

Reverse Contextualization:
Articles by Ralph D. Winter
in Chronological Order

Contents

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The Retreat of the West

Chapter 15, *The Unfolding Drama of the Christian Movement*. 1979)

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This topic, “The Retreat of the West,” is the name of the first chapter of a book I wrote some years ago entitled, *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years*. There is not much value in my just repeating what is in that chapter. It would be of greater advantage if I should enlarge the context of this phenomenon of “The Retreat of the West.”

Defining the West

The West, of course, is a rather silly word. What is west of what on the globe? Everything is west of something. We are talking about a cultural West. Western culture is predominantly a Christianized phenomenon. It does not mean that Westerners are Christians, except in culture. It does mean that a Westerner is a person whose ethical judgments, worldview, philosophy, and cosmology, have been predominantly the result of Westernization. That is, the person has been shaped by the Hellenistic (non-Christian), the Judeo-Christian, and the Western European Christian experience. Eastern Christians are also “Western” in the larger sense of Western culture. In other words, Russians are part of the Western cultural tradition.

When the Russians cross over into China, they are Westerners, even if they are living in Siberia (north of China). China is non-Western, because Chinese thinking and culture, at least prior to Mao Tse-tung, was for the most part unaffected by the West. Communism itself is a Western phenomenon. Westernization has taken place, not only through missionary penetration of the provinces of China, but every single card-carrying communist is a Westernizer. His materialism derives from Christianity. That much, and many other things, we have in common with communism.

The ravages of communism across the world, as an atheistic, anti-religious system, are to a great extent just bizarre perversions of a Christian inheritance. Christianity is the most materialistic of all known world religions. In fact, it may have no choice because, as one great theologian said, “God was the first materialist.” He created the unfathomable atom, along with sub-atomic particles which hold together all this complexity that is beyond our comprehension. God created it all! He took that entire molecular, inorganic chemical reality, played a tune on it, whence came a whole new series of chemical combinations, called the organic chemical universe. Then from those chemicals he brought forth life forms of all kinds, like those unimaginably tiny little creatures, the Plague germs that killed off 33 million people in Europe at a time when the population was only three times that large. (Or was this the work of an enemy distorting God’s good intentions for his creation?) All of this is God’s creation; and it is the Christian who understands this and is awed.

The Christian does not worship it, but respects and sees the glory of God in the handiwork which he has displayed for us: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork.”

Christianity: Faith or Religion?

Christianity itself is anti-religious. Read chapter 1 of Isaiah. Read chapter 23 of Matthew. Christianity is not really a religion, according to some theologians; and when it becomes a religion, it is no longer a faith. Now, that is a slight overstatement. I do believe there are some profoundly religious people who are also Christians, but it is Christianity alone—evangelicalism in particular—that allows the possibility of nonreligious people to be Christians.

Referring to people who do not go through any fancy rituals, who are not beholden to any observable patterns, an evangelical could allow such as Christians. Now even evangelicals eventually fall into patterns; if you walk into the most highly unstructured evangelical service, you can tell exactly what is coming next. So don't let anybody in a non-liturgical tradition claim that he is non-liturgical in the ultimate sense.

But despite habits, structures being what they are, the fact of the matter is that Christianity, in a certain sense is not a religion—not a religious system. It is a faith. It is a way of life. In this sense it is the only candidate for world faith. All other religions are truly religions, and even Christianity becomes a religion all too easily. Is Westernization to blame for this?

Christianity: A “Religion” for the World vs. a World Religion

Christianity is the only world religion, in a certain sense. When people speak of world religions, they only mean long-lasting religious systems; and there are not many of these. Any long-lasting religious system with lots of followers in any certain place is called a world religion. This is nonsense! To be a world religion, that is, to be a religion for the whole world, you have to have some sense of an affinity with the world; and there is no other candidate for that description beside Christianity.

Christianity is the only religion (if you wish to call it that) which is willing to take upon itself the cultural clothes of every tradition in the world.

Islam is the only competitor that could be remotely compared to Christianity as a world religion, and Islam itself is a heretical variety of Christianity. However, Islam is much more of a religion, in that it requires the Arabic language in its holy book and facing towards Mecca for prayers by its adherents. Islam is what the communists in Indonesia have called an imperialistic religion. The communists, before they fell from power some years ago, said that the Indonesians were dupes to accept a foreign religion. But they were unable to pin this criticism on the Christians. The Christians had churches that were built in Indonesian architectural styles; their Bible was in Indonesian languages; their hymns and music partook, at least to some extent, of the Indonesian cultural tradition. In that sense, Christianity was not as much a foreign invasion as was Islam. And, by the way, Christianity got to Indonesia before Islam did! Islam is a very recent thing in Indonesia.

The Bahai religion is an attempt—which I think of as much too small a movement to be called a world religion—to follow Christianity in this multi-cultural approach. Their problem is their scriptures. You can go around and talk to Bahai people, and they will tell you about these ineffable, ethereal scriptures—but these scriptures are untranslatable!

The Impact of Westernization

The point of all this so far is that there are many children of this Westernization process; communism is one of the children. It faithfully reflects many of the ethical concerns of Christianity. The ethical system which the communist society espouses, but which it does not have the power to live up to, is a Christian system for the most part. Their emphasis on the equality of all people, their emphasis on confession, their cell structure—all this was borrowed directly from Christianity. Their sense of history comes directly from Christianity. Communism is a bizarre, heretical, virulent evil, and to a great extent, a mechanism of Western civilization.

This Westernization process produced an immense fertility of mind, of industry, of political and demographic power. There is no example in human history among the annals of mankind throughout the world of any movement gaining such momentum, building up population and wealth and power so rapidly, as that which occurred in Western Europe—precisely where (to some extent) the Bible was unleashed.

That power spilled over in many ugly, tragic ways, as well as in beneficial ways, all across the world. One examples was the Crusades. In some ways the modern colonial movement was far less “holy” and far less Christian than the Crusades, but for most of its early history, under the Portuguese, Spanish, and French colonization was definitely a Christian Crusade. All ships carried priests—missionaries with the intent to convert people to Christ as King.

When the Protestants got into the act, their first largescale presence on the open seas were pirates! The pirates were Protestants; and you can imagine how easily this fit into the Catholic stereotype of Protestantism. Some of these pirates actually did have chapels in their hideaway outposts across the Caribbean. They were religious men, with all their cutthroat piracy they were trying to do God’s will. When Protestants got into the act, colonization no longer had a Christian dimension to it. The Dutch were allowed into the ports of Japan without any problems at all, even after Japan was totally sealed off to all other colonization. The reason for that was because no one would have ever suspected the Dutch Protestants of bringing along Christian missionaries. The Dutch did bring chaplains with them into Taiwan; and at one time there was a fairly promising movement. They eventually did bring chaplains into Indonesia, the so-called Dutch East Indies, but they were simply less religious than other colonizing powers.

Notice that this immense muscular outburst, whether you call it a crusade or not, was largely a result of the help of a community produced by the tincture of Christian faith in Europe. There was a lot of Christian vitality and devotion, of high-mindedness, of social and political reform—the ending of slavery being one of the most obvious reforms brought about by Christianity. Slavery was not something invented by Christians. In fact there have been far more white people enslaved by white people, than black people enslaved by white people to this date in history. Who are the Slavs? They were for centuries—for over a millennium—the great human quarry of slaves, which were taken and sold for use in Africa. So slavery was not the result of Christianity; slavery was there before Christianity ever arrived.

Christianity was what eventually percolated into the higher circles and, through John Wesley and the Evangelical Awakening, into the conscience of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. Clapham was a district of London where these evangelicals lived.

They were called a sect, although they were really only a subordinate party in Parliament. They led the anti-slavery movement.

The impact of Christianity, unknown and undetectable in secular books, accounted for the rise of Western civilization, its vitality and its military power. It is a strange thing that the very muscle wielded by the Crusaders in cutting off people's heads was muscle produced by Christianity. Christianity makes people healthy. It "turns the hearts of the fathers to the children." There is a lower infant mortality immediately when a population becomes Christian. Orphanages, hospitals, and insane asylums appear, and other unfortunate conditions are ameliorated because of Christianity. The benefit produces power, even for those who do not acknowledge it; and it eventually spills over across all the world.

The impact can either be called colonialism (with an adverse twang to it), or it can be called a blessing. I do not know of any clear thinking citizen of a former colonial country who would not be able to tell you how ambivalent the people are about the former colonial presence. John Philip from India, who was in my class last year, will tell you that there are many people in India today who, if they had their choice, would ask the British back. Now, they would probably have to think twice! There would be lots of people who would be opposed to it; and there would be terrible results. The British are a bunch of bigots and snobs, hopelessly tyrannical, almost as bad as the Americans!

It is incredible that any one nation would rule another nation. Allan Moorehead wrote a book on the South Pacific called *The Fatal Impact*. These imperial ambitions literally were fatal to thousands of people as the European diseases flowed in and killed off thousands within those populations. It was fatal in another way, too, as their cultures were destroyed.

It may be found hard to believe that at some point in history, after four hundred years of this massive, muscular, irreversible outreach controlling every square foot of the world, this vast and, for most people, irreversible movement of Westernization began to crumble and retreat.

The Only Source of Merit in Western Society

I do not think that there is the slightest intrinsic virtue or superiority in Western man. I do think that there is a great deal of superiority in Western culture insofar as it has been affected by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I will not give one millimeter of credit to any other source! It is Christ.

As I hear about the unbelievable atrocities in modern-day wars and ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world, such as East Africa, I am just as aware of the orgies of brutality and bestiality among the tribal people of my own past. Consider, for example, the Irish. They were headhunters. They would sail their boats up the Irish Sea, go into a little village thirty miles away and kill every man, woman and child in it. Then they would pile all those heads into their boats and come back—almost sinking—to hollow them out, process them, and drink out of them. Irishmen were drinking out of skulls as late as the sixteenth century!

Whom are we kidding? Satan is the god of this world. We all come from a background of satanically controlled cultures; and there is no intrinsic merit in Western society apart from the impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ, direct and indirect. Science itself is a result of the cosmology that is unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. You

cannot be a scientist if you do not believe in the laws of nature. You cannot be a scientist if you are merely a Hellenistic philosopher.

Plato believed in a pantheon of quarrelsome gods, whose quarreling decided whether it rained or did not rain. You could not possibly have been a scientific observer of the weather if you were a Plato. There is nothing about the Hellenistic tradition that would ever have allowed science to develop. The so-called Greek science, about which many books have been written, is in a totally different category than Western science. The latter is due to God-conscious reflections by Christian people upon the orderliness and beauty of a creation which God designed.

The Unbelievably Good Result of the West's Retreat

There came a time when God obviously said, "Time's up" for Western societies. The crumbling of that vast worldwide empire is the story of the Retreat of the West. The retreat of the West is the retreat of Western political and military power. It is not a retreat of the cultural or economic power, or of the religious influence of the West. Many people assumed—and maybe hoped—that with the withdrawal of the troops and the colonial offices of the Western powers, they would have withdrawn all other influences. But, as you see in my book, in many cases the cultural impact of the West actually escalated in the absence of the stuffy, censorious, and condescending colonial rulers.

After the British had been gone from Ghana for ten years, the Ghanaians actually became more pro-British than they had ever been with the British still present! The other important thing in this story is that, in most cases, the gospel of Jesus Christ actually was given freer reign. It was not the gospel that retreated! The *Twenty Five Unbelievable Years* tells the story of the unbelievable fact that the church of Jesus Christ, after that period of Western retreat, emerged stronger, more powerful, more deeply rooted, and more indigenous than before!

Christology and Missions?

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Christology and Missions?

Ralph Winter

Suppose a Western Union messenger appeared at your door—during a Bible study, let's say. Would your group be content just to sit there and study the man with the telegram in his hand, and not read the telegram? What if, hour after hour, the color of his hair, the clothing he wore, or even the kind of paper on which the telegram was written was the focus of attention—but not the message?

We immediately think of scholars and classrooms when the word "Christology" is mentioned. Or we think of centuries of discussion by earnest men—in school situations, or perhaps even political situations, where the precise definition of who Christ is/was must be carefully determined. All that is important.

However, what follows is what resulted when, at a North American conference of Bible scholars and theologians, a mission scholar was invited to respond to a paper by Dr. Roger Nicole of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The paper was an "application" of Christological truth, entitled "The Work of the Savior." While very appreciative of the scholarship and devotion of all those scholars who are involved in the tradition of theological inquiry, the response here is a courteous attempt to explore just a bit further the practical significance of the "work of the Savior."

One thought, not mentioned until later in the conference, is the fairly obvious fact that the doctrine of the uniqueness of Christ must clearly have a corresponding doctrine of the obligation to share Christ with all of the world's otherwise unreached peoples; we cannot insist on His uniqueness without insisting on mission outreach.



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I come to this topic with three sensitivities held consciously in mind.

First, since this is a conference on the Bible, I feel I must try to deal as much as possible directly with the Bible rather than with a theological corpus through which to view the Bible.

Second, if that were not hard enough, I would like consciously to hold at arm's length, for reexamination if necessary, the particular point of view which we all bring along with our heritage from the roots of the Reformation and the Pietist/Evangelical tradition.

Third, I carry into this discussion my own focus of thought. I must warn you that the bulk of my thinking and writing has been in the realm of mission history, theology and strategy, and I am sure that those who invited me to participate were aware of that fact. Wanting not to disappoint such expectations, I have, in fact, concerned myself about where, if not under this topic of "The Savior and His Work," might there appear legitimately in this conference something about the work of our Savior on earth in its larger, global and eschatological dimension, which we usually call *missions*.

For example, it would surely be possible to consider the missionary expansion of the Kingdom of God under the topic of "The Living God." Or, we ought to be able to approach missions under the topic of "The Church and Her Mission." But it is equally logical that we should see, or take seriously, the entire world through the prism of the topic of "The Savior and His Work."

Roger Nicole has already done us all a great favor as he has so effectively and marvelously, in the short space allotted him, gathered together a veritable floral bouquet of Scriptures which highlight many of the uniquenesses of our Lord. As for scope, he includes the entire human race in his very first sentence! He goes on to underscore the fact that the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus Christ, when offered to the whole world as Scripture has it, does not at all restrict salvation to a minority of the human race: salvation in Christ is precisely aimed at the whole world and always has been from the beginning of redemptive history.

On the other hand, we do well to remember that as evangelicals, reaching back into our Pietist and Reformation roots, we have conventionally focused our attention in the realm of Christology upon the person and work of Christ as this pertains to *our own* salvation. Even the major creeds of Christendom do this, whether we look at the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession. How strange that some would take these creeds very uncritically while subjecting the Bible itself to unending criticism!

Were not the ancient creeds fashioned in semi-political circumstances? Do they not characteristically focus more on the person of Christ than on His work, and if on His work, do they not reduce that work primarily to the atonement and its implications for *us*, rather than seeing in the work of Christ his relentless concern for the *largest possible audience* for that atonement?

One of the dangers to a high view of the Bible, and a danger recognized in the period of the Reformation itself, was the tendency to allow the creedal treatments of Holy Scripture a status very close to that of the Bible itself. Although the Westminster Confession was hammered out in the aftermath of the Reformation, it was not until the 1890's that evangelicals in the Northern Presbyterian church undertook to add a chapter entitled, "Of the Love of God and Missions." This simple fact means it took almost three centuries for the Pietist/Evangelical tradition (with all of its serious Biblical exposition) to gain sufficient confidence for even one of its bodies to dare to alter the sacred creedal text.

By comparison, how refreshing it is to note on the frontline of the missionary expansion of the Kingdom the frequent reminder of how much more significant and reliable are the documents of the Bible themselves than the creeds of Christendom, as respectful as we ought to be of that institutional and quasi-political tradition. Granted, new cultural biases arise on the mission field; not only are old ones lost in the process as the Bible in each new people group becomes freshly again the primary source of orientation. But perhaps God has intended that only in the symphony of many voices and perspectives, drawn from the authentic impact of the Word of God across the globe, would we be best able to

reflect back upon our own cultural traditions with any objectivity, and to understand the Bible with greater certainty.

It is not the Nicene Creed but the Bible which astounds us with the picture of Jesus ignoring the disciples' concern for food and claiming, "My food is to do the will of the Father and to finish His work." Is it not a bit strange that the great mass of theological writing in history, while rightly taking special interest in the work of Christ on the Cross, gives so very little space to the work of Christ which we as his disciples were intended to pick up and carry forward? How easy it is, how human, to dote upon the blessings of Christ for ourselves and pass over lightly the clear call, the heavenly vision, to lose ourselves for His sake and the Gospel's by bending every ounce of our energy to give this great gift away to others at the very ends of the earth!

Yes, the work of Christ on the Cross was unique. But so was his behavior among men. We can search the Gospel accounts in vain to discern any very great mutual understanding between Jesus and His disciples. Indeed, like we, they were interested in His Person and His Work, as it might pertain to their own agendas. But they stumbled along quite in the dark as to the unique and unfathomably different ministry which unfolded in their presence.

We quite rightly covet the truth of the *Finished* Work of Christ, but humanly we are tempted to underemphasize the fact of the *Unfinished* Work of Christ. When in the verse I have just quoted Jesus says his food is to do the will of His Father and finish His work, are we to assume he was only referring to the Cross? Is that all He means to us? Are all these other little stories about Jesus meant merely to be the basis of sermons about the little things in our lives?

Surely we do well to teach our children to say that Jesus died on the Cross to save us from our sins. We must not forget that Jesus also lived among us relentlessly seeking out in love the poor, the dispirited, the handicapped, the sick, the blind, the women, the Greeks, and, yes, even the Samaritans. Why? Because He died on the Cross to save a lot of other peoples besides our people. Even our missionaries who go to the ends of the earth deliberately to befriend the benighted are all too often willing to spell out a traditional Christology,

only one of many examples, allows Japanese believers to take no special interest in the one million despised and unmentionable Eta people among them, or the million socially disenfranchised Koreans concentrated in Osaka. Are we more concerned about the maze of minorities in our cities?

George Eldon Ladd, whose chapel talk on the Great Commission was one of the high points of my time at Fuller Seminary, could at the very end of his teaching career come out with a huge tome on New Testament theology without a single line specifically referring to the crucial, urgent, day-to-day implications of the love of our Savior for the non-Jews and other non-entities of his day, that is to say, the global cross-cultural mission which may actually be the central theme of the New Testament.

I hope Dr. Nicole will not mind if I impute to him much of my own perspective. I believe that in germ this is what he is saying when he speaks of our Lord pictured in different parts of the world in Chinese, Zulu, Navajo and Arab clothing, and when he says that the Incarnation must lead us "all the way" to the place where we are sent as He was sent, to lead all peoples from "where they are to the loving arms of the Savior."

An inerrant Bible does no one any good if it is not accompanied by thoughtful, authentic understanding on our part. We deny our belief in the Bible if our actions do not bear out our words. The amazing, consecrated leadership in this room, giving thirty minutes a day to the concern, could terminate permanently in just five years time, if we wanted to, the scandalous situation in which there are, for example, 723 known languages in which there are no Scriptures. What is the value to the unreached peoples of the world of an untranslated, inerrant Bible?

Does it really matter in God's eyes what words evangelicals parade in public about an inerrant Bible? Does it matter how many times the Bible is translated into English, occasioning each time millions of dollars of new expenditures for ourselves rather than for these groups which have no Scripture at all? Surely it is possible to deny the inerrancy of the Bible by our behavior. As Paul Rees used to say, "It is easier to act our way into right thinking than think our way into right acting." That is hard for us Calvinists to take!

In conclusion, let me leave with you three concepts which I believe bear significantly upon the way we deal with the topic of the Savior and His Work.

THE CONCEPT OF NON-DISCLOSURE

We must, I believe, face the fact that the Bible is not merely God's primary instrument of *revelation*. The Bible itself clearly expositis the intended non-disclosure of God. Again and again it makes clear that it is not yet possible for us to digest all that God is and is about, but that what is revealed is for our admonition in the present world, and for those who are actively walking in the light they have.

For example, we must not draw too much from the fact that Jesus did not teach His disciples a course in mission strategy. The Gospel accounts reveal for them a level of understanding that would have meant total misunderstanding, had they been exposed. Even late in the early ministry of our Lord, as described in the final chapter of Luke, we see two of His followers still struggling with the obvious discrepancy between His perspective and their own understanding of the Savior and His Work. For Jesus to have explained, or tried to explain, to these self-concerned disciples, then or now, just what was the full meaning of the Abrahamic Covenant would have been like running into an accident ward of a hospital with a tennis racket, where the patients are all bundled up in splints and in traction and doped out with anaesthetics, and shouting, "Tennis anyone?"

That is, to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible does not allow us to raid its treasures if we are not ready for its mandate. Jesus told the parables both to reveal and to conceal. The concept of non-disclosure is a crucial parameter in our handling of the Bible.

THE CONCEPT OF THE KAIROS

When we speak of the Savior and His Work, we need to ask not only what did He do, and why did He come, but also why did He come when He came. We must try to see who He was and what He did in the light of God's timing in history.

When the Christ appeared, it had been 2000 years since the call of Abraham and God's crystal-clear enunciation of His

concern to be a blessing to Abraham and his children by faith, and through them to be a blessing to all of the other peoples of the earth.

Throughout the Bible we see God's constant concern for the other peoples of the world: when he pushes Abraham down into the very presence of the Pharaoh of Egypt; when he places Joseph there, and Moses there; when he throws his people again and again into contact with many other nations, sitting in the very spot where He placed them, precisely on the land bridge connecting the continent of Africa and that of Eurasia; when He sends Jonah out to the nation of Ninevah; when He sends all the northern tribes out into a diaspora among the nations; when he sends the Judeans off to the Ends of the Earth (as they referred to Babylon), and, indeed, as He dispersed them throughout the Roman Empire. (We do not wonder at the fact that one of mission history's largest conquests was the Christianization of the Batak tribal peoples of Sumatra, and that, what do you know, they are now dispersed, for better or worse, throughout all of Indonesia like almost no other people.)

When Jesus appeared, what time was it? How was this nation doing with its Commission to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth? Had this nation been hiding its light in the ground? Had this nation revolted, not just against Rome but against the Landowner who finally sent his own Son to check up on things? Were Galileans delighted that God had brought so many foreigners into their midst, and that now this region was called "Galilee of the Gentiles"? (Are evangelicals in American cities today delighted that God has brought the mission field to our doorsteps? Are we taking this as seriously as we ought?)

In this sense Jesus did not come to *give* the Great Commission but to *take it away*. We must understand the Savior and His Work in the sense of God's timing. God is looking at our nation, perhaps, with the same timing in mind. Do we have infiltrated Galilees in our land today? Are we, by and large, quite unconcerned about giving our blessings away? Leighton Ford recently said that 85% of the books in our Christian bookstores focus on self-fulfillment. Is God watching His clock today?

THE CONCEPT OF LITERALISM

It is an objectionable literalism which takes the Gospel accounts as they are, filled with examples of the self-seeking of the disciples, of the inability of the disciples to fathom the radical meaning of the call of Christ, and then accepts this kind of mediocrity and self-concern as normative or even adequate behavior for His disciples today. That is, in our inerrant Bibles we must admit that the real meaning of Christ's call does not show up in the bulk of the text, and that it is an undesirable literalism which fails to distinguish between what happened in the Bible and what the Bible is trying to tell us ought to have happened. That is, inerrant description of errant behavior calls for more than a superficial use of the text.

We see this in regard to the real meaning of the Abrahamic Covenant, which clearly and distinctly asked the Chosen People to reach out with blessing to all the peoples of the earth. (It does not help when our modern translations, for the most part, fail to translate the Hebrew imperative in Genesis 12:2.) Despite this mandate, repeated very clearly five times in Genesis, we then read on to find that the bulk of the text of the Old and New Testaments does not portray an obedient people. It is an undesirable literalism which accepts the failures and foibles thus described so accurately as though they were to be considered normative, and assumes, as so often has been the case, that there was no intention on God's part for the missionary dimension of the Abrahamic Covenant to be taken seriously until 2000 years later.

Talk about distortion of the Bible! I believe that no greater single misunderstanding of Scripture exists widely among us today than the reductionism which sees the global mandate of the early chapters of Genesis as a hibernating mandate which was supposed to be held in suspense until Jesus appeared, or until Jesus died, or until Jesus was resurrected, or until Paul was commissioned, or until William Carey bestirred England, or until the preaching of the heavenly angel of Rev 14:6,7, or, or

Sadly, the Mandate of all Scripture, implied and explained again and again, derives precisely from the scope of the Work of Christ. It is, thus, an unwarranted literalism which accepts

the common as the normal, whether in modern or Old Testament behavior. If we do not believe the Chosen People were chosen to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth, and that this Mandate was in force the moment it was given, then we must believe and accept that all God was after for 2000 years was good behavior, people keeping out of trouble, and that the Mandate was not yet in force. We too often live within this kind of literalism. The Mandate always applies to someone else, somewhere else, some other time. The sobering fact is that God does not have much use for that kind of a nation, no matter how highly they regard their Scriptures. How do we know this? The Bible tells us so.

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“Mission 2000”: Towards a Strategy of Closure

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This is purely a basis for discussion. The initial “consortium” which it projects would have complete freedom to modify it in any way. While it has been drawn up by the U.S. Center for World Mission, it is intended only to inspire thinking along the lines of some sort of common “movement” in the U.S.A. and across the world as an absolutely necessary build-up worthy of the resources God has placed in the global family of truly believing Christians.

A. UNDERLYING CONVICTIONS

1. We believe that those who are blessed by God are automatically obligated to be a blessing to all the peoples of the world (Gen. 12:1-3).
2. We believe that “to be a blessing” means to spread the news of the saving power and sanctifying Lordship of Jesus Christ.
3. We believe that the best way to do this is to plant the church within each and every one of the world’s peoples.
4. We believe that this unique, “pioneer,” church planting activity is the most fundamental goal of missions. We are encouraged by the fact that a broad consensus of mission scholars and leaders is in agreement with this conviction.
5. We believe there are ample evangelical resources in the world community (i.e., 147 congregations per group to be reached!) to make a serious attempt to plant the church within every people by the year 2000, and that such a goal for the year 2000 is therefore a reasonable goal to work and pray for.
6. We believe this task is thus more readily within our grasp than ever in history, and that the very end of history may therefore be near.
7. We believe this task is not marginal or secondary, but the primary and preeminent task of the Church for all of those who are children of Abraham by faith, those who are already enjoying the blessing of God in the redemption that is in Christ.
8. This means believers from all nations and peoples everywhere in the world, everywhere there is already a well-established Christian movement, can be expected to be involved. (By no means does this rule out the participation of Western believers in this task.)
9. We believe, finally, that the question of the wholehearted pursuit of the duties involved in this task is the acid test of faith for any Christian group, and that the very well-being of a blessed nation is dependent upon the sharing of that blessing in a serious, obedient, effective, comprehensive way.

B. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

1. We are convinced that if this is to happen, profound mission renewal will have to take place on a grand scale—in all evangelical communities around the world. We have concluded that what is necessary in the United States must be somewhat of the proportions of a widespread movement, not just the project of any one organization. Stop

and listen! It is already happening! To be a movement, people say, “We're doing what others are doing” (even though there may be many small divergences in materials between the two groups).

2. To generate a true movement, we believe that no single event or campaign will be sufficient, but that a new all-year, year-after-year pattern is necessary.

3. While we believe it is neither necessary nor desirable for initiatives in its build-up stage to be centralized, nevertheless, for such a movement to come into being, a “concert” of decentralized efforts will be much more powerful than a great number of totally independent and dissimilar efforts.

4. We are sure that the primary basis of such a movement must be the local congregation. We do feel it will be helpful if local congregations can be encouraged and assisted by an external “Network.” Such a Network could be a denomination, an already existing renewal movement within a denomination, or some one of many respected para-church ministries with which a given congregation is in close touch. We will assume that each Network will be, nationally, on the order of 100 congregations.

5. We conclude that a movement is most likely to occur if there can be a consortium of such entities working separately, but consciously and supportively in parallel, without the mixing of constituencies.

6. We must concentrate on raising up hope, vision, dedication, and clarification of purpose. To do this, we must recruit people for the task and also funds to support the cause. We regard the local congregation as the normal and the best channel for all giving and going elicited in this movement.

7. At the same time, we see three types of essential structures in cooperation: a) local congregations, b) attending “networks” upon which they normally rely for coordination and updating, and c) certain “Neutral Crucial” functions which are performed by neutral agencies serving everyone, assisting the autonomous networks to efficiently do their job. (In Appendix D is a suggested list often such spheres of need. For practical reasons, these crucial, little-understood entities must both be non-profit and also avoid competing for funds from the sources of income of the various networks.)

8. In order to more decisively assure the existence and vitality of these “Neutral Crucial” support activities, it is planned that the Consortium (of networks)—that is, the central office of the Mission 2000 movement—will receive via the networks \$15.50 of the modest, one-time-only registration fee of \$17.50 given by each individual at the grass-roots who enrolls in the campaign. It is well to note that these funds going to the Consortium are the only funds which will go outside of the structure and budgeted giving of the local congregation. They are less than 12% of the total—88% goes to the local congregation. (See Appendix E, Measurable Expectations of Response.) The \$17.50 registration fee has three components: (a) \$15.00 goes to the “Neutral Crucials”; (b) \$.50 goes to Consortium overhead expenses; and (c) \$2.00 is retained by the networks to cover the cost of the registration packet. 9. We do not believe it is realistic for Mission 2000 to be the dominant concern of a local congregation all year. We do believe, however, that a home visitation effort two months of each year is practical for the Cooperating Congregation, in addition to a regular, once-a-month meeting of a “Mission Fellowship” group during the ten intervening months

C. LONG-RANGE GOALS

1. In close relation to the “Underlying Convictions” we have already stated above, we believe that the coming of Christ was not only the central event of history but also that the character of His ministry demonstrates to us the essential meaning of His command “As My Father has sent me, even so send I you.” Specifically: He came and lived among us, teaching us by word and deed, in general respecting the cultural tradition of the people (except where its practices proved to be religiously phony or morally and ethically reprehensible) and confronting the nation with the ultimate authority of the Kingdom of God. He gathered repentant and believing followers, taught them, worked with them, sent them out to their own people, and eventually to other nations. This is essentially what a pioneer missionary does.
2. We believe that the goal of His final commission (Matt. 28:18), for any given people group, is thus most easily and reliably measured by the example of what He Himself in this respect did. We agree with the broad spectrum of mission leaders brought together by the Lausanne Committee at Chicago ’82 when they defined this long-range goal of Christ's Great Commission as the “reaching of unreached people groups.”
3. This then defines the high priority: we must go to all remaining unreached peoples, some 17,000, and establish in their midst, in cooperation with the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, a people movement that is “a viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement.” This, we believe, is what Jesus did for the Jewish nation. It was and is the Biblical definition of “being a blessing.”

D. INTERMEDIATE OBJECTIVES

1. We recognize that the “reaching of an unreached people” is the most important measurable goal, and that this should be achieved by the year 2000.
2. In order to do that, we assume that the last unreached group must be “engaged” by a mission task force no later than 1995.
3. We recognize that intermediate objectives must include (a) renewed congregations, (b) committed individuals who stay home to keep the cause alive, and (c) missionaries who go to do the work at the “front line,” whether the people group they attempt to reach is found at home or abroad, or both.
4. The following table shows that to enter as many as 2000 new groups per year beginning in 1988, certain intermediate objectives must be met. These are eminently feasible, assuming that a movement can be launched and that churches in other countries help.

"MISSION 2000" - A PROJECTION

By Year	Peoples Engaged		Frontier Missionaries		Annual Cost (in millions)		Support Teams	
	New	Total	New	Total	New	Total	New	Total
1987	1,000	1,000	4,000	4,000	\$50	\$50	4,000	4,000
1988	2,000	3,000	8,000	12,000	\$100	\$150	8,000	12,000
1989	2,000	5,000	8,000	20,000	\$100	\$250	8,000	20,000
1990	2,000	7,000	8,000	28,000	\$100	\$350	8,000	28,000
1991	2,000	9,000	8,000	36,000	\$100	\$450	8,000	36,000
1992	2,000	11,000	8,000	44,000	\$100	\$550	8,000	44,000
1993	2,000	13,000	8,000	52,000	\$100	\$650	8,000	52,000
1994	2,000	15,000	8,000	60,000	\$100	\$750	8,000	60,000
1995	2,000	17,000	8,000	68,000	\$100	\$850	8,000	68,000

(See Appendix A for detail of estimates and assumptions.)

E. THE YEARLY CYCLE

1. The yearly cycle of the Mission 2000 movement consists of two major monthly meetings during a two-month annual campaign period, plus a monthly meeting in each of the remaining ten months of the year, making a total of 12 monthly meetings of a new local "Mission Fellowship," which is a new structure to most present congregations. Earlier in this century it was common in local congregations for there to be women's, men's and young people's "Missionary Societies." Recently, the renowned missiologist Donald A. McGavran, in his article, "A Giant Step in Christian Mission" (International Journal of Frontier Missions, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1984) has called for the restoration of these local mission societies. Since the phrase "mission societies" is nowadays used to refer to sending agencies, we have suggested the phrase "Mission Fellowships."
2. This Mission Fellowship meeting is distinctly different from, and is in addition to, the meeting of a congregational "Mission Committee," which makes financial, personnel and policy decisions. The Mission Fellowship, by contrast, will become the focus, the popular expression, and the carrier vehicle of mission vision in the local church. Such a meeting can be started in any congregation whenever it is deemed feasible.
3. Many materials are already available for the enhancement and enrichment of this meeting. Among others, a monthly audio-visual in three forms is planned: 1) as a set of slides with sound accompaniment, 2) as a videotape in various formats, and 3) as a 16mm film version for use in large gatherings. Each network will likely want to provide a monthly bulletin as well.
4. It is not expected that every member of a local congregation will be involved in the Mission Fellowship. Attendance at the Fellowship meetings will be especially promoted during the annual two-month campaign period and throughout the year on a less intensive basis by the Mission Renewal Teams. (See F-4 below.)
5. Crucial to the Mission 2000 movement is the care and feeding of those who respond to the visitation program during the campaign period. Vision-building will take place

principally through the vehicle of the monthly Mission Fellowship meeting just mentioned.

F. THE TERMS OF AGREEMENT

1. One level of agreement is national. We contemplate a minimum of 30 national “networks,” each of which is capable of enlisting a minimum of 100 “Coordinating Congregations.” This national level of agreement is between the leaders of a given Network constituency and the central office of the Mission 2000 Consortium. Membership in the Consortium implies acceptance and adherence to certain non-negotiable common denominators, such as the definition of unreached peoples, the use of the net \$15.50 registration fee, etc.
2. Each national network will make agreements with its own leaders in an average of ten regional locations.
3. Each regional office will deal with ten local “Coordinating Congregations,” which are the principal operational bases of responsibility of the Mission 2000 movement.
4. Each Coordinating Congregation will be responsible for ten Mission Renewal Teams, the two or three members of each team constituting the nucleus of the monthly Mission Fellowship referred to above. These Renewal Teams can come from, and work in, congregations other than the Coordinating Congregation with which, as a team, they are affiliated. That is, one larger church can be the center for three or four smaller churches, each of which may have only one MRT at work in its membership. Or, a smaller church can be the Coordinating Congregation relating to teams in several other congregations that are larger or smaller.
5. Members of each Mission Renewal Team will have signed on for a stipulated number of “seed plantings”—e.g., presentations to specific individuals in a home visit. As in the Parable of the Soils, the team's goal for the number of individuals to be visited is 30, 60, or 100, so to speak. Some will accomplish more than others. For the sake of evaluating the amount of materials to be produced, etc., we will assume that on the average each Mission Renewal Team (in, say, 15 to 25 visits) will contact 40 individuals. This fairly heavy assignment will be undertaken by only the very highly committed.
6. This “Seed Planting” activity does not absolutely require a visit to the home, although that is assumed to be standard. The initial goal is to register as many as possible and to distribute the inspiring vision-building materials in the registration packet. Each Team can make its own plans and try its own ideas. A team may choose to give a thorough “Presentation” in a home meeting, where six or seven “Simeon” types are invited all at once. (“Simeons” are those already “sold” on missions.) It is also possible that a serious presentation and plea for registrations could take place in some Sunday School class. The main idea is 1) to present people with the exciting challenge of the Mission 2000 campaign and 2) to enlist them in the development of a monthly fellowship in their own setting. Later they will be introduced to the other goals of the movement, such as the daily devotional discipline of the Frontier Fellowship.

G. THE LOCAL PLAN OF ACTION

1. For many of the people drawn into the Mission 2000 movement, their very first discovery of the world of renewed mission vision will occur when a Mission 2000 Renewal Team visits their home. At that time they will hear a presentation, will be shown

some exciting materials to ponder, and will be invited to pay a once-and-for-all \$17.50 Registration Fee to become official, permanent participants in the Mission 2000 Campaign. If they register, the materials shown them, which constitute the “Registration Packet,” become theirs to ponder further. This kind of presentation with its early financial hurdle will fairly accurately determine the true level of their concern at that time.

2. Which individuals should be visited? In the first round, they are the “Simeons” (of Luke 2) who are definitely in the “looking, believing, hoping” category. Fundamental to the Mission 2000 Campaign is the Parable of the Four Soils, in which it is presumed that the farmer is definitely looking for soil which is likely to be reproductive. Rather than just spending our efforts, we seek to multiply them by deliberately and prayerfully enlisting first those who will be most likely to help with further enlistment and renewal efforts. Thus it is strategic to assume that the people to be visited first in any area or group of congregations are those who will welcome the goals and objectives of Mission 2000 and will be delighted by the solid base of additional information about “what God is doing around the world.” (See the first chapter in C. Peter Wagner’s *On the Crest of the Wave*).

3. In terms of the four responses the parable describes, it is possible that of the 40 people carefully chosen to be visited, the following responses will occur:

Pathway: ten will not actually be ready and will decline any involvement at that time;

Shallow soil: ten will respond momentarily, to the point of paying the \$17.50 registration fee and receiving their packet of materials;

Thorny soil: ten will also participate in the annual “Mission Update” study program to which all who register will be invited. And...

Reproductive soil: ten will agree, in addition, to become part of additional Mission Renewal Teams in the second round of outreach (“Operation Andrew”). See Appendix E for details.

4. But the long-term primary goal of the visitation campaign is to enlist people, heart and soul, in the monthly Mission Fellowship. It is this meeting which is to be the central source of materials and expanding interest constituting the foundation of the renewal movement. Area and regional meetings along network lines or across networks in “Concerts of Prayer” may or may not take place. And of course some people will be blessed and inspired who do not come to the monthly Mission Fellowship meeting. But the central force and backbone of the Mission 2000 Renewal is understood to be the Mission Fellowship.

H. THE NATIONAL TIMETABLE

1. It is envisioned that initially only three to five national networks will make up the Mission 2000 Consortium. Their representation will initially constitute the corporate board of the Consortium.

2. At that point, an additional five to ten other networks (denominations, para-church organizations, etc.) will be invited to join an enlarged Consortium. Each new network will, of course, need to agree with the basic concepts and principles already established by the founding consortium. Representatives of the new networks will be added to the board, the earlier group becoming, say, the executive committee.

3. In the third stage, as many as 30 nationwide networks will become consortium members. This number is considered the minimal essential level of viability for a “movement” to take place.
4. The early “unveiling” of the Mission 2000 plan took place at the annual meeting of the (U.S.) Association of Church Mission Committees in July 1985. Some pilot “Coordinating Congregations” have since tested the program. If all goes as planned, we hope that by December 1986 30 networks will be actively considering, if not already involved.

APPENDIX A: FOOTNOTES TO THE TABLE “MISSION 2000—A PROJECTION” (See section D in the main body.)

Underlying the table in section D are the following assumptions and estimates:

1. There are 17,000 unreached peoples—with no indigenous church yet.
2. We seek “A Church for Every People by the Year 2000.”
3. These unreached peoples contain and seal off half the world's population, and average 150,000 individuals in each group.
4. It will take a minimum of two couples five years to reach each people.
5. We can expect 4,000 new missionaries of this type by the beginning of 1987.
6. The necessary increase of the mission force will be gradual, a rate of 8,000 more missionaries per year, beginning in 1988.
7. It will cost an average of \$12,500 per person per year for these new frontier missionaries, many from other countries.
8. A “Support Team” = 100 people giving an average of \$10.42 per month.
9. Thus each new Support Team enrolled can support, completely, one new missionary.

APPENDIX B: THE CONTENTS OF THE REGISTRATION PACKET

The content of the registration packet is of no essential concern to the Mission 2000 Consortium, other than that it be value received for the \$2 collected in the Registration Fee, and that it be relevant to the basic vision of the movement.

In most cases, it will be the Network involved that will want to choose from the mass-produced, low-priced materials which are being used by other networks. They will also want to put in materials of their own choice.

It may well be that many Networks will see the current “Neutral Crucial” (to which \$15 of the \$17.50 Registration Fee goes) as an added, exciting attraction in their network, and will be happy to have the work of that Neutral Crucial mentioned somewhere in the packet. In other cases the current “Neutral Crucial” can go completely unmentioned.

Following is the kind of packet which might be made up, and which, delivered to the Sponsoring Church, would fit into the allowed \$2 portion of the registration fee:

1. Sample copy of World Christian Magazine.
2. Sample copy of the Frontier Fellowship Global Prayer Digest.
3. Poster: “The Unreached Peoples of the World.”
4. Booklet: “Look at What God’s Doing.”
5. A list of materials at a healthy discount, costing a good deal more than \$2:
 - a) From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya, \$14.95/\$10
 - b) On the Crest of the Wave, \$5.95/\$4.00

- c) World Christian Magazine, \$12/\$9
- d) Global Prayer Digest, \$8/\$6
- e) World Christian Encyclopedia, \$125/\$42.50
- f) International Journal of Frontier Missions, \$15/\$10
- g) Evangelical Missions Quarterly, \$10.50/\$9

(Note: The potential saving on this brief list is more than \$100. A whole catalog of items, discounted to campaign registrants, will also be available.)

APPENDIX C: THE BASIC INGREDIENTS OF THE MONTHLY MISSION FELLOWSHIP MEETING

This is to be a meeting for prayer and inspirational education about the mission cause. Provisions are already being made for the highest-quality, monthly motion pictures on low-cost videotape. Small groups can get the basic equipment and have their own tapes updated for \$1 each month at cooperating Christian bookstores and/or Consortium offices. Soon 8mm tapes (similar to audio tapes) will be available. They will cost far less and can either be sent out on a "one way" basis for about \$4 per month, or updated in the way mentioned. The same materials will be available in both the form of slides and 16mm film, depending upon the option selected.

Monthly printed materials will also be made available (perhaps by the different Networks), in addition to the already existing monthly Global Prayer Digest, which is even at this point backed by 36 different organizations, with 22 different covers (and 8-page customized sections).

Many monthly fellowships will, among other things, take in the "loose change" offerings of those who are participating in the Frontier Fellowship daily-prayer discipline (a take-off from the widespread Asian Christian "handful of rice for missions" pattern).

However, these meetings will be expected to follow widely different formats, and we do not see any great value in trying to standardize a single pattern.

APPENDIX D: THE TEN "NEUTRAL CRUCIALS" (See points 7-8 in section B of the main body.)

Certain crucial functions are deemed essential to an authentic mission renewal movement. They are also characterized by the fact that they cannot readily be in a direct fund-raising mode and—at least in their early stage—need financial assistance. A detailed treatment of ten such needs may be found in the Jan. '84 (Vol 1:1) issue of the International Journal of Frontier Missions. Each of them has been summarized in a phrase below:

- 1) A widespread daily devotional discipline emphasizing the completion of the task.
- 2) The Concerts of Prayer "for spiritual awakening and world evangelization."
- 3) The Global Mapping Project, which can feed the work of countless agencies around the world.
- 4) Certain strategically missing mass media.
- 5) A groundswell, international student mission movement.
- 6) The strategic "enrichment" of certain existing programs and customs.
- 7) The engineering of a new pattern in higher education which will routinely locate college students overseas half of each undergraduate year and which will also involve

them in a work-study program that will prevent them from emerging with debts that keep them out of Christian work.

8) A new missionary associate lifestyle (“Senders”).

9) An international network of cooperative mission centers.

10) A “Mission 2000” type of promotional coalition of Christian organizations.

APPENDIX E: MEASURABLE EXPECTATIONS OF RESPONSE (See point 8 in section B of the main body.)

Even if only ten of the 40 people who are visited by each renewal team are willing to go into a second round of outreach (“Operation Andrew”), the potential can be seen to be enormous. The chart below shows the “Operation Andrew” generation as well as the “Operation Simeon” generation. Note that 100% success (e.g., 40, 30, 20, 10) will multiply the fruits of the first round (“Operation Simeon”) by ten, while 50% success will be five times as large, and even 10% success (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1, resulting from visits to 40 people) will be equally as large, thus doubling the overall results.

As for financial response, “minimal local church budget increase” is based upon the rough conservative assumption that registrants in categories 1a and 1b may not be inspired to increase their missions giving to their local churches at all, while those in categories 1c and 1d may well be willing to give about an average of \$10.00 more per month. That is one of the matters covered in the visit—reconsideration of present missions giving. The “loose change” offerings are expected from only ten of the forty people visited, and by experience will average out to about \$8.00 per month. People will not “register” each year, but all other funds listed here (“via local churches”) will likely be year-after-year giving.

My Pilgrimage in Mission

IBMR, April 1995

Frontiers in Mission, 22-25

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

I am deeply ashamed about the disastrous breakdown of morality in my country. Americans are world leaders in Bibles in homes and people in church, but are also world leaders in our divorce rate, illegitimate births, prison population, hand-gun killings, teen suicide rate, pornography export. I am ashamed. Our government spends millions in tax money to promote our deadly export of cigarettes (without warning labels). By that process alone Americans kill more people around the world than all the wars put together. And we provide most of the weapons as well.

I am ashamed but not puzzled. A minority of our population has been a major world force in exporting our faith. Our churches overseas don't have a high divorce rate—nor as exaggerated an emphasis on individual freedom. But we have been unable to learn from our overseas brothers in Christ. In our country we have enormous concern about the breakdown of our families (which is a global scandal). And from this many other evils derive. But how will we wake up to the loss of the extended family if we can't listen to the overseas church? Morality begins at home. But our schools, clinics, even congregations wean us away from our families. We need to be “free” from parents and even spouses.

How did I get these ideas?

Early factors in counter-cultural perspective

Don't blame it on my parents. They were wonderful people, faithful and devout. Loyal Presbyterians, my parents were also strongly influenced by the interdenominational Christian Endeavor movement.

At some point I realized that my faith must be more than just inherited, and began to examine all sorts of other beliefs that were not a part of the inter-denominationalism exhibited by Christian Endeavor—Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. I can still remember the look of dismay on my mother's face when she found me reading the Book of Mormon.

Further cultural loosening up took place over the next few years through World War II. The Bible itself demanded a total parting of the ways with the assumptions undergirding inherited culture. While in high school, I was involved in a sort of a Protestant version of the Jesuit order. The Navigators, which today has 4,000 members in 94 countries, was strong on discipline and Bible study, and involved serious daily and weekly commitments.

Attending the California Institute of Technology—all but the first year under the auspices of the Navy (a cross-cultural decontextualizing experience in itself)—was a time of radical questioning of the social order in which I was born. Already scientifically inclined, I gained there a much deeper acquaintance with the wonders of nature (through

Nobel prize-winner professors, etc.). Later, in seminary all this fused into a permanent merger of science and theology.

All of these influences were in one way or another distinctly “counter-cultural.” And CE, Navigators, Evangelicalism were all globally oriented. In that milieu it is not surprising that I came across one of the earliest anthropology books written by an American evangelical missionary—Gordon H. Smith. But that only whetted my appetite. A hefty 150-page chapter on anthropology by Smalley and Reyburn (in an American Scientific Affiliation book) made clear to me that anthropology, of all academic disciplines, offered more to a boy from the “Evangelical ghetto” than any other field of study.

My parents (and others) thought I would never settle down to a career. (The war gave me college tuition that helped me study in eight schools beyond college.) Would I continue in engineering? Then why, as a college graduate, go back to a Christian college to learn Greek? Or to a Bible school to study their unique method of studying the Bible? Why take two years of seminary if I was not going to be a minister? Why did I shift to an M.A. at Columbia University in Teaching English as a Second Language? (My family knew that I had initiated a movement to send evangelical teachers to a certain closed country, as well as opening the way for my older brother to head up an engineering school there.) Wycliffe’s Summer Institute of Linguistics seemed the logical next step in preparation for me to be a missionary. Why did I decide to go on for a Ph.D. at Cornell? There I majored in structural linguistics, minoring in cultural anthropology and mathematical statistics. Only then, because of my anthropology studies, did I go back to Princeton Seminary to become a “white witchdoctor.” After all, isn’t it the “witch doctor” that has the most influence in most societies, at least in non-Western societies? In other words, I concluded that ordained ministers possess incredible leadership opportunities.

One of my professors at Princeton (Samuel Moffett) at that point was also serving as interim personnel secretary at the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. He told my wife and me about a position in Guatemala where the field request was specifically for a couple where the man was ordained and had graduate training in linguistics and anthropology, and whose wife was a registered nurse. You would have thought that that would have made the decision for us, and it almost did.

At exactly the same time, because of my degree and the nature of my Ph.D. dissertation, I was asked to join the faculty at MIT to help work in the mechanical translation of language—but only if I could promise more than two years. I was still very interested in the problems of language learning (as an aspect of the global mission challenge), and while at Princeton had worked out a *Contextual Lexicon* of the Hebrew text of Genesis. In 1956 I gave a paper on the subject of vocabulary statistics at the Linguistic Society of America, and co-authored one with Charles Fritsch (a Princeton Seminary professor) in relation to Hebrew at the Society for Biblical Literature. It was a wrenching decision to turn my back on such a long-standing interest to go to Guatemala, but the “mission industry” did not as seriously support background academic studies; between mere academics and mission I chose the latter.

Before leaving for Guatemala we went through a really marvelous six-months-long “graduate school of mission” designed by our denominational board. This was one of the most valuable experiences of my life. In that period we went through some inner-city, coal-mining, and other “sand-papery” activities, but we also had some really

straightforward studies in a superb library of global mission, and we were exposed weekly to serious outside lecturers ranging from Communists, Muslims, Hindus, etc., to mission statesmen like Kenneth Scott Latourette and even seminary presidents like Henry Pitt Van Dusen. The formal Ecumenical tradition was made familiar to us. Board policies and backgrounds were explicated. Interpersonal relationships were explored at the same time.

All of these experiences were little more than a prolonged prelude to our even more drastic cultural shakeup within the world of an “aboriginal” culture of the so-called New World, specifically the Maya of Guatemala.

Ten years in Guatemala

My wife and I and our budding family were sent to work in what was considered by our mission board to be one of its “conservative” fields. But after my studies and all the decontextualizing influences through which we had gone, I’m sure we seemed liberal to most of the other missionaries. We precipitated a major rejection by some when, after a great deal of thought, we tried to promote the idea that the pastoral leaders in our mountain tribal churches ought to be trained in both theology and medicine (in view of that same span of functions of the native shaman). We also wanted to give certain minimal modern-day medical skills to local shaman as a means of protecting the people from careless medicine as well as to become friends with them. That idea encountered hopeless opposition. But we did train our budding pastors in various kinds of business activities that enabled them to be itinerant or at least would not tie them to the soil. Although bi-vocational ministry was pervasive in Latin America, it was a pattern often opposed by expatriate missionaries.

A fundamental insight of another missionary, James H. Emery (whom I had known in seminary), pointed out that residential seminary training, so prized by our (historically recent) Presbyterian tradition back home, was clearly a mixed blessing in rural areas where full-time professional ministry did not readily fit (does it anywhere?). I assisted him in bringing about an institutional revolution in the existing “seminary.” This made seminary studies available to the Mayas after they completed a government sponsored adult education program which we also set up and supervised nation-wide with the cooperation of all the major missions.

At Mexico City in 1963 I shared some of our experiences with James Hopewell, secretary of the WCC’s Theological Education Fund. This was while working for a few days as a translator at the first meeting of the transformed International Missionary Council, now the Division of Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. (Years later I was asked by the editor of the *International Review of Mission* to write an article on the IMC meeting in Ghana where the decision to merge with the WCC had taken place.) Hopewell decided to put some of the TEF money in our experiment in Guatemala, and later wrote a chapter for a hefty book I edited in 1969, *Theological Education by Extension*. The TEF also financed the sending out of 1,000 copies of this book to schools all over the world.

