. Meanwhile, the old-timers tend to see themselves as the *real* missionaries, too often demeaning, avoiding, or misusing the naive and sometimes demanding short-termers.

But there is another sort of short-term missionary reemerging: the highly competent specialized fellow laborers whose gifts and expertise are made available to the church communities of the world in genuine partnerships—responding to invitation, planning, and negotiation. The trend is to utilize such persons in small teams, usually composed of peer partners from at least two nations. The church's crying need for leadership development throughout the world is being addressed through this process far better than by sending in one after another ill-equipped and inexperienced teacher of canned curriculum for leadership in the church.

Today's global environment resists expatriates who have "missionary" on their visas.

Innovations that attempt to take account of such developments can be done cautiously. Following are some of the matters of important renewal and refinement of missions for the next century. Each is so important that careless, shallow, or inept handling could set back the progress of any mission agency.

Short-term Mission Discoverers

The integration of short-term persons, with all their typical handicaps and inadequacies, not the least of which is the lack of time for learning language or culture, into the whole network of relationships of the people of God worldwide can surely be accomplished more productively than at present. Too much emotional stress has been stimulated by the quasi-intellectual debates about the relative value and the cost-benefit ratio of short-term missionaries. The more difficult and more worthy question is how best to

deploy short-term persons of various sorts. What might happen if mission agencies in full cooperation with local churches were to reconceptualize 'short-term missionary' into 'short-term discoverer'? These willing and usually well-motivated people, whose meager background, linguistic shortcomings, cultural innocence, and anxious personalities require special accommodations, can be developed into a valuable liaison resource from church-there to church-here. How can they be more effectively guided before, during, and after the field experience? What standards are necessary, and how can they be implemented? What sorts of experiences are actually valuable for the field, for the short-termers, and, most especially, for the church at large?

Tentmaker Witnesses

Various sorts of vigorous adults with significant experiences behind them and well-advanced spiritual maturity are now taking their places in all sorts of mission roles. Sometimes they are affiliated with a mission agency; more often they are unaffiliated because mission agencies are preoccupied with their more customary recruits, deployments, and relationships. Often these volunteer specialists are either not available for long-term or permanent relationships with a given agency in a given place, or their particular gifts call for an itinerant role that is not of much interest to the agency (which starts every relationship by dividing the missionary community into 'career missionaries' and 'short-termers').

Nevertheless, the expansion of these new species—tentmakers, moonlight missionaries, and contracted specialists—is so substantial that new mission agencies are forming around them, representing a marker on the trail where tradition has delimited the old path away from new needs.

Multicultural Collaborators

Another innovation is the use of international task-force teams. Teamwork has proved to be extraordinarily difficult for western missionaries. The obvious necessity of inventing some sort of basis to share the territory and the task with missionaries from other countries and cultures has forced this issue. But Americans, for example, are rarely experienced in team relationships except in competitive sports. We tend to be loners. Sometimes we are prepared to use helpers, but the relationship works best in our eyes when we make the assignments.

The multicultural reality of today's worldwide mission force compounds the problem. Many people in the world, not just westerners, find it difficult to work as peers or subordinates to people of another language, culture, or race. While this is a problem that Christian transformation can deal with, many missionaries have not yet sought the spiritual resources to enter into this transformation. In many, many situations, intercultural teams have fallen apart. Indeed, three couples from Texas or from Iowa expecting to work together as a team are more likely to fall apart than not.

At least part of the solution lies in the representations of cultural diversity and the style of teamwork demonstrated in the central office of the mission agency. In these centers it is typical to hear a good line being advocated about intercultural acceptance and the importance of teamwork, but the overwhelming majority of faces seem very pale, and after the collective "amen" for the platitudes, all return to their respective cubicles and the teamwork idea is left for the field people.

Virtual Missionaries

If anyone doubts the effects of technological change, a reckoning of the number of computers and computer-driven devices that affect everyday life will settle the issue. What really startles is the awareness that all of this has happened within the past twenty to twenty-five years. Any image of the next century

must place the computer, especially in its role within communications, close to the center. For one thing, e-mail and the telephonic uses of e-mail technologies will be dramatically enlarged. It will be possible to carry on rather intimate, confidential conversations with any of a vast array of people across the globe while sitting in a lounge at the airport. This development will surely open up new and more expeditious ways to conduct Christian mission.

Surely the most responsible forecast in reference to computers and communication is that every mission agency needs to assign two people to accept the responsibility, along with their other tasks, to read regularly in the field of communications technology, attend one new technology exhibition each year, and inform the rank and file within the mission of the most promising computer applications for the mission of the church. To do less is to run the risk of being last to grasp the really important transformations.

Minimal Management

Formalizing the management of missions has steadily increased over the twentieth century, bringing depersonalization and eroding the quality of relationships. All sorts of problems in mission management can be traced to distances between decision-making and the context of the problem. Within business and industry there has been a substantial investment in research and high level think-tanking concerning the need to move decision making toward the field context without losing access to the resources and personnel who carry the responsibility of defining and maintaining the coherence of the organization. Within mission agencies, some recognize this problem and are exploring it; others play a vigorous game of high-speed ping pong trying to anticipate the angles of the incoming ball. Worse, other agencies define the issue as a need for micro-managerial adjustments, and thus they tinker.

Perhaps the major guideline needed is to move toward minimalizing management hierarchies. If a pencil needs sharpening, do it. It should not take two levels of authorization. If a bridge is to be built, the whole organization should know about it and line up, not to impede or over regulate, but to support those who will build it. Administrators of mission agencies, if they seek appropriate counsel and advice from within and from outside the mission organization, should be able to reconceptualize their style and paradigms of mission management.

Conclusion

We must anticipate transformations in the organized enabling of the mission of the church. If the dominant paradigms of habituated missions are not challenged, mission organizations will fall out of touch with those they represent or those to whom they minister, and their mission will become more harmful than helpful. Although it is wise to assume an ongoing need for long-term, fixed-place, and institutional missionaries, the needs are changing quantitatively and qualitatively. Some guidelines are offered for the next few years as we turn the corner in missions.

1. Build competent teams of consultative missionaries and make them available for collaborative planning with leaders from other missions, from supporting churches in the sending base, and from emerging churches in other nations.

2. Learn to work in response to and in partnership with initiatives from churches in other places.

3. Give priority to requests for partnerships that bring outside resources to bear on a short-term basis to augment, not replace, local resources.

4. Put major emphasis on developing local leaders in emerging churches.

5. Be ready to pull out and wait for the next moment of call.

6. Maintain a resource base that is not necessarily on the field but is ready to serve a wide variety of fields.

Missionary work is now being carried out in new ways. And the new ways often turn out to be the really old ways. The apostle Paul for example was an itinerant missionary, working with a series of different partners. He rarely stayed anywhere very long. He planted churches and left them to the care of the Holy Spirit long before they were strong. He invited his associates to undertake itinerant teaching ministries to strengthen and straighten out the new churches, but he kept moving.

In the past 200 years, the so-called modern missionary era, the standard style of missions has usually involved sitting in place, digging in deep, and persisting until we judge that the church is strong enough to stand alone. What lessons have been learned from such examples as the churches in China and Burma? These churches were considered weak and unready, but the foreigners, the *Bible women* most commonly, left them to the Holy Spirit's care, and they experienced great growth.

As always, change comes at great price, but lack of change is even more costly. The changes that mission agencies are willingly and thoughtfully implementing today are too few and too slow. Many opportunities may be lost because of rigidity and timidity.

We do not create opportunity for mission; it is God who is the creator and sustainer of the mission of the church, and the twenty first century is in God's hands. We need not fear losing an opportunity. Our rightful role is to commit ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, read the signs of the times, and, wherever possible, establish new models of mission in response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the disciplines of the Holy Scriptures.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Mission Toward the Twenty-First Century: A Global Overview

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

The author views the mission's task from the perspective of one with a global view. "Given the conditions we see around us and given the probabilities of this, that or the other eventuality occurring, what are the alternate scenarios that might unfold in the years ahead?" he says to describe this report. This article deals with key issues confronting missions at the end of the twentieth century—issues that remain challenges in the twenty-first century. *This article is based on a discussion paper Ted Ward prepared for a pastors' conference held at the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in the late 1980s.*

Hard Realities

We cannot be sure where the world is headed, but we can at least be sure we are on the right track as Christians in response to probabilities. In looking ahead, consider three areas: hard realities, strong probabilities, and high hopes.

Three hard realities should be identified: a lifestyle reality, rich-poor gaps, and militant Islam.

Lifestyle. The "American way of life" is in a sense up for grabs. This threat to our lifestyle has the energy crunch at its root. Reduced mobility is likely to be one of its first consequences, and the economy at large is an obvious second implication. Having operated in a period of relative affluence, it has become characteristic of North American Christians, especially in the middle-class denominations and churches, to take many things for granted that now are going to become matters of deliberate choice. Disposable income, the most obvious example, will not be adequate to meet the lifestyle standards that people in your churches have become accustomed to.

This "American way of life" is not nearly as American as many Americans might think. It is highly dependent, for example, on Brazilian coffee, Ghanaian chocolate, and Saudi oil. This fact of dependency, however, allows Christian leaders to deal with our dependency on God, not dependency on the American, self-made entrepreneur. The best estimations available indicate if there is any further restriction on the international supplies of energy, we will be unable to come on line soon enough with adequate domestic energy, coal conversion, or the like. We will face from two to five years of extreme dislocation, if there is the slightest additional energy pinch.

Few people seem capable of coming to grips with the changes in lifestyle, working patterns, living standards, and church giving that will result when people are no longer able to commute to work. We need to take a hard look at what this condition will mean, even in heating or air-conditioning for our churches, let alone in mission support.

Rich-poor gaps. Recent years of development in the third world have produced a new, relatively rich middle class, though much smaller than in the United States. The gap between rich and poor has existed for years. In many countries the land, for example, is owned by three to five percent of the people. Serfdom did not go out of style in the middle ages; it is still a world condition.

As development does occur, those who benefit first are those who somehow get their hands on power. There emerges a new middle class that tends to be power hungry and not very generous. "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

In Brazil the condition of the poorest of the poor, about 40 percent of the population, is much more desperate than it was ten years ago. But the economic wealth divided on a per capita basis looks like so much improvement that official U.S. standards for development aid now rule out Brazil as a recipient. In the third world more of the population is rural than in the United States. True, there is increased urbanization as people are pulled out of the rural sector, but the people who are forced off the farms and into urban areas lack urban skills and thus they very soon become dependent. This is a serious, complicating problem, especially when the urban centers are controlled by the elite power structure.

Militant Islam. As recently as early 1979, conferences have begun to discuss what militant Islam will mean. People are seeing the resurgence of militancy and aggressiveness within various religious groups. Christians are growing more anxious, especially about Islam. In various periods of world history, religious themes have had political meaning but not as much as in the past century. Now it has become very clear that political conflict rooted in religious differences has returned.

Militant Islam presents some very difficult problems for Christian missions. Many are aware that the African continent has been heavily evangelized. Some even refer to Africa as being more Christianized than the United States. In terms of active involvement of God's people in both outreach and fellowship, that generalization is credible.

But Islam is even more active in Africa. All over black Africa, Islam is strong and getting stronger. It is well-supported; if there is nothing else the middle east sheiks are doing with their oil money, they are sponsoring the building of mosques. (Many mosques in the United States are being built with oil money as well.)

Some equate Islam with the Arab world: if it is Arab it is Islamic, and if it is Islamic it is Arab. That is not quite true; one other generalization needs to be added: Islam is much larger than Arab ethnicity. Consider Indonesia, Malaysia, eastern China, many of the former French colonies of Africa, and even Nigeria. There is an active Christian presence in much of Africa, but it is not as prominent as Islam. Hardly any of the Islamic regions are evangelized for Christ. This is one of the great frontiers.

But it does not follow that Islam is inherently Arab. Vast areas of the world that are not Arabic are Islamic. In Nigeria, for example, militant Islam, with new sources of money, is on the move. Watch the mosques being built in the third world. They are serving their societies in much the way Christian cathedrals and parish churches did in the middle ages—becoming a rallying point for development and the emergence of nations.

The developing world is increasingly Islamic in orientation. This fact has serious implications for missions; the most obvious is the increasing difficulty of access for Christian missionaries, even in countries formerly relatively easy to enter.

Strong Probabilities

Migration problems. Increasing difficulty in immigration is the first of the strong probabilities. American Christians have tended to take for granted that whenever enough money is available and enough motivated young people are located, it will likely be possible to send missionaries. Mission planning thus is likely to jump to premature conclusions. Take the matter of closed countries, for example. Increasingly the

matter of dealing with restrictions or finding valid alternatives is important. Some countries or regions are going to become closed almost overnight. In even more cases, the enforcement of migration policies can seem so erratic as to be incomprehensible. It seems inevitable that immigration restrictions will become a problem for missions, even in such places as western Europe. The importance of dual vocations is likely to become more widely accepted by missional Christians.

As a developing nation becomes more sensitive to economics, it learns how much a country loses when immigrant labor uses up local jobs, whether people from a neighboring country come in as cheap laborers or people from the United States come to work as technicians. Resistance arises to any foreign company that is not employing local people. The same thing is happening to all multinational corporations, and like it or not, a North American mission board is just a multinational corporation to much of the third world. We assume that in these government campaigns against foreign workers, the last to fall usually is the person doing church development, church growth, or church planting because he or she is not taking a local job. But whose job *should* it be? Further, Christians are painted from the same bucket used to paint all other Americans. Rarely can the North American Christian mission divorce itself adequately from everything else that being an American means to people of that country. And so much ugliness still abounds. Even in the so-called friendly nations today, there is much more aloofness toward Americans on the part of people in the know than in the past. It should not surprise us that this spills over into immigration policy.

Economic pressures. Financial pressure on missions hardly needs to be elaborated. If any substantial economic dislocation occurs in the North American community, the mission sector of the church probably will be one of the first to feel it. Missionary investment has been too much like a disposable item in the budget; it is seen as an option. Christian leaders must carry a prophetic message to the people of God about where missions fits into the overall economy of God's work in the world. Will foreign mission activity be the first disposable item once we reach the point where there is difficulty in scraping up enough money to pay the rent and utilities bills?

Denominations. A third factor is that denominational distinctives are not nearly as important in other countries as they are in the United States. Church denominations are more important to those who value the specifics of doctrine that underlie the beliefs and historical distinctions. American Christians commonly understand that there are different emphases in the magnificent breadth of God's involvement in His redemptive work in the world. Every denomination has strengths and weaknesses. Each represents something of the wisdom of God's total spectrum, but none embraces the whole.

Denominations have arisen out of culture. We should be more aware of how denominations in the western tradition of the Reformation church grew out of cultural realities in response to questions from western philosophy and society, particularly from the ancient Greek tradition. In much of the mission world, that is not what people are concerned about.

Christian churches are well-advised to mobilize along cross-denominational lines in the third world. Missions and church leaders in North America must help our donor public understand what it means when people stand first for Christ and secondly show respect, but not necessarily loyalty, for the denominations that brought them into the kingdom of God.

Denominational structure lines are crumbling in the third world, but this does not represent a falling away. It is, instead, a response to a new generation of Christians coming forward in churches already planted who do not see as much difference between denominations as the missionaries see.

Let us somehow find our allegiance to Christ with such clarity that we can communicate what God is doing in the world, not simply what a denomination is trying to do within its particular carved-out domain. Thank God for what Southern Baptist missionaries have been able to do. But understand that when God takes over, He draws some different lines, and He draws them in response to local culture.

Education. A fourth factor is that there will be a greater emphasis on higher education in the third world. Part of this will come from the new elite who feel they must have higher education, even if it means leaving the home country. This will be a tough issue, for many are leery of bringing foreign nationals out of culture; the education received probably will not work very well back in the home culture. But the pressure will be there.

Human need. The fifth strong possibility is the mounting pressure in human need. Conflicting stories about the food problem are heard, but we need to keep foremost the fact that the world's population problem has not been solved. Even stabilizing population seems beyond reach of most countries.

North American Christians should be responsive to the tremendous need for a world food bank. Also, a missionary specialization commodity that should be increased is rural and agricultural development.

If Jesus were to walk the countryside today in much of the third world, His work would include ministries of development, helping people to meet their own needs, for food and water particularly.

High Hopes

Development. First, there are high hopes that Christians will become even more involved in national development. It is exciting how in case after case the emerging churches in third world nations are becoming involved in national development schemes. The concern for evangelization does not blind their Christian response to human need and social challenge. (Read Matthew 25:31-46 again.)

China. A second hope is China. It will be a test of missionary creativity. The Lord is giving us one more chance to reconceptualize missions for China. It will take a very different kind of missionary deployment to take advantage of today's situation in China, which is but one example of the so-called "closed" world. There are American Christians in China today conducting English classes. There are increasing numbers of professors from North American institutions teaching in Chinese institutions. Many Christians are "on site." But even the non-monetary supports for most of these are virtually overlooked by the church. Support means more than providing money. Mobilization of prayer is far more important.

Forms in context. A third hope is to put institutions into forms compatible with the local pattern. Americans have inserted into the world a lot of out-of-context institutions, and we have not let the churches remodel these alien forms to fit the cultural settings—the local needs, circumstances, and capabilities.

As we face "contextualization" in theology—as theology is applied in the local setting—we will begin to see its implication for institutional forms and begin to be more local about what form will function.

Frontier rediscovery. Another hope is for a shift in deployment in order to rediscover the frontier. More and more, the deployment of missionaries must be in viable forms that make sense locally. We must send more people whose careers make sense in the local economy. Even if they are to be primarily deployed in one-on-one evangelization tactics, they will need some kind of responsible "cover."

Consider this illustration: Day after day I walked to work past a little Chinese man. He was dressed strangely, but he always smiled at me. I was quite sure he must be from the People's Republic. I got acquainted with him and, sure enough, he was from Canton. "Why are you here?" I asked. "I am here just because I love people," he told me. I didn't think that was much of an answer.

"What kind of work are you in?" I went on. "Well," he replied, "I'm in the work of helping people."

"Who pays your bills?" I asked suspiciously. "People back in China pay me," he said. "Pay you to do what?" I inquired. "To be here," he answered, "because I love people." It didn't add up; perhaps he is some sort of a dangerous agent.

When this story was told to a group of missionaries, their eyes got wide. If they simply changed the characters, they had heard a typical missionary described: one who goes into a place and explains that he is supported from outside; one who says she is there only because of love for people and says a lot of other things that are a real mystery. Because of the nature of the world we live in, the statements can produce anxiety and suspicion.

One independent mission welcomed almost everywhere—at least until someone accuses them of being political—is Wycliffe Bible Translators. They are honest linguists. What they do in linguistic development is available to the country, and quite often a country needs the kind of help Wycliffe offers. Their work is respected. The group has a practical and viable "cover."

Southern Baptists are now likely the largest denomination represented in the oil countries. They have the most people deployed in the Arab world, outnumbering all other Christians in those countries. They are not appointed missionaries. They are oil workers—explorers, drillers, pipe fitters, doctors, and a substantial number of scientists. Most of the families lack adequate religious training, missionary orientation, and a base of responsible prayer support. But they are in-place as potential missionaries.

Sometimes we give God very little credit for being powerful enough to help us deal with the "closed" areas. If we are to crack the frontiers of communist countries and the Arab world, we will need a new kind of deployment. Perhaps God has already provided it.

New modes. A final hope is for new modes of missions. We are seeing people go out as teams, covenanting together to work into a new area and discover ways they can minister. You don't break open new territory by sending single people or lone couples, one by one, into old enclaves. You break out by sending new teams into new possibilities.

Missions should no longer be thought of as one piece, but in terms of three kinds of fields:

1. The first is the *support systems field.* The organization, person, or group that provides funds and resources for a person from the United States under mission board support going into a situation where he or she will be part of a support system for developing national churches. The majority of North American missionaries are deployed "on field" in this manner.

2. Second is the *expansion field*—missionaries who can work with local "on site" people or organizations have a somewhat companionate relationship with "national" persons. This meaning of field presupposes that the benefits to the church in the country being served by the missionary is the important "field of service." Some say that from now on, evangelization within each country will be in the hands of the national believers. The major restraint on this outcome may emerge from the difficult reality that much of the third world is essentially tribal. For example, in many

places in Africa a white person from America will be better received than an African from another tribe. Working with the national Christians as expansion missionaries will be a continuing need.

3. The third is the *high risk field.* God will be opening many of these with missionary approaches that are very different from traditional missionary experience. China, for instance, is open to the Gospel, but not open to classical missionaries. We need to understand that "open to the Gospel" does not necessarily demand that we think in traditional terms of deploying missionaries.

Is the age of missions over? Certainly not. The outreach of the church began at Pentecost and, faithful to the Great Commission, will continue until the Lord returns.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

Turning the Corner in Missions

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

Change is a present reality and familiar assumptions are becoming outdated and unrealistic. The author identifies several persisting ideas in mission organization and international work that can no longer be taken for granted. *This article was an unpublished paper dedicated to* Chrysalis *and its founders, John and Carol Dettoni, May 28, 1996.*

Missions are changing. Before this century comes to a close, many things we have taken for granted will be gone. The evidences of change are all around us, whether we like it or not.

These statements could refer to dozens, hundreds, perhaps thousands of aspects of human society. For the worldwide mission of the church, for example, change is already here. Many of the familiar assumptions are already outdated and unrealistic. Sadly, the strategies and practices of many missionary organizations seem to be so embedded in the old assumptions that timely change is becoming more difficult. Following is a commentary on a few of these former beliefs so persistent in American missionary work which **can no longer be taken for granted**.

We are carrying out missionary work the way it has always been done. That the mission of the church may be coming to an end is surely not the issue. God's redemptive purposes will continue to "the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 20). Our sense of history may be dulled by this assumption. The facts are quite different. The Apostle Paul, for example, was a highly itinerant missionary, working with a series of different partners. He rarely stayed anywhere very long. He planted churches and left them to the care of the Holy Spirit before they were matured. In Crete, Paul instructed Titus to undertake an itinerant teaching ministry around the island to strengthen the newly established churches, but Paul moved on. He kept moving.

Compare the Apostle Paul's mobile ministry with the classic forms of missionary activity within the memory of church folk of our time, the so-called "modern missionary era." Typically missionaries have stayed in one place, or two at most, digging in deep, organizing and managing the support institutions, especially schools, book stores, hospitals, radio stations, and seminaries, keeping the books and watching over every shoulder "until the church is strong enough to stand alone." What lessons have been learned from such examples as the churches in China and Burma, wherein great growth has been sparked by "weak" and "unready" churches which had been left to the Holy Spirit's care?

Missionaries are needed everywhere. This assumption has given rise to the notion that almost anyone can be assumed to be gifted for missionary ministry. It is also one of the two assumptions underlying the unwise habit of sending inadequately prepared and inappropriately gifted people into situations where they will do more harm than good. In fact, missionaries are *not* needed everywhere. As we gain a deeper appreciation of the way the Holy Spirit works in the emerging churches, it is becoming more evident that there are times when withdrawing missionaries actually assists in fulfilling God's purposes. For example, *dependency* on outside resources and outside planning is a common consequence of overly long missionary presence. Non-emergence of local leadership is another consequence. Perhaps the most

harmful consequence is the vast legacy of dysfunctional institutions which have been established by well-intentioned missionaries on the assumption that even the forms of institutions which the churches of the western world have built for themselves are needed everywhere.

Missionaries can go anywhere. Yes, in the modern era missionaries *can* go anywhere, even if it means taking on a *cover* or disguise. But this assumption is based squarely in the ethos of colonialism; it is based on the presumed rights and the actual power of people from a dominant nation to enter at their own choice wherever they choose within the empire. To some missionary agencies and churches, any resistance or delay is interpreted as evidence of satanic works against the Gospel. When will it become more clear that resistance to outsiders and their alien agendas is an ordinary expression of the ordinary human sense of dignity and humanity? Why do those who carry the Gospel message assume that they have right to do to others what they would not allow others to do to them?

Rediscovery of the importance of "frontier missions" in the past twenty-five years has encouraged the assumption that missionaries can go anywhere. Indeed, some of the more valuable deployments of missionaries from various nations are on the frontiers of evangelization and church planting. But the limits on these open frontiers are often more severe than in the past. It could be reasonably argued that the easier new frontiers are already used up and gone. The actual *new frontiers* are in situations and among people that are the hardest to reach, especially among the urbanized subcultures, rich and poor. Appropriate background, experience, education, and motivation for these frontiers are sadly lacking among American missionaries. Indeed, many American missionaries cannot go just *anywhere* without some fundamental changes in themselves that lie far deeper than their declarations of willingness.

Missionaries can do anything. *Missionary* is a term loosely applied to people who go from one place to another with the intention of furthering the Gospel. This freedom of definition, combined with an increasing willingness to travel to seek a clearer view of God's will in one's own life, has led to all sorts of unnecessary expense and misdirected effort. In today's world, constraint is far more important than exuberance in the deployment of missionary resources. Doing things that local people should be doing, doing things that really do not need to be done, and doing things in ways that are culturally inappropriate and even resented are just a few of the unfortunate consequences of this very American assumption about willingness, eagerness, and omni-functional competency.

Presumption of the versatility of missionaries is the other of the foundational assumptions underlying the bad habit of sending unprepared and inept people into situations that demand greater expertise, insights, and interpersonal sensitivity.

Missionaries can do things however they think best. No hangover from colonialism is more persistent than the assumption that those who *do* missionary work should define how it is to be done. The very idea of an American missionary being subordinated to a non-western person is abhorrent to many missionaries and sending churches alike. In the more effective ministries of international missions, often now and surely in the future, the missionary team itself is multicultural and multiethnic. American missionaries are facing a future in which following Christ will involve accommodations to the local church (on the field) in very concrete terms. Modernization throughout the world is producing a deceptive similarity that causes the newcomer and the ossified old-timer to think that cultural adaptations are less needed than in the past. But these apparent similarities must not be interpreted as uniformity. The people of the world are becoming more like Americans only in superficial ways. Beneath it all, cultural history and traditions lie deep and strong.

Missionaries must show their willingness to help. Helping always sounds good, but what motives does this willingness reveal? Sometimes helping is just one more way to gain control of the situation. The urge to exercise power will drive a person to engage in a short period of servanthood in order to get as quickly as possible to the level of authority and glorification that is assumed to follow.

Willingness to help is surely not an undesirable attribute for a missionary, but perhaps in today's world of missions it is equally important to show willingness *not* to help. The assumption that one should "hit the ground running" produces an overeager and often overbearing pushiness. Getting the picture, letting others tell about what is happening and why, and displaying a reluctance to dump ideas all over people demands patience and time. Surely this is not new. Nehemiah's remarkable effectiveness in the rebuilding of Jerusalem shows this investment and patient attitude (Neh. 2:11-16).

When missionaries help *best*, it is in response to requests and invitations. Special attention to the competencies needed and acquiring the preparation to help effectively distinguish the best approach to the missionary's helping role. Specialized ministries of itinerant helpers are emerging. The best of these new missionaries are highly skilled and they use careful judgments about the situations wherein they can best serve.

Missionaries can work best among people who are willing to help. Still true indeed. Missionaries should rarely do things for people that the people can do for themselves. But in the *modern missionary era* this assumption has been used primarily as a basis of judgment of the sincerity and the worthiness of the local Christians. So anxious has been the concern not to leave any *rice Christian*[1] undetected that this willingness to share the load (as defined by the missionary) has been seen as an evidence of spiritual maturity.

What is needed today is the attitude of openness and vulnerability that Jesus showed to the woman of Sychar (John 4:7). Our Lord opened His conversation with this woman by showing Himself to be human, thirsty, and willing to ask even a woman of Samaria for a drink. He opened himself to her mocking and ridicule, through which she quickly sought to grasp control of the situation (v.9).

Willingness to help should be based on the missionary field's communicating an honest *willingness to be helped*. Herein lies the truly Christian basis of reciprocity and trust.

