

Disease:
Articles by Ralph D. Winter
in Chronological Order

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Editorial on “hideous strength”; cancer

(1997) (*Mission Frontiers*, March-April)

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

Dear Reader,

This issue is full of news of things past and things soon to come. The future includes our cover story, “Countdown to 2000.” And that year 2000 is not very far in the future! What CAN be done by then?

On my heart at this point: both the mysterious, far-flung and incredibly potent work of God in the world today, and yet, the fact that the overall picture is not very beautiful.

Why? An evil “hideous strength” is still loose at every level. Kill- or-be-killed prevails at the level of the dinosaurs, at the level of the tiniest insects, and even at the level of the 24-hours-per-day wars out of sight in the world of the microbes.

Whence all this conflict, this destruction and distortion of life?

I cannot believe God once upon a time set out to create a world in which life forms of all kinds, large and small, would be “at each others’ throats.” Rather, the ominous, omnipresent murder and destruction we see at every level is clearly the work of the “god of this world,” the ruler of the darkness of this earth, who roams around as a man-eating lion, seeking whom he may devour.

However, the Bible describes events as recent as 4,000 years ago which appear to be the beginning of a divine counter-offensive. It explains (Gen 12:1-3) that through Abraham the darkness will be wrestled to the mat in all peoples. The world’s peoples will be re-inherited as God’s own possession. This is what the key word “blessing” implies—inheritance, adoption.

So, are our missionaries really supposed to roll back the darkness “over there” somewhere, where it is “darker” than “here?” Is that the purpose of missions—crossing culture barriers to all peoples, and then evangelizing within those peoples once the missionary breakthroughs have taken place? Yes...

But, do we think that if our missionaries get “over there” and gather people together on Sunday to “worship,” that will banish evil over there? Will it keep young folks from bunching up in gangs to brutalize and rape and spread harm, dope and disease to other people—while an individualized Gospel does not prevent that very well here in our inner cities where actual church attendance is often higher than it is the suburbs?

No, not really. Even “back here” in our own Bible-saturated country our most perfect church services consist of people sitting there distracted from this world for a few moments while battles are raging for their souls “at every level.”

When they emerge from the church they re-immense themselves in a world at war “at every level.” Even before they leave church—while they are still singing "Majesty"—they harbor in their blood-streams, in their hair follicles, even on the surface of their freshly brushed teeth, millions of good and bad bacteria battling to the death. Every person present carries diseases of one sort or another, truly gruesome diseases hardly mentionable in a nice Christian publication like this.

Yes, you recall, all of us carry little cancer cells zipping around like terrorists, victimizing healthy cells while multiplying their own number. Perhaps in your body the good guys are beating off the bad guys for the present. My doctor tentatively diagnosed two kinds of cancer for me. Further tests showed nothing. Great, I might have a few more days to live! But, don't we still “speak as dying men to dying men?” (Not so good for Roberta. Her bone-cancer lab symptoms are still climbing).

In other words, realistically, with God's help we are not out to end evil in all its forms. In God's army we are definitely “beating down” but not “beating out” all evil. For thousands of years all forms of life, human and otherwise, have existed enshrouded in fear and inspired by hate. The United Nations—whatever its vote—is not going to end that ghastly reality.

What DO We Look For?

What we are looking forward to at some time in the future, in His timing, is the awesome, resplendent return of Christ. He will at that time “wipe away every tear” (Rev 21:4). That will then be the final judgment against “that hideous strength” which has been ravaging at every level for thousands of years the beauty of God's creation .

How long has “that hideous strength” been around? The newspaper's list of all nine films that have ever sucked in over \$100 million in the first two weeks of their release is a list of films which highlight the massive struggle of good and evil. Is there no “other” subject? Is Spielberg likely to point out the Satanic factor in this pervasive, all-out war?

Dinosaurs and Missions

His two films right at the top explore the most luridly violent of all life forms: the dinosaurs. Yes, the presence—the puzzle—of total violence in all of life and all of earth's history is ever with us. Satan is not given the credit he deserves!

Another case, in the same May 30th issue of the *L.A. Times* reporting on these films, we read of a new discovery of vastly earlier evidence of hominids. And, sure enough, it notes:

One unusual aspect of the fossils is that the bones show tool marks, indicating that flesh had been scraped away just as with animals killed for meat. Such markings are normally associated with cannibalism.

Actually, this is not really unusual at all. The oldest skulls have often displayed blows to the skull.

So will all this change by the end of the year 2000? Our cover refers to “Countdown,” but to what?

I was overjoyed when the *Promise Keepers Magazine* recently came out with an article on global Christian mission. But then I was sorry to see how rather fuzzily it treated the subject of the countdown to A.D. 2000. The generally newsworthy article was given (perhaps by an editor) a pessimistic title and a lead-in sentence, as follows:

Mission Impossible. A decade ago, missions groups targeted the year 2000 as the completion date for the Great Commission. Will it be a mission accomplished?

First, I know of no reputable mission agency which has ever spoken officially of completing the Great Commission by any particular date. The Great Commission is an undefined concept, although agencies may refer to some one aspect of the Great Commission, usually to the complete outworking of some ministry in which they are involved.

But, secondly, I will admit people have talked about “world evangelization” by the year 2000, a phrase which is even more difficult: Not only is there no widely-accepted definition for the phrase, but if it means evangelizing every individual PERSON by a particular date, it will be an achievement immediately undone one single second later as more children grow into the age of accountability, thus needing to be evangelized. That is, you can't “finish” evangelization in this sense, ever.

Well, WHAT CAN BE FINISHED BY THE END OF THIS CENTURY?

Missions! In today's terminology, “getting a beach head in every pocket of mankind.” Missions in the classical sense is the Apostle Paul formulating a Gospel which was intelligible to Greeks and employing it in leading whole households to Christ within that new cultural tradition. This key reformulation of Paul's faith took him three years in Arabia.

His resulting “missiological breakthrough” was for him a double blessing: 1) It stripped him of the legalism which he had deeply imbibed--the false idea that true religion is a matter of religious activity: and 2) It flooded his soul with a passionate, personal knowledge of a Christ who had uniquely demonstrated in the flesh the dynamic meaning of the law, the rule of God.

As with all good missionaries, Paul went beyond that key achievement (the formulation, the “missiological breakthrough” to the Greeks) and went on tirelessly to implement the amazing and powerful significance of a truly Greek way of comprehending the Gospel. That is, he also evangelized whole households, acting out what Dawson Trotman in our day taught the Navigators, Campus Crusade, and Billy Graham—that converted souls need follow-through and fellowship.

But, the inherently pioneer, breakthrough activity of missions fades automatically into relevant, powerful evangelism, which, remember, is never ending, which by definition cannot be completed once for all.

So what is the most important, barely possible goal for the end of the year 2000? I don't want to be dogmatic, but I'll certainly continue to suggest that the end of missions is worth shooting for. It would mean a "missiological breakthrough" to every group in the world. That would in turn mean that every person in the world could hear the Word from someone within his own group, on the wavelength of his own culture.

Meanwhile, stepping down from the ivory tower of speculation, we can stand awed by the immense, magnificent AD2000 Movement spawning new hope and energies all over the globe, focusing on every aspect of the specific outreach necessary. Once the dark powers are decisively confronted within every human people...that's something concrete and worth shooting for! But is that really within reach during the next three and a half years--maybe even if you and I do nothing?

How We May Succeed

- The first stage goal is the "1739 Joshua Project Peoples." Pioneer work already exists in two-thirds of these groups. Many of these groups are actually the same groups from a mission standpoint: they got on this' list twice because they just happened to be cut into two or more pieces by a political border between two countries, and thus only one "missiological breakthrough" may be necessary.
- Virtually all of these groups have "kissing cousins in similar, smaller groups.
- More than at any time in history, bi-lingual/bi-cultural abound. (These are people like Paul who had roots in both Jewish and Hellenistic culture.) It is both fun and folly to try to figure out if a short-term team can make it to the doorway of every remaining group by 2000. That's fine, but that is not the usual way the Gospel spreads. The New Testament is very clear on this. Not the Peter and James types but the Paul and Barnabas types (bi-cultural) are especially essential in working out the new shape of faith in the new culture. But note that in both cases some "Peter" or "James" or some other person went after these bi-cultural and recruited them to the specific cross-cultural task. Can we do that?
- Furthermore, we can expect advance assistance from God Himself. Don Richardson's *Eternity In Their Hearts* describes over two-dozen examples of groups where it is clear that God had already been at work before the missionary arrived. Missionaries may mainly be helping God keep His promise where He said, "Seek me and you shall find me when you search for me with all your heart." Can you believe that there are true seekers in every remaining people? Why not?

How We May Fail

Disturbingly, the greatest assistance we need right now is to re-read the New Testament and discover the fact that the missionary crossing of cultural boundaries has almost always produced new church movements distastefully foreign to those who stay home and pray. And, one of the biggest battles rages between 1) those who insist on an extension of the sending culture in order "to make sure" the Gospel is really understood,

and 2) those who would work within a new group for the freedom of God's will from the sending church's way of life, sensing that inappropriate cultural carry-overs are the essence of legalism, whether they are handed down from the past or imported from afar.

In Poland today, I am told, thousands of young people—perhaps hundreds of thousands—are “too Evangelical” to be acceptable to Catholics, and “too Catholic” to be acceptable to Evangelicals. Is this not to be expected? Doesn't the New Testament prepare us for this?

Greek followers of Christ resulting from Paul's ministry were, sadly, uneasy and disdainful of the Jewishness of Jewish followers of Christ. That's why Paul in Romans 14 had to insist that the Jewish tradition was still perfectly legitimate. Equally, he insisted that the Greek followers of Christ were legitimate. Probably he did not convince very many on either side. Early Christianity soon became non-Jewish or anti-Jewish, and vice versa.

Today, missionaries in Indonesia are hoping to develop a Muslim way of life which will be fully Christian, or, we might say, fully Biblical (the word Christian in most of the world today implies all kinds of negative things, and was never employed by the New Testament believers in Christ). Of course, there is difficulty with this on both sides! Will the missionaries' supporters back home refuse to support that kind of missionary work? Similar breakthroughs are being attempted all over the world.

Would you like to hear a 45-minute testimony of an Evangelical missionary working in France who through 18 years of earnest struggles with the real situation has developed a ministry which is “too Catholic” for some? He spoke to our staff last week. This is a moving, powerful story. (See response page.)

This story holds the key, I feel, to a massive, unexpected, and astonishingly different “Second Front” to the non-Christian world in which we really do find that we are “giving our faith away.”

But, while mature mission leaders in the Navigators, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Campus Crusade, Evangelical Covenant Church, the Missionary Church, SIM International etc., are thinking along these lines—in some cases for years—these are not things that are easily explained to the folks back home for whom often the slightest difference between denominations is too much to swallow.

Indeed, as I see it, the new, younger generation of missionaries may perpetuate much of what has failed in the past. Indeed, the greatest mission mobilization activity today seems to be focused on “more of the same” —Westernizing methods that have never really worked with the “major religions” of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. Drumming up more of the same is not a solution.

However, this is another subject—are these new forces up to date? We'll deal with it in our next issue. Right now we only have space to mention one or two more things.

- Current international news brings up some interesting developments affecting missions: The most extensive impact of the West on the rest of the world is not

the extensive penetration of the Gospel. It is the glitter of Western freedoms. Zaire has chosen a new name embodying “democracy.” Indonesia has turned away from the stridently Muslim political party to a more Western path. Iran has tenuously voted a landslide for a more Westernized leader.

Do the millions behind these massive yearnings for the glitter of the West really want a society like ours, in which pre-marital sex encompasses over half of all teenagers, and 360,000 per month contract venereal disease? What a treacherous glitter! These ugly facts are brushed aside by both Americans and the rest of the world. Curious. But, is this why devout Hindu families are afraid of Western Christianity?

- The United World Mission recently hosted a conference of over a dozen agencies which are moving toward a joint effort in pre-field training. This may expand into training for mission pastors. This is terrific.
- Along the same line, one of the very largest global mission operations—that of the Southern Baptist Convention—is making remarkable strides in the direction of field studies, taking full advantage of the many new “off-campus” methods of education.
- June 30–July 5: Ten global consultations are meeting simultaneously in Pretoria, South Africa. One will be the first global meeting of exclusively mission executives since Edinburgh 1980. It is only the second since Edinburgh 1910 and it is sponsored by the AD2000 Movement. Read about all ten tracks in this issue.

Horizon Seven: Microscopic Spiritual Warfare Massive Blind Spot

(1998) (*Mission Frontiers*, Sept.-Dec.).

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/horizon-sevenmicroscopic-spiritual-warfare-massive-blind-spot>

Some “New Horizons” we took to the EFMA conference are not “new and emerging trends” but old problems that are simply blind spots. Puzzling! Are there really “blind spots”? How could there be when so many people are thinking and praying and pouring themselves out to carry Christ’s mission to the world? But, stop and think: Satan is in the business of causing blind spots. We are not just carrying a pleasant Gospel to the ends of the earth. We are engaging in an all-out battle with “the god of this world, against principalities and powers.” Of course we have blind spots! One is so complex we left it out at the last minute.

My editorial on page two also talks about this major but mysterious “new horizon”—which is so complex that when we got to Atlanta I decided the last minute we ought to leave it out.

However, our steady readers will recognize that it is not entirely new to these pages. In the last year-and-a-half, and sprinkled throughout many of my editorials, you will have seen an idea creeping in that is totally new to me. It involves a much larger understanding of God and His mission.

What? Can you get big new ideas at the age of 73? Actually, it seems like age speeds up discovery. Like finishing up a jig saw puzzle. The more pieces you get in, the faster it goes.

You may be surprised or puzzled or disturbed at what I am going to say. But my thoughts are no more spectacular or provocative than the revolutionary idea that God wants us to represent to people the full spectrum of His love by involvement in the entire battlefield of His conquering Kingdom. This pits us against the strategems of the prince of darkness on a wider front. It is more and more clear to me that He is expecting us to work along with Him in that wider front, at His side, fighting back against Satan in every area and every level of Satan's destructive invasion of creation.

Are you and I culturally blind to certain realms of Satan's deadly activity? Take the realm of tiny microbes. Are Evangelicals duped into considering plagues merely a secular or scientific problem, not a Satanic problem, not a mission problem? If so, unknown to us the people we go out around the world to bless may respond,

"If your God is so smart, why can't He prevent my children dying from malaria?"

As we fumble and stumble for an answer to a question like that, our reply may sound flippant, like:

“As missionaries we do lots of things, but we don’t do suffering. We can only put your kids on a bed while they swell up grotesquely and die an agonizing death. We don’t think it is up to us to completely eradicate the malarial plasmodium. Satan might get discouraged! After all, that evil bug is his pride and joy. He’s killed more of God’s people with that missile than any other weapon in his arsenal.”

We apparently don’t see malaria as our problem, as a mission problem. We don’t know what to do about it. The pills are of less and less value. So?

Can we actually eradicate that brilliant, malicious little monster called a plasmodium? Are we washing our hands of something we don’t understand without trying seriously to understand it? Can we feed children but not in Christ’s name wield scientific knowledge to eliminate something that kills four children every sixty seconds—in an excruciating death? Maybe we could, but we aren’t. Does this glorify God?

You may well guess that I got dragged into this line of thinking by discovering that even though 1,500 people die daily in the U.S. from cancer, all forty funded projects of the U.S. National Cancer Institute budget are merely evaluations of radiation and chemo treatments for cancer. Treatment, yes, is a very big business, one which would suffer massively if cancer were eliminated. But, foundational research into the nature of cancer is a very small business, and it is still awkward for me to think that Satan has covered his tracks so well.

What I am saying may thus seem to be a wacky tangent. Dear reader, Satan will rejoice if you draw that conclusion.

A brand new book, *The Gospel of Germs*, tells the social impact of the discovery of germs in Europe. Yet not all of us take germs seriously. Satan is quite happy with that. He may hope that most people will conclude that God’s good creation has been seriously flawed from the beginning.

This, brothers and sisters, is a new horizon: there is more to do than we thought. I propose we roll up our sleeves and do the trench work, risk our very lives working to completely eradicate Satan’s handiwork—in the area of global disease. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose: that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Now, are you still willing to follow Him?

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The Kingdom Strikes Back

(1999) (Foundations Reader, 7-23)

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Man has virtually erased his own story. Human beings as far back as we have any paleological record have been fighting each other so much that they have destroyed well over 90 percent of their own handiwork. Their libraries, their literature, their cities, their works of art are mostly gone. Even the little that remains from the distant past is riddled with evidences of a strange and pervasive evil that has grotesquely distorted man's potential.

This is strange because apparently no other species treats its own with such deadly hatred. The oldest skulls bear mute witness that they were bashed in and roasted to deliver their contents as food for other human beings. An incredible array of disease germs also cuts down population growth.

World population in Abraham's day is estimated at 27 million—less than the population of California in AD 2000. But, the small slow-growing population of Abraham's day is mute, and ominous evidence exists of the devastating combination of war and pestilence, both the relentless impact of the Evil One. World population growth back then was one-sixteenth of today's global rate. As hatred and disease are conquered, world population instantly picks up speed. If today's relatively slow global growth rate were to have happened in Abraham's day, our present world population (of 6 billion) would have been reached back then in just 321 years! Thus, in those days, evil must have been much more rampant than now.

We are not surprised, then, to find that the explanation for this strange evil comes up in the oldest detailed written records—surviving documents that are respected by Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions whose adherents make up more than half of the world's population. These documents called “the Torah,” by Jews, the “Books of the Law” by Christians, and “the Taurat” by Muslims not only explain the strange source of evil but also describe a counter-campaign and then follow the progress of that campaign through many centuries.

To be specific, the first eleven chapters of Genesis constitute a scary “introduction” to the entire problem, indeed, to the plot of the entire Bible. Those few pages describe three things: 1) a glorious and “good” original creator; 2) the entrance of a rebellious and destructive evil—superhuman, demonic person—resulting in 3) a humanity caught up in that rebellion and brought under the power of that evil person.

Don't ever think that the whole remainder of the Bible is simply a bundle of divergent, unrelated stories as taught in Sunday School. Rather, the Bible consists of a single drama: the entrance of the Kingdom, the power and the glory of the living God in this enemy-occupied territory. From Genesis 12 to the end of the Bible, and indeed until the end of time, there unfolds the single, coherent drama of “the Kingdom strikes back.” This would make a good title for the Bible itself were it to be printed in modern dress (with Gen 1-11 as the introduction to the whole Bible). In this unfolding drama we see the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming His fallen creation through the giving of His own Son at the very center of the 4000-year period ending in 2000 BC. This is tersely summed up: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:6).

This counterattack against the Evil One clearly does not await the appearance of the good Person in the center of the story. Indeed, there would seem to be five identifiable epochs of advance *prior* to the appearance of Christ as well as five after that event. The purpose of this chapter is mainly to describe the five epochs *after* Christ. However, in order for those later epochs to be seen as part of a single ten-epoch 4,000-year unfolding story, we will note a few clues about the first five epochs.

The theme that links all ten epochs is the grace of God intervening in a “world which lies in the power of the Evil One” (1 John 5:19), contesting an enemy who temporarily is “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4) so that the nations will praise God’s name. His plan for doing this is to reach all peoples by conferring an unusual “blessing” on Abraham and Abraham’s seed (Abraham’s children-by-faith), even as we pray “Thy Kingdom come.” By contrast, the Evil One’s plan is to bring reproach on the Name of God. The Evil One stirs up hate, distorts even DNA sequences, perhaps authors suffering and all destruction of God’s good creation. Satan’s devices may very well include devising virulent germs in order to tear down confidence in God’s loving character.

Therefore this “blessing” is a key concept. The English word *blessing* is not an ideal translation. We see the word in use where Isaac confers his “blessing” on Jacob and not on Esau. It was not “blessings” but “a blessing,” the conferral of a family name, responsibility, obligation, as well as privilege. It is not something you can receive or get like a box of chocolates you can run off with and eat by yourself in a cave, or a new personal power you can show off like rippling muscles. It is something you *be-come* in a permanent *relationship and fellowship* with your

Father in Heaven. It returns “families,” that is, *nations* to His household, to the Kingdom of God, so that the nations “will declare His glory.” The nations are being prevented from declaring God’s glory by the scarcity of evidence of God’s ability to cope with evil. If the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the Devil, then what are the Son of God’s followers and “joint heirs” supposed to do to bring honor to His Name?

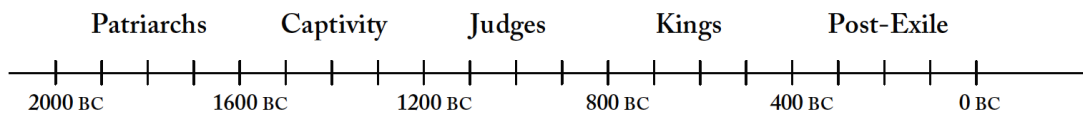
This “blessing” of God is in effect conditioned upon its being shared with other nations, since those who yield to and receive God’s blessing are, like Abraham, those of faith who subject themselves to God’s will, become part of His Kingdom, and represent the extension of His rule, His power, His authority within all other peoples.

The First Half of the 4,000-Year Story

The story of the “strike back” as we see it in Genesis 12 begins in about 2000 BC. During roughly the next 400 years, Abraham was chosen, and moved to the geographic center of the Afro-Asian land mass. The time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (often called the Period of the Patriarchs) displays relatively small breakthroughs of witness to the surrounding nations even though the central mandate to restore God’s control over all nations (Gen 12:1-3) is repeated twice again to Abraham (18:18, 22:18), and once to both Isaac (26:4) and Jacob (28:14,15).