Meanwhile, on our second furlough (in Pasadena) I was a visiting professor at the newly founded School of World Mission at Fuller, sharing insights from the theological education experiments in Guatemala. After being with Donald McGavran (of *Bridges of God* fame) and Alan Tippett (who had just finished his classic *Solomon Islands Christianity* as a WCC study) for that year, I was urged to stay on. I was reluctant to do

so because there was so much to do in Guatemala, but leaders in my PC(USA) mission board decided to assign me to stay on. Was it because they wanted to know just what this new burgeoning school was teaching? Was it because they were aware of the negative reactions we experienced in Guatemala? Or was it because they realized that in this position what had begun in a corner in Guatemala might influence the whole world of missions? Again, it took some soul searching and a willingness to go in a new direction in terms of the overall cause.

From local to global

While on furlough that year at the new mission school at Fuller, I was also Executive Secretary of the Association of Theological Schools in Latin America, Northern Region (an accrediting association). In my travels in the 17 northern countries of Latin America I had a lot of opportunity to talk up the off-campus education of pastors. I was invited further south, speaking to groups of theological educators in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and in Brazil. At the end of my week in Brazil, the 65 or so who attended decided to start an association of theological schools in extension.

Ten years later I was invited back to speak at their annual meeting and to note their progress in theological education by extension (TEE). Again, at their 20th anniversary I was invited back, but this time I discovered that they had dropped out the phrase “by extension” in their title, and the basic ideas in their founding succumbed in a reversion to the residential tradition—even though all of the roaring growth of evangelicalism in Latin America consisted of movements which first selected charismatic leaders (and then trained them) rather than first training young people (and then hoping those young people would grow up to become leaders). Such is the influence of tradition! In the ten years at Fuller I met missionaries from many traditions, with loads of diverse grass-roots experience in many lands. This period was for me personally an incomparable education. In those first ten growing years of the school students could not matriculate without at least three years of field experience. The result was as if I was the student and the students were the teachers! It fell to me to teach TEE, statistics, and the history of missions. I was especially delighted with the history assignment which introduced me to a vast additional array of new insights. This became my major focus. Since seminary days I had been a disciple-at-a-distance of Kenneth Scott Latourette. My job now required an overall perspective of both historical and contemporary global realities. On the latter level I worked with Gerald Anderson to establish a scholarly society (the American Society of Missiology) which would bring together “Catholic, Conciliar, and Conservative” streams of mission scholarship.

I say “conservative,” although it would appear that, historically, the pietist-evangelical stream of Christendom has been anything but conservative. This actuality of un-conservative “conservatism” is revealed by the fact that I had no trouble at the IFMA/EFMA Greenlake ’71 conference signing up 65 evangelical mission leaders as charter members of this new scholarly society in which Roman Catholics were scheduled to have a prominent place.

For the first three years of the ASM I was the secretary and de facto business manager of the society’s journal, *Missiology, an International Review*. This journal started out with a bang, in part because I was able to negotiate a merger with the 19-year old *Practical Anthropology* journal (and its 3,000 subscribers), a journal which had all

along been an enterprising and sprightly product of what you might call radical evangelicals in the world of missions—many of them protégées of Eugene Nida whom I had followed with great respect ever since I had first met him twenty years earlier as a professor in the Wycliffe Bible Translators’ Summer Institute of Linguistics in 1948.

For an additional three years I was unable to shake off the business manager’s job, but it was not difficult in view of my experience for some years in the publishing firm called The William Carey Library which had been founded to assist in the publication of theses and dissertations that were pouring out of the Fuller School of World Mission in ever greater volume. Although we took a deep breath before starting this publishing firm, it was a feasible undertaking for a person with an engineering degree, experience in small business development in Guatemala, plus teaching accounting both in Spanish and English. Little did I know that all this experience and much more would soon be required.

Two disturbing thoughts

The most momentous upheaval in my adult life came as result of a slowly growing awareness of two serious limitations in contemporary mission strategy. First, pioneer missionaries in the Protestant tradition had become planters and then caretakers and then, finally, not much more than spectators in a vast global network of “national” church movements. It was their pride and glory. At the same time, secondly, mission agencies from the West almost uniformly failed to pass on a pioneer missionary vision to the “younger churches.” Missionaries were now wonderfully helpful to national churches that had been the product of earlier pioneer work; they were not now helping those national churches to do their own pioneer mission work elsewhere.

The Melanesian Brotherhood, mentioned in Tippetts’ incomparable analysis of the Solomon Islands was, for example, an unusual event in mission experience, historically. The very concept of “Third World Missions” was not yet discussed very widely. In 1981 I wrote an article for the *International Review of Mission* entitled “The New Missions and the Mission of the Church,” referring to the sprouting up of new mission-sending structures in the so-called mission lands. I was surprised that the keen eye of the editor, in pointing out certain details, also revealed in our early correspondence a total misunderstanding of the concept.

The hue and cry of the major denominational missions was to turn things over to national leaders and go home, or continue on in a very passive, humble basis. But, practically no one was concerned about the still untouched ethnic pockets which, in aggregate, amounted to a significant global reality—over half the world population. The theory that local churches will reach out successfully across cultural boundaries to near neighbors, however plausible at first glance, is all too often the least likely thing to happen—due to almost inevitable resentments at that level. Still needed are those who come from afar.

Doing something about it

After three years at the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission I was asked to add an updating chapter to the seventh volume of Latourette’s *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, the unreduced version of which came out separately as a little book entitled *The Twenty Five Unbelievable Years*. There I observed that although

between 1945 and 1969 the global colonial world had dramatically collapsed, the “younger churches” were for the most part left standing on their feet. The member denominations of the NCCCUSA had provided 75% of all American missionaries in 1925, but by 1969 far less than 10%, even though the total number (deriving from many new sources) was at an all-time high. As Latourette had generalized, vitality is usually accompanied by profusion and confusion.

In 1974, the first of the Lausanne congresses took place in Switzerland. I was asked to present a paper focusing on the remaining task of mission. In those days most mission writers were still talking in terms of countries or major religious groups. My focus at Lausanne was on the subtle barriers that subdivide human society at a vastly more detailed level than is implied by broad categories. (People used to think of “Chinese” as a single language when it would be equally reasonable to think of “European” as a language.)

Also by 1974 (after two years discussing it), the fledgling American Society of Missiology, had unofficially launched a “Call” for a meeting in 1980 comparable to the 1910 meeting at Edinburgh, a global-level meeting of mission executives focused on finishing the task. It brought together an even larger number of mission agency delegates, fully one third of them from the Third World, under the banner World Consultation on Frontier Missions, and under the “watch- word” of “A Church for Every People by the Year 2000.”

Looking back we see that a major shift of attention in mission circles has taken place as perceptions of the ethnic realities around the world have brought into focus “unreached peoples” no longer “unoccupied territories” (the 1910 phrase). Very little in the way of “territories” remained totally unoccupied by 1974, but literally thousands of “nations” (in the ethnic sense) were still sealed off by language and culture from any existing witness—and were not even on the agenda of scholarly and agency strategic dialogue.

The final plunge

By 1976 my own conscience would not let me continue as merely a professor. My wife and I felt we had to leave the scintillating and rewarding atmosphere of the Fuller School of World Mission and attempt to establish a major base for promoting and focusing increased efforts on outreach to those thousands of “frontier” groups within which there was not yet anything like a “national” church. The founding of the U.S. Center for World Mission and its associated university in 1976 and 1977, respectively, pitched us into a whole new world of pressure and anxiety and uncertainty.

Making the decision in the first place brought to mind the thought that “Risks are not to be taken on the basis of their probability of success but in terms of the potential of their result.” What we attempted in 1976 had little chance of success, but if successful carried high importance. That was enough to go on. This change from a settled professorship into a totally new, unsponsored project requiring millions of dollars was the hinge of our lives. One of our daughters came up with the thought that “Faith is not the confidence that God will do what you want Him to do for you. Faith is the conviction that you can do what He wants done and leave the consequences with Him.” At no point in the years of struggle to pay for a 33-acre campus was I able to feel confident that we would succeed. What I never doubted for a second was that our efforts, whatever the risk,

were worth investing in even the possibility of success. I recalled what Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, had said in my hearing years earlier, “Never do what others can do or will do, if there are things God wants done that others either can’t do or won’t do.”

Across the years we have spawned many programs, but the more important growth has been in seasoned and dedicated members of the religious order (The Frontier Mission Fellowship) which is the basic entity guarding and governing our strategies. Without these real people and their long-term commitment and vitality the property for which we struggled so long would be worth nothing.

Now, eighteen years (and quite a few miracles) later, we feel deeply gratified by the small role we have had in the much larger swirl of God’s initiatives around the world focusing on the remaining frontiers of witness. All four of my children are occupied in global mission, on three continents. In all this we have constantly underestimated the number of people who are responsive to information about the work of God across the world. We have been sponsoring a 3-semester-unit study, offering it in 80 places in the USA per year. Over 22,000 have taken this 15-week program. The 944-page textbook associated with this course has topped the 100,000 mark, being used in over 100 colleges and seminaries. As a follow-on we are now in the midst of preparing a 32-semester condensed seminary-plus-global mission curriculum, the first part of which is ready and is being used in both colleges and seminaries. Designed for off-campus use, this will, we hope, be better than nothing for thousands of pastors around the world—who have nothing.

Sending and survival

To “Declare His glory among the nations” is not a technically definable blueprint for action, but it is sufficiently clear in its necessary outworking to allow a truly amazing global fellowship of literally hundreds of agencies linked eagerly, for example, in the unprecedented network of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement, an enterprise with a leadership no longer dominated by Westerners, a movement with a vision that outstrips that of most Western entities! For Archbishop Temple the younger churches were “the great new fact of our time.” Now it is the mission initiatives of the younger churches.

As with most of the others writing in this series, the most significant “lump” for me to digest in my lifetime has been the cross-cultural experience of a missionary career. On the basis of that experience I have concluded that the Christian tradition down through the ages could not have survived had it not attempted to “give away its faith”—that is, transcend the cultural institutionalization of its own experience in the process of mission outreach, the missionary process of sharing *faith across cultures*.

That is, with other writers in this series, in particular H.D. Beeby, I am convinced that one of the most important functions of the missionary movement is to continuously rescue the faith itself from becoming lost through institutional and cultural evolution and absorption, and that this rescuing, renewing process is largely unintentional and unnoticeable—the by-product of earnest attempts at cross-cultural outreach. Western outreach, however small and pathetic in any absolute sense, has inevitably involved many church traditions in “contextualization,” the startling and astringent process of “distinguishing the leaven from the lump”—to employ Eugene Hillman’s metaphor. That process of trying to make our faith understandable cross-culturally has in many different

but vital ways pumped back into the home church a constantly renewed sense of what is, and what is not, the leaven. While a communal faith requires culture just as the crustaceans require a shell, *the life is not in the shell*.

Now, however, thanks in part to Lesslie Newbigin—and Beeby—I realize that the other end of contextualization is decontextualization. Unless we become as serious about re-discovering the true faith *in contrast to the assumptions of our own culture* we will trumpet an uncertain sound wherever else we go. But it is even more dangerous to us if we lose sight of the obligations of our faith and become unable to save ourselves. This is a case where we must (here at home) depend on the insights of our own cross-cultural workers, and yes, brothers and sisters from the other, “mission lands.” Frankly, I see the world church as being not just the result of missionary outreach but by now an essential element in the survival of the West itself.

Editorial Comment on De-westernization

Mission Frontiers, November-December 1996

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment64>

What I'm covering in this editorial:

1. De-Westernization, or where do we go with the scary subject of our last issue? That's the mammoth challenge of expecting new non-Western forms of Biblical faith within Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism which will likely not call themselves Christian.
2. What about the "Supplement" to the last issue?
3. A marvelous but confusing global map of the world's peoples—an explanation!
4. Many have asked about my wife's medical condition.
5. What happened at our 20th Anniversary Celebration?
6. Two books. One about Darwinism and design in nature. One about Jesus—which ties in amazingly with Item #1.
7. The upcoming conference on the 146 "Gateway People Clusters" —a true, global first. Too bad we couldn't have seen the need for this 100 years ago.

Dear Reader,

After the blockbuster issue raised in our last bulletin, should we now go on to something else? But, what in the world could follow that subject?

Wouldn't that be like trying to ignore an elephant in the living room? We can't escape it! That issue is still with us. It is the one subject we cannot brush off or sidestep.

What issue do I speak of? Well, in part, the idea of odd or even heretical movements becoming significant as the global Westernized Christian movement is rapidly stalling before the three major remaining blocs: Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Can heresies have silver linings, becoming orthodoxies tomorrow? Is this going to happen whether we recognize it or not?

Remember the Catholic leaders in Luther's day who devoutly hoped for so many years that Protestantism would fade out of the picture? Well, Protestantism is still a heresy to many Roman Catholics! (And vice versa.)

Here is a thought: Christian spin-offs with real, Biblical vitality don't go away merely by being labeled heresies. But they can change.

Can we live with heresies—or at least unorthodox theologies and emphases—even large, vigorous movements which may even spurn relations with us and our precious Western way of adapting the Bible?

But, just a minute. I don't want to ignore the list of items which I will cover in this editorial—as you see in the box in the next column. I have already started item number one:

Item #1. De-Westernization

What response are we getting from the last issue? One letter only is negative. It misreads the article, "Is an Explosion of Faith Coming to India?" to imply that when a

Hindu worshiper reduces the number of household idols he or she then can be considered Christian. The letter asks me to recant that position. Since I cannot imagine even taking such a position, I don't think "recant" is the right word. Furthermore, I did not even write the article.

At the opposite extreme are two letters from world famous missiologists.

C. Peter Wagner's warm letter says,

I'm typing this in Japan, stopping over on my way to Thailand. On the plane I read the Sept/Oct issue of Mission Frontiers which you modestly say is the most important issue of Mission Frontiers ever published. I agree! The information in that one issue rivals the information contained in any one missiological textbook I know of (possibly excluding McGavran's Understanding Church Growth) in potential implications for completing the Great Commission....

This matter is worth giving it time. If there is anything I can do to help move this innovation through the early adopter stage (where most of the flack will come) let me know.

Roger Greenway wrote:

I found the article, "Is an Explosion of Faith Coming to India?" in the Sept/Oct Issue to be fascinating. Let me explain why.

In 1960 I was flying on a DC-3 from Sri Lanka, where my wife and I were missionaries, to Madras, India. I was seated next to an American who was doing research on the subject of the "secret Christians" of India. He said that the amount of data he had uncovered far exceeded his expectations...

He claimed that the number of secret believers exceeded the number of church members...

They were people like "Rajan" in the article. They accepted the supremacy of Christ and the authority of the Bible, and met in small, secret groups for prayer and fellowship...

If back there in 1960 the researcher was even partially correct in his estimates...how many (secret believers) exist today? In the providence of God, the title of the article may be closer to the truth than we realize.

Other letters have enriched our understanding, and are mentioned in the Supplement (next item).

Item #2. The De-Westernization Supplement

This material adds a lot of excitement to the text of the last issue. Have you noticed how often we need to refer our readers to some additional sources, depending on their special interest. It is truly impossible to give depth to every subject we take up. But we want to give strings readers can pull to get additional insights. More and more this bulletin will be a strategic "index" readers can employ to explore further things of special interest to them. This is why we now have the full-page response form as an extra cover page.

Item #3. The Brilliant New Global Map Explained

Seventy thousand copies of a marvelous, brilliantly colored global map of the world's peoples (not countries) is now out and around. It is the collaboration of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and Global Mapping International. However, it is being made available through the cooperation of dozens of organizations, including ours.

Thus, for the first time in high quality color you can see plotted out the "peoples" of the world, not just the "countries" —10,657 peoples classified by John Gilbert of the Southern Baptist board into five different types of groups or peoples. (12,869 peoples, adding 2,206 additional peoples—as yet unclassified as to A, B, C, D, E status—are available on disk for \$2—see cover response page where you can order both the map and the disk.)

Even without the map, the breakdown you see in the box is a helpful way to look at the different peoples of the world.

[Note, incidentally, that all of our literature, *Mission Frontiers*, Perspectives Study Guide, mobilization materials, etc. use a different meaning for A, B, C, D, as referring to world population, not peoples:

A = believers—10% of world

B = nominal Christians—20%

C = exposed non-Christians—30%

D = (living within unreached peoples)—40%.

No problem since our scale refers to individuals not peoples.]

For those who already possess this map, a much more detailed explanation is available at no charge (see cover response page). Those ordering the map from us will receive the explanation automatically.

Item #4. My Wife's Health

Hundreds have written letters and we want to express our deep gratitude for them and for the avalanche of prayer. She has had two major operations in the last month and is in the hospital (22 Nov) still very weak. Unrelated, but far more serious is the diagnosis of "multiple myeloma" which is a very rare form of cancer (less than 1 of 10,000 cases of cancer) for which there is no known cure.

Please continue to pray.

Item #5. Our 20th Anniversary Celebration

This occurred right in the middle of all the turmoil about my wife's health (she sent faint greetings from her hospital bed in an informal video clip). We had a marvelous time and turnout, looking back over the past and into the future. For those many who sent greetings and regrets and anyone else interested, we have available a four-hour condensation on a single extended-play cassette. See cover response form. A picture story will be in the next issue of *Mission Frontiers*.

Item #6. Two Books

A. The Jesus I Never Knew

This is a superb display of what it takes to be a missionary—first you must de-contextualize your own form of the faith. Philip Yancey, in some ways a child of the '60s, invested thousands of hours in study and open and frank discussion with people in a

wide span of social strata. He is both humble and audacious with many an arresting phrase coupled with disarming personal honesty. He laments the superficiality of much of Christendom and yet holds on tight to the unshakeable meaning behind it all.

However, the main reason I bring this book to your attention is not merely because I have been stirred and blessed by it—as I have just started reading it—but because it is an outstanding example of what Christianity looks like to someone who is trying earnestly to struggle free from the wrapping paper of his own culture in order to see things in a truly fresh light.

This is what missionaries have to do—or their words will fall on deaf ears. Yancey is writing to a generation that, for a tortured moment at least, tried to reinvent civilization and throw off the assumptions of their given tradition, and in trying to do so proved the near impossibility of anything like complete de-contextualization.

In fact it was so difficult merely to throw out one's own culture that many of the flower children settled for American Indian patterns of dress and spirituality. The '60s were an astounding period of culture rejection accompanied by a wholesale, country-wide trek into the wilderness of world religions which has not left us—what with Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist temples arising all across America from day to day. We can't hide from this.

No, missionary contextualization (or de-Westernization) is crucial even if we are going to reach our own new generations. This book is a striking example of what it is going to take.

B. Darwin's Black Box

This is the second book I have not finished reading—but which I am already so excited about that I have to recommend it to you.

Both of these books are powerful. They are treasures. Either of them in the hands of a cross-cultural missionary is dynamite, since both of them significantly rise above human culture in what they focus upon. Together they probe the most asked questions in the world today: Who is Jesus? and What is the very reality science is studying? Each of these is a burning question in the educated spheres of the three major blocs with the least response to Christianity, that is, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Here is what this second book, by Professor Behe, does for you. Star Trek portrays spaceships so large that some of them are like small towns. In the real world we do not know of any such things, but we are beginning to recognize that the tiniest form of life—the cell—is an enormously complex “spaceship” employing navigational propellers as well as incredibly diverse internal structure including the redoubtable DNA molecule with its millions of component atoms. Too bad that humans are the wrong size to deal with this amazing and tiny world of life.

No one would ever suppose that the intricate design of a Star Trek spaceship was produced by non-intelligent natural processes. You can't get very far into this book (indeed a page or two in the appendix will suffice) without realizing with a flush of emotion that EACH of the “1,000s of millions of cells” in a tiny baby is fully as complicated as a Star Trek space ship—and equally as unlikely to have dumbly “evolved” apart from a planning process, that is, design.

This truly remarkable book is, yep, the work of a beer drinking highly secularized author. Yet, Dennis Prager dragged Behe into his talk show, I understand, which indicates that the Spiritual significance of this fascinating mass of detail is prominent.

Really, you can so easily get absorbed in this tiny “out of sight” world that looking up from the book is a withdrawal experience. Where have I been? I had a scientific education which I have been building on ever since. No book has ever laid it out so clearly as this one—that the real world includes a very small world of designed complexity which is in no way simpler than the larger world of objects people our size can touch and feel.

Just like Alexis de Tocqueville, who introduced his fellow Frenchman to the novel civilization of America, Behe, in his modestly named Appendix, takes you by the hand and walks you through a living cell which suddenly takes on the complexity of the more visible features of Manhattan Island—buildings, streets, vehicles, but also windows inside of which are desks, people, fax machines, telephone wires connecting every single office on the island, etc.

Indeed, I think Behe may have found the Appendix the most interesting part of the book to write. Could he condense into 22 pages the overwhelmingly triumphant insights of a half century of biochemical research? What brave probes of reality are these lab men! Frankly, if all you read is the Appendix you could conclude on your own—as Behe did—that the very basis of the Darwinian assumption is quite unthinkable. This book pops into being with an impact similar to what the child blurted out in the famous story of the King who had no clothes.

In these two books the majesty of God’s creation unfolds as powerfully as I have ever seen it. If they don’t give you a holy awe of “what we are dealing with in life,” I am afraid nothing will. Here you have two very brainy, very hard working, very honest people, each in his own sphere patiently introducing you to ultimate reality. They themselves write with the same breathless awareness you will have as you try to follow them. While these authors have, humanly speaking, truly mastered their subjects, the fact is they have humbly allowed that reality to master them!

Item #7. Small but Significant—global conference on “Gateway People Clusters”

This conference may include as many as 400 from all over the world. The purpose this time will be to concentrate on the world’s people, cluster by cluster. See page 44 for more of the details. It will be held at the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California. It will not be open to the public, but Mission Frontiers will be glad to report results and make an informal video which will give you a sense of being there.

Six categories of Peoples (groups), 12,863 total, Five types on So. Bap. Map

I. Three kinds of Unevangelized peoples (8,669 total) [Roughly, those who have not truly heard the Gospel] —Two kinds of Unreached peoples (6,322 total) [Roughly, those lacking a viable indigenous church movement]

Type A 1,681 million people within 2,161 peoples (groups) (on map) called “World A Peoples” (on map) dark red

Type B 1,372 million people within 4,161 peoples (groups) (on map) called “Unreached Peoples,” (on map) light red

Type C 1,455 million people within 2,347 peoples (groups) (on map) called “Unevangelized Peoples,” (on map) yellow

II. Two kinds of Evangelized peoples (1,988 total) [Roughly, having heard but not necessarily accepted the Gospel]

Type D, 1,136 million people within 1,945 peoples (groups),(on map) called “Evangelized Peoples” (on map) green

Type E, 3 million people within 43 peoples (groups) (on map) called “Christian Peoples” (on map) purple III. Peoples unclassified as yet = 2,206 in number, some unreached? (+10,657 classified = 12,863 on disk).

Horizon Five: DeWesternization/DeContextualization DeWesternization Tomorrow

(*Mission Frontiers*, September-December 1998)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/horizon-five-dewesternization-decontextualization-dewesternization-tomorrow>

Are we really ready for tomorrow's Kingdom?

A Jewish rabbi in Los Angeles has thrown down the gauntlet to wayward Westernizing Jews. He claims that his own Orthodoxy is the only genuine form of the Jewish faith. Conservative and Reformed Jewish congregations have gone the way of "Christianity!"

The idea is that the true faith can only be contained in a certain, specific true culture, the original culture.

Holding on to a "true culture" is not very likely to succeed if only because we can look around and see that Jewish Orthodoxy is a very small piece of the global pie even of all those who think they are holding on to the true Biblical faith, and even among those who specifically hold on to a Jewish culture of some sort.

OK, so the Roman socialites threw rice at a wedding. Do Jews who live in Rome have to do that? So the Romans had a big party, giving gifts to each other on December 25th. Should Jews take up the practice? Well, not even Greek Christians took up the 25th of December. To this day they are not impressed by what was in Jesus' day the Roman pagan holiday for Saturn—the "Saturnalia."

More ironic still is the plain fact that much of Jewish Orthodoxy today consists of large and small additions over the centuries since the Christians grabbed the faith and ran with it, certainly long after the sacred days of Hebrew culture. And, when was that? In King David's day, in Moses' day, in Abraham's day? Wow! Not even the Jewish Bible portrays a single cultural way of life.

It would seem that God has determinedly been kicking people out of one culture into a new one (Abraham to Canaan, to Egypt, to the dispersion of the Northern tribes, to the booting out of the Judean tribes, on and on). What is going on? It looks as if God wants them to learn how to carry their faith into different cultures, not just preserve a given way of life within a discordant culture. The Bible, as a whole, would seem to sit in judgment upon every human cultural tradition, no matter whether it is Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidian, first century Jewish, Paul's mixture with Greek elements, Roman-Latin, Germanic, Anglo-saxon, or what.

Now then, is "God's culture" fixed as an evangelical American pop culture with its CDs, DVDs, television, horrifying divorce rate, childcare centers, etc?

Quite honestly, are our missionaries—any of them—now assuming that the ultimate achievement of the Biblical faith is what we have today in evangelical Christianity?

If not, when are we going to seriously contemplate the future form of what we call the Christian faith?

OK, forget the turgid theologies of contextualization. Take a look for just one second at the actual global record. It is not too early to recognize that the largest growing edge of Biblical faith is not Jewish Orthodoxy, not Roman Catholicism, not Eastern Orthodoxy, not German Lutheranism, not Anglicanism, not American “mainline” denominationalism, not Evangelicalism, not Pentecostalism, not the Charismatic renewal, etc.

What is it? It is the often ignored but vast company of those “outside and beyond” what we usually call Christianity. In Africa it is the 32 million “African Initiated Churches.” In India it is a phenomenon perhaps the same size which is arising within the 600 million caste sphere, where “Christianity” by that name is virtually absent. In China it is the “house church” movement which, up to this point, we in the West like to call Christian, but at closer look might not fit very well at all.

The fact is that anything Western has its attractions and detractions, and while most cities of the world are superficially Westernized, Western Christianity has really only successfully lapped up minorities around the world, peoples who had nothing to lose by opting for an outside, foreign culture as against an oppressive majority culture. This is most obvious in India. It is perhaps true in China. It is true in much of Africa. The growing edge may more and more be the kind of thing we would call cultic or at least anomalous in this country.

Are we prepared for that? Does our attitude towards “home grown” aberrant forms of basically Biblical faith in this country match what is needed in the rest of the world? Can we trust the Bible eventually to balance out these thousands of new, “out of control” movements? Can we digest the plain fact that the entire Islamic tradition is, like Roman Catholicism, full of “non-Christian” elements which we despise, yet is clearly the product of the impact of the Bible (unlike Hindu culture)? What do we do with such forms of quasi-Biblical faith?

A Blindspot in Western Christianity?

Transcription of a talk given on June 23, 1999

Foundations Reader, 319-22

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/45_a_blindspot.pdf

I will not be discussing a major correction in one particular stream of Christianity, but rather an urgent Biblical insight lacking in virtually all forms of Western Christianity.

One reason for a correction is that our theological structure of interpretation of the meaning of the Biblical witness took place centuries before we had any inkling of the dark intelligence invested in the micro world of disease germs, and our current theological sensitivities have, amazingly, not yet adjusted to this new information. We do not commonly attribute the origin of destructive germs to an intelligent evil being. We have no theology of mission for destroying such germs!

A Staggering Thought

In the five years of the gradual progress of bone marrow cancer in my wife's physical being, we were both pressed to ask some unusual questions, and have begun to develop some unusual answers.

First came an arresting and even staggering thought that looks upon the need for theological correction as long ago as the fourth century AD. That was the first public and political century of Christianity. It was the kind of mix in which syncretism is often spawned. According to this theory it was the time when a virulent form of pagan syncretism lodged itself deeply into our Western Christian theological tradition. A detailed exposition of this amazing proposal can be found in Gregory Boyd's book entitled *God at War*. Some of the flavor of the entire book can be caught in these few words:

We see...[someone with] polio...and piously shake our heads...saying "It is the will of God...hard to understand...we have to wait to get to heaven [to understand it]"...[By contrast] Jesus looked at [sickness] and in crystal clear terms called it the work of the devil, and not the will of God—[something to be fought, not something to which we should simply resign ourselves.] (Boyd 1997:183)

This contrast, Boyd contends, reveals a pagan neo-Platonist strand in our theology coming through Augustine. It was absorbed further through Boethius and his winsome and incredibly influential *Consolations of Philosophy*. In this line of thinking is an emphasis on a "mysterious good" which stands behind all evil, rather than simply a recognition of the good which God may indeed faithfully work "following" evil. What it then does is distract us and prevent us from turning decisively against and crushing the source of that evil. While pagan, it is imposed on us as an attitude of noble resignation in the midst of suffering. It works itself out as a curious passivity in the presence of evil. It

takes the Biblical phrase, “all things work together for good” to mean that God—who does in fact work good out of evil—is somehow the author of the evil itself.

How has this syncretistic element in our theological tradition surfaced on a practical level? In accord with our by-now instinctive Augustinian neo-Platonism, we cannot be totally surprised that when a godly young preacher in Puritan Massachusetts sought to fight smallpox, the other pastors with one voice opposed him and formed an “anti-vaccination society.” In the perspective of their Augustinian/Calvinist theology this saintly young pastor was, and I quote, “interfering with Divine Providence.” No wonder that when that young man died in the process of trying out a smallpox vaccine on himself, it was assumed that God killed him. Strangely, that comparatively young man attempting to spare the suffering of the Indians at his mission outpost is known today for his philosophy, not for fighting evil in the form of a virus. I speak of Jonathan Edwards.

But, in actual fact, the problem was that Edwards’ keen thinking challenged a seriously syncretistic element in our theological tradition. By Edward’s day the syncretized Christian tradition was so durable and so impervious to change that not for two hundred years did any individual or group decide to eliminate smallpox. And when that campaign finally occurred, it was not this time to the credit of a preacher, a missionary, or a Christian theologian. That eradication effort took place only 21 years ago!

Edwards’ insight could and should have displaced that particular pagan element in our theology—the passive acceptance of disease as being God’s direct will which we are therefore not to fight against. Edwards’ insight could have replaced the pagan element with a theology informing and guiding a serious attack on what the Bible calls simply “the works of the devil.”

But, that insight died with Edwards. I have concluded with profound sadness that had that insight not died with him, our form of faith might have regained a Biblical zeal to set out deliberately to vanquish the works of the devil—all forms of conquerable evil.

Are We Really Passive before Evil?

You may quite readily wonder if I am unaware of “enormous research” that is going on. Several years ago, when my wife was first diagnosed with cancer, I had the idea that surely a lot of money in this country and around the world was flowing into *foundational* cancer research. Having had since then reason to look into this supposition, I am astounded that actually very little goes into foundational cancer research compared to what we spend on cancer *treatment*—after this deadly malady attaches itself to us. My best estimate is that to *understand and eradicate cancer* we spend less than one thousandth of what we pay for cancer *treatments*. Indeed, it may even be less than that. The truth is actually scandalous—are we living with a deception about this?

However, the main point here is not how little goes to understand disease compared to the perfectly enormous amount we frantically spend for treatments once we are individually attacked. That huge imbalance is, of course, curious and puzzling.

The more significant point is that there is absolutely no evidence I know of in all the world of any *theologically driven* interest in combatting disease at its origins. Not only have I not found any work of theology, any chapter, any paragraph, nor to my knowledge any sermon urging us—whether in the pew or in professional missions—to go to battle against the many diseases we now know to be eradicable. Jimmy Carter, our

former president, is the only Christian leader I know of who has set out (in his phrase) “to wipe Guinea worm from the face of the earth.” Note that his insight did not come from a seminary experience, but, perhaps, from being a Sunday school teacher. The Carter Center set out to eradicate two horrible diseases with which missionaries in Africa have had to live for 100 years. They have now done it, and have chosen three more. Apparently, Carter cannot expect to fund this operation from Christian sources. He gets money from secular corporations.

Christian missions spend literally millions of dollars around the world taking care of sick people. And we nourish hundreds of thousands of children in one program or another, raising them up so they can die of malaria. (Every sixty seconds four children die of malaria.) Yet in all the earth I know of only one very small clinic in Zimbabwe where two ill-equipped missionary doctors are working toward the actual elimination of the astonishingly intelligent malarial parasite that is called a plasmodium. And in secular circles the outwitting of that ingeniously evil bug is not being pursued by the World Health Organization nor the US National Institutes of Health nor even the Atlanta Center for Disease Control. Only the U.S. Navy, amazingly, is seriously involved.

Note that I am not talking about efforts to *avoid* disease but efforts to eradicate the very source of a disease. Thus, I am not talking about contributory environmental factors or nutritional factors. All such good things are *defensive* measures. We recall that people tried their best for centuries to avoid smallpox. But it was better finally to exterminate the virus that was the source cause. We can be glad that destructive virus is behind us, but *we have to admit that its eradication was not because of Christian initiative, much less theological insight.*

Defensive measures are good, but notice our strange theological (and pagan) reluctance to set out to *destroy the disease germs themselves*. To do that would be to go on the offense. We don't do that. Yet isn't it Biblical to *destroy the works of the devil*? In 1 John 3:8 we read very simply, “The Son of God came into the world that He might destroy the works of the devil.” We don't hear much of that verse, partly because *we yield in our every day consciousness to a secular mindset that implicitly denies the very possibility of an intelligent evil destroyer of God's good creation.*

Is There an Active Satan? When Did He Get Started and What Is He Doing?

But an additional reason we don't hear much of that verse is because our theological tradition does not illuminate for us exactly what the works of the devil really are. The respected Dutch theologian Berkouer made the rare comment that “You cannot have a proper theology without a sound demonology.” Another theologian dared to suggest that Satan's greatest achievement is “to cover his tracks.” Note that if, in fact, Satan has skillfully “covered his tracks” all of us are likely extensively *unaware* of his deeds. Isn't that logical? Paul suggested that we are not to be ignorant of his devices. We are told that Satan and his angels once worked for God. If so, then precisely what kind of destruction and perversion did Satan set out to achieve when he turned against God? Where would we see evidence of his works? Would he employ powers of deception so that we would get accustomed to evil and no longer connect an intelligent evil power with evil and suffering? Would Satan even successfully tempt us to think that God is somehow behind all evil—and that we must therefore not attempt to eradicate things like smallpox lest we “interfere with Divine Providence”?

In the last 20 years paleontologists have dug up more evidences of earlier life forms than in all previous history. One of their thought-provoking discoveries is that the pre-Cambrian forms of life *revealed no predators*. Then, at a very distinct juncture destructive forms of life suddenly appeared at all levels, from large creatures to destructive forms of life at the smallest microbiological level.

Is this what Satan set out to do from the time he rebelled against the Creator—that is, he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into the arena of tooth and claw that reigns today? Recent lab results indicate that retroviruses are smart enough to carry with them short pieces of pre-coded DNA which they insert into the chromosome of a cell so as to distort the very nature of an organism. Can a lion that would lie down with a lamb become vicious by such DNA tinkering? We do know that many diseases reflect defective genes. Very recent literature indicates that in the case of the major chronic diseases *infections* are now seriously thought to underlie everything from heart disease to cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and even schizophrenia.

A Double Enigma

But we confront a second and separate mystery here that is beyond mere scientific facts. Speaking in colloquial terms, we face a “double whammy.” We are not only suddenly aware that our medical people have been looking in the wrong direction. That may actually be true if, as is now reported, tooth infections are related to heart disease no matter how low-fat your diet is. Finnish scientists are the ones who are aware of this, and are sure of this.

But a second and more ominous fact confronts us. We must be aware that some force is *delaying that awareness*. For example, it has been two decades since it was clearly proven that 95% of duodenal ulcers are caused by a bacterial infection, yet today half the doctors in the state of Colorado still do not employ the necessary three days of tetracycline. Is this not a clear case of demonic *cultural* delusion piled on top of a demonic *physical* distortion?

Will we now see a similarly ominous and tragic lag in the application of knowledge with regard to the relation between infectious agents and the major killer diseases I just mentioned? Can and should the church speak out on these twin problem areas? *Where are our theologians when we need them?*

The Proposed Institute¹

The proposed *Institute for the Study of the Origins of Disease* will have to confine itself in its early days of severely limited funding to the collection and dissemination of information about what is and is not being done at the roots of disease. It will endeavor to attract serious attention to this sphere. It will use both secular and theological weaponry, especially the latter. It will try to upgrade our desire to bring glory to God by ending our apparently neoplatonist truce with Satan in the realm of all his ingenious and destructive works. Our global mission agencies, which already have to their credit the discovery of the nature of leprosy, will declare war on all sources of disease instead of merely being kind to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

Our actions (which often speak louder than our words) will no longer proclaim loudly and embarrassingly that our God can get you a hospital bed to lie on plus a ticket to heaven, but that He is either ignorant, uncaring, or impotent to do anything effective

about the origins of your disease. We cannot blame Augustine or Calvin or Luther for not knowing anything about germs or the enormous complexities of microbiology. But can we repentantly accept blame for the continuing fact that three-fourths of all Americans die prematurely from major chronic diseases which are now suddenly more defeatable than ever?

The least we can do is set something in motion that may rectify our understanding of a God who is not the author of the destructive violence in nature and who has long sought our help in bringing His kingdom and His will on earth.

I read a true story in *Readers Digest* about a family of three children who lost their oldest child, a daughter, through terrible suffering with cancer. Then, the father, fund raising to raise money to fight cancer among children in general collapsed and died ten feet short of the goal in a marathon race. I do not believe that God was the author of that double tragedy, but I do believe he used it to speed up the fund-raising campaign then carried on by the wife. However, what fairly sprang out at me in this story was the statement of one of the younger children at the news of the father's collapse. This little boy had already learned well our syncretized theology. He said, "God would not do two bad things to us in one year." Isn't it too bad that this innocent little boy was unaware that destructive things are the very hallmark of an intelligent evil person, not the initiative of a loving God? When will this become clearer? When will there be a significant glimmer within Christendom to act accordingly? When will we arise to work with God to destroy the works of the devil?

What is it that allows us to simplify the growing issue of homosexuality—that is, the question of whether it is an organic or cultural distortion—without taking into account the recent research that declares it to be a physical distortion resulting from an infectious agent, perhaps even curable by laboratory insights? We are left to two undesirable alternatives: to think that homosexuality must be perfectly normal or to think that homosexuality is entirely cultural, not stopping to think that it may be the result of a disease.

Christians champion singers, basketball players, pole vaulters. Do we find theological reason to champion those rare few who are at the front line in the fight against disease? And, I don't refer to those who *treat illness* but those who scout the very *origins of disease*. The answer is a thunderous NO which can only be explained as a blind spot in our theological tradition, a fact which is itself one of the diabolic delusions classifying as a work of the devil.

Demonic delusions:

1. When we get sick all we need to do is to pray and inquire of God what his reason is for allowing this kind of thing.

2. In case we did something unwise that caused or invited the sickness we don't need to feel responsible to roll up our sleeves and fight the source of the disease. God is content to use disease to teach us.

References Cited

Boyd, Gregory. 1997 *God at War*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Endnote

1 The article was written before the founding of the Roberta Winter Institute which seeks to address the issue of the war against evil. For more information, see <http://www.robertawinterinstitute.org/>.

The Role of Western Missions

(1999) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 114-17)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

1. The long-standing and indeed illustrious campaign to take Western Christianity to the world's minority groups is slowing down because fewer and fewer such groups remain untouched.

One of the miracles of the 20th century— which forever changes the focus of missions for the 21st—is the fact that the Western missions have been so successful in transforming dark mission fields into bright mission sending forces.

We must give credit to the AD2000 Movement and others in the last ten years for highlighting the fact that there are still dark pockets needing the light of the Gospel. But, nevertheless precisely because of the efforts of Western missions and, now more recently the active missionary outreach from many Third World countries, the fact is we are running out of “traditional pioneer mission fields.” There aren't many left. Are we going to be without a job? Yes, in the traditional sense, more and more.

Because pioneer missions have planted well-established churches in so many parts of the world, the 21st century looks radically different from that the 19th or 20th when Western Protestant missions began their work in earnest. Pioneer missions of the kind we have undertaken in the past are useful and essential in far fewer places around the world compared to the situation in the days of William Carey.

Thus, on the world level we now have the miracle of what is very nearly a single Christian family. English, for example, has more and more become the lingua franca of international Evangelicalism. This is a good thing and it is a joyous thing, this relatively unified global cultural tradition of Christianity. But it is probably not the final thing.

It is actually wrong to think that reaching the final unreached people with Western cultural Christianity will be the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It is a marvelous beginning. It is not a mistake. It is nevertheless not the whole picture.

2. Both Western and Non-Western missions are now more and more assisting Christians in other parts of the world to build their churches and schools and to reach out to their own people, rather than tangling with the remaining non-Christian peoples.

This continuing post-pioneer part of the picture is bright and shining and a blessed reality. But it is a very different process from the continuing activity of pioneer mission to the small remaining unreached groups in the world. Ironically, the very success of missions in producing vital overseas churches has meant, for one thing, that donors are becoming less and less interested in supporting mission work. Missionaries have sought to “work themselves out of a job” and they have succeeded in many places beyond their dreams. But their dreams have turned into nightmares as their faithful supporters have lost interest in their work. Donors have by now long been complaining that the Great Commission must not be redefined to read, “Go ye into all the world and meddle in the

national churches.” Many mission supporters have turned to assist the continuing growth and impact of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, since they are known to be working where there is not yet a church that can stand on its own two feet.

3. Meanwhile, as missions have often had great success among oppressed and minority groups, the Gospel of Christ and the Bible has also gone beyond the physical extension of the Western institutional church structure and has entered into the large "Resistant blocs" of non-Christians producing seemingly syncretistic forms of "semi-Christian" faith. Millions of Africans and Asians are in this second category.

The so-called “Resistant blocs” of Chinese, Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists resist the Western cultural style of our faith while being very acceptive of Christ. So while the Gospel has created a substantial movement of “Christianity” within most of the small groups it has only extracted a token few individuals out from within these large groups. At the same time, some people within these large blocs are accepting the Gospel and the Bible in strange and unexpected ways. We may wish to ignore them, but we cannot deny that they are there.

4. It becomes suddenly clear that history may be repeating itself and that the experiences of the New Testament and early church throw remarkable light on the present.

It is necessary to speak of a “global stalling” of the Westernized form of the Gospel. We rejoice that millions have turned from their own culture and embraced the culture of Westernized Christianity, at least in part. They have the freedom in Christ to do so. This is just like the 100,000 Gentiles in Paul’s day who turned from their own people and embraced the Jewish vehicle of faith, becoming circumcised “proselytes.” These people were mostly genuine believers, but had shifted culturally in a way Paul considered a legitimate option but an illegitimate requirement, non-essential to faith. This is the kind of “proselytism” that has evolved around the world among minority peoples but which is mostly feared and fought by those in the majority cultures.

But in Paul’s day, there were many more people— maybe ten times more—who were not proselytes, but “God-fearers.” These were people like Cornelius, who were attracted to the Word of God in the synagogues, but who had not made the shift over to the Jewish cultural tradition.

Paul’s mission strategy made both Jews and Proselytes—who had settled on the Jewish cultural tradition—furious. What did he do? He acknowledged the reality (despite the remaining weaknesses) of a new, unplanned, “Greek” version of the Biblical faith. This new version was based on Jesus Christ and the basic principles of the Jewish Bible, rather than literally upon all the Jewish customs described in the Bible.

From the standpoint of even believing Jews Paul’s efforts helped to generate a vast and—to them—tragic movement which soon encompassed most of the million "God fearers" and eventually became at home in the Greek, Latin and Syrian Christian traditions. Naturally, as soon as these major Mediterranean traditions cast an influence beyond their home cultures hundreds of different varieties of semi-Biblical faith resulted.

For example, the Greek tradition of faith influenced the Slavs and the celts, while the Latin influenced both Celtic and Teutonic, and the Syrian the Arabic. Germanic

Lutheranism, Slavic Orthodoxy and Semitic Islam resulted, employing different languages, literatures and cultures, the most significant common denominator being the Bible. These all, to some significant extent were “people of the book,” the Bible of the early church. All of them in addition were influenced by the New Testament and generated their own additional semi-scriptures as well.

Greek Orthodoxy naturally considered the Greek scriptures most authoritative. Latin Catholicism enshrined its Latin translation, and the Lutherans, to be different, chose the Hebrew. However, because the Arabic translation of the Bible did not come soon enough, the Islamic tradition emerged with far less direct access to “the Book.” There were many arguments about what form of the faith was the one, right form.

When Islam engulfed Egypt, two different Christian traditions were at that time at each other’s throats. All of these various cultural traditions tended to consider their own cultural derivation of the faith correct, and any lingering presence of the followers of a “foreign” faith were resented, rejected or marginalized. Actually none of these cultural traditions of faith were perfect even though most of them were barely salvific.

5. Thus, it seems possible that the 21st century will see further unification around a generalized form of Western Christianity but at the same time see the looming up of radically different forms of our faith which may be barely recognizable and may be alienated or even antagonistic.

We need only to reexamine our own past to see how drastically unity was shattered by the various deviations in Western history. The Quakers were considered a radical departure—and they were. Evangelicalism itself was, but so were Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Pentecostals— all with varying degrees of similarity to the Reformation traditions and with varying degrees of relationship to the Bible. All these became, and perhaps still are for many, shocking departures nevertheless from “the faith once delivered.”

However, figures like Billy Graham have succeeded in gaining a hearing to some extent from within almost all of these divergent traditions, just as Brahmins in India have been attracted to Graham’s message and his Bible without affiliating themselves with the formal movement of Christianity.

The phrase “churchless Christianity” has thus been employed to describe some phenomena in South India. It is possible that a more accurate phrase might be to speak of “Christianity-less churches,” since we see people still regarded as “Hindus” involved in home meetings much like the “*ecclesias*” of the New Testament but we do not see any close affiliation of these believers with the cultural tradition of Christianity. It is as though we must ask whether we are to preach Christ and not Christianity.

A recent secular editorial in India recounted the gruesome tortures early missionaries of Portuguese Christian tradition inflicted on the people of Goa wherever departures from faith were suspected. We can protest that that was “Catholic” Christianity. But our own Protestant “Christian” cultural tradition includes similar events such as when John Calvin consented to the death by fire of Michael Servetus as well as thirty some women accused of witchcraft, whose departures from the faith seemed threatening to the unity of the Gospel. How can we not therefore try to understand the disinclination today of high caste Hindus to see their cultural unity threatened by

invading missionary forces which may find it difficult to conceive of a Hindu cultural tradition that validly understands the Gospel?

6. The willingness and the ability to “give away our faith” is the great challenge of the 21st century. Can we accept the fact that Christianity by that name will never conquer the world even though our Bible and our Savior may become a spiritual reality within even the major so-called “resistant” blocs? This is of course a complex and delicate area of thought as well as a human phenomenon, which now includes perhaps more sincere people in the non-Western world than are included in the formal extension of Western Christianity into Africa and Asia.

We have always thought that one of the blessings of the achievement of a worldwide Church movement is the possibility that this miraculous global fellowship would enable those of us in the West to reexamine our faith, our theology, our very study of the Bible. What neither the Western church nor its converts in the Third World are fully prepared for is the radical deWesternization of the Gospel. But the 21st century may be the time when this will happen without our power to stop it.

Paul’s ministry begs for a parallel today. Our impact on the non-Western world has been primarily on the relatively few who for various reasons want something of our Western cultural tradition. We suddenly realize that both Western and non-Western missions are promoting our Westernized forms of religion. Some of the non-Western missions are just as much involved in this as are the Western missions. This is understandable and it is not evil, unless we believe and preach that the Gospel can only exist in its Western vessel.

Paul said circumcision did not need to carry over. For many in his day this was as outrageous as for anyone today to say that baptism by this or that method is not essential. If the parallel is at all valid that our missionary movement is similar to the Jewish diaspora and its "Gospel," then we are not likely to see the missions, whether Western or not, capable in general of doing so radical a thing as Paul did.

7. It is possible that some of the non-Western peoples are more interested in the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—as they see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ—than they are interested in our procedures for gaining Salvation. It may be that we ought to more deliberately “Declare His glory among the nations” than we are to sell our formulas for getting people into heaven, even though we ourselves may find it difficult to distinguish between these two related things.

Jesus demonstrated the character of God in His preaching and healing ministry, and on that basis, asked people to repent and believe. And he talked to people who had a great head start in understanding His father in heaven. Today we are trying to build on a far thinner foundation. Once people know God through our science and medicine and through scriptures like Proverbs, and even better by knowing the Christ of the Gospels, then our missionary efforts to the major blocs will be more effective. There will still be those who want simply to become Westernized, learn English and so forth.

Can Western and non-Western missions in the 21st century change enough to encourage and nourish some of these highly indigenous movements? Our overseas church constituencies may be as opposed to such an approach as the Jewish believers were opposed to Paul’s approach.

Thus, our task in the 21st century is not so much to promote a Westernized Christianity as to defend the name of God, to represent Him more faithfully, to point out the role of Satan and be on God's side in striving to destroy the works of Satan. We are, as Paul put it, "to open peoples' eyes, turning them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." However, the outward results of this process may both surprise us and also not be immediately recognizable to our supporters.

In summary, the difference between the activity of Western and non-Western missions is not very great. They are both highly Western compared to the new indigenous movements which derive their faith more directly from the Bible more than from Christianity. We have long gloated over the fact that Christianity is now geographically global. However, our faith and our Bible, just as in the past, has quickly gone beyond any particular codification of it.

Third World Missions may be able to leave their own inherited Christianities and choose to follow the growth of Biblical faith and worship where this flows beyond the bounds of traditional Christianity. It is possible that these non-Western missions will be more able to do this than the traditional missions in the West. The culture of the West is itself changing so rapidly that traditional denominations are all on the decline while newer and unusual movements are those which are growing. The West today needs the help of the Third World Churches and missions, especially if they are willing to follow faith and not form.

Basic Concepts

(2000) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 26-27)

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•There is no more impressive measure of the impact of Christ on this planet than the nearly global celebration of the year 2000.

To Understand the Role of Our Faith

•The understanding of the last 4,000 years as a single story of the expansion of the Kingdom of God, the progressive conquest of the earth and evil is highly nourishing to our faith. The very acceleration of global population growth reflects extensive progress in reducing both war and pestilence.

•It is not Christianity we are trying to spread in the world but Christian faith. That can be done without duplicating or extending our present concept of church-going activity, of “churchianity.”

•The renewal of faith in the West must include a fundamental restructuring of Church life in favor of recognition of Christian faith in the home.

•Home-based faith in Christ is the bedrock goal of our concern. Therefore, the kind of church activity which takes the place of worship in the home is not even good as a second best.

•A detailed knowledge of our Christological formulations has never been essential to the kind of fellowship with God the Bible portrays as available to those who diligently seek Him, although even this seeking assumes and builds upon at least a Biblical knowledge of God’s existence.

To quote Karen Armstrong:

Increasingly, Western Christians would come to equate faith with belief in official doctrine. Even though Luther did not see faith in this way, an obsession with intellectual conformity would become one of the legacies of the Reformation and is peculiar to Reformed Christianity. In traditions such as Judaism, Islam or Buddhism, religion is not about believing obligatory propositions but about behaving differently. The emphasis on doctrinal correctness has been experienced by many as intellectually damaging and as a reason for Christianity's decline in Europe.

•The “man of peace”—the people of faith—whom we seek will not necessarily be open to Jesus Christ at first, especially if they have a Jewish background, but that does not mean that they have nothing to gain from Biblical, New Testament witness.

•The history of the Jews reflects the presence of both legalistic futility and an element of true faith, obedience, and righteousness. This is true both before and after Christ.

•In general it is neither wise nor to be expected or desired that a believing Muslim would adopt the name “Christian.” Thus, the often referred to category of “Muslim

Background Believers” represents, generally, an undesirable evangelistic achievement. We need to be able to conceive of “Muslim Foreground Believers.”

- The same is true of Hindus who have put away their idols, revere and study the Bible, and revere and worship Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God—whether or not they identify with any of the current traditions of Christianity in their land.

- Extolling the glory of God is the most basic endeavor in missions compared with efforts to assure individuals of their salvation, which at best are a means to that end.