There are two kinds of missionaries: **short term** and ***real.*** Unfortunately, after two or three years on the field, and especially after the first or second reappointments, veterans begin to think of the newcomers, especially the short-termers, as being less than *real* missionaries. Actually, the rediscovery of the idea of the short-term missionary was perhaps less than fifty years ago, if indeed it was ever used earlier. The Apostle Paul might have thought of himself as being a short-term missionary. Since he was frequently moving often from place to place, he might qualify for the prefix. Ironically, the label *short-term* was first intended to protect the dignity (or holiness?) of real missionaries from this rabble of "unprepared" irregulars who had not gone through all the initiation processes. The Apostle Paul was probably the first one, but in our times short-term mission activity has brought thousands of Americans and many from other western and Asian nations into close encounters with the Holy Spirit's work across the world.

[1] Rice Christian – *a term widely used among overseas missionaries to describe pseudo-Christians, who claim to be followers of Christ in order to gain a share of communal food benefits.*

The trend is likely a consequence of 1) the need to redress the remoteness of missions from the churches in these last times of the *modern missionary era* and 2) the increased affluence of many Christians, especially the Americans, the Chinese, and the Koreans. As a result, there are more and more local mission committees in churches that include at least one or two members who have *been there*. All in all, more good than harm has resulted, though in the years ahead, the missionary organizations that do a more thorough and thoughtful job of articulating the workings of long-term and the short-term missionaries will set the path toward a more effective use of resources. Meanwhile, the old-timers tend to see themselves as the "real" missionaries, too often demeaning, avoiding, or misusing the naive and oft-times demanding short-termers.

But there is another sort of short-term missionary re-emerging: the highly competent specialized fellow-laborers whose gifts and expertise are on call to serve the churches of the world in response to invitation, planning, and negotiating in genuine partnerships. Such people in earlier times would have been expected to become "full-time missionaries" and to confine themselves to some small circle of locations within a single region of a country. The trend is to utilize such persons in small teams, usually composed of peer partners from at least two nations. The church's crying need for leadership development throughout the world is being addressed through this process far better than by sending in one after another ill-equipped and inexperienced teacher of canned curriculum for leadership in the church.

Turning the corner gracefully. As always, change comes at great price. The changes that are taking place are too few and too slow. One fears that much opportunity will be lost because of rigidity and timidity. The status quo always makes prior claim on righteousness. It is tempting to resort to hostile behavior and high explosives. Caution! The ways of our Lord must be the model. Our God is the Lord of the universe. He is the creator of opportunity itself. We need not fear losing an opportunity or letting Him lose one. Absurd. Our job is to commit ourselves to His leading, read the signs of the times, and wherever possible establish new models of mission in response to the guidance of his Holy Spirit and the disciplines of the Holy Scriptures.

Some guidelines are offered for the next few years as we turn the corner in missions:

1. Build competent teams of consultative colleagues and missionaries and help find or establish resources to increase their levels of expertise.
2. Learn to work in response to and in partnership with leaders of the churches in other places.
3. Bring resources to bear on a short-term basis to augment *not to replace* local resources.
4. Put major emphasis on developing local leaders.
5. Be ready to pull out and wait for the next moment of call.
6. Maintain a *home base* that is not "on the field."

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served

through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

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Lone Ranger to Barnabas: Over and Out

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

How North Americans can relate to global missions in the years ahead will depend on three factors: how well the lessons of history are learned, what the planted church wants to do with us and what happens to the human condition in general. None of the three of these factors is predictable except in the most general of terms. *This article was based on a 1982 unpublished manuscript.*

What will the political world be like ten years from now? If there were a clear answer for this question, many recommendations could be made and preparation for the future could proceed with greater confidence. But we do not know. Not even about next year or next month. We just do not know.

So we must make informed estimates, not as wild guesses but as careful extrapolation from existing evidences; the estimates must take into account what we already have seen. The future is apt to be a continuation of trends that are already in place, complicated of course by events that cannot be adequately anticipated. These unpredictable events produce "discontinuities" which will send the trends off their trajectories in various ways. A futurist then is a user of data that show trends; but a futurist also takes account of possible discontinuities and projects the data about trends into alternative scenarios reflecting possible encounters with various discontinuity producing events.

For the literal-minded person all of this sounds like so much wasted time, but the probabilities for the occurrences of particular discontinuities loom so large that the data about the trends themselves seem almost insignificant.

Givens and Options . . . And Knowing the Differences

The Gospel is central to Christianity. Living and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, now and yet to come, is the joyful privilege of the faithful. Whether it is called proselytizing, evangelizing, witnessing, or making disciples, and whether it is judged by human society as welcome or unwelcome, it will continue as long as there are those on earth who know salvation in Jesus Christ. As an extension of the presence and proclamation of the church, mission will continue as an inseparable part of the outreach.

Such reassurance, though representative of no new theological insight, seems to be missing from certain discussions of mission and the future. It is an unfortunate reading of the history of the church to confuse the current models of mission with the New Testament models, rooted in the intrinsic outreach of the Gospel. The issue at hand is not whether the mission of the church will continue but whether North America's organizational and institutional initiatives will continue and if so in what ways.

Mission methodology, strategy, and modes of deployment of missionaries are always debatable matters. There are no mission strategy guidebooks dangling on golden cords. Missionary activity is always negotiable, rooted in Scriptural principles and faithful to the person and work of Jesus Christ, but always a creature of the times. If the era is one of colonial expansionism, this reality is reflected in mission practice, whether it should be or not. If the era is technological, then the mission of the church is carried out in technological terms of purpose, methodology and "evaluative criteria." So it is today.

But a new factor has entered the picture. Since the days of colonial militarism in the New World and slave-commerce in Africa, the world of the missionary has been dominated by the posture of the sending country. In the short period since the mid-twentieth century the advent of nationalism has re-colored the world according the many hued kaleidoscope of national prides. No longer can the missionary from the United States or Canada think and act like an American or a Canadian and get away with it. The ways and means of the missionary must take into account the values and the outlook—official and unofficial—of the people to whom she or he has been sent. It can be observed that some of the best missionaries of an earlier era also went to pains to hear and respond to the aspirations of the host society. Then humility was an option; today it has become a necessity.

One reading of social trends sees selfishness and isolationism on the increase and being reflected in the church and in missions. A more hopeful scenario is premised on the increased contrast between Christian and non-Christian values. As Christians come more and more to accept their distinctive role as representatives of the kingdom of God, missionary "neutralism" and the consequent benign neglect of issues of social justice may become less acceptable. Whether or not the Christian community as supporters of missions becomes larger, the "voices crying in the wilderness" can be expected to increase. Christians of the future can be expected to be more involved in the whole of human condition.

The despotic and inhumanly cruel regimes that the United States has propped up in the name of anti-communism have become our greatest national disgrace. That our side in Guatemala is the 2% who own 70% of the land is, in fact, a loud and clear foreign policy, but it is not compatible with Christian values.

The Christian concern for refugees and widows and orphans is about ready to come of age. The American people in general and Christians in particular are ripe for hearing just why there are refugees and widows and orphans. There is even a readiness to reconsider war itself. The new social revolution could begin with a sensitized conscience of Christian compassion; then it would be nourished by a contrite spirit, humbled by the recognition that "of the people" means us. Where is the government we could trust to wage a just war? That fervent prayer seems to be at odds with the bellicose belligerence of our new experiment in so-called "conservative" government. (It is hard to imagine anything less conservative in foreign policy than kicking one's enemies and many of one's friends just to see if their fondness for us is greater than their annoyance.)

This is no time to go it alone. The era of hero figures with silver bullets is over. It will not come back. The North American missionary of the future must be nurtured in a totally different orientation. It will take genuine selfless, humble, committed love to function cross-culturally for Jesus Christ in the days ahead. This is no option. It is a given.

The Trends in Place

The post-colonial period of nationalism is giving way to a period of inter-third world pragmatic alliances. The practices and policies in many if not most missions still reflect the values and assumptions of the colonial period. Few have made their peace with the nationalistic values of the post-colonial period. To do so has become an urgent agendum because many of the values of earlier times are persisting into the emerging period of pragmatic alliances. Even as we have seen the end of colonial empire we can now see with great anxiety the new power, that of economic empire.

Rather than being liberated, the developing nations find themselves colonized once again, this time by a more generalized and hard-to-target master, economic tyranny. It is difficult to imagine how any of the weaker two-thirds of all nations will weather the economic storms. Rich nations must lend; poor nations

must borrow. It is almost that simple. Thus all sorts of pragmatic alliances, now so necessary to ward off economic slavery, are apt to give way to a heavy-handed subjugation of the poor by the rich. The world groans for Jubilee.

The very term "third world" was the harbinger of the period of pragmatic alliances. The sense of autonomous nationalism is offended by the proposition that a nation must line up with this or that major power. Since the Second World War, western nations have taken the stance that communism is a monolithic threat and must be contained. The Russians, on the other hand, have promoted communism as a supranational ideology that transcends national boundaries. Thus their use of surrogates (Cuba, Angola, Vietnam, for example) has been a natural and pervasive process, often subtle and usually beyond the reach of the simplistic solutions offered by American politicians operating as they tend to do in good-guy/bad-guy models of political thought.

Third world nations have resented being called anyone's ally, because weak allies tend to be used as "lackey" nations obligated to follow the leading of their sponsors. Feeling good about being someone's servant went out with colonialism. The U.S. has managed to sustain the formal linkages of "favored nation" status with any number of "friendlies" until, one by one, their old-style dictatorships of money and family are overthrown by popular uprisings, frequently replaced by dictatorships of the left. The United States has watched the process over and over again, often intervening in exactly the wrong ways. Nevertheless, there is persisting hope that our national leadership will one day put together a policy of constructive assistance for people who want to get out from under tyranny and economic oppression. Reflect on American dealings with Cuba, Zaire, Angola, Nicaragua, and now El Salvador. One wonders . . . someday the Philippines? Korea? Argentina? Saudi Arabia? South Africa? Brazil? Reflect on the "guns not butter" trend in foreign assistance under the current administration. And do not underestimate the popularity of the power formula within a society whose ethos is so securely represented by a national gun manufacturers association.

Small wonder that the emerging nations are less ideological than pragmatic. They live in a world of little compassion. They form alliances on grounds that seem petty or peevish to those in the grand nations of the east or west. If they have any sort of raw material needed by the grand nations, they try to put the squeeze on it. OPEC is the most apparent of these pragmatic alliances. Indeed, what else could unite Kuwait and Nigeria? Comparable alliances to control scarce raw minerals (cobalt, titanium, manganese, lithium, tin, bauxite, for example) or alliances to control waterways, gulfs, and strategic landforms, no matter how impractical, may emerge. The human social need to affiliate is persistent, but antipathy for the richer nations will surely cause the developing nations to grope for ways to affiliate with one another whenever possible to exclude the "have" nations. Is there a nation in the western bloc that could emerge with sufficient in common with developing nations to become the new "white champions?" For example, will Australia be to the twenty-first century what the United States was to the twentieth? By the year 2000 Australia could emerge as the organizing leader of a half dozen mineral-based OPEC-type alliances for the third world; for sure, none would be as powerful as OPEC, but even as the Arab nations have triggered a turnaround for the Nigerian economy, cartels that could assure a stronger world market price for other third world minerals could provide new hope for the hopeless in many places.

Speculation? Yes, but the scenarios of the future bring such possibilities into focus to assist in more effective planning. There are all sorts of trends to watch, and they do not all go the same direction. No longer can you count on anything in international relations. The disappearance of coherent policy, an increasing weakness of the western nations since the dissolution of the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires, has left a troubled sea with no navigational stars. The pragmatic amorality of the United States has further confused the picture. When it suits Uncle Sam's pleasure and business interests, this nation is for

this and against that. But you have to follow it all closely day by day to find out whether dictatorship is good or bad, whether even trade union solidarity is right or wrong for Poland. The Russians do it the same way, but their notion of what is good for their interest is not quite so whimsical. Their self-interest is perhaps more blatant and easier to predict.

We can predict that certain trends now in place will continue and that missions in the years ahead will have to accommodate these realities. Is the U.S. playing into the hands of extremists of the left who are telling third world opinion-makers that the U.S. cannot be expected to comprehend anything complex?

It strikes Latin America watchers as ironic, even absurd, that those who accepted Samosa are now concerned about democracy in Nicaragua. God, make us humble! Our history is too much with us. When Nicaraguan leadership plays on the people's fears of invasion by the United States, they have the facts of established habits to illustrate their point. The United States Marines have been garrisoned in Nicaragua for a total of 24 years. Why not once again?

Political naiveté is common among missionaries. These lambs are being set up for slaughter. In many situations many of them say such foolish and inaccurate things. When will North American mission sending agencies start looking for a modicum of factual knowledge of American social history, political affairs, and global awareness in their candidates?

The question is rhetorical, but the answer had better be forthcoming. The time is running out. Central and South American *campesinos*—yes, even Indians—are more politicized than most missionaries can comprehend. African liberationists are appearing even among the Protestants. Few of our relief and development groups take into account the ways they are being used in genocidal plots.

Consider the way Somalia refugee camps keep the hearts of Americans warmed and divert the attention from the systematic Amharic purges of the Oromos. Our Oromo brothers in Christ get very little understanding or attention. We create benevolent refugee camps for their widows and children, but we do not even discuss openly the underlying political problems. And just what is happening? Disillusioned Oromos are turning to Marxist philosophy in order to compensate for the defaults of Christian awareness and conscience. Now the leftist Oromo Liberation Front has emerged to do battle against the Russian dominated Amharic central government. A strange world.

The fascination with China will be a blessing or a curse to North American missions. It can be a blessing if the unfolding story is carefully studied. The history of missions in China provides a great opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the western institutionalizing model of missions. The data stare us in the face: Christianity was put to the test against proletarian revolution; the godless foundation of communist dictatorship, though a bludgeon of horrible evil, was unable to wipe out the church, but the institutions and organizations crumbled. When survival is at stake, the Christian community can go underground and persevere; our God is powerful. Should organized missions be too busy or too proud to come to grips with the meaning of China's surviving church, the old fascination will likely seduce American money and "cleverness" into some sort of foolhardy adventurism. The Bible smuggling movement suggests how misguided this could be.

Jonathan Chao and John C. Wang (CCRS Prayer Letter No. 18 February, 1982) report that K. H. Ting, the head of the Three-Self Movement, persists in painting an overly cautious picture of the church in China, but greater misunderstandings occur when western churchmen make short visits and long speeches.

Like it or not, the ideology of the Chinese "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" speaks to a deeply felt issue in many parts of the third world. The sense of dignity and valuing of one's own worth should not be denied to a human being for any reason, surely not in the name of Jesus Christ. The "three-self" term strikes the North American as a sort of self-centeredness and thus hardly Christian. Wanting one's church to be *self-governing* is dear to the heart of every congregationally-oriented Christian. The ideal of *self-supporting* is surely a valid goal, at least for every responsible fellowship in the west; why should it not also be for the Chinese? And the idea of *self-propagating* is exactly what we respect most in church outreach, evangelism and, ironically, in third world missions.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement has been manipulated and to some extent subverted. And even more surely it has been an instrument of divisiveness and anti-westernism. Sadly, the three- self movement is more Christian in its original ideology than in its actual practice.

But we should not be drawn into yet one more misbegotten anti-communism drive. Christopher Morris argues that outsiders should hold an attitude of objectivity not hostility (*China and the Church Today* Vol. 4, No.1, 1982)

The Status Becomes Less Quo

The future of North American missions is hard to predict. Any prediction is sure to be at least partly wrong. Estimates made on the basis of today's confusing evidences are unreliable at best, misleading at worst. Nevertheless, mission planning has never been more important. We must have some sort of image of the future. There is no merit in flying blind.

All sorts of predictions about the future are being made. Futurism has become an urgent pursuit of social scientists and a popular topic for editors of Sunday supplements. Considering the potential calamities—nuclear accidents, political chaos, genocide, starvation, economic collapse, global war, just to skim the top of the long list, it may seem to be "tempting fate" to explore the future; maybe it is better not to know what hit you!

The most dangerous prediction one might choose to believe is that things will continue much as they are today. Surely any other view of the future is better than that one. Better, in the sense of more accurate and, more important, better for missions inasmuch as an awareness that the days ahead will be different helps to reduce confidence in the status quo. The one sure prediction is that today's ways are tomorrow's failures.

Nor can the immediate past in the history of modern missions be regarded as the pattern for the future. When the world was simpler and the patterns unfolded over longer periods of time, keeping pace was easier. Today, long-range planning is a challenge to the human imagination. Planners must make estimates, educated guesses, and take into account whatever the observable trends may suggest.

Three major facts of life constitute a possible view of the future. First, control by donors is a changed phenomenon. In the past there was a sort of gentleman's agreement that whoever pays the piper calls the tunes. Never look a gift horse in the mouth was the standard advice for recipients. The matter is far more complex today. Donors still wield substantial influence, but recipients are more shrewd. Donors find themselves bargained, coerced, and manipulated, sometimes with such subtlety as to escape attention. And at the bottom line, control is with the receiver. Knowledgeable mission strategists who have watched the twists and turns of manipulated "invitations" to build schools and medical facilities in Haiti have been seeing this process. The habit of newcomers to establish themselves by building and "giving"

local folks institutional structures patterned on their own traditions and culture is a worldwide phenomenon. Two issues are thus embedded: Who really owns it? Whose concern is its maintenance?

The second "fact of life" is that the prestige of the West, especially of the United States, is substantially lower than ever. Inability to control our economy, the vaunted showcase of free enterprise, added to a muddled and ambiguous foreign policy have combined to dismay and disappoint even our historic friends. In the third world, the new "let them eat cake" sort of economic advice is a poor substitute for much needed technical assistance and burden-sharing. For sure, no nation can buy friends. But among the nations maintaining friendly relations, those most needed are those who stand alongside in difficult times. For sure, these are *terrible* times for many a small nation, especially for those that are energy poor and find themselves helplessly caught up in the tug-of-war between OPEC and the industrial giants.

The third "fact of life" is the mounting probability of nuclear holocaust. Whether by accident or deliberate act, whether in the preemptive strike of a superpower or a brushfire war as in Iran, India, or the North of Africa, sooner or later an atomic device is going to go off. It may not end the world. Indeed, the sobering possibility is that it will not, but it surely will rearrange everyone's priorities. When this happens, depending much on who does what thereafter, life on earth will be a waking horror.

Though we sit side-saddle on the fire monster, Americans contemplate and discuss this issue far less than many another society. Regardless, all futures are up for grabs whether we want to talk about it or not. What is the mission of the church to the remnant of civilization whether 10% or 90% of the population survive? How can you plan for that scenario? Or, better yet, does the church of Jesus Christ have a redemptive role to play in taking apart these engines of horror? God help us act on our responsibilities in time!

When "Modern" is Passé

A mimeographed letter just arrived from a friend who has served over a dozen years as a missionary in Bolivia.[1] Now at the close of a furlough year, he is expressing his hopes and concerns for his next term of service:

> *During our last term, my wife and I, along with several other missionaries, worked with the Bolivian Highlands Church to set up an organized film and cassette ministry….*
>
> *I would like to see this organization completely Bolivianized during my next term. I believe it is possible to do this.*

Here is an apt illustration of a missionary caught mid-stream in change. He is apparently aware that the new rules of the game call for less dominant initiatives by the outsiders. At the same time, the zeal of entrepreneurial "ownership" of the original idea persists. He "believes" not only in his idea (his, his wife's, and that of other missionaries) but also he believes in the new motive of nationalizing. For sure, this missionary, in the flesh, is no stereotype; he is aware that Bolivianization is no easy task. But, frankly, it is not clear that he is willing to consider the possibility that his "organization" will very likely be seen as is an outside representation. Perhaps it already too late to "Bolivianize" it.

[1] Names of person and place have been changed to reduce the possibility of offence.

In case after case, missionaries report that the national Christians resist the turning over of certain activities. Today's major insensitivity of missionaries is toward the embarrassed national Christians who know full well that their economy and/or socio-political situation make it impossible to continue certain activities that missionaries have started. Especially in reference to western-style institutions (schools, hospitals, large-scale broadcasting, publishing houses, bookstores, aviation services, for example), national Christians are often happy to see the services continue, but the very thought of taking over managerial and financial responsibility can seem like the ultimate folly and embarrassment.

One of the tasks that missionaries should undertake is the realistic scaling down or discontinuation of culturally inappropriate institutions.[2] Leaving the landscape littered with the relics of well-meaning beneficence isn't Christian, especially since it is generally understood that the Americans are likely to back off and complain, "You see, they really aren't ready yet."

North American missions in the years ahead will need to pull away from the blighting notion that modern is better. The mad dash toward westernization, from television to automobiles, is a trend not to be turned back. But its secular roots, values, and its godless economic aspirations are surely strange bedfellows with Christian missions. This is no plea for a return to goatskins and locusts, but it does suggest that the North American missionary in the years ahead might better be recruited from among those who take Ron Sider seriously.

Christianity Today (March 19, 1982) reported that 13,000 missionaries were "sent out" by third world churches last year. WEF reports 15,000. Less than a dozen years ago the number was 3,000. Perhaps even more important than the quantitative increase is the fact that relatively few of these people are deployed and supported in the ways that North Americans associate with missionaries and mission agencies. True, some handful of these are under financial support or assistance from the west, but informants are reporting that far more are "tent-makers," supported more in the Biblical sense of prayer and sacrificial sharing in substance. A smaller portion than before are primarily engaged in institution-building and management. It is difficult to assess the substantial increase in missionaries from non-western nations, especially the upsurge of third-world missions, since the data are so meager. But surely something is going on that will have a substantial impact. If North Americans had trouble with comity agreements among Anglicans, Europeans, and the like, just wait until it becomes clear that the third world missionaries are getting closer to peasants and fisherfolk than the North Americans generally do!

The "modern missionary" movement may be over. It may be that its own converts have found the new ways and ushered in an era of missions which the North American missionary agencies have yet to learn about.

Wishful Thinking: A Necessary Danger

With tail feathers in the air and head in the warm sand, the ostrich symbolizes naive response to danger. Many animals employ the rollover-and-play-dead defense, using helplessness as a strategy. But the ostrich is almost human about it: "If I don't see the danger coming maybe it won't see me either." Perhaps the ostrich's behavior is better than the chicken's: flying off in all directions at once is bad for the heart.

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[2] Borrowing from E. F. Schumacher (*Small Is Beautiful*), it is suggested that even as there is a distinction to be made between "appropriate technology" and inappropriate technology, there is also such a thing as an *inappropriate institution.*

There is surely danger ahead of many sorts. But the times call for strength and hope. Defeatism and pessimism are apt to be terminal ailments.

Hopefulness is most important. Not only is the Christian's hope in ultimate fulfillments of eschatological promises, but there is hope because the Lord God holds all things in His hands. Nothing is inevitable except that God's plan will prevail. And God's plan is redemptive. The purpose of the church is to lay claims on behalf of God's redemptive purposes. Christians are intended to make a difference. The mission of the church reflects that hope. One need not be motivated by starry-eyed visions of social evolution to believe that being the light of the world is a very hopeful existence.

The old tension between "presence" and "proclamation" arises out of a mistrust of this hope. If it persists into the years ahead the prospects for the North American mission of the church seem less. The times we face will require careful integrating of faith and works. The choice between faith and works is an anachronistic luxury from easier times when Christians could more afford to pull the Gospel apart as an intellectual exercise. No more. Faith without works is dead. Words without deeds are dead. Though deeds alone can speak, ambiguity is reduced when deeds are gently explained to the credit of Jesus Christ, Redeemer. Perhaps there is no particular basis for an empirical claim that Christianity in North America will "get its act together" to put word and deed into a Christ-centered context. But one must hope.

In any case, it will surely be the church that embraces the *whole* Gospel that will prevail in missions in the years ahead. Given a spiritual revival and methodological renewal, the North American church may well be part of the continued action.

So goes the wishful thinking, but it is profoundly dangerous. The times call for both sober reflection and zealous action. The dilemma drives us toward confused frustration. It's easier to be an ostrich.

Back to Basics

When things go wrong human beings tend to turn back to old habits, whether in individual personality or in society. No one denies that the world is in desperate shape. So now again it is popular to look back and to seek values in older ways.

For the church of Jesus Christ, this could result in miraculous transformations. The history of the faithful saints is a display of effectual power, transcending persecution, and the tragedies of human bondage. We can go back to our basics for renewal. From the New Testament tradition of mission and outreach any number of principles can be drawn—especially from the Acts of the Apostles.

Appropriate to the theme of this paper, there are four conclusions in particular:

1. *A Scattered Community*. In the fullness of time, as the young church at Jerusalem had become prepared, there was a persecution and the Christians scattered, "chattering Jesus Christ's Gospel" as they went. The outreach had its origins not in the cleverness of human planning but in the life-changing transformation that made the Christians of that time the bearers of the Good News wherever they went. And God saw to it that they did go. Let us renew this tradition: may the new life in Jesus Christ work its transformations in each of us.

2. *An Infiltration of Pilgrims*. Quite surely the scattering resulted in infiltration for witness, conversions, and new churches. The Christian community was intended to go *into* communities. The infiltration of secular society, as the salt and the light, was fulfilling the metaphors of Jesus' promises to His followers. May the Holy Spirit work through His people today not to isolate and

separate us from the world, but to cause us to go outward and thus to infiltrate, to invite all people to Christ.

3. *A Collective of Helpers*. As Christians, we help one another. The incident of aid and relief for the Christians in Judea and the gracious characteristics of Barnabas provide a clear illustration: Barnabas traveled to Tarsus searching for the recently converted Saul (Paul) and brought him as a partner in ministry among the exciting new believers in Antioch, thus extending Barnabas' usefulness. Paul moved quickly into this new service, ministering among other new converts in the new churches and reflecting the very personality of Barnabas, the encourager. This clearly illustrates the ancient model of New Testament mission and missionary. The church at Jerusalem learned that the Gospel proclamation in Antioch had resulted in many coming to Christ. Barnabas was sent to inquire and observe. (Not to "check up," mind you; an "encourager" would likely not have been chosen for such a task.) Barnabas, ever the outreaching missioner, saw that indeed the Holy Spirit's work was evident and he promptly traveled back to Antioch bringing poor bruised Saul, much in need of spiritual reassurance. And they stayed for dinner! Just what transactions may have transpired is not stated, but clearly they didn't "take over" the Antioch church. They helped. And the Antioch Christians knew how to use their help. May God raise up churches that send true helpers and establish among Christians everywhere a fellowship that can effectively use helpers.

4. *The Holy Spirit Speaks*. The era of "modern missions" has been marked more by planning than by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. It takes both, but outreach *starts* when the Holy Spirit speaks in a church where cross-cultural helpers are already accepted and at work. Or so we should learn from the first interventional "calling" incident. "Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them," the Holy Spirit of God spoke *to the church* at Antioch. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away, onward…to Seleucia…to Cyprus…to Salamis…to Paphos…to Perga…to Pisidian Antioch…to Iconium…to Crete…to Greece…to Rome…and onward to Spain, to England, to the New World…to the nations….

May it never cease. The Holy Spirit, through God's people, bears witness of Jesus Christ, Creator, Redeemer, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Hallelujah! Amen.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Healer, Teacher, Evangelizer or Revolutionist? Contending Perspectives on the Church and the Third World

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract
This paper was presented at a conference called to deal with the ways in which Christian religious faith contributes to the understanding, valuing, and guiding of American foreign policy. The author presents historical and contemporary difficulties of the church in relation to foreign policy and offers recommendations. *Address presented at the Faith and Foreign Policy Conference October 20-21, 1988.*

This conference has been convened around the theme of the function and contribution of the Christian religious faith to the understanding, valuing, and guiding of American foreign policy. It is unlikely that any one of the papers you will consider will represent the total scope of that theme, least of all this paper. This presentation will deal with only one facet of the problem and is developed from but one perspective. The experiences represented here are largely from within the conservative and evangelical sectors; the problems within that portion of the church of Jesus Christ are at the center of the following observations and recommendations. In matters of public policy in general, and in reference to foreign policy in particular, we cannot lump all of Protestant America into one piece.

While the substance of the matters following is hardly representative of the scope of the conference at large, it is important to note that the impetus and venue for our convening are functions of Christian higher education. Perhaps this discussion was scheduled first in order of presentation because it is based in the field of education in general and specifically on the service of the church of Jesus Christ. This conference is a significant event, drawing its value not only from the urgency of its topic and primary content but also from the fact that a public policy conference is a contribution of an institution of Christian higher education. Many of us are deeply concerned about the contribution of Christian higher education to the viability and integrity of this nation. Hopefully this discussion will raise that contribution to a level of major concern.