Joseph observed to his brothers, “You sold me, but God sent me.” He was obviously a great blessing to the nation of Egypt. Even Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was filled with the Spirit of God (Gen 41:38, *TLB*). But this was not the *intentional* missionary obedience God wanted. Joseph’s brothers, for example, had not taken up an offering and sent him to Egypt as a missionary! God was in the missions business whether they were or not.

Ten Epochs of Redemptive History: The First Half 2000—0 BC



The next four periods, roughly 400 years each, are: 2) the Captivity, 3) the Judges, 4) the Kings and 5) that of the Babylonian Exile and dispersion (*diaspora*). During this rough and tumble, the promised *blessing* and the expected *mission* (to extend God’s rule to all the nations of the world) all but disappear from sight. As a result, where possible, God accomplished His will through the *voluntary* obedience of His people, but where necessary, He accomplished His will through *involuntary* means. Joseph, Jonah, the nation as a whole when taken captive represent the

category of *involuntary* missionary outreach intended by God to force the extension of ^{the}_{SEF} the blessing. The little girl carried away captive to the house of Naaman the Syrian was able to share her faith. Naomi, who “went” a distance away, shared her faith with her children and their non-Jewish wives. On the other hand, Ruth, her daughter-in-law, Naaman the Syrian, and the Queen of Sheba all “came” *voluntarily*, attracted by God’s blessing-relationship with Israel.

Note, then, the four different “mission mechanisms” at work to bless other peoples: 1) going voluntarily, 2) involuntarily going without missionary intent, 3) coming voluntarily, and 4) coming involuntarily (as with Gentiles forcibly settled in Israel—2 Kings 17).

Thus, we see in every epoch the active concern of God to forward His mission, with or without the full cooperation of His chosen nation. When Jesus appears, it is an incriminating “visitation.” He comes to His own, and “His own receive Him not” (John 1:11). He is well received in Nazareth until He refers to God’s desire to bless the Gentiles. At that precise moment (Luke 4:28) an explosion of homicidal fury betrays the fact that this chosen nation—chosen to receive *and to mediate* the blessing (Ex 19:5, 6; Ps 67; Isa 49:6)—has grossly fallen short. There was indeed a sprinkling of fanatical “Bible students” who “traversed land and sea to make a single proselyte” (Matt 23:15). But such outreach was

not so much to be a blessing to the other nations as it was to sustain and protect Israel. They were not always making sure that their converts were “circumcised in heart” (Deut 10:16, 30:6, Jer 9:24-26, Rom 2:29).

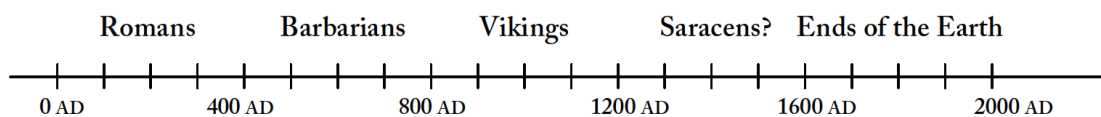
In effect, and under these circumstances, Jesus did not come to *give* the Great Commission but to *take it away*. The natural branches were broken off while other “unnatural” branches were grafted in (Rom 11:13-24). But, despite the general reluctance of the chosen missionary nation—typical of other nations later—many people groups were in fact touched due to the faithfulness and righteousness of some. These groups come to mind: Canaanites, Egyptians, Philistines (of the ancient Minoan culture), Hittites, Moabites, Phoenicians (of Tyre and Sidon), Assyrians, Sabaeans (of the land of Sheba), Babylonians, Persians, Parthians, Medes, Elamites and Romans.

The Second Half of the Story

The next 2,000-year period is one in which God, on the basis of the intervention of His Son, makes sure that the other nations are both blessed and *similarly called* “to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.” In each case, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him (of that people) shall much be required.” Now we see the Kingdom striking back in the realms of the Armenians, the Romans, the Celts, the Franks, the Angles, the Saxons, the Germans, and eventually even those ruthless pagan pirates further north called the Vikings. All these people-basins will be invaded, tamed and subjugated by the power of the gospel, and in turn expected to share that blessing with still other peoples (instead of raiding them).

But in one sense the next five epochs are not all that different from the first five epochs. Those nations that are blessed do not seem terribly eager to share that unique blessing and

Ten Epochs of Redemptive History: The Second Half 0—2000 AD



extend that new kingdom. The Celts are the most active nation in the first millennium to give an outstanding missionary response. As we will see—just as in the Old Testament—the conferral of this unique blessing will bring sober responsibility, dangerous if unfulfilled. And we will see

repeated again and again God's use of the full range of His four missionary mechanisms. The "visitation" of the Christ was dramatic, full of portent and strikingly "in due time." Jesus was born a member of a subjugated people. Yet in spite of her bloody imperialism, Rome was truly an instrument in God's hands to prepare the world for His coming. Rome controlled one of the largest empires the world has ever known, forcing the Roman peace (the "Pax Romana") upon all sorts of disparate and barbaric peoples. For centuries Roman emperors had been building an extensive communication system, both in the 250,000 miles of marvelous roads which stretched throughout the empire, and in the rapid transmission of messages and documents somewhat like the Pony Express on the American frontier. In its conquests, Rome enveloped at least one civilization far more advanced than her own—Greece. Highly-educated artisans and teachers were taken as slaves to every major city of the empire where they taught the Greek language. Greek was thus understood from England to Palestine.

Equally important to our thesis is the less known but empire-wide substratum of obedience and righteousness—the massive and marvelous presence of diaspora Jews, more respected in their dispersion than in their home land! Scholars agree that their numbers had grown to 10 percent of the Roman population. The virile element within this Jewish presence—those "circumcised in heart"—played a large part in attracting many Gentiles to the fringes of the synagogues. Many of these Gentiles, like those of Cornelius' household, became earnest Bible readers and worshipers—people the New Testament calls "devout persons" or "God-fearers." This way the faith jumped the ethnic borders! Such *God-fearers* became the steel rails on which the Christian movement expanded. This movement was basically the Jewish faith in Gentile clothing, something—take note—which was understandably hard for earnest Jews to conceive.

How else could a few Gospels and a few letters from St. Paul have had such a widespread impact within so many different ethnic groups in such a short period of time?

Stop and ponder: Jesus came, lived for 33 years on earth, confronted His own unenthusiastic missionary nation, was rejected by many, was crucified and buried, rose again, and underscored the same longstanding commission to all who would respond, before ascending to the Father. Today even the most agnostic historian stands amazed that what began in a humble stable in Bethlehem of Palestine, a backwater of the Roman Empire, in less than 300 years was given control of the emperors' palace in Rome. How did it happen? It is a truly incredible story.

No Saints in the Middle?

It is wise to interrupt the story here. If you haven't heard this story before you may confront a psychological problem. In church circles today we have fled, feared or forgotten these middle centuries. Hopefully, fewer and fewer of us will continue to think in terms of what may be called a fairly extreme form of the "BOBO" theory—that the Christian faith somehow "Blinked Out" after the Apostles and "Blinked On" again in our time, or whenever our modern "prophets" arose, be they Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Joseph Smith, Ellen White or John Wimber. The result of this kind of BOBO approach is that you have "early" saints and "latter-day" saints, but *no saints in the middle*.

Thus, many Evangelicals are not much interested in what happened prior to the Protestant Reformation. They have the vague impression that the Church was apostate before Luther and Calvin, and whatever there was of real Christianity consisted of a few persecuted individuals here and there. For example, in the multi-volume *Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching*, only half of the first volume is devoted to the first 15 centuries! In evangelical Sunday Schools, children are busy as beavers with the story of God's work from Genesis to Revelation, from Adam to the Apostles—and their Sunday School publishers may even boast about their "all-Bible curriculum." But this only really means that these children do not get exposed to all the incredible things God did with that Bible between the times of the Apostles and the Reformers, a period which is staggering proof of the unique power of the Bible! To many people, it is as if there were "no saints in the middle."

In the space available, however, it is only possible to outline the Western part of the story of the kingdom striking back—and only outline. It will be very helpful to recognize the various cultural basins in which that invasion has taken place. Kenneth Scott Latourette's *History of Christianity* gives the fascinating details, a book extending the story beyond the Bible. (A book more valuable than any other, apart from the Bible!)

Note the pattern in the chart on the following page. Latourette's "resurgences" correspond to our "renaissances."

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

In Period II, the Goths were added in, and they and others briefly achieved a new "Holy" Roman Empire. But this new sphere did not effectively reach further north with the gospel.

In Period III, again almost as a penalty, the Vikings invaded these Christianized Celtic and Gothic barbarians. In the resulting agony, the Vikings, too, became Christians.

In Period IV, Europe now united for the first time by Christian faith, reached out in a sort of pseudo-mission to the Saracens in the great abortion known as the Crusades.

In Period V, Europe now reached out to the very ends of the earth, but still done with highly mixed motives; intermingled commercial and spiritual interests was both a blight and a blessing. Yet, during this period, the entire non-Western world was suddenly stirred into development as the colonial powers greatly reduced war and disease. Never before had so few affected so many, even though never before had so great a gap existed between two halves of the world. What will happen in the next few years?

Will the immeasurably strengthened non-Western world invade Europe and America just as the Goths invaded Rome and the Vikings overran Europe? Will the "Third World" turn on us in a new series of "Barbarian" invasions? Will the OPEC nations gradually buy us out and take us over? Clearly we face the reaction of an awakened non-Western world that is suddenly beyond our control. What will be the role of the gospel? Can we gain any insight from these previous cycles of outreach?

Period I: Winning the Romans, A.D. 0–400

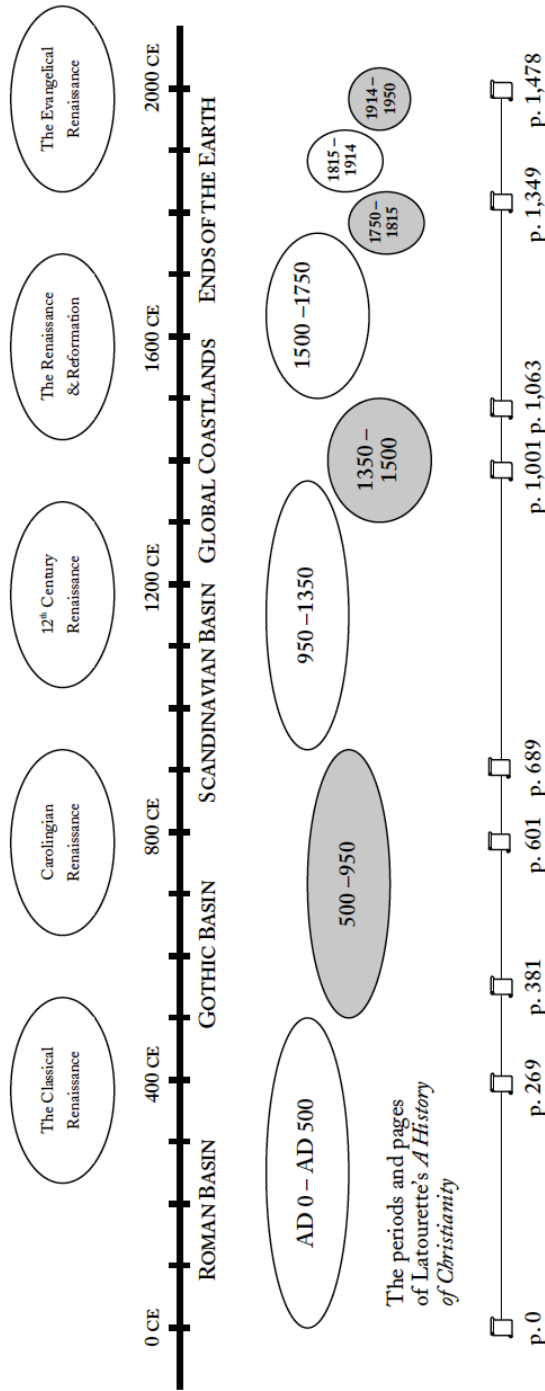
Perhaps the most spectacular triumph of Christianity in history was its conquest of the Roman Empire in roughly 20 decades. There is a lot more we would like to know about this period. Our lack of knowledge makes much of it a mystery, and the growth of Christianity sounds impossible, almost unbelievable—especially if we do not take into account the Jewish substratum. Only the early part of the story starts out emblazoned in the floodlight of the New Testament epistles themselves. Let's take a glance at that.

There we see a Jew named Paul brought up in a Greek city, committed to leadership in the Jewish tradition of his time. Suddenly he is transformed by Christ and gradually comes to see that the essence of the faith of the Jews as fulfilled in Christ could operate without Jewish garments. He realized that an inner circumcision of the heart could be clothed in Greek language and customs as well as Semitic! It should have become crystal clear to everyone that anyone can become a Christian and be transformed in the inner man by the living Christ, whether Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, male or female. The Greeks didn't have to become Jews—undergo physical circumcision, take over the Jewish calendar of festivals or holy days, or even observe Jewish dietary customs—any more than a woman had to be made into a man to be acceptable to God. What *was* necessary was the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5, 16:26).

Paul based his work on the radical biblical principle (unaccepted by many Jews to this day) that it is circumcision of the *heart* that counts (Jer 9), and that the new believers of a new culture did not have to speak the language, wear the clothes, or follow all the customs of the sending church. This meant that for Greeks the cultural details of the Jewish law were no longer to be considered mandatory. Therefore, to the Jews, Paul continued as one "under the law of

Pulses in Western Civilization

As the faith moved in to each new cultural basin it struggled before gaining acceptance in a flourishing period which scholars have called "Renaissance."



The periods and pages of Latourette's *A History of Christianity*

Renaissance in Five Epochs

The dark-lined upper grid of 400-year "epochs" is designed to be easy to remember, not to determine the reality of history. However, the most significant expansions of the Christian faith are reflected at least roughly in this way. More importantly, the existence of five "renaissances" is also highlighted.

The lower line represents the pages Latourette devotes to the timeline above. The unshaded ovals represent what Latourette

calls "Resurgences" of Christianity, while the shaded ovals represent "Recessions." The most important thing revealed by this comparison is the fact that all four of Latourette's "Resurgences" correspond to the "Renaissances" of the upper timeline. The only significant difference is that he does not honor the Carolingian Renaissance to the extent many other scholars do.

One reason Latourette saw this differently is that he was concerned strictly with what is called "Christianity" (which is not illogical in a book entitled *A History of Christianity*) and thus does not consider the Islamic movement a largely positive expression of the same "Judaic" tradition.

In any case, Islam, although starting later, became an advance far more illustrious than our Western upbringing normally

allows us to realize. By the time of the Renaissance in fourth epoch, Islam had become politically, culturally, militarily, and even numerically, superior to "Christianity." In many ways this had been true for more than half of the Christian period. This is not surprising since much of the expansion of Islam built on a Christian substratum, just as Christianity had earlier built on a Jewish substratum.

Indeed, as far as the basic purpose of the Mosaic Law is concerned, the Greek believers immediately developed the functional equivalent to it in their own cultural terms while most of them held on as well to what is often called the Old Testament. After all, it was “the Bible of the early church” (as well as of the Jews), that had led them to belief in the first place.

We may get the impression that mission activity in this period benefitted very little from deliberately organized effort. That may well be only because its structure was transparent: Paul apparently worked within a well-known “missionary team” structure used by the Pharisees—even by Paul himself when he was a Pharisee! Paul’s sending congregation in Antioch certainly undertook some responsibility. But, basically, they “sent him off” more than they “sent him out.” His traveling team had all of the authority of any local church. He did not look for orders from Antioch.

There is good reason to suppose that the Christian faith spread in many areas by the “involuntary-go” mechanism, because Christians were often dispersed as the result of persecutions. We know that fleeing Arian Christians had a lot to do with the conversion of the Goths. We have the stories of Ulfilas and Patrick whose missionary efforts were in each case initiated by the accident of their being taken captive.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that Christianity followed the trade routes of the Roman Empire. We know that there was a close relationship and correspondence between Christians in Gaul and Asia Minor. Yet we must face the fact that the early Christians of the Roman Empire (and Christians today!) were only rarely willing and able to take conscious practical steps to fulfill the Great Commission. In view of the amazing results in those early decades, however, we are all the more impressed by the innate power of the gospel itself.

One intriguing possibility of the natural transfer of the gospel within a given social unit is the case of the Celts. Historical studies clarify for us that the province of Galatia in Asia Minor was called so because it was settled by *Galatoi* from Western Europe (who as late as the fourth century still spoke both their original Celtic tongue and also the Greek of that part of the Roman Empire). Whether or not Paul’s Galatians were merely Jewish traders living in the province of Galatia, or were from the beginning Celtic *Galatoi* who were attracted to synagogues as “God fearers,” we note in any case that Paul’s letter to the Galatians is especially wary of anyone pushing over on his readers the mere *outward customs* of the Jewish culture and confusing such customs with *essential biblical faith* which he preached to both Jew and Greek (Rom 1:16). A matter of high missionary interest is the fact that Paul’s preaching had tapped into a cultural vein of Celtic humanity that may soon have included friends, relatives and trade contacts reaching a great distance to the west. Thus Paul’s efforts in Galatia may give us one clue to the surprisingly early penetration of the gospel into the main Celtic areas of Europe, comprising a belt running across southern Europe clear over into Galicia in Spain, Brittany in France and up into the western and northern parts of the British Isles.

There came a time when not only hundreds of thousands of Greek and Roman citizens had become Christians, but Celtic-speaking peoples and Gothic tribal peoples as well had believed within their own forms for various versions of biblical faith, both within and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. It is probable that the missionary work behind this came about mainly through unplanned processes involving Christians from the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In any case this achievement certainly cannot readily be credited to the planned missionary initiative of *Latin-speaking* Romans in the West. This is the point we are trying to make.

One piece of evidence is the fact that the earliest Irish mission compounds (distinguished from the Latin-Roman type by a central chapel) followed a ground plan derived from Christian centers in *Egypt*. And *Greek*, not Latin, was the language of the early churches in Gaul. Even the first organized mission efforts of John Cassian and Martin of Tours, for example, *came from the East* by means of commune structures begun in Syria and Egypt. Fortunately, these organized

efforts carried with them a strong emphasis on literacy and the studying and copying of biblical manuscripts and ancient Greek classics.

As amazed pagan leaders looked on, the cumulative impact of this new, much more acceptable clothing of biblical faith grew to prominent proportions by AD 300. We don't know with any confidence what personal reasons Constantine had in AD 312 for declaring himself a Christian. We know that his mother in Asia Minor was a Christian, and that his father, as a co-regent in Gaul and Britain, did not enforce in his area the Diocletian edicts commanding persecution of Christians. However, by this time in history the inescapable factor is that there were enough Christians in the Roman Empire to make an official reversal of policy toward Christianity not only feasible but politically wise. I well recall a lecture by the late Professor Lynn White, Jr. of U.C.L.A., one of the great medieval historians, in which he said that even if Constantine had not become a Christian, the empire could not have held out against Christianity more than another decade or two! The long development of the Roman Empire had ended the local autonomy of the city-state and created a widespread need for a sense of belonging—he called it a crisis of identity. At that time Christianity was the one religion that had no nationalism at its root, partly because it was rejected by the Jews! It was not the folk religion of any one tribe. In White's words, it had developed "an unbeatable combination." However, this virtue became a mixed blessing once it became aligned with the Empire.

Thus, it is the very power of the movement which helps to explain why the momentous imperial decision to *tolerate* Christianity almost inevitably led to its becoming (roughly 50 years later) the *official* religion of the Empire. Not long after the curtain rises on Christianity as an officially *tolerated* religion, the head of the Christian community in Rome turns out astonishingly to be the strongest and most trusted man around. That's why Constantine, when he moved the seat of government to Constantinople, left his palace (the famous Lateran Palace) to the people of the Christian community as their "White House" in Rome. In any case, it is simply a matter of record that by AD 375, Christianity had become the official religion of Rome. If it had merely been an ethnic cult, it could not have been even a candidate as an official religion of the Empire.

Ironically, however, once Christianity became locked into a specific cultural tradition and political loyalty, it tended automatically to alienate all who were anti-Roman. Even being *tolerated* instantly created suspicion and then soon widespread slaughter of "Christians" in Arabia and what is now Iran. This persecution stopped for three years, when a Roman emperor (Julian the Apostate) *opposed* Christianity and tried to roll things back to the pagan gods! Meanwhile, even in the case of anti-Roman populations within the Empire's boundaries, as in North Africa, the foundation was laid for people to turn to Islam as an alternative. This in one sense was a cultural breakaway from Christianity just as Christianity had been a breakaway from the Jewish form of the biblical faith. Similarly "Black Muslims" today deliberately reject the "white man's religion."

Thus, the political triumph of what eventually came to be known as *Christianity* was in fact a mixed blessing. The biblical faith could wear other than Jewish clothes; it was now dressed in Roman clothes; but if these new clothes were normative, it would not be expected to spread far beyond the political boundaries of the Roman Empire. It didn't, except in the West. Why was that?