To Understand the Phenomenon of Life

- Since the Christ Event, the strongest new evidence of the very nature of God’s glory is the immense insight into His handiwork revealed only recently by microbiological studies. By comparison, astronomy does not so much reveal the role of His intelligence as the vastness of His creation.

- There is evidence in the record of the rocks that at one point predatory forms of life suddenly appeared—that is, there appeared forms of life that are life-destroying, whether microbiological in size or visible forms of life. Prior to that time life forms were not dangerous to each other—in the so-called Ediacaran period just before the Cambrian explosion of life.

- It is also true that Genesis portrays the existence of an Evil One prior to the temptation of Adam. The rest of the Bible makes clear that this Evil One did not always exist but formerly served God and then rebelled at a given point in time.

- The thought therefore occurs that the time of Satan’s rebellion may coincide with, and explain, the appearance of life-destroying forms of life, such that nature—not just man—from that point on has become a vast scene of constant violence in which we see life destroying life. The number of life forms being driven extinct today is on the order of 30,000 per year. The number of life-forms now in existence is about 1,000th of all that have existed. More than half of two million existing life forms are destructive (parasitic).

- Thus, the “works of the devil” would seem to include the perversion of the very structure of life at DNA levels. The discovery of thousands of defective genes in the human genome is possibly evidence of demonic activity at the DNA level. Even the violent traits of animals and man may exhibit the same kind of distorting influence at that level.

- To do this we may understand the possibility that Satan’s angels of darkness, some of them, may be so small as to be capable of tinkering directly with the DNA molecule.

- Disease is thus a result of hereditary factors as well as external assaults of destructive microbes, and often both working in coordination.

- That is, 1) we inherit genetic defects—defects that are both accidental such as would be caused by cosmic rays or radiation but also defects which seem to be highly intelligent distortions.

- We also, 2) “contract” diseases coming from outside our bodies, like flu or colds or pneumonia or tuberculosis or malaria. Not only that but some of the specific perversions of our genetic inheritance are preyed upon by external disease factors with considerable, obvious intelligence.

- Promoting God’s glory is inextricably related to destroying the works of the devil— “The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8.

- The Garden of Eden is portrayed in Genesis as a locality which differed from the disorder of the surrounding world and that the evil outside the Garden existed prior to the creation of man.

- The Genesis mandate to man to care for life would thus seem to include serious human efforts in collaboration with God to work with Him to restore (to redeem) all perversions of disease or violence in the various forms of life. In this activity we can “Let our light so shine among men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16). This is part of “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:9-13)

To Understand the Nature of Society

- The multilevel family—where a child growing up can witness an obedient relationship between his parents and his parents’ parents—is an element essential to social stability. No amount of focus on the monogenerational, or nuclear, family can enable it to be an ideal environment for children to be raised or for even parents to properly mature. This state of affairs is all the more difficult to attain when the marriage ceremony itself does not define which set of parents is to have the primary continuing parental role.

- The society that has banished young people from the work force is thus forced to reassign children’s work to adults. This, in turn, misuses and abuses both adults and children, and it cuts the natural bond within families and between generations in favor of an age-stratification which destroys the normal function of learning passing from older to younger.

- In the light of the latter point, the comparatively recent achievement of a large proportion of U.S. population becoming involved in the phenomenon of a seventeen-year tunnel in non-productive school experience represents the largest and most stubborn obstacle to the normal maturation of young people as well as the maintenance of cohesive families and a cohesive society.

- The arrangement by which each husband and wife pursue different careers independently in separate social environments must be considered a dubious attainment which puts great strain upon the marriage and further distances the children from the parents.

When God Doesn't Make Sense

Seminar April 10, 2000

Frontiers in Mission, 171-72

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When we act on a hunch or a guess or a wish or a hope, that is what people generally mean when they say, "I don't know for sure but I *believe* so."

By comparison, acting on a certainty which does not entirely rest on visible or rational reality is more like *believing* in the Biblical sense.

In fact, acting on a hunch or a wish, by comparison to *Biblical believing* could be called "over-believing," which is actually very common. Perhaps even more common than acting on true faith.

Faith itself is the basis on which we believe. It is mere confidence if that kind of "faith" derives solely from known facts. Faith is Biblical faith if it comes from God and allows us with certainty to see things that are ordinarily unseen. In the book of Hebrews we read, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." Confidence, by comparison merely derives from visible evidence. Biblical faith derives from evidence which is not visible as well as visible evidence. Faith is like light from God on our path, light which by walking in, acting on, we are obediently believing. The reward for walking in that light, that faith, is more light, more faith, which allows further steps of faith!

Neither Biblical faith, nor even mere "confidence faith," is something we ourselves create. It is something "out there" over which we have no control.

Over-believing is acting on mere whims, hunches, or wishful hopes. Biblical believing is when God leads and we follow. Note that I am speaking of the relatively rare true initiative of God, not our human tendency to put words into His mouth.

Rather than thrusting our wishes into His mouth and then proudly or presumptuously saying "God told me ..." God is much more willing for us normally to employ our God-given senses, our intelligence and common sense to guide us. But, on special occasions He gives us true faith to obey, to believe beyond what others can see (they may think we are jumping into the dark).

Thus He is not a micromanaging God but a patient father in heaven who wants us to employ all of the knowledge and intelligence He has given us. He also wants us to wait on His guidance when we find we cannot proceed on our understanding alone. For example He does not normally want us to break out of the culture of our people. At the same time He does expect us to respond to His guidance even when it leads us out of the box of conventional thinking. That may not be often, but it may never be never.

Much of God's relatively rare direct faith-guidance will in fact come into conflict with our cultural limitations, our cultural eyeglasses for seeing things, the unexamined cultural assumptions that mold our thinking. Much of all this is masterminded by the great Adversary of our faith. What can, sadly, be called *diabolical delusions* may control much more of our perspective than we are readily aware.

It is precisely and unfortunately in regard to *the uncommon sense of rare, true faith* that the Adversary would obviously want to blind us to his efforts, deceive us as to his activities, conceal from us his strategies, even leave us relatively oblivious of his existence.

Yet, it seems ominously clear that the Adversary has greatly succeeded in not only concealing his own existence but in persuading us to think God is the author of all evil. There is an entire book with the title *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, which attempts somehow to justify the idea that harm and suffering and calamity is usually a mysterious work of God.

It is as if a couple were to come home to their house late at night from a church meeting and discover all the lights on and the front door standing wide open with police wandering through the house. Terrible things have happened. The drawers are pulled out, cupboards are emptied, dishes smashed, even carpets pulled up. The whole place is an incredible mess. And the police turn angrily to the returning couple. "We got a 911 call that something was wrong in your house. We have been here a half hour and we are overcome with puzzlement and fury. We have never seen a house so poorly kept. They turn to the wife, "What kind of a housekeeper are you anyway?"

Now, this is highly illogical. Anyone would assume that an intelligent enemy had ransacked the house, not a poor housekeeper. But suppose no one had ever heard of robbers? Suppose there were no previous cases of adversarial destruction? Suppose the robbers wanted to continue entering and ransacking houses for jewelry or whatever, they would do so well if they could cast a great delusion over everyone making them assume the non-existence of robbers.

Last Friday I taught Perspectives for one of the sessions of the Call students. Teri Busse was the one coordinating (and did a great job). But I was reminded of being at her wedding in the bay area when I first met Philip Johnson face to face, the famous Berkeley professor who has challenged the feasibility of what is called Darwinian evolution. Later at another meeting in the bay area I engaged him in the following conversation, as I recall it:

"Dr. Johnson, you and professor Michael Behe have certainly proven beyond a shadow of a doubt the presence of intelligent design in nature. If your computer screen were suddenly to go blank and a dialogue box appeared announcing that your hard disk was wiped clean, in that case you would have no trouble assuming that an intelligent person, not some random, Darwinian process, had done the work—a virus, right?"

"Yes," he said

"This would be clear evidence to you of intelligent design, right, but more precisely would it not be the evidence of 'intelligent evil design'? Aren't computer viruses all like that? Intelligent evil?"

"Yes," he said

"Then, what about real viruses? Are they for the most part evidence of 'intelligent evil design.'"

Thoughtfully he cocked his head, "I'll have to think about that."

I waited six months for him to think about that. I wrote him a letter. His response can be summarized: "Ralph I should have told you at the time we talked that I conceive of my role as one intending to undermine the theory of evolution and nothing more. In my writings I cannot even refer to God much less Satan."

He may be right about what he ought not do. If he did talk about intermediate beings both good and evil, maybe even Christians would not listen to him or read further what he was writing!

Why do we avoid taking Satan into account? Why, unless this phenomenon of skirting his existence and possible activities is itself evidence of a master Satanic delusion?

A secular Jewish professor at Columbia University has written a whole book, *The Demise of Satan*. With ponderous scholarly footnotes and all, he traces down through American history the gradual disappearance of Satan as a serious reality and the gradual appearance of him as a comic-book character. It may not have appeared to this professor that he is tracing the progressive delusion of a real Satan. Is he?

Group Self-Deception, Seminar

February 7, 2003 *Frontiers in Mission*, 181-84

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Our basic commitment here to doing the will of God has all along led us to a serious reevaluation and questioning of both the theology and practice of various new Christian movements on the mission field. Missionaries feel compelled to research the degree of truth and faithfulness these movements have with Biblical truth. Some of this kind of concern is implied by the much discussed term *contextualization*. The looming danger of both contextualization and non-contextualization is the dread term *syncretism*.

For our faith to reappear faithfully and authentically in a new culture is not at all simple. For example, the phrase *holy spirit* when translated literally as *holy wind* in an Irian Jaya language resulted apparently in the practice of earnest, diligent believers running numerous times around the church building—for maybe a half hour—before entering, thus to be out of breath and already receiving the “holy breath” the Christian faith offered. Further understanding of the Bible by these tribal peoples eventually enabled both an insight into the real meaning of “a holy wind that you cannot predict in its origin or destination” and the awareness of the false assumption that the Holy Spirit is merely a new kind of human breathing.

A somewhat parallel assumption here in this country in some Black churches as well as commonly in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, is that human emotion is indelible evidence of the Holy Spirit, when the fact is that while the presence of the Holy Spirit is often manifested in emotion, high emotion does not always manifest the Holy Spirit. Yet manufacturing emotion is a common practice in Christian circles. True emotion cannot be manufactured.

On the other hand, many missionaries, after at first bumping on strange customs in the lands of their mission finally recognize, with a start, significant meaning in certain foreign ways and perspectives which they had at first glance considered ridiculous. A good example is the practice of *couvad*, which is found in more than one country. What happens in this custom is that when a child is about to be born the father replaces the mother-to-be in the family hammock and appropriately groans and rolls around in apparent pain, while the mother goes out and works in the field, the baby being born between rows of crops without the assistance of anyone other than the mother. This practice has gained instant negative reaction from most outsiders. What heartlessness is evident in such a practice! This way of doing things is actually an improvement over the way many cultures pummel and wrestle with mothers in labor, but it is, admittedly, not very easy on the mother in any case. However, the point is that to rush to the conclusion that the people are heartless may well be wrong if you take into account the honest intellectual conclusions of their belief system. That system assumes that devils attack delivering mothers, and that a healthy, thoughtful father is much more likely to withstand those devilish onslaughts, totally sparing the weakened mother from that additional danger.

Now, you would think that missionaries would be able to find some better way for such people. However, that is neither easy nor obvious, since fear of evil spirits is something most missionaries lack, and is widely present in many indigenous societies including for many centuries our own cultural backgrounds.

In the case of what is called euphemistically “female circumcision” missions have made little progress. To this day it is a practice which includes 140 million women in Africa. Drastically more mutilating than male circumcision, missionary hospitals, some of them, need to devote a great deal of time to sewing up the bladders of women who have undergone what is officially called “Female genital mutilation” the reason being that sewing the vagina nearly closed anticipates bladder rupture during the birth of the first child. Without repair surgery a leaking bladder produces a constant 24/7 stench which forces hundreds of thousands of women completely out of their villages.

The minimal progress missions have made against the practice of female genital mutilation—many do not even address the subject for fear of losing converts—is mute testimony to the awesome power of what we could call “Group Self Deception,” a type of *culturally reinforced delusion*. Missionaries are legitimately fearful of destructive cultural practices entering into the Christian movement, and of the puzzling power of “Group Self Deception.”

However, we deceive ourselves if we think our own cultural tradition is devoid of “Group Self Deception.” Thus, this same legitimate fear of straying from Biblical insight has also led returned missionaries to look with foreign eyes upon some of the customs of their countries of origin. Even less likely, but nevertheless possible, is for returning missionaries to look critically upon the nature of the very religious tradition in which they were reared. This latter, very rare and difficult kind of reflection, could be called *reverse contextualization or decontextualization*.

My Friday seminars normally hinge on some event of the past week. This is no exception. I realize that I have used a lot of my time already tiptoeing up to this subject, it is as difficult to raise issues of this kind in our culture as it is for missionaries to do so in an African society. I want to address certain major killers in the United States and much of the Westernized world which our society does little about. These are cultural traditions that are very deep and strong in the Western world, that both pervade and complicate secular society, and in so doing, also the cultural tradition of Christianity from which most of us spring.

My first example is the cultural dynamics surrounding the phenomenon of heart disease. It is the number one killer in the USA today. We spend a billion dollars a day patching people up who succumb to this malady. For 40 years our medical people have been telling people that occluded veins slowing down blood flow is the culprit. At the same time I have read for years that 20% of heart attacks occur in the absence of any of the usual symptoms.

Now, however, way back in May of last year, *Scientific American* ran a cover story whose first few words are:

(Heart disease) causes chest pain, heart attack, and stroke leading to more deaths every year than cancer. The long-held conception of how the disease develops turns out to be wrong. As recently as five years ago, most physicians would have confidently described atherosclerosis as a straight plumbing problem: Fat-laden gunk gradually builds up on the surface of passive artery walls. If a deposit

[plaque] grows large enough, it eventually closes off an affected “pipe,” preventing blood from reaching its intended tissue. After a while the blood-starved tissue dies. When a part of the cardiac muscle or the brain succumbs, a heart attack or stroke occurs. Few believe that tidy explanation anymore.

I have brought this quote up before. Now, nine months later I want to refer to the Harvard Medical School health newsletter which arrived this past week, and use it as evidence of the deep and profound durability of Group Self Deception. Note that this first quote from the article in *Scientific American* states that the change of view began five years ago. Further on in the article it says that the new radically different view was well understood in some circles 20 years ago.

Briefly, the “new” view is that the buildup of plaque in the arteries is a very small factor in heart disease. If it were a main factor, being very gradual, it would weaken people gradually. Fact is that an artery can be restricted 90% with no great problems resulting. Rather, a more dynamic factor is involved. Not gunk in the tube but an inflammation in the wall of the arteries is the real danger. Why? because when an inflammation grows too large it will “erupt” into the artery and clog the artery totally in a few moments, thus healthy athletes keeling over without warning.

I am interested that now that this new understanding is appearing in magazines and newspapers it is becoming clear that fully 50% of heart fatalities lack the long accused symptoms. Cholesterol tests which measure occlusion are fading in significance. C-Reactive Protein, which reflects inflammation somewhere in the body is now considered far more significant. Diet and exercise are also fading in relevance. What in the world is it that causes the inflammation in an arterial wall, that causes the eruption that stops up an artery instantly, that damages even a healthy heart muscle, and often leads to death? This is the difficult to admit factor. It is a little understood infection. It is little understood in great part because for 40 years no one has been researching that kind of factor. Heart disease, like stomach ulcers, has been traditionally explained as a condition, not an infection, the result of lifestyle not an attacking pathogen.

This is all very significant but also very embarrassing, and very disturbing of the status quo. Think of the disturbance to the enormous industry that patches up heart attack victims, strives to dilate occluded arteries, surgically creates incredible bypasses, actually cuts hearts out thousands of times a month, replacing them with donor’s hearts or extremely sophisticated artificial hearts. All this costs a billion dollars a day, all the while 2,000 victims die per day even so. Yet the amount of money that is focused on finding the source infection is microscopic.

Our whole nation pauses and grieves over the sudden death of seven brave astronauts, and spends more on a single space shuttle than is spent per year on the mysterious infection behind 2,000 deaths a day every day of every week. If I were to include deaths from other diseases caused by unnoticed and mysterious infections that number would no doubt increase to 10,000 a day. Compare that to 150 American lives lost per day in the Vietnam war for which our whole nation tightened its belts.

What kind of Group Self Deception is going on here? How could something known 20 years ago take so long to surface? How could the Harvard Medical letter acknowledge some of this but deliberately skirt the role of infection?

Let’s take a different example.

Hitler, 75 years ago decreed that certain whole cities would give up smoking in order to test the strong evidences clearly understood that long ago that smoking led to cancer. It took 40 more years for Americans to come to that conclusion, although all we have really done is to cut civil governments in on the profits, while thousands of young people begin each day a habit which will drag them down into premature death. We are spending billions to reduce the use of other drugs, destabilizing whole countries like Colombia in the process, but like Jimmy Carter said, we kill more Colombian citizens by American cigarettes than Colombian drugs kill American citizens with hard drugs. It is projected that American cigarettes will kill 50 million Chinese in the next few years. Our government defends and promotes the nicotine industry overseas. It has pressured South East Asian countries to open their borders to our cigarettes and our cigarette advertising (only Singapore is a hold out) and already in those countries we monopolize this death dealing market.

I speak of the role and deeply rooted function in our society and churches of an addictive and dangerous drug called alcohol. Delissa last night made a passing reference to “all of these girls are in prison because of alcohol.” Maybe she meant “most.” All those who join the FMF are required to abstain totally from the use of any hard drugs, including both nicotine and alcohol. In the case of milder drugs like caffeine (whether in tea, coffee, or soft drinks) we close our eyes to their use, yet do not institutionally promote their use.

Within days of each other both *Newsweek* and *Christianity Today* have devoted a full page to this issue. I thought I could piggy back on their content and do so from a missiological point of view.

Here at the Center only once before in my recollection have we ever discussed the matter of alcohol in a seminar or missiology hour. We simply wrote into our manual the idea that in view of the fact that avoidance of alcoholic beverages is part of the main stream of the global, missionary culture, we have therefore, as a Fellowship, chosen to abide by that particular cultural norm in order to be able best to minister within that same global missionary culture. We have held all renters, all visitors, all dorm residents on campus to this same norm. Actually, for nearly 90 years this campus has been an alcohol-free campus.

But moods are changing. A more trivial example: there was a time when Evangelical students at UCLA could be identified by their not wearing lipstick. In a lag of change they finally adopted the bizarre custom. By that time, in the '60s, the secular students were slavishly avoiding lipstick, and so at that point Evangelical UCLA students could be identified by the fact that they did wear lipstick. Still more recently, the wearing of lipstick has become an optional item in the secular culture and it is no long possible to detect an Evangelical student by such a clue.

Especially in the last 35 years, in a desperate effort for second and third-generation Evangelicals to cast aside superficial divergences from contemporary culture, and to enable a more ready assimilation into the church of people with secular backgrounds, there are now very little if any observable clues to the presence or absence of Evangelicals in our culture, even in terms of divorce rate. The entire range of secular behaviors is by now evident within the Evangelical tradition, in the USA, that is. By contrast, on many mission fields there are still many large national church movements which reflect earlier thinking. Coming to this country such nationals have a hard time

getting used to the great gap of difference between the Gospel they heard from missionaries and the milieu of the sending churches today.

I recall one time at Fuller an African student was shocked by the amount of drinking in the seminary dorms. It was especially bad on the weekends. One Saturday he held his peace throughout the noise and disorder of the Saturday evening boozing time, but when it got past midnight he felt sure that respect for the Lord's day should make a difference. He did not realize that that had changed, too, and so just after midnight he called up Dr. Glasser, who was the dean of the School of World Mission, to protest. Of course, Glasser could not do anything about a culturally approved drug either—not at an Evangelical seminary priding itself on being *avant garde*.

My reason for this lengthy background to the pressures of culture vs. the influence of the Bible is, as I say, partly to introduce two items from the press: one is an Evangelical writer in *Christianity Today*. The other is a secular author writing in *Newsweek*.

The Evangelical writer walks on pins and needles and yet at first glance seems to come out reasonably. He says:

Christians who do not commit to a principle of total abstinence should follow a guideline that would represent both discernment and Christian freedom by allowing limited use, now and then, within the context of family, friendship, religious celebration, and diplomatic protocol.

His advice, if followed on college campuses today would certainly eliminate the binge drinking which now plagues half of all college students. Note that he mentions two alternatives: total abstinence and limited use. However, he goes on actually to recommend limited use over abstinence, since, as is already present in what I quoted, limited use is the path of “both discernment and Christian freedom.”

The secular author, unrestrained by the Evangelical panic to conform to this world, says,

Booze and beer are not the same as illegal drugs. They're worse.... America's most pervasive drug problem ... Alcohol is a factor in more than half of all domestic violence and sexual-assault cases. Between accidents, health problems, crime and lost productivity, researchers estimate alcohol abuse costs the economy \$167 billion a year. In 1995 four out of every 10 people on probation said they were drinking when they committed a violent crime, while only one in 10 admitted using illicit drugs. Close your eyes and substitute the word blah-blah for alcohol in any of those sentences, and you'd have to conclude that an all-out war on blah-blah would result....

A wholesale uprising in Washington doesn't seem likely against Philip Morris, which owns Miller Brewing and was the largest donor of soft money to the Republicans in 1998, or against Seagram, which did the same for the Democrats in 1996. ...

When members of Congress tried to pass legislation that would make alcohol part of the purview of the nation's drug czar the measure failed. Mothers Against Drunk Driving faces opposition to both its educational programs and its public

service ads from principals and parents who think illicit drugs should be given greater priority. The argument is this: heroin, cocaine and marijuana are harmful and against the law, but alcohol is used in moderation with no ill effects by many people.

She does not agree, and goes on,

Here's the counterargument: there are an enormous number of people who cannot and will never be able to drink in moderation.

Strange, isn't it, that when the drug, Rezulin, which is enormously helpful to most diabetics turns out to harm one out of 100 who take it (but not their families or other drivers), it is withdrawn from the market on the grounds that you cannot tell which diabetics it will harm. Meanwhile, alcohol, which brings premature death to one out of 10 who employ it, cannot be placed under the supervision of the Federal Drug Administration for the purely political reasons of hefty drug payoffs.

One of the partially redeeming virtues of the Evangelical piece is the reference to the use of diluted wine in Roman times. In Roman times it would appear that only the Teutonic tribal people drank fermented grape juice *straight*. The natural level of the alcoholic content of fermented grape juice when mixed with drinking water (at 1 to 7 or 1 to 15 in proportion, and left for a period so as to kill off germs) no doubt saved millions of Romans from diarrhea and even death, and Paul urges Timothy to take this factor into account.

But today wine has a much higher, and unnatural alcohol content, and our contemporary word wine cannot properly be the word used to translate any Biblical beverage, whether what most translations call *wine* (diluted) or *strong drink* (undiluted, but yet only natural alcohol content). Thus, there is no reference in the Bible to the kind of beverage we possess in contemporary "fortified" wine, much less even higher content liquors, none of which can be produced without the use of a distillation process which was unknown in ancient times.

However, totally lacking in the Evangelical piece is any awareness of the killing ratio, the inevitable tragedy for a very high percentage of those who follow its suggested social use of alcohol. Years ago Upton Sinclair, a social prophet of his time, observed that few home owners would keep a dog around if it leaped upon one out of ten dinner guests and dragged them down by the throats to their deaths, yet that is what we do when we serve a deadly drug that does not seem to harm nine out of ten who use it, but condemns one out often to years of difficulties, and gradual degradation leading to premature death and, in that process is by no means a victimless crime, since it leads to violence, crime, child abuse, wife abuse, and highways deaths to others who are totally innocent. However, here at the Center, since we are not radicals, we feel we must recognize the immense power of the cultural upbringing in the lives of some our members. We thus do not go out of our way to change anyone's beliefs in this area. We merely require abstinence from addictive drugs in terms of behavior. This policy is in the category of our very few non-negotiables, since it is a prominent feature of Third World Christianity (in time past missionaries rejected cultural alcohol and produce churches with there convictions).

“The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil”—our mission too?

Causes of Death in the USA						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Died/Yr	D/Y Cum		Cum %	Died/Day	D/D Cum
1 Heart diseases	700,142	700,142	29%	29%	1,917	1,917
2 Cancer	533,768	1,233,910	22%	51%	1,461	3,378
3 Cerebrovascular diseases (Stroke, etc)	163,538	1,397,448	7%	58%	448	3,826
4 Chronic lower respiratory diseases (COPD, emphysema, etc.)	123,013	1,520,461	5%	63%	337	4,163
5 Accidents (unintentional injuries)	101,537	1,621,998	4%	67%	278	4,441
6 Diabetes mellitus	71,372	1,693,370	3.0%	70%	195	4,636
7 Influenza and pneumonia	62,034	1,755,404	2.6%	73%	170	4,806
8 Alzheimer's disease	53,852	1,809,256	2.2%	75%	147	4,953
9 Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, and nephrosis	39,480	1,848,736	1.6%	77%	108	5,062
10 Septicemia (blood infection)	32,238	1,880,974	1.3%	78%	88	5,150
11 Intentional self-harm (suicide)	30,618	1,911,592	1.3%	79%	84	5,234
12 Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	27,035	1,938,627	1.1%	80%	74	5,308
13 Hypertension and hypertensive renal disease	19,250	1,957,877	0.8%	81%	53	5,360
14 Assault (homicide)	17,386	1,975,263	0.7%	82%	48	5,408
15 Parkinson's disease	16,544	1,991,807	0.7%	82.4%	45	5,453
16	1,991,807		82.4%		5,453	
17 Other causes (mainly disease)	424,618	2,416,425	17.6%	17.6%	1,163	6,616
18 Total deaths per year in the USA	2,416,425		100%		6,616	

COMMENTS: (How few die a natural death!)

Row 18 indicates the reported number of deaths in the USA, per year in Col 1, and per day in Col 5.
 Row 16 sums up the total number of deaths in the USA per year due to the 15 causes listed in rows 1-15.
 Each row gives the breakdown for each of the different causes of death, Col 1 = annual total, Col 5 = daily total.

- Note that the deaths from the causes listed in rows 1-8, Col 4, account for 75% of all deaths in the USA.
- Note that number of deaths in the USA from just homicide (Row 14) is only 7/10 of 1% of all deaths.
- Note that the number of deaths from heart disease plus cancer (Col 4 Row 2) constitutes more than half (51%) of all deaths.
- Lines 5, 11 and 14 are non-disease causes. Together they represent 4%, 1.3% and .7% of the total. The remaining 12 disease-related causes are still 76.4% of the total deaths. (Should that be true?)
- If Line 17, "Other Causes," is mostly disease, then pathogenic or germ-based disease accounts for even more than 76.4% of deaths. Yet 99% of medical/pharmaceutical funds focus on treating disease, not eradicating the pathogenic sources.

[Col 1 data for 2001, from the National Center for Health Statistics, 2003. Other columns and calculations, RDW, 5/25/04]

Beneath these silent statistics is a raging war of pathogenic disease against human beings. This war prematurely drags down to death in pain and suffering about four out of five people who die in the United States. Subtracting lines 5, 11, and 14, eight out of ten dies an unnatural death. This is not a pretty picture, and not something to look forward to. As someone said, I am not afraid of death, just the process of dying.

But the absolute wonder is that less than one percent of medical funds goes to disease sources instead of disease *treatments*. There are several reasons for this.

- Until recently many of these diseases were not understood to be the result of *infections* (pathogens, that is, viruses, bacteria or parasites), but because of “conditions.” Duodenal ulcers also were because of stress and spicy food, etc., not a bacterium (*heliobacter pylori*). Tuberculosis was assumed to be caused by sleeping in damp places, not by a pathogen. Heart disease has long been described as being caused by *conditions* like salt or cholesterol in the diet and as a gradual build-up of plaque in the arteries. Now it is clear that half of all who die of heart attacks don’t possess any of the alleged symptoms. Now, heart deaths are attributed to *sudden* “eruption” of inflammation in arterial walls (due to an *infection*), which *suddenly* blocks arteries and thus strains and damages the heart, *suddenly*. Strong evidence has now been acknowledged to indicate that infections underlie heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and schizophrenia, for example.

- A second major reason is that Western theology has a blind spot stemming from the neo-platonism of Augustine (in the fourth century AD). Thus, we tend to look for God’s after-the-fact *purposes* in a tragedy. We don’t often seek to eradicate the causes—unless we think they are conditions like lack of exercise, wrong nutrition, etc.

Jonathan Edwards (1740s) was accused of “interfering with Divine Providence” when he sought to employ a vaccine to defend his Indians from smallpox.

3. The simplest factor to explain is that sick people seeking healing (not causal explanations) provide the truly enormous resources of the medical and pharmaceutical industries. Over 99% of all such funds, understandably, focus on *treatments* not origins of disease. Yet, most government money (NIH, NCI, etc.) is also manipulated or influenced by the medical/pharmaceutical industries. So also with the research grants on which university faculties live. In other words, relatively little concern ends up for disease origins.

Who Is Saved?

Correspondence with David Hesselgrave

Frontiers in Mission, 161-63

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Sunday, July 4, 2004

In reply refer to 4704.756

Dear David,

I append my brief letter to Art Glasser about Cornelius.

Having read your Chapter Two and done some more thinking I can make the following comment.

A small point: I note that in your text you first quote, "a message through which you and all your household will be saved." But later you paraphrase, "in order to be saved." This bends things in the conventional direction all right.

Much more important is the constantly repeated statement in 10:14 as the essence of the angel's message to Peter, in 10:28 as the essence of his visit to Cornelius, and in 11:8 as the essence of his recapitulation, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." The issue is whether or not Cornelius, as is, is acceptable to God. And all this is in the past tense, "God has made clean."

Especially note that this is the sentence Peter quotes immediately upon meeting Cornelius BEFORE Peter says anything at all about Jesus Christ.

On the other hand there is no suggestion here that the blood of Christ or the Name of Jesus was not the basis of Cornelius's salvation. That is the only way anyone has ever been saved, but this is not to say that "a knowledge of Jesus" in the purely intellectual narration Peter gave is the crucial element. No one before or after Christ was ever saved by His blood without something more than Gnostic knowledge. The only route known to the Jews (and to us) is as in 11:18, "repentance unto life."

In Peter's stunned, reflective summary in 10:34, 35, he is saying that Gentiles everywhere in the "God Fearer" category are, as is, acceptable to God as Jews, they are not to be considered unholy. He does not add, "if they can just get the facts about Jesus."

In other words, the overwhelming Biblical evidence negates our contemporary additional stricture about the utter necessity of additional head knowledge beyond OT special revelation. And, it shows that the issue of General vs Special revelation is an issue that is very different from that of Cornelius and the NT "God fearers" in general, all of whom had had extensive contact with Special Revelation. The glorious Fact enabling this startling truth, of course, is the blood of Christ not an animal sacrificial system, which is the "good" news to the Gentiles, upsetting to Jews.

The U.S. Center for World Mission and the William Carey International University are projects of the Frontier Mission Fellowship

David Hesselgrave, Sunday, July 4, 2004

Ralph D. Winter
Frontier Mission Fellowship



Page 2

Thus, the whole dichotomy between circumcized and uncircumcized is irrelevant, and the Gentiles who did not follow the law abjectly were as acceptable to God as Jews, both equally able to find "repentance unto life (11:18)."

Now, I have to say that the question of General versus Special Revelation is an associated topic, and whether Paul was talking about General or Special revelation in Romans two is a key question.

My intuition in this case is that we do not apparently possess the necessary knowledge about God's ways to come down with a dogmatic assertion. Obviously, all people and their fellowship with God, their growth in grace, are eminently better off the more they know of Jesus Christ. We do not need to argue that point.

As you know I believe that we can speed up evangelization and empower our message greatly by including as much knowlege of God's glory as possible. This means first of all to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It also means ripping back the cloak we have put artificially over all of the glory of God to be seen in the microbiological world, etc. Irwin Moon style.

To do this is urgent, imperative, and of higher priority than 98% of what the average believer and the church is actually doing.

Okay, these are some thoughts.

Cordially in Christ,

Ralph

The Greatest Mistake in Missions

Talk at Kabul Reunion, Ralph D. Winter
Sunday, August 8, 2004

W1296.3

(*Frontiers in Mission*, 164-66)

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Scripture: Genesis 20:1-11

Key text: Abraham replying to Abimilech who was outraged by Abraham's conduct: "I said to myself, 'There is no fear of God in this place.'"

Undoubtedly, the most unfortunate error of judgment a missionary can possibly make is to assume that none of the people to whom he is ministering have made any spiritual moves in the right direction. Perhaps most of them have not, just as in our own society most people have little awareness of God in their lives. *But some of them may have!*

On this point the Bible is very clear. God is at work in all parts of the world, and for us to seek out the "man of peace" and build on that foundation is terribly important. Many times mission outreach offers a host of desirable elements, such as the hope of getting out of that society, or going to the States, or getting a job or an education, or some other nonspiritual attraction. But that is not the best foundation to build on.

This was, in a way, what I felt Joe Richie was saying last night. He was insisting that there are Muslims and others in Afghanistan, even—or especially—in villages, who have genuine good will and substantial integrity, with whom we can deal to do real things even though our primary and ulterior motive is not to instruct them in the fine points of the trinity.

My personal pilgrimage in this sphere has led me again and again in recent years to trust the Bible—above things I have heard in church. Indeed, the entire history of missions is basically the history of the Bible. There is no other book like it. If you see a picture of someone going into some sort of religious building carrying a book it won't be a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Shintoist. No other major religion has a book comparable to the levelheaded coherence and compelling authority of our Bible.

My oldest daughter, living for years in the mountains of Morocco, found the women down the street would come over any time she promised to tell them more about Jesus. As a result, the Qur'an grows strangely dim in the bright, intelligible light of the New Testament Gospels.

In my pilgrimage with the Bible the most significant new understanding began in an all-too-brief fall term at Prairie Bible Institute, along with Maynard Eystone. This was the fall of 1949. I went for only one semester because I wanted to see how they taught the Bible using "Search Questions."

[Digression: Maynard Eystone and I had already been together two years before in '46-47 at Princeton Seminary when I had planted a tiny seed which grew into a stream of Americans teaching English at Habibia and later founding AIT. That earlier period included the first of the Urbana Conferences (although it was held in Toronto) where I originally heard of the tent-making strategy.]

At Prairie I first heard of the mission significance of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3). There I was exposed to Exodus 19 (“That all the earth may hear”). I already knew about Isaiah 49:6, “I want you to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

The situation with Abimilech began to grow on me. He was outside the covenant and may have had little or no contact with the Bible. Many times in the Bible we see evidence of God working outside of the box, so to speak.

Another phenomenally significant thing to me is what I now call “The Rosetta Stone” of Biblical interpretation. It has become clearer and clearer to me that the Bible employs two paradoxically different ways of explaining what happens. One, more typical of the OT, takes the point of view of the fulfillment of God’s purposes. The other, more often in the NT, speaks of human or natural causes.

The most dramatic example of both of these two apparently conflicting points of view can be found in the passages about Joseph in Egypt. It straightforwardly describes the evil intentions of his brothers who sent him into slavery. Later he himself tells them, “You did not send me. God sent me.” The Bible, here, is not contradicting itself but is portraying two strikingly different but equally legitimate and true explanations of the same event. One is from the point of view of instrumental causes. The other looks at the purposes of God in the event.

In this case the two explanatory perspectives are found in the same Biblical passage. More startling is the contrast in perspective as revealed in II Samuel and I Chronicles when David’s sin in counting the people comes up. The twenty-five verses describing this event are identical except for one word. In II Sam 24:1 it is God who instigates David to go wrong. In I Chron 21:1 it is Satan who instigates David to go wrong. One account derives from the sovereignty of God, the other from the on-going free will of intermediate beings to do evil.

Indeed, since the OT and the NT extensively side with each of these apparently contrary perspectives, we can at least recognize the importance of not merely attributing everything to God’s initiative. As long as intermediate beings, angels (good and bad) and men (good and bad) exist, the NT perspective must be taken seriously.

The plot thickens. If the Abimilech account verifies the work of God’s spirit beyond the bounds of His covenant people, then the question may fairly be asked if the Babylonian Captivity did not introduce Jewish theologians into a more ample understanding of causality—that is, the source of evil? Was this due to their exposure to the radical dualism of the Zoroastrian religious tradition, which envisioned two equal gods, one good and one evil?

The influence of Zoroastrianism on Christianity later on can easily be seen in the strong Christian movement called Manichaeism, a tradition in which Augustine first believed. But that kind of Christian dualism is not seen in the NT where Satan is in no way a god equal to the good God. Furthermore, for that very reason, Manichaeism was strongly rejected and suppressed once the Roman government sought to foment a single orthodox tradition and the NT came to the fore as the ultimate basis for doctrine.

Unfortunately, Augustine himself not only saw the error of Manichaeism but flipped to a more neoplatonic point of view in which there was no intelligent angelic opponent of God at all, or at least he did very little, all things being the initiative of God.

Augustine is merely the most influential theologian in history. Much of our present thinking derives not so much from the Bible as it does from doctrinal frameworks built out of Augustinian thinking.

For us today this Augustinian influence is very significant. It seems noble to attribute everything to God, and there is truth in that. But when it comes to our joining with God and His Son in fighting evil, such theology may tie our hands. 1 John 3:8 says “The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Neither Luther nor Calvin had the slightest hint about the existence of deadly viruses, bacteria and tiny parasites. Their theology does not address that issue. If they had they might have, following Augustine, decided that such dangerous entities are the work of God and thus we cannot fight against them.

Of course, we know we must help the sick. We are, in Augustine’s perspective left without a mandate to seek out and destroy dangerous germs. Thus, when Jonathan Edwards sought to use a primitive vaccine against the ravages of small pox among his native American congregation at Stockbridge, the pastors of Massachusetts formed an “anti-vaccination society” against him and declared that if he went ahead with his idea he would be “interfering with Divine Providence.” He went ahead, trying it out on his own wrists. As the pastors had predicted he died of small pox, which is the very most painful way to die. God killed him. That is the Augustinian perspective again.

As a matter of fact, our entire Evangelical theology today is not so much a theology of war against Satan and his works as it is a rationale for seeking to rescue Christians from that battle into “peace of mind” and assurance of salvation.

For some this, then, expands into a globally relevant Gospel emphasizing to men and nations salvation from the penalty of sin without serious and trenchant efforts literally to deliver them from the power of sin and evil.

This partial Gospel underlies the enduring tension between “evangelism and social action.” That tension is essentially the dichotomy between an intellectually framed Gospel of Eternal Salvation and the more Biblical intuition of many sincere Christian leaders (including many missionaries) in groping their way into the full meaning of the Biblical mandate.

That mandate is to restore the glory of God among all peoples by more adequately representing His character. We misrepresent Him if we talk only about getting to heaven. We must also reveal by our actions His concern for the conquest of evil and evil disease. Tiny pathogens right now globally drag down into pain, distorting suffering, and futility far more than half of all the people in the world alive today. True, humans since Calvin have made amazing progress in stamping out recurrent plagues. However, Christians have not been prominent in that effort. Here again we see God using people outside of the Covenant.

Today we must understand more clearly that neither Western Christianity nor Protestantism, nor even Evangelicalism is the only substantial cultural tradition stemming from the Bible. We must recognize a whole lot of derivations. Greeks developed a tradition (Orthodoxy) from the Bible which is different from the Latin (Roman Catholic) derivation, which is different from the Armenian, which is different from the Ethiopian Orthodox. Even more different are the Semitic derivation called Islam, and the Northern European derivations called Protestantism, Mennonite, Evangelicalism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Apostolic, etc.

All of these are substantially Biblical. All of them are flawed. All of them are cultural traditions—by now—whose formalized doctrines do not all fairly represent the Bible.

If we can recognize the Spirit of God at work with Abimilech, the Ninevites, Naaman the Syrian, Cornelius, etc. we need to be able to seek out and build upon such people within any of these flawed traditions, specifically Islam.

If we expect to find believing people in all societies we need to avoid calling just our followers “believers.” The Bible does not put as much emphasis on the extensiveness of our intellectual knowledge as the intensiveness of our heart-faith.

Furthermore, it is now reported for all to know that the incredible impact of the Bible on India, for example, has produced between 14 and 24 million daily Bible reading, believers in Jesus Christ who are still part of their Hindu communities. They do not call themselves Christians.

The same is true in more than one movement to Christ within the world’s Islamic traditions. In Afghanistan it may be common to demand that a spiritually seeking person distinctly recognize the divinity of Christ, thinking that that is the key point. Curiously, the millions of Ismaili Muslims (many in Afghanistan) already believe Jesus was the Son of God. But, since they still call themselves Muslims, we may demand that they learn and acknowledge still more of our “Christian” doctrinal tradition—and begin to call themselves Christian? Do we preach Christ or Christianity? If the latter, it may be the greatest mistake in missions today.

In Pursuit of the Full Gospel

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 167)

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What is inadequate with this statement?

“The over-arching vision within the Frontier Mission Fellowship group of projects is to see all unreached peoples reached with the gospel and the kingdom to come among them. In evangelical terms we can know when a group is reached when there is an indigenous church planting movement among them.”

This paragraph fairly well describes the way we looked at things when we were in the founding period of the FMF. Things are now seen—by me anyway—as both simpler and more complex. We do not intend to give up the priority this statement express for those people groups which have no access to Christ. But we recall that to “reach” a people merely by eliciting a church planting movement among them has never been all that God might want accomplished. To add “and the Kingdom to come among them” is helpful but woefully unspecific.

Today, more than a quarter of a century after our founding, I would think we would speak of the four levels of strategy and purpose rather than one or two:

Level 1: Getting people “saved.”

Level 2: Winning them to the Lordship of Christ and into His family

Level 3: Glorifying God

Level 4: Distinguishing evil from God and fighting “the works of the Devil” as a means of glorifying God, that is, understanding the lordship of Christ as involving us in an all-out war against evil, disease, corruption, a war in which we can expect suffering, hardship and death.

The biggest change of perspective for me is the shift away from a picture of man vs. God, which is a polarization that enabled the commercialization of religion at the time of the Reformation, but before and after as well. The service being sold by religious functionaries in many societies is a service which allows, for a price, a better relationship with God or the gods.

The New Testament picture is much more a picture of two sides, the one, that of the god of this world, the other, God along with man working together to destroy the works of the Devil and reclaim the full glory of God. Currently, the “salvation of man” shoulders out a balanced view of the far more serious cleavage between Satan and God, in which dichotomy man was created to be on God’s side.

In so far as Satan has corrupted man and gained his help in opposing God it is true that man can be on both sides of the struggle. However, it is to Satan’s advantage for the whole conflict to be seen as one of Man vs. God.

A great deal of the conflict between man and man is due to the absence of a clear understanding of the larger conflict between Satan and man and Satan and God. What

would immediately and dramatically unify the nations of man would be the sudden exposure of that great enemy Satan. If humans could wake up to the fact that their far greater enemy is rampant in the form of disease germs they might well rally around that common enemy rather than fight each other. In time of war you do not see so much fighting for status, for position, for fame—precisely due to the far greater looming common enemy.

Logically, then, Satan's most strategic influence on humans is lead them blindly to downplay and ridicule or at least misconstrue his very existence—that is, the existence of an intermediate being of awesome power who is an evil opponent of God (and man). Getting human beings to concentrate totally on their own waywardness toward God is very clever because that tactic easily monopolizes their consciousness and diminishes their awareness of the larger struggle. Indeed, the bulk of all theologizing has to do with “getting man right with God” rather than with restoring full glory to God by distinguishing His works from Satan's works. The final achievement of Satan is, indeed, the human delusion that evil is from God, and due to His “mysterious purposes.”

What Is a Christ-Centered Church?

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 168).

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Dear brother, I have read all three articles, including the evaluation. What you have done is well prepared and reasoned. However, I was all along put off a bit by the amount of abstract words and phrases which lend to ambiguity in application. The very phrase “Christ-centered” is hugely abstract, and, in fact, is not at all logically linked with all of the many wonderful expectations of a church which your evaluation lists. By contrast, however inadequate, the “Three Selves” are quite concrete.

But the greatest change I would like to see is for your emphasis to include, expect, require, the outworking of faith in the community. Your illustrations often showed how out on the job a singing cheerful person made a witness. And, presumably a good piece of work went along with that. But the holiness of the daily task doesn't come through as an essential feature of true faith in the Christ who called us not merely to witness but to be salt and light in a world of evil, corruption, and disease. Where does your Christ-centered congregation shoulder the work of Christ to be done in the world as an end in itself, not merely to witness?

Today in the *LA Times* a half of a page is devoted to a report on tens of thousands of Mennonites in northern Mexico who moved down there a half a century ago from both Canada and the USA. They may have wished that way to avoid the evils of the world (rather than fighting them) and thus save themselves and their people from evil and maintain a Christ-centered church. But now today they are (quite a few of them) well known for their immersion in the drug trade, the cartels, the smuggling of drugs into the U.S. One of the biggest drug busts in history in Oklahoma recently took down a Mennonite team, which with their blue eyes were able for a long time to avoid detection.

When souls are saved they are not merely supposed to be survivors singing of their salvation but soldiers deliberately choosing to enter into the dangerous, sacrificial, arduous task of restoring the glory of God for all to see. “Let your light shine in this way: that your good deeds may be seen by men who will thus be able to glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16—my own translation).

If “the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8), do you think it is good enough for our missionaries around the world to be content with getting people to trust Jesus for their eternal salvation, singing at church and on the job, teach each other the scriptures, raise up leaders, start more congregations of singing people who do not regard it their duty to work at the center of Christ's purpose of destroying the works of the Devil? Would not a Christ centered church take seriously His “as my Father sent me so I send you?”

Did Jesus just go around and lead in worship and Bible study? No, both He and John the Baptist tackled the evils of their day, commanded repentance from selfishness, focused on poor people's real needs, disabled people, sick people, excluded people. He

demonstrated the nature of a God who was not merely a judge but a God of love and light and redemption—not just from the penalty of sin but the power of sin. What would Jesus have said about fighting germs in the name of Christ had the people of his time know about germs? Not even Luther and Calvin knew about destructive germs thus our theology (unchanged from the sixteenth century) ignores that whole swath of the works of the Devil. And, when people get sick, whether in Africa or in California they commonly assume “God did it” for some unknown reason. That misunderstanding does not glorify God. And I don't see anything else coming out of the "radiant, worshipful" congregational life among Evangelicals today, nor in the long list of evaluation traits of a Christ centered church in your article.

Am I missing something?

Appreciatively,

Ralph Winter
Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

12 Frontiers of Perspective

(2005) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 28-40)

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Perspective Five: Reverse Contextualization: The Recontextualization of Our Own Tradition

We have been talking about radical contextualization for *others* to contend with in *other* lands. However, as I have thought about this, it became to me ominous and suspicious that our own form of Christianity has been unthinkingly assumed to be the most balanced, Biblical, and properly contextualized. Is it possible that we need to know how to *decontextualize* our own Christianity before we can ever very successfully *contextualize* the Bible for somebody else?

Let's assume for a moment that our best understanding of the word *contextualization* here at home is not that of seeking indigenous forms to make our faith, our form of Christianity, more acceptable to others, but also means trying to make sure that existing indigenous forms employed by our own people are accurate carrier vehicles for a true, balanced, Biblical faith. In that case we need to be doubly sure what Biblical faith really is.

In seeking to understand our own form of Christianity, I have been helped a great deal by a serious book published by InterVarsity called *God at War*. It was written by a professor at Bethel Seminary in Minneapolis, who suggests that in the 4th century our Christianity imbibed a terrible syncretism, a very tragic theological misunderstanding, a theological pollution. And, for the next 1600 years our Western, Latinized Christianity has become a carrier vehicle for a form of faith which is both Biblical but also pagan in the area of Neoplatonism's passivity toward evil and its absence of a Satanic opponent to God's will. This means we are telling people around the world (by our actions, not our words), "Our God can get you to heaven but He can't cure your malaria because He apparently does not know or care or have power in that sphere." Thus, being invisibly and unconsciously saddled with this theology, we can't ourselves as part of our mission do anything trenchant about malaria either, and we should just pray about it, help those who already have it, and let it go at that.

Thus arises the idea of the *decontextualization of our own tradition, or reverse contextualization*, which means being willing to find major philosophic or Biblical or theological flaws in our own tradition. It really isn't the same as asking if the as-is Christianity of our stripe will ever fit into the Hindu tradition. It's a different task requiring us to talk about the proper contextualization of the Gospel in two directions: into the field culture and, even before that, into our home culture.

The Bible and Saving Faith

(Seminar, June 1, 2005).

Transcribed from audio CAS1026.

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When we go back to the Bible we meet both Jesus and the Bible. As I was growing up I somehow got the idea that you could be saved by quote, “accepting Jesus as Savior.” Or that there was such a thing as a quote, “saving knowledge of Christ.” Or that you could, quote, “pray to receive Jesus.”

But there is nothing in the New Testament that would lead to the conclusion that accepting Christ as Savior is saving faith. Even the phrase “saving faith” is dangerously likely to imply the adequacy of a purely intellectual faith. This latter idea led easily to the idea that the New Testament brought a new, easier way to belong to God. Of faith, not works. In the Old Testament people had to obey to be saved. Ugh. In the New Testament they just had to believe. Believe certain doctrines like Jesus died for my sins.

The common view of things is getting people across a line into a circle, a bounded set. The idea is that if you get inside the boundary you go to heaven. If you’re still outside you won’t. Rather we should talk about a centered set. A center to which we are all drawing closer, and I assume only God knows where a boundary is.

I once read a book in which I discovered to my surprise the statement that certain forms of Christianity were further from the Bible than certain forms of Islam. I’m not sure if he was referring to the 14 million Ismailis in Northern Pakistan, who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Later I learned that Mohammed, in insisting that Jesus did not die but was taken directly to heaven, was not denying the deity of Christ but was protecting it from the implication that the Jews had the power to kill him.

I learned that in all the Koran, no one is more highly exalted than Jesus who is presented, unlike Mohammed himself, as having the attributes of divinity, and that the concept of the Trinity refused by Mohammed, was in fact a perverse concept that we ourselves today reject.

Then in my own teaching at Fuller I finally realized that the volcanic blast of the Greek Bible, that is to say, when the Bible finally appeared in the Greek language, which was a very, very widespread language, that sent ripples in all directions. When it invaded the Greek and Latin world it produced Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholic traditions. It’s later impact on the Semitic world was Islam. It’s later impact on the Teutonic world was Protestantism. It’s impact on the Anglo-Saxon world was Anglicanism.

All these traditions are quite defective in many ways if we compare them to the Bible. Islam is, in some ways, more defective, because Mohammed did not have access to the entire Bible, any more than the Christians he dealt with had. But Luther did. But in other ways, Islam is closer to the Bible than evangelicalism. And unlike the Catholic traditions, Muslims at least don't have a goddess to whom they must pray.

I continue to understand the Bible better. None of the early followers of Jesus called themselves Christians. That term meant something like "Messiah-nut," and was an outsiders' term of derision that only 300 years later became a political term for the Greek and Latin forms of Christianity and by now is claimed by people from Jehovah's Witnesses to Mormons to Christian Science.

What did believers in the New Testament call themselves? It is even possible that in a Semitic language, like Aramaic, that Jesus spoke, or Syriac, or Arabic, they called themselves Muslims. And of course, for 600 years, Christians in the Semitic sphere prayed to Allah, before Mohammed was born. And 30 million pray to Allah today with Allah right there in the Bible.

The Bible also liberated me from the zany idea that at a certain time in history God switched gears, to which a distinct knowledge of Jesus was from that point on, in the entire world, essential to salvation. Now that idea, this insight, in turn liberated me from the idea that Cornelius would not have made it to heaven had Peter not gone to his house and told him about Jesus. By contrast it is now clear that if anyone in the Bible was headed for heaven, Cornelius was. Peter enabled Cornelius to be saved from the assumption that God preferred the Jews and their culture and that to please God you had to become a Jew. He was rescued from that delusion, which of course didn't prevent him from talking to God and God talking to him, as the Bible portrays.

That is, Peter did, as we do today, introduce people to Christ as the Redeemer of all mankind, not just the Jews. Indeed, that he is the only means of salvation, whether in the Old Testament they knew a lot about him or not. Knowing details about Jesus was a marvelous new insight, but it was not itself essential to salvation.