A Christian Nation?

On the more general matter of the influence of Christian values in American foreign policy, two substantially different postures contend for attention as a platform for this conference. A transcendental view grounded in Christian theology contends that the Christian values imbedded deeply in the history and common philosophies of the republic are reflected in the truth, compassion, and the commitment to justice and peace which are reflected in the international relations and the foreign policy of the United States.

A rival posture contends that the claim to Christian-ness is no more valid for this nation than for any other responsible nation, whatever good lies therein being attributable to the general grace of God upon all people rather than to any unusual enlightenment by the Word of God. This position would hold that all good deeds, just positions, and compassionate responses are inherently evidences of the author of righteousness.

It is tempting to adopt one or the other of these positions in its extremity. If the first presupposition were adopted, the voice of the church in reference to all policies of government would be judged to be a miserable failure since foreign policy, for example, bears so little resemblance to biblical teachings on godly human relationships and gives so little evidence of concern for pleasing God through the behaviors of the nation. If the second presupposition were accepted, the result would be to describe everything that shows any shred of human decency, any nod in the direction of peace, and any hint of concern for justice and respect as if it were representative of the presence of Christian influence within the historical pattern of the nation.

Neither of these extremes seems useful for the purposes of this conference. A preferable approach lies in the direction of trying to understand what can be done to encourage Christians to find responsible avenues of interaction and communication with the national dialogues on public policy. Clearly, those who claim to be Christian must accept a more whole view of the world and, within themselves, reduce the dualism between things "sacred" and things "secular." Standing aloof is a denial of the gospel.

The presupposition that ours is a truly Christian nation seems dubious on historical and social grounds. If the United States ever was Christian in its political philosophy, it has surely is become substantially less so. Ironically, America's increasing cultural diversity and philosophical pluralism may serve to bring the substantial reservoir of Christian values more clearly into focus and may, indeed, be making the focus of this conference more significant.

Christianity has never worked well when impressed by its own monopoly. Whether in the ill-advised Crusades against Islam, the claims to be "Christianizing the pagans" as a corrupt alibi for exploitation and subjugation through colonization**,** or in the insipid self-congratulation of this or that nation's claim to being a "Christian nation," the essential qualities of Christianity have been obscured by a murky mask of human greed and pride. The argument is sometimes made that because of the purposes of the original settlers, the United States is a Christian nation. However there is recurrent and stubborn evidence that Christians do not sharply contrast with other citizens in many matters of moral conduct or in their commitment to democratic processes for the defense of freedom. These generalizations lead to cynical conclusions, but nevertheless they suggest a profound problem: in recent times the church in North America has grown fat and casual. Christianity of the sort that the Bible knows about is active and involved—spiritually, socially, and politically. In conditions of ease it tends to be flabby, but in the face of adversity it shows resiliency and strength. The most recent large-scale example of this tendency has been made apparent through the reopening of China after Mao's frantic and sustained efforts to wipe every trace of Christianity from the nation. Not only did Mao not succeed but he inadvertently created the very c1imate within which Christianity could thrive.

The Curious Anomalies

Any serious consideration of the way American Christians relate personally and collectively to issues of need and relationship in the world—especially in reference to the emerging nations of the post-colonial world—must take into account certain curious anomalies that are evident in the conservative sectors of today's American Christianity. These anomalous conditions represent unresolved conflicts between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the prevailing cultural images which have taken hold of the imaginations of many Christians.

Disinterest in foreign policy. Rare indeed is the conversation among Christians that deals with matters of international relations and foreign policy. This observation might not be so curious were it not for the fact that the people of God, as instructed by the scriptures, are intended to be outreach oriented,

aware of the whole of God's creation, and motivated to relate in compassion and love to all people everywhere. Despite what would seem to be proper biases of the regenerated soul, little connection seems to be made between godliness and political concerns for the world. With the exception of an occasional discussion related to some difficulty or hardship encountered by a missionary, nothing is more foreign to many a church than foreignness itself.

The more detailed and technical matters of foreign relations—or of history or geometry, for that matter—though very much a part of God's created universe, are hardly the stuff of responsible preaching. Not all of God's people should be expected to develop the necks of giraffes to nibble high on the trees of political science. But the matter of arcane erudition itself does not account for enough of the problem. Disinterest in matters of foreign policy points to a significant lack within general education and, even less excusable for the Christian**,** the lack of what Paulo Friere calls "critical consciousness" (1973). At the bottom of it all, many people in positions of leadership in the church care very little that this facet of Christian education is seriously neglected.

Acquiescence to the separation of Church and State. Reformed theology, just as surely as Roman Catholic theology, finds the separation of church and state hard to swallow. As a tenet of American political philosophy the doctrine has provided significant safeguards against the misuse of religious authority in civil matters. Whether it has safeguarded against the misuse of civil authority in matters of religion does not seem nearly so clear.

At a more basic level**,** the issue of relationship between the claims of God and the claims of the state deserves a more thorough articulation than this simplistic though revered secular doctrine has afforded. For one thing, "the separation of church and state" places the Christian who takes seriously the Lordship of Christ in a continuous quandary. Whose values are really important within a society? Whose values should be represented in national policy? Thankfully, the Christian in this democracy is free to act according to informed conscience through voice and vote; but there is always the subtle message being whispered by the doctrine of separation of church and state that some matters are more of concern to God than others. As a result, many Christians in this democracy seem rarely to develop informed political positions which thoroughly reflect their religious reflections.

Schism and ambivalence in matters of war and peace**.** Perhaps the highly contrasting positions that various church denominations hold on war tend to make Christians assume that this matter is a sort of free option: God can buy it either way—war or peace. The theological problems are substantial in each position, partly because of the social complexity of the issues and partly because of the contrasts in emphasis between the instructions of God to Israel and the instructions of God to the church. The latter, of course, are characterized by the example and explicit teachings of Jesus Christ, and from this sector of scripture it is far more likely that the church in our times will start with this premise: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9 NRSV).

But to start with the biblical teaching on war and peace is not to guarantee that the church today any more than in ages past will come to pacifistic conclusions. All sorts of real and hypothetical scenarios seem to justify self-defense, and from self-defense it is but one step to war. The undisciplined mixing of patriotic and religious symbols and fervor is a tradition for Americans. The nation was founded in a period when deistic philosophy provided the best alternative to the extant "divine right of kings." Somehow we have never quite outlived that part of our national origin, nor have we examined it critically in order to really make something of our Christian-ness.

Tendency toward premature closure of history. Possibly as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the modern person's assumption that one should know how things work, Christianity in the past century has suffered from fits of technological curiosity. Far out of proportion to their importance, the questions of origins and endings have become an obsession for many Christians. Clearly, the Bible teaches that God created the universe; further it teaches that God will bring about a just conclusion of the natural universe as we know it, all in His own good time. Human curiosity has picked away at these matters since Eden. During the years of Christ on this earth, His disciples asked about when and how the end would come. Jesus responded that "But about that day and hour**,** no one knows . . . nor the Son but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36 NRSV)

This curiosity has increased until reaching a fever pitch in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The interest in creation as a technology (How did God do it and how long did it take?) and the end times as a similar matter of technique and timetable (How will it all end and when?) seems to be based on the assumption that anything real can be completely understood—a key fallacy of humanistic reasoning. That such a fallacy can permeate theological orthodoxy defies explanation.

As a result, pushing one's own moment in history forward to the threshold of the return of Christ is taken in some sectors to be a demonstration of "sound doctrine." If one thus assumes that there isn't much time left to live out as a "future," it is easy enough to become disinterested in the long-range value of anything. Matters of world condition and national policy are thus seen as purely "secular" and even lacking in faith, judged in comparison to the belief in the imminent return of Christ. Although Jesus anticipated this debilitating error of theology and warned against it in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) his warning has been ignored, ironically, in some of the most conservative sectors of the church.

Penchant for single-issue political activism. American Christians, broadly across the spectrum, have developed a curious tendency toward single-issue activism and single-issue politics. Perhaps it derives from the necessity of sorting out the overwhelming and intimidating array of issues that mass media bring to the attention of the American onlooker; or, less charitably, it may be simply a preference for being "successful" by throwing one's weight against one vulnerable target at a time. Whatever the root cause, the consequences are evident: strident barking at the heels of this or that movement or political leader, label-throwing as a substitute for reasoned argument, undue emphasis on bits and pieces of larger issues, and in general ignoring the warnings of Jesus Christ about straining out the gnats while swallowing the camel (Matthew 23:24).

The Missions Filter

Throughout the twentieth century many in the American churches, especially in the more conservative sector, have understood the outside world largely in terms of wars and world missions. That wars have shaped the images of specific nations within the minds of Americans in general and have provided the mental models for reasoning about good and bad policy is, of course, only too apparent. War's horrors remain in the public consciousness for quite some time, even within a nation only indirectly affected. For Christians who have been nurtured in a worldview that presumes that God is on one side and Satan is on the other in all human conflicts, wars provide important judgmental categories and evidence, assuming it cannot be made clear who is the aggressor and who is innocent, and assuming that the positions of nations do not shift.

Distrust of the pundits of foreign policy can be attributed in part to the confusion arising from shifts within these simple categories of friend and foe. For example, the Soviet Union has moved back and forth in the American valuing process since the Bolshevik Revolution (bad guys), World War II (good guys), and

the Cold War (bad guys). Now that our president has toned down the "Evil Empire" rhetoric in response to *glasnost,* we wonder if "the Russians" are destined to become good guys again. Keeping all the details clear is not easy for a largely undereducated nation. Even major church denominations have a hard time keeping their members in line with the official church postures on this or that nation and their products and in sympathy with interventions and exploratory excursions in support of revolution or of counter-revolution. Stereotypes are hard to break, especially in matters of culture, but an occasional war can do the trick, assuming that the war can be won.

Reasoning about America's place in the world is even easier when the Christian starts with world missions. What is good for the cause of world missions is good foreign policy; what is not facilitative of world missions is not good foreign policy. While this generalization is too simplistic to account for anything more than the bare outline, it holds enough truth to be useful as a point of entry. Unlike the judgments that emerge from wars, the concern for world missions is peculiar to Christians. Thus the missions filter accounts for much that has been unique in the prevailing Christian attitudes toward American foreign policy.

Perhaps the clearest example of how this filter works is to note the long-standing habit of judging a nation and its government in terms of whether or not Protestant missionaries from America are free to enter. If missionaries are allowed to enter, the country is "open" and deemed to be friendly; if missionaries are denied entry or are required to submit to some sort of awkward conditions in terms of work permits or visas, then the nation or its government is seen as unfriendly, and God will surely "get them for that." Anything that is perceived by Americans as being a hindrance to seeking converts and proselytes, to religious communication, and to free movement of Christian missionaries is interpreted as evidence of a godless system and a closed society. Because of this evaluative process some of the most devious dictators and despotic systems in the modern world have escaped careful scrutiny by godly Americans. The proof text seems to be, "As they accept missionaries, so shall ye know them."

As the American awareness of the nations of the world is processed through this filter, the perceptions are colored more by narrow interests of the Christian mission than by any up-to-date realities of national and international situations or contemporary realities of human life. Whatever may be grasped of the basic needs of people tends to be defined in terms of the contributions that missionaries are intended to make.

Thus the dominant assumptions about what missionaries are intended to do shapes the perception of the foreign policy positions which deserve the support of Christians.

Healers for the world. Early in the twentieth century, virtually parallel with the reforms in medical education and medical practice in the United States, much of the activity of overseas missionaries was centered in medical services and little by little in the establishment of medical institutions. During this period it became common to think of America's contributions to the less technical nations in terms of the blessings of medicine and surgery. The consciousness arose in reference to missionary efforts of American Christians and ultimately came to dominate the perceptions of many other Americans. "To Bring Healing to the Nations" was written large in the image that many Americans held. Teddy Roosevelt's "Speak softly but carry a big stick" was supplemented, not replaced, by the notion that America has been given a responsibility to control and to heal. The nation's foreign policy had to be made to fit this image.

Teaching people to help themselves. Much of the world holds a teacher in high respect. Adding the task of teaching to the task of healing resulted in a more comprehensive function and image. In the nineteenth century, American Christianity had become identified with schools and colleges. As the

missionary societies of the early twentieth century began to expand the activities of Americans abroad, all sorts of educational institutions were established. Indeed, so pervasive was education among the activities of missions that when nationhood came to various African nations, the missionary-founded schools became the backbone of the new national schemes of public education. Although World War II slowed down the educational efforts, the period of missionary resurgence after the war was extensively marked by further expansions of the overseas schooling efforts. It was during this period when American missionaries became convinced of their competencies as institution builders; but at about the same time the rise of nationalism brought to light some new and troubling questions about the degree of cultural and economic adaptabi1ity of these made-in-America institutions of education and health care. Nonetheless the image of relationship of Americans with the third world had become well established: we heal them, we teach them. Paternalism was rampant and, in some sectors of the church, paternalism was recognized as a danger and the first significant steps toward indigenization and nationalization were taken.

Bringers of Good News. The major concern of the missionary as evangelist has never been very far off the center of motive and attention. Whatever may be the institutional and service roles played by missionaries, the major role is the spiritual ministry of bringing people to Christ. The image of the world that this motive engenders is quite simplistic: we have Christ, they do not have Christ, and thus we have what they need and we will provide it. Within the last several decades this dominant view of ourselves has been shaken. Nation after nation has showed its ingratitude in various ways. Even our expectation that our converts in other nations would adopt our ways of evangelizing, healing, and teaching has been partially frustrated. Our faith in our own old ways has been challenged, but we cannot quite find new patterns that we can control. It seems that in many nations people now want to do things their own ways.

Missionaries in support of revolution. The human tendency to bounce from one extreme to another seems partially to explain the emergence of "liberation theology." After centuries of convenient marriage between hierarchical Christianity and totalitarian governments, substantial sectors of Christendom have "seen the light," converted from their indulgences in wealth and power, and now seem to want to bring everyone along in their excursions of atonement. Even Protestants have been swept up in the fever. In many ways the liberation themes are much closer to the Gospel than were the former domination themes, but the danger once again is the substitution of one form of human strategy for another with very little new inquiry into what the disciplines of godliness and the tests of scripture would demand.

So again the image has changed. The missionary filter is telling some Christians, at least, that the role of Americans should be to foment revolution and to encourage people to stand up for their rights. This image has value, of course, but it is prone to an old tendency; it is again assumed that North Americans should decide just when things are to happen and toward what ends.

When world missions is the filter through which the peoples and nations of the world are understood, it leads to good news, bad news, and potentially worse news. The good news is that Christians with awareness and concern for world evangelization are more apt than other Americans to give attention to other nations and to America's dealings with them. The bad news is that the mission's filter tends to render the world scene in flat tones, mainly in a simplistic black and white. The worse news is that when a church, especially a whole denomination, wanes in its concern for world evangelization**,** the members tend to lose interest in their responsibilities to the world, or else their concerns are transformed into sectarian political biases, not the least dangerous of which is enthusiasm for violent overthrow of governments in the quest for freedom and liberty apart from God.

The Demanding Rudiments

Christianity makes no sense apart from the disciplines of the Gospel. In Luke 4:18,19, Jesus describes himself in terms of Isaiah's prophecies of "good news to the poor." For the more narrowly oriented Christian, Luke 4 demands a larger-than-preaching view of evangelization. For the more broadly oriented Christian, indeed for all Christians, Luke 4 demands a basis in God's just processes of liberation through redemption. Willy-nilly appetite for revolution for its own sake does not satisfy the conditions of the Gospel. Simplistic verbal affirmations of doctrinal propositions falls short. The Gospel is to be lived, not merely claimed or affirmed.

For a godly person or a godly nation, no matter how exalted and noble may be an objective or goal, the means to that end must be honorable, true, and just. God must be honored in the means a nation employs just as surely as in the ends the nation seeks. If this be classified as soft-headed idealism, so be it; it is none the less demanded by the Lord of the universe.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ demands rudiments in policy which are not easily fulfilled. Jesus warned that "it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23 NRSV). As a "rich person" among nations, the United States has an especially difficult task in facing up to its errors of the past, its presumptions of rights, power, and authority. But the Gospel teaches that humility and simple honesty, even among nations, honors God and makes the nation an object of God's blessing. Wealth and materialism coupled as they are with pride and insecurity constitute a debilitating mixture.

No one enjoys facing up to the errors of the past, least of all people who thought they were doing good. This difficulty permeates the issue of Christian influence on national policy. Some things are so offensive that we cannot believe that they are true. It is easier to explain away the dissonances between values and behavior than to confront them and make changes. Christians tend to think well of their nation and of its place in the world.

> Before 1949 in [the Chinese] view, the church in China was not a Chinese church, but rather a foreign religion on Chinese soil. It was resented by the vast majority of Chinese people because of its association with Western imperialism in the nineteenth century. One has only to think of the activities of Karl Gutzlaff, an American missionary of Prussian birth, to understand their point of view. It is said that Gutzlaff, in his zeal to penetrate the Chinese interior for Christ In the 1830's, would travel on a European gunboat, handing out tracts from one side while opium was being unloaded on the other, and that he had a hand in writing the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, the first of the unequal treaties that did so much to disrupt Chinese sovereignty. (Spickard 1987, 70)

We do not want to think thus of any incident in Christian missions. Similarly, we do not want to consider evidences of self-centeredness in contemporary foreign policy, as represented in such testimony as the following.

When the Reagan administration took office, it developed its own particular rationale for U.S. relations with South Africa. Among the factors it cited were South Africa's strategic position on the oil routes around the Cape of Good Hope, the South African market for U.S. goods, U.S. investments in the South African economy, South Africa's standing as an 'anticommunist' state in the region, and, perhaps most important, South Africa's supply of strategic minerals. Last July, in a White House speech, Reagan reiterated his administration's view that these considerations determined U.S. interests in the southern African regions. (Walters 1986, 99)

But in matters of missions and in matters of foreign policy, Americans have been shaped by an individualism that tends to demean others.

> In the course of the history of the United States a heritage of self-sufficiency within our own boundaries has developed. The people are proud of the nation. They tend to think of the United States as a unique experiment not to be influenced or even contaminated by the experiences of others. This view limits one's expectation of any potential contributions from the rest of the world. (Peterson 1987, 47)

The demanding rudiments of the Gospel of Jesus Christ require that we give attention to many international policy issues that are deliberately shut out of many of today's churches. How can a church justify committing itself to world missions and yet deny its responsibilities for political activism on behalf of that world?

Why do Americans in general, and Christian Americans in particular, suppress or ignore the profound danger that lies across any but the most astutely chosen path of foreign policy?

> The church and individual Christians have been strangely silent about [nuclear holocaust]. What will it take before Christians will speak up? If one city is pulverized by a nuclear warhead, will we speak up then? . . . How can we speak about the morality of issues like abortion, cheating, and child abuse and quietly look the other way in the face of nuclear war? All of us must make clear that even the preparation for nuclear war is an abomination against God, who loves the whole world….
>
> Doesn't it make more sense to learn to live with our enemies than to kill ourselves defending ourselves? Christians in every land must insist that madness in the name of peace is really death in disguise. We must understand that a peace that holds millions of people hostage to fear is not peace. A peace built on military threats, bluffing, and bullying is not peace. Preserving freedom by threatening to use nuclear weapons is slavery to death. War is the antithesis of God's shalom. (Kraybill 1978, 220-221)

Our moment of history requires critical review of the past and moral accountability for the future:

> The next administration will have both an opportunity and a responsibility to restore democracy and accountability to the foreign-policy process. Historically this issue has transcended party lines; it has never been one of Democrat versus Republican but rather one of the President versus Congress. Although all postwar presidents have shown extreme reluctance to allow Congress a role in formulating military policy, that need not be the case. The time has come to begin a new relationship between the two branches over national security and military policy. (Halperin 1988, 173)

Even at the pragmatic level, there are certain things this nation has done that simply do not work. We need revision of foreign policy in the directions of integrity and morality; the by-product will be a higher level of effectiveness.

> As long as our thoughts and actions are governed by the stale definition of security that equates international stability with American power, we will remain trapped in a perpetual contest over some dubious advantage, be it in the military, economic, or political realm. (Sanders 1984, 678)

Covert paramilitary activity has not been successful. Such operations fail to adhere to the procedures established in the Constitution that guarantee an open and accountable system of government. They avoid precisely the democratic process in the United States that most of them are ostensibly designed to promote in other countries.

> Secret wars also make for bad foreign policy. The results of even 'successful' secret wars have been the empowerment of dictators wholly inimical to American political values.
>
> The greatest 'successes'—Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, and Chile in 1973—spawned some of the worst oppression of the postwar era. (Halperin 1988, 179)

This nation has leaned on its own wisdom and resources so long that is has developed a pernicious habit of resurrecting faulty machinery from the past in order to try to deal with new problems.

> In March 1979, *Business Week* was moved to devote a special issue to 'the decline of U.S. power.' While the report shed little light on the causes for this phenomenon, it revealed a great deal about conventional thinking on the subject. In a nutshell, *Business Week* suggested that the weakening of America's position in the world could be traced to a growing reluctance by U.S. leadership to flex the financial, military, and political muscle required of an 'imperial power.' The essay harkened back with unvarnished pride to the days when the United States played the role of 'both banker and cop' in a benign system of empire that extended to the far reaches of the globe. (Sanders 1984, 679)

Americans must learn to reject the simplistic notion that the availability of military force, political advantage, and economic leverage are the basic ingredients of worthy power. It may be a long time in coming, but a moral and spiritual reawakening is possible, based on the rudiments of the Gospel.

Part of the cost may very well be the rethinking among American Christians of some of their socio-political beliefs and self-images. The contrasts posed by David Campbell serve to stimulate such reflections:

> Utilitarian individualism, with its emphasis on rights, liberties, and protections, stands in uneasy coexistence with the communitarian strain (common to biblical and classical political thought) and its emphasis on loyalty, duty, and responsibility. It is useful to consider these as alternative political cultural ideals, each with its own assumptions about the meaning of freedom, the basis of political community, and the proper distinction between the public and private spheres.

Key Features	Individualist	Communitarian
Overriding Concern	Individual achievement	Collective moral purpose
Basis of Political Community	Social Contract	Covenant Community
Freedom	Absence of constraint	Obedience to the authoritative
Realm of Freedom	Private sphere	Public world
Threat to Freedom	State tyranny; loss of liberty	Decadence; loss of virtue

(Campbell 1987, 27-28)

In light of the demanding rudiments of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we need as members of the church and as members of the nation to reflect anew: Who are we? Who are the others in this world? What does God expect of us in terms of our own characteristics and resources? What does God expect of us in terms of the others in this world? How should the church relate to this nation? How should this nation relate to the world?

The Christian Hope

Carl Henry may be right. It is just possible that America may have already turned the corner, irrevocably committing itself to self-degradation. Rounding off a long series of attempts to prove itself able to survive with nothing more substantial than the judgments of learned persons as its moral compass, the final step is to deny God more formally.

> Our generation is lost to the truth of God, to the reality of divine revelation, to the content of God's will, to the power of His redemption, and to the authority of His Word. For this loss it is paying dearly in a swift relapse to paganism. The savages are stirring again; you can hear them rumbling and rustling in the tempo of our times. (Henry 1988, 15)

If Americans as individuals and as a nation persist in their narrow quests toward fulfillment of their self-interest, investing less and less in the welfare of others, the road is downhill. But the Christian value of hope will not leave it at this. There must be a way to bring this nation to its senses and to rekindle the collective conscience.

The biblical teaching on revival is basic to recovery.

> *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. (2 Chronicles 7:14-15 NRSV)*

First we must confess that not all evil is done against religion. Ungodliness comes in many guises:

Throughout history regimes devoted to religious ends have been among the most repressive. In the United States, survey researchers link the strength of religious commitment with intolerance, and observers of the religious right note the frequent lapse into dogmatism and the tendency to portray political opponents as the embodiment of evil. Similar tendencies are not unknown among the religious left. (Campbell 1987, 31)

Indeed, the ways and means that Christians use, unless they reflect the values of the Gospel, can work against the effectiveness of the witness of the Gospel.

> We should then recognize that the distortions and the misunderstandings of truth and goodness which lead to war have their origins within the Christian camp. The roots of the crusading mentality are not 'secular' in the modern sense, nor are they rooted in the mores of pagan religions. They constitute a deformation of biblical faith. (Yoder 1972, 247)

Arthur Simon, president of Bread for the World, has pointed the way for Christians to avail themselves of the channels of gentle influence, especially through letter-writing and organizing for collective study and influencing national policy. Unlike many another leader's attempts to mobilize people toward godly influences upon government policy, Simon has avoided the pitfalls of demagoguery and the espousing of quasi-religious ideologies. His warnings against the political pursuit of narrow interests while claiming to support a biblical form of Christian witness have not been heard as widely within the conservative churches as one might hope.

Protestants in twentieth century America share a heritage of hope, marred though it is by dissension and fraternal conflict. We seem finally ready to accept the fact that we can live with one another even if we have different answers to important questions. Certain common concerns can unite us. The

Gospel calls the church and nation to respond to particular problems of the world community. On these matters, especially, we must learn to think and to deal with issues in light of scriptural values.

The struggles of majority world nations for true identity as nations, for respect, for the opportunities to participate in equitable trade, and for national development must be our concern. The worsening of social and economic conditions for those in poorest nations, threats to religious freedom and worship posed by absolutist systems and closed societies, and the continuing saga of mankind's inhumanity—these must be our concern. A godly nation cannot stand passively as an observer.

The hope for substantial Christian influence in American foreign policy must start with godly values. It must then move toward godly relationships. One place to begin is in the local church. Donald Kraybill suggests four practical steps through which people in a Christian fellowship can exercise the freedom to develop a whole-world perspective. He relates his steps to people in a limited context—the "boxes" we live in. Metaphorically, at least, his pattern could be seen as a model for a whole nation.

> In the first place subgroups need to be recognized and talked about. To look the other way and pretend they are not there is foolish. Subgroup formation is as natural as breathing and it will occur in every social and religious setting. The quicker we recognize this reality the sooner we can experience redemption.
>
> Second, the teaching and preaching ministry must continually call people to a common faith in Jesus Christ which transcends social ties . . . utterly diverse people from all sorts of boxes are reconciled together in a common faith in Jesus Christ. This doesn't mean that people jump out of their boxes. But now the boxes synchronize together in a complementary way [and] build up the whole so that the entire body matures in Jesus Christ. Paul's analogy of the body applies just as much to subgroups as to individuals.
>
> Third, individuals need to take the initiative to disrupt boxing patterns. We need to be conscious of when we are in our own group's box and deliberately move out of it at times. Invite people from other boxes to your home. Participate in activities even when your own group doesn't. Intentionally go to people in other boxes, slip by their label, and love them. (Kraybill 1978, 252-253)

Kraybill adds a fourth step, reminding that time, place, and function need to be provided so that people will become able to climb out of their old boxes and develop transcendent relationships and more relational visions of themselves. "Time for social interaction is absolutely necessary to get behind the tags and labels" (253).

The capacity to empathize, to bring ourselves to feel with others, no matter how "foreign" they may be, is essential to the reconciliations afforded by the Gospel. Nehemiah, the rebuilder of Jerusalem, represented this truth in his choice of words as he assessed the problems in that devastated city: "You see the trouble we are in . . ." (Nehemiah 2:17 NRSV). Acknowledging that others are capable of seeing and judging, yet being willing to bring one's own interests into the collective acknowledgment that we have a problem—this is God's way.

> [The church is called] to be the conscience and the servant within human society. The church must be sufficiently experienced to be able to discern when and where and how God is using the powers, whether this be thanks to the faithful testimony of the church or in spite of her infidelity. Either way, she is called to contribute to the creation of structures more worthy of man (sic). (Yoder 1972, 158)

The function of Christian higher education in the development of public policy of any sort remains unclear. The possibilities for substantial contributions to foreign policy are even less well defined. Public policy decisions which directly affect the viability of the institutions of Christian higher education always get response from the administrative voices of the establishments; but aside from selected single-issue biases of the moment, little has been clearly enunciated within the arena of Christian higher education that results in systematic, constructive, and value-based impacts on public policy at the state or national level. Such expressions of the academic communities that represent evangelical Christianity, except in direct self-interest, seem strangely lacking. Therefore, whether attributable to limited vision, limited resources, or even more likely, an unexamined posture of isolation, the voice of Christian higher education in matters of American foreign policy has indeed been small.