No one questions that when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, it became ill-equipped by its very form to complete the Great Commission with any populace that was anti-Roman. As we might expect, only Christianity of a heretical variety was accepted by the Germanic tribes while Rome was still strong militarily. But once the tribal peoples discovered it possible to invade and conquer the western half of the Roman Empire, the Catholic and Orthodox forms of the faith became less threatening because the Goths and others could now try to acquire the prestige of the Roman language and culture without being dominated by the Roman legions.

Note, however, the domino results of partially Christianized Gothic barbarians

threatening Rome: the Romans in defense pulled their legions out of Britain. As a result, four centuries of Roman literacy in southern Britain were soon extinguished by a new form of invading barbarians—Angles, Saxons and Frisians who, compared to the Goths, were total pagans, cruel and destructive. What would happen now? Thus began the “First” of the two Dark Ages.

Period II: Winning the Barbarians, A.D. 400–800

It is a fact that when the earlier (Gothic) tribal peoples became Christianized into an antagonistic Arian form of the faith, they became a greater and greater military threat to Rome. All it took for this threat to become a true menace was for the feared Huns to punch into Europe from Central Asia. This pushed the panicked Visigoths (and then the Ostrogoths and then the Vandals) inside the Empire. In the turmoil and confusion these tribal incursions somewhat unintentionally wrecked the entire network of civil government in the West (in today’s Italy, Spain and North Africa). Later they tried seriously to rebuild it.

(Was all this something like the post-colonial chaos in Africa after the Second World War?) In fact, the only reason the city of Rome itself was not physically devastated by the invasions, which arrived finally at the gates of Rome in 410, was that these Gothic Barbarians were, all things considered, really very respectful of life and property, especially that of the churches! It was a huge benefit to citizens of Rome that earlier informal missionary effort—for which Latin Roman Christians could claim little credit—had brought these peoples into at least a superficial Christian faith. Even secular Romans observed how lucky they were that the invaders held high certain standards of Christian morality. Not so the Angles and Saxons who invaded Britain.

We are tantalized by the reflection that this much was accomplished by informal and almost unconscious sharing of the gospel—e.g., the news and authority of the *blessing* being extended to all Gentile nations. How much better might it have been if the Romans—during that brief hundred years of official flourishing of Christianity (310-410) prior to the first Gothic invasion of the city of Rome—had been devoted to energetic and intentional missionary effort. Even a little heretical Christianity prevented the Barbarians from that total disregard of civilization which was to be shown by the Vikings in the third period. Perhaps a little more missionary work might have prevented the complete collapse of the governmental structure of the Roman Empire in the West. Today, for example, the ability of the new African states to maintain a stable government is to a great extent dependent upon their degree of Christianization (that is, both in knowledge and morality).

In any case, we confront the ominous phenomenon of partially Christianized barbarian hordes being emboldened and enabled to pour in upon a complacent, officially Christian empire that had failed effectively to reach out to them. The tribal peoples were quick to acquire Roman military skills, often serving as mercenaries in the Roman legions.

[These events may remind us of our relation to the present-day colossus of China. The country of China, like the Barbarians north of Rome, has been crucially affected by Christianity even though bitterly opposed to its alien connections. And they have gained nuclear power. Can you imagine why they vigorously opposed the Pope’s appointment of a Cardinal within their midst? After the Second World War they adopted “Chinese communism” extensively and profoundly, which was a kind of superficial “faith” embodying a number of distinctively Christian ingredients—despite the often grave distortion of those Christian elements. Just as a modicum of Christian faith in some ways strengthened the hand of the Barbarians against the Romans, so the country of China today is awesomely more dangerous due to the cleansing, integrating and galvanizing effect of the Communist philosophy and cell (structure which is clearly derived from the West, and indirectly from the Christian tradition itself). You can imagine the Barbarians criticizing the softness and degeneracy of the Roman Christians just as the

country of China denounced both the Russians for failing to live up to Communist standards and the West for its pornography and crime.]

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

The immediate result: right within the city of Rome appeared two “denominations,” the one Arian and the other Athanasian. Also in the picture was the Celtic “church,” which was more a series of missionary compounds than it was a denomination made up of local churches. Still less like a church was an organization called the Benedictines, which came along later to compete with the Celts in establishing missionary compounds all over Europe. By the time the Vikings appeared on the horizon there had spread up through Europe over 1,000 such mission compounds.

Mission compounds?

Protestants, and perhaps even modern Catholics, must pause at this phenomenon. Our problem in understanding these strange (and much misunderstood) instruments of evangelization is not so much our ignorance of what these people did as our prejudice which developed because of decadent monks who lived almost a thousand years later. It is wholly unfair for us to judge the work of a traveling evangelist like Columban or Boniface by the stagnation of the wealthy Augustinians in Luther’s day—although we must certainly pardon Luther for thinking such thoughts.

It is indisputable that the chief characteristic of these “Jesus People” in this second period, whether they were Celtic *peregrini* (wandering evangelists) or their parallel in Benedictine communes, was the fact that they held the Bible in awe. They sang their way through the whole book of Psalms each week as a routine discipline. It was primarily they who enabled the Kingdom and the power and the glory to be shared with the barbaric Anglo-Saxons and Goths.

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

Enter: The Orders

Under the particular circumstances of that time, similar to many chaotic corners of the world today, the most durable structure around was the *order*—a fellowship much more highly disciplined and tightly-knit than the usual American Protestant congregation today. Its “houses” came to dot the landscape of Europe. We must admit, furthermore, that these novel Christian communities not only were the source of spirituality and scholarship during the Middle Ages, but they also preserved the technologies of the Roman industrial world—tanning, dyeing, weaving, metalworking, masonry skills, bridge building, etc. Their civil, charitable and even scientific contribution is, in general, grossly underestimated—especially by Protestants who have developed unfriendly stereotypes about “monks.” Probably the greatest accomplishment of these disciplined Christian communities is seen in the simple fact that almost all our knowledge of the Roman world is derived from their libraries, whose silent testimony reveals the appreciation they had, even as Christians, for the “pagan” authors of ancient times.

Thus, in our secular age it is embarrassing to recognize that had it not been for these highly literate “mission field” Christians who preserved and copied manuscripts (not only of the Bible but of ancient Christian and non-Christian classics as well), we would know no more about

the Roman Empire today than we do of the Mayan or Incan empires, or many other empires that have long since almost vanished from sight.

Many Evangelicals might be jolted by the Wheaton professor who wrote an appreciative chapter about these disciplined *order* structures entitled, “The Monastic Rescue of the Church.” One sentence stands out: “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” (p. 78).

Curiously, our phrase *Third World* comes from those days when Greek and Latin were the first two worlds and the barbarians to the north were the *Third World*. Using this phrase, Barbarian Europe was won more by the witness and labors of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon converts of the Celts—“Third World missionaries”—than by the efforts of missionaries deriving from Italy or Gaul. This fact was to bear decisively upon the apparently permanent shift of power in Western Europe from the Mediterranean to northern Europe. Even as late as AD 596, when Rome’s first missionary headed north (with serious faintheartedness), he incidentally crossed the path of the much more daring and widely-traveled Irish missionary, Columban, one of the scholarly Celtic *peregrini* who had worked his way practically to Rome’s doorstep and who was already further from his birthplace than Augustine was planning to go from his.

We are not surprised that Constantinople was considered the “Second Rome” by those living in the East, nor that both Aachen (in Charlemagne’s France) and Moscow were later to compete for recognition as new Romes by the descendants of the newly Christianized Franks and Slavs, respectively. Neither the original Rome as a city nor the Italian peninsula as a region were ever again to be politically as significant as the chief cities of the new nations—Spain, France, Germany, and England.

Enter Charlemagne

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

But Charlemagne was much more of a Christian than Constantine and as such industriously sponsored far more Christian activity. Like Constantine, his official espousal of Christianity produced many Christians who were Christians in name only. There is little doubt that the great missionary Boniface was slain by the Saxons because his patron, Charlemagne (with whose military policies he did not at all agree) had brutally suppressed the Saxons on many occasions. Then, as in our own recent past, the political force of a colonial power did not so much pave the way for Christianity, as turn people against the faith. Of interest to missionaries is the fact that the great centers of learning established by Charlemagne were copies and expansions of newly established mission compounds deep in German territory, themselves outposts that were the work of British and Celtic missionaries from sending centers as far away to the west as Britain’s Iona and Lindisfarne.

Indeed, the first serious attempt at anything like public education was initiated by this great tribal chieftain, Charlemagne, on the advice and impulse of Anglo-Celtic missionaries and scholars from Britain, such as Alcuin, whose projects eventually required the help of thousands of literate Christians from Britain and Ireland to man schools founded on the Continent. It is hard to believe, but formerly “barbarian” Irish teachers of Latin (never a native tongue in Ireland) were eventually needed to teach Latin in Rome. This indicates extensively how the tribal invasions of other barbarians had broken down the civilization of the Roman Empire. This reality underlies Thomas Cahill’s book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*.

The Celtic Christians and their Anglo-Saxon and Continental converts especially treasured the Bible. Mute testimony to the Bible as their chief source of inspiration is that the highest works of art during these “dark” centuries were marvelously “illuminated” biblical manuscripts and devoutly ornamented church buildings. Manuscripts of non-Christian classical authors, though preserved and copied, were not illuminated. Through the long night of the progressive breakdown of the Western part of the Roman Empire, when the tribal migrations reduced almost all of life in the West to the level of the tribesmen themselves, the two great regenerating ideals were the hope of building anew the glory that was once Rome, and the hope of making everything subject to the Lord of Glory. The one really high point, when these twin objectives were most nearly achieved, was during Charlemagne’s long, vigorous career centered around the year 800. As one recent scholar put it,

In the long sweep of European history, from the decline of the Roman Empire to the flowering of the Renaissance nearly a thousand years later, his [Charlemagne’s] is the sole commanding presence.

No wonder recent scholars call Charlemagne’s period the Carolingian Renaissance, and thus replace the concept of a single lengthy “dark ages” for a more precise perspective of a First Dark Ages early in this period, and a Second Dark Ages early in the next period, with a “Carolingian Renaissance” in between.

Unfortunately, the rebuilt empire (later to be called the Holy Roman Empire) was unable to find the ingredients of a Charlemagne in his successor; even more ominously, a new threat now posed itself externally. Charlemagne had been eager for his own peoples to be made Christian—the Germanic tribes. He offered wise, even spiritual leadership in many affairs, but did not throw his weight behind any kind of bold mission outreach to the Scandinavian peoples to the north. What missionary work was begun under his son was too little and too late. This fact contributed greatly to the undoing of the his empire.

Period III: Winning the Vikings, A.D. 800–1200

No sooner had the consolidation in Western Europe been accomplished under Charlemagne than a new menace appeared to peace and prosperity. This new menace—the Vikings—would create a second period of at least semi-darkness to last 250 years. These savages further north had not yet been effectively evangelized. While the tribal invaders of Rome, who created the First Dark Ages, were rough forest people, they were, for the most part, nominally Arian Christians. The Vikings, by contrast, were neither civilized nor even lightly Christian. There was another difference: the Vikings were men of the sea. This meant that key island sanctuaries for missionary training, like Iona, or like the offshore promontory of Lindisfarne (connected to the land only at low tide), were as vulnerable to attacking seafarers as they had been invulnerable to attackers from the land. In this new period both of these mission centers were sacked more than a dozen times, their occupants slaughtered or sold off as slaves. It seems unquestionable that the Christians of Charlemagne’s empire would have fared far better had the Vikings had at least the appreciation of the Christian faith that the earlier barbarians had when they overran Rome. The very opposite of the Visigoths and Vandals who spared the churches, the Vikings seemed attracted like magnets to the monastic centers of scholarship and Christian devotion. They took a special delight in burning churches, in putting human life to the sword right in the churches, and in selling monks into slavery. These depraved people even sold into North African slavery the raided daughters of nearby antagonistic Vikings. A contemporary’s words give us a graphic impression of their carnage in “Christian” Europe:

The Northmen cease not to slay and carry into captivity the Christian people, to destroy the churches and to burn the towns. Everywhere, there is nothing but dead bodies—clergy and laymen, nobles and common people, women and children. There is no road or place where the

ground is not covered with corpses. We live in distress and anguish before this spectacle of the destruction of the Christian people.²

No wonder the Anglican prayer book contains the prayer, “From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us.” Once more, when Christians did not reach out to them, pagan peoples came after what the Christians possessed. And once more, the phenomenal power of Christianity manifested itself: the conquerors became conquered by the faith of their captives. Usually it was the monks sold as slaves or Christian girls forced to be their wives and mistresses who eventually won these savages of the north. In God’s providence their redemption became more important than the harrowing tragedy of this new invasion of barbarian violence and evil which fell upon God’s own people whom He loved. After all, He spared not His own Son in order to redeem us! Thus, again, what Satan intended for evil, God used for good.

In the previous hundred years, Charlemagne’s scholars had carefully collected the manuscripts of the ancient world. Now the majority were to be burned by the Vikings. Only because so many copies had been made and scattered so widely did the fruits of the Charlemagnic literary revival survive at all. Once scholars and missionaries had streamed in peace from Ireland across England and onto the continent, and even out beyond the frontiers of Charlemagne’s empire. Under the brunt of these new violent invasions from the north, the Irish volcano which had poured forth a passionate fire of evangelism for three centuries cooled almost to extinction. Viking warriors, newly based in Ireland, followed the paths of the earlier Irish *peregrini* across England and onto the continent, but this time ploughing waste and destruction rather than new life and hope.

There were some blessings in this horrifying disguise. Alfred the Great, a tribal chieftain (“king”) of Wessex, successfully headed up guerrilla resistance and was equally concerned about spiritual as well as physical losses. As a measure of emergency, he gave up the ideal of maintaining the Latin tongue as a general pattern for worship and began a Christian library in the vernacular—the Anglo-Saxon. This was a decision of monumental importance which might have been delayed several centuries had the tragedy of the Vikings not provided the necessity which was the mother of this invention.

In any case, as Christopher Dawson puts it, the un-paralleled devastation of England and the Continent was “not a victory for paganism.” The Northmen who landed on the Continent under Rollo became the Christianized Normans, and the Danish who took over a huge section of middle England (along with invaders from Norway who planted their own kind in many other parts of England and Ireland) also were soon to become Christians. The gospel was too powerful. One result was that a new Christian culture spread back into Scandinavia. This stemmed largely from England from which came the first monastic communities and early missionary bishops. What England lost, Scandinavia gained.

It must also be admitted that the Vikings would not have been attracted either to the churches or to the monasteries had not those centers of Christian piety to a great extent succumbed to luxury. The switch from the Irish to the Benedictine pattern of monasticism was an improvement in many respects, but apparently allowed greater possibilities for the development of an unchristian opulence and glitter which attracted the greedy eyes of the Norsemen. Thus, another side-benefit of the new invasions was their indirect cleansing and refinement of the Christian movement. Even before the Vikings appeared, Benedict of Aniane inspired a rustle of reform here and there. By 910, at Cluny, a novel and significant step forward was begun. Among other changes, the authority over a monastic center was shifted away from local politics, and for the first time beyond anything previous whole networks of “daughter” houses arose which were related to a single, strongly spiritual “mother” house. The Cluny revival, moreover, produced a new reforming attitude toward society as a whole.

The greatest bishop in Rome in the first millennium, Gregory I, was the product of a Benedictine community. So also, early in the second millennium, Hildebrand was a product of the Cluny reform. His successors in reform were bolstered greatly by the Cistercian revival which

went even further. Working behind the scenes for many years for wholesale reform across the entire church, he finally became Pope Gregory VII for a relatively brief period. But his reforming zeal set the stage for Pope Innocent III, who wielded greater power (and all things considered, greater power for good) than any other Pope before or since. Gregory VII had made a decisive step toward wresting control of the church from secular power—this was the question of “lay investiture.” It was he who allowed Henry IV to wait for three days out in the snow at Canossa. Innocent III not only carried forward Gregory’s reforms, but had the distinction of being the Pope who authorized the first of a whole new series of mobile mission orders— the Friars.

Our First Period ended with a barely Christian Roman Empire and a somewhat Christian emperor—Constantine. Our second period ended with a reconstitution of that empire under a Christianized barbarian, Charlemagne, who was devoutly and vigorously Christian. Can you imagine an emperor who wore a monk’s habit? Our third period ends with a pope, Innocent III, as the strongest man in Europe, made strong by the Cluny, Cistercian and allied spiritual movements which together are called the Gregorian Reform. The scene was now an enlarged Europe in which no secular ruler could survive without at least tipping his hat to the leaders in the Christian movement. It was a period in which European Christians had not reached out in missions, but they had at least with phenomenal speed grafted in the entire northern area, and had also deepened the foundations of Christian scholarship and devotion passed on from the Europe of Charlemagne.

The next period would unfold some happy and unhappy surprises. Would Europe now take the initiative in reaching out with the Gospel? Would it sink in self-satisfaction? In some respects it would do both.

Period IV: Winning the Saracens? A.D.1200–1600

The fourth period began with a spectacular, new evangelistic instrument—the Friars—and after the disaster of the prolonged plague would end with the greatest, the most vital, and most disruptive reformation of all. However, the Christian movement had already been involved for a hundred years in the most massive and tragic misconstrual of Christian mission in all of history. Ironically, part of the “flourishing” of the faith toward the end of the previous period led to disaster: never before had any nation or group of nations in the name of Christ launched as energetic and sustained a campaign into foreign territory as did Europe in the tragic debacle of the Crusades. This was in part the carry-over of the Viking spirit into the Christian Church. All of the major Crusades were led by Viking descendants.

While the Crusades had many political overtones (they were often a unifying device for faltering rulers), they would not have happened without the vigorous but misguided sponsorship of Christian leaders. They were not only an unprecedented blood-letting to the Europeans themselves and a savage wound in the side of the Muslim peoples (a wound which is not healed to this day), but they were a fatal blow even to the cause of Greek/Latin Christian unity and to the cultural unity of eastern Europe. In the long run, though Western Christians held Jerusalem for a hundred years, the Crusaders by default eventually gave the Eastern Christians over to the Ottoman sultans. Far worse, they established a permanent image of brutal, militant Christianity that alienates a large proportion of mankind, tearing down the value of the very word *Christian* in missions to this day.

Ironically, the mission of the Crusaders would not have been so appallingly negative had it not involved so high a component of abject Christian commitment. The great lesson of the Crusades is that goodwill, even sacrificial obedience to God, is no substitute for a clear understanding of His will. Significant in this sorry movement was an authentically devout man, Bernard of Clairvaux, to whom are attributed the words of the hymn *Jesus the Very Thought of Thee*. He preached the first crusade. Two Franciscans, Francis of Assisi and Raymond Lull, stand out as the only ones in this period whose insight into God’s will led them to substitute for warfare

and violence the gentle words of the evangel as the proper means of extending the blessing God conferred on Abraham and had always intended for all of Abraham's children-of-faith.

At this point we must pause to reflect on this curious period. We may not succeed, but let us try to see things from God's point of view, treading with caution and tentativeness. We know, for example, that at the end of the First Period after three centuries of hardship and persecution, just when things were apparently going great, invaders appeared and chaos and catastrophe ensued. Why? That followed the period we have called the "Classical Renaissance." It was both good and not so good. Just when Christians were translating the Bible into Latin and waxing eloquent in theological debate, when Eusebius, as the government's official historian, was editing a massive collection of previous Christian writings, when heretics were thrown out of the empire (and became, however reluctantly, the only missionaries to the Goths), when Rome finally became officially Christian... then suddenly the curtain came down. Now, out of chaos God would bring a new cluster of people groups to be included in the "blessing," that is, to be confronted with the claims, privileges, and obligations of the expanding Kingdom of God.

Similarly, at the end of the Second Period, after three centuries of chaos during which the rampaging Gothic hordes were eventually Christianized, tamed and civilized, Bibles and biblical knowledge proliferated as never before. Major biblical-missionary centers were established by the Celtic Christians and their Anglo-Saxon pupils. In this Charlemagnic (actually "Carolingian") renaissance, thousands of public schools led by Christians attempted mass biblical and general literacy. Charlemagne dared even to attack the endemic use of alcohol. Great theologians tussled with theological/political issues, The Venerable Bede became the Eusebius of this period (indeed, when both Charlemagne and Bede were much more Christian than Constantine and Eusebius). And, once again, invaders appeared and chaos and catastrophe ensued. Why?

Strangely similar, then, is the third period. In its early part it only took two and a half centuries for the Vikings to capitulate to the "counterattack of the Gospel." The "renaissance" ensuing toward the end of this period was longer than a century and far more extensive than ever before. The Crusades, the cathedrals, the so-called Scholastic theologians, the universities, most importantly the blessed Friars, and even the early part of the Humanistic Renaissance make up this outsized 1050–1350 outburst of a Medieval Renaissance, or the "Twelfth Century Renaissance." But then suddenly a new invader appeared—the Black plague—more virulent than ever, and chaos and catastrophe greater than ever occurred. Why?

Was God dissatisfied with incomplete obedience? Or was Satan striking back each time in greater desperation? Were those with the blessing retaining it and not sufficiently and determinedly sharing it with the other nations of the world? More puzzling, the plague that killed one-third of the inhabitants of Europe killed a much higher proportion of the Franciscans: 120,000 were laid still in Germany alone. Surely God was not trying to judge their missionary fire. Was He trying to judge the Crusaders whose atrocities greatly out-weighed the Christian devotional elements in their movement? If so, why did He wait several hundred years to do that? Surely Satan, not God, inflicted Christian leadership in Europe so greatly. Would not Satan rather have that happen than for the Crusaders to die of the plague?