We have to get back to the Bible. We have got to realize that our Christianity has developed a sales talk that isn't really faithful to the Bible, and that many of our traditions are really foreign to the Bible, and that doesn't mean we should throw them all out, but that doesn't mean that some of them are in contrast to the Bible, which is very, very dangerous.

Now, to me, the biggest difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, in some ways, anyway, is not that we now have superior knowledge of the nature of God, by looking at the face of Jesus Christ, and seeing the glory of God. Now that, of course, is spectacular, even if not essential. But the really astounding difference between the Old and New Testaments, is the fact that you have 237 references to Satan in the New Testament and not one in the Old Testament, practically. As a person. The word satan in

the Hebrew simply means adversary. God himself is a satan. God was a satan when he opposed a certain prophet. He was an adversary.

But it was not until the New Testament that there was deeper understanding of the fact that there is an intelligent adversary personality which we must fight against. If Satan is the one who perverted and distorted all of nature, and developed the outlandishly violent suffering that goes on every moment of the day in all of nature, with all kinds of creatures killing each other, if this was Satan's activity, along with dragging down Adam into a post-fallen original sin, a new damaged creation, we have monumental obstacles in becoming what God wants us to be. We were born depraved to some extent because of the Fall. Because of Satan's influence.

It isn't just getting saved, getting secure, but it's getting enlisted. When you were listed in the Lamb's Book of Life, you're also enlisted in an armed force, in a military operation. Disease, which is probably the most prominent reality among human beings today, and also among animals—disease is primarily the work of Satan. And we should be deliberately focusing on that.

It makes sense to say that as long as people get to heaven it doesn't matter how soon they die or how badly they suffer. Just so long as they get to heaven. You can easily say that, and that's logical.

But you can't quite say that it doesn't matter to the glory of God. It doesn't affect our understanding of the glory of God for people to be dragged down prematurely into death, into disease, into suffering. We can't say that, can we?

We talk about evangelism and social action as if they are both nice things to do. But we do not normally understand the fact that the very gospel we preach is undermined by the pervasive assumption since Augustine that evil in the world is primarily God's initiative and it's our part to resign ourselves to it and to ask God what his mysterious purposes are, and maybe have to wait until heaven to find them out. That does not empower our gospel at all. Thousand and thousands of marvelous evangelicals live in two worlds. One the church world and one the real world, in which, as a matter of fact, it doesn't make any sense.

Ruth Tucker's recent book, *Walking Away from Faith*, underscores the fact that a very large number of thinking adults really don't respond positively to that kind of a God.

What are we trying to get people inside this line for? Not merely that they should be saved, of course, and that gets them closer and closer to Jesus. Not merely that they would understand the wonders of God himself in the flesh. But that we would become enlisted. That, with Jesus we would be focused on a battle in which we would be involved. We would be following him not only as Savior and Lord, but also as Commander-in-Chief of an army.

The evils and corruptions and diseases and suffering of our time and poverty and injustice, and the terrible things that are happening—these are the work of Satan. We

don't fight them because we believe in social action as well as evangelism. We fight them because we do believe in evangelism—of a God who does not identify with those things. If we want to come to the Bible, the Bible talks about “the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The 4 implications of that for mission and for restoring the glory of God in the minds and hearts of the peoples of the world, is very, very prominent, in my opinion.

Beyond Transformation: An Ancient Syncretism as a Handicap to a “Public Theology,”

Chicago, American Society of Missiology, June 2005 (*Frontiers in Mission*, 279ff).

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

In mission circles we have harbored for many years a phobia of what we call syncretism. We have assumed syncretism can readily occur if we are not very careful whenever a church movement on a mission field is created and becomes autonomous. Less attention is given to the possibility of syncretism that may have long been part of our own religious tradition. I would like to address the latter.

Introduction

The reader may understand my train of thought better if I begin with some personal references.

In 1996 my first wife was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a somewhat rare form of cancer of the bone marrow. She lived for five more years, albeit with increasing difficulties. During her illness I experienced a crash course in cancer, disease in general, and the entire medical/pharmaceutical industry. Unexpectedly, all this converged to spark some serious new thinking in the area of theology and missiology. I doubt if all this intense thinking would have occurred had my wife’s disease not taken five long years. After marrying again I have been pressed into thinking even more deeply about these issues now that I, too, have been diagnosed with the same disease.

The first thing that came to my attention in this bedeviled period was the fact that almost all medical funds are focused on caring for the dying, curing the sick, and preventing disease—all worthwhile things, of course. However, virtually pennies make their way into efforts to combat and eradicate the causal germs of disease. Indeed, the whole history of medicine is, you might say, the slow and almost reluctant understanding that most diseases are not conditions, but infections. Germs themselves have been discovered fairly recently, speaking historically, and have been recognized only very reluctantly, speaking psychologically. Even today for many it is counter to all common sense that tiny organisms too small to see without a microscope could sicken, much less kill, human beings. Most people in the world still do not believe it.

Furthermore, only very recently have we had strong evidence for the infectious origins of heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and schizophrenia. In other words, it is scary but true that today only a pittance is focused on eradicating the pathogenic origins of disease. By contrast, a billion dollars a day goes to patching up people who have suffered heart failure or stroke. An ominous absence of attention?

The second thing I ran into is the curiously widespread absence in Western Christian circles of a corresponding theology of disease. Of course, until recently (historically speaking), virtually no one has puzzled over this gap in our theology, since Calvin and Luther had no idea of germs. Is it not time to call into question the carry-over today of many of our pre-germ theological assumptions? Those assumptions are what

seem to justify our attributing evil to God, saying again and again, in one way or another, “God in His mysterious ways orchestrates all disease and evil.”

When my wife finally died, sincere Christian friends urged me to recognize that “God knows what He is doing,” as if her premature death was obviously God’s mysterious initiative, not the result of an intelligent—and conquerable?—disease pathogen. Long before she died hundreds of friends assured me they were praying for her. I never said this, but I often wondered, “Is prayer all that can be done?”

Both Yancey’s famous book, *Where is God When it Hurts?* and James Dobson’s book, *When God Doesn’t Make Sense* echo the same point of view: we cannot fully know God’s mysterious purposes. So there would seem to be nothing to do but resign ourselves to unexpected tragedy and evil. In neither book is prayer advised, nor are we urged to deploy efforts to discover and eradicate attacking pathogens (whether viruses, bacteria or parasites) in the Name of Christ, as a logical result of our efforts for the Kingdom and His glory.

I am sure that neither Yancey nor Dobson would question the necessity for society to do something to rid our streets of muggers, attack dogs, and, in California, mountain lions. Intelligent enemies of the kind we can see with the naked eye, we should fight, of course. But apparently, if such dangers are too small to see—even if we can now see them in a microscope—they must be *ipso facto* part of God’s mysterious will! Isn’t this a theological hiatus? While we may try to avoid such pathogens, we have no theology—no reasoned or mandated mission—to *eradicate* them. Over the centuries the church has successfully primed the “world” to do many good things, an entire range of things (from hospitals to ramps for handicapped people). However, if “non-spiritual” efforts at eradication are pursued at all, we have loftily left that for the world to do.

Thus, as I see it, key elements of “the work of the church” are actually being done by the world—it is not a part of the articulated mission of church people. They are off singing hymns and dreaming about heaven. Calvin said nothing about germs, of course, and since his era we have developed and embraced no significant “public theology” in that sphere.

Somewhere along the line I ran into Gregory Boyd’s Intervarsity Press book, *God at War*, and was introduced to the idea that Augustine had incorporated a syncretic element into his thinking that has for sixteen centuries bedeviled Western theology, especially public theology.

Historical Background

However, before looking into the source of Augustine’s alleged syncretism, it may be helpful to generalize about the feasibility of public theology in the case of different Christian traditions in history.

For example, the type of Christianity that flourished among African slaves in America is noted for a hymnology of the next world. Similarly, the enormous, mainly lower-class movement brought into being by D. L. Moody focused for many years on dispensational and eschatological exegesis, not public theology. For slaves, theologizing about how governments should be run or even how civil society might be improved would have been of little practical value. In the same way, the Anabaptists in Reformation times had little or no possibility of effecting changes in this world at the social and political level of the ruling class.

By contrast, Calvin himself pushed through legislation requiring banisters on second-floor balconies in every house within his considerable political influence. Indeed, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, and, of course, Roman Catholics, historically, have all usually participated in—or even dominated—the ruling class.

In the United States the fruits of middle 19th century revivals energized a wide spectrum of social reforms precisely because the very subjects of revival included social and political leaders.

But when in the late 19th century the churches became flooded by a torrent of immigration representing older European Christian traditions (e.g., Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic), the weight of the newcomers tended to water down the earlier (often idealistic) revival distinctives that had so dramatically affected the public domain.

This explains how it is that two remnants of the revival ethos of the 1850s have survived without heavy European immigration: the Mormon and Adventist traditions. To this day they maintain what used to be advanced ideas about nutrition and education. They peeled off from the mainstream and were thus isolated from the influence of the new immigrants with their more traditional European and contrary pre-revival opinions. Thus, in some cultural features, the Mormon and Adventist traditions today are museum pieces of mid-19th century revival Evangelicalism.

Unlike the extensive social activism of the Wesleys and Whitefields of the Great Awakening of the 18th century, and the Charles Finneys of the 19th century revivals, the biggest negative impact on an awareness of public theology was that of D. L. Moody in the early 20th century. Millions of poorer and less-educated people got swept into church life, carrying with them their social distance from college education and the college educated. This made their participation in the professions and civil government very unlikely.

Furthermore, their schools—Moody Bible Institute faculty, for example—determinedly distanced themselves from the cultured proponents of the Social Gospel, emphasizing eschatology instead. They abandoned the school system of the civil order, preferring for more than a half century the newly developed Bible Institute model. However, despite a relatively isolationist social detour of 50 to 90 years, the 157 Bible institutes created in the Moody era gradually became Bible colleges, Christian colleges, and more recently, Christian universities. Only now in just the past few years have people whose background of faith originated in the Moody period begun to move into the professions, public life, Congress, and even the White House staff. This new visibility and influence is creating a renewed (and scary) symbiosis between faith and society, one which at least superficially is more open to public theology than at any time since the mid 19th century.

In this large sphere, then, public theology is now once more *feasible*. Unhappily, however feasible, the *clarity* of the “horizon of the coming Kingdom,” on which George Hunsberger has urged us to keep our eyes fixed, is, as I see it, mainly unimproved or maybe blurred or even invisible. Public theology, in order to become significant, needs to be both *feasible* and *visible*.

The Visibility of the Horizon

Speaking of our present horizon, an understandable range of perspectives has rippled through Western churches and missions over the past two centuries.

Many pastors and missionaries have continued to replace the Biblical agenda with one of the central (somewhat artificial?) issues of the Reformation, namely, mission that simply offers (sells) advice to people on the attractive subject of “how to get to heaven,” or “how to be assured of eternal salvation.”

Other missionaries, with better phraseology, seek to reconcile people into ongoing fellowship with God by “winning people to Christ.”

Still others have earnestly sensed the importance of “Kingdom Mission,” which implies much more (and many different things), especially the reevaluation of culture in the light of Christian perspective.

Recently the word “transformation” has been resurrected from the past and has now become a buzzword. This is good insofar as it helps us rise above a purely otherworldly concept of salvation. But the word itself is weak, implying no specific direction of transformation. The whole of society is, after all, constantly undergoing *transformation*, though not necessarily in the right direction. The word *transformation* is thus not an inherently positive term. A better one might be *restoration*, which is teleological and moves in a certain direction.

There is also the Biblical emphasis on glorifying God in all the earth. This is what we sing about all the time with little concrete reference. “Glorifying God” often sinks to the level of a meaningless, intangible catch phrase that is usually redefined in terms of whatever ministry is being promoted. Is any agency today mainly expounding the glory of God? It is hard to imagine a global educational enterprise focused exclusively on, say, the wonders of God’s Creation. That would be nice, and did indeed happen back in the 1930s–50s in the days of the Moody Institute of Science films.

However, what if the God of whom we speak is, by default, understood to be cruel and destructive, the sponsor of deadly germs and all of the violence in nature? What if God’s reputation, His glory, is severely tarnished and needs to be defended? What if God is thought to be the direct perpetrator of all that happens, good and evil (such that His purposes must be understood to be mysterious)? If these things are true, one can easily imagine the problem they pose for evangelism in the public sphere. Do not all these “ifs” cry out for any activity that could counteract them and more adequately defend and exposit the unmarred, unstained glory of God? And would that not be a valid definition of a larger “public” mission? That sounds reasonable, perhaps, but is still desperately platitudinous.

Are we in an improved position now in the 21st century to get a better handle on what our mission is supposed to be? I think so. I would hope so. To do so may have a lot to do with the difference between Shiite and Sunni Muslims. It may also be a problem made more difficult by Augustine’s flight from Manichaeism.

Another Rosetta Stone

A further factor in the picture: I feel it is important to acknowledge that our Christian Bibles reveal many evidences of having incorporated perspectives from outside the Abrahamic genetic lineage. Furthermore, it is plain that our Bibles display a

progressive unfolding of insight, such that while New Testament insights do not necessarily invalidate Old Testament insights, in some cases they clearly add to them.

Thus, without throwing out the entire OT as having been outmoded and superseded—as Marcion did—it is yet possible to discern significantly new features in the latter parts of the OT and especially in the NT.

To me one of the most striking contrasts between OT and NT insights is what I have playfully called “The Rosetta Stone of Biblical Hermeneutics.” I refer to the contrast (which is quite shocking at first glance) between the earlier and later Biblical accounts of the famous event in which King David went wrong in numbering his people. The earlier account in II Samuel 24:1-25 (NIV) is repeated verbatim in I Chronicles chapter 21 (NIV), with the change of a single word. The earlier account says plainly that “God incited” David to do this wrong. The later version in I Chronicles replaces the word God with the word Satan. Now it says “Satan incited” David to do wrong.

A possible explanation of this seemingly monumental difference may be seen in the similarly paradoxical contrast between the initial straightforward account of Joseph’s being sold into slavery *by his brothers*, and then Joseph’s own declaration later (to his brothers), “*You did not send me to Egypt, God did*” (Genesis 45:8).

In the case of both Joseph and David, one of the two perspectives is that of God’s ultimate sovereignty, the other perspective is that of immediate instrumentality. Joseph’s brothers were the ones who—in the immediate, instrumental sense—sent him into slavery, even though God somehow in His sovereignty was involved. In the case of David, Satan “incited” him to do wrong in the immediate and instrumental sense in I Chronicles, but, in terms of God’s sovereignty, in II Samuel, God did it.

In fact, throughout the OT, the perspective of sovereignty is very common, almost pervasive, and, it would seem, easily misleading. This is where Augustine apparently got stuck. The word *satan* in most of the OT simply means “opponent,” or, “adversary.” God himself, in opposing a false prophet is said to be a “*satan*.” Even in the NT this earlier meaning, which is more typical of the OT, still lingers: when Peter objects to Jesus’ will, Jesus calls Peter an adversary; not Satan, but a *satan*.

Thus, in almost all cases the word *satan* in the OT means opponent or adversary while in most of the NT it almost always refers to an enormously powerful “god of this world,” a specific, personal, intelligent, intermediate being.

In this case, then, the difference between the OT outlook on things and what we find in the NT is decidedly different, and the implications for public theology are massive. Where did the Jews, specifically the NT authors, get this new insight?

Where Augustine Comes In

It seems possible that this new understanding of an opposing intelligent being is an insight picked up by Jewish scholars in captivity in Zoroastrian territory where followers of Zoroaster believed in an evil second god, thus two equal gods, one good and one evil. While the NT did not accept the full Zoroastrian dualism, the NT, as we have seen, is full of references to a Satan as a powerful *intermediate* being, and, in this case, not merely any “adversary” as in the OT.

Significantly, one of the early church traditions, Manichaeism, did retain the full Zoroastrian dualism. One of the substantial differences in the two main branches of Islam may be the continuing influence of Zoroastrianism in the Shiite branch. In the Christian

sphere, as late as the latter part of the fourth century, Manichaeism was a strong stream encompassing Augustine in his initial entry into Christianity. It hung on clear into the fifteenth century in the form of the violently destroyed Cathari tradition in southern France.

Thus, while the NT does not reflect the entire Zoroastrian dualism, at least one of the church traditions did. Eventually, Manichaeism was mainly driven out of existence as a heresy. However, according to some modern scholars (such as Gregory Boyd), Augustine's eventual rejection of it swung him all the way over into a neo-Platonic view that imputed all or most Satanic initiatives to God as part of God's "mysterious purposes." The threat of Zoroastrian influences was durably difficult for the Roman church to root out entirely. Augustine's neo-Platonism may be equally durable.

I must pause here, so that I can apologize for appearing to presume the existence of "intermediate beings" such as Satan and his intelligent angelic accomplices. I don't want anyone to feel this idea is forced upon them, or that it is absolutely essential to what else I say. I realize that today in most of Western Christianity the idea of intermediate beings belongs in the category of Santa Claus and Harry Potter. I will say, however, that most of the ever-present discussion down through history of the so-called "problem of evil" seems to have been fueled and prolonged by ignoring or forgetting the possibility of evil, powerful, intermediate beings.

The Impact on Mission Strategy

In any case, the plot thickens, since Augustine is perhaps the most influential theologian in history. What he thought and wrote has gained far more significance than the writings of most other scholars, and both Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin leaned heavily on him. My main concern with this particular element of Augustinian neo-Platonism is that such a perspective tends to lead to a dysfunctional syndrome in which people tend automatically to identify evil with God and thus hesitate to engage in any human all-out mission aimed deliberately at countering evil. Why waste one's time fighting God?

Let's look at two examples of this syndrome. One of my seminary professors of church history told of a mother superior in a thirteenth-century convent who awakened one morning to find something moving under her skin in the center of her forehead. In a few days a worm broke the skin so as to become visible. This dear woman, perhaps with an Augustinian understanding of a micromanaging God, was so confident that the worm had been sent by God that whenever the worm fell out, she quickly replaced it.

A second example, a bit closer to our own day, would be the experience of Jonathan Edwards, who was for seven years exiled for his revivalist mutation to an artificial missionary village in the far west of Massachusetts. The village, Stockbridge, as it was named, was established to teach Indians who were hunters and gatherers how to be farmers (probably not a sound missiological idea). While pastor of that missionary congregation Edwards did some of his most advanced writing, but also was horrified by the annual toll of smallpox on his Indian charges, death by smallpox being possibly the most painful way to die.

However, when he sought to employ the then-recent Turkish idea of cowpox vaccine against smallpox, he faced the stern warning of many Massachusetts pastors that if he sought to destroy smallpox he would be "interfering with Divine Providence" (Clark

1995, 25). Those pastors actually formed an “Anti-vaccination Society.” Theologians and church historians may have conveniently forgotten this incident, but not the medical historians!

Despite some effort, I have not been able to determine what was going on in Edwards’ mind—perhaps someday an Edwardian scholar will discover this—but Edwards decided to try out the vaccine on himself just three months after being called to be president of what today is Princeton University. The experiment did not work. He died of smallpox. Quite likely the pastors concluded that God killed him for interfering with His mysterious workings.

Two centuries earlier neither Luther nor the younger Calvin were aware of the existence of germs—any more than was Augustine a millennium earlier still. However, even today we have no noticeable theology on the status of deadly germs to tell us whether they are of God’s direct initiative or not. No wonder then that thus far we have no substantial missiology of pathogens.

Reverberations Today

Missions have planted hospitals all over the world to deal with the effects of pathogens. There is, however, to my knowledge no Christian institution on the face of the earth that considers its mission to be the destruction of the pathogens themselves, whether those pathogens are viruses like smallpox, bacteria like staphylococcus, or parasites like malaria.

Are we doing any better at facing this attacking evil here in the USA? Here the facts are quite available. The perfectly enormous American medical/pharmaceutical industrial has such a voracious appetite for funds that it has now become the number one reason for bankruptcy in the USA. Each day Americans are called upon to spend over a half billion dollars for prescription drugs alone. They are also squeezed for a full billion dollars a day just to deal with heart and stroke problems. Our military efforts cost pennies by comparison.

Yet all of this is almost entirely “defensive” activity, whether it is caring for the sick or pursuing measures to prevent or avoid disease. These activities are called curative and preventive medicine, both *defensive* in nature. By comparison, perhaps less than 1% of the torrent of money that goes to the medical and pharmaceutical worlds is focused on an offensive action aimed specifically to eradicate the disease pathogens underlying most diseases. Infections are now recently suspected of being the cause of even heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s and schizophrenia (Hooper 1999).

Well, you may be thinking, is this a major matter, and is it really a theological problem? Consider these facts: less than one percent of the deaths in the USA per year are due to murder—7%. Twice as many people die from suicide—1.4%. More than five times as many people die of accidental deaths (mostly automobile accidents due to alcohol addiction)—4%. That’s a total of six percent. However, over 90 percent of Americans die prematurely because of the relentless attack of pathogens—viruses, bacteria, or parasites.

To get this into perspective, on the average ten Americans died every day in the Vietnam War. About the same is happening in Iraq. Ten a day. But in the USA alone just two diseases kill ten times that many? 50 times as many? No, 300 times that many per day. It is as though we are involved in 300 Iraq wars simultaneously because of just two

diseases, cancer and cardio-vascular disease. The issue of disease is understandably even much larger in the non-Western world. Part of the problem is that many diseases have until fairly recently been assumed to be conditions, not infections, such as peptic ulcers.

The Larger, “Public” Mission

Thus, it seems clear to me that we have drastically underestimated the mission to which all followers of Jesus are called. You may not be prepared for what I am about to say, but you will have to admit that, if what I suggest turns out to be true, it will mean that current concepts of the Christian mission fall drastically short of what God is asking us to do.

If we can lift away from our thinking Augustine’s reluctance to recognize a large role for Satan, I believe our eyes will suddenly be opened to the pervasive distortions of an intelligent evil throughout all of nature. Many things will begin to appear differently.

The event portrayed by *The Passion* (motion picture), for example, will not mean the total defeat of Satan at that time, but simply a definitive conquest and *the turning point* in a battle against the Satanic campaign to tear down God’s glory. That gruesome event will also clearly exemplify the reality of an unspeakably cruel enemy, not merely a salvation from sin to be greeted with joy and praise.

The saving of souls will no longer be the central strategy of mission, but will in large part be merely a means, the means of the recruitment of human beings into the ongoing war against the distorting work of a formidable evil intelligence utterly opposed to the restoration of all creation and the re-glorification of God.

Glorifying God will become more than a worship exercise. It will require all-out war against all distortion of creation, including the carnivorous state of present-day destructive animal life (that is, all life forms except those like dogs and horses which have been deliberately and intelligently genetically restored). Yes, if wolves have been genetically altered through selective breeding we can begin to understand how that might be done even more efficiently through genesplicing with animals that are still violent. Feeding man-eating tigers grass won’t restore them to a non-carnivorous state, but genesplicing might. Humans going vegetarian may not change their carnivorous nature. Also, fighting pathogens at the molecular level, if possible, would seem to have to be added to limited understandings of the Christian mission.

If the “horizon” of the coming Kingdom is drawn from the Bible, it would appear that the horizon requires the restoration of all animal life from vicious and carnivorous states. Note this is not a case of elevating animals in God’s sight to the level of importance of human beings. It is to elevate neither one but to portray more accurately the nature and purposes of our Father in heaven. Our God is the one who, in Genesis 1, brought into being both animals and humans that were non-carnivorous. The lion must again lie down with the lamb.

Both Hindu and Muslim traditions in some ways treat taking animal life as a sacrament. Our “Christian” slaughterhouses involve little or no spiritual sensitivities. Yet, even our secular society prohibits bull fights, cockfights, and artificial killing farms for bloodthirsty hunters.

Judging by the immense achievement of early humans 11,000 years ago which developed dogs out of wolves, it is apparent that even the rather blunt instrument of selective breeding can restore the wild to the tame. How much more can genesplicing do?

Is the only solution to “kill or cage” the man-eating tiger—and the same for all wild animals as well?

Don’t worry if it looks like we can’t do all this. It is not at all clear that we humans are going to set everything right, eliminate all pathogens, tame all forms of life and usher in the millennium. What we do know that must be done is to work urgently to clear the name of God in matters of evil.

We can do that only by allying ourselves clearly and urgently with God’s kingdom efforts to fight all evil. Jesus said we are to be salt and light in this world and immediately followed those statements with the explanation that people who see our good works (not good words) will glorify our Father in Heaven. That is the primary way we can clarify His nature and glory—which, in turn, is essential to our most potent evangelism.

We may have become specialists in all those verses that speak of human redemption, such as “the angels rejoice when one sinner repents.” We may even misinterpret the NT statement about the gates of hell notwithstanding the offensive onslaught of the kingdom, assuming somehow that our new kingdom will merely be called upon defensively to resist the onslaught of Satan. It is just the opposite. What is needed is for the redeemed to move from survivors to soldiers, whose God is no longer just a Savior but a Commander in Chief.

I know this seems far out. I have been reflecting on the wild violence and suffering throughout nature for many years. At 80 I have had more time to reflect on this than most readers. And do listen to Hindus and Muslims on this point.

I conclude with an interesting quote from a pastor who also has a doctorate in science from MIT:

According to Scripture, the universe was originally good and the glory of God is still evident in it (Rom 1:20). But something else—something frightfully wicked—is evident in it as well. Of their own free will, Satan and other spiritual beings rebelled against God in the primordial past and now abuse their God-given authority over certain aspects of creation. Satan, who holds the power of death (Heb 2:14) exercises a pervasive, structural, diabolic influence to the point that the entire creation is in bondage to decay. The pain-ridden, bloodthirsty, sinister and hostile character of nature should be attributed to Satan and his army, not to God. Jesus’ Earthly ministry reflected the belief that the world had been seized by a hostile, sinister lord. Jesus came to take it back (McLaughlin 2004, 237).

Thus, the question arises: Is a syncretized theology blinding us to the existence and actions of a hideously evil, highly intelligent, intermediate being often described as an agent of masterful deception? It has been said that his greatest achievement is to cover his tracks. If that is true, then we need to look more closely for what other destructive deeds that kind of an intelligent evil may be performing.

Is our mission that broad? If so, then we have drastically underestimated what it should involve. Is it time to unravel a 1,600-year-old syncretism? If we do, that would seem to require a much larger public theology.

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The Gospels from a Global Perspective

(2006) (*Foundations Reader*, 101-05)

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The primary focus of this article is the Gospels from a global perspective. In a way, we are also looking back at the four Gospels because this is a strategic time in the course. This is a thrilling moment, because we have accumulated information, and we want to somehow digest various ideas and get an overall picture. It is amazing the extent to which the Bible has been grandly misunderstood by practically everybody. We have to go very cautiously because of the many, many misunderstandings in past history and in our own lives. The point is that very few people understand what the Bible is really all about; therefore, they misunderstand it when they open it.

Unfortunately, the fact is that some people treat the Bible as a medicine chest. They rush to the Bible to find the answer to their problem, or their divorce, or their loss of a child or something. It is that; it does help us solve problems. The Gideon Bibles have a whole list of problems: “Look on page such and such if this is your problem.” Other people look at the Bible as a source of inspiration, of blessings. This view is sort of like a refrigerator. Go to the refrigerator and take something out that is good to eat. Like sermons picked up here and there, it is a source of ammunition for making people happy, or something like that. One Bible, supposedly, has been tinted in on all the blessing verses so you can just page through and read about the blessings. Others, of course, look at the Bible as a crystal ball that is going to tell them about the future. There are many uses, you might say misuses, of the Bible.

How electrifying to try to see the Bible for what it really is. What is it? You may wonder, for example (before you really look at them closely), why we have four different Gospels. Why not have just one? Well, you could ask the other question: What would we lose if we lost one of the four Gospels? Then you stop to realize that we would be losing something very, very important. For example, Mark is the Gospel that does not have very much in it that is not in one of the other Gospels. We could easily get rid of Mark! Really? Mark is the Gospel that puts in all the adjectives, especially the derogatory adjectives, when it comes to the disciples. None of the other Gospels is as hard on the disciples. But to say that Mark is hard on the disciples is probably to misstate the situation. The disciples are the ones being hard on the disciples. We do not know precisely how Mark came into being. Peter may have written it, or maybe Peter edited it, or possibly the disciples, looking back with tremendous repentance and humility, said, “we’ve got to tell it like it really was—not smooth over anything.” Now, some scholars say, “Well, Luke and Matthew tone down the criticisms.” Maybe the disciples toned up the criticisms. In any case, Mark is an astoundingly different Gospel than the other three, even though the subjects it covers are covered (in a slightly different cast) in the other Gospels.

For example, as you page through Mark, you see a shattering divergence between the person of Christ and the impulses, the expectations, the hopes, the ideas of the disciples. It is as if they are always at odds. This is the disciples' own confession really, basically, rather than somebody saying, "Yeah, yeah, yeah! You went wrong here." It's the disciples who produced this Gospel, apparently. So, when Jesus is interested in a sick person, the disciples say, "Don't bother with these sick people. You know, they're not going to be part of your constituency. They're not going to give you a lot of votes. I mean, you can ignore these people!"

Well, it was the healing of a sick person that was the first great splash of awareness of the difference of who Jesus was. He was interested in the poor people. He was interested in the children. He was interested in the women. The disciples said, "Hey, Jesus, this lady is a Greek. Can't you tell?" Well, he was interested in the Greeks. The whole thing is just such a shattering divergence between what they would expect and what he is.

Probably the most graphic of all is the one where the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue—like the mayor of the town—is in need (Mark 5:21 – 43). So off he goes. Then there's this little old woman who's supposed to be outside the city limits because of her condition (Mark 5: 24 – 34). She was "untouchable." And here she was, right in the middle of the crowd. And I can just hear the disciples and see them tearing out their hair, furious with Jesus! Jesus says, "Well, now, who touched me?" They are furious! "Can't you see that this crowd is all around you? What do you mean, who touched you? Lots of people were touching you!"

They were really upset, and they portray themselves as Dr. Osborne suggested in an earlier article as dim-witted. That is a charitable statement. Scholars tend to say, "They didn't catch on." But you know, when we don't catch on, it may not be that we're dim-witted, but dim-hearted. In fact, Jesus himself said that they were slow of heart to believe. He did not say they were dumb. They did not say that they were slow to catch on in an intellectual sense. They caught on to all the little novelties and nuances that had to do with their self-interest. But they were very slow of heart to understand what God's interests were.

What about Luke? Luke also portrays them as dim-witted or, worse still, slow of heart to believe (Luke 24:25). In the last chapter of Luke, these two disciples (maybe not two of the Twelve, but two of the Seventy) are portrayed in a shatteringly different light from what you would hope they would have been. It is not their moral breakdown so much that is highlighted here—although in Mark you see the self-interests of the disciples in chapters 8–10, where Jesus talks about his death. They do not just resist the thought; they ignore the thought. They were going to win! Anticipating going places with Jesus, they argue about who is going to be the first to sit next to him and all that sort of thing. Luke, on the other hand, shows how drastically different their expectations of what he was up to really were. They thought he was going to come and rescue them as a nation. Christ had larger thoughts in mind. Oh, this is a shattering critique, too!

Luke has this huge section, chapters 9–19, where there is this resolute trip back to Jerusalem. If we did not have Luke, we miss that insight. We would not have it so graphically pointed out that at Nazareth he was rejected and they attempted to kill him because he was talking about the Gentiles. That is very clear in Luke.

But then, there is Matthew. Matthew is so different from all the others. It bonds itself with the Old Testament. Quotes are included from the Old Testament, and Matthew bonds with Moses and the Law. But it says, “If you fulfill the Law externally, you go through the motions, but that is not good enough” (see Matt. 23). That tended to be what some of the Pharisees had fallen into in their zeal—and many of them were very fine people to study the Bible, to understand it and to fulfill it. They ended up, to some great extent, simply doing things in the proper way rather than becoming the proper people. And so Matthew is very different.

Matthew has the five discourses that compare to the five books of the Torah. There is this very clear attempt to provide a parallel. But Matthew has three parables that clearly talk about the Gentiles. Yet, you know, our modern scholars and readers and we ourselves may have misunderstood these parables. When the people come late in the day to work and they get paid the same amount, it is a perfectly obvious reference to the Gentiles coming in late and getting the same basic blessings of a relationship to the living God; and the Jews did not think that was fair (Matthew 20:1-16). But in Matthew, which is beamed to Jews, both believing and unbelieving Jews, this is an impelling parable to explain how it is that the Gentiles are coming in late. There are a number of parables that have that missiological twist to them.

Now, let us consider the book of John. John is enormously different from all of the other Gospels. Mark may have very little that is not in the other Gospels. John has very little that is in the other Gospels. It is perfectly obvious that John is coming along in his old age—perhaps his vocabulary has drifted due to his associations in the Greek world more than ever before—and he is reflecting. John is deliberately adding what was not there already. It is hard to believe that he did not have access to the other Gospels and was not deliberately adding on.

And John does! The Upper Room Discourses—my, what we would miss! In John, he is far enough away from Palestine at this point, apparently, so that he can refer to the Jews as Jews. The other Gospels do not. Behind all this, we may have the thought that maybe the New Testament is unfair in its criticism of Jews. But is the Bible unfair? I mean, John comes right out in John 1:10, that the people—the Jews—did not understand the living God. When his Son came, he came to his own people, but his own people did not receive him. The fact that they did not receive him is not probably as important as that they did not know who he was. They were not close enough to God.

But, is this an outside criticism of the Jews? This is a Jew speaking! And it is not just in the New Testament; the Old Testament is at least as critical of the Jewish people. But then, we get into Paul’s letters. In Romans, for example, Paul says, “Now wait just a minute, you Gentiles! If you have been artificially grafted into this true vine or branch or root, don’t suppose that if God can cut out the real branches that you can’t be cut out.” So there is not the slightest implication in the Bible that the Jews are worse than anyone else. The Bible itself is talking in critical terms; but it is the Jewish people themselves commenting. This is not the harsh, unfair, outside anti-Semitism of some other group. This is the honest, spiritual confession of people about themselves. Of course, it also incriminates those who are unwilling to be implicated.

As you go into these Gospels, from now on til the rest of your life, realize how easy it is for the Jews to misunderstand, for the disciples to misunderstand, and for us to

misunderstand—in every single case because of self-interest rather than God’s interest. So take care! We are walking on holy ground.

Reflections

Reflection #1: *What kinds of massive misunderstandings appear as we look at the four Gospels from a global perspective?*

I think we have to realize that our job in understanding the Bible is not to get little tidbits of deeper understanding here and there, although that’s all to the good. For example, Jesus saying if you’re slapped on the cheek, turn the other cheek: it’s more likely in the Middle Eastern culture that any violation of another person’s physical being, just touching a person on the cheek, is challenging to a duel. Jesus was getting at the whole question of dueling, for example, not so much slapping people. Those are little tidbits. But if we don’t go behind those meanings, getting into the larger misunderstandings, we will still be like an ant walking on a picture, seeing every little part of the picture, but not seeing the picture itself. We need to look at the larger picture.

Earlier I referred to what I called Mickey Mouse interpretations. For example, the idea that each of the four Gospels portrays Jesus with different clothing. As if the Gospel writers felt it incumbent upon themselves to do what they were doing in order to present Jesus in a slightly different light. Jesus does get presented in a slightly different light. But these authors had more dynamic and pragmatic purposes in mind. These perceptions of the Gospels each focusing on prophet, priest, king, or man, or the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (that’s a neat categorization) are descriptors not so much erroneous as superficial. We need to get into the deeper and more practical reasons for the Gospels and their existence. Otherwise this constitutes a massive misunderstanding.

Examples of massive misunderstandings that we have referred to in the past, include the triumphal entry. You know the Hosanna statement: “Save us now! Now is the time to save us!” Their agenda was very different from God’s agenda. Sometimes in our Easter period celebrations, we take very superficially the apparent meaning of the triumphal entry, not realizing that most of the people who were heralding Jesus’ entry were confused about what he was going to do. Their hopes were discordant with his. We need to understand that.

Or take, for instance, the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). We mentioned that earlier. The Pharisees were saying, “Why are you mixing with sinners and low caste people?” Jesus tells them (Luke 15), “Look, if you had one sheep that was lost, wouldn’t you look for the one sheep? Or if a woman lost her engagement ring down the trap, wouldn’t she take the whole trap off to find it?” That’s the equivalent of the woman cleaning up the whole house to find something. It wasn’t just that she lost a dime; she lost something that had marital significance. Then he says, “What about a son?” They’re following him, and it is pretty logical. But then it’s like a left-curve to the jaw—he comes in with the older brother. All of a sudden, the Pharisees realize he is making them out to be the older brother who begrudges the interest in the younger son. By extension, this clearly puts the entire Jewish nation into those shoes, as they looked askance at the thought of the Gentiles being brought in. There are many wonderful lessons in the parable of the prodigal son. But we need to get the overall, entire New Testament into the picture to understand it.

Take the parable of the four soils (Matt. 13:1-23). Talk about misunderstanding! I have never heard anybody interpret the parable in a strategic sense. This may be an interesting catalog of the different kinds of responses that preachers or evangelists get. People can ask, am I in category 1, 2, or 3? There is a lot of discussion about which of these people are really saved. What about the people who were temporarily saved and then the sun came out? Were they ever really saved? Will they make it to heaven? We go off into all kinds of extraneous questions.

Actually this parable in all of the three Synoptic Gospels occurs exactly at the point where Jesus shifts strategically from a public ministry to a private ministry, to “the training of the twelve.” Now, that could have been superficially considered as a mistake. Why did Christ not stay with the crowds? Should he not have tried to influence the whole world? Well, he did influence the whole world, by a multiplying process. And this parable explains how this works. You can go on broadcasting the seed all over the place, but the wise farmer puts the precious seed that he has in the ground that will reproduce. That is what Jesus set out to do. Paul repeated it to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2. This strategic reason for explaining the four soils, explaining his shifting from a public to a private ministry, could easily be lost. Misunderstandings abound if we are not careful.

Reflection #2: *The Gospel of John is the different Gospel.*

The only Gospel not written within the Palestinian setting, it is the odd man out. Luke, of course, came from outside Palestine. You would think Luke would have been written with a different perspective. But probably most of Luke was put together when Paul was in prison. Luke was just travelling around, staying close by, picking up oral tradition, recording things, and producing the Lucan narrative. This was a remarkable piece of work, being the first half of what goes on into the book of Acts. You know, there’s more in the New Testament from Luke than from any other writer. In any case, even John’s vocabulary is different. Written many years later, completely outside of Palestine, now the missionary significance is partly the fact that he is both subconsciously and consciously employing the vocabulary of the world in which he finds himself.

For example, Jesus never refers to himself as the *logos*. John picks this up because it is meaningful and arrests the attention of the Hellenistic world to use that phrase. This liberates us to do that in missions. It frees us to use the vocabulary of the people, the similes, the metaphors, the proverbs, and so forth, in order to convey the essential meaning of what is being talked about. It is very significant!

There are many marvelous, strange, wonderful things about John. I would just like to read this one verse here: “He who has my commandments . . .” —that means you’ve got something already—but then: “...and keeps them” (John 14:21). This phrase, *keeps them*, I’ll come back to that in a second. “He it is who loves me.” Love is very important. The worst thing he says about the Jews: I know you; you do not have the love of God in you. He says that to these people who are glaring at him with hate and with plots against him. He just discloses exactly who they are in a single sentence: *You do not love*.

The connection between love, and believing, and information that you already have, is manifestly demonstrated in this book in this verse. “He who keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and,” listen to this, “I will disclose myself to him.” This is very significant in the book of

John, because again and again in John, in 6:69 and 10:38, he talks about believing in order to know. Now, we would think you have got to know in order to believe. That is also true. But the precious thing is that the very process of believing leads us into knowledge. Incidentally, John is the book that throws into parallel the words believe and obey. Look for the verse which says: “If you believe,” and as you go on, obeying is a synonym for the word believe in that case.

We see also in the Gospel of John that John is no longer thinking in terms of the sacred land. He is not thinking in terms of the Gentiles’ land, either. His focus is on the world. Not the world in a geographical sense, but the world in the sense of humanity. Constantly, John is thinking about God and the world. A *global picture* is evident at every point in John, and that is a very significant contribution to the mission movement.

I went to a school called Cal Tech (the California Institute of Technology). Over the portal there it says: “The truth shall make you free.” That’s an absolutely correct statement. The question is, “How do you get the truth?” For instance, when the Hubble telescope reveals a few more things they never knew before, apparently a lot of additional confusion is brought into the picture. For every time we learn something more, we learn a lot more about what we do not know. The Hubble telescope is not only revealing more that we can understand, but much more that we do not understand.

If you go back in John to that phrase, the truth shall make you free (John 8:31,32), notice the linkage. If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine. As a result, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Truth is not just something you grab hold of, or discover, and it makes you free. Truth comes as a result of believing. This is John’s great emphasis. Some years ago, I wrote in the margin of my Bible by this verse soak, submit, seek, celebrate! Soak yourself in his word, submit to his will, seek his purposes, and celebrate the glory that comes from that.

John is a marvelous addition! What if we did not have John? Yet where did John find all this additional information that is not in the other Gospels? He himself says, “Look, I don’t even have space to put in all the stuff that I know. Many other things happened which are not written in this book.” He probably refers to the existing Gospels, but also to other things. Because the very last verse (21:25) of the whole book is, “There are also many other things Jesus did which if they were written (he’s not referring to what’s already written, but if these other things we know about were written) I suppose that not even the world itself could contain the books.” So obviously he is not inventing or scrounging for things to add. He is flooded with a world of possibilities! John just selects the rich and powerful aspects for us to consider.

Let me finish with this thought: these four Gospels with their wealth of information (obviously not written in the same room at the same time, or there would be much more precise correspondence) are independent witnesses that are so detailed and so complete, you can no longer imagine them being invented. Ultimately it is the Bible that sits in judgment on Josephus, rather than Josephus on the Bible. The Bible is a much more thorough, accurate, dependable source of information than any other book or any other source of information, not just about Jesus and John, but all back down through history. Ultimately, scholars somewhat grudgingly admit that the Bible really is the thing that judges other books. We rest our case there.

Planetary Events and the Mission of the Church

Donald McClure Lectureship, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

October 3-4, 2005 (*Frontiers in Mission* 286-307).

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

These three lectures are an honest and exciting new attempt to recognize Genesis 1 as a literal, eye-witness account. This attempt rejects Darwinian random, unguided evolution. It tries to answer questions that have often arisen about the sequence of events in chapter one. It upholds an inerrant Bible. It explains how nature became so violent a scene and how bad things may not always be the “mysterious” will of God but the work of Satan. It refocuses our understanding of Christian mission today, expanding it from an effort to rescue and redeem humanity into a full-blown Biblical effort to restore glory to God by destroying the works of the Devil. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil (1 Jn 3:8).”

Contents

Part 1: Pre-Edenic Events

A description of widespread scientific thinking regarding the last 500 million years: major life forms reflecting pervasive distortion and violence, punctuated by repeated and massive “extinction events” due to asteroids hitting the earth, all of this preceding Genesis 1:1.

Part 2: Genesis and the New Beginning

Following a massive regional asteroidal collision knocking out most of life in that region, Genesis then picks up the story. As dust settles, light gradually returns, new life is created that is neither violent nor carnivorous - neither animal nor human life. Immediately this new beginning is seduced by Satan and reverts to violence which continues throughout the next 6,000 years, leading up to the present. This relatively short period is one of redemption and advance through storm in spite of constant Satanic attacks of war and pestilence - animal life being distorted and suffering, animals eating animals, humans killing both animals and themselves.

Part 3: The Future that Ought to Be

The recognition of a wartime situation and thus the mobilization of redeemed people in the identification and destruction of deadly diseases as well as deadly delusions that also take life. This is a mission to restore glory to God!

Part 1. Planetary Events: Pre-Edenic

Let's begin by glancing at four significant discoveries, conclusions or inferences humans have made in fairly recent history.

Introduction

As telescopes improved, astronomers discovered that the things they could see out in space appeared to be expanding, racing farther and farther away from each other. This unexpected discovery meant that things must have started out closer and smaller. By tracing the contents of the universe backwards, scientists came to the remarkable conclusion that the entire universe began suddenly about 13.7 billion years ago, exploding from a tiny speck. Some scientists at first ridiculed this idea, calling it derisively, "The Big Bang" theory. Some warned that religious people would assume that this theory confirmed their Biblical ideas about creation.

However, now that this Big Bang theory has become widely accepted, and its derisive name has stuck, the concept itself is still very difficult to imagine. Within even the first second, we are told (this is very hard to believe), the universe exploded into a size larger than our galaxy. Now, our galaxy is so large it takes 100,000 years for light to travel across it going at 186,000 miles per second. Thus, if the universe expanded larger than our galaxy in the first second, the new-born universe would in that case have expanded at least 3,154 billion times faster than the speed of light. This would be true because simple arithmetic tells us there are 3,154 billion seconds in 100,000 years.

Equally breathtaking, but for different reasons, are two more conclusions, first, that the planet Earth came into being about 4.5 billion years ago, and, second, that tiny life forms began to appear about 4 billion years ago.

But, far more unexpected is a fourth double conclusion which is widely accepted as true: 1) the occurrence far more recently—about 500 million years ago—of the curious and astounding Cambrian Explosion of larger life forms, and at the same time, 2) the first appearance of predatory forms of life. This relatively abrupt and massive profusion of larger forms of life is, incidentally, all the more credible because the scientists who have accepted it have done so despite the fact that its suddenness would seem to be so very contrary to the gradualism expected by classical Darwinism. The vicious, predatory aspect will be considered further on.

The vast majority of fossils large enough to be detected appear in the 500-million-year period following the mysterious Cambrian Explosion. For example, about 160 million years ago the thousands of different incredibly destructive dinosaurs came into 100 million years of existence. Then, when the dinosaurs disappeared, about 65 million years ago, mammals came into their own, and of course humans have appeared far more recently. The chart on the next page indicates some of this.

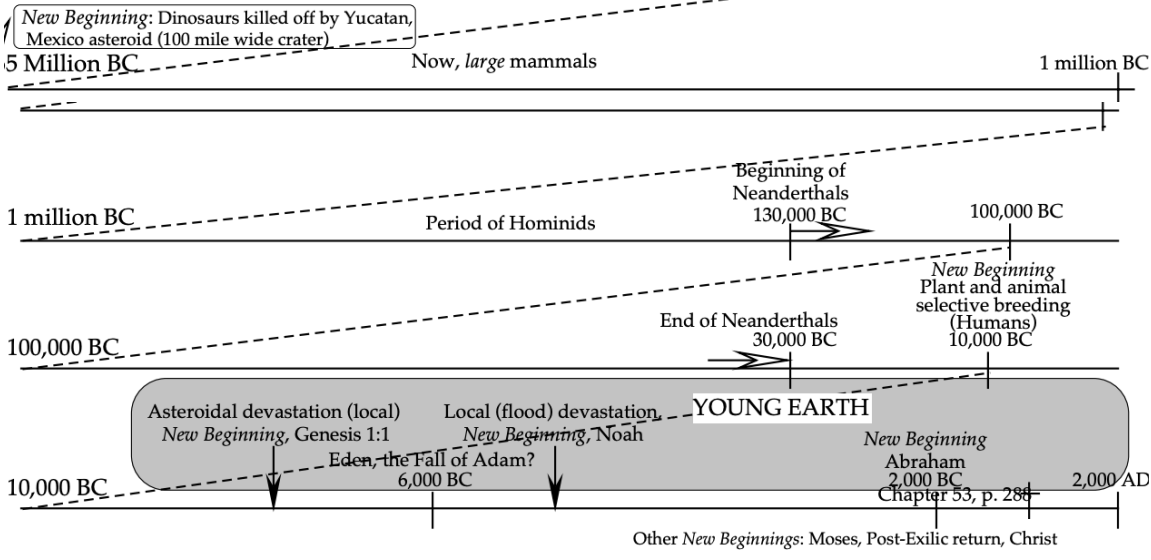
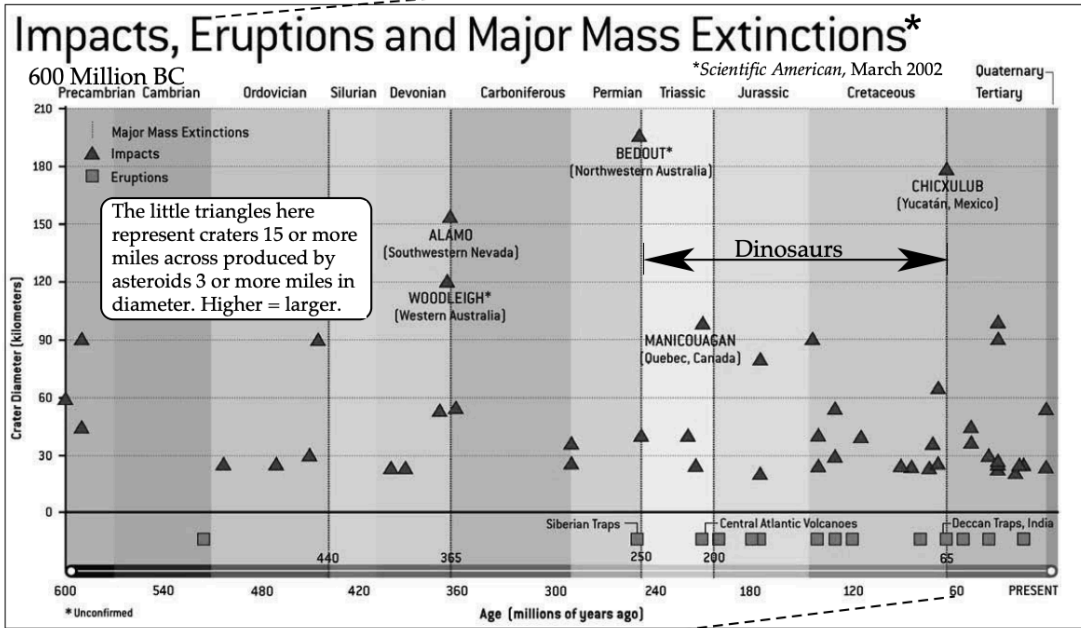
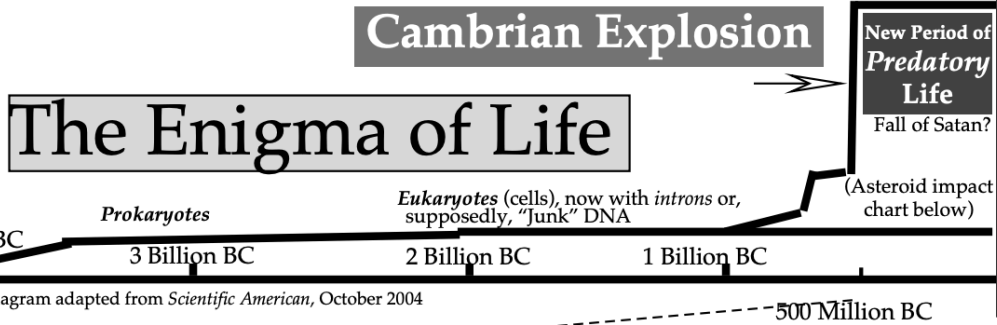
Addressing the Puzzle

It is clear that few things have been as fascinating, and at the same time as endlessly puzzling, as the results of human inquiry into the far distant past. Today, even children are often as well-acquainted with dinosaurs as I was familiar in my childhood with the ABCs and Columbus sailing the ocean blue.

However, here I am most interested in the human period. While life is thought to have been under development for a total of four billion years, human forms of life are exceedingly recent, and truly human creatures may only have appeared at the point of selective breeding of plants and animals which is about 11,000 years ago. On this see further below.

If the entire 4 billion-year period of the development of life were squashed into a 24-hour day, three hours would account for the last 500 million years, while the human period would become merely the last quarter of a second. But 500 million years itself is

THE CHART ON THE NEXT PAGE contains one diagram at the top which is redrawn from *Scientific American*. It displays the 4 billion period many have concluded is the period of the development of life. The next one down portrays only the most recent 600 million years, also from *Scientific American*. You can see the small dotted line running from the near right hand of the first to the near left of the second to show the portion of the first that is expanded for closer observation. Other dotted lines further below do similar things.



43,000 times as long as the human period. Even if just the last 500 million years is reduced to 24 hours, the human period is still only the last 2 seconds.

Interestingly, far more bones and shells and other evidences of earth's history have been uncovered in the past 20 years than ever before. In fact, digging up bones and ancient artifacts has become a global activity of scholars, competing with looters and falsifiers.