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About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Christian Missions—Survival in What Forms?

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

Noting that modern missions have been unwilling to adjust to the changes pressing in on them, the author stresses that in order to survive into the next century, missions must develop appropriate institutional forms. *Reprinted from: Ted Ward. Christian Missions—Survival in What Forms?* International Bulletin of Missionary Research, *January 1982: 2-3.*

When survival depends on change, human institutions often tend perversely toward suicide. In times of social upheaval, clinging to yesterday's images provides solace. For modern Christian missions to survive, it will take brave and visionary change, not just solace.

The realm of "modern missions" shows inadequate willingness or capacity to adjust to the conditions requisite for its survival. This institutional creature of two centuries of western imagination hangs in the balance. To argue that the mission of the church will continue no matter what is beside the point. The institution of missions as we know it today in North America, Europe, and among the planted churches of the world comes out of the unique moment of sociopolitical history. The conditions that gave it birth (spiritual zeal and profound moral conviction, coupled with entrepreneurial wealth, colonial expansion, a vast-but-reachable globe, controllable others, and paternal perceptions of other cultures) are becoming less characteristic of our times. The church in North America, at least, is becoming motivated by other values.

Pessimism grows out of the apparent unwillingness to invent anew. The mission of the church has no less meaning, motive, and message in the 1980's, but the end of old models is in sight. Even as the vision of the housetop in Joppa shook Peter into a state of openness for the "unthinkable" invitations to eat forbidden meats and to visit an inquiring Gentile army officer, the need for new vision is all that stands between the present stalemates and an exciting future. The limited perceptions of what God intends to do can easily give way to fresh, invigorating, Spirit-filled renewal whenever getting on with the work of Jesus Christ becomes more important than holding onto old forms. Thus optimism is free for the asking.

The present transitional scene is full of object lessons. Shrinkage of the economy suggests that people will be forced to become more discriminating about where they put their money. The organization that cannot give convincing evidence of its bang-for-the-buck ratio will be hurting. Church people are already asking questions about who should be sent overseas to do what.

The object lesson of vast fund-raising by certain media-conscious relief and development organizations will not go forever unheeded. The *me-too* tendency will soon emerge. Some mission organizations will copy one part of this apparent formula for success: the use of television and research-based direct mail for fund-raising. Others will copy the other part: the emphasis on doing memorable deeds of kindness. Some may even get both parts together, but they will likely need new constituencies because some other donors will be quite convinced that the emphasis on verbal proclamation has been compromised.

The closing of borders to missionaries will surely continue to force mission organizations into three classes: missions that concentrate more and more of their missionaries in already evangelized centers where access is relatively free, missions that concentrate their resources in places where the frontiers of outreach demand creative, new ways to get in and validate their presence and purpose, and missions that limit their activity to the sending of national Christians and whatever else can be done to encourage and assist, short of sending missionaries.

In the world where every human act has a political meaning, the cloak of "apolitical" vagueness has been worn thin on the backs of missionaries. The demand for political consciousness and the thrusting of missions and missionaries into the spotlights of political conflict (e.g., Peru, Guatemala, Columbia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Zaire, China) will further polarize mission organizations. Some will persist in asserting their nonpolitical nature and will thus continue to aid and abet the status quo, for good or for evil. Others will accept and acknowledge their political meaning and influence. They will be swept up in ever more complex webs of intrigue and decision-making about matters they would far rather leave alone. There are no easy choices; one wonders if, after all, the naïve may inherit the world of foreign missions. If so, the era will soon close.

Now that western thought is able to entertain the counter-mechanistic proposition of "appropriate technology," can the discussion about *appropriate institutions* be far behind? Considering the large and still expanding proportion of missionaries sent out to take posts in ever larger and more costly institutions, has the point of diminishing returns not already been passed? As the emphasis on unreached people increases, the inappropriateness of large and costly institutions (western-style hospitals, schools, pastoral accreditation schemes, radio, aviation networks, and the like) will be far easier to challenge. Inappropriate institutions almost always depend on outside money, alien know-how, government cooperation, expatriate leadership, and rejection of the folkways of local Christians. When these challenges become vocal, the schisms will force all sorts of new alignments.

The illustrations above suggest an upheaval and reconstruction of thought within the "missionary-minded" people of God that cannot be accommodated by the older and simplistic distinctions between liberal and conservative, fundamentalist and modernist, Catholic and Protestant, or traditionalist and revisionist. The new alignment, while varying in one axis according to view of Scripture, may vary in dozens of other axes according to temporary resolutions of the theological and sociological issues. The hopeful possibilities for constructive change depend on the shifts in Christian consciousness about what is truly important.

A paper by Larry Horton[1] suggests that the important schisms among mission organizations at the evangelical core may be best explained as a choice among three options: (1) to become more withdrawn, isolationist and exclusive, (2) to follow in the footsteps of the social-activistic and politically liberal missionary experiments (especially today associated with Latin American trends), or (3) to join forces with other organizations bent on a politically conservative and zealously dogmatic preservation of manipulative forms of missionary presence. Accumulation of all these not-so-nice descriptors into this third option does not do justice to Horton's treatment, but it does suggest the easier choices that may be made by those who reject and those who accept the proposition of verbal proclamation as the ultimate issue in missions.

[1]Larry Horton, The Issues That Fragment Missions, unpublished, 1981

Seven "camps" of North Americans and Europeans seem to be pitching their tents along the trail: (1) *the persistent*—those who hold to a belief that God will continue to honor the approaches that have served well in the past; (2) *the overseers*—those who believe that the next generation of world evangelism will come from the "planted church" in the third world; (3) *the pushers*—those who seek new ways to put missionaries of the clerical sort[2]into situations that will further the outreach of the church; (4) *the institutionalized*—those who see missions largely in terms of supplying personnel for overseas institutions; (5) *the contractors*—those who cultivate amicable relationships with governments in order to establish Christian witness through compassionate action; (6) *the explorers*—those who seek new modes of entry and new sorts of deployment, including the dual-vocational options, and (7) *the politicizers*—those who see the primary issues of the gospel in sociopolitical and economic terms and thus devote themselves to arousing people to political action.

With which of these seven camps will one's missionary society or para-church organization be counted?

To make an informed choice and self-judgment the following questions can be studied. If one is serious about putting Christ before culture, these questions must be carefully answered:

1. For what reasons should "modern missions" or "the missionary movement" deserve to survive?
2. What elements of the present images, ideals, and practices of missions are appropriate to the emergent realities in the world?
3. Into what form or forms can missions be reconstituted to better relate the gospel to human need in the world today?
4. What are the keys to entry into an increasingly "closed" world of nationalistic, defensive, and religiously polarized nations?
5. What are the modes of deployment that allow for credible presence, honest status, and effective witness among the vast areas and significant pockets of unreached peoples?
6. What are the needs of the missionaries in these new deployments that can be significantly provided by ministering missionary agencies? (What functions and forms of "sending" agencies make sense? What training and retraining are needed?
7. What reeducation of the sending/giving communities is needed?
8. How does the Western tradition of missions relate to the emerging local understanding of scriptural mission of the church?

In each of the questions above, there are four explicit tasks: (1) research is needed to provide a more thorough understanding of the factors and issues underlying the choices to be made, (2) exploration and experimentation are needed to carve out propositional models for testing, (3) executive reorganization

[2]"Missionaries of the clerical sort:" Bible college or seminary trained, often ordained or working within a community where the leadership people are ordained, describing their primary occupation and identity as "missionary."

to facilitate change must be undertaken, and (4) personnel must be retrained (from top to bottom of the organization).

Any organization currently serving as a missionary support agency ignores these tasks at its peril. The work of Jesus Christ will continue—this assertion is an issue of faith. One dare not claim this assertion for even the most persevering missionary society. It is the *church* that our Lord promised to build, not missionary societies.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Coping with Cultural Differences—A Major Task for Theological Education

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

The author asserts that a theologically grounded understanding of the church as global in scope and international in function is necessary as theological schools confront the need for a contextualized curriculum and educational practices. *This article is an unpublished manuscript written for Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the 1990's.*

Whatever else may emerge from the current emphasis on globalization of theological education, we can hope that an increased awareness of the global nature and mission of the church will result. During this late-century upheaval of international realignments and changed alliances, ambiguities and confusion in the minds of Americans already threaten to usher in a new era of isolationism. The painful evidence suggests that many Americans are disoriented if they are not clear on who it is that they are against.

A theologically grounded understanding of the church of Jesus Christ is necessarily global in scope and international in function. Deliberate exclusiveness and ignorant provincialism are similarly evidences of a faulty ecclesiology. The profound implications of the most basic of New Testament Scriptures "God so loved the world..." (John 3:16) direct attention to the world's scope and breadth and, just as surely, to the cultural diversity represented across the human clusters in that world.

It is tempting to fill the first part of this paper with data and details in support of the following generalizations:

1. The world is shrinking in terms of human movement and communications.

2. Populations are intermixing with increased pace; no longer are distinctions between us and them valid in many parts of the world. For example, the "white" ethnic groups are clearly headed toward a well-mixed and minority status in the United States.

3. New alignments of socio-political power and influence are emerging, replacing colonial and neo-colonial structures with new empires based less on ideologies than on economic leverage.

While many people in the church still seem unwilling to accept these realities, it seems redundant to argue these points in the fellowship of informed scholars. It is more profitable to devote time and attention to the implications for the education of the churchmen and churchwomen of the new century.

The implications of these three rudiments of change center on one major issue: the capability of Christian communities to cope with cultural differences. Consciousness of the important role of culture in human understanding has substantially increased in this century, but the relationship between cultural barriers and the fulfillment of Christ's intended purposes for his church still rarely seems to be given adequate attention.

Deeper Issues Underlying Contextualization

At least within the missions arm of the church, the matter of culture is being given its due, but even here the cultural issues seem less than well centered. In recent years missiologists, especially, have emphasized contextualization. In reference both to the Bible in specific and the Gospel in general, "contextualization" is generally identified as a key to intercultural effectiveness. The tendency to think and work in terms of pragmatic and functional categories leads toward a definition of contextualization as the task of the evangelizing missionary or the expatriate teacher. In this view, we must make our Bible, our Gospel, and inevitably, our cultural emphases, more understandable to those from some other cultural background.

This image of contextualization falls short in several ways. Although it is dangerous, even hostile to the cross-cultural nature of the Gospel, it is perhaps the only view that is capable of being grasped by those who have a parochial view of the work of Christ.

The first flaw herein is the ethnocentric one-sidedness of the task itself. Instead of recognizing that the Gospel exists in similar vitality for each culture, the mistaken presumption naively traps the Gospel within categories and values of one's own culture and then attempts to transmit and reconcile these values and images to others. A far better way to view the task is as an invitation to those who come to Christ from another cultural background to deal with the Gospel themselves in terms of its biblical sources, letting the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit do their own confronting of cultural flaws and gaps.

The second flaw is in the purpose of contextualization. It is hazardous indeed to believe that any outsider can undertake the task of putting the Gospel into someone else's context. The Apostle Paul's purposes, by contrast, seem far more concerned with building relationships than with modifying or transforming the message of the Gospel to accommodate cultural diversity. It is harder yet to think of Jesus as contextualizing the Scriptures to fit cultural specifics. The encounter at Sychar's well is summarized by the Samaritan woman in terms of a faith-inspiring attentiveness and understanding of her—her person and het situation. The content of Jesus' conversation with her is simple; and yet it leads to a large-scale evangelizing of Sychar (John 4:39). All of this occurs with little if any effort to contextualize across the very difficult cultural dissonances between Jews and Samaritans. One must imagine that the contextualizing task came later, as the Samaritan believers had to come to terms with the whole meaning of the Gospel. It was their job, not the task of Jesus or his disciples, to discern and discriminate within their own context and ultimately to let the Gospel evaluate and criticize specific matters within their cultural values and worldview.

Beyond the Pragmatics of Missionary Strategy

Modern American Christianity, perhaps the whole "modern missionary era," has dared to take on the "ends of the earth" having had little experience with the evangelization of "Judea and Samaria" (Acts 1:8). Although Luke's specification of the four outward-oriented circles of Gospel expansion should not be seen as a required sequence for all purposes, it has proved to be awkward and costly to send people into the fourth zone without training and experience in the second and third zones. In some respects it is easier to recruit people for missionary service to the exotic remoteness of the fourth zone. The distasteful and frightening intercultural jolts of the second and third zones are all too easy to see. And besides, it does not seem as exciting, spectacular, or worthy of support to go to those so close at hand.

The church in our time has glorified "foreignness" in missions with two unfortunate consequences. First, the adjective *foreign* has put global evangelism into a mindset loaded with us-them, here-there, and sender-receiver imagery and a consequent remoteness of the very idea of missions. Second, it has

projected the most reasonable and predictable of the results of salvation (telling the good news) into a specialized and exotic professionalized category of work, weighed down with the forbidding idea of foreignness of the ordinary Christian.

Is it possible for today's churches to be rescued from this trap? One promising model of delivery can be inferred from Acts 6. As the chapter opens, the young church of Jerusalem is growing well, but it is not yet moving out. It is a multi-ethnic church with internal problems that must ultimately be traced to racial and "tribal" prejudice. The believers of more pure Jewish origin were systematically neglecting the practical needs of fellow-believers of non-Jewish origin. Whether the interactions were deliberate or unthinking, Luke does not tell us. Neglect is neglect, prejudice is prejudice, evil is evil.

The remedy for the young church lay in the same path, then uncharted, that is open to churches today. Recognize the problem of neglect and acknowledge it to be a dishonor to the Gospel of Christ. Become motivated toward change through the observation that unresolved problems of ethnic tension can and do hinder the work of Christ. They keep the church from being all that Christ intends and they inhibit "prayer and the ministry of the Word" (v. 4). Come together in concern as the whole body of believers and seek a solution through the good offices of those who are "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." (Note well, the Holy Spirit *and* wisdom.) Seek out from among the minority people themselves those who can help to heal the wounds, ministering both to the needs of the neglected and also ministering to the majority as they seek ways to redress the grievances of the past.

This pattern is clear in the selection of Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas. Luke took pains to list these seven peculiarly Greek and Greco-Roman names. And he says that these seven are the whole list. The ethnic identity of these first deacons is crucial to the conclusion: "So the Word of God spread" (Acts 6:7). In wonderment and a touch of irony we must reflect today on our departure from the purpose and meaning of the original deacons: those who serve in practical ways to restore the integrity of the body of Christ as it is so easily prey to the wiles of the evil one, ministering to those who offend and are offended because of the inattentiveness of Christians to ethnic and cultural prejudice. When did we lose sight of Acts 6:1-7?

Leaders for the church in the next century must take their culture-learning lessons seriously. The time has come for the people of God to be the ambassadors and the teachers of intercultural competency for the whole of society. Since the tasks of mercy and the ministries of the gifts of the Spirit are through the whole church to the whole world, we must do our homework well. If the church of Jesus Christ is to be an honor to His name, it should become a service of leadership and training in matters of intercultural skills and relationships to be felt throughout the whole of human society as a ministry of reconciliation. The facts are plain. Cultural differences are here to stay, unresolved ethnic tension is at the crux of much human conflict inside and outside the church, and the reconciling work of Christ ***is*** a central thorn of the Gospel. Thus it follows that if the people of God are competent and diligent in the work of the kingdom, their influences and their services should be widely recognized, utilized, and appreciated. Is this not an avenue of effective witness to the power of our Lord, the reconciler of God and humanity?

The Educational Task

Especially among Christians who are conservative in their theology, politics, and choice of breakfast cereal, the predilection toward closure is evident at almost every turn. Thus *learning* is seen as a concern for storing up in the brain as many right answers as possible. The emphasis on information as *answers* is dominant over the idea of wisdom as exemplified in valuing the right *questions*. Culture learning is far more than knowing information about a people and their habits. It is far more concerned with the *values* of

people, the questions they ask and why they regard them as important enough to ask. Learning to communicate wisely within a culture is more a matter of listening than of speaking. It is more a matter of asking than answering, of interacting responsibly rather than directly attempting to influence.

Thus the skills of culture learning are as much the taking on of attitudes and relationships as of taking on information. What is needed most of all is an openness, the openness of genuine inquiry, dedicated to a continuation of *learning through experience* throughout life.

The Limits of Cubic Space

Classrooms, lecture halls, and library carrels are not the best environments for culture learning. Indeed, a student can and should learn about culture and structures of societies from books, lectures, and graphic media. But if the realities are to come clear and if a person's whole socio-psychological personality and attitudinal matrix are to be reshaped into a "world Christian," it takes more than the cubic space experiences of formal education. What is most needed is human interaction, interpersonal encounters in intercultural settings. The best curricula today include field experiences and contextual learnings, a sustained series of experiences in a metropolitan center, an overseas assignment or two, including at least one substantial encounter within a less materialistic culture. Through such opportunities for culture learning, today's formal education can be delivered from some of the limits of cubic space, the walls-ceiling-and-floor box commonly called a classroom. Just as surely as language learning develops faster in a field setting, the skills of culture learning are more effectively learned in real contexts.

Three Demons of Westernization

Three characteristics of western persons, both Europeans and North Americans, underlie much of the evident intercultural dissonance within the church. As a largely westernized movement during the colonial and post-colonial eras, Christianity has carried three demons along in its baggage: assertiveness, cleverness, and neatness.

Assertiveness is most often attributed to the new world, and especially to people from the United States. It takes the form of incautious and inconsiderate pushing ahead with one's own view of things. It shows up in the failure to listen well; perhaps this demon causes deafness. It is hard to overcome. It quickly becomes a part of one's style of working with others. It demands acquiescence and docility. It works against the sharing of responsibility and the building of leadership.

Cleverness, especially manipulative cleverness, is a specialty of those who put much faith in technology and well-engineered plans. This demon always calls attention to itself and its own capacity to see "angles." Its compromises with integrity are well known among those who take pride in their clever talents; perhaps it can cause blindness, selective blindness that is self-induced, at the very least. Prov. 16:8 provides a warning: "Better is a little [gain] with righteousness than large income with injustice" (NRSV). For western Christians, learning not to trust one's own cleverness is a difficult part of the culture-learning task.

Neatness, at the surface of things, is a humorous fixation. "Cleanliness is next to godliness" is a cornerstone in pseudo-scripture. But it goes far deeper than the compulsive tendency to arrange and rearrange, to wash and purify, to remain "above reproach." It goes deeper into choices of appearances over realities, of claims rather than substance. And most especially this demon values *things* above *people.* Perhaps it causes lameness as Christians bog down in the mire of details and reports, valuing "evidences" seen on paper over trust in what is clearly apparent to the eyes of the beholder. Learning to deal with the resultant inter-cultural dilemmas is a difficult task; learning to control the compulsive judgments that follow

is even harder. Some of these traits are strongly evident in certain Asian societies, but the major concern of culture learning is to deal first with self-criticism.

Especially among those Christians who have carefully preserved and nurtured the historic Christian concern of the Bible as God's special revelation of Himself to humankind, careful *exegesis* is the rule. Responsible handling of the Bible calls for avoidance of reading meaning into it; the highest value is to discover what it is saying in its own terms and contexts. This is a very tall order, to say the least, but it does have practical value. It puts a central focus on the meanings of the text while setting up a warning system to reduce the likelihood of imposing outside interpretations that would distort the understanding of the text. This concern for responsible exegesis should be extended with similar rigor to the responsible handling of cultural differences. Understandings of people and practices should be read from within the meanings of their society to whatever extent possible, and should be set against bringing unsound meanings into one's perceptions of a given culture and especially to the comparative study of a given specific matter in two different cultural contexts.

Scholarly care for the integrity of cultures begins with the acknowledgement that one's own culture is not the center of things. No ethnic group provides the standards by which all other cultures are measured or through which any other culture must come in order to grasp the meaning of the Gospel.

The American church in its fulfillment of its mission at home and abroad needs an incarnational image of itself, not as a proud leader of the nations, nor as the holder of golden keys, but instead as an evidence of the presence of God within and among human societies. Its attitude and posture should reflect the Apostle Paul's image of the incarnation of Christ: "[He] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave . . . he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death (Phil. 2:7, 8 NRSV).

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas*.

The Church in the Intermediate Future

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

The church in the intermediate future confronts issues just beyond the present but before the remote "end time." The article uses four metaphors to describe possible actions of the church in such a time. *This article is adapted from: Ted Ward. The Church in the Intermediate Future.* Christianity Today *Vol. XXIII (18) June 29, 1979: 14-18.*

What can the church expect to face in the intermediate future? Will it be able to withstand the onslaught of secularism in the world? What developments and problems will it confront? What will be its role?

The term "intermediate future" is used deliberately. For most people, the "near future" is almost inconceivable except in terms of extending the present. On the other hand, the "distant future" brings to mind for Christians the ultimate judgment and/or fulfilled kingdom. So in order to help us grapple with issues beyond the present and before that seemingly remote time to come, the term "intermediate future" seems appropriate

For the future of society in general, there seems to be little hope. The likelihood of some sort of catastrophe seems overwhelming. Yet for the church—for God's people and God's work in the world—there is great hope. Secular society is crumbling around us and the probability of persecution of the church increases. Accounting for society's pessimism while living out one's own optimism requires more than psychotherapy, it requires faith.

The church needs to prepare energetically for the future, not just as a matter of personal spiritual readiness and ostrich-like millennialism, but in order to determine what it can do to make a difference in the world until the end.

The Bible uses various metaphors to depict aspects of the fulfillment of the kingdom. These metaphors suggest two themes: what God will do, and what God's people will be doing. Concerning the first theme, metaphors such as lightning, angels, a trumpet all suggest that God alone knows the details of the end of this era.

To describe what the church will be doing, the biblical metaphors indicate vigilance and ongoing preparation: keeping the home protected against intruders, keeping adequate oil supplies, continuously watching, being hospitable to travelers. The emphasis is clearly on continuous activity.

The scientific study of the future has become an important activity within virtually all fields of academic research. Scientists, especially in the natural sciences, are confronting world-scarring consequences of some of their finest efforts. Social scientists are undertaking futuristic studies with steadily growing sophistication. Gone is the straight line notion in which the future is seen merely as an extension of recent history. Anything can happen. Responsible futurism not only studies trends but seeks to identify the possible emerging factors that could alter everything.

To explore the relationship of evangelical Christianity and secular society in the intermediate future, we must begin with today, though we dare not confine ourselves to current problems and perspectives.

What is the condition of society and of the church today? What trend-changing events may be about to emerge?

To use the vernacular, secular society is "a mixed bag." Even as the church is not all of one stripe, secular society cannot be described responsibly in one set of terms. The variations within "secular" range from aggressively anti-Christian attitudes to those warmly sympathetic to Christian values and virtues.

The expressions of evil in secular society are widely varied. From time to time and from place to place "spiritual wickedness in high places" takes various forms. Sometimes it is an overt attack on the principles and the people of God; at other times evil forces may infiltrate and subvert. Probably the latter describes the current era of North American Christianity, though the intermediate future may well be different.

God's witness in the world through natural revelation, human conscience, and the living Word within the church has made a persistent mark. What Christians stand for has more influence than Christians themselves. The warts and pockmarks show up only too well on close examination of any exemplary Christian; but the total effect of Christian influence is undeniably in the direction of morality and spiritual concern, even as defined by secular standards.

Religiously, contemporary society speaks of an inner quest, suspecting that there is little if any responsible authority outside oneself. According to Ellwood, it is an "increasingly privatized sort of searching and yet it's a very intense and very real searching in all sorts of directions." Looking ahead, he sees these "religions of feelings" taking two possible roads. Worldwide hunger and starvation may lead to "doomsday religions," or else, if somehow human societies muddle through without catastrophe, scientific mysticism would be the religion of the future *(Alternative Altars,* Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., University of Chicago, 1979).

In our present society, solutions to basic human problems are often sought piecemeal. Unaware of the spiritual dimension that ties together all human traits and functions, massive government and private agencies treat only bits and pieces of larger, interdependent problems. For example, the World Health Organization has announced its new worldwide goal: "Good health for everyone by the year 2000." They will claim to strive for this. But by the year 2000, it is likely famine will be wiping out hundreds of thousands of people, partly because of the continuing population explosion which, ironically, will be accelerated by whatever gains are made on the health front.

If Christians are too inclined to grasp for a spiritual panacea, secular people grasp at far more absurd bits of the whole human dilemma. Technology is seen as the major alternative to moral renewal, especially because of its proven capacity to usher in "brave new worlds." It is both the oppressor and the savior. "What science has created, science can overcome" is the first article of faith for a dominant sector of secular society. At the same time, others are becoming aware that some technological creations cannot be brought under control.

Christians who walk away and mumble, ''I told you so!" are irresponsible. Perhaps as never before, Christians are needed in science and technology, not to be slaves of materialism designing automobile bodies and attachments for electric hairdryers, but to bring the marvels of God's creation back into

harmony with God's design before they become any further the tools of intentional, accidental, or negligent death and destruction.

The secular world is changing. The church and its ministries are changing. At the very least, any discussion of the future relationship between the church and the world must deal with change. The important questions are (1) What is happening? and (2) What are the implications for the church? These two questions center on change. Most traditional societies resist change and thus avoid change-related questions. Consequently they develop only minimal competency in dealing constructively with change.

Because of its historical-documentary eschatology, North American evangelical Christianity tends to explore the future by asking deterministic "is" questions—What is God's plan for the ages? What is the surest sign of the end times? When is Christ returning? Rather than focusing on the developmental unfoldings that characterize the holy scripture, these questions force the discussion into the concrete "is" and thus impoverish biblical theology and weaken our ability to cope with the intermediate future. We evangelicals seem quite at home with the present and happy to think about the ultimate future ("the end of this age"). Observers wonder at our lack of burden for the needs of the lost world between now and the Lord's return.

The desperate here and now demands foresight and planning as never before in history. Within less than a century, in our own time, all of humanity has been made subject to petrochemical technology, the energy for which is now virtually waning. The oldest among us are no younger than the petroleum industry. The single-century doubling of world population arrived in our lifetime. The conquering of disease and the global proliferation of bio-damage is the mindless tradeoff of our lifetime. The war to end wars and the looming possibility of the war to end life, these are of our lifetime.

Where will the needed thinking and planning come from? Can evangelicals rise quickly to the challenge of the times? Can we learn to do belatedly what the evangelical subculture has previously discouraged, to think and plan for the intermediate future? Or will we continue to burn our midnight oil for the discussions of when and where the rapture?

Preoccupations and anxieties tell much about people's faith. The Christian's faith is not taken seriously if it is only concerned with the mechanics and chronology of rapture and tribulation. Nor is faith worth having if it forces us to overlook human need. Does the dividing of sheep and goats in Matthew *25* reflect the value system of the kingdom of God, or does it only inform us of the logic of some future judgment when Nazis and anti-Christian Arabs will suffer for their treatment of Israel? Faith that refuses to address the realities of our troubled times is not worth having. Our bumper stickers make us a laughing stock: "What do Christians miss? Hell." It may be good enough for the insiders but not for those outside watching for evidence of a viable alternative.

If the issues of the intermediate future are not static, neither should be our means of dealing with them. We must seek ways to deal with the dynamics of change in the relationship between the church and the world.

Our heritage is a vital asset; we believe in the future. Secular society may well become more despairing; the trend is clear. We believe in the future because of faith not technology, not in utopian dreams, not in human self-improvement, but in Jesus Christ as Lord of the universe. Such faith makes us flexible and responsive. Many surges of creative spirit in human history may be traced to Christians who saw visions of the possible while secular society despaired. There is no reason why it cannot happen again. So we must choose well the path to walk into the future.