Perhaps it was that Europe did not sufficiently listen to the saintly Friars; that it was not the Friars that went wrong, but the hearers who did not respond. God's judgment upon Europe then might have been to take the Gospel away from them, to take away the Friars and their message. Even though to us it seems like it was a judgment upon the messengers rather than upon the resistant hearers, is this not one impression that could be received from the New Testament as well? Jesus Himself came unto His own, and His own received Him not, yet Jesus rather than the resisting people went to the cross. Perhaps Satan's evil intent—of removing the messenger—God employed as a judgment against those who chose not to hear.

In any case, the invasion of the Bubonic plague, first in 1346 and every so often during the next decade, brought a greater setback than the Gothic, the Anglo-Saxon or the Viking invasions. It first devastated parts of Italy and Spain, then spread west and north to France,

England, Holland, Germany and Scandinavia. By the time it had run its course 40 years later, one third to one half of the population of Europe was dead. Especially stricken were the Friars and the truly spiritual leaders. They were the ones who stayed behind to tend the sick and to bury the dead. Europe was absolutely in ruins. The result? There were three rival Popes at one point, the humanist elements turned menacingly humanistic, peasant turmoil (often based in justice and even justified by the Bible itself) turned into orgies and excesses of violence. “The god of this world” must have been glad, but out of all that death, poverty, confusion and lengthy travail, God birthed a new reform greater than anything before it.

Once more, at the end of one of our periods, a great flourishing took place. Printing came to the fore, Europeans finally escaped from their geographical cul de sac and sent ships for commerce, subjugation, and spiritual blessing to the very ends of the earth. And as a part of the reform, the Protestant Reformation now loomed on the horizon: that great, seemingly permanent, cultural decentralization of Europe.

Protestants often think of the Reformation as a legitimate reaction against the evils of a monstrous Christian bureaucracy sunken in decadence and corruption. But it must be admitted that this reformation was much more than that. This great decentralization of Christendom was in many respects the result of an increasing vitality which—although this is unknown to most Protestants—was just as evident in Italy, Spain and France as in Moravia, Germany, and England. Everywhere we see a return to a study of the Bible and the appearance of new life and evangelical preaching. The Gospel encouraged believers to be German, not merely permitted Germans to be Roman Christians. Nevertheless, that marvelous insight was one of the products of a renewal already in progress. (Luther produced not the *first* but the *fourteenth* translation of the Bible into German.) Unfortunately, the marvelous emphasis on justification by faith—which was preached as much in Italy and Spain as in Germany at the time Luther loomed into view—became identified and ensnared with German nationalistic (separatist) hopes and was thus, understandably, suppressed as a dangerous doctrine by political powers in Southern Europe.

It is merely a typical Protestant misunderstanding that there was not as much a revival of deeper life, Bible study and prayer in Southern Europe as in Northern Europe at the time of the Reformation. The issue may have appeared to the Protestants as faith vs. law, or to the Romans as unity vs. division, but such popular scales are askew because it was much more a case of over-reaching Latin uniformity vs. national and indigenous diversity. The vernacular had to eventually conquer.

While Paul had not demanded that the Greeks become Jews, nevertheless the Germans had been obliged to become Roman. The Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians had at least been allowed their vernacular to an extent unknown in Christian Germany. Germany was where the revolt then reasonably took place. Italy, France, and Spain, which were formerly part of the Roman Empire and extensively assimilated culturally in that direction, had no equivalent nationalistic steam behind their reforming movements and thus became almost irrelevant in the political polarity of the scuffle that ensued.

However—here we go again—despite the fact that the Protestants won on the political front, and to a great extent gained the power to formulate anew their own Christian tradition and certainly thought they took the Bible seriously, they did not even talk of mission outreach. Rather, the period ended with *Roman* Europe expanding both politically and religiously on the seven seas. Thus, entirely unshared by Protestants for at least two centuries, the Catholic variety of Christianity actively promoted and accompanied a worldwide movement of scope unprecedented in the annals of mankind, one in which there was greater Christian missionary awareness than ever before. But, having lost non-Roman Europe by insisting on its Mediterranean culture, the Catholic tradition would now try to win the rest of the world without fully understanding what had just happened.

But why did the Protestants not even try to reach out? Catholic missionaries for two hundred years preceded Protestant missionaries. Some scholars point to the fact that the

Protestants did not have a global network of colonial outreach. Well, the Dutch Protestants did. And, their ships, unlike those from Catholic countries, carried no missionaries. This is why the Japanese—once they began to fear the Christian movement Catholic missionaries planted—would allow only Dutch ships into their ports. Indeed, the Dutch even cheered and assisted the Japanese in the slaughter of the budding Christian (Catholic) community.

Period V: To the Ends of the Earth, A.D. 1600–2000

The period from 1600 to 2000 began with European footholds in the rest of the world. Apart from taking over what was relatively an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of the rest of the non-Western world. By 1945, Europeans had achieved virtual control over 99.5% of the non-Western world. This would not last. The peoples inhabiting the colonial empires had grown significantly in knowledge and initiative, just as the Goths had grown strong outside the bounds of the Roman empire. The Second World War mightily distracted the Western nations from their colonial hold on the rest of the world. That did it. Nationalism exploded.

Twenty-five years later, the Western nations had lost control over all but 5% of the non-Western population of the world. This 1945–1969 period of the sudden collapse of Western control, coupled with the unexpected upsurge of significance of the Christian movement in the non-Western world, I have elsewhere called “the twenty-five unbelievable years.” If we compare this period to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire’s domination over its conquered provinces of Spain, Gaul and Britain, and to the breakdown of control over non-Frankish Europe under Charlemagne’s successors, we might anticipate—at least by the logic of sheer parallelism—that the Western world itself will soon be significantly dominated by non-Westerners.

With some reason, ever since the collapse of Western power became obvious (during “the twenty-five unbelievable years”), there have been many who have decried the thought of any further missionary effort moving from the West to the non-Western world. Perhaps they have confused the inappropriateness of political control with a need to cut ties of faith in any further foreign missions.

The true situation is actually very different. In fact, the absence of political control for the first time in many areas has now begun to allow non-Western populations to yield to the Kingdom of Christ without simultaneously yielding to the political kingdoms of the Western world. Here we see a parallel to the Frankish tribal people accepting the faith of Rome only after Rome had lost its military power. This new openness to Catholic Christianity continued among the Anglo-Saxons, Germans and Scandinavians up until the time when the emergence of strong papal authority, mixed with power politics, became a threat to legitimate national ambitions, and led to a Reformation which allowed nationalized forms of Christianity to break away.

The present spectacle of a Western world flaunting the standards of Christian morality in more obvious ways than ever may dissuade non-Christian nations from embracing the Christian faith; but it may also tend to disassociate the treasure of Christian ideals from a Western world which has, until this age, been their most prominent sponsor. When Asians accuse Western nations of immorality in warfare, they are appealing to Christian values, certainly not the values of any nation’s pagan past. In this sense, Christianity has already conquered the world. No longer, for example, is the long-standing Chinese tradition of ingenious torture likely to be boasted about in China nor highly respected anywhere else, at least in public circles.

But this worldwide transformation has not come about suddenly. Even the present, minimal attainment of world-wide Christian morality on a tenuous public level has been accomplished only at the cost of a great amount of sacrificial missionary endeavor (during the four centuries of Period Five), missionary labors which have been mightier and more deliberate than at any time in 2,000 years. The first half (1600–1800) of this fifth period was almost

exclusively a Roman show. By the year 1800 it was painfully embarrassing to Protestants to hear Roman missionaries writing off the Protestant movement as apostate simply because it was not sending missionaries. But by that same year, Roman missionary effort had been forced into sudden decline due to the curtailment of the Jesuits, and the combined effect of the French Revolution and ensuing chaos which then cut the European economic roots of Catholic missions.

However, the year 1800 marks the awakening of the Protestants from two-and-a-half centuries of inactivity, if not theological slumber, in regard to missionary outreach across the world. The 1800 to 2000 year period is treated in the chapter “Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions.” During this final period, for the first time, Protestants equipped themselves with organizational structures of mission comparable to the Catholic orders and began to make up for lost time. Unheralded, unnoticed, and all but forgotten in our day except for ill-informed criticism, Protestant missionary efforts in this period, more than Catholic missions, led the way in establishing throughout the world the democratic apparatus of government, the schools, the hospitals, the universities and the political foundations of the new nations. Rightly understood, Protestant missionaries, along with their Roman Catholic counterparts, are surely not less than the prime movers of the tremendous energy that is mushrooming in the Third World today. Take China, for example. Two of its greatest modern leaders, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, were both Christians. Teng Hsiao-P’ing’s “Four Modernizations” were principal emphases of the Western mission movement in China. Missions had planted a university in every province of China, etc.

But, if the Western home base is now to falter and to fail as the tide is reversed through the rising power of its partially evangelized periphery (as is the pattern in the earlier periods), we can only refer to Dawson’s comment on the devastation wrought by the Vikings—that this will not be a “victory for paganism.”

The fall of the West will, in that case, be due in part to a decay of spirit. It will also be due to the pagan power in the non-Western world emboldened and strengthened by its first contact with Christian faith. It may come as a most drastic punishment to a Western world that has always spent more on cosmetics than it has on foreign missions—and lately ten times as much.

From a secular or even nationalistic point of view, the next years may be a very dark period for the Western world. The normal hopes and aspirations of Christian people for their own country may find only a very slight basis for optimism. But if the past is any guide at all, even this will have to be darkness before the dawn. The entire Western world in its present political form may be radically altered. We may not even be sure about the survival of our own country. But we have every reason to suppose from past experience that the Christian, biblical faith will clearly survive in one form or another.

We can readily calculate that during the 20th century, Westerners dropped from 18% to 8% of the world population. But we cannot ultimately be pessimistic. Beyond the agony of Rome was the winning of the Barbarians. Beyond the agony of the Barbarians was the winning of the Vikings. Beyond the agony of the Western world we can only pray that there will be the defeat of Satan’s power holding millions of people hostage in thousands of peoples—peoples which have too long “sat in darkness” and who “shall see a great light” (Matt 4:16). And we can know that there is no basis in the past or in the present for assuming that things are out of the control of the Living God.

If we in the West insist on keeping our blessing instead of sharing it, then we will, like other nations before us, have to lose our blessing for the remaining nations to receive it. God has not changed His plan in the last 4,000 years. But how much better not to focus on how to retain but to strive intentionally to extend that marvelous “blessing”! That way “in you and in your descendants all of the peoples of the world will be blessed.” This is the only way we can continue in God’s blessing. The expanding Kingdom is not going to stop with us (although it may leave us behind). “This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all

peoples, and then shall the end come” (Matt 24:14). God can raise up others if we falter. Indeed, the rest of this book indicates that is already happening.

Origins, Evil, and Mission

(2001) *Frontiers in Mission*, 195-234

(*This is a group of articles*)

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A Larger Worldview?

Missiology Hour USCWM, Tuesday, October 20, 2001

(*Frontiers in Mission*, 197-99)

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

The concept of a *worldview* ranges from the very comprehensive to the fairly narrow, from ideas about the origin of the entire universe to merely the complex of cultural norms which seem to urge children to do things differently from mainstream society.

There are limits also to what I will fly here as a trial balloon. I don't have any interest at the moment in the idea that the universe once sprang from a tiny speck of concentrated matter. I would rather concentrate merely on a worldview which would explain at least hypothetically the origin and development of life on this planet from the simplest and earliest forms of life to the most complex, whether large or small. (Complexity and size do not seem to be related. For example, the eyes of a housefly are said to be much more complex than the eyes of human beings.)

Furthermore, I would like for the moment to try to avoid "accepted" religious terminology about a supreme being. The current English word God derives from the forests of northern Europe not from the Bible. It might be possible to proceed here with this exercise without using any traditional religious terms. Concepts yes. Terms no.

I will not limit myself by the need to talk only of the proven existence of this or that. Although I am unaware of anything which could be called an infallible proof of the Big Bang origin of the universe the concept is talked about freely. So it is with the so-called "Record of the Rocks." I am aware of various ways of interpreting that evidence. However, for this experiment in worldview I will address those who accept it at face-value. I will not try to validate it. At the same time, I don't feel it necessary or helpful to yield to a blanket assumption that there are not or cannot be intelligent beings other than the forms of life seen on earth, nor that such beings cannot be more than spectators of what goes on.

Also, I do not feel obligated to assign any special meaning to the two words *evolution* and *creation*, both of which are widely used quite casually with a vast range of differing definitions. I, thus, have no trouble calling the 20th Century development of the automobile either the "*evolution* of the automobile or the *creation* of the automobile," since neither phrase in itself requires or excludes a Darwinian mechanism of selection—

even though it would be preposterous to propose that the development of the automobile came about without intelligent guidance at every point.

Evolution can imply, for at least some people, many different things. *Creation* can imply instant original creation, sporadic intervention, or continuous or “progressive” creation. However, since both terms are often heavily loaded, I would prefer simply to speak of *development*.

Finally, I don’t wish to be bothered by a distinction between a *natural* explanation and a *theological* explanation. Even Darwin was thinking theologically, apparently, when he felt moved to protect the idea of a good God by postulating a purely automatic hands-off process of evolution to account for the evil in nature:

There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the [parasitic wasp] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that the cat should play with mice (Darwin, 1860).

I would prefer to be as free (as Darwin seemed to be) to live with the idea of an intelligent supreme being existing outside of the sphere of life on earth. That seems to me to be as intelligent an assumption as, for example, the seemingly arbitrary insistence on there being no such a thing.

With these terminological qualifications behind us, then let us speculate with as much evidence as possible and be willing to go beyond present evidence where it seems necessary.

Thus, we begin with a roughly five-billion-year-old planet and a roughly four-billion-year record of life. Two things are curious about this record (in case it happened that way!).

1. The “Delay” in the Development of Life

First, there is the apparent evidence that multi-celled or even single-celled life appeared quite late in the story. Perhaps, however, that seems strange to us only because our common knowledge understands so very little of the unimaginable complexity of the so-called “simpler forms of life.” If we draw a parallel here between the development of life and the development of the automobile several things pop out.

Practically every component of the early automobiles was originally developed with something else in mind. Indeed, the history of the automobile is relatively short compared to the previous long period in the development of understanding of things like the electromotive force essential for spark plugs to work. In current evolutionary terminology the Model T evolved by “co-opting” things made for something else. Nevertheless, such previous creations and the novel arrangement and adaptation of them in the Model T demanded a great many intelligent workers for many years.

It might also be postulated that just as thousands of intelligent engineers and workers were necessary in the development of the automobile, so thousands of non-human beings have been involved in the development of life, and that these intelligent beings could learn as they went, and that a superior being was pleased with their learning progress.

2. The Sudden Emergence of Violence

Second, and even more fascinating, we are told that for almost three and a half billion years the development of increasingly complex forms of life went on in the absence of predatory or life-destroying forms of life (Fortey 1997, xx). The earlier *absence* of predatory forms of life is not the surprising thing--if we postulate a good superior being with loyal workers doing his bidding. But the fact that suddenly in this conjectured record there appeared incredible predation and violence is a huge puzzle unless we recognize that rebellion and opposition to original intent must have come into the process at that precise point (3.5 billion years along in the process, and at about 500 million years ago).

That is, it would seem to be reasonable to postulate that after the Cambrian extinction event, and after lengthy familiarity with the entire DNA process, a new, profoundly antagonistic non-human being (along with many knowledgeable and skilled workers) apparently set to work to undo, to distort, and to destroy all that they had earlier assisted into being.

Overnight, so to speak, every form of life at every level of complexity was either transformed into viciousness or left as prey or both, all the way from the size of bacteria to that of large animals. New species in vast profusion ("the Cambrian explosion") also appeared. Those workers that did not rebel had now evidently to develop forms of life with defenses. Crustaceans now first appear, and animals with defensive spines, like porcupines, etc. Immune systems were apparently developed since they would not have been necessary had not attacking pathogens appeared.

But life went on, and a variety of new species were being constantly developed, some workers employing their intelligence for good, others for distortion and destruction. The inherent beauty and complexity of much of life would continue to be evident, but the novel new element would be the additional presence of absolutely pervasive and destructive evil. It is said that two-thirds of all life forms now in existence are parasitic. The destructive forces could even tinker with DNA to transform a lion that would lie down with a lamb into a highly destructive, but still beautiful beast.

Major asteroidal collisions continued, each time much of life was extinguished, with enormous coal deposits resulting from huge amounts of vegetation being suddenly killed off, and parallel oil deposits resulting from massive amounts of animal life suddenly being engulfed. It would appear that only one out of a thousand different species appearing in earlier times exists today.

The most recent major collision of an asteroid is reported to be 60 million years ago and is widely believed now to be the cause of the demise of the dinosaur era. If you can imagine a Super Being having control over asteroids, you can well imagine that the grim and savage violence that characterized the dinosaur era was cut short for that very reason.

Coming closer to the present, hominids appear in the record as long as several million years ago, and manlike creatures such as the Neanderthals very much more recently like 60 thousand years ago, but DNA studies now indicate that the Neanderthals were neither human nor an antecedent of *homo sapiens*.

What seems quite possible is that a smaller asteroid collided with the earth about 10 thousand years ago, and that the events of Genesis record the immediate results as well as what followed as various forms of life appeared and, specifically, *homo sapiens*.

The immediate result of such a collision would have been formlessness and darkness (due to the immense dust clouds hurled into the air from the impact). Gradually the dust would settle and it would eventually be possible to tell the day from the night but not to see the sun itself. Finally the dust canopy would thin to the point that the sun and the moon would appear as visible bodies (and actual rays of light would enable rainbows). Meanwhile various kinds of animals would be redeveloped.

This could have been when a brand new and radically different form of life appeared, *homo sapiens*, but only in a unique garden spot intended to enable a new counterthrust to the previous 500 million years of rampant evil and destruction. Genesis 1:1-2 actually permits this interpretation, namely “When God began His work of rehabilitation He had to deal with a battered, formless and darkened earth ...” Note the text in the NRSV for Genesis 1:1, which is in the margins of other translations. As C. S. Lewis puts it:

It seems to me ... a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on ...planet Earth, before ever man came on the scene ... If there is such a power, as I myself believe, it may well have corrupted the animal creation before man appeared (Lewis 1940, 87).

But no sooner did this Eden experiment begin than the non-human Evil Being appeared—“some mighty created power”—and, having a 500 million year “crime record” behind him, ever since his own rebellion, seduced this new human couple, thus reintroducing violence into the picture, such as fratricide between their own children. Things became so bad that it would not have been unreasonable for the good Supreme Being to arrange a flood that would destroy perverted humanity, and that following this flood, the dust canopy would be completely gone, actual rays of light finally appearing, permitting a rainbow for the first time since that particular asteroidal collision.

Here is where in Genesis the Bible may begin its story: the redevelopment and “replenishing” of things after the most recent asteroidal impact, after the early failure of the Edenic experiment. Thus, the compromised result immersed the unique, new form of life, humans, now already in significant rebellion, into the rest of the planet which had been undergoing plundering and distortion for 500 million years.

Out of all this coldness and chaos, this darkness and hopeless evil, one man is now selected and commissioned in a fight-back plan which was intended to expand the beachhead of those who are a special part of the family of the good Supreme Being. In Genesis 12 a “covenant” is introduced which becomes the theme of the entire remainder of the Bible.

Empire after empire appeared and collapsed. The Sumerian was in decline at the time Abraham departed. The Old Babylonian empire came next, then the Assyrian, the New Babylonian, the much more high-minded Persian next, with its Zoroastrian and Hebrew sub-populations, then finally the Roman Empire, harsh and cruel yet ruled by law and considerably more impartial in its justice (eventually even conceding special recognition to the Jewish nation within its boundaries). There was the astounding flash-in-the-pan of the Alexandrian extension of what was to be mainly inherited by the Roman sphere. In Alexander’s Greek language very wisely and carefully selected Hebrew scriptures found an unprecedented voice and acceptance. Here was the first major crosscultural impact of the Abrahamic plan. From this Greek document (called the Septuagint) translations were then made into many other languages. The Hebrew

originals were not brought together for an additional 800 years). Eventually, after another 700 years, the Hebrew came into its own mainly due to the breakaway movement of the Germans, when Luther chose to work from the Hebrew in order to avoid both the Greek and the Latin scriptures, whose interpretations had already been set in concrete by the Orthodox and Catholic traditions, respectively.

However, all of this is simply a quick synopsis of the backdrop of the current ongoing and all-out conflict between warring powers as seen in every aspect of life on earth. Since Abraham the gradually increasing insight of humans into the nature of nature has enabled the incrementally accelerated reconquest of evil which the Abrahamic Covenant set in motion.

Curiously, the most basic evidence of the waning of the influence of the non-human, angelic Evil Being is the gradual net increase in population. For much of the earlier part of the human story the destructive perversions of “war and pestilence” held population growth virtually to a standstill. By 2002, however, it was estimated that victims of war on a global level were only one-fourth the number of people killed in traffic accidents.

It was not always so. It is estimated that world population was roughly 28 million in Abraham’s day. Had it increased at the present rate from that point on it would have reached six billion only 321 years later. However, the fact that world population only reached about 200 million (not six billion) in the next two thousand years (not 321 years), betrays the ghastly toll of war and pestilence in the unfolding drama of human history.