Cave drawings and arrowheads tell us a great deal about the impressive intelligence of forms of life earlier than humans. We are well acquainted, for example, with the capabilities of the Neanderthals, who are nevertheless no longer considered ancestors of humans due to recent DNA testing.

The Appearance of Humans

However, nothing that was accomplished by earlier forms of life is as impressive as evidences beginning about 11,000 years ago of the activity of deliberate, determined, patient, intelligent *selective breeding* of both plants and animals.

Worldwide, today, what we usually eat without appropriate gratitude, rice, corn, wheat, potatoes, are all genetically altered plants which give mute witness to the fact that fairly recently some very ingenious forms of life—working with apparently unique intelligence—worked for lengthy periods of time to achieve amazingly extensive modification of several plants that were originally virtually inedible, but which are now quite useful for human consumption.

Also about 11,000 years ago, these same new uniquely intelligent forms of life began carefully and skillfully breeding wolves into the 235 different species of dogs which today in multiple ways are friendly benefactors of human beings.

Some scholars are now thinking that the appearance of this kind of radically superior intelligence is more significant than the study of fossil bones in determining the time of the first appearance of true humans. Thus, in this light, I want to suggest two ideas for discussion purposes: 1) that the first appearance of humans can be detected from the first evidence of the intelligence necessary for the genetic alteration of plants and animals, and 2) that all of this may have occurred before Adam.

Huge but Local Destruction

Not widely understood as yet is the possibility that only about six thousand years ago some of these very intelligent human beings in various parts of the earth may have heard an enormous “boom” from an impacting asteroid from outer space. Although not as large as some earlier impacts, this one could have been large enough to have blotted out all life in a fairly large region of the earth, accompanied by a huge “boom” of sound flashing past humans further away at the speed of sound (about 750 miles per hour), an event leaving only a fleeting impression. More easily remembered is what would likely have happened next, namely, the almost immediate appearance of darkening dust in the atmosphere producing a shroud of thick and total darkness holding the entire earth in its grip, something humans living in every part of the globe would not easily forget even if they lived too far away to hear the initial boom.

It would then take time for this dark encompassing cloud of thick dust to settle. First it would thin out enough for light to come through dimly - just enough to tell day

from night. Then the light would get brighter as time went on. Finally, the sun, the moon and later the stars would again become visible—the sequence we read in Genesis, chapter one. This is not a creation sequence but a recovery sequence.

I hasten to add that this is all supposition. However, if truly modern, highly intelligent humans did first appear 11,000 years ago, and if some time after that a sizable asteroid did hit our planet, it would certainly seem possible for the human beings surviving to have passed down an oral tradition about that event or recalled at least that sequence of events in its aftermath.

What about Asteroids?

Before thinking further about the possibility of oral tradition of this kind, it may be helpful to understand the background of my supposition that a major asteroidal collision could have occurred fairly recently in our planetary history.

All this actually began with our landing on the moon. When that happened, all of a sudden all those visible pock marks on the face of the moon - which had always been assumed to be volcanic craters - turned out to be impact craters! Absolutely stunned, geologists began a mad scramble to track down evidences of similar impacts on earth, evidences which, of course, are far more difficult to find on earth due to the erosion of wind and rain which are completely absent on the moon.

Now, after 30 years of geological pursuit, we are being offered credible evidence of literally thousands of asteroidal impacts on the earth, both large and small. The vast majority of these impacts are small and, in fact, millions of small asteroids fortunately burn up before actually hitting the earth. This rain of objects from outer space is a process that continues unabated until today, their ashes settling down to earth at the rate of an estimated 40 tons a day.

Of special concern in this scenario is the fact that quite a few asteroids colliding with the earth in the distant past have been large enough to gouge huge craters and devastate a wide area of the earth miles away, maybe hundreds of miles, beyond the crater itself. The evidence of one meteor that hit only 50,000 years ago in the arid, rainless desert in Arizona is still an awesome, gaping hole a breath-taking mile across and a quarter of a mile deep.

But, let's ignore the thousands of smaller objects from outer space in the last 600 million years, and even ignore all those thousands of asteroids that created craters less than an enormous 15 miles across. At this date forty-five craters 15 miles or larger have been found. These much larger asteroidal collisions consequently killed off far more life on earth. The largest crater so far discovered - in northwestern Australia - is 135 miles in diameter, and is estimated to have killed 97% of all life on the entire planet. A slightly smaller one, 65 million years ago, created a crater only 100 miles across. However, the latter is the one credited with killing off all dinosaurs in all parts of the planet.

Although none of even these larger asteroids extinguished all of life, it seems evident that life on earth has had drastic ups and downs due to asteroids alone—without mentioning volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, etc., almost all of such events occurring prior to the appearance of human life.

Note that in the case of virtually all asteroidal collisions of any great magnitude, a familiar sequence would have unfolded as mentioned earlier: thick darkness, later, dim

light half of the day, then, finally, rays of light from the directly observed sun, moon and stars, the very sequence described in Genesis.

Paleontologists have observed, interestingly, that the aftermath of such explosive “extinction events” has often been the occasion for the fairly abrupt emergence of quite different forms of plant and animal life. For example, the huge impact that extinguished the entire spectrum of thousands of different forms of dinosaur life was followed by the era of mammals, when their size zoomed from two pounds or less, to a ton or more.

The 45 largest asteroidal collisions mentioned are pegged at dates prior to the human period, that is, before there were humans in existence to witness their effects and create oral tradition about them. Thus, all we can go by are the evidences in the rims of their craters of certain things like crystallized iodine.

Record of a Recent Collision?

However, suppose there was a smaller collision relatively recently—after humans appeared on the scene—that is, in the last 11,000 years. In that case would we not expect surviving humans living at a distance to include a recollection of such an event in their oral traditions?

Let’s look into this. In the last few years following the Moon landing it certainly has begun to seem possible that the collision of a fairly recent asteroid might have wiped out a large, regional sector of human life—such as the area of the Fertile Crescent, or just the Dead Sea—and that surviving humans outside that area could have noticed the characteristic sequence of events without understanding exactly what had happened. They might have only observed the thick darkness, the dim but increasing light, the final appearance of the Sun, Moon, and then the stars. Could such recollections have passed down, say, in oral tradition, down through Egyptian archives to Moses? *And, does the sequence of events described in the first chapter of Genesis describe this sort of sequence?*

If Genesis 1 describes such a train of events, then we would not expect the humans who created the Genesis narrative to be speaking of cosmological events that were only understood much later in the human story. Rather, logically, we would expect Genesis 1:1 to describe not the initial creation of the entire universe, but a much more recent new beginning, in merely a region of the earth (the “known world” of the people of that time). If there were such a collision, would not the next thing be the replenishment of animal and human life in that region?

To accept such a supposition would instantly require certain radical adjustments of popular exegesis, because it would mean the first few chapters of Genesis were entirely local events.

What adjustments? First, the Gen. 1:1 phrase, “In the beginning God” would have to be translatable as, “At the time God began.” Second, the Hebrew word “bara” would have to be able to mean “recreate” not just “create” (it does not mean “create out of nothing”). Thirdly, the familiar phrase, “formless and void” from the Hebrew phrase *tohu wabohu* would have to mean something like “destroyed and desolate.” The single sentence in Hebrew running through Gen. 1:1, and 1:2, would then come out something like, “Things (in a regional area) were quite destroyed and desolate when God began to recreate...”

Even more obvious would be the need to understand the whole of early Genesis as talking about events that were universally significant, yet geographically local. This would include the idea of a local flood, which has been a tolerated view in the Wheaton College faculty as far back as the 1950s. Even the “table of nations” in Genesis 11 would have to refer to predominantly Middle Eastern peoples, not Chinese, East Indians, or Eskimos.

Furthermore, it would be helpful if we were aware of at least some biblical scholars who have recognized all of these possibilities, even as it would be helpful to discover that these ideas (all but the asteroids) were more widely held some years ago.

Finally, speaking of nice things, today the most avid supporters of a world only six thousand years old are an outspoken group of so-called “Young Earth” Evangelicals. Can we listen to Merrill F. Unger? He was a conservative and respected Dallas Theological Seminary professor, head of the Department of OT studies. He expressed pre-Genesis 1 views in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* (the official journal of the seminary) in 1958, as well as later in his very widely used Unger’s Bible Handbook (500,000 in print, in 24 editions), published by the press at the Moody Bible Institute. In his *Handbook* he says,

“In the beginning.” These opening words of Genesis have been commonly assumed to refer to the original creation of the earth and the universe, and well they might. But the question is asked, May they not envision a *relative* beginning as to God’s creative activity of the earth in a much later period in preparation for earth’s late-comer man? ... If “In the beginning” is a relative beginning with regard to the late-comer man, then “created” does not refer to God’s activity in bringing the earth into being *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), but His refashioning the earth and its sidereal heavens at a much later period in geological history. (Italics his)

Unger goes on to state that it is not grammatically possible to put the old earth between verses 1 and 2.

In view of these comments from Dallas Seminary’s Unger, I feel emboldened to suggest that there is apparently no insurmountable exegetical obstacle to the suppositions I have mentioned for the understanding of the text. In fact, we should perhaps feel ashamed that many of us have tried for so long anachronistically to read into the literary record of Genesis modern cosmological information about the origin of a universe and a planet, information totally unknown at the time of the writing or oral formulation of Genesis.

Those who might oppose this view—the “Young Earth” group—are highly visible within the homeschooling movement. Ronald Numbers has pointed out in his magisterial book, *Creationism: the Evolution of Creation Science*, that the Young Earth view of an earth only 6,000 years old was derived in the last seventy years from the emergence within Evangelicalism of a once mainly Seventh-Day Adventist understanding of Genesis. This relatively recent accrual from Adventism is not strengthened by the fact that even earlier, C. I. Scofield clearly presented the idea of the vast geologic ages occurring prior to the six days of Genesis 1 (in a “gap” between 1:1 and 1:2) in his *Scofield Reference Bible*, which was to become the most widely used study Bible of all time. Scofield, furthermore was backed by a list of prominent scholars on the title page of his famous study bible, including Moody Bible Institute faculty.

In any case, followers of the “Young Earth” perspective can at least take comfort in the fact that the interpretation I have described here does not conflict with, but would tend to substantiate not an awesomely ancient, but recent and quite literal (“eye-witness”) understanding of the events of Genesis.

The Ominous Presence of Evil

This entire scenario, however, simply lays the groundwork for an element in the story that is highly crucial to our concept of Christian mission, and which explains my personal interest in this whole subject.

Note the striking contrast between the type of animal life apparently inhabiting “the vast geologic ages,” being uncovered by paleontologists, and the distinctly non-carnivorous kind of life described in Genesis 1:29-30. By contrast, the thousands of creatures whose bones are being dug up from earlier earth history are for the most part outrageously vicious. This same frightful viciousness is also seen in the pervasive cannibalism of virtually all early evidences of humanity.

Furthermore, it is curious and highly significant that life-destroying forms of life, we are told by paleontologists today, first appeared suddenly at the time of the enigmatic “Cambrian Explosion” we have already mentioned. Of course, 500 million years ago may seem very distant, although tiny forms of life may have appeared as much as 4 billion years ago, that is, eight times earlier. The point is, that for most of that very distant past, life forms were too small to have left fossil records. However, just prior to the Cambrian event (in the Ediacaran period) there are evidences of animal life that was radially symmetrical, like starfish, as well as bi-polar forms of life with a front and a back and four legs.

Still begging for interpretation is the evidence that these pre-Cambrian forms of life did not possess protective shells or quills, nor the kind of sharp teeth characteristic of predatory life. Thus, here is a theological question: at this point seven eighths of the way along in the development of life, when predatory forms of life first appeared, *did some of the intermediate beings rebel and begin to distort nature? Are these events evidence of what might be meant by Satan “falling?”*

The most thorough contemporary, Biblical discussion I know of referring to angels good and bad being involved in creation and its distortion is an essay by Robert C. Newman, a professor at the Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, PA. It is entitled, “Rumors of Angels: Using ID to Detect Malevolent Spiritual Agents,” and appears in a series of the Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute (report #56, 2005, www.ibri.org)

In any case, as noted, the kinds of life we see recreated in Genesis 1 are clearly stated to be non-carnivorous. Even Adam and Eve are described as non-carnivorous. Nevertheless some people hold the idea that the animal life appearing in Genesis 1 must be the animal life reflected in all the old bones of vicious animals. This in itself seems difficult to maintain, for that could then only mean that all of these incredibly old bones come from animals which would have had to appear after Adam, and have been distorted as a result of Adam’s fall rather than Satan’s much earlier fall. That in turn would mean that that enormous complexity would have both appeared and mainly disappeared very recently within just the brief period (the “two seconds”) of human life on earth. Existing life forms are very small in number compared to those now extinct.

In summary, in case Genesis 1 does happen to be an accurate eye-witness account of conditions of the earth following a massive but regional asteroidal collision, the oral history of those events would have had to have been preserved by unaffected humans outside the area.

Remember that the new creation of animal and human life as described in Genesis is a significantly different type of life. Adam, we are told, is the type of human being distinctively created “in the image of God.” That could at least mean “as God intended,” that is, for example, non-carnivorous. It is not until later in Genesis that Adam’s lineage is described as reverting to carnivorous behavior and a gradually shorter life span, following his fall and the breakdown of the Edenic New Beginning, the reversion logically being hastened by interbreeding with the previously distorted and depraved forms of vicious carnivorous human life elsewhere on the planet.

In any case, the clear implication is that the rampant, destructive violence observable all throughout nature was and is a perversion of God’s original intent and design. Eden, in that light, would then be a New Beginning which was a re-creation of undistorted life, just as Isaiah 11 describes in the end times the lion lying down with the lamb in the ultimate triumph of God’s intent—once again *in the form of non-carnivorous and non-violent life*.

In other words, the immense complexity and duration of what is perceived from thousands of old bones (and many more thousands of no-longer-existing forms of life) does not easily fit into the few short years between Adam and today. It does not seem to fit into the first chapter of Genesis. It very easily fits into a period prior to Genesis 1:1.

The Question of the Process of Creation

Now that we have plunged into the concept of God “creating” or “recreating” life, a small digression may be in order. The paleontologists are telling us that the development life on earth took an exceedingly long time. On the one hand, the enormous, sudden changes at the time of the Cambrian Explosion do not readily correspond to the gradual process envisioned by Darwin. But, neither does that sort of lengthy process seem to be the work of what some people think of as an infinitely wise and powerful wand-waving Supreme Deity—unless, for example, that Supreme Being was working through finite intermediate beings who did their work in a lengthy learning process.

But, are there intermediate beings? Are some of them small enough or smart enough to tamper directly with DNA as modern humans are beginning to do? If there are such beings, it would seem quite reasonable for them to have been involved in a lengthy learning curve. We can then imagine that their final achievement of cellular development and the consequent potential for large animals might have been the occasion of one of the key angelic leaders deciding to turn against God and systematically sabotage His creation. Here again note Robert Newman’s essay noted earlier,

Organisms which possess incredible complexity beyond what natural selection could “design” from the available offerings of chance, and which also seem to be clearly malevolent, might well be the work of malevolent spirit beings.

Interestingly, the evolution of the American automobile throughout the twentieth century may provide an example of an “evolution” which is actually the example of the work of finite beings. We see mostly continuity all along from model to model with no

missing links, although, for example, at one point most cars got smaller. At another point some cars appeared with engines in the back. More recently, SUVs loomed into the picture, etc.

At every point along the way, however, *the changes that took place with automobiles were due not to random mutations but to the meticulous involvement of thousands of intelligent engineers.* The obviously necessary role of those human engineers could, it would seem, be parallel to the role of intermediate beings (good and bad) in the evolution (and distortion) of life forms. This perspective is radically different from the currently popular concept of Darwinian “unguided evolution.”

One question may come up. If loyal angelic beings took millions of years to develop life (all along under God’s guidance) how then could the various forms of life mentioned in Genesis 1 be re-created in six days, even if those periods of time were longer than 24 hours?

I don’t see this as a serious problem. To me this is like assuming that although swarms of highly intelligent automotive engineers took an entire century to go from a Model T to a Lincoln Continental, that with that backlog of experience they could not readily put out new models each year. But they do. Thus, obviously, if loyal intermediate beings (angels) had been steadily learning about genetics, developing a variety of life forms over a very long period, they would certainly have had no problem in re-creating non-carnivorous life forms in a very short period.

In other words there does not seem to be any stubborn obstacle to understanding Genesis to harmonize with current scientific knowledge of the earth, and to accepting a version of both the so-called “Old Earth” scenario as well as the “Young Earth” concept.

An Intelligent Counterforce?

It would seem clear that one value of understanding the great ages of the earth as coming before Genesis 1:1 is the lack of conflict with the concept of an old earth. Another value, that to me is even more important, is the significance of recognizing the full extent of the distortion of nature by an active, intelligent counterforce. This, in turn, defines the need for those defending God’s glory today to deal seriously with the continuous worldwide assault by the microbiological world on both animal and human life.

This kind of recognition—this apparently belated insight—would seem to be essential to any truly serious mobilization of believers to fight back against the origins of disease. This, in turn, then defines an appreciably larger concept of mission, and is my primary concern.

Therefore, unless and until that recognition of a larger concept of mission is more widespread, we are confined and restricted to a “gospel” which concentrates almost solely on individuals gaining assurance about getting into the next world and merely staying out of trouble while spreading that gospel until then. In this common understanding of the Christian life there is no war going on. Worse still, many thinking people are honestly wondering again and again how a loving and all-powerful God can both create, and put up with, or condone, the pervasive violence and suffering and sickness in this world. Furthermore such people do not understand that in this war God is expecting our help.

In other words, what puzzles both theologians and scientists regarding the specific process of the creation of life is made significantly more understandable by taking into

account that additional strange factor, namely, the evidence of a destructive counterforce to whatever might seem to be beautiful and good.

After all, one of the least mentioned and yet most unavoidable characteristics of nature is the absolutely pervasive evidence of a counterforce distorting, degrading, and destroying all that is good, pitting animal against animal and human against human, and in addition pulling down all forms of animal and human life by means of a virtual hurricane of deadly viruses, bacteria, and ominously clever parasites.

Curiously, those who commendably urge the recognition of Intelligent Design in nature do not usually offer comment on the resulting problem of people having to assume that violence in nature is due to the work of God rather than Satan. As a Harvard professor in a TIME Magazine cover story said that if Intelligent Design is true, "What kind of a divine sadist would create a parasite that would blind millions of people?"

Similarly, even Darwin pondered the paradox of an omnipotent God of love and the apparently gratuitous death of his little niece, the premature death of his father, and the rampant violence and suffering throughout the nature he knew so well. His resulting proposal of a purely natural, and random evolution was in one sense his method of absolving God of blame for the evident evil in nature. It might have been easier for him had he seriously considered the existence of the factor of intelligent evil opposition to God. Newman, in his mentioned essay, quotes Darwin as saying,

What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horribly cruel works of nature!

We can plainly see the evidence of virulent evil in the earliest remains of hominids, humanoids, or even modern humans who perversely and yet pervasively display extreme cruelty and homicidal behavior - the sort of thing bluntly described in Genesis. We also see evil in the omnipresent evidence of destructive disease. If divine intent is reflected in the re-creation that may be described in Genesis, as well as the final situation described in Isa. 6 and 11 (in which the lion will lie down with the lamb), *we can readily recognize that nature-as-we-know-it is clearly not the way a loving, powerful divine being intended it.*

However, if dangerous wolves can be altered genetically through selective breeding over a lengthy period of time, so, you would think, could man-eating tigers. That procedure would seem to be better than either of the two main alternatives we have at present - either to "kill or cage." I have read that there are only 5,000 tigers remaining in the wild, while in the U.S. as temporary pets there are another 10,000. I say temporary because treating wolves or tigers in a friendly way does not change their DNA. Nor, apparently, can either animals or humans become herbivorous just by being fed plant life.

The often overlooked genetic distortion that has already happened would seem clearly to be a more serious problem than can be coped with either through behavioral or nutritional modification. Patient, multigenerational selective breeding can make a difference. But that is a process which is inherently clumsy compared to gene splicing. "Original sin" in this light could be the result of genetic distortions re-inherited in the reversion following Eden. This may be why despite "the power of the Gospel to transform lives" humans still have seemingly indelible inclinations to sin, as Paul testifies in Romans 7.

Restoration in the Teeth of Opposition?

The thinking of the University of Chicago anthropologist, Robert Redfield enters here. He puzzled for years over the gradual but substantial changes that have often taken place in human society over the centuries. He first wrote the book, *The Village That Chose Progress*, which tussles with what really happens when an indigenous, tribal society encounters the modern world. (He did not think the changes were all that good.) Later, in a lectureship at Cornell University, he raised a lot of eyebrows and opposition in a famous speech entitled, “The Transformation of Ethical Judgment,” which is now the final chapter in his book, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*. In this lecture he asked what was happening when a young chieftain in a tribe of Plains Indians in the USA summarily abolished human sacrifice.

I realize it is not politically correct to assume anything like absolute historical progress in human ethical judgment. As I say, Redfield ran into a lot of flack. Many other reasons, therefore, are commonly adduced for the significant decrease of widow burnings in India and the near total amnesia in China today regarding the binding and grotesque distortion of little girls’ feet. Also, there is the legendary ingenuity of the Chinese in human torture that is no longer a national boast.

Many serious books have been written about the puzzle of seeming progress in human society. Years ago the missionary statesman, Frank Laubach, wrote *The World Is Learning Compassion*. One fairly recent book wrestling with the question of historical progress would be Jared Diamond’s very different ruminations about the mysterious rise of Western civilization in his *Guns, Germs and Steel*.

Could it be that human progress in knowledge of nature and technology has also been accompanied by a small but significant process due to “selective breeding,” a process that has in fact genetically restored some of humans’ pre-fall nature, varying from region to region? In the USA we have had our Jimmy Jones and his slaughter in Guyana, but can we imagine a U.S. mayor becoming a Pol Pot, or leading the way to chop off the hands of thousands of children as in Sierra Leone? Is the difference genetic or just cultural?

In any case, you would think that the constant attack of deadly disease germs, although their existence surfaced after Calvin died, would be enough to force us to wonder about an intelligent counterforce to the intent of the divine.

Unfortunately, the word Satan often swims in the same world as Santa Claus, the *Tooth Fairy*, and *Harry Potter*. Thus, if there is in active existence a frighteningly intelligent counterforce to divine intent, modern Christians don’t usually think or talk much about that possibility. Such thoughts are almost never heard in church or seminary classes.

Paradoxically, once you emerge from church into the rest of the world, turn on the TV or a computer game, go see a movie, open a newspaper or visit a prison, the pervasive theme of good versus evil fairly jumps out at you. Embarrassingly, the world would seem to be doing more of the fighting against evil than what is constituted by overtly Christian efforts. Could it be that the Kingdom of God is being more advanced by the indirect influence of the Christian movement on the world than by the formal Christian churches and organizations of our time?

In contrast to the intuitions of “the world,” the Western Christian tradition has often tended to concentrate on the next world, and, for this world, on merely the

obligation to maintain good behavior. This has been especially true since the Reformation's massive over-emphasis on simply how to get to heaven.

In current Evangelical thinking there would not seem to be any all-out or all-encompassing battle to be fought, nothing that would make the calling of every believer, lay or clergy, to be a participant in that battle.

The key issue, as I see it, is the difference between 1) seeing our mission simply that of resolving a tension between man and God and 2) seeing our mission as clarifying the tension between God-plus-redeemed-humans and the evil that is often blamed on God, that is, seeing redeemed humanity in a wartime kingdom as an agent on God's side doing whatever can glorify Him - not merely concerned to recruit more people for a peacetime kingdom. This concept of the kingdom as being not a holding tank of saved souls but a wartime involvement of every believer is the concept we will pursue in the second and third lectures. ■

Part 2. Planetary Events: the New Beginning

As we have already seen in the previous presentation, the origin of modern humans would seem to have been only 11 thousand years ago. That is, if we go by the first appearance of high intelligence—the first appearance of the intelligence it takes to genetically alter plants and animals by selective breeding. In any case, as I earlier explained, 11,000 years is an exceedingly short time in the light of a universe which is said to be about 13.7 billion years old, a planet 4.5 billion years old, the conjectured 4-billion-year earliest appearance of life, or even the last half billion years (the last 500 million years since the Cambrian Explosion).

You also will recall that, if we compare the human period to just the last 500 million years, the human period represents only the last two seconds in a 24-hour day.

However, our knowledge about the last 11 thousand years is perfectly enormous compared to what we know about earlier events. These last two seconds are the period of human existence. This is the period of human consciousness. This is the period we must try to understand. This is the period dealt with in the Bible.

I continue, as before, with the conjectural scenario which has the entire “old earth” falling before Genesis 1:1. That perspective makes relatively recent all of the events of Genesis. According to this scenario Genesis 1:1 in effect announces not “the beginning” but a very significant New Beginning.

It would be possible to suggest that Genesis 1:1 describes only one of many new beginnings, since each of the many major, previous asteroidal collisions occasioned new beginnings of life, often quite different forms of life. It is not necessary to understand those many extinction events as divine punishments to understand them at least as partial or almost complete new beginnings of life on earth.

Beyond chapter one in the book of Genesis there are other new beginnings. We read of the selectivity involved in the choice of Noah whose three sons formed a new lineage in at least one region of the earth. Then, we read of Abraham being selected, Isaac instead of Ishmael, and Jacob instead of Esau. We see Moses being chosen, and then Joshua. We see the Southern Kingdom emerging instead of “all Israel.” We see just a partial remnant returning from Babylon, two thirds remaining in Babylon, only one third returning to the land of their fathers. We see selectivity in the case of Galilee-of-the-Gentiles rather than Jerusalem, Nazareth, of all places, the selection of Mary.

Such *selectivity* has sometimes been interpreted as exclusivity. Thus, we are surprised when Abraham is judged immoral by a man, Abimelech, who was completely outside of the Abrahamic Covenant. It would seem that the Bible certainly reports accurately and critically on a nation and its story, a story which is not altogether admirable. But, in reality, much of the Bible describes almost exaggeratedly-objectionable behavior. Thus, the British historian, Herbert Butterfield, remarked that the uniqueness of the story of the Jewish people is not their history but their historiography. Apparently selection has had as much or more to do with reporting to posterity and other nations as it has been a matter of special favor.

Furthermore, the Bible obviously does not contain all the things God has said and done among all of the nations of the world. We don't always remember that fact. It is common for Christians to assume that God's selectivity has really been intended to be exclusivity: that God spoke to and through the Jewish tradition and to and through none other. Thus, again, echoing Butterfield, we can, in the case of the Jewish people, and their Bible, understand that it is the *nature of the record* not the *content of the record* that is the most unique.

In other words, the amazing and unique *literary* record we have in the Bible, despite its admirable honesty and self-criticism, does not on every page talk about human events that were unique or universal. With surprising accuracy it does describes people and their experiences and their understanding of things in the situation in which they found themselves.

For example, the Biblical authors speak of the "ends of the earth"—which to them meant "to the ends of the flat earth plain of the Fertile Crescent as bounded by the mountains of Afghanistan and the mountains of Turkey"—which was their known world. It did not mean, as we might think, anachronistically, the far reaches of the planet. Similarly, when the early chapters of Genesis speak of "the whole earth" they are not very likely referring to the entire planet, which was a reality not yet understood.

When Genesis speaks of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the specific information about where they and their lineages lived is clearly in the middle east. The Biblical text apparently does not intend to refer to the Chinese. The entire reality of which Genesis speaks we would at least initially assume made sense to the authors of oral tradition and later to Moses, all of whom, however, were very likely unaware of the true extent of the planet in that era.

Thus, we gain from Gen 1:29-30 the idea that the Edenic New Beginning in its initial stage consisted of the emergence, in a single region, of animals and humans which were strikingly different from the past, being explicitly non-carnivorous. This kind of nonpredatory life, then, would seem be what had been intended earlier (even though consistently distorted) during the 500 million year period following the Cambrian Explosion.

This particular, Genesis "New Beginning," according to the text, did not last long. The story tells us that during Adam's lifetime it went down due to his yielding to the intervention of a counterforce to the intent of God, and both the new animals and these new human beings were created in the image of God, but after the breakdown of Eden reverted, interbreeding with the animals and humans living outside of the destroyed area spoken of in Genesis 1:1-2, beings already distorted.

At this point, what some call the Evangelistic Mandate became necessary, a mandate to reconcile estranged man to God. In addition, what some call the “Cultural Mandate”—in its original simplicity a mandate to care for life on earth—would now have had to be augmented in the face of the very hostile environment external to the area of Eden. We might think of the “Cultural Mandate” as being now necessarily incorporated into a new and distinctly larger “Wartime” or “Military” Mandate, which would include both the Cultural and the Evangelistic Mandate. The latter, would be a recruiting program, and have as its overall purpose that of redeeming human beings and not only putting them to work in caring for life on earth, but also, now, warring against the powers of evil and darkness.

The point of what I am saying would be the significant difference between 1) the idea that the Evangelistic Mandate is the total definition of mission, and, 2) the idea that a recruiting evangelistic enterprise is simply part of a larger wartime effort to defeat what Paul calls “the god of this world,” and to restore the whole creation to the glory of God.

There is, evidently, a very great difference between a mission to get people into heaven and a mission to recover the glory of God by defeating the powers of darkness and distortion. In this latter, larger mission evangelism is to be viewed as in part recruitment for war. Mere evangelism, or mere recruitment for the Kingdom is not the single Divine goal. The Kingdom is at war and is not merely recruiting in peacetime. In this perspective the distinction between evangelism and social action is highly artificial. But both evangelism and social concerns are misconceived if they are seen as a humanistic campaign for the betterment of the human race. They are essential features of a Kingdom at war where the very glory of God is at stake. This reality is described by John as being very different from mere evangelism, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).”

In this light the major events of the Bible can be seen as the extension of God’s Rule: the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, the military occupation of what is called Palestine, the scattering of the northern tribes, the captivity of the Southern Kingdom in Babylon, the expansion of Hellenistic culture by Alexander, the “salting” of the Roman empire by thousands of Synagogues, and the expansion of the faith East, West, North, South in the past 2,000 years. All of this can be summed up not merely as a campaign for human betterment, but as evidence of the partial, gradual defeat of the powers of darkness, in the words of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

In this light we can note the gradual defeat of “war and pestilence” across the centuries. The conquest of either war or disease is neither easy nor automatic. One somewhat crude measurement of that conquest is an increase in the rate of population growth. For example, when the Roman legions withdrew from the British Isles to defend the city of Rome itself, at about 440 AD, the population of the British Isles has been estimated at one million. After three centuries of literacy, war and pestilence became again so fierce, however, as to hold the population constant for the next 600 years. Not until after 1066 AD did the population of the British Isles begin to creep up.

Similarly, there were an estimated 27 million people on earth in Abraham’s day, but 2,000 years later in Jesus’ day there were only roughly seven times that many. That’s a growth rate of one-tenth of one percent per year. What if in Abraham’s day world

population had grown at 1.7%—the relatively modest rate of growth of world population today?

Note, first, that the Western, so-called “developed” countries of the world today contribute very little to world population growth. This fact forces down the average rate of world population growth to the relatively modest world average of 1.7% per year. Many countries, like Egypt are growing at 3.5% per year.

Thus, if world population in Abraham’s day had only grown at this 1.7% rate there would have been six billion people on earth in only 321 years. What actually happened, by comparison, was that the 27 million world population in Abraham’s day grew as we have seen above, at .1% per year, or at one seventeenth of the world growth rate today. That depressed rate, note, is obviously the result of unbounded war and pestilence. This stubborn fact makes both gruesome and obvious the ravages of war and pestilence.

In recent years war has diminished to the point that on a world level today the number of people killed in car accidents is now five times that of the number killed in war. Disease is a different story. Certainly great advances have been made against many diseases. Our increasing understanding of how we get diseased has greatly increased, but in this case, the extensive development of resistant strains counterbalances a great deal of the progress. Two ways to measure the impact of disease on humanity are 1) to ask how long do people live, and also 2) how many people die prematurely of disease. In this country, longevity is constantly increasing. Yet, it is still true that nine out of ten Americans die prematurely from disease alone.

Let’s stand back at this point. This second lecture is supposed to cover the period from Eden to the present. Clearly we cannot go into detail for all the major events of the last few thousand years. We have already remarked about the more or less continuous increase in population and what that means. We have already mentioned the major events of the Bible from the standpoint of an expanding Kingdom of God. Our knowledge bank for the last 2,000 years is filled if not clogged by the nearly infinite details we now have of those years. Those details are more voluminous than ever before both because of a growing world population - more and more people are doing things and saying things and also because of the zeal and discipline of modern scholars to retain that information.

Basically, however, we can note the amazing impact the Bible as a document has had upon a number of human traditions, the Greek, the Roman, the Celtic and the Armenian in the form of Christianity, the Semitic in the form of Islam, the Goths, the Ethiopians, the Anglo-Saxons, the Slavs and the Scandinavians in still other forms of Christianity, and so on into modern times where all the world is involved.

At the same time, often with glacial slowness along with many setbacks, we can note that both war and pestilence have steadily declined. It is conceivable that in view of the onslaught of the forces of darkness genetic changes were early made throughout nature in the form of elevated birth rates.

It was once a good question whether human life could even survive. Hundreds of human communities have not survived. One per month is blinking out. On the other hand, today it is more likely a question of how to quell or at least slow down the incredible growth rate of humanity. John Wesley was the 15th child of his mother, Susannah. His brother Charles was the 17th. However, there were never more than five children alive at any one time.

We do well to recognize that no greater enemy of animal life has ever existed than the human race. Virtually all large mammals have already been driven extinct. At the same time extreme measures are sometimes pursued today to protect animal and even insect life. (There would seem to be more zeal for this than for preserving human societies.) Interestingly, in terms of the entire sweep of earth history our paleontologists have made us aware of one thousand times as many now-extinct forms of life as are in existence today.

The question we must address, however, is the extent to which those who have treasured the Bible and sought to yield to its message have understood their mission. I am afraid the answer is not entirely a happy one.

Even our terminology is complex. If we go back as far as Joseph confronting his brothers in Egypt we see two strikingly different ways of looking at things. He says to them, pointedly, “You did not send me to Egypt, God did.” We already have seen how, in fact, Joseph got to Egypt very clearly because of the actions of his brothers.

In 2 Sam. 24:1-25 we read the story of David’s sinful counting of the people. In 1 Chron. 21:1-25, written centuries later, that story recurs, verbatim, except for one word. Earlier it is God who “incites” David to do wrong. Later, in Chronicles, it is Satan who “incites” David to do wrong. And, just in general, following the period of Babylonian Captivity—where contact was made with Zoroastrianism, which held the concept of two gods, one good and one evil—the Bible begins more often to talk about the existence of an intelligent enemy, giving an alternate explanation of the reason for evil, the kind of thing the Old Testament almost always describes as simply the direct initiative of God.

The words *satan* or *devil* occur 68 times in the New Testament in one English translation, but apart from Job only three times in the Old Testament. One fairly strong early Christian movement, Manichaeism, took over the Zoroastrian dualism of two gods. Augustine started out in that group. When he rejected it he tended to move over to a neo-Platonic view which did away with an evil counterforce and ascribed all events to the direct initiative of God. It is possible to see this influence in at least Western Christianity. Let me give three examples.

Anicius Boethius, a Christian and follower of Augustine, and an upright man at the right hand of one of the tribal Goths ruling Rome, was accused of disloyalty and was for “safety sake” condemned to death. While awaiting his execution with calm and equanimity, he wrote an essay entitled “The Consolations of Philosophy.” This document was so high minded and noble in attitude, facing death without fear or recrimination, that it was widely read in the middle ages, almost beyond the Bible itself. Boethius resigned himself to the wisdom of God in his situation. The queen of England was so impressed that she translated it from Latin into English.

A 13th Century Mother Superior awakened one morning to feel something moving under the skin in her forehead. She wondered what God was up to. In a few days it broke the skin and the worm became visible. From time to time, stooping over, it fell out. Being God’s worm, she replaced it. You can’t fight God.

Jonathan Edwards, exiled from his pulpit in Boston to an artificial missionary village at the outer extremities of western Massachusetts, noted during his seven years there, amidst doing some of his most advanced writing, that his Indian charges were horribly decimated again and again by smallpox. There is no more painful death. Hearing about the Turkish idea of what we today call a vaccine, he set out to try it. The pastors of

Massachusetts warned him that he was “interfering with Divine Providence.” He did not heed their warnings, tried it on himself and died very prematurely of that horrible death shortly after being appointed president of what is today Princeton University. It was thought that God killed him.

These three examples show how unlikely it is that anyone would take steps to fight evil if they think that God is the initiator of the evil in each case. Here are four contemporary examples of this perspective, this tendency to be resigned to evil rather than fighting it.

A few days ago I was given a brochure put out as a ministry by the International Bible Society. It was designed to help those who are grieving. It told of a young husband whose wife was suddenly taken in their second year of marriage. He almost went out of his mind. At one point it flashed through his head that he wanted to “punch God in the nose.” Obviously, in his mind, his theology allowed him to assume God was the one who took his wife. Instead of recognizing the existence of a hideous and cruel counterforce to God, and pledging himself to work with God to defeat the precise medical reason his wife died, he simply assumed that God must have done it. He now needed simply to resign Himself to the mysterious will of God.

Earlier I was referred to an article in an issue of Guideposts about a family of two boys, one of which in his teens was overcome by an unusual form of cancer. The distraught father created an organization to fight that form of cancer. He organized a 10K race to raise money for it. He himself participated in the runathon. But as he approached the finish line he collapsed and died of a heart attack. The surviving little boy asked his mother, “God wouldn’t do two bad things to us in one year would He?” His intuition was good. His theology was bad. Even children within our stream of Christianity get the idea that God is himself the author of all evil - just as the Old Testament describes things.

A famous, but I will allow unnamed Christian leader writing a book about the Christian life proudly tells how his daughter who had struggled for years with an autistic son finally reached the point where her family could handle the situation fairly well. She at this point told her father “I have come to believe that Alex is exactly the way God wants him to be.” Why God would want a boy to be brain damaged is one thing. The real question for me is whether this influential Christian leader is involved in trying to find out what it is that is brain damaging millions of children today. “Not expecting evil but resigning ourselves to it when it appears” has today replaced the New Testament’s perspective of “expecting evil and fighting it when it appears.”

When my first wife finally succumbed to cancer I was advised, “Don’t fret, God knows what He is doing.” Another said, “You need to thank God for cancer.” Hundreds said they would pray for her. No one ever said they were going to do anything to fight cancer, or even pray for those limited efforts which are attempting to understand the sources of cancer.

In Philip Yancey’s insightful book, *Where is God When It Hurts?*, he urges readers not to speculate about causes of evil but to focus on the purposes God may work out of evil. Satan is mentioned in passing (as one who some think of) as a cause, but nothing is said about fighting back

He brilliantly summarizes common approaches to evil in his first chapter where a formerly beautiful young woman married for only one year is flat on her back in a hospital room ravaged by Hodgkin’s disease. Five visitors come to see her. The first, a

deacon from her church talks to her for some time and before leaving says, “Surely something in your life must displease God ... these things don’t just happen. God uses circumstances to warn us and to punish us. What is He telling you?”

A second visitor is an ebullient, cheerful woman who pastes get-well cards all over her window and refuses to talk about or listen to Claudia’s problem. A third, also a woman, hearing what the deacon said, blurts out, “Sickness is never God’s will. Haven’t you read the Bible? The Devil stalks us like a roaring lion, but God will deliver you if you can muster up enough faith to believe you’ll be healed ... Simply name your promise, in faith, and claim the victory.”

A fourth visitor, patiently explains, “Claudia, you need to come to the place where you can say, ‘God, I love you for making me suffer like this. It is your will, and you know what’s best for me. And I praise you for loving me enough to allow me to experience this. In all things, including this, I give thanks.’”

Finally, her pastor visits and explains to Claudia that God must have chosen her to be a hero, whose stalwart faith in adversity will be a blessing to many others.

While Yancey’s five visitors do not include any who simply say that Claudia’s tortured situation is part of God’s mysterious will, nevertheless that is commonly said, and is essentially what these five visitors are saying. In no case, did any of these well-wishers recognize the necessity of believers taking steps to fight Hodgkin’s disease.

Yancey does go on to say that no other problem provokes so serious a response and that many college students give up their faith because of it.

James Dobson’s book, *When God Doesn’t Make Sense*, similarly emphasizes the mystery of God’s will attendant upon terrible and unexplainable happenings. The very title assumes God is the prime mover in all evil. He mentions Satan in passing as what some say is the cause of disease but he does not speak of the need to counter Satan’s works.

Does our Christian mission involve an obligation and challenge to fight disease at its source? Orthodox Jewish doctors are at the forefront of such activity. Shall we simply let them busy themselves with this task? Apparently, we must assume that their intuitive theology is superior to our formal Evangelical theology. If so, this is very strange since their part of our Bibles is precisely the part which does not usually give reason for discerning the active, evil presence of a Satan in disease, nor reason to set about to destroy evil. We have that in the New Testament but not in our theology. Not since Augustine.

We have talked about the past and the present. If our life in Christ is both a great blessing and also a call to arms, just how can the future, and must the future, be different from the present? That is the subject of the third lecture

Part 3. Planetary Events: the Future

In this presentation I am not going to attempt to predict the future but rather to ponder what *ought to be the future*, that is, not guess at what will happen but propose *what should happen*.

The past, as portrayed in the earlier presentations, revolved around the basic stance of the redeemed human in regard to his earthly mission. It was alleged that seeking pardon for sin and becoming assured of heaven is by no means the whole picture. To the extent that that kind of reductionism is a product of the Reformation we do well to hold

much of such theology tentatively. Even the simplicity of what is called The Lord's Prayer goes far beyond that kind of truncated mission.

However, if there is any substantial truth to what I have been saying, there are in our future substantial obstacles to our response to the very first petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It would seem clear that the "coming" of the Kingdom of God is related to how God can be glorified in a darkened and captive world.

One way to approach a fresh redefinition of Christian mission for the future, then, is to ask the basic question, What will it take to remove the stain of accusations against a supreme being which arise from the very existence of evil in this created world? This gets at the task of glorifying God, but in so doing it recognizes that the task of glorifying God must involve the removal of understandings of God that are contradictory to His nature and existence.

Not long ago it was widely suggested that "God is dead." The ongoing Christian cultural momentum mainly doomed that phrase, but the phrase died in part because the same phrase could imply that God once lived - and that, too, is unacceptable to many. Today, any thought of a supreme being who ever existed in any form whatever in the past or present is usually considered totally out of date or even antagonistic to our "sacred" science.

Thus, to approach contemporaries thinking in these terms it may not be necessary to prove that the Bible is a magical, superhuman book. However, if the Da Vinci Code's popularity has done any damage at all it would seem urgent in the defense of the Christian tradition to discover ways in which people may disregard the Bible simply due to misreadings thereof.

I have described one of those possible misunderstandings in suggesting that Genesis should not be forced to talk anachronistically of modern cosmological insights. When both Luther and Calvin assumed the Biblical authors were acquainted with the sphericity of the earth and that the Bible described the Sun as going around the Earth, they were not accused of misinterpreting the Bible. It was assumed that those two very intelligent men had been simply following a defective book.

Today, when a *TIME* Magazine cover story mentions that Christians believe the earth is 6,000 years old—due to what the Bible teaches—the journalist is not thinking that someone has misinterpreted the Bible, but is quite likely assuming that the Bible itself is faulty in this respect.

Far more damaging is the fact that Christian leaders today are writing whole books to explain suffering and egregious evil without taking into account the role of an intelligent counter being to God.

Today we are in the midst of a massive shift toward explaining all things in purely mechanistic and material terms. This trend forces the concept of unguided evolution into prominence, but it does not make the concept of unguided evolution more credible, just more widely accepted. However, those who believe "God did it" are just as hard pressed to explain how and in what timing the creation of life was accomplished. The Christians are most concerned to maintain belief in God, while many scientists are just as determined to believe there is no supreme being.

Phobias in both cases? When the now-accepted "Big Bang" theory was first proposed the editor of the world's most prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*, opposed it

on the grounds that it was smuggling in a religious concept. Although scientists are no longer saying that, the same phobia today is desperately levelled against those who insist on the possibility of “intelligent design” in nature. Meanwhile, no one complains that multimillion dollar radio telescopes in Florida are trained skyward on the thesis that all that is necessary to prove the existence of intelligent life would be some minimal evidence of coding in the electromagnetic radiation from outer space that is constantly raining down upon the Earth.

An equal panic seems to exist for some who would seem to fear the thought that there is any real evidence of an old earth. I have wondered if this fear arises from a subconscious assumption that given enough time randomly guided Darwinian selection might possibly work, and thus prove there is no God.

But, besides removing misunderstandings of the Bible, there are other obstacles to the task of glorifying God. Some of these obstacles are very substantial, in the sense of being tangible and concrete, others equally substantial involve intangibles of misunderstanding. It is fairly simple to illustrate, first, the tangibles.

We have earlier considered the physical suffering due to physical aggression on the part of man or beast. We know we must fight wartime aggressors, muggers, robbers, dangerous animals - things we can see with the naked eye.

Not so clear is a theological mandate to fight the physical onslaught of entities Calvin knew not of: the tiniest of all are deadly viruses, which though tiny are not simple, some of them being composed of as many as ten million atoms. Viruses are all dangerous and destructive. Much, much larger in size are bacteria which are both good and bad. Finally, still larger are parasites, many too small to see but still incredibly more complex than bacteria and dauntingly clever, such as the malarial “plasmodium” which kills four children every sixty seconds.

Some parasites are big enough to be seen in their adult life, like the Hair Worm which invades grasshoppers, eats out their insides just short of total demobilization (a process called “zombification”), then creates proteins that mimic the grasshopper’s brain cells inducing the grasshopper to drown itself in water, at which time the Hair Worm swims away to breed.

Certain parasites invading humans, called generically worms, are even larger, including round worms, tapeworms, and flukes. They range in length from a quarter of an inch to three feet. One kind, for example, the schistosome in its tadpole stage in any water contact can breach the skin in three to five minutes not needing any cut or crack. Invading the body each one can lay from 100 to 300 eggs a day, course through the bloodstream penetrate the liver, the lungs, and the brain. The Guinea Worm may grow to 32 inches inside the human body.

These things are incredibly powerful enemies, designed to destroy, but to my knowledge there is not one substantial Christian institution in the world that is seeking to eradicate them. The problem is deep. Our theology and missiology originated in an era when the existence of such enemies was not known, and there has been no update of our theology, apparently, in the last four hundred years.

Of course, even if the global Christian family does choose to fight newly discovered evils rather than be resigned to them, it is not necessarily true that all disease can be crushed by human enterprise alone. Guinea Worm has been reduced by the Carter Center from 3.5 million victims to 13,000, mainly in unreachable areas of Sudan. But the

Carter Center, although Jimmy Carter is a Sunday school teacher, is not funded by any Christian denomination or mission agency, and its modest goals of eradicating five major diseases is not the idea of any theologian or mission agency I know of.

It must be obvious that physical dangers of the kind we have just noted would seem in general to be more understandable and identifiable. The exception might be the ones too small to see with the naked eye. If our two-year-old daughter is playing in the backyard and we can see through the kitchen window that a mountain lion is creeping up toward her, or if a pit bull is about to break through the fence and get to her, or if a big black spider is crawling up the back of her dress, such a danger is both understandable and identifiable. We don't stop to pray in such cases. We both pray and act.

But if the enemy entity is too small to see we have for most of human history not known of its existence, or, as in fairly recent history, we have learned only vaguely what the problem is, we tend, as a church, as a people, as a mission, simply to pray, not act. If we act at all we care for the sick, the victims, and we may try to avoid the pathogens by some sort of "preventive" measures or healthy lifestyle.

Yet, this is all "defensive." We do not pay much attention at all to the appropriate search and destroy mission, only the victims. But, you can't win a war by merely caring for the wounded. Our theology does not lead us to eradicate the attacking pathogens, as was done in the case of smallpox and polio through initiatives outside the formal Christian mission. In this sense our theology is still appropriate to the First Century.

All this is to observe that the problem is far deeper than mustering efforts to eradicate pathogens. They are tangible enemies. They are bad enough if only we could think clearly about them. Unfortunately, in a way parallel to the Hair Worm injecting mind-altering proteins into the brain of the grasshopper, the enemies we face that are tangible are made much more difficult to defeat due to mind-altering cultural and intellectual forces. These forces are similarly mind-altering and might be called "Diabolical delusions." Thus, delusions not just physical enemies are foes.

Let me give some quick examples of deadly delusions of the kind we don't have to fight in the United States.

I have, actually, already mentioned the grotesque practices of foot-binding that used to be practiced in some parts of China. What kind of a delusion would lead to the idea that that would be an improvement? Obviously, it was not a defensive measure against physical danger.

Or, take the burning of widows in India, which still exists in some places. That delusion is more understandable: the widow, if she dutifully yields to that fiery death she will be reincarnated at a higher level, she is given to believe.

More common in India today, but quite different, is the practice of burning to death a young bride whose dowry has already been turned over to her husband's family. Once or twice a month such events occur in the city of New Delhi alone, being reported in the paper as accidental. But that kind of evil is different from widow burning in that, to my knowledge, it is not furthered by delusion but simple greed.

In Southern Africa it is widely believed that a man with AIDS can be cured by having intercourse with a virgin. That delusion certainly seems diabolical.

What, then, about delusions that must be fought in the United States? Why did we go on for 35 years ignoring the link of cancer to smoking? Why did we go on for 35 years

chopping off women's breasts when it was known that lumpectomy was equally effective in almost all cases?

For one thing, we must in the USA fight against delusions about the size and scope of out-of-sight, microbiological aggression. Consider these facts: less than one percent of Americans are victims of homicide. Twice as many die from suicide (1.4%). A full four percent die of accidents, mostly car accidents. Add it up. Almost all the rest, well over 90% die prematurely of *disease*. This, despite some significant progress over time. In Franklin D. Roosevelt's era, when they determined a reasonable retirement age - 65 - certain factors including disease were taken into account. It has been estimated that if that same reasoning were followed today the calculation of retirement age would come out 92. Yet, despite many gains, disease is still clawing down to premature death over 90% of Americans!

A specific illustration of how enormous is the onslaught disease upon us, note the fact that Americans are forced to pay \$1 billion per day simply in treating cardiovascular disease - heart and stroke patients. That is, we are paying as much per day for cardiovascular disease as we are paying for the Iraqi war. But, you say, in Iraq we are also paying in U.S. lives, averaging ten a day. Well, U.S. citizens are losing their lives in the cardiovascular war at 3,000 lives a day. Thus, for that one type of disease alone our country is losing as much money and as many lives as if we were fighting 300 Iraqi wars.

Yes, I believe we need to fight a delusion regarding the scope of the war against disease. We need to fight that delusion in order to fight that war.

I might add that delusions about disease are also extensive in the rest of the world. I think of a 300-page book entitled *International Development*. The African Oxford-educated Ph.D. who writes the book stresses in the introduction that the book is focused primarily on poverty. When four out of five family members are down with disease that family is bound to be poor. The major factor in poverty is disease. But there is not one line in the book about the disease factor in poverty.

This major delusion I have mentioned can be described as the amazing and dangerous underestimation of what some clear thinking authors have claimed is the "plague dimensions" of disease today.

Compounding the effect of this first major delusion is a second, related delusion we must fight. It is the widespread idea that the American medical/pharmaceutical complex with its multiple billions of income is seriously dealing with the sources of disease not just the treatment of sick people. Since there is already a chorus of voices protesting features of the medical/pharmaceutical industry, let me say in advance that I do not believe, and will not imply, that the people working in that enormous industry are any more or less ethical than those in any other basically wholesome industry.

However, major new and highly credible insight into the realities in this sphere have come from Dr. Marcia Angell, the Harvard Medical School professor and just-retired former editor in chief for 20 years of the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*. Her book, *The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It*, is both eminently knowledgeable and fair minded. It is packed with actual cases and with detailed facts and figures to show how extensively the enormous inflow of money into the medical/pharmaceutical industry has allowed that industry to become a controlling influence in university testing, private testing, in medical journalism, advertising, education of doctors, the ostensibly autonomous Federal Drug

Administration, the government sponsored National Institutes of Health, and even Congress (where there are more drug lobbyists than congressmen). Here is one comment: “Legislators are now so beholden to the Pharmaceutical industry that it will be exceedingly difficult to break its lock on them.”