What are some of the roads the church may take? In what situations might the church find itself? Consider the following four metaphors that may describe the church in the intermediate future:

1. *The unheeded conscience.* If Herman Kahn and others who foresee a rosy future are right, the church is likely to be all but forgotten. If science and technology are able to solve the dominant human social problems (hunger, disease, political oppression, war), Christians should thank God for yet another reprieve for sinful humankind. But with the passage of time, especially of an easy time, Christians will find the "light of the world" less welcome. "Who needs it?" the world will say. The church of Jesus Christ will be seen as superfluous. Good times produce less God-consciousness than do foxholes. Thus the church as the unheeded conscience, may itself lapse into profound neglect or apostasy.

   Though it is unnatural to choose hardship, we must hope that the intermediate future will not be a time of fatness and ease. The church in North America has had about all the fatness it can take. Indeed, the church here today is flabby partly because secular society has incorporated a cultural religion (with Christian name and overtones) that wants Christianity's benefits but not its conscience. Were it not for the ominous clouds on time's horizon, we might pass from lukewarmness into oblivion, the church as the unheeded conscience of secular society.

2. *The ghetto.* Minorities of various sorts, particularly religious and racial, have been pushed into ghettos. Throughout history, minorities that posed a psychic threat to groups in the ascendancy were enslaved or oppressed. In the Middle Ages, a ghetto was where a minority population chose or was required to live. This people were distinct, peculiar, and had an assigned place apart from the larger society. Interestingly, the institutionalization of the ghetto in Europe and much later in the United States was to keep God's ancient people, the Jews, "in their place."

   It can happen again. If conditions reach the point where a scapegoat is needed as in Nazi Germany to mobilize and energize the ascendant society, some minority may once again be singled out for "special treatment." In order to qualify for this dubious benefit, a group of people must indeed be distinct, different in dress, look, belief, or custom. People should view them as thinking themselves superior in some way that is irritating or offensive to their larger society.

   As long as evangelical Christians are mostly white, middle class, aspiring, acquisitive winners in the capitalistic game of secular society, they are unlikely to qualify as unique except for their self-proclaimed pietism. An offense for the sake of the Gospel? "Defamed, made as filth of the world…. the offscouring of all things"? Hardly today. Yet, even as it was true of the vigorous young church in the apostle Paul's time, so it will be again when the church truly takes Christ seriously.

   As the church comes more directly into confrontation with secular society, the conditions for persecution will have been met; then it will be only a matter of time and a question of intensity and the church will once again come under sustained and systematic persecution. The community of God's family may be invited, encouraged, or even compelled to keep to itself. The church will then be the ghetto of godly influence, isolated, its effect as salt and light neutralized.

Through their experiences during the holocaust of Nazi occupation, Polish Jews learned something very curious about ghettos. Forced into isolation, people come to accept a "ghetto mentality." They see being cut off from the ascendant society as somehow appropriate or deserved. Today "ghetto mentality" has come to mean a lack of self-esteem that makes a person or group particularly vulnerable to persecution.

Since the church in modern times has had no large-scale experience with the demeaning effects of the ghetto, Christians may do even as the Jews did in the early Middle Ages by voluntarily creating their own ghettos as a misguided investment in group security.

God never meant for his people to accept a ghetto mentality. The ghetto proclaims hope for saving oneself and one's own but it sidesteps any love or burden for the outside world. To retreat to the ghetto is to relinquish the contacts by which the church ministers to a dying society.

3. *The underground.* "Underground" connotes the necessity to achieve principled objectives in covert ways. For example, in the period when the United States was developing a moral conscience about slavery, the underground railroad, a slightly organized network of godly and humanitarian people working together, spirited escaped slaves to freedom in free states and Canada.

   Evangelical Christianity in North America encountered its own "underground" in the late 1960's. Alienated young people, "turned off by the (formalized) church but turned on to Jesus," sought alternate ways of Christian expression and communion. Increasing coldness and rejection by the Christian "establishment" led them to go underground. Much of the movement was spiritually motivated and biblically sound. But reaction to the changing of the political guard and the suspending of American military vandalism reduced the need young people felt to be underground.

   The broader use of the term underground refers to resistance or guerilla movements within an invaded or occupied country. There is something romantic, almost rhapsodic, in the courage and persistence of resistance fighters. Their heads are high. To live is honor; to die is greater honor. While the underground lives, the enemy's victory is hollow. If the underground dies, hope dies with it.

   This is our Father's world. We claim it in His name to further His redemptive works. But the enemy has invaded and occupied our Father's world. The church, if not highly visible, is at least present as underground resistance. Satan's victory is hollow as long as this underground lives. And it will live. Our Lord promised, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

   The underground metaphor has one major problem. In wartime the watchword of any resistance movement is "kill or be killed," but the Christian command to love our enemies and to pray even for those who despitefully use us requires a most unusual underground. If the metaphor applies at all, it suggests that we should subvert secularism though love and good works. We need to be infiltrators.

The church may become a bold and brave underground if it seeks to recapture the secular world in the name of Christ.

4. *The field hospital.* Conscientious objectors in some countries are given alternative service assignments in wartime. While they do not condone or support immoral acts of war and would prefer to be as far away and as unsupportive as possible, they often find themselves in or close to the front lines of action. The debate has raged over whether medical services contribute directly to a war effort, bolstering morale and fitting service personnel for return to combat, or relieving the consciences of politicians, but humanitarian values almost always outweigh others.

   The conscientious objectors are needed to staff the field hospitals. The Christian community, although resented and persecuted in annoying but tolerable ways, may well be appreciated for its healing and restoring influence.

   The world is literally and figuratively at war. Nations use war to express righteous concern about other nations, to settle old grievances, to test their "superiority." Always war is an expression of or a reaction to sin, and as long as sin dominates human processes there will be war. Even if one tribe or nation were to build a near-Utopia, it would be so sinfully self-centered that those less fortunate would demand warfare.

   There is a spiritual warfare that affects all humankind and shows every promise of increasing. As secular society seeks freedom without responsibility, truth without source, and the good life without justice, the decline will lead to hysterical trauma. Casualties are already piling up; one can hardly imagine the suffering to come.

   It is part of the redeemed nature to engage in the relief of human suffering and to be active in constructive and restorative processes. Evangelical Christians are beginning to move in that direction. No longer can we self-righteously weigh each good deed according to its opportunity to serve as a vehicle for verbal witness. Rather, we need to return to the heart of Christ's compassion wherein the motive of good works is not clever strategy but to express what we *are* (Matt. 25:31-46).

   The field hospital is more than a tent and a stack of medical supplies. What makes it work is people who know what they are doing. The field hospital as one of the proposed metaphors of the church in the intermediate future demands the most in the way of preparation. To fulfill Christ's ministry to a needy world we must claim the task, identify and enhance the skills involved, and practice the gifts of healing and helping. It may well be the church's destiny to minister in the front lines among the spiritual, emotional, and physical traumas inflicted by the enemy. The church may honor its Lord best as a field hospital, a prepared community of relief and restoration in tragic times.

These four metaphors describe the choices may confront Christians who will live in the intermediate future. They have in common an increasing distance between the church and secular society. In North America today the distance is not great at all. Although this country has reflected some of its heritage of Christian social values, the continuing slide toward worldly values may force the church finally

to put its own house in order. After centuries of drifting with the secular tide, the church can hardly go further; even the crucial issue of family values (love, fidelity, and responsibility) may differentiate Christians as a peculiar minority.

There can be optimism about the place of Christians in the intermediate future. “The world is tiring, but we are to endure,” John Perkins has written. “The world will become frustrated, but we can have hope. The world will withdraw, but we must strike. We are God’s guerilla fighters, His spiritual saboteurs. We must now go to battle in our communities armed with the evangelism, social action, and political encounter through which Jesus can work.”

Persecution will come. Christians could be forced to go underground. More and more we will need to maintain a godly lifestyle in the face of increasing secularism, especially since that secularism is destined to be materialistic and spiritually vapid. But the church of Jesus Christ will stand. We need not fear the intermediate future. Let us eagerly prepare for it by acting as God’s agents of redemption in the world *today* so that the world will have been profoundly affected by the church when the end finally comes.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted’s tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University’s institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

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Involvement or Interference? How to Relate to a Needy World

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

Ted Ward presents his viewpoint on the meaning of "need" in development activity and the dangers that emerge when ineffective responses are implemented. *From a convocation address at Bethel Mennonite College, Kansas, April 28, 1978.*

When discussing human needs and worthwhile international assistance it is important to be aware that intervention is often ineffective, just as surely as it can often make a constructive and corrective difference. There are effective and ineffective responses to needs in the world. As Americans we often feel helpless because the problems in this needy world are so large. Real solutions are hard to find. Especially when it comes to recommendations for large scale policy, the search so often seems futile. Defeatism sets in readily. It becomes easy to say that there is hardly anything that can be done to make much difference. Yes, in the large picture, this assumption is often true. There is no magic bullet, no miracle lotion, no permanent cure. As in caring for one's own health, the best practice is to adopt the procedures of good maintenance and stick to them faithfully. Making a big difference in the long run usually depends on persisting in the little changes as they become possible.

Turning to America for solutions is a habit that many nations have adopted. America's technological advances virtually invite the attention that America is given. But it is often forgotten, even by Americans, that while this nation is indeed a somewhat reliable source of solutions, it is also a source or contributor to many problems. Thus it is somewhat hypocritical for Americans to become preoccupied with finding solutions for the problems of the world while denying our own role in creating those problems. No doubt about it, as we drive up consumption, as we raise the standard of living, and set a world pattern for acquisition, we put a pressure on the world's resources and affect others who are trying to emulate us.

As our money becomes less stable, the world's money becomes more unstable and the probability of economic collapse in many countries becomes a high probability. Within the American community our lifestyle is already affected. Our cars are getting shorter and lighter and the speedometers do not read as high. Gasoline is becoming expensive and money is harder to get. With things changing in so many sectors of society, life has become more than a little harsh and uncomfortable. But we will adapt ourselves and accept change simply because it has become part of our emerging reality. Americans are involved in the world scene. Americans are, in effect, as victimized by the real conditions as anyone else in the world. Our victimization, our sense of loss, our awareness of the degrading of our own lifestyles and standard of living are perhaps less sharp; but the fact remains that we have not only the potential to help, but we have the obligation to help wisely.

The central issue then is that good intentions to be of assistance, to be part of the helping community in the world, are not enough. Sincerity is no substitute for effectiveness. It is nice to want to do well, but it is even nicer actually to contribute to positive change. It is nice to want to help someone; but it is more important to actually provide help. Americans tend to see their actions as based on generous and benevolent motives. We want to be seen us as working from a sense of kindness and a sense of concern.

Nice enough, yes, but nevertheless it is important that we make honest assessments of the motives of our "acts of kindness."

For example, Boy Scouts are said to gain merit by helping little old ladies across street corners. But we chuckle at the cartoon showing a Boy Scout doing his good deed for the day *by dragging the little old lady who doesn't want to cross the street.* Humane acts that are out of tune with the needs of people may be indeed look like humane acts, but when they are out of context or unwanted they become hindrances. The issue then is how do we assure that we go beyond good intentions and accept responsibility for the consequences of having tried to help?

Following are five problems in reference to this issue:

1. The first problem is that *response to need itself is not a reliable basis for helping people.* This comment may seem controversial and confusing; but a few illustrations will make it more clear. Needs often look very different to insiders and outsiders. Outsiders are rarely able to plan or to implement effective development without help from the insiders. In the field of international development and foreign assistance this has been learned the hard way. Outsiders so often are poor planners. The best contribution an outsider can make is to *develop planning competencies among the insiders.* This is a role and a result that I have observed in many situations. It was mentioned in the introduction that I have served in quite a number of countries. Therefore, I couldn't possibly have been very long or gained substantial depth in each of those countries. But I operate within a model of short-term assistance based on the following steps:

    A. LEARN. By reading carefully and interacting with people who have been in the situation. Avoid making judgments before taking a careful look at the situation.

    B. LISTEN. Minimize your speeches and avoid lecturing; but pay very close attention to what the insiders are saying.

    C. PROCESS THE CLUES. Starting with questions that will confirm or disconfirm what the observation and listening has suggested, move into increasingly specific suggestions. Avoid very carefully the appearance of having decided anything more pointed than this question format: "What do you suppose might happen if you tried this idea…?"

    D. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN. Keep listening until the local folks begin to notice that most of the new thoughts and ideas being discussed are *theirs.* Success can be measured in terms of how competently they are shifting their comments and roles from being *receivers* of ideas to becoming *sources* of ideas.

    E. MOVE ON. In terms of short-term and brief exposure a wise consultant will avoid adding to dependency on outside resource. This model is one that missions may have to consider more carefully in the future. The wise consultant will endeavor to enhance local leadership competencies and then move out of the situation before dependency sets in!

2. The second problem is that *lists of needs tend to be statements of symptoms rather than statements of causes*. Consider the phenomenon of beggars: in many parts of the world, while in the company of an experienced local person, you may note that your companion seems to ignore the beggars. You may be surprised that your friend is so callous to human need. But what is more commonly the explanation is that the local person who has an understanding of the development process, will actually caution you not to give to a beggar because it tends to perpetuate an

inhumane relationship between donor and receiver. Americans so rarely recognize that the conditions of poverty usually spring from far deeper causes than can be remedied by pocket change. And when we develop the habit of making small contributions it is fundamentally demeaning. Similarly, responding to illness, deformities, and water-borne disease by providing medicine without helping to remediate the supply system is likely to deepen the problem with no contribution of actual help.

Careful analysis is the first step toward development. Determining what sorts of causes underlie the evident poor health, malnutrition, or poverty in general provides the information that can lead to a knowledgeable basis for substantial change. If we move too impulsively, our tendency is to respond emotionally, almost surely resulting in treating symptoms and ignoring true causation.

3. The third problem is that *many people do not think of their situations in terms of needs.* There was a startling moment of in our work in Indonesia. We were engaged in a long planning session with a village chief and elders. We had all been together for a succession of evenings talking through their hopes and intentions for the village, what they aspired to, what their hopes and fears were, and how they understood their people in terms of their own traditional history. As invited consultants, we two Americans were struggling to gain a coherent picture of the situation. We truly wanted to understand the community better. My colleague was a technologist who persisted compulsively, always in any situation, asking the question "What do you need? Tell us your needs." We had worked together in other Indonesian villages; his procedure was a habit. Sooner or later, his persistent push would begin. He seemed not to notice the evident discomfort of the elders. He assumed that people in responsible positions would be able to respond knowledgeably. Thus he especially badgered this poor chief: "But tell us, what are your needs?" Of course, the truth is that many people, including Americans, don't like to admit that they *have* needs. It is especially true of people that are in somewhat more primitive conditions. They don't like to be pushed to lose face over the issue of needs.

   Finally, the chief had heard enough of this, and he decided to answer. "Now I will answer. I will try to tell you of some of the need in our community." We waited and we waited, assuming that he was organizing some kind of magnificent response. Finally, from his cross-legged position, he slowly held up one foot, partially covered by a very well-worn assemblage of ragged leather, and spoke, "See this shoe! We don't have a man in this village who can fix shoes." The irony immediately stuck me: he was the only man that we had seen in that village wearing shoes. Everyone else wore sandals or nothing at all on their feet. The chief did not see his village in terms of needs, in our sense. Apparently he saw his village in terms of people who were able to do things. Was he answering in a way that would make sense to an American technologist? When we approach problems from a "needs" orientation, we may find ourselves in a different world!

4. The fourth problem is that *whatever is given may not fit*. Consider some of the horror stories that are told about famine relief. Various kinds of emergencies tend to produce in people an instantaneous "compassionate giving" reaction wherein the motivation to contribute *something* is very strong. People are willing to contribute all sorts of things, whether they can actually be shipped and put to good use is not considered.

   We hear news stories about earthquake ravished villages being re-built with metal roofs so they will not cave in and kill people. But not many tropical residents can survive under a metal roof.

The human tendency so often seems to be to take the easiest, quickest way out of difficult situations. So sending massive amounts of "relief" commodities is exactly what we do first. We send wheat, for example, to rice-dependent regions where very few people understand how to make wheat edible. And then we wonder why it rots on the docks. *There must be a reasonable fit between a help given and a meaningful assistance received.*

5. There is also *the problem of distribution—getting the "aid" items to the places intended*. One of the things that Americans commonly overlook, especially with reference to the majority world, is that distribution systems rarely work backwards. Even in our country distribution works better from source to user. If trucks bring raw foodstuff from rural sources to urban markets they will likely make the return trip empty. It is difficult for people to understand that if food is shipped in, put on the docks, and trucked out to villages, this is a one-way process. It likely means that many trucks and ships gain revenue only in one direction. In a difficult economic situation this is a losing proposition. The lack of adequate distribution systems is one reason that great loads of assistance commodities do not reach the points of greatest need.

   Another part of this puzzle is corruption. Infections of political, economic, and social corruption make it phenomenally difficult to successfully operate aid and development projects. Corruption? If a driver is to take a load to the countryside but is paid in advance for his services, he may be inclined to take the load up the road a bit, unload and sell it. Why pay the drivers in advance? In such situations, truck-drivers may be unwilling to operate any other way; further, many quickly learn that the middle-men (emergency aid brokers) are so eager to do *something* quickly with the aid commodities that they join in the deceptions along with the drivers.

6. The sixth problem is that *whatever is given in the cause of aid, assistance, or helping can and often does create further problems.* One of the most pressing of contemporary problems is urban blight. Calamitous overcrowding has triggered a virtual implosion of city after city. Desperately sick cities are now more common than imagined in earlier years. The polite way to talk calls it "urban poverty," but in one way or another it impoverishes all of us.

   But urban problems are not the only problems that are exacerbated by honest efforts to help. Another important secondary problem of development is *rural* poverty. There is a curious relationship now understood fairly widely between the mechanization of agriculture and the deepening of rural poverty.

   As agriculture is mechanized in the rural sectors of developing nations, farming families are put out of work. No longer do they have a legitimate claim on the community rice basket. If a man and his family are pushed off the rice paddy by mechanization—especially if they are pushed out of their family rice mill by competition from a big new highly efficient corporation-owned rice mill, they lose their right to the community rice baskets and they become relief cases. Since in much of the world there is no organized relief, the only thing for them to do is to move to the city where, because they have no particular skills that have worth in the urban world, they quickly fall into the ranks of the unemployed. This has led large cities, especially in Asia, to build barricades and check points in order to ensure that anyone entering the city has a work card and the promise of a job. Many major cities have thus taken desperate steps that have led to vast internal strife among their people. Already there are more unemployable folk in the city than they can possibly sustain. This action, then, forces people to build ancillary communities just outside the police cordons—communities full of people who are begging and starving. We live in a desperate world.

7. The seventh problem is that *the underlying causes of problems in the underdeveloped world are quite often untouchable,* except through political and social reform, which usually means bloody revolution. Many of the contracts that most affect development are drawn up on a nation-to-nation basis. Such contracts are controlled by power that is commonly beyond the reach of carefully reasoned decisions and caring concern. When contracts are drawn by government, a nation's pride, prestige, and power are the dominant factors in the decisions and the resulting terms of the contract. In most cases the projects of aid and assistance are regulated through the management of governments, many of which are self-seeking, elitist, and corrupt. Inequitable access to resources, particularly in terms of monopolies of land use and land ownership, are almost inevitable. And issues of justice themselves, especially as they relate to totalitarian governments, is almost an untouchable. And until these sorts of problems can be dealt with, everything else we do in terms of beneficent aid seems to be futile.

8. The eighth problem is that *receiving aid itself can deepen dependency and cause further loss of dignity* Many young people develop deep resentment of excessive parental paternal postures. They learn to fight against it as they begin to build selfhood and identity. Nations are much the same. Especially in formerly colonial nations and patriarchal monarchies, and long-term dictatorships, the nation itself may have been treated continually as a group of children, continually receiving support and assistance as powerless persons. Such conditions give meager experience through which to gain dignity and a sense of worth. This sort of colonial mentality is not a sound seed-bed for independence. The fact that the world is no longer dominated by colonial powers has very little to do with the fact that many people in the world are still stifled the old-fashioned way. Thus development assistance may or may not result in social transformation of the colonial mentality.

Looking Squarely at Development

What is development? Is it an economic issue? Brazil is an interesting case: industry is expanding, it seems that there are more jobs, tourism flourishes, major corporations are emerging, the universities are widely acknowledged to be world-class-- but a study of the really tough sectors reveals some problems. Small farms and the more remote rural areas seem to be barely existing in another era. In cities, the slums (favelas) are an embarrassing reality. Police control often resembles small-scale warfare. The structure of society is even more disjointed than in the United States. The rich are getting much richer, the middle class is growing, but the poor are getting much poorer. *And the poor are still very impoverished.* That's the fact of life in economic development. Is it technology transfer? Is it simply adding tools and skills and machines so that other people can build for themselves? The multi-national corporations would suggest that is what counts. But if you look closely at what happens in this technology transfer, you cannot help but feel that some of it is inappropriate technology. Is development *mechanization?* Is it moving into a "machine age?" In countries where automobiles and trucks, motorcycles and the like, are forcing tremendous amounts of national investment in the resources necessary to provide roads, one wonders what mechanization has to do with the development of those nations. Technological change is costly, especially during development transitions. One of the bravest series of technological changes in America arose from the advent of the automobile. The highway system was quite literally a huge national investment across a century of change. Its value was even greater than original expectations, but today maintaining the system is a huge annual expenditure.

Is development *urbanization*? It is in the urban fringes where the contrasts of rich and poor societies show the greatest contradictions. In some regions, great wealth is evident in the city core; in other regions the greatest wealth is in the suburban fringes, avoiding the core. Can either extreme represent development at its best? Outlying districts of almost any city in the majority world where poverty is at its

extreme seems to force development into tall and yet taller new residential buildings. But in the United States, the core of many cities has become the poverty zone; wealth is centered in the suburbs. Not so in much of the world, where the people who are on the margins of the city are most apt to be trapped in misery.

There is a natural progression to be seen in the history of both modern missions and in the history of the foreign aid movement since World War II. Both began with the motive of *helping.* They moved beyond helping posture to a *training* posture and then onward into a *reciprocity* posture.

Helping seems to be a reasonable way to think about working cross-culturally whether in missions or international aid; but the problem is that when we help, especially helping by *giving*, dependency will likely increase.

Training goes beyond helping by assuring that the knowledge of the helper is shared with those who are helped. If training is limited to passing along information, it can become just one more tool for exploitation. Misguided training can become a matter of imposing thoughts and ideas on others. It can falsely legitimatize hierarchy and hierarchy itself is the very root of elitism. Training, especially if carried out with tactics of domination, can produce a tendency of people to search for other people to be trained—always people beneath them. Training should make people more secure and competent, self-reliant and creative, engaged in discovery. It should not become the perpetuation of a hierarchy of information.

Reciprocity is the third element and the prime objective of the development process. The importance of reciprocity is only recently recognized for its importance both in international aid and Christian missions. Reciprocity is as much a goal as a process. It is the objective of development; it is also a major evidence of development. Through assistance people start the path to reciprocity; through training at its best, people can take deliberate steps toward increasingly effective cooperation and ultimately can become truly reciprocating leaders themselves. Reciprocity is built on a two-way street of learning and action. It is a quality built by the training process; it comes from the shared relationship in which a back-and-forth of ideas, observations, supports, assistances, and companionship leads to a mutually constructive quality. Both the methods and the outcomes of effective training should be *the process of establishing humane relationship among people through which all will learn, trainers and trainees alike.* And whatever is done should encourage people to find their roles within society as productive, sensitive, and autonomous persons, engaged responsibly in the interdependencies of society.

So, then, how can we help a community? Perhaps there is a prior question: *Should* we help? Christians have a unique answer for this question. Some would assert that anyone who does anything generous or kind is ultimately doing it as a kind of remote self-interest. But no, that assertion reflects a failure to come to grips with the reality of the human soul. We can be accused of trying to gain friendship, to make points for Jesus. We can be accused of trying to sharpen our skills at the expense of others; and, of course, as Americans we also accused of expanding our economic markets through whatever we do, whether through Christian missions, foreign aid, or through military presence.

All of that notwithstanding, there is a worthy place in the international world community for the American Christian today and an inescapable reality: world community is not a choice. It is already upon us. The interdependency of the world is clear and has gone past the point of any return. Christians then need to have as never before in the history of humankind a sense of being world citizens. It is one thing to be a sojourner, to be a person wandering through a nation; but it is quite a different thing to realize that the nature of that sojourning puts one into a strong identification with other sojourners in other nations, and, therefore, we are part of a world citizenship.

We need to be about our Father's business just as clearly as Jesus was about his Father's business as a young person in Jerusalem. Redemption is the backdrop of life's drama. The people of God are godly insofar as they respond in compassionate love to the conditions of the human family. The relatedness of reciprocity is the state of humanity that is the most glorifying to God. It glorifies God less that we are giving than that we are *giving and receiving* to others and each other, within the fellowship of the redeemed.

What we call church-to-church sending and sharing began in Acts 9, 10, and 11 with a situation that began with the conversion of the vicious anti-Christian, Saul, who was confronted by a blinding light and the voice of Jesus on the Damascus road. Later, after several days with the Christian disciple Ananias and the confirmation of his conversion, he began to proclaim his faith in Christ, especially in the synagogue of Damascus. Many Jews were thus brought to faith in Christ but Saul was caught in the middle; many of the Damascus Christians were deeply suspicious of Saul's sincerity because he had been their greatly feared persecutor; perhaps Saul was trying to trick them into a trap. His persistent testimony and proclamations that Jesus is the Son of God caused the core Jews of the synagogue to conspire against Saul. His Christian friends in Damascus helped him escape the city and join the growing Christian community in Jerusalem. Here again, Saul ran into the same problem: Christians in Jerusalem were also suspicious of him so they sent him back to Tarsus. The Bible does not describe his months or years back in Tarsus, but the story picks up after the church of Jerusalem heard the great news of the large–scale conversions and establishment of the very strong church in Antioch. Perhaps knowing that Saul would be encouraged by joining a really strong church at work, Barnabas, the encourager from the Jerusalem church, made a quick trip to Tarsus, to search out this new convert, Saul (later named Paul). Together they made their way onward to Antioch where they worked together teaching and encouraging many for the next year. ". . . And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

Christians from one church were helping Christians in another church. It continues to occur in this way. The Jerusalem church did not send a publicist or a street-corner evangelist; instead they sent Barnabas, a man they knew and valued because he was an encourager. There is evidence that strong churches assisted weak churches, funds were shifted from one church to another as needs arose, and each church was provided tangible assistance, even from the weaker to stronger economic regions, from the sending churches to Judea "where at that time a poverty had arisen." In other words, those first sending acts of the new church were reciprocal acts. Missions sour when the haves tend to be the givers who do not see any particular value in receiving. We need to listen and respond to those from other nations who come and share with us something of the reality of lifestyle in the majority world, in order to prepare us to be competent to deal with lifestyle changes in our own nation.

Observations from the Field

Following are some complementary observations from the field. In the first place, I have gained a profound respect for younger and short-term people in the development field. This began with my awareness that many of the people in the Peace Corps had great integrity along with zeal, patience, and substantial skills. Many of their qualities are in sharp contrast with the weary cynicism of the "old-timers." Many have demonstrated that most promising of qualities: *knowing enough to do the job well but recognizing how much more they need to learn.* They are ready and eager to move into cross-cultural work. If newcomers are over-educated before they get into cross-cultural work, they likely will arrive feeling that somehow they must "show off" and prove that they know what the answers are. But if you feel any tug on your heart for service of a humane sort in the developing world, may I urge you to find ways to respond to it while you are still young enough to be honest about what you do not know. And then when you get there, do not put on an act.

The second observation from the field is that family, church, and school background shows through loud and clear especially in terms of handling the natural urge to dominate and to let others dominate them. Young people who are most competent in international development work come from background experiences wherein they have not been dominated in their educational, home, or church experiences, have been treated humanely, and have not been constantly badgered by those trying to push them this way and that. Such people do not feel quite so inclined to find foreign nationals to push around.

Third, those from previous experiences wherein the style of life and learning is give-and-take seem far less often to do the hindering, harmful acts in the world. It is not a matter of technological know-how or natural intellect; more surely it is a lifestyle of reciprocity and truth that leads to leadership. These characteristics are the lifestyle traits of the Christian community, especially in matters of sharing, compassion, and concern.