Or, for example, when the Roman legions withdrew from British soil early in the fifth century (in order to go and protect the city of Rome from Gothic invaders), the one million population of the British Isles failed to increase in the slightest for the next six centuries. Why? War and pestilence.

The Christian faith had brought a certain amount of order to Britain, but it was not until 1066 that local warfare and the unremitting Viking invasions markedly diminished and the overall population began to creep up. Creep, I say, because nearly constant pestilence was still a major factor. When Napoleon marched toward Russia with a huge army of 600,000 he had no idea that pestilence alone would be the major factor in his return with less than one out of twenty of his men.

In Luther’s day life expectancy averaged 25 years. But, in Germany today it is almost three times that.

Meanwhile, however, new and more virulent forms of age-old pathogens continue to be invented before our eyes. We tend to think that the times of great plagues are now history, yet if you stop and think about the number of Americans who are cut down prematurely by cancer and heart disease alone, you confront the very definition of a major plague, and the actual proportion of our population affected is clearly higher than in the case of a medieval plague.

At about the time my wife was in the City of Hope’s Intensive Care Unit with a minor infection (causing special difficulties due to her simultaneous cancer) and was rendered totally hopeless by contracting the dread “Hospital Sepsis,” another Lake Avenue couple, the husband perfectly healthy, going in for merely a prostate biopsy, also contracted the same disease and died in 17 hours. “Hospital sepsis” has increased ten-fold in ten years.

Now that we are nearing what is perhaps the end of time, we can more clearly discern the existence of a basic struggle between darkness and light. The war between the dominion of an evil power and the existence of a good Supreme Being is more evident than ever, even though in public forums such beings are less talked of than ever. This huge gap between the reality of this pervasive struggle and the awareness thereof by contemporary man provides us with the arena in which our mission must take place.

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Theologizing the Microbiological World: Implications for Mission

(2001) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 202ff)

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“For half a millennium the engine driving our society has been science. Sure, politics and philosophy, religious insight and artistic expression have helped out in their way, but even the efficacy of those things has had its pace measured and set by hard knowledge, *our burgeoning comprehension of our material universe*; it’s no accident that the dethroning of kings and cardinals followed the dethroning of the Earth from the center of the sky” (Italics added). So says a science writer in the *LA Times* last Sunday, and so much for the post-modern inclination to pooh pooh the accumulation of concrete scientific insights.

However, whether well understood or not, it is difficult to deny the fact that at no time in the history of science, or in the history of the world for that matter, has there ever been anything remotely comparable to the incredible explosion of scientific knowledge in the past twenty years. The massive, global involvement in the study of *what God made, called science*, is an activity far more elaborate and inherently awe-inspiring than the study of the works of man, which is called art.

In the process of this enormous pursuit of the work of what obviously must be an intelligent Creator, one might expect breakdowns of relationship between researchers representing the various global cultural traditions. To some extent that has been true, but even this has not been able to throttle the immense, now global, “gold rush” in many scientific fields ranging from 1) the zealous examination of outer space to 2) the exploration of the enormous land mass under Antarctica (which happens to be twice the size of the 48 States)—explorations performed by magnetic resonance through an ice layer three miles deep.

In any case, nothing, absolutely no probe of scientific inquiry, has suddenly opened a door into so vast, and totally undreamed-of a new world as the historically recent penetration of the cell. There, in this newly revealed microscopic universe, are mysteries that have infinitely more to do with our future, our mission and our theology than any new insight into the cosmos—the panoply of stars—where we are mere observers, not intimate participants who are crucially affected by the conclusions of the astronomers and cosmologists.

On the other hand, our theologies, that is, *our formalized ways of attempting to think Biblically*, were hammered out during centuries that were totally blind to the microscopic world. As a result, to this day our religious impulses and purposes, neither our hymns nor our theologies, yet throb with any of the new insights in this huge new sphere, even though the everyday existence of all life is intimately tuned and doomed by these tiny forces. Rather, in place of that new knowledge we have until recently been ignorantly offering a vast range of pseudo explanations which still rule our thinking in many ways.

Six Enigmas

In fact, the whole of this new reality is laced by several enigmas which are puzzling, debilitating, and ominous. I will take them up one by one.

1. *Anthropomorphisms in science writings.* Curiously, scientific writers, in contrast to their formal and official anti-supernatural bias, often unconsciously describe viruses, bacteria, or parasites with words such as *ingenious*, *clever*, or *malicious*. I have not seen the word *intelligent*, but you frequently encounter these anthropomorphisms in scientific writings dealing with the extravagant wilderness of the destructive forms of life. This fact would seem to give unintended insight into the intuitive appreciation these specialists have, even if not admitted, for the apparent intelligence and ingenuity underlying the vast array of disease pathogens.

Evangelicals have recently stressed the inevitable *intelligence* and *design* in nature, but they have not, to my knowledge, attempted to suggest that there is evidence of any evil intelligence and design. This is perhaps due to a theological tradition which does not understand demonic powers to have the ability to distort DNA. Our Evangelical theological tradition is so old that it also would not conceive of good angels working at the DNA level. In other words, we have no explicit theology for intentional modification of either good or bad bacteria. However, the evidence of anthropomorphisms in science writings clearly implies the presence of intelligence at that level.

2. *The concept of inappropriate prayer.* This is seldom discussed in Evangelical circles. As a result, we fail frequently to distinguish between what part God wants us to play and what part only He can play. Confusion in this area is clearly in Satan's favor. He is glad when he can get us to ask God to do something God expects us to do.

This has come about since it is only natural for man to pray when there would seem to be nothing more he can do. But massive changes have occurred since the time little or nothing was known about the causes of disease. Now, amidst the wealth of new knowledge we cannot logically go on merely praying when a whole array of options to act are before us.

3. *Erroneous perspectives about disease origins.* Let us ponder the settled and accepted, but incorrect, explanations for the causes of disease which mysteriously live on quite durably. This is a major factor in retarding the progress of overcoming the march of disease pathogens. For example, how easily can a half century of increasingly successful heart by-pass, heart-replacement surgery and mechanical replacement pumps yield to the new awareness of the basic role of infection in heart disease? That is, the assumption that many of the related characteristics or *symptoms* of heart disease are also *causes* of heart disease postpones the effort to isolate the prime causal infection that destroys the heart muscle even where there are no conventional symptoms. This is like the finally outmoded theories that dampness causes tuberculosis, that a chill creates a cold infection, or that stress causes ulcers. And especially when an opposing *intelligence* may be involved it is like carefully washing the decks of a ship thinking this will prevent a submarine attack.

4. *Unusual accidents of insight.* There is a very surprising and extensive factor of serendipity in the conquest of disease. This can be seen again and again. Four times in the 35-year saga of Judah Folkman's so-called "War Against Cancer" beneficial things occurred that were apparently total accidents. This may be a fascinating clue to the way and the wind of the Holy Spirit. Pasteur's famous statement that discoveries in the lab favor the prepared mind do not by any means fully explain the prominent role of

serendipity in medical research. God would seem to be on the side of those who pursue the origins of disease.

5. *Unseemly opposition.* Equally surprising and harmful are the many factors of opposition to such discovery. The whole process of research is constantly enshrouded with the fog of political factors, commercial factors, personal factors, and technical factors, in addition to the major setbacks caused by the vast social turmoil of wars large and small and the role of pestilence itself. It has been said that the Second World War was the first war in history during which there was not far greater loss of life due to disease than the brutality of the war itself. That is, many are killed, but many more are injured, and the injured in the past have usually then died of disease complications. These various obstacles to foundational research are so great that often fundamental improvements in insight would logically seem to be the very last thing that could happen.

Consider one of these dimensions alone: the commercial factors. Commerce is extensively driven by what makes money. Billions of dollars are harvested annually by companies which sell products that don't really work, while billions are not spent to prove the value of things that may be commonly reported to work. Take heart disease alone, and only in the USA. It costs our people \$300 billion per year. That's \$34 million per hour, or \$570,000 per minute.

6. *Massive imbalance in funding.* Unfortunately most nutritional supplements fall into the category of what does not really work, or that which does not work as well as a judicious choice of foods. One report is that 75% of the food supplements you buy don't even contain the assumed active ingredients, and for that matter, the same unreliability factor is true for pharmaceuticals in many other parts of the world.

But more stubborn still is the simple fact that funds are not readily generated in a commercial situation, whenever substantial sales income is not available for something that is either too inexpensive to sell or cannot be patented. Thus, anything too inexpensive to produce, with a low potential sales income, can never expect to be the subject of serious testing to prove if it works. Commercial dynamics are in our favor only when the service being purchased can cover the cost of that service.

For example, no commercial firm will ever run an FDA test on selenium as a cancer suppressant. Why? Because it would be too inexpensive to sell later for a compensatory profit. FDA approval once cost about \$1 million. Now it is well over \$300 million. This bars all inexpensive substances from substantiation!

Nevertheless forces other than a promise of commercial gain either are or ought to be available. Smallpox would have never been defeated had it been up to commercial processes. The early efforts of a small but highly opposed group of clergymen in New England were not carried forward until 200 years later by the UN. Thus, much of the world's ills cannot be resolved by commercial dynamics. Jimmy Carter's Carter Center led the way in confronting the growing list of diseases which *we know how to eradicate but haven't taken the trouble to eradicate*. The William Gates foundation has picked up on that lead, and is funding some work. But the entire global summation of all non-commercial efforts is only a teaspoon compared to the amount of cash paid out by people in the Western world after they get sick.

Thus, it is not as though everyone is working together to understand the nature of disease. Either 99-to-one, or more likely (as with cancer) 999-to-one, is the ratio of the financial outlay for curative services—where people who are already by disease pay for

help—compared to the relatively tiny resources focused on the roots of the problem, the very nature of disease.

Again, this is like spending so much energy repairing ships damaged by torpedoes that we do not take time to perfect the sonar equipment necessary to detect and destroy the submarines that are sending the torpedoes.

Is There a Conclusion?

At this point it is time to ask the question why it is that the mounting muscle of the very considerable movement of all those globally who are moved by Jesus Christ has not weighed in either theologically or practically in the area of working to correct distortions of nature and of God's will *by going to the roots of the problem*. In a way this is the most ominous fact of all.

I know of no theological tradition, no denomination, no Christian school—or hospital for that matter—that has seriously accepted the roots of the challenge of the enormous and continuing and growing factor of disease in this world of ours.

Meanwhile constantly both believers and nonbelievers are stumbling about wondering over the amount, the harshness, and the unpredictability of evil in our world. Indeed, the credibility of an all-powerful and loving God is constantly being called into question by people who are no longer content to suppose “that God has His reasons.” We may indeed not know all His reasons. But do we have *reasons* for our inaction? Really, has He asked us not to eradicate disease pathogens but to let them alone? Do we, like Orthodox Jews expect Gentiles to turn the lights on for us? To expect secular powers to be concerned but not our own college young people? Do those college students have to leave the Christian community in order to work against disease? Does God intend for us to protect these “ingenious” disease pathogens along with all the rest of “the good earth”? Fundamentalist Sikhs would say yes. Evangelical Christians are saying yes by their apparent deafness to this simple question.

The patterns of our actual, functional theology are thus observable in our common language when we hear people say, “*God took my wife, my granddaughter, etc.*” Or when we wonder “Why did God allow THAT to happen?” when in fact the only really logical question is, Why did God allow Satan to exist? Once Satan is in the picture (if we believe he is) no amount or kind of harsh or heartless evil should be unexpected in any quarter. But apparently *Satan really isn't any kind of a major factor in our normal perspective*. This absence of awareness of Satan happens to be exactly what would be the case if pastor Gordon Kirk's statement were true that “Satan's greatest achievement is to cover his tracks.”

We may not be seriously disturbed by such theological talk. Yet certain obvious conclusions at least logically push their way forward should such a statement be true—namely, that Satan is doing far more than we are aware of.

One conclusion might be to recognize that our understanding of our mission under God has been truncated down to a certain limited sphere, in spite of God's earnest desire to enlist our efforts on a wider front.

Another conclusion is the reverse, that we need to recognize and ponder more seriously the kind and degree of harm Satan is able to cause. We need to unmask the works of Satan and not go on thinking that he, as a spirit being, cannot be held responsible for causing any intelligent damage to our DNA codes, our genetic distortions

being labeled “defects” instead of “intelligent distortions.” Granted that our forefathers who were the caretakers and creators of our theology were unaware of the microscopic world and its myriad evidences of Satanic distortion, cannot we now in the much clearer light of dawn come to more extensive theological thinking that allows us to notice, to applaud, and even to join in with those limited and scattered efforts across the world to fight back (along with the good angels constantly enhancing our bodily immune systems) to counteract the truly monstrous head start Satan already has in this troubled world of ours?

To destroy the works of the devil is one major way in which our testimony of word and deed can glorify the true nature of our living God, our heavenly father. It is not an alternative to evangelism, it will make our evangelism more credible. It is to rectify our God’s damaged reputation. It is to avoid extending the implicit and embarrassing policy of almost constantly misrepresenting Him in our mission work around the world. Attacking the roots of disease is part and parcel of our basic mandate to glorify God in all the earth.

To that end I raise, once more, the proposal for the establishment of an Institute for the Study of the Origins of Disease. If the cold reception of earlier efforts to move in this direction are any prediction of the future we cannot expect wide acclaim, at least not from the formal Evangelical tradition. Like Paul, like Jimmy Carter, we may be forced “to go to the Gentiles” for a warm reception. Some will scoff. Some will believe.

Theologizing Prehistory: Implications for Mission

(2001) (Foundations Reader, 323-28)

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We talk casually about the Copernican Revolution, which was basically a massive and arresting readjustment of understanding about the nature of the universe. Somewhere in Europe Copernicus proposed a major new understanding which rearranged the position of known celestial objects, as though rearranging the furniture in one corner of a vast room such that we who were in that corner could see the larger room.

A second Copernican Revolution, if you will, took place when Hubble employed the latest telescope to explode the size of that already larger Copernican room by proposing that all those little lights out there in the sky were actually enormous universes of their own.

More recently, still more Copernican Revolutions have continued to take place as our cosmologists puzzle their way more deeply almost daily into increased complexities and unfathomed mysteries of an ever-larger phenomenon.

We are less likely to speak of the Keplerian Revolution, which, in developing the *mathematical* description of planetary motion, was basically an astounding leap forward in awareness of the orderliness of nature. No one had ever captured nature's laws in mathematical equations. Soon after, the revolutionary thinking embodied in the Newtonian breakthrough added details to Kepler's already orderly nature.

Standing upon Newton's additional insights godly men such as Faraday dramatically furthered our awareness not only of the very existence of "laws" of nature but of the astonishing ways in which a knowledge of those laws could be harnessed for human use. He was in one sense not only a scientist but an engineer, not only penetrating some of the mysterious phenomena we call magnetism and electricity but coming up with—among many other things—the electric motor and its reverse, the electric generator.

On the heels of these excitements and rearrangements of our thinking about nature a doorway then opened into a new dimension of complexity, a tiny world totally invisible to the naked eye. In many respects all of the earlier breakthroughs of additional human apprehension of nature have been almost totally eclipsed by the historically recent further awareness of the seemingly unending complexities at the small end of the scale.

This new dimension of reality includes not only the imponderables of the molecular and yet inert realities, but the infinitely more complex phenomenon of life itself, DNA, viruses, bacteria, cells, and parasites.

This new dimension of reality has been every bit as Copernican in its demands for intellectual rearrangement. The somewhat simplistic Darwinian scheme of ever more complex forms of life has been forced to give way to the awareness that neither largeness nor lateness in history necessarily coordinate with complexity. The housefly has eyes that are incredibly more elaborate than humans. Certain very small forms of life navigate by use of celestial data. Other tiny insects have a sense of smell that allows them to detect floating molecules a mile away. Even honey bees have navigation systems that have long been puzzling. Human sensory apparatus is clumsy by comparison to such examples. Yet

humans do things that even the most advanced primates could not possibly do. Managing the words on this page, let alone the thinking behind these words or even the computer-generated forms on my screen, is totally beyond any other form of life.

Amidst all this recent explosion of both complexity and attendant confusion, we are in some ways much closer to an overall understanding of things. Indeed I do not believe it is too early to launch theories about the development of life forms which are undergirded with theology, if you understand theology to mean thinking that makes room for an awareness of intention and intelligence behind natural realities.

One of the most fully explored realities in the past 50 years has been what is commonly referred to as the Record of the Rocks. Here we see life forms in a somewhat regular progression of size. Yet the size of dinosaurs does not correlate with intelligence, and neither does smallness coordinate with simplicity. Nevertheless the earliest evidences of life are in fact both smaller and simpler than later forms. For this apparent progression Darwin has his theory, around which much of the secular world has rallied. Christians do not have a similarly concrete consensus about how it all happened. Some continue to insist that it all happened in an instant. I do not question that it is a perfectly reasonable idea—that God could have created our planet in an instant replete with rock layers that would give the impression of gradual formation over immense lengths of time. That God could have done this, however, is not the same as believing that this is the way God did it. Other Evangelicals back away entirely from conjecturing any details at all about how it happened, they simply insist that God, not Darwin, did it.

At least we can recognize that among Evangelicals great strides have been seen lately along the lines of the evidence of intelligent design in nature. Yet, neither Michael Behe nor Philip Johnson were able to answer the question posed by a Canadian philosopher in a TV debate, “Does your God make parasites?” That is, evidences for evil design are not heard among Christians as yet, despite the very evident violence-drenched nature that is perfectly visible to a small child.

Let us ask, for the sake of discussion, what might it mean theologically if the so-called Record of the Rocks were taken at face value, and the fourteen current different methods of estimating age were regarded as true.

For one thing, the now enormous mass of information that has been gathered does at least indicate that forms of life that are destructive to other forms of life appeared late in the record. And, when that kind of evil appeared, it appeared pervasively. At every level of life, from small forms to large, predatory forms suddenly appeared. Current thinking puts this curious event, an aspect of which is often referred to as the Cambrian Explosion, at about 550 million years ago. From that point until this moment, there has been such constant and pervasive violence in nature that it is common to assume that this is the way it was intended to be, that this is simply “the way it is,” not going into any detail as to the when or the why of how it happened.

Yet, all of this cries out for an explanation. Perhaps multiple trial explanations are possible. One that comes to my mind takes seriously the idea that there is a supreme, personal intelligence (whom we have called God), and that this person has created beings often called heavenly messengers (angels), but actually much more than messengers—workers, if you will. It is possible to think of such heavenly assistants as intelligent, able to learn and to please God, but apparently also being given true free will that has allowed

a considerable number of them to be in revolt while at the same time not being confronted with old age.

This is all you really need, then, to conceive of such beings as working for God at the DNA level, many of them being able to tamper with the DNA molecule at least as skillfully as our contemporary scientists, whose enormous disadvantage, for one thing, is the size of human beings in comparison to the size of the nucleotides which make up the binary helix molecule which is the basic code for all of life forms.

The astonishing discovery that a mouse, an elephant, and a man have DNA that is roughly 95% the same gives us insight into the vast complexity of the constituent elements of cells and their amazing contents, and at the same time an understanding of why it took so long for these workers for God to learn to do more than arrive at the cellular level, apparently laboring four billion years or so before anything very much larger than single-cell life appeared possible. It is likely a measure of our limited and recent education about tiny things that allows us to wonder why it took so long for bigger forms of life to appear.

We can readily imagine a sequence something like this:

1. We don't really know much about the appearance of the universe itself. To believe that the whole universe suddenly exploded from a very tiny object requires more faith by far than any of the Christian claims about the miracles of Jesus. We do know that the phenomena to which we refer as "material" is consistent with that found on our planet and also outer space, and that somehow the laws of gravitation, light, magnetism, etc. are also continuous with what we know of outer space. This knowledge lasts us long enough to understand at least partially the reality and orderliness of the periodic table of elements—the fantastic array of larger and larger atoms that underlie all that we call material.
2. But apparently atoms and molecules of the kind which compose what is technically called "the inorganic universe" are the basis not only of all such forms of matter but are specifically the building blocks from which has been derived, somehow, that other far more unimaginable "organic universe." Curiously all life utilizes the ubiquitous carbon atom. Not all molecules built of carbon are "organic," but all organic chemicals are built around carbon.
3. Only fairly recently in history have human beings discovered that all forms of life are apparently built up from and defined by an amazing coded molecule called DNA, a "double helix" involving millions and millions of atoms. Note that an additional intelligence is apparently required for a phenomenon which thus far seems to be unique to our planet, namely life forms. The DNA itself does not create life unless it is coded intelligently. It is like having on our hands a computer "language" like the widely familiar BASIC. All computer programs are built from what are called languages, but the language itself, like the English language, does not automatically create literature. It is a useful code to employ for that purpose but a grammar book does not create literature. Intelligence does. The very tiniest life forms are enormously larger than the underlying DNA code which defines their nature and function.
4. Thus, not only is the DNA molecule itself an incredibly complex reality, its endless potential for defining life is unimaginably more complex, and would seem to require even very intelligent angels a long time to master.