It would be impossible to go into even a tiny portion of the many examples described in this sane and sad book in which we again and again see truth surrendered to economic benefit. But economic goals easily explain why drug companies do not bother with the diseases of the poorer parts of the glob. Similarly, they do not see sufficient profit in the use of natural substances which cannot be patented were they to be expensively tested. This applies even to diseases that can be cured outright. There is more money in drugs for diseases that last on and on.

It is a revelation that FDA approval says nothing about the relative merits of a drug compared to others but only that it is better than nothing. This means that when a widely advertised and profitable drug goes out of patent it is very often replaced by a new one that is either no better or actually less helpful, but which now will get the big TV ads. Meanwhile, the previous drug that might be better is dropped from production in view of inevitable competition and lowered profits. Out of 415 new drugs approved by the FDA in five years, 77 percent were no better or were worse than earlier, earlier out-of-patent drugs. Most of the testing is either run by or controlled by the company that wants to sell the drug. When test results are negative they may be suppressed, or when they are submitted to journals, the company may submit only what happened in the first six months of testing and drop out the second six months which indicated a very different result.

These statements are only the tip of the iceberg. The reason for bringing this matter up, however, is that it illustrates well a widespread delusion about what the medical/ pharmaceutical industry does, working as it does almost exclusively subject to the gravitational pull of economic and market forces.

A specific illustration is the case of cardiovascular disease, the number one killer already mentioned. The perfectly enormous and expensive attention paid to treating those who have already suffered a heart attack or a stroke is explained by market forces. The victims are the ones who will pay anything to get well.

It is well known today that half of all who die of heart attacks lack the supposed symptoms of cardio-vascular disease. But heart bypass surgeons don't have time or training to look into primary causes. That is not what they are being paid to do. As for the pharmaceutical companies, even if there were the possibility of a drug that would strike at the cause rather than at the symptoms (such as high LDL cholesterol), such an outright cure would not render the same profit as the kind that requires, say, the long term administration of a drug to maintain lower cholesterol. Thus, institutionally, attention to root causes is almost non-existent by comparison to healing. It is a *delusion* to think otherwise. If Christian mission offers no help at the roots of disease then these delusions triumph even there.

The entire Bible expects us and exhorts us to do good works. We are not merely to wait for the next world. Paul put it this way to Titus:

We wait for the blessed hope —the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness

and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

Note the unspecific phrase, “to do what is good.” Whatever Paul had in mind, it was inevitably limited by his First Century understanding. He would not have thought about combatting cancer at the DNA level as a good thing to do. Our exegesis must explore all that he might have had in mind. That is, the first law of seminary exegesis is “What did it mean?”

But, we must go on to ask “What would Paul have said about good deeds had he known what we know today about what is dangerous in the microbiological world? What would he have said had he our understanding of the inherent limitations of a medical/pharmaceutical industry that is allowed and even expected to make decisions based on purely commercial factors? It is not enough for us to read Paul’s statement to Titus out loud in church and turn our people out into the parking lot with merely the phrase ringing in their ears, “eager to do what is good.”

The definition of mission is the difference between what is and what ought to be.

It is absurd to suppose that we cannot sit down and make a list of things that are wrong, unfair, ungodly, deadly dangerous, and then accept profound responsibility to do something about these evils, to work individually and jointly to identify every evil that could possibly be blamed upon God and confront it, as a church, in the name of Christ.

If a pastor was rumored to have been unfaithful, in a fit of anger to have broken the neck of a noisy two-year old, and to have cheated on his income tax, it would not be reasonable to schedule an evening of praise for him without first trying to clear up these rumors.

However, the concept of God is widely fowled with assumptions that God is busy inventing parasites that blind millions of people, of “taking the lives” of innocent and even godly people and doing all this for mysterious reasons. Yet we have no trouble going to church and singing, “The whole earth is full of His glory.”

It is not as though no Christian believer has noticed specific details of God’s creation. Brilliant individual scientists like John Kepler, James Clerk Maxwell, Michael Faraday and Isaac Newton were believers who paved the way for all of modern science.

For several centuries now, with such individual Christians taking the lead in the early years, science has churned up oceans of new evidence of God’s creativity, not only in outer space but within the world of the optical microscope and the electron microscope.

Seemingly, none of this new insight has been embraced by the church either for its theology or its hymnody. We don’t sing about the wonders of the microbiological world. Again, it is not as though Evangelicals know less about science than other Americans. Apparently those of us who have witnessed the incredible intelligence and creativity in nature have not made any connection to the never-never land of the Sunday morning service.

The future of rapidly expanding Christianity around the world is not very bright, beyond the initial explosion of numbers, if we cannot bridge the contemporary chasm between our outdated religion of mainly emotional conviction and the intellectual dimensions of updated science. We fail to understand that our religious version of our faith is extensively cultural. Thus, the real work going on today of the expanding

Kingdom is perhaps more outside of the church than within it where we continue on singing platitudinous hymns and choruses.

Right now there are in this world millions of scientists, none of which would get out of bed in the morning if they did not have the faith that nature is orderly, is beautiful, and is reliable. We cannot expect them to give up that faith. At the same time we have millions of Christian leaders who would not get up in the morning if they did not have faith in an all-wise and loving divine being. We cannot expect them to give up that faith.

The one group is studying the divine Book of Creation, the other is studying the divine Book of Scripture. Neither of them can win if they insist on denying the faith of the other. Both faiths reflect God's glory. I truly believe that both of them are in one way or another reflecting the expanding Kingdom of God. Again, I seriously wonder if much or not most of the work of the Kingdom is now being done by people Evangelicals consider nonbelievers.

The Bible itself says of the Book of Creation that there is no speech or language where its voice is not heard. We must take advantage of that fact. Ours is not just a world whose riches can be mined to create cell phones and computer chips. Ours is a world which, rightly understood, reflects at least in part the glory of God.

Clarifying the glory of God as a mission is an unacknowledged means as well as a goal of the Reformation emphasis on soul saving, the reason being that clarifying the glory of God is in fact the most sturdy basis for evangelism. Furthermore, clarifying the glory of God is the common ground between science and pure religion.

When Jesus spoke of His followers being salt and light in this world He went on to explain that they should "let their light shine in such a way that the world would see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven (Matt 5:16)." That is the common ground for the future. As St. Francis said, "Witness at all times, with words if necessary."

Growth of the Church in Judea and Samaria: Acts 3–12

(2006) (*Foundations Reader*, 117-20)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5ed13d18cfba127f3c41f09d/1590770998243/Foundations+Reader.pdf>

We have been working through the Gospels. Now we are plunging off the end of the Gospels to beyond the Resurrection, and the book of Acts is our guide for a while. Specifically, we are moving out of Jerusalem into the rest of the world. In a certain sense, you could say this is the most momentous moment for all history. Obviously there would be other candidates for that distinction like the cross of Christ and all kinds of other important events. But in terms of God’s plans to reconquer this planet, certainly this period is significant. The decisive move of the church in Jerusalem into the rest of the world is taking place in fulfillment of Acts 1:8, which states, “You shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” That kind of outline for the book of Acts, of course, is very basic. But this move beyond Jerusalem initiates a decisive change in all of world history.

We do not want to over-emphasize the changing of plans. At the same time, we must recognize by any comparison that in the 2,000 year period between 2000 BC and the birth of Christ, and the period of 2000 years beyond, that there is an absolute, fantastic difference. The difference begins right here in Acts. There is a difference, but the difference is not total. It was Abraham, 2,000 years before, who was pushed into Egypt in God’s providence. The word of God, the power of God, the Gospel of God (Gospel is what Paul talks about in Galatians 3 as having been preached to Abraham) begins to move out of Palestine into Egypt, a really major regional power.

Of course, later on many other activities we have already studied indicate that God is concerned, he is interested, and he is working. He is accomplishing the pushing out of the witness of the power of his Spirit into the darkened peoples of the world long before this. What is so unique about this? Paul sums it up later on in Romans 11 when he talks about the natural branches being cut off and artificial branches being grafted in. That never took place before. He assures the reader that does not mean that the natural vine will never bear fruit of itself. He talks about the time of the Gentiles as being fulfilled. It is not as if Israel is cut off forever, but there is a distinct change that can be observed.

Again, a qualification may be helpful as the change was not necessarily very obvious. The twelve disciples themselves did not seem to be fantastic missionaries, at least within the pages of the book of Acts. Peter is a very reluctant missionary. The cultural obstacles immediately loom very, very large. His ethnocentrism would lead him to believe that you cannot be acceptable to God if you eat the wrong kind of food. In any event, you have a distinct change of mood and pace. This is a momentous moment!

If you consider Walter Russell’s lesson, “The Growth of the Church in Judea and Samaria” (chapter 14 in *Intertestamental and New Testament Periods from a Missiological Perspective*), I am not real excited about that title if I can be very technical

for a moment. The key phenomenon here is the bursting out of Jerusalem into larger spaces and that is not called growth. In a way, the church did grow, take root and grow in the rest of Judea and in Samaria. But the central motif is that of moving out, of expansion. Let us understand that this period is not just simply the growth of something that was there already. This is a brand new movement. Peter's experience is decisive.

In Chapter 15 of Acts, Peter refers to the fact that in every city, Moses is already being preached. What is new then about the moving out of Jerusalem? The new dimension is in this case highlighted by Peter's experience—the sheet let down from heaven (Acts 10:1-48). “Oh, no, Lord, I couldn't do that!” The missionaries that had gone before Peter were extending not just the Gospel. There was an element of the Gospel in which the Gentiles were very interested. That is why they crowded in the synagogues in the back rows and were treated as God-fearers and devout persons.

The fact is that no one ever clearly understood that the salvation of the Living God is not a matter of meat or not meat, of eating this or not eating that. It is not the cultural tradition. All of us fall prey to our own religious ethnocentrism again and again if we assume that the way we do things, the way we say things, has got to be what new believers are to do. The shock we have introduced here is that even going beyond Judea into Samaria, where they had a somewhat similar cultural tradition even though distinct in many ways, there was a huge obstacle of communication. Peter had a crisis of missionary strategy, you might say. Instead of traversing land and sea to make a single proselyte, they were now going to make not proselytes, but believers.

In our era we talk very loosely about making converts. We really ought not to use that word. What we mean to say is just fine. The only catch is that in general English the word convert means the wrong thing. It means exactly what Peter expected, rather than what he was forced to accept. The word convert implies a conversion externally as well as internally perhaps. But that external dimension is decisively lifted in this section of Scripture, and even more so when we get into the next section.

Now I have to argue with the English language. In English it can be so glib, the reference to the Gentiles and to this man, Luke, for example, who was a Gentile. The English word is clear. We know what that phrase means: “Luke was a Gentile.” He's the only Gentile who wrote that much in the New Testament. In fact, he wrote more than anybody else in the New Testament! This in itself is an arresting fact—that God would employ a Gentile for the biggest single section of the New Testament. How about that? But in any case, the very phrase, “Luke was a Gentile” already throws us off. I want you to think about this. The word Gentile is usually the translation of the word *ethnos*, or in the plural *ethné*. In our mentality as American individualists, we can easily conceive of the Germans instead of the German nation, or the Jews instead of the nation of Jews. How very interesting that when the New Testament uses the term the *ethnos* of the Jews, which you find in Acts 10:10, the translators can no longer translate that “Gentile.” You can't speak of “the Gentile of the Jews.” But when you say the word *ethnos*, you're always referring to a group. You're never referring to a person.

You can check this out both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament. But in the English language, the word Gentile in the singular rarely if ever refers to a group. You could say in English, by stretching things a little, there was a Gentile group, but you almost have to add the word group for it to have the same meaning as the word *ethnos*. Here you have the peculiar situation. American individualism dives into the New

Testament and translates the words *ethnos/ethné* faithfully as Gentile/Gentiles. But our culture forces the word to mean what the words *ethnos* and *ethné* do not mean. At key points where it just is not possible to think in terms of individuals or an individual, then the translators shift over to what they should have chosen in the first place, namely nation. It would be much better, when you see the word Gentile in the singular, to read nation, and in the plural, read nations. That is not always the case, but almost always.

The word *spirit* in English, coming from *pneuma* in Greek, is another one of these words that gets hijacked, in a sense. We practically never use the word *spirit*. If a window broke out in a tornado and the wind burst in through the classroom, we wouldn't say, "Oh! There's a spirit moving here." We reserve the English word *spirit* for something that has distinctly to do with the life of a person, or an inner reality, or a theological concept. When Jesus said, "the wind bloweth where it wills and you don't know where it comes from or where it's going," he used the word *spirit* (John 3:8). This same word can no longer be translated as *spirit* elsewhere because the word never means wind in English. But there is absolutely no distinction in the Greek between that word, here and elsewhere. You can verify this for yourself both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament.

Of course, there is so much in this section that cannot be dealt with in a limited time frame. Sit back and enjoy the phenomenal significance of this first moment in all of history, when God is really getting the movement "to the ends of the earth" off the dime, on to a new plane.

Reflections

Reflection #1: We have noticed during the ministry of Christ with his disciples, that the disciples lagged considerably in their grasp of what Jesus was intending. Probably the most regrettable series of episodes has to do with their denial, or refusal, with regard to his death. They could not accept it. In Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34, where this announcement of his death comes up, the disciples in each case do not want to hear this kind of thing. Peter takes him aside on one of those occasions and says, "You've got to cut this out! You're really breaking down the morale of our guys here. You've got to think more clearly when you say stupid things like that."

In the third occurrence (10:34), Jesus introduced for the first time the word torture. They knew what that meant. Most of us do not know what that means. That should have shocked them to the core. But in this third incident, James and John were somewhat flippantly saying, "Okay, are you through with your little paragraph, Jesus? We've got something important." They had their little slip of paper they wanted him to sign to clarify the leadership structure. They had been reading Peter. It is important to have clear lines of leadership. They were on the right track. It's probably the most phenomenal non sequitur in all the world's literature. At the termination of his much more detailed account of what was up ahead of him, the disciples say, "Jesus, we've got to talk to you about something." They were just waiting for him to get through with this nonsense or this irrelevancy. Of course, Jesus says, "Do you know what you are asking?" He is saying, "Go ahead and sign the little slip of paper. Get this thing straightened out."

By the first chapter of Acts, they knew that Jesus got very upset when they talked about who is the most powerful and when are they going to get power. When are they going to *get, get, get?* They knew that there was something very verboten about that.

They had a new tack. They got out their little diary books. They said, “Now, Jesus, we’re not really interested in great things for ourselves. We just want to make sure we have the schedule right. When is it that *you are* going to come into your power, come into your kingdom?” They were talking about him, not them. They thought that they would ride into power with him. Jesus saw right through them.

The verse that for most of my life has always been a wonderful promise, “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you,” all of a sudden is seen in a different light. It seems as if Jesus is saying, “Okay, if it’s power you want, these are the terms.” They would have said, “Oh! We didn’t say anything about power. Hey! No, no, no! We’re just trying to get our schedules straight.” But Jesus goes on, “Yes! You will receive power when the Spirit of God takes over your life, and you are on your way to the ends of the earth.” I think that is not so much a promise as a put-down. A direct contradiction of their own interests and motivation occurs here. This, of course, is still prior to the coming of the Spirit in the Upper Room. Some pretty significant aspects are happening here.

In considering the meaning of these Greek words, I think we have to realize different cultures look at things very differently. Although the American individualization process may have some merit, our culture does not even allow us to talk in these terms. The American translators go astray again and again. For example, in the Pauline Epistles where Paul says, “You,” he means plural. He talks to the group. The promises of God, the presence, the power of the Holy Spirit, are almost always directed to a fellowship: “where two or three are gathered together in my name” (Matthew 18:20). But the American translators translate those verses as if to say, “you, you personally.” As you read along in the New Testament, it is speaking to *you*. “Oh, that’s great! I’ll make it personal.” But it does not work when there is just one person. I am only saying that the New Testament is gravely distorted on this very subject of whether we talk about a group or an individual. The key point here is not in regards to these two words. The big point is the drastic difference between cultures.

Reflection #2: Acts 12 is one of the great, great passages in my whole life. The besetting sin of the disciples was not that they were immoral, or even goof-offs. Their problem was they could not believe. They could not follow. They did not have the ideas, or the goals or purposes. They could not really believe as Jesus wanted. He spoke to the slow of heart to believe.

There is no more grave indictment of anyone than “slow of heart to believe” (Luke 24:25). In my opinion, the most graphic illustration of that is where Peter is in prison. He gets out; then he is in prison again. The Lord delivers him. He ends up in prison a third time. Believers are praying for him. (Naturally, they want to be faithful in their religious duties.) He comes out of prison a third time—not the first time, the third time—and he is knocking at the gate. The little girl, she can believe. She comes to the prayer room, and they say, “Will you shush up!” I mean, it is just hilarious here! They tell this girl, “You’re crazy!”

Now, when believing that God can do great things becomes crazy, this is a desperate situation. This is beyond Pentecost. This is beyond the giving of the Holy Spirit. Those people presumably were filled with the Holy Spirit, but they were still slow to believe.

Reflection #3: Another opportunity for reflection pertains to the time-table of expansion of the kingdom of God. We often remark that the whole Bible could be called “The Reconquest,” or “The Story of the Kingdom.” It is the story of God’s recovering a darkened world, like C. S. Lewis put in his book *Out of the Silent Planet*. A planet was out of contact with the Living God. All across the centuries, if you look closely in the Old Testament, you see God’s insistent, relentless love for all peoples. The rather spectacular occurrence of Gentiles in the genealogies is one example—a very discordant phenomenon for those who would be pure-pedigreed types. But the Bible relentlessly portrays that universal concern of the Living God. Don Richardson counts 480 times that this global commission of the Living God looms into the picture.

Earlier, I implied a question whether this is so unusual that here in Acts things are going to be moving out for the first time. Remember that there were proselytes all over the Empire. The Pharisees had little missionary bands going out. The synagogues and the missionary bands were both borrowed structures that God had no trouble using for his purposes. The synagogues were clusters of extended families whose elders formed a collegiate ministry. This is very different from our modern churches, which are essentially the gathering of broken pieces of pottery, fragments of families put together. Our mission agencies today are like the Pharisee bands that reached out. Paul employed the same sort of thing. But the thing that was new, that was radically different, was that *God was using other languages and other cultures* in which the treasure could be invested.

Always before, the idea was that a person had to put on Jewish clothes to be acceptable to God—not an unreasonable assumption at all. This assumption is evident in one way or another by almost every missionary in every situation around the world. Only when the planted church gets completely loose from missionary influence, sometimes, can really flourish within the garments and the structures of its own society.

This movement to Christ throughout the world was clearly out of the Jewish control. Even today, the workers, the powers of the kingdom, are in full pursuit of the enemy. The enemy is still there. But we are over the top, over the hump, coming down the other side. We are in the final stretches of this campaign.

What a marvelous, incredible opportunity was begun through a radical *contextualization*. This allowed the full freedom of the Spirit within the personalities and the cultures where the gospel went, rather than a legalistic conforming and bending of persons and cultures to fit something that is foreign. There is still a great deal to be learned here.

The Post-Exilic Period

(2006) (*Foundations Reader*, 79-82)

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The so-called *post-exilic* period had significance for the Jews. One of the hazards of nationalism is the exclusion of data that does not fit into that nationalistic perspective. It is perfectly understandable that the Jewish people would want to trace their history in their land; but it is true that by the time you get to this period of history, the Jews are mainly elsewhere. They are in Babylon, or in Alexandria, a Greek city; and whether they are one place or the other, they end up in Greek influence. Their durability in their own land suffers all the hazards of the instability of the periods of kings that preceded them. You could safely say that once the Northern Kingdom was removed by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom was removed by the Persians, that was the end of the story of the Jewish people geographically.

The Jews did not forget where they came from; they had that living, burning image of their land, and they still have it wherever they are in the world. Today, of course, there are a lot more Jews in the United States by far than in Israel, and there have always been more outside Israel than in, since that final, forcible removal of the Southern Kingdom. So when we think of Jerusalem, or of Israel, or of Palestine (Judea), we are really thinking of an *idea* more than of a people. As we plunge into this period that is such a jumble of names and people and assassinations and confusion, let us not get overawed by the details. What we want to do is not memorize facts, which themselves may be irrelevant, but to understand what was actually happening.

Realize the possibility that when their land was no longer more than an idea, when their dispersion was so extensive, when great and learned communities of Jews arose in both the east and in the south (in Egypt) you might even conclude that God was taking away the concept of a political kingdom. Was he trying forcibly to focus their attention upon a spiritual kingdom? Remember that Jesus said before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." That was a revolting thought! They thought it was of this world. They sang "Hosanna," which means, Let's get rid of the Romans now! They misunderstood the triumphal entry, and many modern Christians even misunderstand. Many modern Christians think that it is very important that Israel become a kingdom again. Now, it is beyond the remotest thought that Jewish people would ever rule the world as Alexander tried to, or Hitler; but they tried. They really worked hard at it. Solomon's kingdom was an enormous place, and when the Maccabeans took over and eventually extended the territory far beyond what is today Palestine, they must have had such thoughts in mind.

In fact, it is quite possible in view of the spectacular achievement of Alexander. He probably accomplished more for good as well as more for evil than almost any other person. The youthfulness, the drama, the vigorous military achievements of Alexander were probably in the minds and hearts of the people who seized control from the Persians and the Seleucids and began a new, faltering, very brief empire. A hundred years is not so

brief, but the Hasmonean period really went downhill from the beginning; it was not really very likely to become a new Alexandrian type of empire.

But Alexander has remained an evil model for many young people who somehow dream that they can do what he did in one way or another. By putting to death every single man, woman and child in the city of Thebes at the very onset of his conquest, he proved what kind of a person he was. When in the New Testament we see John's head on a platter, or the cross of Christ, we should not be especially revolted, because that was not unusual at all. There were 800 of the more zealous Jews who were put on a cross by one of the Hasmonean-Herodian tradition, which theoretically was Jewish. Even Herod was part of that Edomite or Idumean (two words that mean the same thing) kingdom south of Jerusalem, which had been converted wholesale by the Maccabees. Herod was not really accepted as a Jew. But in all that confusion and violence and assassinations and counter-assassinations, we do not see anything that looks as if it is going to become a secular kingdom, or even a cultural tradition that will endure.

The irony is that those Jews who lost the political kingdom, but who hung on to their cultural traditions, went equally wrong. They did not really accomplish very much, any more than Christians who would hold on for dear life to their Lutheran or Latin or English traditions and would split hairs over formalities. (Some have called this "morphological fundamentalism," which means that it is not theological, but has to do with liturgical fixity.) Such people, hanging on for dear life to outward forms, have obviously, whoever they are—Jew or Christian—missed the deeper point that apparently God had in mind. One of the things that we need to realize, then, is not to pay too much attention to the political externals or even the cultural forms, but to understand the purposes and the spiritual meaning behind all of this, especially in global terms.

One other comment: it may very well be that you never realized how many books there were on these subjects beyond the Bible itself, and why we would have to bother with other materials. Although we do not need to be overawed by all this mass of literature, we certainly ought to be friendly to it. It was the Christians preeminently, as well as the Jews and the Muslims, who preserved literature. I would say the vast proportion of all the literature we have in either its original form or its copied form is due to the instinct, if you want to call it that, of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims to preserve it. It is impossible to find anywhere else the detailed information as far back in history as in the Bible and the other books that were also carried along with the Bible. The Bible included, until modern times, other books called the Apocrypha. The Christians copied other books called the Pseudepigrapha and many other totally secular books without which we simply would not know a tenth, or maybe even a hundredth, of what we know about ancient times.

We need to bear in mind that our focus is not to memorize all the dates and details. The point is a growing globalization of a very significant faith, and we do well to keep our eye on the main idea.

Reflections

Reflection #1: You might wonder why the Bible is not a growing document, updated by God every century and covering all of history, so we would know what God's point of view at every point is. On the other hand, if the Bible makes plain a divine understanding of history, and we are to continue to follow it, then we should not be too

upset that the Old Testament essentially stops 400 years before Christ. We ought to be able to look at the next period of 400 years through the eyes of the earlier periods for which we do have a Bible. I think basically this is what is called the biblical philosophy of history.

There is a very distinct set of factors in this biblical philosophy of history. I believe that God intends us to look at our own nation from that point of view, as well as at other nations and other periods of history. We simply gain a certain perspective from the OT, and we are supposed to continue on with that perspective.

Reflection #2: “What mission significance is there in the Jewish loss of (or inability to gain) secular power?” This loss of kingdom in the secular, political sense freed the Jewish people and forced them back to their own faith as a universal and intercultural entity. Now it is true that very few actually saw this clearly. The transmission of the faith in the Greek language was of incredible significance, and to this day it is considered translatable. This is different from the Jewish tradition, which still holds to its own language. Something very special and sacred about their own cultural tradition and their own language is believed.

On the other hand, the Islamic tradition, which has the same attitude, refuses to translate their book, which is both a strength and a weakness. Everywhere in the world little children are memorizing portions of the Qur’an in sing-song notes that drone the book into their heads, but with little real value. This allows for an external uniformity that unifies the global Islamic tradition to some extent, although there are great differences between different forms of Islam. But Christianity does not have that formal exterior in terms of its Book; and this has, on balance, been a far greater advantage than a disadvantage.

Reflection #3: “How do we know what happened outside the Bible and what does it matter?” Well, the Bible itself regards other writings as valuable. In 1 Kings 15:7,23,31, for instance, other books are referred to, but there are dozens of references in the Bible to other books, both direct and indirect. Paul refers to writings of his time and appeals to them as would modern sermonizers appeal to current literature. But the Jewish and, especially, the Christian and Muslim traditions have held other writings of all kinds as of high significance. You find great libraries being cared for by Christians and by Muslims. In fact, the Muslims often employed Christians and Jews to care for documents. Most of our knowledge of ancient times is the result of this high view of truth wherever it is found. A way of putting it that Tertullian is noted for is that all truth is God’s truth.

Reflection #4: “In what three ways did Jewish messianism defectively reflect the biblical concern for the salvation of all people?” Here we are specifically indebted to Dr. Russell, who actually lists these three versions, or reactions, all of which are in some way defective, to the biblical concern for the salvation of all peoples. I might add, this is not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon. You can see exactly the same thing occurring in the Christian tradition, as we are very aware: the Christian tradition itself for the most part shuts out all peoples. Witness the fact that missions itself is an almost unknown phenomenon, even in American churches which have, relatively, a very strong mission

tradition. But as Russell states, the biblical concern for all peoples, which is definitely there, is understated.

But secondly, and much more virulently, Jewish messianism actually reversed the biblical concern for all peoples, and the Gentiles became enemies rather than objects of love and outreach. Thirdly, any kind of nationalism, if extreme, will make other nations second in importance. We find this very often in the Christian tradition, not just in the Jewish case. It is rather astounding that not even the people who followed Jesus closely really understood clearly this biblical concern for all peoples. I think the most astounding passage of the Bible is where Jesus overtakes two of his followers after the resurrection, which is not yet fully clear to them, and they are grumbling (Luke 24:13-35). The downcast attitude of these two men is very obvious. They are unhappy; they may have been part of the crowd that sang Hosanna, hoping for instant results and national rescue. All that is gone; they are really shattered in their attitude. Jesus says, "Hey, fellas, what's the problem?" They snarl at Him; they lash back and say, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn't know what happened?" They're really angry, and actually, He is the only one who *does* know what is really happening. It is one of the most astonishing passages in Scripture.

Then they spill the beans. He says, "Well, no, tell me." He leads them along, and they come up with this statement, which I will read verbatim, and you ask yourself what kind of implicit messianism does this involve? They say, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people." So far, so good. Okay? "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him." Again, they are just being descriptive. This does not in itself reveal what they had hoped. But the next few words are incriminating in the extreme. Yet I think many modern readers just figure, "Hey, why not?" Anyway, they go on to say, "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel (*NASB*)." They obviously had a political concept in mind.

Now, we throw around the word *redeemed* all the time. We talk about people being redeemed, not, I hope, in a purely mercenary sense like a prosperity gospel. That is a form of individual messianism: in other words, what can God do for me? But we do see here a very clearly deficient understanding of His purposes. This passage perhaps more than any other shows the great distinction between the concept of a Messiah as Jesus understood it and the messianism, the political, nationalistic and cultural durabilities to which they clung. This is something that is very important in our understanding. We, too, should not expect and hope that our country will do all the right things at the right time and will somehow perform God's will for us. We need to believe that other countries and other peoples have just as much right as ours to grope their way into the will of God, and not to expect the kind of messianic or Zionistic hopes that we find in the Bible. We certainly cannot and must not assume that the Jewish people were worse off in their understanding or were more disobedient or more sinful than others who tried and sought to follow the living God.

All the way down through Christian history, as well as Islamic and Jewish history, you find these same encroaching misunderstandings which are contrary to the biblical perspective. So we have, then, a very muddled and muddled picture if we read the Bible cursorily. Too often, we do not understand what it is that God is really up to. That is the great challenge of our time.

**To the New Asian Society of Missiology:
Greetings from the West
(Twelve Mistakes of the West)**

(2007) (*Foundations Reader*, 247-51)

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In 1973, a third of a century ago, David Cho, Ph.D., invited several of us from the West to a meeting in Seoul, Korea which preceded the formation of the Asia Missions Association. On that occasion I presented a paper urging Asian mission leaders not to make the same mistake as Western leaders had made when the Foreign Mission Conference of North America shortly after 1900 had insisted that in God's Kingdom only denominational mission boards were legitimate. My paper was entitled, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," which spoke favorably of both "modalities" and "sodalities." By now, of course, there are many American as well as Asian structures that are interdenominational.

Later, I often pointed out in my classroom teaching the shocking failure of the Western missions to understand the possibility and importance of Non-Western believers to form their own mission agencies. By now, of course, Non-Western agencies are very numerous and enthusiastic.

It would seem clear that Asian mission leaders have potentially a great advantage in being able to learn from the mistakes of Western agencies. If not, Asian mission leaders face the danger of making some of the same mistakes. One problem is that Western leaders may not know what their mistakes are, and thus cannot warn Asian leaders of what Western leaders did wrong. It is also true that not all Westerners agree about the various issues in missiology. Thus, the twelve "mistakes" of Western churches and agencies, as described below, must be understood to be merely my own best understanding. Note that they are not problems of the distant past. They are all contemporary problems. In any case, Asians will have to judge their validity.

1. The Mistake of Starting Bible Schools, Not Universities

The Student Volunteer Movement, in which John Mott was a leader, is noted for the number of universities that it established around the world. The missionaries who went to China made sure there was a university in every province of China. However, in later years Evangelicals, who had never been to college, went out across the world and established Bible Schools, Bible Institutes or theological schools that either replaced or ignored the university tradition. In the last 50 years the majority of American mission agencies have not founded a single university.

The curious thing is that, even though western missionaries cannot be given credit (except in the earlier period) for establishing universities, the hundreds of thousands of national leaders who have been a product of western mission agencies have been able to see what the missionaries could not see. They have recognized the great influence of the

university pattern. As a result they have taken the initiative to found over forty universities in the last forty years. I myself was, somewhat accidentally, part of the founding of an evangelical university in Guatemala which now after forty years has 37,000 students. No missionary can be given any credit for the founding of this university. In my case I merely stood up for a photograph of the founding board of directors two weeks before leaving the country to be a professor at Fuller Seminary.

Why is it that missionaries have not realized that Bible Schools, no matter how high the quality of instruction and curricula, simply do not represent the global mainstream of the university pattern? In the last 100 years in the United States 157 Bible Institutes eventually, after sixty or seventy years, have converted over to colleges and universities. Why haven't missionaries applied the same practical wisdom in their work overseas? This has been a serious strategic mistake. We can at least be glad that national leaders have taken the initiative to found universities without the help of western missionaries.

2. The Mistake of Only “Salvation in Heaven,” not “Kingdom on Earth”

Earlier missionaries again were wiser than those in recent times. They realized that (as we see in the Lord's Prayer), Jesus told us to pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth. Yet we have mainly helped people escape this world. Unlike the 19th century, many missionaries in the 20th century, who have not been influential in the upper levels of society, have been content to talk about getting people into heaven but have no longer been concerned for transformation in this life. They have done many good things on the micro level of society—hospitals, clinics, schools, vocational training, agricultural developments—they even pioneered insights into leprosy and essentially conquered that malady. But there were many things on the macro level of society they couldn't do without greater social influence, such as stamping out Guinea Worm or malaria. Today, however, when Evangelicals have far greater influence than ever before, they are often asleep to the opportunities for transformation on the macro levels of society.

3. The Mistake of Congregations Sending Missionaries, Not Using Mission Agencies

Today many congregations are large enough and strong enough to feel that they don't need a mission agency through which to send their missionaries. This is a new and widespread phenomenon which ignores the great value of the veteran mission agencies which can draw upon the insights of missiology and the vast field experience which are lacking in the average congregation. It may be true that some mission agencies are more experienced and wiser than others, but to my knowledge there is no example of a local congregation bypassing mission agencies with any great success.

4. The Mistake of Whole Congregations in Direct Involvement, Not Professional Missions

A more recent phenomenon (which is characteristic of whole congregations which are highly excited about missions) is the idea of every family in a congregation briefly becoming a missionary family. In this plan, during, say, a four-year period, the intention is for every family in the church to go overseas to work on some sort of two-week project. This is a marvelous idea for the education of people in the church about foreign

lands. Yet, it is incredibly expensive and it is a very questionable contribution to the cause of missions.

5. The Mistake of Insisting that Devout Followers of Jesus Call Themselves “Christians” and Identify with the Western Church

Congregations may find it easy to believe that their people can win converts to Christianity in a ten-day short-term mission. But what very few congregations in America are prepared to understand is that dragging people out of their culture and converting them to what they think a “Christian” should look like, is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible talks of our conveying a treasure in earthen vessels. The earthen vessels are not the important thing, but the treasure is. The new vessel will be another very different earthen vessel. This is what happened when the faith of the Bible was first conveyed to Greeks. In that case the treasure of Biblical faith in an earthen Jewish vessel became contained in a Greek earthen vessel. Later it went to Latin vessels and to Germanic vessels and to English vessels, and is now contained in Muslim vessels, Hindu vessels and Buddhist vessels.

It is just as unreasonable for a Hindu to be dragged completely out of his culture in the process of becoming a follower of Christ as it would have been if Paul the Apostle had insisted that a Greek become a Jew in the process of following Christ. Amazingly, there may be more Muslims who are true, Bible-believing followers of Christ, than there are Muslims who have abandoned their cultural tradition in the process of becoming Christian. There are already more Hindus who are predominantly Hindu in their culture but who are Bible-reading believers in Jesus Christ, than there are Hindus who have abandoned their culture and become “Christian.” In the New Testament there was no law against a Greek becoming a Jew. However, Paul was very insistent that that kind of a cultural conversion was not necessary in becoming a follower of Christ.

6. The Mistake of Sending Only Money, Not Missionaries

This has been a problem for many years. It can rarely be a good thing to send money to a mission field with little accountability for its use. There are many examples where foreign funds are used to “buy” national leaders away from their churches or away from their denominations rather than strengthening the existing churches. Money can be very helpful but there is no example of harm to the cause of missions that is more extensive than the careless use of money. Money is more easily corrupted than missionaries. This is the reason that wise national leaders talk about trade, not aid. What poor people need is the ability to earn money. With earnings they can buy food and medicines and not have to rely upon uncertain gifts from a foreign country. Missionaries are often ill-trained to establish businesses.

7. The Mistake of Sending Short-Termers, Not Long-Termers

This is not a case where one of these things is good and the other is bad. Neither should take the place of the other. However, there are now almost two million short-termers leaving the United States each year compared to 35,000 long-term missionaries. Note that the overall cost of short-termers is at least five times as much as the overall cost of long-term missionaries. This means that instead of doubling or tripling the number of long-term missionaries we’re investing at least five times as much money in short-

termers. Short-term trips are wonderful education, but a very small accomplishment in missions. Worse still, a short term is often scary enough or useless enough to turn a young person away from being a missionary at all.

8. The Mistake of Not Understanding Business in Mission and Mission in Business

One of the latest explosions of interest in missions is the result of Christian businessmen in the United States recognizing the value of thoroughly Christian businesses in a foreign land. There is no question that one of the greatest needs of churches across the world is for their members to earn a living. It is pathetic when we think of sending food around the world instead of sending businesses that would enable believers to earn the money necessary to buy their own food. Businesses can often do things that are very essential. They can enable local people to sell their products in foreign lands. They can produce goods of great value to the people. Unfortunately, it is true that few missionaries have business experience and often ignore opportunities to establish businesses that would employ large numbers of needy people.

One thing is true, however, that businesses cannot be relied on as a source of profit for missionary work. In the long run, businesses that divert profits to other things will lose out to competitors who don't divert profits to other things. There is no great future in a plan to "milk" profits from a business to support ministry. It is equally true that micro loans may have a temporary value, but will also fall prey to competitors with larger capital resources employing inherently more efficient processes. In the early history of missions, Moravian missionaries started businesses and so did some Swiss and German missionaries. Sadly, American missionaries have not been as creative. However, the business process will never take the place of the mission process in situations where the people in need cannot pay for what is needed. Businesses have to recover their own expenses. The mission process is still essential in all situations where there is no realistic possibility of remuneration.

9. The Mistake of Healing the Sick, Not Eradicating Disease Germs

The activity of healing the sick is one of the most genuine means of portraying God's love and His concern for hurting people. It is a perfect example of the importance of the essential relationship of word and deed. On the other hand with our increased scientific knowledge of microbiology God can expect us to go beyond healing the sick to the eradication of the germs that make millions sick. Missionaries have done well in establishing a thousand hospitals but very few of them are big enough or are properly structured to be able to drive out of existence the evil pathogens that cause millions of people to be sick.

Malaria is an example of a tiny parasite that drags 45 million Africans out of the workplace every day of the year. It is imperative that the malarial parasite be eradicated. Malaria is virtually as large a threat in Africa as the AIDS epidemic. We don't yet know how to eradicate the AIDS virus, but we do know how to rid this planet of malaria. That would be a significant transformation. Why then is there no Christian mission agency that is involved in the eradication of malaria rather than merely the healing of those who are attacked by malaria? It is very embarrassing to have to admit that the church of Jesus Christ is expecting billionaires like Bill Gates to do that job for them. Worse still,

Christians are misrepresenting the love of God in Christ if they do not become noted for their relentless efforts in such a cause.

10. The Mistake of Thinking “Peace” Not “War”

Missionaries have for centuries moved out across the world with the idea that the Gospel is merely a message to be communicated rather than a “call to arms.” I grew up with the idea that the main problem the Bible talked about was how human beings can become reconciled to God. That is certainly a glorious part of the story! But the main problem the Bible is really talking about goes beyond man’s reconciliation to God and is more precisely a war in which God-plus-man is fighting against Satan and his evil works. As a result our God is being blamed widely for rampant disease, poverty, injustice and corruption—since we as Christians are not fighting these works of Satan. People are asking what kind of a God would sponsor a world like this? They say this because they are unaware of the existence of Satan and his intelligent opposition to God. Thus, instead of God being glorified, He is being blamed for the work of Satan.

When things go wrong Evangelicals commonly say, “Why would God do that?” instead of blaming Satan. They do not realize that we are in a war and that casualties are to be expected because of the hideous strength of our opponent. We are lulled into inaction by the widespread belief that Satan was “defeated” at the Cross. In fact, the Cross was the turning point beyond which there have been centuries of ongoing conflict with a Satan yet to be completely defeated. Long after the Cross Paul told Agrippa his mission was delivering people from “the dominion of Satan.” Satan was still around. Peter talked about Satan seeking to destroy. Christians today, with modern understanding of microbiology, for example, as well as the endemic corruption in business and government, now possess far greater responsibility than we have ever had before. Are mission agencies part of that war against Satan? Is it necessary for Christ’s followers to be counted at the front lines of that war whether it be eradication of disease or the conquest of corruption in business and government? Do we misrepresent God if we are missing in action? I feel sure we do.

11. The Mistake of Assuming Science Is a Foe Not a Friend

When I was a young person missionaries were showing science films 2,000 times per day in the non-Western world. The Moody Institute of Science films were shown even more widely in America. Many times in history Christian scholars have recognized that God has revealed Himself in “Two Books,” the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. As Psalm 19 indicates, the Book of Nature does not even need to be translated into the world’s languages. Every missionary must take with him to the mission field both a microscope and a telescope if we are to properly glorify God. Even more important is the need to take to the field a true reverence for the glory of God in Creation. This requires a substantial knowledge of nature. Science is the study of God’s creativity. Art is the study of man’s creativity. We cannot truly expect educated people to accept Christ if our hymns in church reflect no awareness of anything discovered in nature in the last 400 years, or if our young people are being led astray by recent and superficial theories that the world is only 6,000 years old. That is an improper reading of Genesis 1:1, as well as a reckless ignoring of thousands of honest Evangelicals who are outstanding scientists.

12. The Mistake of an Evangelism That Is Not Validated and Empowered by Social Transformation

Several times in the points I have already made above have I contrasted the 19th Century Western missionaries and 20th Century Western missionaries. This is because a radical change in the perspective of American Evangelicals took place between the 1800s and the 1900s. In the 19th Century we were singing about the glorification of God as His will is fulfilled “on earth.” Here is the final stanza and chorus of “America the Beautiful”:

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears.
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

In the 20th Century we have been singing mainly about heaven:

This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

In the 1800s great revivals swept the country and Evangelicals in high places conceived and promoted equally sweeping reforms. Ten, immigration of non-Evangelical people quadrupled the population and Evangelicals lost influence. Millions of non-college people were converted by D. L. Moody and others, but their 157 Bible Institutes did not feed the professions nor congress. Only recently, as Evangelicals have more and more been going to universities, are there sufficient numbers of American Evangelicals to begin to think seriously about social transformation either in the USA or elsewhere in the world.

Conclusion

I hope it is clear that I have not wanted to do more than point out what in my estimation are failings and shortcomings in the history of Western mission thinkers. My perspectives may be faulty. At least I have raised certain issues that Asian missiologists may also confront in their work. Furthermore, this must not be a one-way street. I hope that we in the West can learn from members of the Asian Society of Missiology as they share with us their own perspectives. In 1972 I helped to start the ASM (American Society of Missiology, www.asmweb.org) and its journal, *Missiology: An International Review*. A few years later I helped start the ISFM (International Society of Frontier Missiology, www.ijfm.org) and the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. I have edited the latter for the last six years. It will be strategically helpful as Asian counterparts such as the Asian Society of Missiology arise and global sharing increases.

We of the West have already learned a great deal from you. We expect to learn a great deal more in the future. Thank you for this invitation to greet you in Christ's name!

The Classical Renaissance

(2008) (Foundations Course, Lecture 10)

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The first 400 years AD are a glorious interplay of dynamism and diversity. At the same time, we can look back and see how predictable the different main views were. Finally, we can see amazing parallels today to the main perspectives then. This is a truly rich and significant period to study.

However, my first duty in this lesson is to make clear that the very title, Classical Renaissance, is my own invention. I don't know of anyone else who has dared to employ this phrase in the way I do. The obvious danger is that the phrase, Classical Renaissance, may lead people to assume I refer to The Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries, which, in fact, was, in part, a "rebirth" of interest in the Roman/Greek classical world.

In this case I am drawing attention to the original "classical" renaissance—the 4th century itself. After all, the word "renaissance" is, like most words, not under lock and key and is employed in many other ways. As I have studied the development of Western civilization, I have noticed through the centuries what I first thought I might call various "flourishings" of peace and quiet and faith. Later I boldly decided to call all of them "renaissances," using the word in a more general sense.

Specifically, I have found reason to think of five renaissances in the last two thousand years of Western history. After identifying these five "flourishings" or "renaissances" I noticed that in four out of five of the cases others had already employed the word renaissance!

I also found that if you utilize a grid of five four-hundred-year periods, 0 AD to 400, to 800, to 1200, to 1600, to 2000, you will find that the five renaissances fall in the latter part of each period:

1. 300–400, The Classical Renaissance
2. 700–800, The Carolingian Renaissance
3. 1100–1200, The Twelfth-Century Renaissance
4. 1500–1600, THE Renaissance
5. 1700–2000, The Evangelical Renaissance

Each of these epochs or pulses is described in some detail in my article in the Perspectives Reader, entitled "The Kingdom Strikes Back," where I have a diagram which shows the essential parallel of these five renaissances to the "pulses" Latourette describes.

Notice that the flourishing portion of the most recent 400-year period started earlier than just the last century of that final four-century period, that is not about 1900 but about 1800. Actually, in each of the five epochs the renaissance begins a little earlier each time, and is a bit stronger. By the fifth it is almost an explosion by contrast.

Just in general, this 400-year breakdown is intended to be an impartial grid and basically means no more for the structure of history than 100-year centuries. No one pretends that history falls precisely into either 100 or 400-year periods. I feel it is helpful to use such a grid to which to tie things. That seems easier than to track 40 centuries!

Thus, even though there are some things (these renaissances) which seem roughly to coincide with 400-year periods, other very significant things don't seem to pay attention to that grid, such as the doings of the Celtic Christian movement or the rise of Islam.

One other thought is that many of these periods begin in chaos or persecution. Roman government crackdowns in the first 400 years, Gothic and Saxon invasions in the second 400 years, Viking invasions in the third 400 years, for example.

However, in this lesson we focus on the 4th century and our first, "Classical Renaissance." In our last lesson we already pointed out the lifting of persecution under Constantine and the scholarly work that followed. There was also scholarly work needing to be opposed. Indeed, Eusebius brought together documents which were themselves critiques of opposition to some earlier streams.

Probably the most formidable opponent of standard Christianity was associated very early with a wealthy businessman, eventually a Bishop, named Marcion. His reaction to the Bible was to embrace just the Pauline message and ignore anything that was appreciative of earlier Hebrew faith. Consequently, he threw out the whole OT and most of the New—anything which seemed more Hebrew than Greek. For him Paul's religion "superceded" that of the Jews. He was thus the first "supercessionist" in understanding the church to replace the Jewish tradition, not merely inherit the Jewish faith as enriched by the ministry of Jesus.

His perspective was a predictable conclusion, and his kind of ethnocentrism bedevils us to this day whenever we find it difficult to figure out how the Biblical faith could be transferred from one earthen vessel to another.

For example, some may puzzle over the question of how any Hebrew before Christ could ever have been "born again," or how any Catholic before Luther could be born again, or how any Lutheran before the Evangelical Awakening could be born again, or how any Evangelical before the Charismatic movement could be born again, or how any Charismatic before the emergence of a house church movement in China could really be born again, etc.

Marcionism, ancient or modern, represents the inability to see one's faith clothed in unfamiliar garments, customs other than one's own. Marcion, himself no doubt a dedicated believer, accomplished (accidentally) one good thing: scholars believe his drastic abandonment of treasured documents actually assisted in the process of firming up the "Canon"—that is, a list of approved NT documents. The LXX had already firmed up what we call (misleadingly) the Old Testament, but Marcion's influence may have speeded up the formation of what we call (misleadingly) the New Testament. Note that I think it would be better for us to speak of the Bible, Part I and Part II.

Marcion's fairly strong following may have survived to some extent in another major divergence just a little later, namely, Manichaeism. Mani carried the Zoroastrian full-blown dualism (both a good and a bad god) into Christianity, in a very strong movement into which the famous 4th-century theologian, Augustine, first became a believer. After a number of years in the Manichaean stream Augustine abandoned it and

then tended toward the neo-platonic concept in which all evil is the mysterious work of the one good God.

Augustine's pendulum swing has defined what some scholars regard as a longstanding syncretistic element in Christianity of the West. This resulted in only a vague idea of Satan. It talks of Satan being completely defeated at the Cross and no longer "walking around as a lion seeking whom he may devour" —even though the latter phrase was penned by Peter after the Cross.

Another ancient perspective we have inherited is the idea we call the heresy of Pelagianism. Although none of the writings of either Marcion or Pelagius survive (only criticisms by their opponents), our understanding of Marcion may be more correct than our view of Pelagius. Latourette felt it necessary to suggest that Pelagius probably was not a Pelagian but only a "semi-pelagian."

Similarly we can note that many other ancients are popularly misunderstood. That is, the Stoics were not stoical, the Epicureans did not have epicurean tastes— any more than Calvin's thinking was equivalent to Dutch Calvinism or the Puritans were puritanical.

There are, in fact, many features of Western Christianity that do not derive from the Bible and at the same time there are many features of the Bible that have not properly survived in Western Christianity. The phrases "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven," which occur 98 times in the New Testament, do not appear at all in the early creeds. Presumably Constantine did not warm up to the idea that there was any other kingdom besides his. Even the Cross as a symbol was not in use in the first 300 years.

In other words, every cultural vehicle of faith in history is in part an earthen pot in which the glory of God is carried, our own form of faith included.

It is commonly assumed that the doctrine of the Trinity was always held by Christians, but for over half a century an alternate perspective (named after Bishop Arius—Arianism) was the official creed of Roman Christendom. And, admittedly there has been some real Biblical truth in Arianism, Marcionism, Manichaeism, Augustinianism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, even Islam. Some of these are better than others. None is perfect.

Fortunately, God judges us by the heart and not just by our heads, and much less by our labels. Donald McGavran is famous for saying of the huge African phenomenon of marginal sects (52 million and over 10,000 denominations) that "It does not matter what they believe for now if they just keep on studying the Bible."

In any case, the final, flourishing fourth century involved significant changes. Followers of Christ were now finally forced politically to accept for themselves the label Christians, even though no one in the New Testament ever called himself a Christian—the word in the NT was used merely as an outsider's sneering label for Christ's followers, something like "Messiah Nut."

The fourth century was when, in Rodney Stark's words, two different forms of Christianity emerged and diverged, the Church of Power and the Church of Piety. The Church of Power phrase refers to the public and official activities which were partially funded by the Roman government, and which eventually included all Roman citizens whether they individually were believers or not. The latter, the Church of Piety, refers to the highly selective and elite small communities ("orders") of "monks" who wanted to be more fully faithful than was required by public morality.

The “orders” proved to be a great blessing to Western Christianity. They maintained libraries, made copies of books, both Christian and secular. Apart from their labors only four manuscripts exist from the period of the Roman empire. Lynn White, Jr., UCLA’s famous medieval scholar said that apart from the orders’ literary endeavors we would know no more about the Roman empire today than we know about the ancient (and apparently brilliant) Georgian empire. These monks who sang their way through the Psalms each week were, in White’s words, “The first intellectuals to get dirt under their fingernails.”

But in the relatively brief fourth century, the Roman Church of Power is not known for sending missionaries beyond its borders. They did exile “heretics” such as Arian leaders whose faith after 60 years was rejected and was picked up among the Gothic tribes. This unintended mission effort explains in great part the fact that when masses of tribal (“barbarian”) peoples later invaded the empire they represented a “heretical” version of the faith and for that reason were at least relatively gentle invaders. They did not molest the women, and they kept their word. Some Roman aristocrats said they were more Christian than the Romans.

Ironically, the so-called “Fall” of the Roman empire is usually pegged simply as the overrunning of the Roman (what is now the Italian) peninsula. There were, however, two quite positive factors in that unprecedented event.

First, it marked the achievement of significant military skills on the part of the tribal peoples north of the empire (middle Europe) who had for many decades been rotated in and out of the Roman legions.

Second, the prime mover of the decline of Rome in the West was the pressure of the Huns invading Europe from the steppes of Asia. They pushed the mildly Christianized Gothic tribal peoples into Empire territory, Alaric finally invading Rome itself in 410. The Huns themselves arrived at the Roman gates forty years later. By that time the actual seat of the Roman empire was no longer the city of Rome but the city of Constantinople (today’s Istanbul), a significant move which had been made over a hundred years earlier.

By the end of the Fourth Century, while the Gothic tribes were only superficially Christian, the faith had also penetrated the Celtic parts of Europe in a much more serious form and remarkably early had resulted in advanced scholarship. In our next lesson we will go further with the remarkable Celtic movement to Christ.

Here, at the very end of the fourth century Pelagius, already mentioned, is graphic testimony to the advanced Biblical scholarship already the case among the Celtic peoples.