If you intend to prepare yourself for the future that is inevitably upon us, there is not a better time to start than today and there are no finer people to start with than those sitting around you. Your lifestyle is far more important than any single question of energy consumption, food, and all the rest, because these follow from an orientation of *compassionate sharing concern*. Americans are becoming individualistic to the point where they say, "I don't care about anybody but me."

Development must first attend to survival. Assistance tends to go through a cycle or a series of steps beginning with *relief* through which people respond to symptoms and attempt to relieve symptoms. Participation in relief is surely appropriate for Christians, but if we stop there, it quite often results in useless interference. Relief very commonly results in short-term solutions, "quick fixes," and the likelihood of recurrence of the problems. Without worthy goals for the follow-up steps, such assistance has little or no prospect of success and has no long-term value.

Rehabilitation generally follows relief. Reconstructing, correcting, and rearranging the structural and institutional factors that underlie the need for relief must follow. Rehabilitation is concerned with re-building, replacing, and re-organizing the whole social environment. This is usually the most costly phase of the development process.

Development goes beyond rehabilitation. Development is concerned with freeing up the internal, intrinsic functions that enable the natural social condition of continual maturing. In theological terms, the human is born as a creature destined for being fulfilled across the years of a lifetime. Each person is gifted as an evidence of God's redemptive purpose. When the person comes to an awareness of who and what he or she is called to be, the development process moves beyond the physical, emotional, and social states of being into a fulfillment of our great destiny of humanness in the image of God. Development goes beyond rehabilitation inasmuch as it is concerned with the freeing up of internal competencies and spiritual gifts through the process of redemption.

Conclusion: The development cycle transforms interference into involvement. As Christians, we accept and freely acknowledge the buying back of our lives from the power of sin; God has accepted us through the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We participate in the development of others, not as puppets of God, but individually and autonomously as a collective society of human beings—the body of Christ. Thus through this process of development we are able to function and stand in the company of saints as persons of integrity. This, for sure, is development.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

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The Impossible Dream

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

A discussion of the problems that emerge when relief and development activity are confused. The article presents theological and organizational principles to guide these activities. *From an address to the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organization (AERDO) in the late 1970's or early 1980's.*

Don Quixote is the story of a man who creates a world in his mind and then proceeds to engage that world with the aid of a real-world person, Sancho Panza. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, incident after incident, provide a metaphor of relief and development. Don Quixote and his companion march across the countryside like relief and development, spearing windmills and occasionally noting their inability to see anything of major consequence resulting from their valiant efforts. Much relief and development work is characterized by the tendency to attack problems that are most familiar, to which we apply hand-me-down solutions, based on habit, tradition, and the misguided confidence that what worked before will again suffice. Like Don Quixote, we bring our view of the world as we have known it, confident that our experiences of the past will accommodate the future. Our viewpoints, our judgments, and our actions too commonly are based on the way we want to view the world. But this does not fit well with reality. We face new realities and we must approach the tasks with humility and caution.

Christian involvement in relief and development activity has established a rather positive reputation. Familiarity with some of the dilemmas that we confront and observations of the attempts to deal with them tends to cause at least mild alarm. It is so easy to do damage while attempting to do good.

Following is one person's attempt to engage a series of problems beginning with the technical issue raised by your organization's name: Association of Evangelical Relief and Development. Linking *relief* with *development* is problematic. Many of our secular colleagues have recognized that inadvertent tying of *relief* to *development* leads to confusion. At first thought, the connection seems obvious and intends no harm. But whenever the word *development* is preceded by any other word, the two tend to blend together. *Reliefandevelopment* tends to become one long polysyllabic word, just as surely as *growth and development* or *research and development*. None of these pairs is clarified by the combination. The word *development* tends to slip in as a second thought after several other starting points, and it tends not to get the careful attention it deserves. Relief describes one purpose, motive, and procedure; development connotes a very different purpose, motive, and procedure. Neither is a product of the other. While the intent may be to retrieve a sinking boat, two very different procedures are required: *bailing* or pumping to reverse the sinking and *repairing* or rebuilding to restore the boat's integrity as a boat. Two different functions rarely performed simultaneously.

Protestant missions have been strong in reference to relief-type medical and famine operations. We also have a great track record meeting physical needs in periods of calamity. But when it comes to the needs that are rooted in social and economic malfunctions, Christian efforts have rarely led to effective development, with the notable exception of Wilberforce's leadership in the anti-slavery movement and after almost 150 years, Martin Luther King's valiant continuation of the same pursuit. Christians are more comfortable dealing with first-level needs; there is a strong avoidance of the arduous and often ambiguous

tasks of helping people engage in their own social improvement. Perhaps as an outgrowth of the twentieth century view of conversion as a *moment of decision*; development is assumed to follow. In the real world, this is rarely the case. When relief and development are viewed as the same process, the impression is created that development, in and of itself, is not an answer, but is simply part of the solution to emergencies.

This presents a serious dilemma because *the logic of relief and the logic of development are essentially contradictory.* The modus or motives may be similar but the logic of approach is fundamentally different. Relief activity is essentially counter-developmental.

This does not mean that relief activity is wrong or to be avoided; but we should understand that relief activity has the potential for creating an even greater development problem. When the same organization engages in both activities, that engagement will be at cross-purposes. This realization is critical for organizational effectiveness.

It is not unusual for organizations to plan as if relief and development can be hooked together, i.e., where relief leaves off development picks up. That looks good on a flow chart, but in the field it does not work out that way. Generally speaking the logic of relief is "short-term intensive, adequate, and then leave" whereas development is "long-term, minimal (not maximal) interference, and minimal dependence on outside resources."

Relief is addictive, and this realization should affect the way we look at our medical services, food relief ministries, refugee accommodation programs, and so on.

The second dilemma is *gaps in evangelical theology*. For many people there is a kind of human reaction to suffering and need that says, "Somehow we *ought* to do something about that," but the dogmas that guide Christians just do not justify it. The North American orientation to biblical Christianity seems to condone manipulative uses of benevolence. In fact, good works are easier to "sell" if they can be put into a legitimizing package where they are "justified by evangelistic outcomes. To put it in simplest words, we engage in good works or acts of kindness which can open doors for preaching and dogmatic pronouncements.

Evangelical relief and development organizations confront criticism when they appear to be concerned more with relief or development than evangelism. The criticism tends to create defensiveness in the organization which can lead to ineffectiveness in relief and development assistance. The wholeness of the Gospel is what we need to strive for in our theology and practice.

There are vast sections of the teachings of our Lord that are virtually lost in today's sermonizing in many of the churches that are key supporting churches in evangelicalism—especially the teachings that are set aside because of certain eschatological propositions and dispensational theology. Many of those teachings excised from the Scripture and laid aside are crucial to the comprehension of the ethical frame of reference of the redeemed community in a lost world.

Matthew 5, for example, presents an ethical frame of reference that is often contrary to the values of our society. Perhaps nothing speaks more bluntly to American notions of power, authority, and leadership than does the Beatitudes. Matthew 25 is surely another basic text for those in the business of meeting human needs.

Regardless of one's position on the eschatological issues, the ethical teachings are crucial and unequivocal. On the day of judgment the Lord will say to the "sheep" and "goats", "When I was thirsty, you

gave me drink," "When I was hungry, you fed me," "When I was in prison, you visited me," and so forth. The reaction of the sheep is not, "Yes we did, and we are so glad you noticed!" Instead, their reaction is, "Are you sure you meant to put us on the right side?" Because in effect that's what they are asking the moment they say, "When did we see you in that condition? When did we fulfill those criteria?"

Then the Judge, our Lord, says, "When you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me." And the goats say, "How come then we're over here?" So our Lord responds, "When I was hungry, you did not feed me. When I was thirsty, you did not give me something to drink" and so on. Let me paraphrase their reaction: "We would have if we had known it was you!" When did we see *You* hungry?" I submit that this response is uncomfortably close to the reaction in many evangelical Christian circles when people say, "Well, we're perfectly willing to do all these things *if we're doing it for Jesus*!"

God is working in the lives of His people to transform their consciousness and their ethical system so that in the engagement with people's needs, they are not preoccupied about doing it *for* Jesus; they are doing it *because* of Jesus. Significantly, in Matthew 10:42 Jesus says, "And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward; and Mark 9:41 "For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward."

Noting these passages is not an apologetic for separating those things that we do in the realm of good works from those things that we do verbally in evangelical propagation. It is not a question of A or B or B over A, the meeting of physical needs or the meeting of spiritual needs as an artificial A versus B, but it is a concern as was our Lord's in His incarnation for the wholeness of human need.

The assumption that human beings have a spiritual aspect separate from the other aspects of development seems misguided. Spirituality is not an aspect; it is the essence of the nature of human personhood, and while all the classified aspects of development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social) are separable aspects and approachable in differential ways; the spiritual soul of the person cannot be compartmentalized as a "part" of the whole person. Nor is it reasonable to assume that it is approachable in some separate way. The spirit is the core of human personhood.

Another basic reality is that relief activity is appropriate as a Christian response and needs no justification. It was in our Lord's nature to respond to people who presented needs to him. He did not on any occasion strategize how that approach of a physical sort could be converted to a focus on the spiritual nature or evangelism. In fact, as He healed people, often He would heal and move on as if the whole person had been addressed.

Our Lord was somewhat less crisis-oriented than much of evangelical teaching and preaching today, which pushes people to a decision, as if making an intellectual decision is the major issue. Our Lord seemed quite aware of the nature of human development as a function of discovery, of wrestling with issues, and of coming to new resolutions in time. Our Lord let rich young rulers and others walk out in the middle of the night with their questions still unresolved. Our Lord was broad in His approach to the needs of people, without needing to justify why He was engaged in the meeting of human need.

Three deeply held myths are evident. These myths can be traced to the North American individualistic gain ethic, and to the economics of the competitive marketplace. The first of these is the myth that *people get what they deserve*.

Quite often people justify this particular myth by such reasoning as, “Oh well, they’ve mismanaged all these years so now they’re getting what’s coming to them. Serves them right.” The same reasoning applies to other cultures: “They’ve squandered their resources; they spend every nickel; they’ve been careless, so now they’re paying a price for it.” We tend to generalize from assumptions that are based on our own society and cultural experiences. Regardless of narrowness or evident misfitting, we cast the judgments all over the world!

The second myth is the contention that *poverty is the consequence of poor management, laziness*, or some other flaw that is the fault of the poor person. The stock reasons given are that “they” drink too much, or don’t manage their money, or are just plain lazy or worse. They just don’t know any better. In this particular myth lies a very deep racism.

The third myth, perhaps more a product of poor theological reasoning, is the assertion that *only what can be done in the overt name of Christ is appropriate*. Considering the increased awareness of Islam as a world-wide reality we hear more concern for Christian distinctiveness. The fault in this myth is in its distortion of Jesus’ teaching. The “cup of water given in my name” was not intended to criticize thirstiness. Nor is it appropriate to argue that the compassionate act is nullified unless the authority of Christ is explicitly declared in that moment. Americans assume they alone have the right to determine the conditions under which they will send relief and assistance funds, missionaries, health workers, or teachers anyplace in the world. If anyone threatens to curtail that in any way, it is treated as a violation of an American right. After all, if we are putting up the money, we ought to decide what sort of label gets fastened on the side of the truck.

Following three deeply held myths lead to problematic habits in the culture of North American evangelicalism. The first is the *tendency to dichotomize* or to draw sharp lines of separation. Separatism leads people *to classify* things and other people, to create categories, and to think and behave in mechanistic way. Once again, something of the spiritual wholeness of the situations is lost.

Second is the tendency to spiritualize—to take a passage such as “the poor you’ll always have with you” and make it an alibi, to say, “You just have to pray for them because they’ll always be there. There’s nothing else you can do.”

Third is the tendency to legalize, to resort to proof texts, to use the Bible as law rather than as basis of principle. In legalism, the whole liberating work of Christ is missed.

Restoring the social consciousness of Christians is a worthy goal of evangelical relief and development. We are facing a time when the church will be divided, not on arbitrary grounds of separatism, but in terms of actions and behavior, those who are committed to a spiritual discipleship and those who are not. Those who are faithful in the grace of God will become a much stronger and more visible church, though perhaps a smaller church.

The developed nations tend to institutionalize human effort. Quite often even before the worth of a given effort is well demonstrated, somebody has built an organization around it! This really creates a problem, because though there are advantages in getting one’s act together to raise funds and mobilize efforts, there are costs. For example, bigness usually produces serious costs in communication. The larger an organization becomes, the greater its communication problems. Efficiency is another cost. It can lead to inflexibility. Another result is *tunnel vision*, the notion that it is possible to anticipate things that are going to occur in the future, and to mobilize appropriately for these. Effectiveness has been described as the art of doing the right things, whereas efficiency is described as the art of doing things right. Sometimes in our

fetish for doing things right we do not ask carefully enough the question, "What are the right things?" In relief, and even development activities, flexibility is an essential. The capacity to get into action quickly and the capacity to get out of situations promptly are essential.

But moving too quickly in organizational management tends to cost dearly in terms of human sensitivity. We have all known people who have been hurt because of insensitive personnel policies and a management scheme that looks good on paper and impresses the "home office;" but the human consequences on the field can be debilitating.

Certainly by now we are accustomed to thinking in terms of *appropriate technology*. We know, for example, that drilling a well and putting a diesel pump at the top of it will likely not have long-term value to nomadic people since 1) they will not be encamped at this location very long, 2) they have few people among them with mechanical skills, especially in diesel engine and pump maintenance, 3) the closest fuel supply source is two days away, and 4) they do not like the idea.

Appropriate technology is more a matter of finding simple solutions than it is of finding clever and abstract strategies. Americans are more inclined to use machines, computers, and other high-cost components, and they tend to be less clever in the use of rudimentary gimmicks. Developing the habit of *thinking simple* and *thinking "cheap"* will help a person gain these skills. A local person often turns out be the best exemplar of this contrast. Finding and encouraging such a person will likely be more valuable than all the materials, pictures, tapes, slides and clever suggestions that the consultant can bring to the discussion.

These very real matters are some of the reasons that development specialists have such intriguing work! And the competent ones learn several important principles rather soon: 1. Face the facts *with* people. Argument is sometimes necessary but always keep it short and carefully avoid anger. 2. The barriers and hindrances are very real to people who lack experience in searching for alternatives. Accept this fact and work around it. 3. Skills can be learned; identify and start teaching the persons who show interest in discovering new ideas. 4. Demonstrate alternatives, do not assert contrary positions until you can show or illustrate them. Use concrete (real) objects and take learners into contact with actual operational contact with reality. 5. Do not rely too much on verbal communication, especially when there are language differences.

Appropriate Institutions

Schools as we know them in the western world, are a relatively recent institutional form. In the Old Testament "schools of the prophets" appear, and in our minds the chalkboard, rows of benches and tables, teacher up front, learners taking notes, waiting for the bell, and the whole picture takes shape. Schools as most of the western world has shaped them are not the only way to organize and deliver learning experiences. New forms and approaches are being organized in many places. Not only is this bringing changes in the technologies of teaching and learning, but it is also stimulating changes in the institutional forms. The search is now underway for *appropriate institutions*. The task is to find, identify, describe, and assess what configurations of people and physical resources can be put together to produce the most effective and applicable learning outcomes. It is a "work in progress," but it will likely affect the multi-cultural educational situations first. Is there such a thing, then, as an appropriate form of an institution? It is a difficult question because our organizations have come out of a tradition in missions that depends heavily on transported, transplanted, North American and European-style institutions. Approaches to medical services, education, and leadership borrow extensively from models that are appropriate in a complex and relatively affluent society; they tend to be inappropriate for societies that are unable to sustain them, and

these imported schemes will increase long-term dependency. In the names of relief and development we must be extremely careful about the tendency to transplant institutional forms that function rather well *here* but *over there* will likely not facilitate development.

Relief and development agencies should resist the temptation to centralize. Much of our organizational logic is a centralizing kind of logic and the issue may be better solved not by arguing against organization but against centralization. The issue is not that we should do away with organization but that we should keep it well-disciplined making sure that it's appropriate to the situation.

Here are four principles relevant to organizations: First, keep decision-making close to the action level. Acting on this principle has caused some multi-national organizations to set up regional centers. Second, keep capital investments to a minimum. Big properties demand upkeep. Third, make few long-term commitments, especially in the area of relief. Whenever possible, use local resources and local facilities. And fourth, leaders must pour themselves willingly and knowledgeably into responsible dialogue with other Christians wherever there are contacts.

In conclusion, it is important to distinguish between the various activities of helping agencies: *Relief* is concerned with saving lives, basic and urgent. *Rehabilitation* is helping to put the human infrastructure back together. People with earth-moving machinery helping to clear out streets is rehabilitation not relief. Rehabilitation functions like convalescence whereas relief functions more like trauma treatment. *Development*, however, is participation in the normal processes of a human group toward the integrated functioning and activating of that society.

Once we understand the nature of these activities, we can then create appropriate technologies, integrated with appropriate institutional change.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Key Concepts of Development

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

A series of terms that together describe Ted Ward's understanding of development. *From the first session in a workshop series on development at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya, 1980.*

Reflections on Terms for Development

Community. Change occurs only when a community wants it to happen. The term *community* is usually used to indicate a group of human beings that have something in common (e.g., ideology, space, hopes, aspirations). It is this shared community that drives development. Development does not occur around individuals.

Need. It is unlikely that anyone really knows the needs of another person. It is unreasonable to assume that anyone outside a community can know the needs of that community. Educated cosmopolitan people tend to over-estimate their capability to determine the needs of people who lack education. Even an outsider would be hard pressed to know the needs of a group in three to four weeks of assessment.

Therefore, if *naming needs* is where you start, it will take too long. There has to be a place to start other than *needs*. Assessing needs is a difficult task; people can become soon frustrated if they begin at this point. Furthermore, it is possible to arrive at early and erroneous conclusions about needs.

People must become part of the process of identifying their own needs. Certain physical needs can be met promptly. Such needs might be resolved promptly but more basic needs may go unresolved. In the incident reported in Mark 2, the man's friends clearly identified his need as they had observed it. Jesus, however, never even mentioned this need until he had addressed the sin issue. Jesus met both needs—but He had addressed the real need: sin.

Meeting needs can lead to temporary solutions. Ultimately solving the problem will require long-term development. *Relief* is the short term solution to needs. There is no such thing as precision in defining "real" needs. Any truly basic need is likely complex and will require several different skills to understand and effectively deal with it. An outsider may identify it but have no idea how to fully comprehend its scope.

Priority. Which needs do we deal with first? Priority is usually established in some hierarchy of survival, beginning with what appears to be most urgent. However, there are exceptions. When a village in Brazil with a serious sanitation problem elects to put lights on a soccer field, it could be said that they did not meet the basic need. But the villagers knew that their basic need was a spiritual and emotional attitude that said "we can't do anything for ourselves." They needed a viewpoint of hope. Because a need can be identified is no assurance that it is the best place to start the remediation. The view of the development specialist is relatively unimportant. The issue is where are these people ready to start? Need, though important as a concept, does not provide the keys to the appropriate development activity. Only a dialogue with people, a process by which people begin speaking for themselves, will reveal the more likely tactics and path to the solution. Even the most elegant and clever analysis of needs will likely fall short.

But most people cannot tell you what their needs are and simply to ask people "What are your needs?" is not a valid approach. A community usually needs assistance in defining and naming its needs, but the competent development specialist usually avoids simply telling people what they need. The role of the development specialist is a facilitator of dialogue and analysis, not a maker of pronouncements!

Integrated Development. Development activity is concerned for more than one sector of life. Sectors that require attention include health, agriculture, nutrition, literacy, financial security, employment, sanitation, and so on. Integrated development is needed because no sector stands alone. This word of warning should be a special concern for Christians in mission work. There is no wise development that lacks integrated planning. In making an artificial distinction between spiritual and other aspects of life the church has for decades been involved in unbalanced, one-sided, non-integrated, development planning.

Self-Help. Sometimes a community is capable of finding within itself and within its own resources the way to move forward without dependency. The development consultant must exercise self-discipline and caution in order to avoid the default role as *expert*. Since the goal is encouraging self-help in the community, the methodology or the consultant should avoid *telling the answers* and *speaking from 'on high*.' The sections following provide clues about possible tactics. The goal is stimulating self-help initiatives that will avoid increasing the community's dependency.

Facilitation. Many communities are in a state of non-development because the development processes have been arrested for one reason or another. Sometimes outside help is needed to facilitate the restoration of the self-help process. Self-help does not always restart itself. The facilitator can bring processes into action. The skills of the facilitator, then, become important—not directing, controlling, or managing, but facilitating.

Conscientization. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian god-father of community development, popularized this term. He fervently believed that development was ultimately a concern of the human conscience. Not just knowledge, information, ideas, or procedures, but awakening and respecting the conscience of the person, the community, and the nation. His images were huge, his concerns for people were boundless, and his faith was eternal. As he spoke, usually in quiet unhurried short phrases, as he shared ideas and reflections, those around him were *hearing actively,* stimulated by Paulo's thoughts and always ready to interact, never simply listening. He rarely needed to encourage discussion because it was already happening! The term conscientization, both in English and in the comparable word in Brazilian Portuguese, suggests both *conscious* and *conscience*. Thus the single word embraces the whole of Paulo's emphasis: development is a concern for raising people's consciousness of their world to such an extent that it touches their conscience. In Paulo's view of the Gospel message, there is an absolute linkage between knowledge and morality. If you truly know, you truly believe, thus your Christian commitment is not just to know Jesus but to believe and act with Jesus. Conscientization has to do not only with the *conscience* but with one's *consciousness*—the heart and the head. It focuses on one's own condition—to understand with head and heart why things are the way they are. It is not common for many in the world to think in terms of need. That is a western notion. The problem is that where development is arrested, quite often people have not stopped to think about what is wrong, especially those who are caught in religious fatalism (it is what it is, because God has willed it).

Those people need conscientization to begin to understand the forces working on them and to assume responsibility for their own situation. Thinking more clearly and feeling more deeply about their situation is conscientization.

Organic Growth. Growth, as in getting bigger, is not necessarily good. The development process itself is a function of organic growth. Organic growth is a growth that is regulated by the nature of whatever it is that is growing. When communities develop they grow like communities. You do not have to tell them to grow like communities (any more than you would tell a banana to grow like a banana). The nature of community is what it is. Gardeners do not sit around diagramming the growth of plants. They help things grow. Gardeners facilitate by giving attention to the conditions.

Communities have organizational patterns of growth. Development planners energize or facilitate organic growth. The development planner does not need to make a precise model of what is to happen. He or she reaffirms the organic growth processes. And that takes the pressure off of the developer.

Why is nothing growing? Because the gardener does not understand the dynamic growth processes that are within the plants' nature and fails to attend to the environment and nourishment required for the development process.

Intrinsic and Acquired Needs. Needs may come from inside the perception and value system of the person or group, or they may be "transplanted" from some other source or person or group. Thus the distinction is made between sources: intrinsic or acquired from the inside versus needs that have been acquired from another person or source. An acquired need may spring from an intrinsic need as one discovers a "better way of looking at it."

There is a possibility here that the nuance in an acquired need may represent a manipulation that subverts the person's original conviction. Generally when dealing with needs, both intrinsic and acquired needs will be dealt with. This distinction cannot be forced on people. If it has become "real," it is what it is!

Functional and Felt Needs. Any need draws or drives the person's motivations. A *functional need* is a desire, eagerness, appetite, or aspiration that is organic or actively functional in a society or person. A *felt need* is any need that person feels (believes or claims) to be important. Functional needs are usually already being acted upon, resulting in consequences of some sort or determining some observable effect.

Reciprocity. The satisfactions one derives from receiving and giving are the major evidence of reciprocity. Sometimes defined as the procedure and the goal of effective training, reciprocity is a major cornerstone of a community's development. Whatever is done is carefully planned as a two-way street, a give-and-take of discussion, a balanced forum or dialogue, and a mutual sharing of every task and each decision. It is the spirit of a deliberate balancing that keeps each party in a relationship of acceptance and commitment to others. It is the heart-beat of community development. Without it, bias and prejudice will predictably emerge as the barrier to effective collaboration.

Three choices. There are three basically different sorts of goals that can be seen in development projects.

1. *Bringing change in a situation regardless of the needs of people* (e.g., the introduction of large-scale industry into a region.)

2. *Bringing change based on an outsider's views of the needs of people*. (e.g. "These people seem to be malnourished; we shall bring some extra food for them.") Much in current practice in mission and social development planning seems to be of this sort. This is not necessarily wrong, but it does suggest that the resulting procedures will be weak and the results will be less than intended.

3. *Bringing change as a result of planning and working with people based on their view of their need.* There is such a thing as working *with* people and living *among* people so that their view of their needs and their resources matures. Paulo Freire calls this development of the community conscientization. It requires dialogue and time; nevertheless it is the road worth traveling!

But it is not a magic charm; there are difficulties here, too! For example, most people do not respond well to the suggestion that they have needs. True enough. Getting beyond the self-protection hang-up is not easy. Self-discovery of needs in a community is an essential process, but defensiveness always disrupts. It must be approached carefully and patiently. Situations that lead to changes in one's own perspective are always difficult and even threatening. Most people have been living in a selfish world for so long that it is profoundly jarring to move to a more compassionate and selfless stance.

Consider this incident: a missionary shows up in a Jeep, and after many confusing remarks are exchanged with the tribesman, the missionary declares, "You need Jesus." The tribesman ponders for a moment and replies, "All that you say is true," but his eye is on the Jeep.

Adding it all up. We can make a distinction between needs and wants, but the problem is still there. When we ask people to face up to their needs, it is easier for them to name their wants.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Possibilities, Paradigms, and Paralysis

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

A discussion of forms of mission careers in the emerging interdependency of the worldwide church. The focus is, in particular, on short-term international activity. *From an unpublished paper, December 11,1998.*

From the author: I have been consistently supportive of a wide variety of *short-term* missionary activities since the earliest days of this terminology. The comments here, then, are reflections of a sympathetic participant, himself a long-time *short-termer* and bi-vocational missionary in over sixty countries across forty-five years. The reader is encouraged to consider the following criticisms as one more attempt to encourage responsible and well-articulated involvements of the people of God in Gospel witness and facilitation of the development of the church in the world.

Faith comes before rhetoric and prediction. In matters concerned with the mission of the church in the world, failure to put faith first costs dearly in terms of useless arguments, foolish prophecies, and rigid defensiveness. Especially in regard to non-doctrinal issues, the tensions and divisions that emerge are hurtful.

Recommendation 1. **Comparisons of *short-term* and *long-term* mission operations and outcomes should be subordinated to the larger issues of the work of Christ through His church in the world. Forms of missionary deployment are not ends in themselves. While definitions are useful, much time has been wasted in various attempts to make a sharp distinction between *short-term* and *long-term* missions. It simply cannot be done; the variations and combinations are constantly proliferating.**

Faith is a gift of God. It provides a foundation of grounded belief. This foundation enables people to see beyond their own experience and to allow God to inspire a lifelong search into the world which is and which is becoming. A faith-based and God-centered perspective of the future enables a constructive and minimally speculative approach to planning

Recommendation 2. **All guidelines for the mission of the church should take a forward-looking view. For *short-term* missions, for example, the issue is much more a concern for what is needful and appropriate for collaborations with the emerging churches than for prolonging the habits and assumptions of the past two centuries of the "modern missionary era."**

Faith enables God's people to anticipate change and to accept a lifelong unfolding of God's purposes and fulfillments of the call to the mission of the church rather than to take comfort from rigidity and to prefer the security of sameness.

Recommendation 3. **The characteristics of missionary deployment in one period of church development, in one type of ministry, and in one set of socio-cultural circumstances should be *instructive* but *not determinative* to any other situation. Grave distortions of the church can occur when the future of missions is dominated by the presumptions of the past.**

At the heart of the *long-term* versus *short-term* contrast is a variety of issues. Some of these reflect honest and godly concerns, to be sure, but far more are rooted in contentiousness and a habit of groundless dichotomizing. The worth of conversations about the short-term issues is negatively correlated with the time spent in arguments about definitions and assertions that the dichotomy is important.