5. In fact, a major milestone was achieved when the angels, no doubt following God's blueprints, created the first cell, each one containing in its nucleus an essential coded DNA molecule, but also an enormous assortment of other highly integrated activity which, if enlarged, would resemble a large city in complexity.
6. Once the cell was achieved, then building larger life out of cells became a new challenge, one which could and did accelerate far more rapidly. After four and a half billion years, at roughly 550 million years ago, in the so-called Ediacaran era, we see both radially symmetrical (like a starfish) and bipolar symmetry, where you have a front and a back. What you do not see is any predatory forms of life. Nowhere are defensive measures like shells, spines, or offensive devices like destructive teeth. Up to this point the angels were laboring to create new forms of life. They were learning from their task and from each other, and in different parts of the planet were producing different results.
7. But then, a major asteroidal collision wiped out a great deal of the life at that point—not the angels, not their knowledge and skills but their handiwork. Apparently, the angels immediately went back to work, and a lavish new array of life forms now appeared in what is called the Cambrian Explosion. Something totally new also appeared.
8. At precisely that moment a revolt must have occurred, which immediately pitted the loyal workers against rebels, launching a see-saw contest which would generate not only new forms of life, but new forms of destructive life at every level. Rebel workers who had long known how to make DNA and proteins and so on could now both twist and distort existing forms of life so as to make them carnivorous. They could also devise destructive retroviruses that carry in a backpack, so to speak, replacement spans of DNA precisely designed to invade cells and distort the original DNA code in life forms large and small. Thus, from the Cambrian period until now nature is a mad, wild, violent cauldron of killing and being killed, at every level.

Was this revolt due to discouragement on the part of some of the angels? We have no idea whatsoever how and why a leading supervisor and one-third of the angels defected. It is enough to deal with the what this time and not puzzle about the why.

The story after the Cambrian Explosion, estimated at 550 million years ago, followed both the routine continuation of the school of workers ever building larger and larger forms of life of all kinds, sea dwellers, land dwellers and air borne forms of life. More and more defense mechanisms were born. Thus, unique in the post-Ediacaran era (that is, the Cambrian and following) has been the appearance of defensive shells, spines, poisons, protective scales, and fight-back capabilities. It seems that every form of life had its particular predators. Many forms of life were driven to extinction. Today only one tenth of one percent of the various forms of life seen in the Record of the Rocks still exist. And, yes, the loyal workers have not only put together new forms of life on schedule, but have been forced simultaneously to adapt them skillfully to defend themselves against opposing forms of life. *These adaptations can most easily be understood as intelligent modifications, not just accidental or fortuitous mutations.*

In fact, if you reflect on the 100-year story of the development of the automobile in the twentieth century, you must take into account the millions of large and small, but intelligent modifications during that period performed by thousands of keen designers

and engineers, and by hundreds of thousands of workers. This amazing process, moving from the Model T Ford to the contemporary Lincoln Continental, produced today in the same place by the same company of workers, could be described as the “Evolution of the American Automobile,” to employ that disputed term evolution in this case as a *guided, intelligent* process.

In a parallel way, loyal angel workers may well have been busy across the years developing not only new forms of life but newly defense-capable forms in view of the relentless onslaught of life-destroying varieties which have been the labor and intelligence of the rebel workers.

More than once this gruesome contest got so bad that, perhaps it was helpful for another asteroid from outer space to collide with the earth and destroy a great deal of both good and destructive forms of life. It is now widely believed that dinosaurs disappeared as the result of a very large asteroid colliding with what we know today as the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico. Note well that our contemporary insanely increasing exhaustion of fossil fuels is both allowed and limited distinctly by the creation of fossil fuels through sudden mass extinction: oil results from fossilize animal life, coal results from fossilized plant life.

Many studies of impact phenomena have been done since the Moon landing and its upsetting revelation about asteroidal activity. By now it is pretty well settled in scientific circles that the explosive impact of a large asteroid generates a global canopy of dust lasting for years, obscuring the sun and moon, and only gradually thinning so as to allow an awareness of dark and light periods caused by Earth’s rotation with respect to the Sun. Finally, it can be understood that a collapse of the remaining canopy would allow suddenly the direct rays of Sun and Moon, and, of course, the possibility of a rainbow, which requires unobstructed rays of light to appear. This is a sequence, by the way, that is eerily reminiscent of the events early in the biblical book of Genesis.

At the same time, following a collision, the loyal workers would set about replacing forms of life extinguished in a collision. Indeed new and different designs would be possible. The sudden flourishing of new forms of life following major asteroidal collisions has always puzzled Darwinian thinkers, and clearly favors a theory of design over chance.

At some point, the Supreme Being may have decided to launch a new and more effective counterattack. This seems to have occurred immediately following a major collision. Now we are approaching what could be called the Edenic experiment, which in geologic time is very recent. For the first time an enormously significantly different kind of life was now formed. In many respects similar to earlier models, the *homo sapiens* would be much more capable of assisting the loyal workers in the necessary defense and counterattack against the destructive forces. But even in this Edenic beachhead things went wrong, the arch rival succeeding in corrupting the divine design. The arch rival had “fallen” long before, at the onset of the Cambrian period. And during the next half billion years the existence of warring, antagonistic forms of life become the norm, all of that preceding Eden or the events of Genesis One. Genesis 1:1 in the Hebrew implies not creation out of nothing—the word *bara* being the same word a potter uses in creating a pot—but rather the rehabilitation of a planet extensively damaged by an asteroid (“without form and void, darkness upon the deep”).

An asteroidal collision does not usually kill all forms of life. When Eden was created there were no doubt many forms of life in existence outside of the garden, among which the characteristic constant, all-out war was taking place.

The new experiment was the hope, but now *homo sapiens* also “fell” and slowed the reconquest of a plundered planet. Inside Eden as well as outside, counterforces to Creative Design existed and took their toll. For many years, not only destructive external forces against *homo sapiens* existed, but rampant aggression of man against man prevailed. The replenishing of the earth was drastically slowed by homicidal violence and pervasive disease pathogens. The most ancient evidences of *homo sapiens* display, characteristically, skulls crushed by human instrumentality, widespread cannibalism, as well as corruption by disease. Only recently and reluctantly has this morbid evidence been recognized widely in scholarly circles.

For many centuries human population grew only very slightly. For example, had our modern degree of conquest over disease and war been in force in Abraham’s day, human population of an estimated 28 million could have grown to 6 billion in only 123 years. Such explosive growth of population has been impossible until recently, most of the story being one of nearly total ignorance of the nature and mechanisms of disease.

Incidentally, the advent of *homo sapiens* brought literacy into the picture, and with literacy came documents which in turn have given rise to the study of history (often defined as the period during which writing was in existence), thus ending the Prehistory period. However, it is perfectly obvious that much of the story of life is in the prehistory period. (If the five-billion- year history of this planet were to be represented by a five-foot-long bar on a blackboard, the history period would only be the last 1/100,000 of an inch.) Thus, by the time *homo sapiens* appears, and writing appears, most of the story, in one sense, is over, or at least well-established. Furthermore it is questionable whether the official “history” period can be well understood without the backdrop of prehistory.

For one thing, only prehistory records a period prior to the existence of warring life forms. Therefore, if all we do is to trace history we do not encounter the sudden appearance of violence, and thus we may very typically be blind to the existence of rampant evil and antagonism on a large scale. We may further be blind to the existence of an arch rival and, worst of all, we may thus impute to the Supreme Being blame for evil and suffering, which is exactly what the Old Testament seems to do.

Rather, however, than to blame God for the origin of evil or to blame the Bible for portraying Him in that light, it seems to me better to understand the Old Testament perspective as being an overall perspective, while the New Testament’s constant references to Satan are simply a more specific perspective. The best example is the dual reference to David’s numbering the people as found both in 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 24:1.

Thus the story of prehistory continues essentially into the final moments of the story of life on earth. The main new factor is the existence of an incredibly more intelligent species, its “fall” and the unique corrective of the “Second Adam” further pressing the claims of God’s rule, His Kingdom right down to the present moment.

For us today the challenge is to understand the gigantic conflict which continues unabated, but which is rapidly being modified as both disease and war are relatively diminished, and as human awareness of Satanic opposition to and distortion of creation increases. Much of the history of medicine is the relatively blind but helpful opposition to

Satanic corruption, which has enormously accelerated in the last few years. Modern gene-splicing illuminates the way the very nature of otherwise violent forms of life can be restored to peaceful coexistence. That is, against the backdrop of progressive insight into nature is the rather sudden and totally unexpected appearance of the complexity of the world of microbiology. I have already spoken of the need to theologize this new and enormous world of microbiology. The further task is to theologize the entire story of prehistory.

Missiological Implications

I have stipulated before that the ideas presented in this article are highly speculative. However, when we try to evangelize the 160,000 highly educated scientists in Hyderabad, India, for example, we must have at least a theologically sound “speculation” about *what they think they know* about the main events of earth history. India is highly industrialized, and the millions of Western-educated Hindus have something like an intellectual dual personality. If we can’t win this cutting-edge sphere, we falter desperately in our sharing of the Gospel with the 600 million Hindus. But Evangelicals also have a tough time dealing with and digesting the world of science.

Scientists in Hyderabad will likely have a Hindu predisposition to believe that all evil is of God (ominously similar to Augustine’s neo-Platonism bequeathed to Aquinas, Calvin, and contemporary pastors), and thus, will have no initial interest in the Christian understanding of Satan. However, I don’t feel Evangelical theology defines very much in detail for Satan to be doing either. The hardest thing for the theistic position that we hold (in contrast to Hindu thought) is our ambiguous theological inheritance in regard to the origin of what I would call “deformed” life. To rehabilitate Satan, so to speak, and begin to put the blame on him for widespread distortion of God-created life forms, is to me the most satisfying (speculative) way to confront the pervasive violence and evil in nature, the existence of deadly bacteria, incredibly intelligent parasites, etc. I think this perspective (albeit speculation) can be electrifying to keen intellects with a Hindu background, because in that background lies at least dormant and unresolved the sweeping conviction that all life is sacred, and, of course, the resulting paradox that so much of it is deadly, violent and life-destroying.

Furthermore, our evangelism of Hindus is blunted and weakened seriously, it would seem, by our own unresolved inheritance in regard to evil. We find it difficult, yet logical, given Augustine’s input, that the pastors of Massachusetts ganged up on Jonathan Edwards to condemn him for “interfering with Divine Providence” when he set out to protect his mission-field Indians from that very deadly pathogen (by now eliminated) smallpox. We cannot and do not normally in our evangelism claim that God is not the author of smallpox, malaria, etc. We leave it to our hearers to suppose that our God either does not know of the ravages of malaria, does not care, or does not have the ability to do anything to eliminate this kind of suffering and death. My speculation is that our Gospel would carry far greater conviction if we allied our God on the side of planned opposition to these deadly pathogens, rather than letting this be the exclusive domain of the new gods, “the scientists.” I have speculated, as you can see, that these deadly pathogens are Satan’s work, specifically the result of his dark angels’ tinkering with DNA. Would our usual evangelism do well to contain that thought, clearly absolving our God from such blatant evil?

The Most Prominent and Yet Unresolved Issue in Western Civilization in the Last Two Centuries: Its Meaning for Mission

(2001) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 217-19)

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Chadwick Hanson makes the truly upsetting case that in 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts, unlike three centuries of ensuing conventional interpretations, it was not the preachers but the town's businessmen who instigated the hysteria about witches leading to the death of 19 people. The preachers, he points out, trained in science at Yale, insisted on an evaluation of objective evidence in a court trial which put an end to the killings. Furthermore—and even more significant—the example of what was done in Salem then so impressed Europeans that a century-long orgy of witch burning on the Continent that put 250,000 women to death considerably came to a halt.

Ominously, then, this often-referred-to event (long referred to in our public and private school texts as “what happens when religious people get control of a community”) was actually an example of what happens when Biblically informed people lose control of a community. However, ironically and tragically, it marked a major milestone in the decline of belief in America in the existence and activity of Satan. In fact, only a few years later when Jonathan Edwards attempted to protect the Indians at his mission outpost from almost annual plagues of smallpox he was warned by the pastors of Massachusetts against “interfering with Divine Providence.” Why did they conclude that smallpox was of God not of Satan? Was it their non-Biblical theological training?

Alexander Kalomiros, a scholar within Eastern Orthodox Christianity, would answer ‘yes’ to that question. He bluntly states that the Devil himself has made men believe that God does not really love us but punishes us with disease, and that these switched roles for Satan and God represent a view which has gained ground mainly within Catholic and Protestant Christianity. He says,

What was the instrument of the devil's slandering of God? What means did he use to convince humanity (of this slander) ... He used “theology.” He first introduced a slight alteration in theology which, once it was accepted, he managed to increase more and more ... This is what we call “Western Theology” ... its principal characteristic is that it considers God as the real cause of all evil.

Ronald Numbers is the William Coleman Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He grew up in the family of a Seventh-Day Adventist preacher who firmly believed and often preached that paleontologists have it all wrong because, according to the well-established view within Seventh-Day Adventism, the world is no more than ten thousand years old, and all of the fossil evidence can be explained by a universal flood. Implicit in this view is the idea that all evil, all suffering, all violence in nature (reflected by the gigantic teeth in the fossils) is the result of Adam's sin and “Fall” (not an earlier “Fall” of Satan).

Alarmingly, this view, the “evolution” of which Numbers handles with great fairness and respect, now mainly resides in the Homeschooling movement. The view

understands that creation was good, was created in six days, very recently, and was at that point, and due to Adam's sin, corrupted in various unspecified ways. That is, in this view, we need to explain all violence in nature in all of earth's history including what is perhaps the pervasive and systematic distortion of the DNA of all peculiarly life-destroying forms of life, whether present or now-extinct, and explain all of this as resulting from Adam's sin. This view has the main function of allowing people to believe that the fossil record does not conflict with a literal interpretation of Genesis One (even though the animals in Genesis One are not carnivorous, as would seem to be the animals represented by the "old" bones we are digging up). And it attributes all of the evil in nature to the result of Adam's "fall," not Satan's fall (rebellion). Indeed it confuses the two events. It is more concerned with preserving belief in what some understand the Bible to say than it was concerned to explain the problem of evil, that is, the evidence of violence in nature. See also **Brown**, 2001.

A book which truly takes the bull by the horns is **Andrew Delbanco's** *Death of Satan, How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*. This man is the Julian Clarence Levi Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University in New York "writing intellectual history with the scholarly erudition of a Perry Miller," according to a technical reviewer. His book gives a detailed, blow by blow account of the gradual loss and trivialization in American life and literature of the concept of Satan. It describes the increasing concern about violence and evil in American life and yet the decreasing connection in our minds of this evil with any kind of an overarching evil person or power.

Michael Behe, Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University in Eastern Pennsylvania, dramatically proves in the opinion of many, including myself, the impossibility of explaining incredible microbiological complexity as the result of an unguided, chance process. His book is, almost singlehandedly, the principle stake in the growing movement insisting on intelligent design in nature in place of Darwin's mechanism of the survival of the fittest. But Behe, Johnson, and Demsky make no attempt to explain how the gruesome violence got into the picture. Thus, in a TV debate sponsored by William F. Buckley, called Cross-fire, neither Behe nor any member of his team debating against the other team which was upholding unguided evolution was able to answer the question posed by a Canadian philosopher, "Does your God create parasites?" Ironically, parasites represent perhaps the most ingenious, intelligent (evil) design to be found in nature.

Curiously and puzzlingly, **Deborah Ajulu's** book, published by World Vision MARC, which is focused exclusively on combatting poverty in the Third World, says absolutely nothing about combatting parasites and disease as one of the truly major factors in poverty. Instead, and certainly very effectively, she points out that social and political factors not just material aid are important. Yet an enormous amount of poverty, perhaps in Africa the majority, is the direct result of rampant disease which often pulls down into sickness, suffering and death as many as four fifths of the members of a family.

But then, **Cornelius Hunter's** book startlingly points out that Darwin himself was highly concerned about the presence of disease and violence in a world created by a good God. Publishers Weekly describes it as

Rather than an assault on God's existence, evolution was for Darwin and many of his contemporaries a defense of God's goodness, a strategy for disassociating God

from the often unsavory details of nature by introducing a blind process of natural selection.

What a switch! I have always understood evolutionists to be totally unconcerned about violence in nature, not at all concerned to protect God's reputation by dreaming up an automatic process the results of which cannot be blamed on God. Well, evolutionists in general today are in fact the last to worry about any kind of a creator God. But apparently Darwin did.

The irony here is that when spiritually minded creationists insist that God created all things, then the problem Darwin was apparently worried about is back in the fire. What could possibly be the explanation for evidence that seems to shout out at us of a nature shot through and through with a huge and horrifying amount of carnage and evil long before the appearance of man in the picture, evil which has existed at least since the Cambrian period (before that we know of no predatory forms of life).

Mitchell Stevens a professor of sociology at Hamilton College, ups the ante by giving us an up-to-date view of the burgeoning homeschooling movement, the very movement forming a significant number of future Evangelical leaders. This Princeton University Pressbook takes this homeschooling movement very seriously, delivering in minute detail its struggle for legality, and the various state and national associations which promote, serve, and defend home schooling parents.

The book apparently deserved four full pages of a review by **Margaret Talbot** in the November 2001 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. This movement is so significant in her eyes that she labels her review "A New Counterculture." Once again, this is the powerful movement which is rearing millions of serious Evangelical young people in a worldview of creation which does not effectively confront the enormously threatening and ugly facts of disease and violence in nature.

In total contrast is the glossy, oversized and truly impressive work of **Carl Zimmer**, who with incredible erudition produced an oversized book which brilliantly accompanies the recent eight-hour PBS series on evolution. If anyone can convince you of a chance, random process creating complexity he can. And for most people he no doubt succeeds. In the final chapter of the book he turns confidently to the question, "What about God?" and boldly visits Wheaton College finding even Evangelicals willing to believe in his kind of Evolution. He then adds Southern Baptists and even the Pope to his cause. In sweeping terms he dismisses the Creation Science movement.

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Editorial on wife's last illness

(2001) (*Mission Frontiers*, November-December)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-other-terrorists>

My wife's final ordeal (see p. 37) right in the middle of all this consternation about the new global war on terrorism has meant a double upheaval for me. At times the panic on the TV screen (in the waiting room at the Intensive Care Unit) could hardly distract me from another very different kind of "distraction."

"Things would never again be the same." Right: in my case, for two reasons.

I found myself during the first 28 days of October, every day almost all day in that Intensive Care Unit, thinking, praying, consternating, as my wife of almost 50 years steadily passed out of this life. I could not avoid pondering two different kinds of terrorists, big and very small, the latter being far more dangerous.

The "big" terrorists, the human-sized terrorists, thanks to September 11, are well-known by now. They are apparently sincere but aggrieved and deadly-dangerous Muslims. Passions are now inflamed on both sides. You need to be careful as you read the articles in this issue. Most of them effectively try not to see only evil within Islam. Yet few bother to make comparisons with similar historical evil on the Christian side of the fence.

The actual facts on both sides are not well-known to the average American. But as with Pearl Harbor, Americans are in for a crash course, this time a course on Islam (and maybe a parallel course on a comparably-mixed Christian record).

But while the world is now shocked into consternation about the "big" terrorists, I wish there could be as lurid an awareness of the far greater danger of another kind of "terrorists" too small to see with the naked eye. Yes, our Center in Pasadena, this bulletin, my life, the life of the new Roberta Winter Institute will all be radically different, irretrievably.

In my case I am now in the early stages of a new and major activity I want to tell you about, that is, what may now happen as a result of my wife's five-year ordeal—I am very sure she did not die in vain. First, it may be helpful to the reader to note some of my earlier "major projects."

Project One

I gave several years to developing, with others, the global movement called Theological Education by Extension, which has been aimed at the plight of at least two million "functional pastors" in mission lands being neglected while 4000 mission schools train young, untried youth to replace them.

Project Two

I gave a hunk of time to developing, with others, a major center in Pasadena (from which this bulletin derives) designed to focus on the frontiers of missions, that is, to discover and to tackle major dimensions of need in the mission movement. The most prominent need we recognized was to refocus missions from working in countries to work specifically with "peoples."

A second need was to reclaim in people's minds the Old Testament as the starting point of missions, the Abrahamic Covenant to be seen as the beginning of the Great Commission. A spin-off of that idea has been the now large network for the course called Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. (See pp. 38, 39.)

Basic to this period was not only the establishment of the Center and the acquisition of related property but the founding of a mission society which would be the owner and operator of the entire project—now a highly dedicated community of 56 families in some ways more important than the Center itself.

Project Three

However, once the Center in Pasadena was established, my next ten years were mostly invested, with others, in the rewriting of the content of the entire liberal arts and seminary curricula into a single, integrated 4,000- year story. This novel new curriculum employs 100 textbooks and hundreds of additional chapters and articles, but is essentially a single picture putting together the jigsaw puzzle pieces of what is otherwise a long list of “courses” which are unintegrated fragments of that picture. This new way of being educated, designed to be a more efficient way forward for national leaders around the world, is now already in use by various colleges and universities in this country and abroad as an M.A. degree, an undergraduate final two years, and in a reduced form as a first college year. Very exciting.

Final Project?

I'm getting old. My 50-year companion is gone. My perhaps “final” task is to tackle the most difficult-to- explain problem of all, and to explain the reasons for the Roberta Winter Institute.

This is where my wife's long- drawn-out illness and suffering has played a major role. Even before she was waylaid by a mysterious bone- marrow cancer, I had puzzled over the artificial separation in our theological and missionary heritage of the “natural” world from the “spiritual” world, and especially our dulled senses to the truly horrifying amount of violence which is seen at every point in nature. That violence comes home to human beings, and particularly on the mission field, in the form of crime and terrorism, but especially in the form of the tiny terrorists of rampant and dangerous disease.