Pelagius was so advanced he was an embarrassment to Latin scholars, such as Augustine. Yet, because he came from an ethnic background generally despised in both the Latin and Greek worlds they did not feel they could learn from him or agree with him. His native language was within the Celtic sphere, yet he arrived in Rome with a command of both Latin, Greek and Hebrew when most of the Latin scholars, such as Augustine, knew only Latin. Considerable commotion ensued. Doctrines for which he was blamed were condemned (he was too optimistic about the human will). But in a number of face-to-face trials he was able to defend himself successfully, especially at the Eastern Greek-speaking end of the empire where his Latin accusers who followed his tracks had to work through translators, unlike Pelagius. Most of the differences between the two parties we would call semantic. It is probable that people like Jerome, who 50

considered the Celtic peoples “pigs,” felt they had to arrive at some sort of formal rejection of the insights of Pelagius.

In any case, Pelagius stands as a durable example of the surprisingly advanced Biblical scholarship which existed by the year 400 among some of the Celtic tribal, headhunting people into whose midst the faith of the Bible had gained a deep and permanent foothold. In our next lesson we will see how their grounding in the Bible allowed them to “re-evangelize” what we call England after the Anglo-Saxon invasions had encompassed all of the southern part, and how they contributed very significantly in the renaissance of Christian faith which occurred at the end of the next period. It is, in fact, difficult to imagine how the Christian tradition in the West would have survived without the help of these Celtic “mission field believers.”

Curiously, the fall of Roman power in the West after 400 AD precisely allowed the faith to spread beyond former Roman borders, while the continued military power of Rome in the East, due to its identification officially with Christianity, worked to prevent the spread of the faith beyond the limits of the Empire there. This helps to explain why Islam arose originally in opposition to Rome but not to the Biblical faith which they tried to gain from Christians we would call very defective in their understanding.

I believe we can see a parallel between the unfettered rise of Christianity in Western Europe following the decline of Rome in the West, and the continued and similarly accelerated spread of Christianity in the colonial world today ever since the colonial powers in modern times rather suddenly pulled back following World War II.

We will see in the next few lessons that in Western Europe even the Latin version of Biblical faith— despite being considered a universal faith centered in Rome— eventually gave way to many different cultural versions of the faith both before and after the events surrounding the tumultuous “Protestant Reformation.”

Collapse of Colonialism, The Rise of Globalization

(2008) (Foundations Course Lecture 15)

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Our topic leans heavily on the book, *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years*. There is certainly no value in my just repeating what is in those chapters. Rather, I would like to build up a larger context for that phenomenon—the phenomenon of the retreat of the West.

The West, of course, is a rather silly word, for what is west of what on the globe? Everything is west of something. We are talking about Western culture. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, there is what is called Western culture. Western culture is predominantly a Christianized phenomenon. It doesn't mean that Westerners are Christians, except in culture. It does mean that a Westerner is a person whose ethical judgments and philosophical, cosmological, worldview thinking, and so forth, have been predominantly the result, whether he knows it or not, of the Hellenistic tradition, which is non-Christian, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the Western European Christian experience.

Eastern Christians are also Western in the larger sense of Western culture. In other words, Russians are part of the Western cultural tradition. When the Russians cross over into China, they are Westerners, even if they are living in Siberia or going into China. China is non-Western, because China in thinking and culture, at least prior to Mao Tse-tung, was for the most part unaffected by the West. Communism, however, is a Western phenomenon. Westernization has taken place not only through missionary penetration of the provinces of China, but because every single card-carrying communist is a Westernizer. His materialism derives from Christianity.

Christianity is the most materialistic of all known world religions. In fact, it has to be, because as some great theologian said, "God was the first materialist." He created the atoms, those shining, brilliant, unfathomable beauties that go together with the subatomic particles; and all this unbelievable complexity that is beyond our comprehension in its ultimate reality— God created all this!

All of this is based on God's wisdom, and it is the Christian who understands and is awed. The Christian does not worship it, but respects it and sees the glory of God in the handiwork which He has displayed for us: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Thus, the created world we have in common with communism. Many other things we have in common with communism. The ravages of communism across the world, as an atheistic, anti-religious system, are to a great extent just bizarre perversions of a Christian inheritance. The Bible itself is anti-religious! Read chapter 1 of Isaiah. Read chapter 23 of Matthew. Christianity is not even really a religion, according to some theologians, and when it becomes a religion, it may no longer be a faith.

Now, that is an overstatement. I do believe there are many religious people who are also profoundly Christian. But it is Christianity alone—Evangelicalism in particular—which allows for the acceptance of people who do not go through fancy rituals, and who are not beholden to any observable patterns. Even Evangelicals eventually fall into patterns, so that if you walk into the most highly unstructured Evangelical service, the people there can tell exactly what is coming next. So don't let people in non-liturgical traditions claim that they are non-liturgical in the ultimate sense. But despite habit structures being what they are, the fact of the matter is that Christianity in a certain sense really isn't a religion. It is a faith, it is a life. It is, in this sense, the only candidate for a world faith. All other religions are religions. Even Christianity becomes a religion all too easily.

But Christianity is the only world religion in another sense. When people speak of world religions, they often only mean long-lasting religious systems. Any long-lasting religious system with lots of followers in any place is sometimes called a world religion. That's nonsense! To be a world religion you have to have, in some sense, an affinity with all the cultures of the world. There is no other good candidate for that description except Christianity and its extensive cultural diversity. Christianity is the religion (if you wish to call it that) which has been most willing to take upon itself the cultural clothes of every tradition.

Islam, by comparison, although in some ways a heretical variety of Christianity, is much more of a religion, in that it requires the Arabic language in its holy book. It requires facing towards Mecca when you pray. It requires many things to be the same wherever it goes. It is what the communists in Indonesia once called an imperialistic religion. The communists, before they fell from power in Indonesia some years ago, claimed that the Indonesians were dupes to accept a foreign religion. But they were unable to pin that criticism on the Christians. The Christians had churches that were built in Indonesian architectural styles; their Bible was in Indonesian languages; their hymns and music partook, at least to some extent, of the Indonesian cultural tradition. In that sense, Christianity was nowhere near as foreign an invasion as Islam. And, by the way, Christianity got to Indonesia before Islam did! That is a very interesting thing. Islam is a relatively recent in Indonesia.

The Bahai religion is much too small a movement to be called a world religion, but it does to some extent follow Christianity in a multi-cultural approach. Their problem is their scriptures. Bahai people will tell you about their ineffable, ethereal scriptures, but they cannot be translated! I think that it is true: they are un-translatable! For when you translate them, no modern person with any sensitivity would go along with their bizarre and rather crude character. They have the same problem at that point as Islam. However, Muslims refuse to translate their scripture for the additional reason that they envision a global single language.

The point is that somehow there are many children of the Westernization process: communism is one of the children. It reflects faithfully many of the ethical concerns of Christianity. The ethical system which the communist society espouses, but which it does not have the power to live up to, is for the most part Christian. Their emphasis on the equality of all people was borrowed directly from Christianity. Their cell structure, their emphasis on confession, all this was borrowed directly from Christianity. Their sense of history comes directly from Christianity. Communism is a bizarre, heretical, and virulent

evil, but to a great extent it has been a part of Western Christianized civilization. The process of Westernization produced an immense fertility of mind and industry, of political and demographic power. There is no example in human history, in the annals of mankind in any part of the world, of any other human movement gaining momentum so rapidly, building up population and wealth and power so rapidly, as you see in Western Europe. And that is precisely where the Bible was unleashed.

That power spilled over in many ugly ways, tragic ways, and also beneficial ways, all across the world. What earlier parallel is there of a vast muscular spill-over of population into another part of the world, as the modern colonial movement? What about the Crusades? The colonial movement was, in fact similar in some ways to the Crusades. It was far less holy, far less Christian in most ways. But for most of its early history, under the Portuguese, Spanish, and French—before the Bible-pounding Protestants got into the act—colonization was definitely a Christian Crusade. All ships carried priests: missionaries with the intent to convert people to Christ as King.

When the Protestants got into the act, their first large-scale presence on the open seas was the pirates. That's right, the pirates were Protestants, and you can imagine how easily this fitted into the Catholic stereotype of Protestantism. Father Baegert, a missionary priest, in his book, *Observations in Lower California*, pointed out that Protestants actually ruled the Caribbean, meaning that pirates ruled the Caribbean, and why didn't they evangelize? Some of these pirates actually did have chapels in their outposts, in their hideaways. Some were religious men. With all their cut-throat piracy, they may have thought they were doing God's will.

However, in general, when Protestants got into the act, colonization no longer had a Christian dimension to it. For example, the Dutch were allowed into the ports of Japan even after Japan totally sealed itself off from all other ships. The reason was that no one would have ever suspected the Dutch Protestants of bringing Christian missionaries. That is not quite true, however. The Dutch actually did bring chaplains with them to Taiwan. At one time there even was a fairly promising movement there. They also eventually did bring chaplains into Indonesia, the so-called Dutch East Indies. But, as I say, Protestants in general were less religious by far than other colonizing powers.

Notice that all this immense muscular outburst, whether you call it a crusade or not, to a great extent was a result of the explosion of a community produced by the limited tincture of Christian faith in Europe. When I read books written by secular scholars about the rise of Western civilization I just have to shake myself to realize that these authors are systematically omitting all of the Christian dimensions. I would read in Latourette about the Evangelical Awakening and its impact on the English parliament and everything else; and then I read a secular book with no reference of any kind to anything of that sort! It is just as if you're reading about two different worlds.

In fact, there was a great deal of vitality, of Christian devotion, of high-mindedness, of social reform, political reform in Western civilization and colonialism. The ending of slavery is one of the most obvious results of Christianity. Slavery was not something invented by Christians. In fact, to this date in history, there have been far more white people enslaved by white people, than black people enslaved by white people. Who are the Slavs? They are the quarry from which human slaves were gained for centuries and centuries, for over a millennium, the greatest source of human slaves sold into

Africa. Slavery, therefore, was not caused by Christianity; slavery was there before Christianity ever arrived.

Christianity was what eventually percolated into the higher circles and, through John Wesley and the Evangelical Awakening, into the lives of Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. Clapham was a district of London where these Evangelicals lived. They were called a sect, although they were really only a subordinate party in Parliament. They were the ones who led the anti-slavery movement. The impact of Christianity on the rise of Western civilization, virtually unknown and undetectable in secular books, also accounted for the vitality and the military power of the West. It is a strange thing that the very muscle wielded by the Crusaders in cutting off people's heads was muscle produced by Christianity.

Christianity makes people healthy. It turns "the hearts of the fathers to the children." There is a lower infant mortality instantly when a population becomes Christian. There are all kinds of good things that happen: orphanages and hospitals, insane asylums. All kinds of problems are ameliorated because of Christianity. All that produces power, even for those who do not acknowledge it, and eventually spills over across all the world.

But the impact can either be called colonialism (with an adverse twang to the word), or it can be called a blessing. I don't know of any clear-thinking member of a former colonial country who will not be able to tell you how ambivalent their people are about the former colonial presence. Many people in India today, if they had their choice, would ask the British back. Of course, they would probably have to think twice! There would be lots of people who would be opposed to it. And there would probably be a lot of violence.

It is incredible that any one country would rule another country. Allan Moorehead wrote a book on the South Pacific called *The Fatal Impact*, and describes it as literally fatal to thousands of people, as slave ships and European diseases captured or killed off those people. It was fatal in other ways, since their cultures were largely destroyed. The point is that, at some point in history, the vast, massive and, for most observers, utterly irreversible movement out across the world all of a sudden began to crumble and retreat—after four hundred years of massive, muscular, irreversible outreach, controlling every square foot of the world!

So we have this amazing and unexpected collapse of colonial power. I will not say that I don't think that there is the slightest intrinsic virtue or superiority in Western man. I really do think that there is a great deal of superiority in Western culture insofar as it has been affected by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I will give not one millimeter of credit to any other source! It is Christ. Western nations can say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I!"

But I was sitting in a hotel room years ago talking to a Christian leader, John Gatui, from East Africa. He and I in a few minutes were to debate, before cameras, his widely criticized proposal for a moratorium on all mission work. He came up to my room in the hotel. It was his initiative to talk to me, hoping somehow that we could avoid unnecessary conflict in our discussions. I'm sure after the debate he was completely satisfied with what I said, because I agreed that in his situation in Kenya a withdrawal of missionaries from authority was quite reasonable.

But there I was, talking to a man whose own people a few months earlier were involved in the Mau Mau uprising. If I were John Gatu, I would be very embarrassed at the thought that my people, the Kikuyu, were involved in the orgies and unbelievable atrocities of those satanically-driven people. What I tried to tell him—yet what I couldn't easily convey—is that I was just as aware as he was of the orgies of brutality and bestiality among the tribal people of my own past.

Consider the Irish. They were originally headhunters. In their little boats they would go up the Irish Sea and suddenly besiege a little village thirty miles away and kill every man, woman and child. They would pile all the heads into their boats and return, almost sinking, hollow out those skulls, process them and drink out of those skulls. Irishmen were drinking out of skulls as late as the sixteenth century!

Who are we kidding? Satan is the god of this world. All peoples come from a background of satanically controlled cultures. There is no intrinsic merit in Western society apart from the direct and indirect impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Science itself is a result of the cosmology which is uniquely found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

You cannot be a scientist if you do not believe in the orderliness of nature. You cannot be a scientist if you are merely a Hellenistic philosopher. Plato believed in a pantheon of quarreling gods, whose quarrels decided whether it rained or didn't rain. You couldn't possibly have been a scientific observer of weather if you were a Plato. There is nothing about the Hellenistic tradition that would ever have allowed science to develop. The so-called Greek science, about which many books are written, is in a totally different category from Western science. The roots of the latter are the godly reflections of Christian people upon the orderliness and beauty of a creation which God designed.

However, there came a time when God obviously said "time's up" for Western political power. The crumbling of that vast world-wide empire is the story of the "Retreat of the West." However, the retreat of the West is actually only the retreat of political and military power. It is not a retreat of the cultural or economic power, or the retreat of the religious influence of the West.

Many people assumed, and maybe many hoped, that with the withdrawal of the troops and the colonial offices of the Western powers, they would have taken with them all other influences. But, as you'll see in the chapters of my book, in many cases the cultural impact of the West actually escalated in the absence of the often stuffy, censorious, and condescending colonial rulers.

The other important thing in this whole story is that in most cases the gospel of Jesus Christ actually was given freer reign with the Retreat of the West. It was not the gospel that retreated! *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years* book is simply the story of the unbelievable fact that the church of Jesus Christ emerged from this twenty-five-year period of Western retreat more powerful, stronger, more rooted, more indigenous than ever before!

At this point our dual topic, from colonialism to globalization, can be seen not as two different eras but as a very long and gradual transition in which both are present at all times. The end of the "25 Unbelievable Years" is described in that book as the end of only certain externalities, the outward clothing. The inner dynamic of the impact of the West did not decline at all, and is now the major driving force in the entire globe.

Globalization also is not new, except in its extent and rapidity. For thousands of years, goods from one part of the world have been traded for goods from other parts. All that has happened is, seemingly, that the process has been astoundingly speeded up. Interdependence has increased to the point that some are suggesting that the main reason China will not literally conquer the USA is due to the industrial and commercial interdependence of the two countries. Frankly, that may be the opposite. When the Gothic tribal peoples had learned the art of war by mustering in and out of the Roman legions, it simply made them both willing as well as able to overrun the Western Roman capital of the city of Rome itself. The Empire never again regained it.

A recent book proclaims that the world is now “flat.” That is, there is a level playing field and small businesses in one place must contend with huge industries thousands of miles away. (On that score it is just as much a smaller world as a flat world). The book gives an example of workers in Egypt losing their jobs. The work they used to do is now suddenly taken away from them by more efficient processes in China. Lantern makers of Cairo used to work months in advance to pile up stock for the moment when the Islamic year made carrying around hand lanterns the thing to do. Now those millions of lanterns are made in China and shipped to Egypt at a lower cost.

The thousands of Egyptians left without work are not less willing or less able to work. They simply cannot compete with Chinese efficiency. They have been made poor through no fault of their own but because of sweeping improvements in global communication and manufacturing. Neither is it due to people in China trying to harm them. The Chinese workers are simply trying to make things that the world will buy, so they then can buy things other countries of the world make. Another example is that after the 9/11 travesty in New York, the first two million miniature American flags sold in the USA were made in China!

For centuries, but more gradually, what is called technological unemployment has been taking place as hand looms gave way to textile mills, and subsistence farming gave way to mechanized farming. Today the transitions are blindingly swift and millions upon millions of people in the so-called Two-thirds World are suddenly without work. At the same time smaller numbers do in fact have jobs as part of the global economy due to distant outsourcing—jobs that never existed before where they live. Advanced globalization has obviously injected a new ingredient into the necessary strategy of Christian missions. That will have to await another lesson.

The Emerging, Expanding Church

(2008) (Foundations Course, Lecture 9)

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In our previous lesson we saw the firm reality, and also the complexity, of a new beginning, a new tradition of Biblical faith through a lateral shift from Semitic to Greek and Latin cultures. We noted the same kind of a confusing shift later on between the Mediterranean sphere and the Germanic sphere, in the Reformation. We pointed out the contemporary shift away from Western culture into the intricacies of African, Indian and Chinese cultures. In this lesson our concern is to see how well this New Testament lateral shift both survived and expanded in totally unexpected ways in the next few centuries.

Our first observation should be to recall that this shift really was not entirely sudden. It surfaced like a delayed-action fuse. It had been in the making for centuries before the birth of Jesus or Paul. At the time the Pauline letters were being written, literally thousands of Jewish synagogues had already been sprinkled throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Even more significant was the amazing and gratifying fact that the faith and faithfulness of these far-flung Jewish communities of what is called “the Jewish diaspora”—the Jewish Dispersion—was so real and had such integrity that it had already attracted two kinds of Gentiles:

- 1) Proselytes—perhaps as many as 100,000 individuals of Gentile background who had gone the whole way in adopting Jewish culture and faith, and
- 2) God-Fearers—perhaps a million who at least attended the Jewish synagogues, to hear the scriptures and to enter into worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Much of this could not even have occurred had not what we think of today as the “Old Testament” been in the Greek language. In at least the East end of the Mediterranean, including Palestine, the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, had become common. In Greek areas Synagogues were able to attract and maintain Greek God-Fearers precisely because of the existence of the Septuagint.

Thus, all this was a massive head start, which Christian historians have usually been loath to give its proper place. They sometimes have allowed the impression that Gentiles gained nothing and had nothing to gain from Jewish believers.

The divergence of the faith, even faith in Jesus Christ, between Jewish and Greek cultures can be seen in Romans 14, where Paul courteously cautions Greek believers against belittling the Jewish customs of the Jewish believers in Jesus. Paul himself, a bicultural of both Jewish and Greek culture, firmly believed, as he said in Romans 1:16, that the Gospel he preached had the power of salvation for both Jew and Gentile, but you have to wonder (after reading Romans 14) how many others truly believed that.

A tragic element also enters in. The Jews had fought and struggled to attain special favor and you might say, license, to pursue much of their own religion within the I 42 Empire. When Gentile groups began to form, it is apparently true that Jews

sometimes called upon Roman authorities not to extend that same license to these new groups, within which there may not have been any Jews at all.

This could have led to persecution and even death of the early Gentile followers of Christ, and naturally, to the widening of the divergence between the two faith traditions. In the process thousands of Jewish followers of Christ became seen as more Jewish than followers of Christ. Before long, perhaps in a single generation, it became easier for the Jewish followers of Christ to identify with Jews rather than Gentiles.

As the rift widened and deepened, both sides began to think ill of the other, and Christian history is full of terrible evils inflicted upon communities of Jews throughout the Mediterranean and middle Europe. To the Jews, the word “Jesus” became associated with their persecutors.

Meanwhile, despite sporadic persecution, the initially substantial “God-Fearer” population expanded. Civil authorities began to identify them with the sneer- word, “Messiah Nuts” which is something like what the word “Christian” meant.

The testimony of daily life of Jews carried some of them into marriage with emperors. Now, in the same way, the integrity of life of the followers of Christ gained them respect. In one instance, in particular, one of two sub-caesars, Constantius, married a woman who had grown up in the East where Christianity was far more widespread. It is possible that this kind of Christian influence caused him to refuse to implement the terrible decade of the Diocletian persecutions in his area of Western Europe including the British Isles. He sent his son Constantine as a formal hostage to grow up in the East under the watchful eye of the other Caesar, to ensure good relations.

Constantine grew up to inherit his father’s role and eventually became the sole caesar, ruling favorably to Christianity for 45 years, early moving the seat of empire to the new city called Constantinople, today Istanbul. These 45 years, plus the rest of the 4th century in general, are the amazing window we have into early Christianity. This is when Eusebius was commissioned to collect documents and information about the first three centuries, and compose his mammoth multivolume study, apart from which we would know very little. It was this window which allowed the canon of the New Testament to become established. This is the period of the empire-wide Nicene Council and the resulting Nicene Creed.

After Constantine (called Constantine the Great) died, a younger relation, Julian, soon became an anti-Christian emperor. He did not make much headway in turning the clock back, and died prematurely fighting the Persians. Christianity then returned, became the official religion of the empire, with no further major threats.

No further threats to the identification of the Empire with so-called Christianity, but a huge destabilizing element loomed from the East. Oriental peoples from the steps of Asia moved in on Visigoths and Goths north of Rome and Constantinople. This pushed the lightly Christianized Visigoths across the boundaries of the empire, temporarily. They were condescended to and mistreated and eventually seized Rome in 410 AD under Alaric. The occupation of Rome was relatively nondestructive, due to the fact that the Visigoths were somewhat Christian, did not burn the churches, respected women, did not harm those who did not oppose them.

Rome in the West had already yielded much of its glory to the New Rome of Constantinople, but after 410 was never on a par. Gothic rule was turbulent and within a third of a century, was further depressed when the Huns almost entered the city, in 446

AD, a date which scholars centuries later began to think of as “The Dark Ages,” even though the centuries that followed were in fact the “Light Ages” for the tribal peoples to the North. Actually few scholars today think that the Dark Ages terminology is helpful. It was an invention of the 15th Century Renaissance.

Thus, from the rise of Constantine in the West until the fall of Rome to Alaric in 410 AD we have roughly a hundred-year window during which most of what we know about early Christianity either happened or was recorded. Eusebius the official historian, Jerome, translator of the whole Bible into Latin, Augustine, the most influential theologian of all time, even Pelagius, long misunderstood, unfairly blamed for “Pelagianism,” were all in this century.

Because of Eusebius we have the ten-volume Ante- Nicene Fathers, referring to the centuries prior to the Council of Nicea. Thanks to Eusebius we know of people like Clement of Rome, Mathetes, Polycarp, Ignatius, Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, in Volume II, people like Hermas, Tatian, Theophilus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria. In Volume III- VI, Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus; Cyprian; Caius; Novatian, Gregory Thaumaturgus; Dinoysius the Great; Julius Africanus; Anatolius and Minor Writers; Methodius; Arnobius.

From Volume VII on we encounter fathers of the third and fourth centuries, as well as whole documents such as The Gospel of Peter, The Diatessaron of Tatian, The Apocalypse of Peter, The Visio Pauli, The Apocalypses of the Virgin and Sedrach, The Testament of Abraham, The Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena, The Narrative of Zosimus, The Apology of Aristides, The Epistles of Clement (Complete Text), Origen’s Commentary on John, Books I-X, Origen’s Commentary on Matthew, etc.

Others have emulated Eusebius and added the so- called Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, the first series of 14 volumes contains mainly works produced or brought together by Augustine and Chrysostom. A second series of 14 volumes of additional materials relate to both before and after the Nicene Council.

This, of course, is all “printed page.” Much that we will never know we must simply work like detectives to try to understand.

For example, we will never know in this life the details of the earlier centuries of the many different varieties of the faith, nor can we know the whole picture after Constantine came into the picture because what we do know was highly influenced by political factors.

That Constantine gave close attention to the unity and growth of Christianity during 45 years of relative peace over which he presided we cannot doubt. That, like an earlier Napoleon, he was not just a general but paid close attention to civic affairs, presiding over the massive shift of the seat of empire from Rome to a new city that he named Constantinople, we cannot doubt. That in leaving he decided to turn over the Lateran Palace (the White House of his day) to the Christian leaders in Rome, we do know. That, after he died, the brief three years when Julian tried to re-establish earlier religion fizzled because the former priestly tradition had no idea of mercy and good works, we do know.

We also know that massive changes took place in the very form of the faith. In New Testament times, as with the Jews (and today’s Mormons) the faith was primarily a shared experience in the household. The captivity had ended what temple-centric faith 44 had developed, and the Deuteronomic focus on the family flourished. Built on the

minimum basis of ten heads of family, Synagogues also were invented in captivity and survived and spread far and wide.

As Jewish faith was taken over by people of Greek culture, who had temples, the believers in Jesus as Messiah and King did not go near the pagan temples but maintained their faith almost entirely at the household level. Unfortunately, the Greek word for household gathering (ecclesia) is routinely translated in English as “church” which goes back to “Kirk” which goes back to the Greek word “Kyriakon” which means temple. Today when we go to church or see a church burning down we assume that we are talking about a building.

But, all this is greatly due to the fact that under Constantine the believers could come out of the catacombs, could get together for more reasons than weddings and funerals, could even use the formerly pagan temples, and enjoy a government dole for their pastors. This remarkable transformation is perhaps the only thing that could have happened when the whole empire went Christian, and many good things came of it.

However, bad things also resulted. The Mennonites, who for many decades found no government friendly to them, have generally interpreted the transformation under the well-meaning Constantine as Constantinianism, or simply “The Fall of the Church.” They rightly fear the faith becoming official. Unfortunately, their own experience down through history seems very parallel because their communities, mainly perpetuated biologically, have routinely incorporated their own children whether or not they are heart believers. The resulting “official” faith for them has been inadvertently what could be called a “tribal constantinianism.” In an attempt to forestall that process, one branch of the Mennonites, called Hutterites, require their young people to live outside their communities for a year to make sure they want to come back.

Another bad thing that happened was the identification of Christianity with the Roman Imperial power. Samuel Moffett, in his authoritative *Christianity in Asia*, points out that in lands bordering the Roman sphere, like Persia (Iran) once Rome became Christian, anyone who professed the Christian faith was suspect of being sympathetic to their enemy, Rome. As a result, when that happened, more Christians were killed for their faith than during all of the previous centuries under sporadic Roman persecution.

In far more ways than we may realize our Christianity is part and parcel of the Roman cultural tradition—from the wearing of wedding rings and throwing rice at weddings to the celebration of Jesus’ birthday (which was probably in June) on the day of the annual Roman Saturnalia, celebrating Saturn including the giving of gifts. In later lessons we will see many other cultural traditions from later centuries woven into “Christianity” which do not at all derive from the Bible, including, of course, the assumption that to become a follower of Christ means automatically taking on and taking over the Roman form of Biblical faith which is called becoming a “Christian.” We easily forget that no one in the NT called himself a “Christian” even though that sneer word was employed by outsiders for certain believers.

We certainly can appreciate the immense social and intellectual investment which is represented by the Christian tradition. At the same time, as we shall see, certain elements that became incorporated along the way clearly misrepresent the Bible. We may easily deplore some of Constantine’s actions but it would be hard to imagine how history would have been rewritten if one of the largest and most powerful empires in human 45

history, definitely superior to most others in those days and earlier, had not embraced the faith to the extent it did.

Both before and after the window century from 310 to 410 AD, grim conditions and chaos were more than likely the order of the day. This blessed incubation period allowed a movement to begin that all of the subsequent tribal invasions could not obliterate. Especially durable as understood by Mark Noll, professor of history at Wheaton, was the development of the monastic study/work centers. Of that development he says (contrary to much Protestant thinking):

The rise of monasticism was, after Christ's commission to His disciples, the most important—and in many ways the most beneficial—institutional event in the history of Christianity (*Turning Points in Christian History*, p. 84).

Indeed, apart from the work of these so-called order structures, very little happened in Christian history until Protestants invented their own equivalent in the form of the many globe-girdling Protestant mission societies.

Of that story we will inevitably hear much more in our later lessons.

Frontier #1: Restoring God's Glory

(2008) (Foundations Course, Lecture 19)

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The Lord's Prayer and Social Action

Most of the people in the world are powerless to a great extent. Very few people could change their vocation if they wanted to. They're just scratching out a living, barely, or maybe not even succeeding. Understandably, their religion would have nothing to do with this world; it is all heaven.

In church history, those religious groups that ran governments, like the Lutherans, or the Anglicans, or the Catholics, had theologies which are today called public theologies, or theologies of this world. The minorities that never ran any government—groups like the Anabaptists, the Moravians, the Quakers—tended to think about the next world, because they had nothing they could do in this world. We've inherited more of that theology by far. The person who's a devout fervent believer in Jesus Christ owes more to the Anabaptists than to the reformers or to the Catholics. The Evangelical Awakening is closer to us than it is to the Reformation itself, and it's the Evangelical Awakening from which we derive our theology and our church life, which mostly has to do with the next world. The only exception to this is a man in the Anglican tradition named John Wesley. He took the Pietism from Germany, which was mainly otherworldly, and he grafted into it all kinds of secular concerns. They reformed the courts, the prisons, the insane asylums, the schools—it was an immense transformation of society in England in the eighteenth century. The Evangelicals, though most of them don't remember it today, have this history that did involve drastic and extensive social action.

Today we tend to look down our nose at social action, and if that's a means of getting into heaven, rightly so. But if it's an outgrowth of our faith in the Lord's Prayer, then this is the way we glorify God, to align ourselves with the light instead of with the darkness. When a Harvard professor could make a statement quoted in *Time* magazine that if the Intelligent Design people's God exists, then he's the author of all the evil we see, this does not demonstrate a very good basis for evangelism. This isn't the Bible talking, this is not the New Testament with its awareness of Satan; this is a kind of paganism, what we could call evangelical fatalism.

People like John Piper say that everything that moves is God's energy: when a gnat bats its wings, that's the power of God. So he has no room for Satan at all. When you tell your child of 4 that you want them to decide whether they're going to buy this dress or that dress, are you in control of that child, or are you just conceding free will? When God chooses to create beings with free will, he's conceding his will, but he's still in control. If the child chooses the wrong dress you could say "No, you can't do that," or you could make your child into a robot where it would never say anything or do anything that wasn't you initiating it, but you may not want a robot for a child.

Maybe God doesn't want angels and human beings as robots. He wants them with free will. Now that doesn't mean he condones whatever they do, he deplores what they do in many cases. Apparently, that's part of God's purpose. He chose not to control them. And it's not that he can't, not that he doesn't have the power to defeat evil in all forms, but for some reason he wants us to work intelligently and voluntarily for him, to love him voluntarily, to give our lives for him voluntarily.

But if you subtract the free will and say that God controls everything, then you get into the question why he does all these evil things. Why does he create parasites that blind millions of people? In my book he didn't do that. And to say that he did is a major obstacle in promoting the glory of God. But ever since Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin we have tried to insist on a brittle intellectual formula that is logical but erroneous. If you say, "Why pray the Lord's Prayer —Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven—if that's already true?" But it isn't true. If it were already true, we wouldn't be told to pray that prayer. If everything that happened on earth was God's will already, why pray the Lord's Prayer?

Historically the reason the evangelicals rejected the social gospel was because the masses of them were lower class people that D.L. Moody won to Christ. The people who were talking about governmental level decisions were wealthy college people—the old style evangelicals. So there was a social polarization there, the rejection wasn't purely theological.

Jesus taught in terms of changing society to the will of God. We say that's hopeless, the world's getting worse and worse anyway so forget it. It puts more blame on the evangelicals than on the liberals. But the people who are passionate social reformers were not necessary liberal. In fact, the thing that broke the myth about that was a book by Timothy Smith called *Revivalism and Social Reform*, where he shows how revivalism directly led to social reform. It wasn't that revivalism was spiritual and social reform was liberal. Revivalism and social reform were the same thing in the 1850s, and there were incredible numbers of societies for the improvement of morals and societies for literacy, society for women's education, societies for abolition of slavery. All this social activity was very evangelical.

But that was before Moody came along. Moody brought millions of lower class people into the church, and they had no stake in running the governments or social change, and so they talked about the next world.

The evangelicals at the Moody Bible Institute began to think about eschatology. For about 35 years, practically everything they taught and wrote about was what was going to happen at the end of time, any moment it's going to happen. In other words, no use building a bridge because Christ may come before you finish the bridge—that type of thinking.

Well, Wesley didn't think that way, he wanted to reform England anyway. And I think we need to align ourselves with the Lord's Prayer whether we're going to do all of that before Christ returns or not. We need to be lined up with God against darkness and evil. However, Evangelicals are not distinguished yet in the fields of medical research on the front lines of doing away with diseases for instance, they're not involved in world level banking decisions, there's no developed theology even about disease.

Evangelicals didn't form any colleges, they formed Bible institutes. And for 60, 70 years they went off into a tunnel, a detour, and kept out of public life—no

congressmen, no lawyers, no mayors, no professionals practically. But now all those Bible Institutes have become Christian colleges and universities. Evangelicals are going into mainstream public life, and all of a sudden facing questions they never had to decide before. They are gaining a social conscience. They are now members of Congress. They are having to make decisions, which way to vote and how to run the government. They never used to do that, and now they're developing what is called a public theology. This is the simple reason why I think the face of Evangelicalism is changing today.

The Future of Evangelicals in Mission: Will We Regain the Kingdom Vision of Our Forefathers in the Faith?

(2008) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 327-43)

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A flood of light on the future of the Evangelical movement and its mission vision can be deduced by looking closely at its roots. Evangelicals happen to have a rich heritage of faith and works, extensively forgotten, that can once again inspire and instruct us as we seek to bring a complete gospel to every tribe and tongue.

Evangelicals? Who Are They?

The word evangelical in the Catholic tradition refers to those people who take the four Evangelical gospels very seriously—specifically, members of Catholic orders. Later, in the Protestant tradition, the word evangelical came to refer to a political party where the *evangelici*, adhering to the authority of the Bible, were opposed to the *pontifici* who supported the authority of the Pope.

However, at the time of the Reformation other things were going on besides tension between two parties. There were the Anabaptists and later on Pietists and still later a still different kind of “Evangelical,” namely Quakers, and eventually, the Methodists, who became a global force.

As a broad generalization, all of these additional “third force” movements came to understand the word Evangelical to mean more than correct belief. The word began to refer to those individuals who had had a personal “evangelical experience,” by which was meant something real had happened in a person’s heart and life not just purely mental assent to a prescribed intellectual creed.

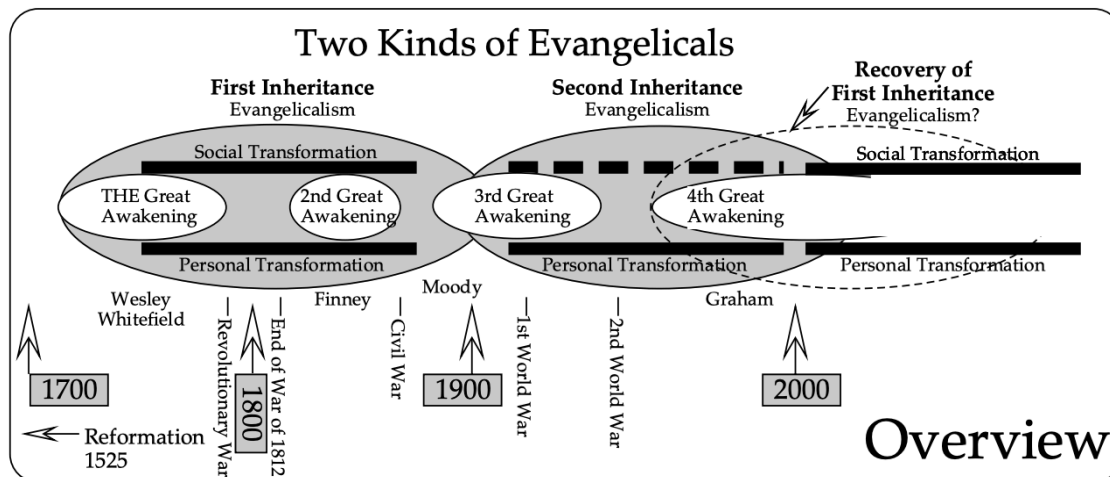
At the time of the Reformation the concept of a “born again” experience was almost entirely unknown. Much later it came into its own, in a sense, when a university trained Anglican, John Wesley, in 1738, in a little Moravian chapel on a street in London called Aldersgate, sensed the warming of his heart as he listened to a verse being read out loud from Paul’s letter to the Romans in a commentary by Luther. The verse spoke of people being “saved by faith.”

A little later the idea of a need for an initial, personal heart-warming “faith” experience was followed by a concept of an even deeper work of grace, “a second blessing,” “entire sanctification,” “an infilling of the Spirit,” or “a baptism of the Spirit.”

An Overview: Two Kinds of Evangelicals

What even later ensued is a complex picture. In examining that picture it would seem helpful to distinguish between First-Inheritance Evangelicalism and Second-Inheritance Evangelicalism (my terms). For this article we can define—as does the diagram on the next page—the First as that which was characterized by a broad dual social/personal spectrum of concern, typified in John Wesley’s ministry, ranging from

foreign missions to changing the legal structure of society and even the waging of war. The Second Inheritance reduced most of that to the level of personal salvation.



The Evangelical Awakening in England as related to Wesley certainly displays a heady, dual emphasis on earthly and heavenly, social and personal. This dual emphasis is seen in America where in the 1700s an awakening occurred called the Great Awakening of the Middle Colonies, which both exploded church membership and led to the Declaration of Independence. Then, later in the 1800s a Second Great Awakening brought thousands more into the churches, drastically overhauled society, believing the Millennium was near, and led to the Civil War which then seriously damaged that optimism. These major “awakenings” are far more significant in American history than secularized schoolbooks reveal. An exception is the remarkable book of a secular Nobel Prize winner, Robert Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening*, which recognizes the foundational importance of four spiritual awakenings in American history.

To generalize, what I am calling First Inheritance Evangelicalism ran from, say, the earliest glimmers of the Great Awakening with Theodore Frelinghuysen in 1721 in the Raritan Valley in New Jersey, to the onset of D. L. Moody’s enormous influence in, say, 1875. This period was significantly characterized by Evangelicals in a position of civil leadership. This role in national mood, I conclude, is the main reason they could readily believe not only in a profound transformation of individuals, but also in a wide range of different aspects of social transformation and God-glorification, indeed the coming of the millennium.

However, this First Inheritance, after, say, 1875, gradually branched into two “reductions,” each concentrating on one of the two elements in the former unified concept of a Biblical Christian service which was an emphasis on both personal holiness and social transformation—heaven and earth, spiritual and material.

One of these “reductions” after 1875 continued to be even larger than social concern, that is, God’s will on earth. It had a reduced emphasis on personal faith, and was, accordingly, less likely to call itself Evangelical. The other “reduction” continued the emphasis on sin and salvation, and, specifically, on the necessity (and assumed sufficiency) of a personal experience coupled with an otherworldly focus, on heaven. Jesus coming before the Millennium.

First Inheritance people had commanded the upper levels of society. They had found it quite possible to tackle widespread evils and change social structure as well as believe in the conversion of the heart. However, eventually many of these upscale college people (when only 2% of Americans went to college), followed a social gospel reduction, a relatively small stream outnumbered greatly by a surge of people—both immigrants and non-college converts. The latter, the followers of the personal reduction, became the main stream I am calling Second Inheritance Evangelicals. They were mainly non-college masses swept into faith by popular evangelists—D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and many others. This, to me, is a very key point: not being in a position of social influence they tended to turn away from the very idea of transforming society at a macro level, the Millennium being out of the question before Jesus returned.

This Second Inheritance Evangelicalism soon became the Evangelical main stream due to four forces. One was the lingering horror of the Civil War which for many demolished all hope of bettering this world (one out of 20 Americans died compared to one of 800 in the First World War). Another, was the impact of massive immigration from the Catholic parts of Europe. U. S. population jumped 240% from 44 million to 106 million between 1875 and 1920. As a result leading First Inheritance families lost influence and gradually slipped in both faith and political standing. Thirdly, the first and second World Wars seemed to shatter all optimism for a new world order prior to the coming of Christ. Fourthly, D. L. Moody and others impacted millions of non-college Americans who, even after conversion, were extensively isolated from both civic leadership and college education but became the majority in the Evangelical stream.

Thus, this new Evangelicalism-of-the-masses, characterized the Second Inheritance, significantly boosted church attendance in the United States, and also created Bible Institutes, new denominations and non-denominational churches. However, it had little stake in politics or social action and tended to suspect as being “liberal” (which by then was often the case) the smaller number of continuing, socially upscale college-educated Evangelicals from the First Inheritance (who then became the dwindling social reduction). Post-Moody Evangelicals in the non-college stratum tended to react against social schemes and even to banish the word “kingdom” from their vocabulary, thus tending to undergo the second type of reduction, this time, to a primarily “personal” Christianity emphasizing a theology reflected in the wording of a Gospel song, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through.” This produced an opposite pole from the other reduction to primarily social action.

Thesis: A Recovery of First-Inheritance Evangelicalism

My prediction in this article is based on the fact that the non-college groundswell, has gradually gained social prominence throughout the 20th century as the mainstream of Evangelicalism in the USA (and of Evangelical missions in particular). I predict therefore that we will recover an electrifyingly broader perspective of mission, so significant that it can be called The Fourth Era of Protestant Mission, or The Kingdom Era. This new vision will mean moving beyond from what has long been dominantly a heaven-and-individually focused Second Inheritance to a rediscovery of the earlier full-spectrum of the “First Inheritance” tradition, which possessed a theology combining both personal “salvation” and vast social responsibility. This will increasingly mean a concern for the

glorification of God in both individual and social transformation. Note that the First Inheritance perspective did not even see evangelism and social action as two entirely different things. Words and deeds for them were as inseparable as faith and works. Wordless deeds and deedless words were both unthinkable.

We can actually see this kind of integrated strategy in the very character of all truly effective mission history. We can see that unity in the Bible itself where Jesus validated, illuminated and empowered His words by His deeds. This type of virile wide-spectrum faith, without very often being given much credit in either secular or religious circles, contributed enormously to the development of America. Hopefully it may become the new mainstream of global Evangelicalism with the same effect.

Undoubtedly not everyone will embrace the healed polarization. Two dangers can be anticipated. One danger will be that a “Second Inheritance” avoidance of social transformation may endure in some circles—because there are still quite a few disenfranchised, non-college masses in America to be won, not to mention the apparently vast readership of “Left behind” books, which perpetuate the assumption that we don’t need to bother with fixing up this world since we will soon be raptured out of it.

The opposite danger will be a renewed focus on social transformation stripped of an adequate emphasis on the individual transformation that is, ironically, so very essential to any significant social transformation. All the recent books on International Development acknowledge the truly major problem of corruption—books like *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* by William Easterly, and *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* by Paul Collier. Both Easterly and Collier are eminently qualified to assess corruption as perhaps the biggest roadblock to the success of practically project or program. The mission/Christian community abroad has almost a monopoly on people of honesty and integrity, and that morality comes mainly from a vertical awareness of the living God. Otherwise good deeds easily become good business. Indeed, the enormous sums floating around the world in the form of financial aid have created an equally enormous “aid-industry” which soaks up most of the money before it ever gets where it is supposed to go or to what it is supposed to do.

Hopefully, the full spectrum of recovered First Inheritance Evangelicalism I am talking about will go beyond a “holism” that often merely does many good things but leaves a “hole” where evangelism should be. Holism at times may risk the assumption that our “battle” is merely to benefit humans, a suspiciously humanistic angle of view.

By contrast, in Heaven’s war against Satan our priority is to recruit soldiers, freeing people from “the dominion of Satan,” (Acts 26:18), by winning their allegiance to a supreme deity whose attributes are portrayed definitively in Jesus Christ. But even that is then a priority which is merely “prior” if we are going to accumulate active, effective soldiers. Obviously, recruitment before battle is a priority, but merely a priority. As these new soldiers, with their transformed lives, then seek along with Christ and by the empowering grace of God to “destroy the works of the Devil” (1 Jn. 3:8), their good deeds will, as in Matt. 5:16 “glorify their Father in heaven.” These “communicating” deeds will then validate and empower further evangelism that will be able to gain still more recruits for the battle of the kingdom. But note: merely recruiting and not offensive action does not win wars.

Intriguingly, this perspective is no longer primarily a tension between God and Man, as our Reformation heritage tends to portray it, but is a much larger war of the Kingdom of God-plus-His-people against the Kingdom of darkness. However, seeking to destroy the “dominion” of Satan must not be confused with the idea of seeking the “dominion” of society by the saints through worldly power, an idea sometimes called “Dominion” theology.

Let’s go back and look more closely at the earlier synthesis.

PART I: First Inheritance Evangelicals

The Great Awakening

In the United States in the early 1700s, Jonathan Edwards in Boston, and Theodore Frelinghuysen in the Raritan Valley in northern New Jersey—the latter bringing over some Pietism from the old country—are given credit for being precursors to the widespread and powerful “Great Awakening of the Middle Colonies.” That profound movement was then stirred up further by George Whitefield, a friend of John Wesley who came from England to do powerful outdoor preaching. His major impact from Boston to Charleston built upon those earlier events. Whitefield had emerged alongside the Wesleyan movement in England as part of the larger “Evangelical Awakening” which transformed English society more than any other movement in English history.

This new form of personal-experience Christianity was so significantly different that, in the colonies, long before the North/South divisions during the Civil War, it split the majority group, the Presbyterians, right down the middle for many years. One side reflected the more intellectual Reformation requirements. The other side emphasized an experiential and identifiable “work of grace.”

As surprising as it may be to most Evangelicals of the Second Inheritance (since 1900), the key point of this article is that the earlier “First Inheritance” Evangelicalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was by no means oriented only to personal experience and the next world. In contrast to the almost exclusively personal-salvation oriented Evangelicalism of the Second Inheritance, the First Inheritance engaged in a mountain of social reforms parallel to Wesley’s profound social impact in England. The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies was a powerful movement that actually forged a democratically governed church structure ranging from Boston to Charleston and, with this pattern of rule in the context, gave crucial impetus to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitutional Convention and the idea of a single government over all the colonies. Without this democratically governed inter-colonial model the birth of the new nation wouldn’t have occurred in the way it did. The crafting of the U. S. Constitution was done one block away from meetings redrafting the Presbyterian Constitution. Many of the same men were involved in both meetings. Many of the same phrases occur in both documents.

Just as Evangelicalism today is becoming more politically aware and active, so in addition to the spiritual fervor of the Great Awakening, the whole idea of breaking away from England was also associated, pulling into the scene many people, such as Tom Paine, who had no formal connection to the church at all.

Among America's leaders the initially Christian vision for wholesale social change became so widespread that it was easy for many (whether, as with Tom Paine, spiritually alive or not) to be enthused by a this-world cause. Thus, by the time of the American Revolution, the spiritual roots of the Great Awakening became paradoxically overshadowed in public life—virtually snuffed out—by the political and military events going on between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the conclusion of the War of 1812 in 1815.

The Second Great Awakening

Many scholars refer to certain events of roughly 1815-1840 as the Second Great Awakening, which was at least a renewal of the earlier Great Awakening. In this second awakening we see the contribution of Charles Finney, an attorney who found Christ, and who very definitely believed in a “second work of grace.” Much of the USA saw the impact of his ministry as well as that of the “camp meeting” phenomenon, plus other itinerant preachers and many local revivals. It is significant that these spiritual events did not ignore social transformation but fueled it, providing, incidentally, the moral outrage which underlay many of the events leading to the Civil War.

In many respects the most prominent event of the early 1800s in America was the outcome of the War of 1812. Unexpectedly for the Americans, when the war was not lost but went to a draw in 1815, this amazing turn of events popped the balloon of a longstanding fear of inexorable British reprisal. This euphoria of freedom, this sense of ownership for the first time of a vast land of their own (never mind the Indians), gave life to all kinds of radical experiments—social, political and religious—and it very dynamically sparked the imagination, vision and even the rethinking of the Christian religion itself. One author calls the period of 1815 to 1848 “The Transformation of America.”

Oberlin College could be a case study. Established with the encouragement of Charles Finney and the financial resources of the wealthy Tappan brothers, it was both a fruit of the spiritual revival and also socially upscale. Oberlin was the first interracial school, the first co-educational school, the first vocational school, the first school to teach music, the first anti-slavery school, first temperance school, and so forth. No holy reform was outside its purview. For example, students believed that God would help them improve the efficiency of the Franklin Stove, and so was invented the Oberlin Stove. The entire period represented incredible ingenuity, innovation, and—most specifically—attention to what today we would call social transformation. In this mix Evangelicals were the main leaders—not the reluctant followers of secular initiatives.

It would be impossible to overstate the significant changes of direction of both the Christian movement and our nation between 1815 and 1850. By 1850, for example, virtually all of the states had banned alcoholic beverages. It was even true that vast numbers would not drink tea or coffee, so extensive was the counter-cultural application of Christian faith to everyday life. Dozens and dozens of reform movements sprang into life—ranging from the temperance movement, and the movement for the abolition of slavery, to a movement urging use of the whole grain in wheat flour (Graham flour—preached by a minister named Sylvester Graham), etc.

Both the Mormon and Adventist groups peeled off at this time. They differ greatly in theology but today equally represent museum pieces of the typical revival concerns about food and health, which had become part and parcel of the mood of that revival period. If the Mormons and Adventists could not change society in general they could at least invent new societies!

If applied to today it would suggest that for globally-minded people, good works must go beyond just personal good deeds to organized good deeds, beyond micro good deeds to macro good works, which will include, for example, the deliberate discovery and exposition of the glories of God's creation (Ps 19:1-4) as well as serious concern for global slavery, corruption, oppression, poverty and disease. Otherwise Evangelicals will misrepresent the character of God and its proclamation activity will lack both credibility and authenticity. That was the mood and temper of First Inheritance Evangelicalism. What went wrong?

PART II: Second Inheritance Evangelicalism

Remember that, as defined, the period of the First Inheritance can be seen as a period in which Evangelical leaders at levels of national influence (as well as common people who followed them) uniquely worked within a window of awareness which made the transformation of society feasible— something which was within their grasp.

Of all unlikely people, Moody—from the back woods of Massachusetts—won millions of non-college people (as well as key college students). Thus, due more to Moody than any other, Evangelicalism for the first time became, in America, predominantly a lower-class movement. The families of the leading citizens of the earlier Second Awakening were now a tiny minority. Yet, the Evangelical movement as a whole had burgeoned amazingly both within the ranks of the immigrants, and also the uneducated stratum of society. But, it was no longer true that people of faith ran the country.

It was somewhat a lingering anomaly that 100,000 up-scale college students could be caught up in the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and provide leadership to the famous World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. Very few of these college-level “student volunteers” came from the mainstream of Moody's converts even though Moody himself, somewhat accidentally, had significantly helped to spark both the upper-class “Cambridge Seven” in England and the Student Volunteer Movement in America.

The Evangelical Divide and the Emergence of the Second Inheritance

The last fling of the wide-spectrum First Inheritance Evangelicals was arguably the Prohibition era and the Student Volunteer Movement, but the cleavage between college people and Bible Institute people, already emerging by 1900, had by the 1920s, for better or worse, already become a major polarization, a veritable culture war within Evangelicalism. Upper-class people who were still thinking in terms of social reform were more and more often labeled liberal due to their social reform intuitions, whether or not they were liberal in their theology.

Meanwhile, the newer, less-educated Evangelicals had never had a chance to elect one of their own as a mayor. Their Bible Institute graduates did not nourish the

professions or the universities. They were for the most part not college people at all. To these non-college people (as with slaves and their “negro spirituals” that focused purely on heaven) the very idea of reforming society seemed utterly impossible, theologically unexpected, and therefore evangelistically objectionable. Out of date by the time it was written, just after 1900, a school teacher would write the words to “America the Beautiful” still speaking of the earlier vision of a Gospel reflected in the words “alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears” and “Crown thy good with brotherhood,” in short, an approaching millennium after which Christ would come (“Postmillennialism”).

From its gradual beginning after the Civil War this Second Inheritance Evangelicalism, facing the total breakdown of that ghastly war, lost faith in reforming society and began to believe in a world getting worse and worse leading to a coming tribulation preceded by a pre-tribulation rapture, that is, Christ coming before the millennium not after (“Premillennialism”). The goal of reforming individuals, while properly considered basic, was often improperly considered all that was needed. At the same time there was to be seen commendable but merely “intuitive” (and relatively modest) good works lacking theological rationale. The tradition highlighted by the Moody Bible Institute, developed 157 Bible Institutes all following in this new perspective, to a great extent typifying the Second Inheritance type of Christianity that was generally antagonistic to the earlier First Inheritance brand of Evangelicalism. The dwindling socially influential remnants of the First Inheritance soon became regarded simply and objectionably “liberal.”