Recommendation 4. **The motive of any planning of contrasting forms of mission should be compatibility and complementarity. The competitive habit of asserting "better-ness" or priority should be constrained.**

Gaining Perspective

To understand the changing forms of mission careers, it is important to look *back* and to look *ahead* at the relationships between the church and the world.

Problems from the Past

In the near past there has been a substantial increase of missionary activity in the post-colonial world. The church has become more evident and more evangelistic in many nations. This growth of the church owes much to the wide variety of missionary efforts which has marked the past two hundred years, often described as the *modern missionary era.* Nevertheless, four problems confronting missionary recruitment and deployment are deeply rooted in the formally organized "foreign" missions of the past two hundred years:

Colonial patterns of relationship continue to dominate mission strategy. Even in former receiving countries, e.g., Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Kenya, India, and Brazil, the tendency in many mission ventures is to set goals, determine deployments, and organize accountabilities with minimal input from the region in which the missionaries are to evangelize or develop institutions.

Recommendation 5. **In most cases short-term missionaries, indeed all missionaries, should be deployed on schedules and for tasks jointly defined by the sending and the receiving communities. Many complaints are heard about the imposition of the short-term missionary on the schedule and lifestyle of the *career* missionary. This problem is no more serious than imposition upon the national church or the local leaders whose development is often impeded by outsiders who interrupt and usurp, however unintentionally.**

Western assumptions about the church, its leadership, and its educational needs dominate. The strategies of evangelism and purposes of mission are reflective of the twentieth-century development of the churches in the modernized western world.

Recommendation 6. **Although much of the world is becoming more standardized around the shared elements of modernization (mistakenly called *westernization*), respecting the cultures of people has never been more important. Whatever purposes, plans, skills, and values are carried into a situation by missionaries should be carefully adjusted, on site, to the realities of the local situation.**

Emphasis on institutional enterprise and institution-planting has persisted throughout the "modern missionary era" and has strongly affected the practical aspects of *short-term* missions. The extensive deployment of construction teams and bunkhouse proliferators continues within short-term mission motives as a representation of this bottom-line-is-buildings sort of thinking.

***Recommendation 7*. What is needed is a paradigm shift, inspired by specific examples from the Acts of the Apostles. Institutions should be planned and developed by the church-in-place, not by outsiders. People should "count the costs" for themselves and seek help of the sort they determine, at times and in ways they deem appropriate.**

The source of "real" missionaries is presumed to be Bible colleges and seminaries. Those who are called from other preparational backgrounds are typically relegated to the short-term category. This equating of formal education in Bible and theology to the readiness for deployment into long-term careers is dangerous although understandable. The lack of a truly biblical and responsibly theological orientation to the missionary tasks is predictably a severe handicap; but it does not follow that a formal education in Bible college or theological school will assure that the candidate is appropriately grounded for the missionary role and tasks.

***Recommendation 8.* The earliest missionaries of the church were itinerant, not long-term residents. The time has come for a break with the more recent image of the ideal missionary as a resident-in-place, holding multiple formal degrees, being expert in one local language, and having the intention of living out all of life in one field. Needs of today's emerging churches far more often are better served by highly responsive and flexible encouragers who can provide specialized help for a short period of time and then move on to a similar role elsewhere or go back home.**

Problems Ahead

A true globalization of the church is just around the corner. Just as likely, the breadth of the church and its increase in missionary spirit will de-center the western nations as the presumed source and supply of world missionaries. Further, the movement of Christians across borders for many different reasons is a trend persistently expanding—again, not limited to the churches of the west. International student mobility is steadily increasing; commerce, transportation, and communications are drawing many young professionals and technicians into international employment. The presence of Christians in the short-term and long-term international workforce is increasing far more rapidly than the numbers of Christians in missionary service supported by missionary organizations.

All of God's people need experiences with the evangelistic and missionary tasks of the church. Missions is not an option. The church that treats missionary outreach as a sort of miscellaneous activity that can be added when the funds are in the bank is a sick church. Mission agencies are often essentially passive and fail to help the churches directly. Other than to facilitate the way to a missionary career for those who are nominated by the churches or to try to help individuals who seek them out when the church doesn't know how else to encourage them, the mission agency tends to keep at arm's length from the churches. This tension has become worse in that the typical mission agency has been lukewarm-warm at best about increased interests of church members in short-term, exploratory, and tourist-like adventures in the mission field. While the number of people who have "seen missions first-hand" is rapidly growing, agencies—far more than churches—treat the trend as a sort of undignified nuisance rather than seeing the good that comes from it.

***Recommendation 9.* Mission agencies and local churches need closer relationships. The agencies can help the churches develop a keener awareness of the vast world in which the church is represented. The churches need the agencies to help them fulfill their responsibilities and motivations toward outreach. A special need at this time is for the mission agencies to be much more forthcoming and pro-active in the encouragement and effective deployment of a broad variety of Christians in missionary endeavor.**

Overseas Christians are under-utilized as missionaries. Not to suggest diverting people that God has called into other specialized service into organizational missionary employment, these internationalists should be made aware of God's call to all Christians and urged to develop effective personal witness wherever they are and wherever they go. Christians in so-called *secular* careers overseas rarely have the competencies and understandings of the Word that would enable them to engage in effective and appropriate witness and Christian nurture. Only a few churches and fewer missionary agencies have instituted creative procedures to help these people become better grounded for such bi-vocational ministries. Until the short-term emphasis emerged, these people were treated as non-persons by the mission establishment.

Recommendation 10. **Since many of the most valuable short-term missionary deployments will likely be served by bi-vocational and second-career people, the need for appropriate means of helping Christian adults undertake and extend Biblical and theological studies is urgently needed. These people can rarely "go back to school," nor should they be expected to do so. New technologies of teaching and learning can be utilized. Especially seminar and short-course approaches have great promise. Could such means as the "Walk Through the Bible" experience and the course be adapted and augmented to serve the vast communities of overseas Christians?**

Conclusion

Harmonizing *short-term* and *long-term* missionary deployments is important. Missionary activity of the church has always required multi-year commitments, especially from those engaged in the discovery and development of the bridges of evangelism and church planting. Similarly, shorter and more specialized commitments have been required of others, especially from those who respond to specific requests or initiatives as the churches become established and develop their own outreach.

The increasing dominance of hyper-orthodoxy, especially in Islamic regions and where other strong anti-Christian religious biases influence national policy and grass-roots resistance, has created a climate of resistance and dangerous obstacle to the expansion of Christian witness. In many situations major revision of the missionary organization and of the nature of missionary deployment is absolutely necessary if intercultural participation in evangelization and development of the church are to continue. Thus, various forms of "short-term" missions will be more important in the future than in the past. The coordination of all modes of missionary deployment is an important task.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

Options for Overseas Service in World Evangelism

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

An encouragement to college students in particular to consider careers in overseas service. The benefits of such service are identified along with a challenge to the church to be more culturally attuned. *From an address at* Urbana *1970.*

The lights were dim and the roar was muffled, but I couldn't sleep. It was my first nonstop flight directly into the heart of Africa and we were already high over the mid-Atlantic. I needed a stretch. Coach seats can get pretty stiff after a while. I shuffled down the aisle to the rear of the cabin, turned, and started slowly back. Then it suddenly hit me. These hundred or more huddled sleepers were largely unknown to me. I only knew the name of one other, but suddenly these travelers took on a specific meaning. It was not the tourist season and, anyway, we were headed for destinations that are not very popular with the tourist trade. These travelers were a small sample of the international set, the employed jet-set, if you prefer: professional and technical workers of the world, families, businessmen, young couples who had looked so matter-of-fact as we had awaited departure at New York's Kennedy. A few were Africans headed home, but most were from major metropolitan labor centers such as Houston, Dallas, and Atlanta.

If we assume that you, participants in Urbana 70, are a random sample of American college students, we could predict that more than one of each fifty of you will invest a substantial portion of your career outside the U. S. But you are *not* a random group; you are much more attuned to international opportunities than is typical. That is why you are here. Your awareness and sensitivity to the overseas opportunities and needs places you in a group apart. This factor will have the effect, conservatively, of doubling the probability that you will go overseas to work. Add the fact that many of you are committed to the Christian purpose of worldwide evangelism, and it follows that you, or one of the people at no more than easy arm's reach from where you sit, will become an internationalist.

Opportunities for women and the demand for trained husband-and-wife teams are increasing. Just for fun, try to predict which of the people near you will become an internationalist. Reach out and touch his or her shoulder. The reactions likely vary from "Who, me?" to "Are you kidding?" But were we all to re-gather here ten years from now, your experiences would likely have fulfilled these informal predictions.

Many of you will become missionaries in the classical sense; certainly the day of organized missions is far from over. But not all of you who become internationalists will be full-time missionaries. The number of Americans going overseas in non-missionary roles is increasing at a higher rate than the missionary force. In the twenty years from 1949 to 1969, the number of Protestant American missionaries (denominational and independent) rose from 16,000 to 33,289—almost double. The total number of American civilians overseas during the same period went from 491,000 to 1,399,000—almost triple. Unless our nation reverts to an isolationist stance, these trends are likely to continue. And you could become part of the action, whether as missionary or as "American worker, expatriate."

Who is the "American worker, expatriate"? First, this person is an American man or woman who became interested in several years or even a career overseas. Then, usually during or after the college

years, this person became a member of the growing community of internationalists, sharing skills and abilities with the world community. Skills are particularly needed in the developing nations, where his emotional bias and his aspirations must be committed to "working oneself out of a job" by training other workers and helping them take their rightful places in their own emerging nations. The beauty of all this is that an exciting career can be built around a series of "dig-in, help-others, get-out" experiences. There is only one sort of person who will be miserable in the role of the new internationalist—the person who wants to quickly settle down, lock into one steady role, and be protected by the status quo for life. If you are this sort of person, turn off your hearing aid; I am not on your wavelength.

What does a career overseas look like? Although there are occasionally some wild and fascinating variations, ordinarily the American family overseas continues to be involved in an American-style community—far too often it is a ghetto of the elite—complete with chain-link fence, swimming pool and armed guards. Of course, there can be plenty of involvement with the foreign nationals.

In many situations the American-type schools and even American-style friendship patterns will not be as different as one might expect. As a witness for Christ within this typically mixed community the opportunities for friendship and cooperation are similar to what they are at home in the United States, neither distinctly better nor worse.

Isolation and loneliness can hit pretty hard when you discover how much you need support and encouragement from fellow Christians, especially when you begin to sense that it requires a deliberate effort to establish satisfying interaction with the national community.

The duration of careers overseas varies widely. You will encounter secondary and college students who will be returning home after only one or two semesters overseas, and you will likely find others among the expats who will regale you with stories of "how things were when we arrived . . . twenty years ago." It is difficult to find reliable data on the number of years the "international Americans" spend overseas. Some observations suggest that the typical American sojourner stays "on post" from eight to twelve years. There seem to be three patterns: the *limited assignment,* from one to five years; the *career experience,* from eight to twenty years overseas; and the *lifetime* people—those who really cut their ties to America, taking satisfaction in the thought of being buried in the soil of their adopted and beloved country. These "lifetime" people are a minority, though their number is growing in such countries as Israel and, for a while at least, in Sweden and Canada.

Very few Americans, even those who are altruistic and highly motivated, are able to change their lifestyles enough to step down to the economic realities of "going on the local economy. " Local salary rates vary widely, it makes some difference that you will be paid as an employee or representative of an American or local firm. American "ex-pats" (the common term for a person from a different country) are widely reputed to be receiving more money than nationals doing the same job. Nevertheless, family budgeting may require careful planning.

You may prefer to think of yourself as a "limited-assignment" person. Most Americans in the international community are temporary residents. Most do not renounce their American citizenship, and most return to the U. S. for two weeks or more of furlough or vacation at one to four year intervals. Most live at salary standards somewhat above the local population. In fact, some few live like royalty and are hated for it. Many save enough of their so-called "hardship allowance" while overseas to allow an improvement of their standard of living even after they return to the U. S. Many swimming pools have been built in America with hardship allowance money!

The international communities of Paris, London, Buenos Aires, Berlin, Rome, Nairobi, Manila, Melbourne, Singapore, Shanghai, and New Delhi, as well as hundreds of other cities, constitute large unevangelized fields in themselves, and these spiritually needy Americans are upper middle class and above, in our terms, and upper class in local terms. There is a message here! Missions have tended to leave the rest of the American community alone. Although the primary justification of foreign missions is, of course, reaching the citizens of the host nation, the witness to and among overseas Americans should not be neglected. Careful reading of Acts 16 indicates that Paul, the first missionary to Europe, went first to a person of his own religious and cultural background. Christian businesspersons, engineers, teachers, bankers, and government agents are needed to infiltrate this overseas community. And vital work for Christ needs to be done, in English, by spouses and government staff persons. Is this where God wants you? If so, there is a price to pay. You will have to be a missionary on an overtime basis. It is harder, and in some respects less productive, to be a self-supported missionary than to be a church-supported missionary.

Following are a few specific comments on overseas employment:

Business and industry constitute the largest categories of employment overseas for Americans. Opportunities in this private sector typically involve considerable freedom and, in fact, free time to engage in outside activities of the sort that can make your “other career” as a missionary as extensive as you wish. There are some restrictive exceptions, particularly in the Muslim-dominated countries.

Government service positions are a bit more strictly defined. Since the representative of the government is more or less “on display” most of the time, whether the occasions are formal or informal, there is some restriction on involvement in “sectarian ventures.” But the occasions and the context for personal influence and private conversations about Christ can be both numerous and consequential. Think of the importance of sharing Christ with strategically placed people in other nations. There are people to be reached by laymen whom missionaries cannot even get to. Ambassador John Gordon Mein, for one, found it possible to be both ambassador for the United States and ambassador for Christ at the same time. His assignment in Guatemala was shortened by an assassin’s bullet but not before he had established in one more country that Americans can live and speak for the transforming power of the gospel of Christ.

A wide array of positions is available in government service, from career posts in the diplomatic service to limited-term positions in civilian support roles related to the armed forces. There are positions requiring various levels of education and various degrees of career commitment.

And rather than neglect them altogether, the Peace Corps and other quasi-governmental operations should be mentioned as one of the ways young Americans can give substantially of themselves for the sake of humanity. Like most experiences in life, a term in the Peace Corps can be as valuable or as trite as you make it. A really dedicated young man or woman can make a most worthy start toward a career as an internationalist through an assignment as a Peace Corps volunteer. A short-term mission assignment or even a summer overseas can serve the same purpose, though in general, the longer, the better.

The demand for professional workers overseas is very real. There is a huge American stake in overseas research and especially research on international affairs. Just one example: the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies recently counted a roster of 416 U. S. professors who are scholarly experts on Japan; they are located on 135 different campuses in the United States. These specialists were primarily responsible for the $15,000,000 spent on Japanese studies last year. This illustration deals with Japan alone, not even one of the so-called underdeveloped nations where an immense American involvement still continues despite war-economy cutbacks. These millions for research and training were spent by and through projects in which overseas Americans were involved.

Thousands of Americans are choosing international research and management as a career. Many intend to be teachers after graduation. You have likely heard about the thousands of teachers engaged in the education of the dependents of overseas Americans, but there is an even more exciting job to do. Especially in the rapidly developing nations, education in the national schools and in regional nonformal education programs promises to continue to be a major employment field for overseas Americans. One major difficulty with this category of service is that teacher salaries in the local economies are sometimes incredibly low. But many teaching positions are subsidized through USAID or American foundations. Many have taught in literacy programs, small-farm management, family nutrition, and family planning. Not the typical subjects of the American curriculum, but American-trained teaching skills can be useful in a variety of subjects!

There are opportunities for productive relationships between internationalists and traditional missionaries. Missionaries and Christian internationalists occasionally learn to help each other. This sort of cooperation can be extremely important in strengthening, enriching and deepening the right sort of impact of missions on the local scene. Regardless of the way you go, the length of time you are there, or the roles you play, you should plan to learn the language! Many Americans overseas fail to take local language seriously. Without a doubt our monolingual culture tends to make us linguistically handicapped. So when you add a bit of laziness to ineptness, it is not surprising that avoiding language learning is common.

English *is* a marvelously handy language and, in most cities of the world, it is possible to make your way rather well with nothing but English. Nevertheless, if you intend to double in missions you will need the local language. Knowing the language of the people is part of what it takes to be a beautiful American. And you have to want to get close to the people. You need to take a real interest in their condition, their needs, their hopes, their past, and their beauty as people.

Why should we encourage American Christians to go overseas? We live in the reality of the one-world era. The involvement of *all* nations in the problems that affect any *one* nation is a matter both of atomic energy and of global ecology. From a pragmatic viewpoint, there is no feasibility in isolation. From a Christian viewpoint there is no feasibility in separateness. We are in the world. Christ is building His church in this world. We are partners in this singular venture. As American Christians, the inordinate and imbalanced riches of our land and of ourselves, in the light of the impoverished majority of the world, make us even more profoundly debtors to all people. We have obligations. Christians must not be counted among the more selfish people of our nation. We should seek out many ways to share. Sharing is not just a matter of monetary wealth but involves our *selves,* our *lives,* our *careers.* Americans are sharing all sorts of capacities and roles. Should you as *Christian* Americans become more aware of your potentialities as internationalists even as you are aware of your opportunities in church-financed mission possibilities?

Another reason for Christians to be involved as members of the general American community overseas is the need to get a balance in the American image. If the only American Christians that non-Americans see are church-supported missionaries, they can get the impression that all Christians drop out of everything else to be full-time employees of the church. They can also assume that *highly prosperous Americans* whom they likely envy for their worldly goods are rarely Christians. Thus they may conclude that God does not prosper the very people who are called by His name.

Going overseas as a secular worker is one way to help enlighten the church of Jesus Christ in the U. S. Of all the supposedly sophisticated Christian groups of this world, the church in America is one of the most distinctly culture-bound. Increased overseas experience of American church members might do much to reduce the parochial and narrow views of how God works and what God wants in a life. Mission board members, pastors, deacons, as well as parishioners in general, need greater inter-cultural sensitivity and

profound Christian love for human variations. As we work together to reduce the American-ness of our Christianity and rely more on the scriptural models of faith and love, we have a better claim on an orthodoxy of community and an orthodoxy of compassion.

Cross-cultural communication and the methods of anthropology can make a constructive difference in the church at home. We can all work toward the day when a majority of church members have had some firsthand experience in a productive relationship with others whose cultural backgrounds are different. That will be a great day!

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has a cross-cultural appeal, but the way many Americans present it does not. What a great thing it would be for a local church to deliberately engage an international experience through the eyes of three or four families of internationalists in their own community!

In summary, here are several suggestions:

1. For those who are trying to select a major field of study: Select a field that will prepare you for a versatile career—in the U.S. and the *world!*

2. For those who are planning on graduate school: Consider a graduate program that includes overseas learning experiences.

3. For those who are going to be college and university faculty members: Give special consideration to institutions that are involved in overseas contracts and try to participate as part of your academic work now or later.

4. For all of you: Take some studies in cross-cultural understanding, area studies in geography, sociology and history of specific world regions, and perhaps include some foundational anthropology courses.

5. One further suggestion: Get some cross-cultural experiences now by learning to work in an American sub-cultural setting somewhere close to where you live or go to school.

Americans are going overseas to carry on the business, research, training and cooperative development that is part of the world obligations of a profoundly indebted nation. Should Christians be among them? *Yes.*

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About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted’s tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University’s institute for International Studies, working as consultant

and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

COMMON GROUND JOURNAL

The Anxious Climate of Concern for Missionary Children

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

Noting that concern for missionary children is a dominant factor in missionary deployment, the author offers an institutional and theological perspective on the issue. *From an unpublished manuscript from the 1990's.*

A Climate of Concern for Missionary Children

During the past decade MKs (missionary kids) have come into their own. Lurking just behind the door for several generations, a whole bag of problems and issues has ripped open and now litters the floor for all to see. The missionary kid is now assumed to be one of the significant though rarely understood factors in the success or failure of many a missionary. Formerly among the best-kept secrets of the mission establishment, the trials and tribulations of some children of missionary parents are now widely published and discussed. Closely related to the post-1970 resurgence of anxious interest in the vitality and welfare of Christian families, the concern for MKs has both pathos and promise, a sure-fire combination for popularity as an issue for the contemporary church.

As is the case for many another human problem concern for the children of missionaries is a swinging pendulum. Sweeping from one extreme to the other, the issue of proper care for missionaries' children now is a dominant factor in the calling of the missionary and in mission career planning. After a long period of virtual neglect, taking for granted that somehow God takes care of the children of missionaries no matter what the privations and traumas. Today we see an almost paranoid preoccupation. Providing a carbon copy of North American upbringing for their children has replaced the sense of joy and adventure that gave an optimism to missionaries of years gone by. Perhaps the optimism was unfounded in some case as evidenced by some of the current literature and judging by the discussions at the first and second International Conferences on Missionary Kids, but one must wonder at the reversal of bias and hope.

Missionary families, no less than any other families, are dear to the heart of God. God does not require a dichotomizing or prioritizing of responsibilities along the axis of ministry versus family. One's family is part of one's ministry.

Today's world makes parenthood difficult. Bringing up children can bring anxieties to anyone anywhere. For the missionary community, and especially for those who are inclined to emphasize the hardships and hazards of missionary life, it is easy enough to focus attention on the problems of missionary children. Every childhood tantrum, every adolescent pain, every perplexing dilemma of educational choices becomes transformed into an "MK problem."

In the current discussions of the conditions and choices that confront missionaries, one has the uneasy feeling that God is assumed to be either whimsical or senile, calling husbands but not wives, and forgetting altogether that those He has called also have some responsibilities to their children. Surely the difficult sociopolitical climate within which today's missionaries must function should not be minimized, but perhaps faulty theology lies behind some part of the contemporary anxiety about the missionary's family.

At the risk of minimizing the importance of the practical decisions, a plea must be made for looking closely at theological and institutional roots of the anxieties. Failure to do so condemns us to a perpetual treating of symptoms. Young missionary couples, especially those with young children, are especially vulnerable to anxiety. The missionary vocation may have been described to them in terms of one among several career alternatives. The spiritual concern for the calling of God sometimes takes second place behind a reasoned argument about why it would be good to at least put a few years into overseas ministry. "Try it, you may like it" can sometimes be heard as the recruiter's message. The shifts in missionary recruitment appeals are traceable to several matters within the mission establishment: compulsion to keep up with quotas, the need to replace missionaries who are renouncing their earlier commitments to long-term service, the corporate quest to keep the mission competitively large, and the need for slices of support funds to keep the home offices adequately funded.

For today's missionary the career, tenure, specific assignments, and periods between furloughs and home-country furloughs are all generally becoming shorter. In many cases shorter assignments are wise for personal and family reasons; in other cases they are necessary because of the vagaries of the modem political world. Few missionaries today need to think in terms of being buried with members of their family in foreign soil. Being a missionary has become a more transient sort of vocation, requiring periodic retraining and major moves during the course of a career. This is hardly the stuff of clear images and specific goals. Few questions have satisfactory answers. The frustrations that newcomers feel are inevitable. Ultimately, the new missionary must settle for a few really firm commitments. So the family issues dominate, as perhaps they should. Where will my children go to school? What sort of school is that? Who is in charge?

These questions are being asked insistently. Candidates or prospective candidates who encounter any of the answers that they have been predisposed to consider wrong tend to react sharply. For many, the ultimate no-no is the boarding school. Lonely-child stories about mission dormitories and hostels have been popularized in autobiographical books. Any schooling arrangement that might lead a child to believe that he or she has been forsaken or mistreated is now feared like the plague. Even home-schooling seems like a better alternative—never mind that it will demand the lion's share of the time and energy of at least one of the parents. The concerns and fears-real and imagined, add up to an almost irrational rejection of any mode of education or family lifestyle that is outside the experiences of the parents. Willingness to accept the privations of pioneering is becoming rare.

In this climate, all matters must be discussed and all working conditions must be probed from the beginning. One hears it in concerns about retirement plans, guarantees about level of support, and all sorts of demands on behalf of the presumed welfare of the candidate's children. Nothing is left to chance, much less to faith. One is tempted to ask if Matthew 6:25-34 is still in the Book!

The symptoms of anxiety have become familiar. Although the evidence is anecdotal rather than systematic, the syndrome has taken shape. New missionaries and candidates are insisting on assurances that their children will be able to live their lives overseas in much the same manner as their mono-cultural cousins back home. Missionaries already on the field are pushing harder than ever before to ensure that the schools for their children conform to their images of what they think suburban schools in North America are like.

Hardly anyone doubts that there is something amiss, but there are sharply contrasting views of what the problems are and what to do about them. Missionary families and missionary children have been given more and more attention in recent years.

One must ask which is cause and which is effect. Does the increased attention follow from increasing difficulties confronting missionary families? Or is there more awareness of problems because of the increased attention?

The underlying assumption among today's younger missionaries seems to be that being overseas during the years of childhood and adolescence will hurt their children. The major concern arises from another popular delusion: that the quality of education overseas is apt to be inferior. For this reason and for dozens of others even less valid, the repatriated youngster is expected to encounter great difficulties while "catching up" upon return to the home country. These threatening images are built on the dubious assumptions that things are inherently better in America and that irreparable damage will result from bicultural child-rearing and schooling.

Much of the misunderstanding derives from a negative view of the intercultural experience. Americans, in general, are inexperienced and thus unpracticed in the human arts of intercultural relations. This handicap, which affects adults far more than children, derives from the fact that the communities in which most American Protestants were reared were and continue to be mono-cultural. The background of the rank-and-file missionary is thus culturally and linguistically narrow. There is little in the American suburban and rural culture that attracts people outward into relationships with people who are substantially different from themselves. What little language learning the missionary parents may have encountered in their own school years likely consisted of unpleasant and unproductive experiences. What few intercultural experiences these small-town and suburban North Americans would have had probably included overtones of prejudice and fear. In short, the typical American missionary finds that there is much to learn and much to overcome because of this limited background.

In the providence of God many missionaries do overcome their cultural and linguistic handicaps rather well. But in the minds of the newcomers to missionary experience, negative images loom large, especially in regard to their "helpless" children who are assumed to be harmed in some way by the parents' decision to follow Christ. The resultant self-criticism and emergent doubts can easily turn pathological. Missionaries whose motivations must compete aggressively with fears and self-doubts tend to become negative about one aspect or another of the missionary call. All they can imagine for their children is on the dark side of the moon.

The positive side of the story about growing up overseas is far more substantial than the negative. Unfortunately, as in journalism's maxim about only the unusual being newsworthy, the positive side rarely gets told. If the family is strong, and the members committed to each other and not overly protective or compulsively dominating, the children will make the best of whatever schooling is available and will gain far more in social adaptability, creative and improvisational skills, interpersonal sensitivity, and self-acceptance than their cousins back in North America.

Oddly, only a few people writing about the missionary experience are calling attention to the fact that the world today is crying out for young leaders who have been reared in bicultural communities and who have overcome their fears of language and culture early in life. An impressive proportion of the veterans of the early Peace Corps, with its emphasis on cultural immersion, have been eagerly snapped up for substantial careers by international agencies of government, business, communications, and education. Offspring of missionary parents have also done well in such careers, though perhaps not to the extent of dominating the pages of *Who's Who* as once glowingly claimed by a friendly exaggerator. But the fact that there is substantial demand for inter-culturally and linguistically experienced young people should surely be more than enough to offset the missionaries' parental concerns about ultimate educability and employability of their children.

Misguided and exaggerated misunderstandings do not account for all of the increased concern about the welfare of the missionary's family. Some very real problems are on the increase. Since the days of the explorers and colonists, health has been a major personal anxiety among overseas Westerners. Today a newly dominant concern for kidnapping and other acts of violence has become well established in many regions. The resultant defensive measures and especially the tendency to limit one's exposures to the "outside" environment has added yet another strain to the emotional well-being of the overseas family.

The fear of being stranded at the far ends of the earth with a crucial health problem lessened with the advent of the Boeing 707. Various components of the world's health systems now at least communicate with one another, and medical evacuation by air is feasible almost anywhere. But just when it seemed that health anxieties could be pushed to the lower part of the "worry list," the world is convulsed by one of the most sure-death ailments on record. Although it seems not to have hit hard among Christians yet except among African families and children, the fear of falling victim to AIDS may re-establish health as the number one concern, at least among missionaries. Within the missionary community vulnerability increases in proportion to exposure to accidents and illnesses that might require emergency treatment with HIV-contaminated blood products.