Sure, Christians along with others have been wonderfully active in curing or treating disease, even in the prevention of disease. But our theological heritage begins to stumble at the question of our declaring war, in the Name of Christ, on all disease, and seeking the total eradication of all disease-causing pathogens. Why? Yet, along with a widely acknowledged new understanding (of DNA and all that) we have now inherited vast new opportunity and unacknowledged new responsibility.

This has been long in coming. Certain scholars have recently pointed out that Augustine, 1600 years ago, was the one who prominently failed to understand disease and violence as something 1) not only within God's sovereignty, since “He has not ceased to rule from the galaxies to the atom,” but 2) essentially the initiative of a superhuman, evil person.

Reacting against Manicheanism, Augustine went too far in theologizing that it is good enough to think merely of a sovereign God who in some sense sends all harm and

suffering, and not also to fight against the works of a Biblical Satan whose destructive intelligence differently explains violence and suffering in nature.

It makes a difference. When the famous theologian, Jonathan Edwards, sought to defeat smallpox, the pastors of Massachusetts warned him that in doing so he would be “interfering with Divine Providence.” When he tragically killed himself tinkering with the newly- developed vaccine, they assumed that he was fighting against God, who thus had to kill him.

To condense a long story

I have come to believe that my wife might not have died of cancer, Robertson McQuilkin’s wife might not have been knocked out by Alzheimer’s disease for the last twenty years, John Wimber might not have died of heart disease, if if if if!!!! Christian believers had properly and biblically taken seriously a search-and-destroy mission for the pathogens producing these diseases.

God could have healed these dear people, but maybe He has expected us to draw some conclusions and “declare a war” on tiny terrorists as well as big ones. The small/invisible terrorists attack and kill more people every day of the week than were put to death by the collapse of those New York city towers. In a year they torture and kill 365 times as many.

But Calvin and Luther were unaware of germs. We know things they did not know. Yet, we Christians, we missionaries have not sought to engage this enormous enemy with anything like the vigor with which we teach our young people to throw balls through hoops and our retired people to bat little balls across meadows.

Thus, the Roberta Winter Institute

Twenty thousand dollars has already come in to get it started. Roberta and I pledged a \$5,000 prize we received three years ago. Christy Wilson on his death-bed urged a \$5,000 gift in his memory be given to this project. A staff member here wrote out a personal check for \$1,000.

Well, of course, we do not yet spend sufficient time to know exactly what to do with certain tiny global terrorists, like malaria. Missions spend at least \$500 million per year raising children up, only to see four die of malaria every sixty seconds. Why not raise an extra \$5 or \$10 million for an all-out war against the source of this pathogen which terrorizes 300 million new people each year, and is lapping at our doorstep in the United States. Would this not glorify God? Is our God properly described as unaware of these tiny terrorists?

Many friendly people have implied to me and to my wife, before she died, that Jesus could heal any disease and that it only takes faith to make it happen. Okay. Why did Jesus heal? One missionary reminded me that healing people does not get them into heaven. But what can attract people to heaven is preaching a God who was, and still is, deeply concerned about physical deformities and disease and suffering, and is not simply in the business— perish the thought—of inflicting people with pain to deepen their spiritual lives. If that is God’s initiative, why did His Son go around relieving people of pain?

The primary focus of this new institute will not be laboratory science but public and mission awareness of the need for a new theological sensitivity for destroying the works of the devil.

It is truly astonishing how much greater we can make the impact of our missionary evangelism if the true spectrum of concern of our loving God is made clear and is backed up by serious attention not only to treating illness but to eradicating the evil causes, the works of the devil.

If it is true that “the works of God are to declare His glory”, then every missionary needs to carry with him both a telescope and a microscope!

For example, missionaries in West Africa for a hundred years have merely “lived with” an evil microbe called Guinea Worm. This pathogen starts out as a tiny bundle in your drinking water, too small to see with the naked eye. Within your body it grows destructively into a 32-inch snake, eventually breaking the skin and winding out slowly over a period of weeks. You can’t pull it out or it may break off and kill you. You must gradually “spool” it out, winding it on a stick. Did God design this?

Honestly, has anyone ever identified this pathogen as a work of the devil to be destroyed in the Name of Christ?

Apparently not. Our passivity declares that God doesn’t know or care or is unable to do anything about such things! All we normally offer to our followers around the world is 1) sympathy, 2) a suspension of criticism of a good God for the evil in this world, 3) admonitions to be resigned to the pain and suffering while awaiting God’s making some good out of the evil, and 4) a way out of this world into eternity.

However, in the case of Guinea Worm, 600,000 people were afflicted twenty years ago. Yet the number now is almost down to zero. Why? Because one Christian layman visiting in West Africa — not a missionary, not a pastor, not a theologian — decided to return to the U.S. and muster efforts to eradicate this pathogen, “to wipe it from the face of the earth.” That was Jimmy Carter.

This new challenge for missions could lead to a drastic reduction in our annual outlay to care for diseased people (it being the chief factor in poverty). And it may radically add power and beauty to the very concept of the God we preach, and thus become a new and vital means of glorifying God among the nations.

Let’s be realistic

Many honest souls, both on the mission field and also in our secularized world, are not dramatically impressed by a God that cannot be bothered to conquer and exterminate the evil bugs that cause disease, but can mainly only offer a ticket to heaven. Declaring war on disease may be the only way to restore the full power of true evangelism.

Why? It may readily be that young people on the mission field (and here at home) will grow up and ask the embarrassing questions, “Why don’t Christians have a theology for attacking the very roots of disease?” Why merely give intravenous liquids to babies dying from dysentery without dealing with a contaminated water supply? Why deal with water contamination and not concern ourselves with eradicating the pathogens that constitute the contamination? Why, now that we know what to do, are we not doing it, in the Name of Christ?”

Oh God, when will we be as involved in glorifying Your Name as we are in attracting people to eternal life? How can we go on believing that all the pestilence and disease and suffering in the world “is exactly the way God wants it to be,” as some have told me? Is Your reputation at risk as long as Your people pay little attention to “destroying the works of the devil” (I Jn 3:8)? Can we launch an even more powerful form of evangelism if we actively identify with Your concern for banishing diabolic pathogens?

Satan triumphs in the presence of unawareness of his presence, of his deeds. His greatest achievement, according to my pastor, “is to cover his tracks.” He has apparently done that so successfully that, to my knowledge, no pastor, no TV evangelist, no theologian has ever spoken of believers everywhere declaring a global war against Satanically-devised disease pathogens.

No one is going to solve such problems overnight, or perhaps ever, before the return of Christ. But what if in the meantime God’s reputation is at stake in the absence of our publicly declaring His concern and identifying with that concern to conquer and eradicate evil parasites and bacteria and viruses in His Name?

How Should We Deal with the Phenomenon of Disease?

(Dec. 8, 2002) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 173-74)

[The following is an entry in the prayer log at the U.S. Center for World Mission during the 6 am to 10 am shift.]

Sunday, 8 December 2002

0600–1000 Ralph Winter This is a great place to start out on a birthday, even though I will only be able to go to the 11 o'clock service and not Sunday School. Today I'm 78 and feel like 60. It is hard to believe that the tests last week showed the telltale signs of bone marrow cancer (myeloma) continuing steadily to increase. It means that no matter how fine I feel now I may not be able to count on very many more months of that. It's funny. We all know that life is uncertain and that in a bike accident like Dan Eddy's we could actually break our necks, etc., but in my case a fairly likely date has been set, so to speak, not too far in the future. This allows and indeed encourages pinchpenny use of time almost like never before. Of course I have not for many years been regarding my time much differently simple because of the thrill and excitement of making every day and hour count for the work of Christ.

It really is thrilling to be my age and in my health. I feel I have learned the most important things of my life since I was 70! The more you know the easier it is to attach new information to what you already know. This is true in the realm of the spiritual, in regard to historical information, as well as science.

At the same time knowing things that the average citizen may not know is unhandy because it separates you off into some kind of isolation. Most of what I have "learned" since I was 70 has to do with the nature of God and His Word. I have been especially fascinated by praying and meditating about the glory of God. I have come to the place where I am doubtful that by singing over and over again "glory, glory" we are learning more about His glory. Suppose you were separated from your earthly father at birth and at the age of 30 met him for the first time. If you were to raise your hands and sing "wonderful father" over and over again it would not expand your knowledge of him at all.

I don't mean people are trying to avoid God by their worship songs. I believe all of that is quite sincere. What I am thinking is that most people don't know what to do to know God better. Or, take another example. Suppose you get engaged to a girl who lives in a distant city. Every letter you get enlightens you more about her. And going over older letters may even give a bit of additional knowledge about this person. But pure mediation would have distinct limitations in providing you with new and additional information about her.

I am the one who pushed for a TV set in here, and specifically because of the amazing video by R. C. Sproul on the holiness of God. I don't see that video here anymore but I continue to believe that a weekly or biweekly four-hour time of prayer and meditation here can be best served if we have input not merely output. One of the last things prayer is, is talking to God. Listening to Him is more important and learning about Him is also important. If you called up someone to whom you are engaged and did all the talking you would not learn much about her or him.

So how do we find out more about God? Through His words and deeds, not by talking to Him or even singing about Him (unless the song or hymn reveals new things not just generalities). His words and deeds are seen preeminently in the Bible. His deeds are also and magnificently seen in His Creation. Thus we have two books to consult: the Book of Creation (nature) and the Book of Revelation (the Bible). Note that the Book of Creation came first and that “there is no speech or language where (its) voice is not heard (Ps 19:1-3). In Romans 1:20 we read “Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen.”

\Scientists peer into the one book often with sincerity and genuine awe. Religious people peer into the other book often with sincerity and awe. But the religious people have become alienated from the Book of Creation by some of the scientists who have misread and misinterpreted it. They tell all the scientists that their book is no good. And, of course, many scientists say the book of the religious is no good. But God meant us to read both books! It is our obligation to read, study, and worship Him as we learn of the true glory of God that can be seen in both books. Thus, not only prayer but worship is seen in a new light. Prayer and worship thus also consist of witnessing and digesting and learning about God. That is why prayerful and worshipful reading of the Bible is itself a form of prayer and worship (here in the prayer room). But if I brought in a text on microbiology I would guess a few of our good people here would be shocked.

I wonder if we cannot learn something from the way we treat the fabulous video we are widely promoting, “Unlocking the Mystery of Life.” We all enjoyed it in part because it tears down Darwinism and bolsters our faith in God as the Intelligent Designer. But note, it is combative in some ways. It pours scorn (courteously of course) on enemies of the Gospel. We do not use it as a worship tape, however. No one I know is putting some of the awesome glory of God in the small world of microbiological world into worship songs. There we simply go on and on praising God “generically.” Is it not obvious that there is something dreadfully wrong with our relationship to the Book of Creation?

OK, take me. Here I am a few months away from my own death by an apparently irreversible destruction of my bone marrow. My daughter Linda in this very log sincerely presents the idea “that many of our sinful responses to life (fear, anxiety, unforgiveness, bitterness etc.) have negative consequences in our physical bodies.” (Incidentally, wrongly understood this is a veritable recipe for morbid introspection.) Well, I certainly have no problem believing this.

I know that Linda also believes “devoutly” (yes that’s the right word!) in fighting cancer by proper nutrition. Oh yes, exercise, too. And all of this I devoutly believe. But I ask, Does nutrition, exercise, banishing anxiety, etc. protect you or cure you of Malaria? Are our immune systems normally capable of defeating Malaria, Tuberculosis, Smallpox, Anthrax, etc.? No, not normally. And, if the latest thinking is correct slow-acting viruses underlie heart disease as well as cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and Schizophrenia.. And perfectly healthy people like Jeff Brom are keeling over every day from heart disease, So, do we go on just praying in addition to making sure we heed these other things (nutrition, exercise, peace of soul and mind, etc.)?

Note that all of those things are mere defenses against disease. However, surprising recent insights are that all of the listed diseases are all basically caused by outside invaders which we need to fight in the same sense as we fight the crime of visible

terrorists. It is understandable, of course, that we would not automatically think about going beyond prayer and taking concrete measures to quell the source of these destructive diseases if we did not know that they are caused by attacking pathogens which our immune systems, no matter how healthy, cannot always overcome.

Here is where closer study is needed of the Book of Creation to discern the difference between the beauty God put there and the violence and gruesome cruelty Satan has put there. Here is where we cannot leave this to secular scientists. Do you realize that we have not even kept a list of our own staff and immediate relations that have died of heart attacks, cancer etc.!

Why? Because we continue to assume that there is nothing you can do but hope and pray it does not happen to you! OK, there WAS nothing we could do (beyond the many reasonable defensive measures mentioned earlier). There is not NOW nothing that can be done. And this massive change is the result of a relative handful of (mainly secular) people studying the Book of Creation and discerning therein that God is not the author of the twisting and distortions of that Creation, but that there is a whole array of intelligent pathogens to be fought and exterminated. Meanwhile Evangelicals often believe by default that it must be God that is destroying his own creation. (Sort of like the opposite where the Pharisees resorted to the position that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan!). Jesus healed diseases. He did not blame God for them. Peter described Jesus' ministry as "healing all those oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). He recognized an outside enemy, not a lack of proper nutrition, exercise, etc. although it is obvious that an outside attack is more likely to succeed if we ignore those defensive measures.

So what does this all lead to? It seems likely to mean that now that we have new knowledge about the outside sources of several massive diseases problems that we cannot in good conscience fail to do what we can to mount new offensive warfare with those attacking sources.

My time is running out on this shift. A week ago I spent a couple of hours prayerfully perusing a book that patiently, detailedly, describes how over 200 years of missionary work went down the drain. The word, *Florida*, in the 16th century included not only our present state by that name but also the entire southeast of the USA, in the triangle from Virginia to Alabama to Miami. In that area lived literally hundreds of thousands of Indians (native Americans). Well, between about 1530 and 1800 primarily Spanish work was undertaken employing both soldiers and missionaries, the latter very faithfully. Lots of good things and unwise things happened, but eventually "missions" (outposts) of the kind we see still standing in California, 150 of them, were planted. Each one was a worship center, an educational center, and an industrial center.

However, today there is not a physical trace of a single one of those painstakingly established missions. Worse still the entire Indian population, as in Cuba, has totally vanished, dying primarily of European diseases. All of those hundreds of thousands of people! Their religion certainly did not save them, at least not in this life. Neither did ours. Are we to send missionaries around the world simultaneously to implant disease and offer eternal salvation? You will say no, not intentionally. But what about the diseases they already have? Are we to help them to eradicate those diseases (not just be kind to those who get sick)?

It is not obvious how we can help, if in fact virtually no one is trying to figure out how to eradicate pathogens, especially those pathogens whose existence we have not even thought about. But few realize how little attention is given to the ultimate causes of disease, or how confused we have been as to what the causes of, say, heart disease are. Last week's TIME and NEWSWEEK both reported that the percentage of people who die of heart disease but who do not have high cholesterol, etc. is now finally admitted to be 50%. We have a lot of learning to do and as a nation we don't seem well prepared to do that study. But that is another story.

Roberta Winter Institute Explanation

(2003)

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*Compiled and condensed by Beth Snodderly from the writings and speeches of Ralph D. Winter. February, 2003. He included this in his *Frontiers in Mission* book, pp. 177-80).*

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

The Roberta Winter Institute will try to upgrade our desire to bring glory to God by ending our apparently neo-platonist 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 other sources of disease in addition to being kind helpfully to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

Mobilized Christian response did not come soon enough to materially help my wife, and may not help you or yours. But 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.

We are in a war against an intelligent enemy

What I am trying to do, groping into it gradually but as fast as I can, is to try to undo a huge and diabolical complex of misunderstandings which enervates and destroys any resistance we might offer to the distorting works of the Devil.

My pastor (Gordon Kirk, Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, California) who is a former theology professor at Biola has observed that “Satan’s greatest achievement has been to cover his tracks.” This urges us to recognize that we are extensively unaware of diabolic activity in the world.

In scripture we see the prominence of the emphasis on the coming of God’s Kingdom, and note that “the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8).” What if all disease pathogens as well as all violent forms of life are the work of Satan? How would that amplify and refocus our global mission?

When Satan turned against God precisely what kind of destruction and perversion did he set out to achieve? Where would we see evidence of his works? Would he set out to pervert the DNA of originally tame animals? Would he employ powers of deception so that we would get accustomed to pervasive violence in nature and no longer connect an intelligent evil power with evil and suffering? Worse still, 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 pre-Cambrian forms of life *revealed no predators*. Then, at that 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 fell out with the Creator—that is, did he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into an arena “red in tooth and claw” that reigns today?

We need to recognize and ponder more seriously the kind and degree of harm Satan is able to cause. We need to unmask the works of Satan.

Are we fellowships of survivors or of soldiers? We are all enlisted to war against the works of Satan.

Attributing evil to God/distortion of God’s character

There are very many people, even Bible-believing Christians not just non-Christians, who are profoundly puzzled, perplexed, and certainly confused by the extensive presence of outrageous evil in the created world of all-powerful, benevolent God. In coping with this, they may frequently attribute to God what is actually the work of an evil intelligence, and thus fatalistically give not the slightest thought to fighting back.

The assumption that all evil comes from God is pagan, coming from neo-Platonism which taught there is one God who is the source of both evil & good. We have inherited this thinking in our view of Romans 8:28.

The Intelligent Design people don’t take into account that they are attributing the creation of evil to God. Darwin did not do this. Instead he invented the wacky theory of unaided evolution. But Darwin at least recognized the presence of evil if not intelligent evil, and even the need to protect the reputation of a benevolent God. In that he scored higher than what we see in the written materials of Intelligent Design.

The corollary to this mistaken assumption that all evil comes from God is that we can’t go after evil because we’d be going after God. The pattern is to be “resigned” to evil, even to presume that God is behind all things rather than that God is in front of all things, turning Satanic evil into good, but by no means initiating the evil, much less suggesting that we do nothing about it.

Free Will/God works through intermediaries

We need to recognize the very radical and significant decision of God to create beings, angelic and human, with true free will and to work through those intermediaries.

We may frequently ask God to do things which He has been expecting us as intermediaries to do. Our mission then may need to include things for which we ordinarily only pray.

The concept of inappropriate prayer. This is seldom discussed in Evangelical circles. As a result, we fail frequently to distinguish between what part God wants us to play and what part only He can play. Confusion in this area is clearly in Satan’s favor. He is glad when he can get us to ask God to do something God expects us to do. But it must be true that God empowers those who seek him and want to do His will.

We don’t ask God to paint the back fence.

We don’t ask God to evangelize the heathen (as they did in William Carey’s day).

We should not ask God to take care of disease.

God, we know, invites us to bind up the wounds we can see with our eyes and to ward off evil which is large enough to see without a microscope, but He also has seemed to want to await human collaboration in fighting the microbiological roots of evil for some reason we may not fully understand.

We have an un-updated theology, thinking that we aren't responsible to do something about something we can't see (microbes). But we CAN see these now and do something. We are casting aside a whole arena of responsibility.

Un-updated theology that doesn't take new knowledge about microbiology into account

It seems likely that now that we have new knowledge about the outside sources of several massive diseases that we cannot in good conscience fail to do what we can to mount new offensive warfare with those attacking sources.

From "Theologizing the Microbiological World": Our theologies, that is, *our formalized ways of attempting to think Biblically*, were hammered out during centuries that were totally blind to the microscopic world.

Evangelicals have recently stressed the inevitable *intelligence* and *design* in nature, but they have not, to my knowledge, attempted to suggest that there is evidence of any evil intelligence and design.

This is perhaps due to a theological tradition which does not understand demonic powers to have the ability to distort DNA. Our Evangelical theological tradition is so old that it also would not conceive of good angels working at the DNA level. In other words, we have no explicit theology for intentional modification of either good or bad bacteria. Our current theological literature, to my knowledge, does not seriously consider disease pathogens from a theological point of view—that is, are they the work of God or Satan? Much less does this literature ask the question, "Does God mandate us to eliminate pathogens?"

Discover and eradicate the origins of disease rather than treatment and prevention

Surprising recent insights show that many diseases are basically caused by outside invaders which we need to fight in the same sense as we fight the crime of visible terrorists. Does nutrition, exercise, banishing anxiety, etc. protect you or cure you of Malaria? Are our immune systems normally capable of defeating Malaria, Tuberculosis, Smallpox, Anthrax, etc.? No, not normally. And, if the latest thinking is correct slow-acting viruses underlie heart disease as well as cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, and Schizophrenia. So, do we go on just praying in addition to making sure we heed these other things (nutrition, exercise, peace of soul and mind, etc.)? It is understandable, of course, that we would not automatically think about going beyond prayer and taking concrete measures to quell the source of these destructive diseases if we did not know that they are caused by attacking pathogens which our immune systems, no matter how healthy, cannot always overcome.

I spent a couple of hours [recently] prayerfully perusing a book that patiently, detailedly, describes how over 200 years of missionary work went down the drain. The word Florida in the 16th century included not only our present state by that name but also the entire southeast of the USA, in the triangle from Virginia to Alabama to Miami. In that area lived literally hundreds of thousands of Indians (native Americans). Well,

between about 1530 and 1800 primarily Spanish work was undertaken employing both soldiers and missionaries, the latter very faithfully. Lots of good things and unwise things happened, but eventually “missions” (outposts) of the kind we see still standing in California, 150 of them, were planted. Each one was a worship center, an educational center, and an industrial center. However, today there is not a physical trace of a single one of those painstakingly established missions. Worse still the entire Indian population, as in Cuba, has totally vanished, dying primarily of European diseases. All of those hundreds of thousands of people! Their religion certainly did not save them, at least not in this life. ... I admit that I cannot easily shake off the sensation of strangeness and tragedy hovering over those 250 years during which Spanish, French, and British fought each other and in some cases Indian uprisings, without realizing that their real and common enemy was Satanically devised pathogens.