Thus, the dominant force of Second Inheritance Evangelicalism essentially went socially “underground” for 60 or 70 years while those Bible Institutes, one by one, became Bible colleges, then Christian colleges and the majority eventually Christian universities. For example, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) took from 1908 to 1981 to become Biola University. The Training School for Christian Workers of 1900 became Azusa Pacific University in 1981. Then, as a result of this gradual reemergence of culturally standard educational patterns, people of Evangelical convictions once more populated Congress and the White House. However, this increased social influence was unaccompanied by a theology corresponding to such new opportunities.

The Bible School and Bible Institute stream constituted the backbone of the Evangelical movement for a lengthy period. Its eventual remarriage with the ethos of the college/university cultural stream would be a long time in coming. The simultaneous delay in recovering the wide-spectrum sense of mission of the First Inheritance was not so much because 20th century Evangelicals couldn't think, but because they were thinking different things. They may not have continued to think of major reforms in society, as did their socially upscale forebears. But, despite intuitive good works as mentioned, they did develop all kinds of new and creative ideas about the Bible.

Typical was their emphasis on eschatology, the Rapture, and the Second Coming of Christ, a heavenly optimism replacing earthly dreams. Such ideas for many years characterized this Second Inheritance brand of Evangelicalism, to some extent following J. N. Darby, Lewis Sperry Chafer and reflected in the Scofield Reference Bible (perhaps the most widely used study Bible of all time). The Moody Bible Institute may have led the way but virtually all Bible Institutes took part. Prophecy Conferences abounded. Social reform seemed illogical if only because the world was expected to get worse and

worse until true believers were raptured out of it. Any kind of “social gospel” became anathema.

On the other hand, to its credit, within this non-college stream in the first half of the 1900s there was for a time a substantial science-and-the-Bible movement which understood science to be preeminently the friend of faith, issuing eventually in Irwin Moon’s spectacular “Sermons from Science” films under the auspices of the Moody Institute of Science. (Moon was a Bible institute graduate who had gone on for a Ph.D. in Physics at UCLA.) At their peak missionaries were showing his films 2,000 times a day. By contrast today a reversion within a good deal of the Evangelical tradition has posed science not as the great friend of faith but as the great foe of faith.

PART III: The Recovery of First Inheritance Evangelicalism

As Evangelicals today work their way into social and even political influence, many other changes will take place in the context of mission. But mission theology will lead and follow the growth of the civil stature of the Evangelical movement, forcing into existence a recovery of older interpretations of the Bible in regard to the use of that vastly increased influence.

The future of Evangelicalism and Evangelical missions is thus likely to involve a difficult and painful shift away from decades of polarization between “social action” and a “spiritual gospel.” This shift, which is already taking place, has brought new opportunity and responsibility, but shares the dangers to which the children of the First Inheritance Evangelicals eventually fell prey. As the 20th century wore on, many outstanding evangelicals ranging from John Stott and others in the Lausanne Movement tried very hard to point out that there can be no real dichotomy between faith and good works, despite a continuing Reformation-triggered bias in that realm.

One example of this, already mentioned, is the simple fact that the word kingdom was almost totally banned from Evangelical literature for at least 50 years. Only fairly recently has this word, so prominent in the NT, been recovered as some expositors have written whole books about the Kingdom of God and tried to bring it back into the fold (for instance, *Announcing the Kingdom*, by Arthur Glasser). But the phrase continues to be suspect in many Evangelical circles. In the sphere of missions the polarization is reflected by the fact that on the social action side there is one entire association of over 50 agencies, the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations (AERDO), which includes a number of very strong Evangelical mission agencies, such as World Vision, World Concern, the World Relief Department of the National Association of Evangelicals, Food For The Hungry, and so on. Their social activities have gained quite a following, or it wouldn’t be possible for World Vision to achieve an annual \$700 million-dollar budget.

Yet until recently (in Bryant Myers’ books) World Vision has not vigorously advanced a theological basis for what it is doing. Fortunately, many Evangelical donors have obviously felt drawn intuitively to what World Vision is trying to do. This is in some ways a non-theological recovering of one aspect of First Inheritance Evangelicalism, focused primarily on helping individual human beings even though it is not, as yet, as concerned for social transformation in general (e.g. eradicating disease, fighting global slavery, rehabilitating science as a domain of God’s glory, etc.).

Meanwhile, in the first five years after the Second World War, when 150 new mission agencies jumped into being, most of the new agencies were characterized as “service agencies” adding technological muscle—like airplanes, radio, or literature—to existing missions in the already existing mission movement. This meant that all of this new vigor merely emphasized what was already going on, and its limitations, that is, the preaching of an intellectual and emotional individual gospel plus an emphasis on a restoration of individual fellowship with God. If, in the world of overseas missions, it had not been for the informal theological intuition of thousands of sensitive, loving missionaries we would not see in that sphere such extensive “good works” but merely the evangelism of still others mainly oriented toward the next world—“an emphasis on the eternal not the temporal.”

In other words, the reason Second Inheritance Evangelicalism is a complicated phenomenon is that, confusingly, the most extensive and the most influential social transformation-as-mission activity even in the 20th Century has been actually accomplished (much of it not adequately reported to donors) across the world by the older Evangelical mission agencies founded before 1900. This was true because of First Inheritance momentum in the mainline denominational missions and the great interdenominational mission agencies like Sudan Interior Mission or the Africa Inland Mission, as well as the work of the smaller Evangelical denominational missions. Most of this, however, employed an intuition not undergirded by formal theology.

These forces, nevertheless, have made tremendous contributions to the entire educational framework of whole countries like China and Nigeria. The western hemisphere’s largest technical university was founded by missionaries in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Asia’s largest agricultural university was founded by missionaries in North India. The university system itself was taken to the field explicitly by Evangelical missionaries in the first half of the 20th century, especially the well-heeled college students of the Student Volunteer Movement. We think of projects like “Yale in China.” However, this was in part the residual momentum of the First Inheritance, some of it carrying over into the 20th century, lasting longer in the realm of missions than in the home churches. However, outside the mainline denominational missions it existed mainly due to the keen intuition of sensitive missionaries.

It was understood back in the 19th Century and within these major missions that there was no rift whatsoever between learning and gospel, or good works and gospel, or schools, hospitals, vocational schools, universities, and the planting of churches. Nevertheless, today, as far as donors are concerned, the enormous impact of social transformation arising (intuitively) in the work of standard church planting mission agencies is widely little known, under estimated or even opposed. Indeed, the scope of this influence is virtually unknown in certain spheres, in part due to an intentional downplaying of this effort in reports to donors who want to hear only of spiritual conversions. This may for some be incorrectly rationalized as merely a tension between liberal and conservative perspectives. In fact, it is largely due to the increasing social influence of some Evangelicals and the continuing lack of influence among most Evangelicals in the earlier 20th century. Increasingly, numerous exceptions like Charles Colson, an influential civil leader, have no trouble envisioning sweeping changes in the whole world’s prison systems, nor any hesitance in helping to resurrect the powerful social/political example of the distinctly upper class William Wilberforce. Wilberforce’s

Real Christianity has now been reprinted by four different Evangelical publishers. He is now again a followable hero.

Empowered Evangelism

Obviously there is a theological problem here. Without taking sides in the Postmillennial Premillennial issue, we, of course, need to take seriously the fact that Jesus was concerned with handicapped people, sick people, children, women, Samaritans, Greeks, etc. and that His ministry embraced and encompassed those things. When He responded to John the Baptist, who wondered if He was “the one to come,” He sent back descriptions of what He did, not the text of what He said—it was simply a report of the good works He was doing. This He did, not only as an authentication of His divinity, but also as a demonstration of God’s character and thus the nature of God’s Kingdom. His ministry was congruent with His own statement, “Let your light shine among men in this way—that they will glorify God when they see your good works (Matt 5:16).” In the Synagogue in Nazareth Jesus quoted Isa. 61:1,2:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

Do His words and deeds apply to 27 million men, women and children held as slaves in the world today? That number, right now, is more than twice the total bartered during the four centuries before slavery was (supposedly) “abolished” by Wilberforce. Does His perspective apply to the lifting of the burden of 45 million man-years of labor annually destroyed in Africa alone due just to the malarial parasite?

It has been said that precisely because the gospel is a message of hope, the poorest must see some concrete reason for hope before they can understand the gospel.

Speaking linguistically, words themselves have no power if they do not refer to reality. Jesus’ words were constantly accompanied and informed by the actions to which His words referred. Thus, just as faith without works is dead, so evangelism without works is dead. Unless words refer to works and to reality, they are worth nothing. Just as it is a Reformation myth that faith can be separated from works, so it is meaningless if words are separated from the reality to which they were meant to refer.

It would seem, then, that just as we believe that works ought to follow faith in the sequence of salvation in the life of believing individuals, it is equally true that in our outreach to unbelievers those very works displaying God’s glory better precede. We see this clearly when we recognize that the usual way in which individuals come to faith is primarily by viewing the good works of those who already have faith—that is, by seeing good works that reflect the power and character of God. It was immediately after speaking of His followers being salt and light in the world that Jesus spoke this very key verse we have already quoted, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5:16).” That is how people can see God’s glory and be drawn to Him. Those who may be drawn by mere desires to be blessed personally will have trouble with Jesus’ plain statement that “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it (Mark 8:35).” Evangelicals today often ignore this.

Thus, in order for people to hear and respond to an offer of personal salvation, personal fulfillment, or a ticket to heaven, it is paramount for them to witness the glory of God in believers' lives—seeing the love and goodness in their lives and deeds, and their changed motives and new intentions. That is the reality which gives them reason to turn away from all evil and against all evil as they seek to be closer to that kind of God and His will in this world.

It is of course perfectly true that personal salvation alone can still be a glorious transformation of people who may never arise from a sickbed or escape from poverty, simply knowing that God loves them and wants them to love Him—if they can understand what love is. At the same time, many believers are not poor, and have time and energy to do things other than simply talk to people about the next world or how they can be personally benefited. For them, a concept that is very hard to avoid (because it is happening throughout the whole Bible) is the concept that works are necessary to authenticate and demonstrate the true character of God. That is the true basis for an empowered evangelism.

This potent continuum of word and deed is, furthermore, the mainstream of mission history. It may not have been so large a factor among up-and-out people in, say, Japan, but in much of the world, the stunning achievements of medicine and healing have demonstrated to potential converts not only the love of God for them, but also the power of God that is on their side against the forces of darkness.

Paul the apostle spoke of delivering people from the dominion of Satan (Acts 26:18). Peter summed up Jesus' ministry by speaking of "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil because God was with him. (Acts 10:38)." This kind of demonstration of the person and the power of God certainly should not be considered alien or antagonistic to evangelism. In most cases it is, again, the very basis of an empowerment of evangelism.

However, by taking a quick glance at the current record of our global "missions of good works" it is perfectly obvious that thus far no great dents in world poverty have been achieved by missionaries of Jesus Christ, even though their intentions and even their record is highly respectable. Recently, more and more high-minded young people have shown themselves willing to go and live among people in extreme poverty. This, too, is praiseworthy. But most desperately poor people need more than another apparently poor and powerless person to come and live among them.

It is nevertheless true that once individuals find faith, they have often pulled themselves up by their bootstraps—through their honesty, abandonment of liquor and drugs, and their ability and integrity to build businesses of good will that succeed. This has gradually lifted them up out of the poverty category into the middle class category, not just in England in the 18th century, but also in America and in many parts of the world. This kind of individual "salvation" is the primary focus of Evangelical missions today even though it is not be the whole picture.

However, without even studying the past, it is apparent that there is a crescendo of concern for the serious problems of our world. The AIDS crisis has thrown us into a lot of confusion, but also into serious contemplation about what now can be done or should be done. It would seem embarrassing that Jimmy Carter, a Sunday School teacher, not a

theologian, nor a mission executive, nor a missiologist, has actually done more than anyone else in arousing world opinion to the need to eradicate diseases, not just extend health care after people get sick.

But it is saddening that Carter has not been able to get substantial backing from Christian churches and missions for this activity. Apparently that kind of vision is not, at this stage of history, something that can be credited either to Christian theology or to missiology, but rather to the energy and intuitive theology of a past president of the USA who happened to be well known on a world level. Missions and churches have vitally helped but they cannot claim the initiative.

Thus, in all of our commendable haste to get to the ends of the earth and to the last group which has never heard the gospel, we may be overlooking the fact that the vast bulk of the Western world no longer believes in the Bible and no longer follows our faith—partly because people have not noticed believers at the forefront of efforts to defeat the evils of this present world. Does that mean our immense overseas achievements are going to be only temporary? Are we preaching a “relapsing” Christianity?

PART IV: The Future of Evangelicals in Mission

“Teaching them to OBEY everything that I commanded you”

So what is the future of the Evangelical movement? I believe that the mission movement—more than the church movement and considerably more than the secular world—holds the key to a great new burst of credibility which could win new millions, not just the poor and uneducated. An unexpected trend of current philanthropy clearly indicates the potential assistance of people in high places who have grown up in a highly Christianized society, even if they haven’t regularly gone to church. But what is crucially true is that these secular forces need to understand that their efforts will ultimately be dismayingly ineffective without a certain minimum of transformed individuals whose character and integrity is essential to their major efforts. They need to realize that missions and the Christian movement have a virtual monopoly on transformed individuals who can be trusted.

I yearn to see Evangelical missions be able to give more direct, credible credit to Jesus Christ for the impetus behind the social transformation that they have been doing, are doing and should be doing. Practically none of the major religions, by comparison, has a similar contribution to good works, small or large. Islam has the giving of alms as one of its five pillars, but there is very little in the entire mammoth global Islamic movement that compares even remotely to the hundreds of major Christian mission agencies, or the thousands of ways in which the Christian movement has reached out with love and tenderness to those who are suffering. Islam also has a near vacuum of “non-government agencies,” although both in Pakistan and Bangladesh are some outstanding exceptions. But in general the West has thousands of NGOs which are not explicitly Christian. Islam has only a few.

The work of Christ in the gospels, Christ’s references to the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and the present outworking in this world of the phrase “Thy will be done” in the Lord’s Prayer are actually echoed by the Great Commission itself. Looking closely at Matt. 28:20, it isn’t just the passing on of His teachings to which Jesus

commissions His disciples. It is the actual enforcing, so to speak, of obedience to those teachings, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” This implies the conquest of evil when the Lord’s Prayer is read in this light: “Thy will be done on earth.”

We hear later in the New Testament about people who do not “obey” the gospel. In contrast to the common Evangelical perspective in the Second Inheritance period, the Gospel is not just mere information in the way of good advice. We see both authority and commands from God in the real Biblical Gospel. This is the clear meaning of the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Since Jesus sent his disciples out to bring about obedience to the things He had taught, the last two thousand years has brought about a massive, global campaign against evil.

As I have suggested, the older missions with roots in the 19th Century have in actual fact been doing exactly what Jesus did, both demonstrate the love of God and invite into eternal life all who yield to that love and that authority. The trouble is that the fact of this breadth of mission has not been as clearly theologized to the point where we would be urged exegetically or theologically to tackle some of the macro problems such as the wiping out of Guinea worm or malaria, problems which have existed under the very nose of missionaries for over a century. Nevertheless, such extra breadth must not be seen to be a divergence from the preaching of eternal life, but rather an empowerment of the message of a gospel of a kingdom, a reality that is both here and hereafter.

That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of the kingdom. It is the announcement of a “rule and reign of God” which must be extended to the whole world and all of creation. We must stand up and be counted as active Christian foes of the world’s worst evils. This is the biblical way, the way more than any other, in which missions, beyond what they have done in the past, can now in the future more powerfully and extensively than ever demonstrate who God is and what His purposes are. This is, for example, what the superb Transform World movement is envisioning.

This more extensive influence will come if agencies will simply take the practical conclusions of their missionaries’ magnificent local intuition up into national levels and into international campaigns to drive out those things that not only cut their own lives short but also causes hundreds of millions of people to go to bed at night in severe suffering and pain. Otherwise all such unaddressed evil is blamed on God and His “mysterious purposes.” This new, expanded influence of Evangelicals may thus measurably help us re-win the West to “a faith that works,” and to a God Who is not doing bad things for mysterious reasons, but a God Who concretely opposes the Evil One and all his works— and asks us to assist Him in that campaign.

Evangelicals are increasingly again in the position of social influence. Yet, are still mainly in the business of merely giving people a personal faith, a

faith that does not include much of a mission beyond the idea of converts fulfilling their own lives and converting still others to personal fulfillment. However, a return to a full-spectrum Gospel could mean an enormous change. Doors will open. Attitudes about missionaries will change. It will no longer be the case of missionaries thinking that they have to use adroit language to cover up the “real purpose” of their work. Their real purpose will include the identification and destruction of all forms of evil, both human and microbiological and will thus be explainable in plain English

without religious jargon. This can provide very solid common ground in almost any community in any country.

Widely understood is the fact that Protestant mission efforts can be classified in three eras marked off in each case by a certain definition of a more extensive awareness of mission. The first era began about 1800 and until 1910 focused on the coastlands of the Non-Western world. The second era began in 1865 (overlapping the first) and extended to 1980 focusing on going inland. The third era began in 1935, (overlapping the second) focusing on by-passed peoples (Unreached Peoples) and will continue until perhaps 2050. The urgent emphasis of this paper would predict the need for a fourth era of new and radically wider awareness, becoming widely known in 2010 at the Global conference of mission agencies in Tokyo, May 11-15, 2010. This new awareness might be called the Kingdom Era, when far more serious attention is paid to the transformation of both society and nature, recognizing that the demonstration of God's concerns is an achievement which will both vitally support, and as well as depend upon, the need for transformation on a personal level.

In that event there is no doubt in my mind that the future of the Evangelical movement and its mission will be very bright indeed. As Adoniram Judson said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God." We must not forget that God is the one who asked us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Indicators of the Future (2008) (Foundations Course, Lecture 18).

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Our lesson today speaks of the future and of various “indicators” which can help us anticipate the future—the future of “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In our last lesson we actually talked about one of the major new features of the future, namely the spectacular and unexpected growth of those new types of Christianity which don’t readily classify as Christianity, if in fact we understand Christianity, by now, to be simply one of several cultural traditions imbued with Biblical values.

In this lesson, we will touch on some additional “indicators” of the future, such as science and faith, global agency networks, leadership development, university education, the unfinished task, new church planting movements, and the increasingly important concept of international development.

Science and Faith

In my perspective, the most serious of all features of the new future is the seemingly unresolvable polarization between science and faith.

Our global situation is this: it is as if millions of sincere and intelligent and believing scientists are genuinely awed into some sort of spirituality by the sheer wonder and infinite complexity of the nature they behold. Meanwhile, millions of sincere, intelligent believing people are similarly awed by the never ending riches and unexpected spiritual challenges they find in the Bible.

Modern man has gained such breathtaking new in- sights into nature that you might think there is nothing major left to be understood. However, the more we have learned about nature, the more we yet seem to need to find out. It is as though when the diameter of our knowledge increases, the circumference of our ignorance increases more than three times as fast.

Even the simplest things are still unfathomable. Take the attraction of a magnet to a screwdriver. What could possibly be going on between those two objects - each pulling toward each other? There is absolutely no human being alive, or who has ever lived, who has even the faintest idea of what’s going on. All we can do is predict the power of magnetism mathematically and describe its behavior minutely. We have not the faintest idea what it is.

It is equally confounding that there is a top and bottom to our world. Discovering that we live on a huge ball hanging in space held into a gravitational orbit by a sun 80 million miles away is common knowledge, and once again, we can calculate very accurately how gravitational attraction functions. But its very nature, while quite different from magnetic attraction in obvious ways, is just as totally inscrutable. No one has the faintest idea how it actually works.

Whether it is in the realm of enormously large things like our own galaxy, which to fly across would require a spaceship going at the speed of light for a hundred thousand

years, or the billions of other galaxies both larger and smaller, or whether it is the tiniest things which we can only see with an electron microscope rather than a telescope, once again, our knowledge is in many ways quite superficial.

Consider bacteria, of which there are 30 million different types. Upon invading the human body, they are intelligent enough to bide their time until their number can be multiplied sufficiently to do significant damage. At that key point scientists say, they have achieved a “quorum” and they attack simultaneously. If they attacked before a quorum was reached, the human body would be more easily able to defend itself. Now, that is a lot of intelligence for so small a creature as a bacterium. Until recently, no microbiologist ever dreamed that bacteria could communicate with each other, count noses and attack in force.

Thus, it is easy to see how awestruck many scientists can be. It is equally easy to understand the earnestness and the awe of those who pursue the pages of Holy Writ, where we find inklings of understanding of things that science can't say anything about, where we can find challenges to our morality and our very purposes for existence, where we can find sensitivities of love and compassion and the willingness to sacrifice, where we can understand how profoundly different humans are from animals, and where we can seek illumination in regard to our own personal existence and role in life.

The Polarization

How could these two sources of awe—science and religion—be polarized, be in opposition? I believe the fault is on both sides. Religious people have rightly been disturbed when science has been employed as a military weapon, when wild science fiction portrays totally horrifying futures, or when scientists have boasted, so often, of certain knowledge, only to be confounded by later insights which question their earlier audacities.

No wonder some Bible believing Christians insist that science is the enemy of the Christian faith. However, in my youth, science was considered a friend of faith and the Moody Bible Institute put out an incredible series of avant-garde color motion pictures probing the wonders of science and demonstrating thereby the glory of God.

If I type “Hugh Ross” into Google practically everything on the screen beyond his home page denounces his work. On the other hand, many who write from a religious background denounce Hugh Ross for seeking to glorify God through the wonders of science. One of these religious web addresses actually insists that science is both dangerous and even useless because it says that while the heavens declare the glory of God and the earth demonstrates His handiwork, “there is no speech or language where their voice is heard.” Of course the Bible says, “there is no speech or language where their voice is NOT heard.” Do we need to twist the Bible to defend it? Misquote scripture to prove our points?

On the other hand, some scientists collect stories from history when scientists were actually opposed by religious leaders even though the Church, for example, has much more often promoted science than it has opposed it, even providing a theological basis for it! But, some scientists only remember the opposition and develop a sort of righteous indignation towards religion.

Furthermore, many scientists are simply unwilling to allow any divine authority to tamper with their lives.

However, other scientists are genuinely concerned over the fact that religious leaders like John Calvin and Martin Luther stated emphatically that the Bible teaches that the sun goes around the earth and that the Copernican theory of a heliocentric solar system is refuted by the Bible. These scientists don't stop to think that Calvin and Luther misunderstood the Bible. They assume Calvin and Luther were intelligently explaining what the Bible teaches, and that therefore the Bible cannot be trusted.

A similar situation exists today for all of those people who believe the earth is very old. Often, they oppose religion, because of course all religious people insist the earth is just 6,000 years old based upon the teaching of scripture. As I see it, the issue really isn't whether the earth is old or young, but whether the Bible is not to be trusted.

Many evangelicals today have somehow lost track of the background of the Evangelical movement in which it was widely taught that the geological ages preceded Genesis 1:1 and that the creation account in Genesis is a new creation, explaining the origin of human beings and non-carnivorous animal life of the kind that would be achieved at the end of time, when (in Isaiah 11) a lion will lie down with a lamb and the 24/7 violence we see in nature will have ceased. This "pre-Genesis" view was clearly explained in *Unger's Bible Handbook* published by Moody Press in 24 editions over decades amounting to over 500,000 copies. A revision of it is still in print. Unger was the chair of the Old Testament Department at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Note that if this view were correct—and I am not saying it is—there would be no conflict whatsoever between modern paleontology and the Biblical text. However, everybody, from Time magazine to the kindergarten teacher has been persuaded by earnest Christians that the Bible certainly teaches that the universe is no older than 6,000 years.

Obviously, huge obstacles exist for anyone who would seriously attempt to evangelize in a scientifically-oriented society. Christianity has clearly succeeded among rural populations and among uneducated people all over the world, but in its own backyard it is facing increasing opposition because of religious teachings which may have no foundation in the Bible whatsoever.

We probably need to go back to the days when the Moody Bible Institute promoted its now-closed Moody Institute of Science, and try to understand science anew so that it does not oppose but actually upholds the Christian faith.

Nothing we have said thus far prevents the continued expansion of the Christian faith for the present. It can expand in areas where science is not well understood, or is not considered an obstacle to faith. There are new church planting movements described by David Garrison all over the world, especially among rural people. The Unfinished Task is very nearly finished, if in fact we measure that task by geographical or even sociological penetration of the Christian faith in one form or another.

Where we are gaining... and where we are losing...

But all such gains are temporary where a population will soon become educated by the dominant form of education today which is highly secularized both in science and history, and where poverty is not taken seriously by all mission agencies. We already see The William Carey International University adopting International Development as its 90 theme, as of 1977, and the Fuller Theological Seminary adding a course in International Development in 2005.

But, as long as scientists, who are genuinely awed, denounce Christian leaders who are genuinely awed, the Christian leaders will tend to reject the source of awe of the scientists. It is equally, and even more importantly true, that when Christian leaders (who are awed by the Bible) denounce scientists (who are awed by the works of God), the scientists will tend to deny the legitimacy of the source of awe of the Christian leaders.

Neither side will win unless both sources of awe are understood, both the Book of Nature as a revelation of God and the Book of Scripture as a revelation of God.

We, as Christian leaders, must take the initiative of knowing both books. The Christian leadership development pattern around the world and in the USA normally omits science from its curriculum altogether. Our curriculum does not lean at all, as the Bible itself would urge it to, upon this important additional source of awe and revelation—the works of God in nature.

This leads us to another future indicator.

Christian Leadership Education

Indeed, our leadership education is flawed in several different ways. I have often spoken of three levels of failure: *wrong students, wrong curriculum, and wrong packaging*.

We have already spoken of the *wrong curriculum* when it leaves out the earliest book of revelation, namely the Book of Nature, whose voice is heard in all languages. An almost more serious problem of global leadership development within the Christian tradition is our overwhelming emphasis on book learning and other training programs instead of on selection. By and large, the students at Bible schools and seminaries around the world are not gifted as pastors or missionaries no matter how many A's they earn in school. They were well trained but not well chosen. Selection is the problem.

It is a simple fact, grim as it may seem, that every church movement that depends on residentially trained pastoral leaders ends up foisting off on the church all kinds of highly trained, but ungifted people. This produces non-growth, or actual decline in membership, as can eminently be seen in the United States where every denomination depending on residential training for pastoral ordination is declining.

Meanwhile, around the world, every rapidly growing church movement depends on an entirely different system of selection—not who goes to seminary, but who is gifted. Training people who are gifted is remarkably different from trying to develop gifts in those who are already trained.

The third flaw in leadership development is rather simple. Wrong students, wrong curriculum. How about *wrong packaging*? While missionaries are expected to speak the language of the native, our ecclesiastical structures mindlessly continue to ignore the accepted university pattern of education and continue to call their schools “Bible Schools” or “Seminaries” and continue to wound the future of their graduates with nondescript degrees, such as M.Div.s or D.Min.s, degrees that mean nothing in the everyday world and thus impede graduate studies.

Another indicator to note is the extensive birth of new evangelical universities around the world. Joel Carpenter, Dean of Calvin College, did a quick internet survey and found at least 41 new evangelical universities in the mission lands. These universities, 91 curiously, have not been the result of missionary initiative. Their existence proves the importance, in the eyes of the national believers, of the university pattern over the

seminary pattern. But since these schools are not the result of missionary initiative and are not linked to mission agencies, they are, in many cases, wandering in the world of secularized curricula and are not directly contributing to leadership development in the Christian sphere. We must come to terms with the University pattern of education.

Networks of Mission Agencies

Speaking as we are, of globally-true phenomena, another important indicator of the future is the emergence of a new and unprecedented network of mission agencies on the global level.

This was founded in April of 2005 and is called the Global Network of Mission Structures. There are already associations of mission agencies at the national level and, in some cases, at the regional level, but until the establishment of the GNMS, there has never been, on the global level, an association of Evangelical mission agencies. The closest thing to it is the Third World Mission Association, but you can tell by its name that it is not a global association.

The GNMS now faces the challenge of networking on the global level in an age of absolutely unprecedented population interchange. A recent study indicates that the number of migrant workers in the world today is so large that the financial remittances that they send back to their families amount to something like 380 billion dollars a year, which is greater than all foreign aid and foreign investment put together.

Very specifically, the GNMS will be able to track the migration of individual people groups. It may find 10,000 in London or Los Angeles from a group which in the new situation is open to assistance and friendship, compared to the relatively closed attitude of its own people in the foreign situations from which they come.

This is not to say that migration is necessarily a good thing. Probably there is no single phenomenon in world history that has torn apart more families. The evangelization of migrant workers is not an entire solution, but leading people to Christ is certainly an essential foundation for whatever further solutions may appear on the horizon. But that horizon is not simple. An even more important factor in the future will come up in the next lesson.

Seizing the Future

(2008) (Foundations Course, Lecture 20)

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In the perspective of this course we are dealing with the unfolding of a single story. It is not the story of the universe all the way from the big bang until today. Although presented speculatively, it is more especially the story of a good Creator and a good creation which after a lengthy period is suddenly attacked by a breakaway leader who, with his intelligent followers, wound terribly both the creation and the reputation of the Creator, thus presenting the challenge of redemption and restoration. It can be seen as an epic in five acts.

Act 1 is the longest of all the Acts, by far. During this first act the universe is created and the very lengthy period of the development of life takes place, possibly the work of angels guided by God, pleasing Him as they gradually learn what today we are beginning to understand as the true complexities of life itself.

The emergency arises at the end of Act 1. By this time atoms and molecules and, most surprisingly of all, the incredible intricacies of life have been developed, not just tiny bacteria based on DNA molecules, but small animals. Some of the animals are radially symmetrical, like star fish. Others are “bipolar” which means they have a front and a back, a right and a left. The key point is that none of these animals at this stage is aggressive. None needs to defend itself.

But the emergency, introducing Act 2, arises when, let’s guess, the archangel whom Paul calls “the god of this world,” with all his host, turns against God. This is the Fall of Satan. As a result of the genetic distortions of a rebel Satan, during this much shorter but still lengthy Act 2, predatory forms of life appear at all levels, from bacteria to dinosaurs, and all of nature becomes a battle ground.

Meanwhile during this tumultuous Act 2 the good angels continue to develop increasingly intelligent forms of life. By 11,000 years ago truly modern humans finally appear, but like the rest of nature, are gruesomely distorted and dangerously predatory.

Finally, a major counter move introduces Act 3. A massive asteroid wipes out all life in the middle East, possibly gouging the below-sea-level depression now known as the Dead Sea. And now in this region, the original, non-carnivorous kind of plants and animals are recreated in the Garden of Eden and a new Adamic race is brought into existence in the image of God, with the apparent intent of re-introducing harmonious, not carnivorous forms of life, life that is a reflection of the end of time when the lion will lie down with the lamb (Isa. 11).

However, Act 4 begins when Adam falls, and Eden breaks down. Now, the new forms of non-predatory life of Genesis 1 interbreed with the earlier depraved forms of life outside of the region of the Garden of Eden. The Sons of God marry the daughters of men, and the length of human life gradually sags to a fraction of what it was intended.

Obviously, as the result of Adam's fall the image of God was damaged or erased, whatever it was, and all human beings are now equally deprived and in need of redemption.

We, today, stand at the later stages of this Act 4, in which God's redemptive work is making men new and enlisting them in the war effort to "destroy the works of the Devil" (1 John 3:8).

Meanwhile, in this present Act 4 situation, widespread delusion and blindness prevails even concerning the existence of a war against Satan. This is especially true and tragic in those parts of the world where redemption would seem to have succeeded more completely, that is, in the "Christian" West, and where war efforts could best be launched.

Much of the world is still so beaten down by the ravages of evil—poverty, disease, human conflict—that it is ironic that unlike the West the poor and the powerless of this world are more likely to understand the wartime footing we actually are experiencing. It is further ironic because they may be the least likely to be able to do anything about it. For them "escapist theology" is the best solace. They are the ones who now can best sing "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through."

Since the poor and the disadvantaged can't be effectively involved in a global war to defeat the works of Satan we must return to those whom we might describe as "disinclined," but theoretically capable.

The famous philosopher of yesteryear, Mortimer Adler, made the observation that what the world needed was the "moral equivalent of war"—that is, an attitude of all-out war effort, not fighting against flesh and blood, but against a similarly massive, urgent, intense, sacrificial concentration of human beings against not humans but human problems and other evils which distort God's creation and tear down His reputation. I would add, against an enemy that is not human and whose very existence is denied apathetically by even most Christians today.

Wars in the past have typically gotten started because of some massive and aggressive challenge. The closest thing to that might be a global plague of the sort that killed from 50 to 100 million people in 1918—far more people right after World War I than were killed in the war itself. But even that might not lead to the kind of total war which the United States and other nations experienced in what we call the Second World War. Not many people alive today lived through that war; those of us who did, can recall vividly the utter transformation of a nation involved in all-out, total war.

If our analysis in these lessons is correct, this war has been going on ever since Satan fell, and was renewed with humans involved when Adam fell. Adam's role in the garden was to take care of it, but after Eden broke down, his own survival was at stake. Indeed, his own son lost his life no doubt in part due to the sin permeated atmosphere outside of Eden. There is no likelihood that the equivalent of a Pearl Harbor is going to happen that would rally the social resources of the world, or even Christian resources, or more particularly, the Evangelicals. But it is easily possible to imagine that the force of the Lord's Prayer "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," would require us to do everything we possibly can, not just to exhibit fantastic personal sacrifice, but to mobilize as much of the Christian world and the non-Christian world as possible. 97

To quote 1 John 3:8 again, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” This verse points out how very central war against evil, war against Satan, actually is. If this is the central purpose, or one of the central purposes of the Son of God (who made it plain that, “as my Father has sent me, even so send I you”), then His commission is our commission and our commission is today widely underestimated and misunderstood. First century believers could not know how great were the inroads the enemy had made, for example, in the realm of disease.

We do have, vaguely, the structure of war in our hands. Christians, notably in the western world, and now noticeably in the rest of the world, have launched mission agencies which are teams of people explicitly determined to carry out purposeful actions in accord with God’s will. These could be considered the “armed forces” of the Kingdom, containing the “servicemen” of that Kingdom. In that Kingdom there are also “civilians,” the donors, the supporters, and even those who do not support them, who are “behind the lines.” The problem is, that the civilians are not remotely as mobilized at this time as they would be during a real total war, and it is true that even the servicemen are only striking a glancing blow against the Enemy of the Kingdom.

I don’t believe the problem is that we have outrageously selfish, evil, or even acquisitive people. We simply have people who don’t sense any war effort and are living it up in an apparently peacetime situation.

It might be observed in passing that if all mission donors were to adopt the consumption level of the missionary families they support this would free up, in a large percentage of the donors cases, a good percentage of their income. But right now they would say, “What’s the use?” Such a question derives understandably from the thought that the needs around the world are dimly existent, hopelessly too large to resolve, or the efforts being made seem to be ineffective or futile.

If we are going to seize the future in terms of the wartime situation in which we find ourselves, several radically new perspectives must urgently become more widespread.

The Scope of the Problem

First of all, we must realize the true scope of the problem. If Satan is able to dull people’s senses and to divert their gaze, that would certainly explain the extent to which, as John Eldredge puts it in his book *The Epic*, “I am staggered by the level of naivete that most people live with regarding evil.” How is it possible for us to get a good deal of our country into a war effort in Iraq, where perhaps ten Americans die a day, and not be far more alarmed over the fact that back home due to two diseases alone, we lose as many people as if we are fighting 600 Iraq wars? Cardiovascular disease and cancer claw down to horrible death 6,000 people per day—600 times as many as in Iraq—who go down in as great a degree of suffering as those who are dying in Iraq. Yet the actual mobilization in this country to understand the origins of either of these two major diseases is terrifyingly minor. More than ninety percent of the money that goes for the ravages of these two diseases (almost two billion dollars a day) is focused on treatments of people who are already diseased, not on pursuing the sources of the diseases.

If this imbalance were more widely known, could this function as a “Pearl Harbor,” to help us rally the troops for a new world war against disease? Our gargantuan

outlay in this country for medical and pharmaceutical services is almost totally concentrated on healing activity, not on the eradication of the sources of disease.

The Obscurity of the Problem

Secondly, we need to realize that this problem is not only huge and vicious, it is cloaked in the obscurity of confusion and ignorance. What has just been said about the lack of awareness of the problem is itself clearly a separate aspect of it. The hugeness of the problem wouldn't be as serious if it were in plain sight.

However, thus far I have only spoken of the evil of the massive onslaught of disease on animals and humans. Evil also includes the widespread corruption of the human element that might be involved in the solution of the problem!

Then, what about the rarely noticed distortions we see in the very existence of predatory forms of life? How about the genetic transformation that could restore predatory life to non-carnivorous condition? Is that part of the mission to glorify God? If man-eating tigers are vicious due to genetic distortion by Satan and his angels, isn't that a work of the devil? How about one day restoring them through genetic re-engineering? Is the only answer to kill or cage? Would it not be glorifying to God not to be blamed for their current predatory state? Again, is that part of our mission? If so, it involves a knowledge of microbiology which has only recently dawned on us.

But there are still other easily overlooked evils. After many years working for the World Bank, one of the senior officials wrote a book entitled, *The White Man's Burden*. The book points out the gruesome reality that well over half the funds intended to relieve the poverty and economic distress in underdeveloped nations of the world gets diverted by the dishonesty of government officials and intermediaries in the needy nations, as well as within the ranks of the 10,000 employees of the World Bank itself. Again and again, the World Bank has attempted to clean up its act, but the diversion of funds even within its walls is so extensive that there is little will to do it.

Indeed, for the Kingdom of God to come on earth and His will to be elaborated in opposition to our great enemy, radically new awareness is necessary.

Who Will Fight for Us?

Furthermore, it would be simplest to believe that it would be sufficient if the Christians of the world are aroused to this effort. Embarrassingly, except in the area of personal salvation and hopes of eternity, most of the efforts and initiatives in our world today that focus on the defeat of the works of the Devil are led by non-Christians, or by entities that are not clearly Christian.

If money would do it, then the magnificent efforts of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation could be the answer, since their example has already pressured many other foundations to deal with some of the world's most urgent problems. It so happens that at the cutting edge of microbiological research on sources of disease, Orthodox Jewish doctors are to be found all out of proportion to their percentage of the population. However, even in the case of Jimmy Carter and his outstanding Carter Center, which has a focus on the extermination of disease pathogens, neither the money nor the activity is noticeably derived from the formal Christian movement.

In other words, it does not seem likely that it would be wise to suppose that Christians alone can slay the giants of evil in our world today. In a sense, however, our

main purpose, which is more likely achievable, is to clarify the fact that God's purposes, as reflected by Christian initiatives, make Him out to be the opponent of evil, not the initiator of evil.

A Particular Problem

Several types of theology would seem to frustrate any substantial efforts against evil. One theological tradition might emphasize that the world is getting worse and worse anyway, so why bother? Focus on the next world. Another, more virulent form of theology, would actually attribute all tragedies to the initiative of God Himself, rather than to the initiative of fallen angels, or fallen humanity. This latter type of theology is so pervasive that even Christian leaders can write books like *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, or *Where Is God When It Hurts?* In both cases, God's mysterious will, to which we are told we must resign ourselves, is the main emphasis, not an intelligent evil power which we have a mandate to defeat, or at least die in the attempt.

Even more pervasive is the assumption that Christianity is primarily the rescue of human beings rather than the restoration of all creation. It is thought that to escape this world is more important than to restore God's glory on earth through the conquest of the destructive and distorting elements of Satanic fury against God.

Discipline

The one obvious truth about effective human action is that the vast majority of the work of the world is accomplished through social discipline. In a war, the armed forces are characterized by disciplined troop activities. Commercial enterprises typically squeeze the life out of people to get their work done. Once people retire, their good intentions quickly evaporate for a lack of social discipline. Their lives are cluttered with many good things, but strikingly different is their useful output by comparison to their own earlier days when they were in the harness of the work force. Even wealthy athletes and movie stars have to pay "trainers." If the world were to depend on personal will power alone, practically everything significant would grind to a halt.

It is well known that the contemporary church in America requires very little of its people. This gives rise to the fact that we have an Opus Dei in the Catholic tradition which harnesses lay believers in a very accountable lifestyle. In the Protestant tradition we have the Disciplined Order of Christ which tends in the same direction, though far less seriously. When everyone does that which is right in their own eyes, the resulting efforts for the Kingdom are token at best, and essentially meaningless at worst. In the case of the Opus Dei, the "sanctification of daily life" is a marvelous emphasis, but considerably directionless without any clear war effort in mind. In the case of the Disciplined Order of Christ (DOC), there is even less emphasis upon "holy worldliness," to use Richard Mouw's famous phrase. However, something vaguely equivalent, in addition to, but not in opposition to existing congregations, would seem to be necessary if we are going to mobilize Christian believers in any real depth.

At the present time, I am unaware of any substantial, explicitly Christian organization in the world that is focused on the defeat of disease pathogens as is the case with the Carter Center. We have organizations devoted to justice and which defend the 100 rights of Christian believers in public schools and in public life, but these are, to some extent, defensive, or superficial.

There is not space or time here, to go further in elaboration of what it would take to disassociate God from evil events, or the disciplined group efforts necessary for that purpose. But at least we can sense, with what has been said, the larger dimensions of the Christian mission, and the contrast with what is now being accomplished.

Total war will require thousands of Evangelicals to move to the cutting edge of microbiology and of political life, to work for the transformation of ethical standards throughout the commercial world and a new sense of the need of group discipline to do those things. All this and more is necessary if we are to “seize the future.”

Who Is a True Christian?

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This was Ralph Winter's last "writing," dictated to his assistant a few weeks before his death on May 20, 2009.

Evangelicals have a hard time figuring out who is and who is not a true Christian, in the sense of a born-again member of God's Kingdom. We are especially troubled about those who don't call themselves Christians. We tend to reject the faith of Gentiles in the Bible who had a relationship with God, such as Abimelech. On the other hand, we turn a blind eye to a billion Christians who may have no spiritual credentials at all. And even church fathers like Justin Martyr and Tertullian, who disagreed with each other on practically everything, and whose views would not pass muster with our present day doctrine of substitutionary atonement, are viewed as true Christians by most Evangelicals today.

Down through history our criterion for what a Christian is has tended to be intellectual. As late as 1524, long after the Constantinian period, a scholarly Lutheran professor began to doubt whether the body and blood of Christ appeared in the eucharist. She was executed. A few years later a man turned up in Geneva with a slightly different interpretation of the trinity and Calvin executed him. As Christianity invaded the Dutch, two versions of Calvinism were popular. One version was totally unacceptable to the other side and street riots led to people on the other side having their arms and legs torn off.

Eventually the Evangelical Awakening appeared with its emphasis that experience, not knowledge, is what is necessary to be converted: being born again, the filling of the Spirit, and other experiences. However, Evangelicalism has experienced a relapse, and we are back to emphasizing creeds, which seem less demanding. Across the United States we have innumerable creeds.

Thus to sum up, it seems to make little difference to most Evangelicals what a Christian needs to be and to do if they call themselves a Christian. But if they don't call themselves Christians, such as Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists, all of our powerful criteria are brought to bear and we tend to throw them out, no matter how seriously they seek God.

It seems to me, however, that no form of Evangelicalism nor any other definition can be adequate as a criterion of acceptability to God. We need to realize God does not intend for us to decide who is a spiritual Christian [OR: who is in his Kingdom] and who is not. That means the spiritual status of a lot of people is in doubt, and that's the way it should be. Embarrassingly, a huge amount of God's will is being performed every day by people who do not call themselves "Christian." Jesus' expectations that the will of God would be enacted in this life is actually happening before our eyes. This also means that Kingdom mission is in many cases a joint operation with "Christians" and non-"Christians" whose status with God is ambiguous or unfinished.

Random Quotes from Ralph Winter Seminars

Compiled by Beth Snodderly

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6-15-00

- Our contribution to the fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer is most likely to be accomplished by an effort intended to enhance the impact of the mission societies of the world. ... Our destiny then is to be a mission society among mission societies working to enhance the impact of those societies, not just being one more mission society that sends out pioneer missionaries.

10-30-01

- The Intelligent Design movement isn't as sensitive as Darwin was to violence in nature. Darwin at least has an explanation for why God can't be blamed. Intelligent Design people don't have an explanation for that. ...Right now, only evolution has an answer to the problem of evil, but their theory is the shakiest there ever was. The most fundamental problem in Western Civilization is that even Christians are unwilling to even look at the problem of evil. We have no explanation for this.
- God works all things for good out of whatever evil deed Satan performs, but this is not the same as saying God works by sending evil.
- There is a massive fight going on and we are called to fight in it. The Son of God appeared for purpose to destroy the works of the devil. "As father sent me, so send I you." WE have authority in physical realm to take authority, just as in the spiritual world (no dichotomy between spiritual and physical).

1-4-02

- What is God asking us to do? What ARE the works of the devil?
- God has called for a war but no one has gone. Missions is a fumbling attempt to prosecute that war. Missions should encompass all things to do with God's glory.
- We need to de-contextualize the gospel in our own inheritance before we can contextualize it for others.
- Summary: We need to understand reality as best we can to be faithful to the purposes of God.

1-14-02

- Adjusting our lives and our thinking to the Bible is the name of the game.
- Our understanding of what the Bible is about and our understanding of theology is humanistic.
- McGavran said, "all evangelism is heresy."

- RDW: People need the Word of God to grow past their initial understanding of Christianity
- Matthew 24: This gospel OF THE KINGDOM will be preached. ... It is about people yielding to the authority of the Lord of the Kingdom.

2-02

- Education that does not interrupt the productive relationship of the student to society: This is the purpose of distance education and a goal WCF was designed to help achieve.

2-1-02

- If we are convinced the will of God always involves serene circumstances, there is no hope of going forward.

2-7-02

- The current major approach to mobilization is at the root of our mission problem.
- The future of missions depends on the quality of the people going into it.
- We need secular supplements to show the influence of the Gospel on history.
- Mission training has to begin before college graduation. Otherwise we'll have the re-amateurization of missions as with the Student Volunteer Movement which set missions back 40 years: eager, dedicated people, but unprepared for what they faced.

4-19-02

- Awareness of God's handwork enhances our sense of God's presence.
- The deepness and richness of our walk with God depends on the deepness and richness of our knowledge [of God's world].

6-10-02

- The key to unlocking many separate peoples to be addressed adequately with the gospel may be an over-arching affinity characteristic (such as ancestor worship) which needs to be addressed.
- Counterpoint to emphasis on individual peoples: instead of moving ahead with small minority peoples, turn instead to large majority groups where we haven't achieved a viable Christian faith tradition within these major cultures.
- All groups of Muslims have same problem, but those working with individual groups can't quite see it.
- Maybe 90% of the future of missions will be radically different from what we've seen.

8-2-02

- What would missions look like on earth if there were no human beings?
- The purpose of missions is to destroy the works of the devil.
- Human beings are not the goal of evangelism but the means of mission to help God vanquish the devil.

8-15-02

- "A person who can draw on wisdom from insights down through history can make better decisions today."

9-5-02 4

- Man was created to participate in a battle already going on, to re-take Christ's dominion over Satan.

9-6-02

- Are human beings here on earth to watch God win the battle or here on earth to HELP God win the battle?

9-13-02

- Re Business and Missions: Major problem: There is no normal meeting that brings together proponents of both types of ministry: business and traditional missions.
- A new “gap” identified by Dr. Winter in his seminar: The unsolved chasm between business and mission needs healing, with business being defined as ministry that is remunerative and pays for itself.

9-25-02

- Transform the mission industry to an earlier recruitment pattern. That could be launched at an ISFM seminar next Fall.
- Series of supplemental booklets to track with the public schools of America and get it into the Sunday Schools.
- Give the Bible in a language a people can understand: let them dig out what it means in their culture.
- Colossians 1:13: Christian life is a war. What does it mean to rescue people from the dominion of darkness? I have pondered this long and hard the last few years.

10-11-02

- Evangelicals need to reclaim science, the other book God wrote.
- The God of creation and the God of the Bible are the same person.
- All over the world people are studying God's works through microscopes and telescopes.
- The most unifying phenomenon in the world is science.

10-16-02

- We're not attracting the right kind of people by dangling the free gift of salvation in front of them.
- We deflect people from God to their own salvation. We attract people concerned about themselves.
- The missionary's job is to glorify God (reflect the glory of God). It is God's job to take care of people's salvation and destiny in heaven or not.
- If people expect the wrong thing, they don't recognize the right thing when they see it.
- The Book of Creation is being studied by thousands of devout, awed scientists who don't know it is God's book.
- We need to maximize the dazzling of the glory of God to people.
- The Bible itself is distance education

10-18-02

- A missions minded pastor can be ten times more strategic than a missionary. Pastors create missionaries.

12-2-02

- God brought human beings into the fight to assist Him against Satan.
- When missions from a human point of view succeeds, humans who are rescued don't become soldiers (as intended) but often sit down and take their ease.

2-1-03

- We are not just disseminating information but are involved in the conquest of evil. Are we soldiers conquering evil or expecting God to do something for us? We are spectators, not soldiers.

2-4-03

- Someone has to mine the Bible for wisdom. Take a good look at the church in the world. What is needed is not U.S. culture.

3-30-03

- Our gospel is vitiated by our lack of awareness of God's glory in creation.
- The true glory of God is rescued only if you postulate the existence of a spiritual adversary.

4-9-03

- Nothing that is not done daily will dominate your life

4-29-03 • Forming a permanent community of believers ready for any good work, in a commitment beyond church membership, is probably the most important thing I have ever attempted to do. I am open to advice from every side.

6-12-03

- Re conventional attitudes to disease: It is not true that "the most important thing is prayer. God is still in charge." If a baby was drowning in a bath tub this would not be true. The church has the audacity to be content to pray and let the world do the hard work in the lab. They want someone else who doesn't love Christ to do the work.

11-16-03

- In the spiritual formation movement: how big is the component of military preparation?
- There needs to be a gearing up for battle: destroying the works of the devil.

11-22-03

- Re WCF overarching theme of the glory of God: I really don't think God so much SEEKS glory (except in Calvin's thinking). He HAS glory. He possesses glory. We obviously must want to seek to understand more and more of His glory (not by singing repetitive songs), but we must also glorify God in great part as a means of setting the record straight in dealing with people deceived by Satan—as in the case of the father whose wife drowned their five children, he said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh

away.” It is perverted theology like that which stands in the way of rescuing people out of the hands of Satan. We must be able to blame the right person! Doing that requires removing a twisted-lens view of God's glory as a “means.” In this vein I see most “worship” as possibly very superficial if not almost totally sterile. You would think that true worship would involve discovering more and more of His glory not repeating platitudes. A church service could in my mind be redeemed if only for two minutes someone said something that revealed more of His glory. Much of that we wall off as secular “science.” This itself is because of diabolic deception.

8-7-04

- Complaining is the most creative force in history.

9-18-04

- Use the term “restoration” instead of transformation.
- Three stages in God’s plan: Good (creation) Corruption Restoration (see Isaiah where lion eats straw, the earth is full of 7 God’s glory)

10-29-04

- Statement by RDW to Beth: The best way to explain Ralph Winter’s life is his increasing understanding of the Bible.

12-10-04

- On spiritual formation: Living with ambiguity and the willingness to postpone the gratification of desires are aspects of maturity. Spiritual maturity doesn’t come by trying to be more holy. “He who seeks to save his life will lose it.” Spiritual growth comes from hundreds of little hammer blows that are responded to with acts of obedience.

2-1-08

- Poverty is not people with an absence of food, it is people with enemies.
- It is the impossibility of earning money beyond barely enough to survive.
- Social action is the empowerment of the gospel.
- There are hardly any evangelicals on the front lines of world problems.
- Jim Wallis: Social action without personal experience with Christ is useless.
- RWI: We need to broaden the scope of what missions is doing—the Kingdom Era/ the Fourth Era.

3-28-08

- We’re trying to enlist people to get INTO trouble, not keep them out of trouble.
- Go after evil in an organized way, not as individuals.

6-27-08

- I can’t think of anything more important than understanding what the Bible is really saying.