Even if the anxiety about missionary children largely derives from a theological flaw, there are surely important contributing factors in the contemporary Western societies and world climate. The investigation should not be limited to the theological sector. A substantial agenda of matters needs attention; the problems are complex, and they deserve the best reasoning that can be bought to bear. The best of outcomes would be to re-center the theological foundations of the missionary vocation, propagate a more balanced view of the overseas experience, and thus reduce the fears that are distorting the missionary enterprise.

But in order that the missionary's sociological perspective can be brought into touch with reality, several matters should be set straight:

1. The cultural enrichment available in the bicultural or multicultural experiences of missionary families is a positive feature for most normal children. There is little persuasive evidence of negative effects from the rumored threats: cultural confusion, linguistic confusion, or rootlessness.

2. The tendency to attribute any and every difficulty of raising children to being overseas or being a missionary is simply unrealistic. To the extent that it is a bad habit of faulty reasoning, it must be corrected by a more informed awareness that many of the problems encountered would occur no matter where the family might be located.

3. So that the tensions and mysteries of child-rearing do not become overwhelming, missionary parents need well-formed support networks. The missionary organization can play a limited role, at least providing access to appropriate counseling resources when needed; but the major emphasis needs to be on the sorts of interpersonal supports and encouragements that each family can uniquely develop around itself.

4. Appropriate literature and parent-skills workshops can and should be made available to missionary families. Ironically, in a society that has lost many of the values of intergenerational support and extended family relationship, not even the Christians have done much about the need for teaching and learning family skills. We are still operating on the assumption that parenting skills simply come along in the biological package called reproduction. Here is where the major problem lies. Being overseas simply provides a diverting alibi.

5. As with other residential schools, especially elementary and secondary schools, the quality of care and the supervision of the care-givers can flare into sudden tragedy. Living in a dormitory or guest-house is rarely appropriate as the alternative to children living with their parents. But when missionary assignments are to remote cites or locations lacking appropriate educational resources, the pattern of off to boarding school at an early age is sometimes the only alternative. At best, housemothers serve as substitute parents. But given the upsurge of neglect and child-abuse, missionaries with responsibilities for young children need to take definite precautions. Overseas Americans are commonly in cities where bi-lingual and multi-national schools are accessible, but rural and "outback" missionaries confront a much more difficult situation.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

Pejorative Presumptions about Missing Missionaries: A Response to Peter Brierley's *Why Our Missionaries Quit*

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

A review of the WEF research on missionary attrition, reflecting strengths and key problems in the inquiries and the analysis procedures, suggesting improvements in research rigor. Noting characteristic issues in research conducted in multinational contexts. *From a paper for the Overseas Missions Study Center (OMSC), December, 1996.*

> *A trustworthy maxim within the arcane world of social science research is that unless research is designed and carried out with great rigor and self-discipline, the findings will show just about what the researcher expected to find.*

Part I—The Intentions

The World Evangelical Fellowship research into missionary attrition represents an important milestone. Now that the work of the Christian mission is so widely shared across the world, the importance of international planning and collaboration is gaining recognition. Thus the value of sharing insights from the varied experiences in missionary deployment and operation is driving the mission movement in general toward a more open and responsible reportage.

Pragmatic concerns about solving such a problem as the rising attrition rate among missionaries are valid but secondary motives for good research. Indeed, pragmatic motives are sure to prove less important than *discovery of insights* leading toward fulfillment of the command of Jesus Christ to *make disciples*. Whether longer or shorter missionary assignments have anything to do with this more important outcome is among the many things that need to be better understood. But if the highest intention of research, to encounter truth more clearly, can be honorably fulfilled, then indeed a corner will have been turned.

Among sporting events nothing looks more chaotic than the start of a marathon race. Great clusters and clumps of participants crouch nervously awaiting the starting gun. And off they go in more or less the same direction! Before long the mass has transformed itself into a long straggling line of flushed and panting athletes, each running the race in his or her own way. Remarkably, the race is not officially over until the last person has struggled across the line.

So it is with the first several tries at international research by any group or cluster of groups. Despite the best intentions, the willingness to join together and to start out in the same direction at the same time, the differences in skills, resources, preparations, and behaviors becomes evident quite early, and at the end of things everyone is scattered across the landscape. As participating researchers in the early attempts of UNESCO to encourage and co-sponsor large-scale international research on educational standards and outcomes, we were simply overwhelmed, again and again, by the lack of common vocabulary and comparable categories of data. Nearly twenty years went by as conferences, commissions, hearings, and diplomatic-level treaties of international commitment hammered out the basis for doing

international studies by pooling data. What was necessary, and stubbornly resisted, was standardizing the definitions and changing the very basis of record-keeping in the individual nations' ministries of education, interior, national development, and other related governmental units. Until data were being kept in the same categories and with a common agreement about the meanings of categories and standards, only frustration and misleading comparisons emerged from the international studies.

Agreeing on the meanings and criteria for categorical judgments and descriptions requires negotiation and compromise. Consider an illustration from international comparative research on literacy: In the large studies that attempt to compare national literacy rates, the knowledgeable reviewer soon becomes aware that *literacy* is claimed by some nations in terms of normed criteria and data from national-scope testing programs, by other nations in term of numbers of people having been enrolled in a primary school for as few as three years, by still others in terms of political persons' estimates based on their own opinions, and by positions adopted for government or agency propaganda.

Validity is severely threatened by the way international data are generally collected. A research study is typically initiated "high up" in the international leadership sector. Some sort of international representation is convened to discuss the issues and questions to be investigated. The "hub" or center of the study will then select one or more agencies to represent each nation; such agencies are rarely disinterested and objective parties to the research. The people asked to supply the data bring very different cultural backgrounds; one of the few things they usually have in common is that they are "internationalized" or "westernized" people, often being only slightly intercultural yet somewhat remote from their own original context.

Each of these agencies will then solicit data from its most convenient and "trusted" sources, whether or not these sources will add up to a representative sample. Control of the sampling plan and the resulting reliability of the data are passed into the hands of the data sources themselves. Is it surprising that the aggregate of data in the study will be contaminated by bias and discrepancies? Can data in such a study be respected as a basis for "encountering truth more clearly?"

Even worse is the problem of deliberate misrepresentation. Political and ideological biases underlie this source of unreliability. National pride, international competitiveness, and organizational paranoia cause certain agencies, even national governments, to hold back their submissions of data until they get a look at their competitors' data; then after belatedly adding their own data, somewhat tailored to fit their own image of themselves, they can bring themselves closer to the top in terms of whatever qualitative issues are at stake. Truth is rarely as important as prestige. Nations at the lower end of the distributions are typically in a terrible quandary. If they bias their national data downward, it will increase the likelihood of receiving international assistance funds; if they bias their data upward, they will be seen as stronger and "higher" in prestige among the nations. This sort of political opportunism often prevails over any sort of commitment to objectivity and truth.

Do we encounter any similar problems in research on Christian missions? Perhaps we have forgotten Barrett's *magnum opus.*[1] More to the point, do such problems affect such a study as reported by Brierley? Without a doubt, yes.

[1] David Barrett. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, AD 1900-2000* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

Part II—The Report

Peter Brierley has addressed an important topic: **causes for missionary attrition**. His concerns are evident and his intent is honorable. The sheer bravery of this paper and the research upon which it is based are impressive in ambition and for Brierley's innovative use of data. Brierley presents his summative conclusion in a blunt statement at the beginning rather than after the evidences are presented: "We have a problem!" (p.1).

Semantic hurdles and complicated management issues are encountered in the data collection and analysis in this sort of international and intercultural research. There is more to be concerned about in the WEF research procedures than in the research outcomes. In reference to the techniques of data gathering and analysis, indeed there is a problem. The highly generalized summative comment should be, Brierley is right.

The most convincing elements of Brierley's findings are reassuring. Almost, he persuades the reader that the incidence of missionary attrition is substantially less than previously indicated. If one accepts the 5.1% *per annum* rate of missionary departure from the field as the current norm (4.3%, if those who return to the field under different affiliation are deducted), the missionary vocation stands up quite positively.

"Measured over the years 1992-94, the average number of workers who leave is . . . 5.1% of their mission-force. . . . One missionary in 20 is being lost to missionary service each year" (Brierley, p.1). If this summative finding is compared with church ministries within the United States, for example, it is similar or, in most cases, lower. Compared with the labor force in general, the missionary data fall at the high end for tenure and job security. Given the complexity and the increased demands of international and intercultural service in recent years, the missionary career would seem to be astonishingly free from disruptions. In most fields of steady employment, retirement alone will typically account for 4% to 5% leaving the workforce each year.

A major ground for skepticism arises from the difficulties inherent in quantitative research in social contexts. The problems are not unique to studies of missions and missionaries. A similar array of problems confronts each demographer and social scientist who attempts a multinational study drawing from multiple data bases:

1. The *conceptual equivalency* problem is not easily solved no matter how well the language translation is done. Even across social sectors and educational levels within one society, social terminology is shaped variously. A researcher cannot be confident that any two respondents are reading, comprehending, and responding in an equivalent manner. What is a *missionary*? This question has never been easy, partly because there is no single biblical exemplar, and partly because the actual work of missionaries in the contemporary world is so widely varied. What is *attrition*? Is it "leaving" or "quitting?" Is it following God into a new ministry or is it getting out of God's will? And just what is an *acceptable* reason for "leaving?" And what is so *unacceptable* that it must be called "dropping out" or "quitting?" This problem of uncoordinated and evidently non-equivalent concepts constitutes a serious burden in the doing of this research as well as in reporting it and in reading the report.

2. The *validity-of-response* problem is always a threat. As David Barrett's work demonstrated, the level of precision among data sources varies substantially. Some have "hard data" at hand and are vocationally attuned to the disciplines and rigors of research data-gathering; but data are rarely available in a completely parallel form, so extrapolating and estimating must be done. Others, especially those who are afraid that they will appear a bit less than competent if they are not

forthcoming with specific data, will make "educated guesses." Still others will answer almost any question in terms of what will be most pleasing to the inquirer or will put one's own work in the best possible light. Which of these types of unreliability has distorted the reports from given sources the researcher can only guess. The tendency thus is to confess the "possibility" of error and proceed with the analysis as if nothing were seriously amiss.

3. The *mixing* of differing types of subjects or data often results from the frustrations and embarrassments of trying to keep precise accounts in the face of obviously non-parallel reports from the separate agencies. In the Brierley report, for example, the mixing of data on short-term and long-term missionaries seems to result from widely differing definitions and substantially varying ways of reporting attrition data. Thus, the frustrated analyst stirs it all together and later resorts to imposing arithmetic correction values, attempting to make belated differentiations. Validity can be achieved only by agreement on comparable definitions of categories at the outset, collecting of the *original* data in these precisely defined and separated categories, and analyzing the data independently from the individual sources before allowing any aggregating of data across categories or data sources. The common rush to make large-scale statements and international generalizations works against disciplined analysis on a nation-by-nation basis. It then becomes almost impossible to back up and repair the gaps.

4. The *missing data* problem is especially troubling in a research that attempts to establish national or international norms, and most especially in a body of data that will be used for comparative purposes. Unless the data are truly whole and truly comparable, mischief may result. For example, since data are more readily forthcoming which show things that are positive, commendable, and "good," extraordinary steps must often be taken to fill in the missing data; otherwise a more-rosy-than-real picture emerges. Unless all relevant cases in the truly representative sample are presented in the document files, bias of the sample must be assumed. Any voluntarism within the sample, leaving an agency free to report or not to report; leaving a respondent free to decide independently which cases to omit, or worse, eliminating late or slow respondents, reduces the validity of the sample. Sometimes this sort of biasing is beyond the control of the researcher, although controls and adjustments are often attempted. To illustrate: if a missionary society has not identified a probationary missionary (a first-term missionary, for example) as a "regular" or "career" missionary, any first-term attrition tends to be reported as if the departed missionary had been a "short-term" missionary. This aberration in record keeping, alone, makes research of the sort that the WEF Missions Commission has undertaken akin to comparing apples and oranges.

   Any research of attrition which does not differentiate the key variables at every step of the process, especially such variables as "short-term" or "long-term," whether the subject is early or established in the position, in new to missionary service or more experienced, married or single, wife of missionary or appointed woman missionary, specially educated or not, aware of having been called or not aware of a call of God, older or younger, teen-aged children or not, long-standing health problems or not, previously experienced in ministry or not—is sure to be misleading, ultimately requiring all sorts of arithmetic "weighting" to try to salvage the analyses. If data had been collected and analyzed precisely in terms of these variables *before* aggregating the data, many useful correlations could have been anticipated and examined. And Peter Brierley's task would have been far more rewarding.

5. The *predetermined category* problem exists to some extent in all surveying, but it is most acute in the design of surveys that use ambiguous categorical labels which are open to diverse interpretations or that lack evidential grounding in previous smaller and more precise research. The

various disciplines of social science now generally recognize the importance of case studies and intensive ethnography as the foundation for survey instrumentation, and especially for the *categories* used in the wording and the analysis of data from short-response instruments. The major trouble with predetermined categories is that they predispose the research to look into certain concerns at the expense of other concerns. Unless the same concerns happen to be really important across all venues, findings will be limited and biased in ways that are difficult to detect.

6. The *quantitative* problem underlies all of large-scale demography and almost every questionnaire-based study. What constitutes a *unit?* That is, what counts as "1"—is far less manageable than it would appear to a layperson. Counting hands for anticipated attendance at a group dinner is a classical illustration. Does each hand in the air represent one person? *Better hold up two hands if you are bringing your spouse—unless he is also here and holding up his own hand. . . . What if I want to bring my sister-in-law and my brother?*

   Brierley describes brave attempts to solve various quantitative problems. Tables of numbers allow comparisons, but they are not often instructive in matters of causation and basic understanding. Quantities are valuable if the problem is how widespread is something such as missionary attrition, how do agencies and nations compare, and what characteristics are correlated? Statistical analysis is a craft undergirded by a substantial body of research and a highly professional set of standards. For many purposes related to assessment and planning in the changing world of missions, we need these disciplines, and we need the patience and cooperation to use them correctly.

Part III—Socio-Theological Assumptions

Of greater concern in this study is not the methodology so much as the underlying assumptions. About ten years ago when the possibility of missions as a revolving door began to emerge research was based upon several assumptions—later rejected—that reappear in the Brierley report. They are hard to shake, and it is easy to be sympathetic. Nevertheless, they must be challenged. After ten years, some of these assumptions are still tempting but theologically untenable. It is especially important not to design research inquiries into missionary attrition in terms of purely naturalistic phenomena or in terms of momentary perceptions and judgments of people. Being a missionary is not an ordinary job; it is a spiritual calling.

Some of the causes for attrition are *preventable*, and thus they *should* be prevented.

Contemporary scholarship tends toward reducing everything to rational decision-making. (After all, "if we know the right things to do, we will surely act on them." Compare Paul's confession in *Romans 7:15, 16*. If we just get the shortcomings classified we can treat them with the right preventatives and things will go along ever so much better. Is this premise delusional? In this fallen world, a good place to start on missionary attrition is to identify the more preventable hindrances and give them the first attention. Again, it sounds good, but initiatives attacking hindrances so easily end up hurting the wrong people! All of this discussion is so that we can organize an intervention? Even in this simple logic of identifying hindrances there lurks a nest of difficulties. Interventions and preventions are hazardous, especially as organizations try to shape the behavior of persons. Standards are important, yes. Qualitative goals are important as well. But to presume to change the direction of a person's life by rejecting the "preventable reason" and urging a "cure" seems to be a bit more interventional than God would suggest. Further, it is obviously plain pragmatism that leads us to prefer the survivor and disdain the person is *called away from* the missionary career. Pragmatic reasoning causes us to look at ministry through misshapen lenses.

Where should we look to find deeper understanding of missionary attrition? Where does the "quitting" problem arise? In the missionary? In the preparation of the missionary? In the decision-making process? In the nature of the assignment? Somehow, the "quitting" problem is in the missionary or in the failure to help, support, challenge, or reward the missionary in the right way at the right time. This assumption is one of the most tempting. It would seem that although it is best to leave the matters of calling to God, we could learn important truth about missionaries if we examined the outcomes of education, counseling, mentoring, and organizational planning that affect the service of missionaries. But some troubling evidences are too readily overlooked by this research. They are not very hard to see, although the categorization and basis of analysis are so erratic as to cast doubt on the worth of another analysis. But curiosity alone makes the reader eager to see where the truth may actually lie! A careful re-examination of these very data could lead to some startling and contrary conclusions. There are troubling evidences that could lead into important changes. It will require more interviewing rather than checking boxes on a questionnaire. It will require many hours of patient and pointed conversation. In sum, to really open up the attrition question will surely turn into a more demanding chore than has been undertaken to date . . . that dissonances occur between the images, expectations, and other anticipatory assumptions on the one hand, and the realities, discoveries, and actual circumstances on the field on the other hand are devastating to many new missionaries. Especially when missionaries are recruited among people of limited social involvements, minimal intercultural experiences, and strong materialistic preoccupations, the call of God must be emphasized transcendently. It may be only the craving for targets-to-dump-guilt-on that interests the researchers? Attrition may be God's way of "clearing out the pipes for better flow! Perhaps if the attrition rate and its causes were better understood, we could possibly see God "freshening" His work force. *As Americans, we tend to assume that more is better and less is loss.* In a sort of suspicious, conceivably unholy way, the Brierly study pushes us closer to the position that attrition may be a God-given process of assuring that the mission of the church will be steadily protected against the small-minded exploiters who would lead the field into a glut of inadequate buccaneers whose very presence on the field distorts the work of the Gospel. So I will mildly hold my tongue from here on and try to keep watch on the paths where God leads.

What can be learned from this research may be divided into two categories: evident generalizations from the findings and guidelines for future research. The first of these lists is not as extensive as the mass of data may suggest, largely because of the difficulties arising from confusions in the analyses. The second category likely constitutes the more important steps forward.

Evident Generalizations. The findings revealed in the Brierley report suggest that indeed the return from the mission field can be productively examined. The most evident generalizations include these:

1. Countries vary widely in certain characteristics of missionary attrition.
2. Substantial differences are seen in the comparisons of "old sending countries" and "new sending countries."
3. Normal retirement is seen as the most common reason for departure from missionary activity.
4. Lack of home support is a commonly reported contributor to attrition among many of the new sending countries.
5. Certain problems widely encountered and widely reported in other research into attrition are minimized in these data, for example, cultural factors including language development and

functional effectiveness in the new culture, intra-team disharmony, and conflicts with the agency's home office and its policies.

Guidelines for Future Research. After this brave start by the WEF investigators, it should be possible to organize some smaller-scale bi-national or tri-national comparative studies. It is now evident that greater attention to small details and especially more personal inquiries into underlying difficulties will be valuable. Among the issues that the data from the WEF study suggest are the following:

1. How much of the variance in missionary characteristics seen in the comparisons of Old Sending Countries with New Sending Countries can be attributed to a relatively younger missionary community in the latter?

2. What correlations can be made between dominant approaches to recruitment of missionaries and any of the factors associated with attrition?

3. To what extent do agencies report data based on estimates or guesses?

4. What studies of missionary experiences and behaviors have been carried out as a basis for the judgments about "preventable" and "unpreventable" contributory factors and conditions?

5. How much do the standards of categorizing *acceptable* and *unacceptable* experiences of missionaries vary? . . . from one agency to another? . . . across nations?

6. What sort of missionary assignments are more commonly associated with early and unplanned departure?

7. What happens to "former" missionaries? Is "leaving the agency" the same thing as leaving missionary service or leaving Christian ministry? Where else do they go?

8. Where is attrition lowest? In what sorts of missionary deployment? . . . from which countries or regions? . . . among missionaries of what age, educational, and experiential background?

9. How do marriage and family responsibilities relate to attrition?

10. Which "polite" answers to questions about attrition serve as disguises for more deep-seated problems?

Is attrition is essentially the same thing as quitting? Categories of cause in the Brierley project include some benign sorts of leaving-the-field that hardly justify such a pejorative term as *quitting*. Even less kind is "being *lost* to missions" and "*dropping out."* Further, the judgmental category system (preventable/unpreventable) raises curious questions: Is being asked to take a post in the home office preventable or unpreventable? Is a senior missionary's being pulled away from leadership responsibilities in Latin America in order to move to Russia to take up a co-mission assignment preventable or unpreventable? Indeed, just what do these terms suggest about who is in control? Have we glanced away from God just for an instant here? Whose mission is this, after all?

The Call of God Changes

Surely God moves His people from place to place, from ministry to ministry, and back and forth from "home base." Is this what is meant by "changes" in the call of God? The increasingly mobile and eruptive nature of many of the cultures of humankind surely calls for a greater flexibility and mobility in

missionaries and missionary deployment. Indeed, responsiveness to the call of God is hardly a once-for-all-matter. It is a matter of daily renewal. A good awakening prayer: *"Good morning, Father. Here's another day that is yours. By your grace, I'm ready. Lead on."*

The New Testament pattern of movement, change, mobility, and early departure seems largely overlooked in the modern missionary era. We value permanency, stability, fixed-place institution-building and long-term possessiveness. These are the very characteristics now getting many missionary efforts into difficulties in the field. Last longer on the field? Is this a good idea? Always? Until missionary service is once again presented as a demand for sacrificial *mobility*, we will see more and more attrition problems.

For whatever it may be worth, only one "guiding light" assumption is left: **It is important to help those who are called and prepared as missionaries to last as long they find themselves clearly within God's will for their lives.**

EPILOGUE: With thanks and apologies to Peter Brierly, attrition is sometimes a good thing, the result of processes by which God enriches, renews, and energizes his work in the world. God finds ways to use many, holding onto the few for even more extensive service in a given place. His warnings are still timely, and the article is a fine case example of how to do research in multicultural contexts.

About the Author

Ted Ward is Professor Emeritus of Education and International Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University. He has spent his career in formal education at the University of Florida, at Michigan State University (MSU), and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). Ted's tenure at two Land Grant universities reflects his lifelong commitment to education as service and as a lifelong discipline. For thirty years he served through Michigan State University's institute for International Studies, working as consultant and educational planner in over sixty countries. He has served extensively in theological education and church planning in many mission and church-development locations. His books include *Values Begin at Home* and *Living Overseas.*

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Beyond the Pith Helmet

Ted W. Ward

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Abstract

The author calls for an end to the stereotype of the missionary as unaware culturally, ignorant of the nuances of social and governmental systems, and ministering out of a tenuous sense of call. *From an Unpublished Manuscript for Michigan State University, circa 1980's.*

One of the impressive sights seen all over Latin America is a heroic, sculptured image of Christ. These huge statues of our Lord perched high on mountain peaks and in border passes of the Andes and above magnificent harbors are hard to miss. You cannot avoid a sense of the splendid, the magnificent and the enduring as you gaze from the harbor of Rio de Janeiro upon the great Christ of Corcovado, floating as if on a ship of rocks in a distant sea of clouds.

The image of Christ is a compelling force in the people's thinking. The Christ of Corcovado and the Christ of the Andes are expressions of people who found one way to declare, "Sirs, we would see Christ."

This is what the mission of the church of Jesus Christ is all about: not the material substance of the statue or the painted icon, but the solid spiritual reality that heralds this most basic human need, "Sirs, we would see Christ!"

The Stereotyped Missionary

The word "missionary" is a turn-off to many people today. The word has negative associations. It conjures up the stereotype of a tired old codger, or dear Aunt Millie, slogging about in a Frank Buck hat and tennis shoes, reading a three-inch-thick book about heaven-knows-what to thirty-two naked children squatting under a banyan tree.

Unfortunately, missionaries on furlough sometimes still feed the old stereotypes. African missionaries still show slides of elephants and lions, though now they need to buy most of them at airport gift shops. The missionary conference slides still give the impression that missionaries minister only to incredibly primitive relics of caveman days. Stripped of their national costume and finery and dressed in western sport shirts, these impoverished creatures do indeed look less than interesting. Their own native dignity, the elaborateness of their customs and institutions, the pride of their own creativeness—all of this, we gather, must be sacrificed to the cause of Christ.

Is it not odd that we have come to expect this cultural devastation as a characteristic of evangelized persons in other lands, yet we do not make these sorts of demands on each other in our own lavish, bloated society.

Destroying the Stereotype

Through travel, and especially through working alongside missionaries and national evangelists, the falseness of these pictures emerges. Many missionaries, perhaps most missionaries, are beyond the era of enforcing the rejection of culture as a prerequisite to Christianity. Most missionaries are not blind even to

the important opportunities for Christian witness in the upper social classes. In short, most missionaries are no more stupid than the rest of us.

So the silly old stereotypes of the pith-helmet missionary who tromps over jungle underbrush and cultural values without knowing the difference are becoming less valid. Granted, not enough missionaries get a background of behavioral science and social consciousness, particularly through the vital research in anthropology, social philosophy, and human learning. Many are not aware of what to look for! But being charitable about it: the dark ages of bumbling, even if it is unfair to represent the past this way, are over. What is a missionary? The term is not from the Bible, but it is useful for labeling the man or woman who has accepted a special mission of Christian outreach overseas. *Missionary* is an arbitrary distinction, but nonetheless useful. And the "pith helmet" conjures up images of Frank Buck and other caricatures of tropical explorers, slogging through tall grass and crocodile swamps in neatly buttoned khaki jackets and very tall boots. (Childhood memories of comic books!)

Newly appointed missionaries today are more alert and energetic people, often a young couple, sometimes a midcareer fortyish pair, usually with some prior overseas experience in business, industry, government, or the Peace Corps, and maybe a summer in Costa Rica swinging a hammer and coaching a construction crew of nationals. Not heading out for a ride to the bottomless pit, not having broken many of their old ties, and now extending their circle of friends into new places of service. These are today's missionaries, set apart to go forth. But long before this, these folks were called into the service of Christ. Not with some new mysterious call freshly ringing in their ears but with an awareness of a new *assignment,* a new *event* in their series of service activities for Christ.

Forget It—If You Can

Long ago mission executives began saying that they avoid sending a person overseas who is not already working for Christ at home. You may have heard it: a boat ride (or is it a plane ride?) does not make you a missionary. That is a fact. So if you are not already a missionary, forget it.

If you have not learned to speak out for Christ in the English language, why do you think it might be easier in Mandarin, Tagalog, or Arabic? Christian talk that is not backed up by a Christlike life and intimate dependence on prayer will not function better in Borneo than in Birmingham.

Here is sound advice about the next step that you should take: try for a day or two to suppress the idea of becoming a missionary. This is a sincere and honest suggestion, that you have confidence in the Holy Spirit and in God's capability to finish the tasks that He has begun. So you do not need to hear God's pep talk; *God* will find ways to get through to you. If He wants you as a missionary, He will not let you forget it.

There are several "Gideon's fleece missionaries" overseas right now. They may not get back for a second term. When they take their first furlough, God may not bother to wet their fleece anymore. People who repetitively ask God to keep reminding them what they already know are the most to be pitied. They are a drag on mission management as well.

If you assume that all missionaries are overseas because they were called, you have to wonder if God made some mistakes, or perhaps if somebody might be fudging a bit about the call. These are the ones who indulged in risky sorts of propositions to God. Going overseas does not guarantee that God is more pleased with you than if you had stayed in North America. The place you go is relatively unimportant. God's invitation is to *commitment,* not related to geography or position.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1 NRSV). Does that sound familiar? God is in the business of getting through to you to ask for a commitment of your life and resources to do His will wherever you are. If you do this, you will find really exciting things happening. God will let you work for Him.

You start with the commitment; you sell out the whole scene to God. And to that commitment, God provides the mission. He will really *send* you.

Christ on a Rock

The North American who lives out a real "yes" to Jesus Christ will not run roughshod over others, whether they are other North Americans, Japanese, or tribesmen in the Amazon. You will keep first things first, to clarify the image of Christ through your living, not just through your words. As with the image of the Christ of Corcovado, those who watch you will see the majesty of a *solid* Christ, fixed on the rocks that hold firm, shining through the earthbound clouds.

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