Missions implications/bringing glory to God

Are we to send missionaries around the world simultaneously to implant disease and offer eternal salvation? You will say no, not intentionally. But what about the diseases they already have? Are we to help them to eradicate those diseases (not just be kind to those who get sick)?

To destroy the works of the devil is one major way in which our testimony of word and deed can glorify the true nature of our living God, our heavenly father. It is not an alternative to evangelism, it will make our evangelism more credible. It is to *rectify our God's damaged reputation*. It is to avoid extending the implicit and embarrassing policy of almost constantly misrepresenting Him in our mission work around the world. Attacking the roots of disease is part and parcel of our basic mandate to glorify God in all the earth.

The principal concern in all of this is the distortion we can see in many people's ideas of God. Pause and consider Tozer's statement that “*The most important thing about you is what comes to your mind when you think of God.*” Our theological inheritance was hammered out before germs were known of. A full awareness of the larger scope of the battle against God is not yet ours. In regard to horrifying violence in nature, people have become so used to it, so accustomed to it, so hardened to it, so calloused about it that they have drifted into suppositions that this must be the way God created things. (Only Satan is happy about that.) And, people get to thinking that a God who does not mind violence, cruelty and suffering, whether among animals or man, is not the most appealing kind of a God when we set out to win people to Christ, His Son.

The Purpose for the Roberta Winter Institute

At this point it is time to ask the question why it is that the mounting muscle of the very considerable movement of all those globally who are moved by Jesus Christ has not weighed in either theologically or practically in the area of working to correct distortions of nature and of God's will *by going to the roots of the problem*. In a way this is the most ominous fact of all.

I know of no theological tradition, no denomination, no Christian school—or hospital for that matter—that has seriously accepted the roots of the challenge of the enormous and continuing and growing factor of disease in this world of ours.

Meanwhile constantly both believers and non- believers are stumbling about wondering over the amount, the harshness, and the unpredictability of evil in our world. Indeed, the credibility of an all- powerful and loving God is constantly being called into question by people who are no longer content to suppose “that God has His reasons.” We may indeed not know all His reasons. But do we have reasons for our inaction?

It is truly astonishing how much greater we can make the impact of our missionary evangelism if the true spectrum of concern of our loving God is made clear and is backed up by serious attention not only to treating illness but to eradicating the evil causes, the works of the devil.

Gordon Kirk says that “Satan’s greatest achievement is to cover his tracks.” That, surely, is why we get out of practice speaking of him or recognizing his works or even recognizing his existence. Yet, when we reinstate his existence as an evil intelligence loose in God’s creation only then do a lot of things become clear and reasonable. Otherwise God gets blamed for all kinds of evil: “God took my wife,” etc.

I find it difficult, after making this switch, not to conclude that Satan's angels are the source of life-destroying forms of life, vicious animals, bacteria, viruses. Not that he created them but that he tampered with their DNA to distort them. To “destroy his works” means thus to take it as part of our efforts, our mission, to glorify God to restore, with God's help, what Satan has distorted. Thus, you see the rationale for establishing the Roberta Winter Institute.

The primary focus of this new institute will not be laboratory science but public and mission awareness of the need for a new theological sensitivity for destroying the works of the devil.

Causes of Death in USA

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 185)

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

“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.

2. 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.

Editorial Comment on Evil/Disease as a Frontier in Mission

(Mission Frontiers January–February 2004).

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment32>

Dear Reader,

I would guess that a major reason you are holding this newsprint booklet in your hands is that it helps you in some ways to understand more clearly what God wants you to do.

In any case, nothing, nothing can be more important for any of us to know than what God wants us to do.

For us here at the Center it is crystal-clear that God's calling for all believers is for "Our Utmost for His Highest." The discernment of His Highest takes study. Much of what we do here in Pasadena is to keep our eye on every part of the world to see what God is doing and what obvious and strategic needs are there.

Dimensions, frontiers

Okay. Essentially that is the business the Center and the university here are in. It is also the major reason for the theme of this issue: What is God doing, what specifically is left to be done, and where can we help? Or, what is the best way we with our specific strengths and limitations might offer the most strategic help? That is, what are the dimensions of the unfinished task?

Here at the Center and university we are "24/7" focused on what is most strategic and most needed. We call these "Frontiers."

We started out by zeroing in on groups by-passed by existing missionary work, called "Hidden Peoples" or "Unreached Peoples." They fall into the major categories reviewed in this issue.

But in order to reach out effectively to these groups, we need to try to understand which methods and approaches are not really working, and if we are being slow to adopt new approaches which might enable us to reach out more intelligibly to strange populations. This describes another kind of frontier, which typically requires rethinking, ingenuity, and in-depth knowledge.

Other Frontiers?

One example of this other kind of frontier (especially among the increasingly educated leaders around the world) is what in my editorials I have been mentioning lately, namely, the horrifying divergence between those millions of intelligent people who trust in science and not religion and those millions who trust in religion and not science. Call this frontier "the Religion of Science." See excerpts from Professor Hammond's new book on pages 16-17.

A second frontier of this other type can be called "Fatalism about Evil." It is a common but debilitating "passivity" in the face of evil. In so far as we automatically attribute all misfortune, all disease, all sickness to the "mysterious" mind of God, that perspective cuts the nerve of any intense, intentional fighting back.

For example, Charles Colson is as brilliant and dedicated a Christian as they come. Yet, after his daughter had struggled for many years with an autistic son, call him

Alex, Colson praised her when she came to the conclusion that “Alex is exactly the way God wants him to be.”

First, the idea that God would want any child to be brain-damaged is inconceivable.

Even more important, this fatalistic perspective, no matter how brave and noble, cuts the nerve of anyone wanting to join the increasing number of parents who want to get to the bottom of why autism is skyrocketing. Colson’s immense influence would be a great help to those parents, such as my oldest daughter and son-in-law, whose own son’s autism has led them to do all they can to get to the roots of this mounting plague.

However, don’t assume that very many others are concerned. The enormous Medical/Pharmaceutical industrial complex gets 99% of its funds from treating people who are already sick. It does not have a lot of extra money to find out why people get sick.

Furthermore, if hyper-calvinistic theology leads nearly all Evangelicals to accept autism as “the mysterious hand of God”, we must count Evangelicals out of the efforts to find out not how to deal with autism after it appears, but why it is happening with increasing frequency.

What has this to do with missions? It means that if we set out to “declare His glory among the nations,” by revealing the true, penetrating love of Christ for sick and suffering people, as well as His hatred of evil, we must decide whether diseases are of God or not. The question is not merely about what Jesus actually did or said about disease, but what He would have said had those people back then known what we know about disease.

Should missions go on spending millions of scarce mission dollars on raising children up to the age where they can die of malaria (four die every sixty seconds) if they are not doing absolutely everything they can to ferret out the nature of the malarial parasite and how to eradicate it?

In other words, is it the whole gospel just to protect people from malaria and treat the sick? It would seem that our mission mandate includes portraying our God as One whose love extends beyond treating sick people to the actual eradication of the incredibly ingenious malarial parasite itself. With our increasing knowledge, do we not have proportionately broader responsibility?

Isn’t this a frontier? Isn’t it doubly difficult a frontier due to a twisted non-biblical theology that blames God for all illness?

Malaria is just about as bad a global plague as is the HIV virus. We see many Christians seeking to help the AIDS-orphaned children, and being kind to those writhing in the pains of malaria. But, do we see anywhere in the world any kind of a substantial Christian institution which in the Name of Christ is pursuing the total eradication of either HIV or malaria?

Thus, it may be that we are telling people around the world that our God does not care, does not know what to do, or worse still, is Himself the author of these evils (for our good, of course). Fortunately, the God of the Bible is different!

Beyond Unreached Peoples

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 186-87)

One of our recent publications states the following for the general public:

We're glad you're here! Our purpose in meeting each Thursday night is to celebrate what God is doing around the world and to learn how we can better participate in His purposes for the nations. In particular, we come to give special attention to frontier mission among 10,000 unreached peoples without strong, culturally relevant church movements in their midst. Let's seek God together for how we should respond to what we hear.

Note the fact that the phrase by itself, Unreached Peoples, could easily be misunderstood by visitors apart from the additional defining phrase, "without strong, culturally relevant church movements in their midst." It is very good for that to be added. The need for that additional phrase, incidentally, explains why, as an institution, we had earlier objected to the phrase, Unreached Peoples, preferring our own phrase, Hidden Peoples, as well as a different definition.

Thus, I approve of the helpful "appositional" phrase that explains to the general public very accurately what Unreached Peoples means to us.

Here is a statement from another document that attempts to state what we are all about:

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 would know when a group was reached when there was an indigenous church planting movement among them.

I would like to see if we can go beyond these statements to something more.

If we think of the remaining unreached peoples as enemy occupied territories, rather than merely unenlightened areas, "reaching" them with "a viable, evangelizing, indigenous church movement" could seem to assume the possibility that the problem of unreached peoples is merely the absence of good news.

I continue to believe that "reaching unreached peoples" with a viable, evangelizing, indigenous church movement is a most worthy and important thing to do. However, it may involve unexpected, perplexing opposition and danger. In that case is it fair to prospective missionaries to talk as though it is merely a communication problem? And, is it fair to the people within the group we are trying to reach, for them to think that we see no use for the significant knowledge we in fact possess that could enable many of them not to become victims of disease?

Otherwise it would seem to be sort of like telling willing recruits that they need merely to walk into Falouja thinking that the only thing they need to do is inform the people that democracy is the answer to all their problems. In other words after we make the missiological breakthrough and see a people movement to Christ, what do we do with the fact that most of the new believers will die very, very prematurely because of

pathogens about which neither Jesus or Calvin said a word, but pathogens about which we now know a great deal?

Jesus extensively demonstrated God's concern for the sick. Are we today under any obligation to demonstrate even more cogent ways of fighting off illness, due to the additional insight God has allowed us to gain? Or is it no longer important for people to know that sickness is very definitely a concern of God? Are those who hear our words and witness our work and our concerns supposed to think that our God is just the God of the next world?

This morning Gordon Kirk at Lake Avenue delivered a powerful sermon in effect galvanizing believers to shape up, quit quibbling over peripherals, regain their faith and joy and demonstrate unity. It was all to the good.

However, it was somewhat like giving a rousing charge during wartime to the individuals in an army to stop quarrelling, vying for leadership, grumbling, living with disunity in the ranks, etc. without mentioning the crucial additional truth that there is a war to fight. What unifies disparate, normally quarrelsome men is precisely the unity of fighting the same war. No wonder so many veterans groups emerge from a war, groups of men who are astounding disparate otherwise.

Churches that are riven by internal disunity may often be plagued in part by the lack the unifying power of a significant external goal. Even if that goal is merely getting pamphlets to Iraq it will certainly help unify the church. However, if the goal is to confront a hideous, invisible enemy that has infiltrated the bloodstream of every member of the church and will be causing pain and suffering and premature death, that unity might come much more quickly and solidly.

I had similar concerns recently as I listened to Greg Livingstone share his experiences with several key Muslims who were apparently glad to talk to him but did not appear to be seeking God. They are Muslims, perhaps, only in the sense that they may be caught up in a cultural tradition they felt they could not abandon. I wonder what would have happened if he had shared with them his awe for the glory of God? How would he have done that and how would these men have reacted? Maybe their disinterest would have turned them away and he would then have had to spend time with others whose hearts toward God were more tender?

The average missionary in a Muslim village does not share with the people many similar goals. The one common denominator which might possibly draw both missionary and Muslim together could be to share, positively and humbly, genuine awe for the glory of God as seen in a microscope, and negatively, to share genuine awe and fear for the additional evidence in that same microscope of an intelligent, malicious enemy of them both. The missionary and the Muslim can both be awed (and worship) as they contemplate God's glory together, and they can together be gripped by the urgent, crucial task of fighting a common enemy that is constantly tearing down that glory. Isn't that what Jesus' extensive healing ministry would teach us to do?

Fighting the Works of the Devil

Morning Meeting on June 1, 2005

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5ecfde0c7112f61d1bf0d507/1590681101359/Fighting+the+Works+of+the+Devil.pdf>

In his talk to staff, Ralph Winter included some comments about why he was passionate about mobilizing believers to fight disease in God's name. The audio version of these excerpts is available here: <https://vimeo.com/243756825>

If Satan is the one who perverted and distorted all of nature and developed 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 post-Fallen original sin—a damaged creation. In becoming believers we have monumental obstacles in becoming what God wants us to because 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 we are listed in the Lamb's Book of Life, we're also enlisted in an armed force, in a military operation. Disease, which is probably the most prominent reality among human beings, and also among animals, disease is primarily the work of Satan and we should be deliberately focusing on that. ... We do 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 is 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. ... Jesus is focused on a battle in which we need to be involved. We should 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 the 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. ... We're not warriors here. We're not workers. We're influencers. We're trying to change the course of the entire evangelical tradition. ... We're trying to publish things that will change perspectives. So I would think that we should encourage young people to fight diseases in the name of Christ.

When Business Can Be Mission Where Both Business and Mission Fall Short

(2005) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 41-47)

We hear some people these days talking as if “business as mission” is going to replace—not merely augment—missions. Granted, business-as-mission is different from the kind of tentmaking effort in which people go overseas to “take a job.” The former approach goes overseas owning a business that hires people—and also provides some good service of some kind. Some say the usual tentmaker takes jobs, while “business as mission” makes jobs. However, it is likely not that simple.

Some people think that missionaries only do “church work.” True, missionaries do believe that their central strategy must be to bring people under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and into accountable fellowships within the family and small groups. But missionaries also set up schools, clinics, agricultural ventures and businesses. They are the only workers for whom no human problem is outside their mandate. And one main reason they can pursue any problem is precisely because they do not have to restrict themselves to things that will pay them back for their effort. They don’t have to support themselves. They can do many things by that method that businesses cannot do. This is not to say that good businesses are not an essential backbone in every society.

However, every time a new thought gains wide interest there is the tendency to describe it as entirely new and distinct from earlier ideas (and far better). I have noticed this sort of thing since I myself have done a lot of thinking about the emergence of new ideas in mission. The bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission is actually named *Mission Frontiers*, and has been published continuously for more than 25 years. The International Society for Frontier Missiology has been around many years, and its associated journal, the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (which I have edited the last four years) just now completes its 21st year.

There are Many Mission Frontiers

More specifically, I have been writing and adding to a paper mentioning (now twelve) major frontiers, which, as I see it, have gained our attention during just the relatively short history of our work at the U.S. Center for World Mission.

But even those twelve frontiers range widely over the general field of missions and, of course, all are frontiers in mission in particular. In that list I include frontiers that are no longer entirely frontiers, such as the massive switch in mission thinking from evangelizing individuals of whatever background to the evangelization of specific people groups. This particular frontier peaked in a sense at the World Consultation of Frontier Missions held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1980.

Another frontier I mention in that list of twelve is far less well addressed as yet, and has been called “Radical Contextualization.” It is closely associated with the even more radical concept of the Gospel expanding now around the world in ways not associated directly with identifiable forms of what we loosely call “Christianity.” This more radical frontier I have called “Beyond Christianity.”

Other frontiers mentioned in that paper touch on the way we train leaders in mission lands, the rarely considered interface between Christianity and science, and the perplexing confusion about the works of Satan today. Those works include clever disease germs, which display unexplainable intelligence. Furthermore, they continue their deadly work unnoticed theologically and are thus almost totally unassailed from any theological or Christian point of view. (People in Calvin's day did not know about germs.)

New Frontier: "Business as Mission"

My purpose here, however, is to turn specifically to what could be considered a thirteenth frontier of thinking: "Business as Mission." Although the idea is certainly not altogether new, the mounting and widening discussion of the idea is new—witness the new swirl of related books and conferences. No doubt "Business as Mission" can legitimately be called a "new" frontier in mission awareness and thinking.

This sphere interests me greatly, in part because some of my own experiences involve business activities. During grade school I delivered papers early in the morning. I got paid by the people I served for doing what they were willing to pay for. While in high school, I worked one summer in a heating company spray painting on the night shift. My pay came from the people I served since I was doing what they were willing to pay for. Another summer I worked for the Square-D Electric Company, first as a mechanical draftsman, then later in its quality-control department. Again the customers being served paid for that service. After the war I was hired to do a topographical survey of the Westmont College campus. I did what they wanted me to do. While in seminary I worked as a civil engineer for an engineering company. Those who paid for this activity were being directly served. In missions, however, I have for 50 years rarely been paid by the people whom I directly served—a distinctly different dynamic.

Nevertheless, as a missionary in Guatemala I initiated 17 small business endeavors that others ran. I enabled seminary students to earn their way while in school. More importantly, that then gave them a portable trade after graduation, allowing them to serve beyond the confines of their own acreage. Most earlier pastors were tied down to the soil, so these 17 "businesses" were all portable (as with the Apostle Paul). These registered businesses were also the first ever in which mountain Indians became the registered owners.

Two other missionaries (from other missions) and I started the Inter-American School, which is thriving to this day. I helped very slightly in the founding of an Evangelical university, which today has 30,000 students and has provided almost all the judges in Guatemala.

At Fuller, while on the faculty, I was urged to set up a publishing activity, which is called the William Carey Library. It has been operating for 35 years, sells \$1 million worth of books a year, and is now wholly owned by the U. S. Center for World Mission. I also helped set up the self-sustaining American Society of Missiology, not to mention the U. S. Center for World Mission and the William Carey International University. Both of the latter involve many essentially business functions. The history of missions is full of other examples. The Moravians went out to establish new villages with all of the trades necessary to a small town. They planted what is today the largest retail company (a kind of Sears Roebuck) in Surinam. William Danker's book *Profit for the Lord*, which may well be the classic text on business-as-mission, tells how Swiss missionaries planted a

chain of hardware stores in Nigeria. Those stores not only fulfilled a much-needed function but also displayed an attitude toward customers that was a marvelous Christian testimony. And, of course, every church or school that is planted on the mission field, and is self-supporting, is like a business in the sense that it renders a service and is provided for by those whom it serves. If you add up all such “small businesses” on the mission field (churches and schools), it would run into millions of businesses. This is “Big Business” no matter how you look at it. In fact, I read yesterday that there are “over 500,000 pastors” in Nigeria alone, who are essentially—even if only part time—in that kind of “business.” However, let's look more closely at a general question.

What is business?

Business is basically the activity of *providing goods and services to others on the condition of repayment to cover the cost of those goods and services*. This is not to say that businesses never do anything that does not at least indirectly assist their efforts in image building, public relations or something of that kind. However, businesses that use profits in ways that add nothing to the business would seem to be very rare. Businesses, in fact, that try to do that would, it seems, inevitably run into conflict with their customers' interests, employees' interests, or stockholders' interests. Why? They are jealous if any considerable proportion of the gross income is diverted by the owners to private interests of no concern to customers, employees or stockholders.

Note that business typically involves a concrete understanding between two parties (the customer and the company) and comprises what is essentially a two-way street: the company gives the customer something and the customer gives back something previously agreed-upon. Missionaries, by contrast, serve people from whom they do not necessarily expect to receive anything previously agreed-upon.

However, mission work is, in one sense, actually a business. Donors and supporters of missionaries are, in a sense, the customers paying for a service they wish to see rendered to a third group. The missionaries are providing the services for which the donors are “hiring” them. Note that the ultimate beneficiaries of the missionaries' labors, and of the donors' payments, are needy people in foreign lands who receive aid of some sort without paying for it. Incidentally, when those final recipients get something for nothing it is hard for them to believe what is happening and they often impute lesser motives to the missionaries.

However, missions are not like businesses in one unfortunate way. I refer to the simple fact that most missionaries are not adequately managed and face temptations to slack off or, more likely, to overdo. Most humans cannot survive under those circumstances. Missionaries are for the most part highly dedicated people. That does not mean they will inevitably be good managers of themselves.

However, sooner or later it may dawn on the ultimate recipients that someone wants to help them without asking payment, as in Jesus' case. Is there any better way to communicate God's love?

Of course, it is equally true that a goodhearted and hard-working businessman may be providing a very beneficial service out of genuine love, not just as a means to earn a living. That is equally true, but to the customer, not equally obvious—altruism is so often missing from the marketplace that suspicions will rule.

What Types of Businesses?

You can well imagine that some business missionaries will go overseas and start a business that will be owned and operated by citizens of that country. Others will plant a business or a branch of an international business, owned by the business/missionary, which is an activity that truly serves the people, and is itself therefore a type of ministry. Others will not only plant a business but will expect to support other work from the profits.

Still others may not have the capital necessary or the required expertise to set up a business but can only take a job in the foreign land. Not everyone can buy 20 tons of castor oil at a time, as described in an excellent book I will mention below. The biggest problem I see with Christian college courses on business-as-mission is simply that the average student taking that course may be enamored of this new approach but not be wealthy enough to swing it, even in his own country, let alone amidst all the increased hazards and bureaucracy of foreign lands.

However, just getting a job in a foreign land is what is more often thought of when the phrase tentmaker is used.

Ironically, Paul the Apostle was not that kind of tentmaker. He essentially owned his own business. He evidently on occasion supported both himself and others with him, although they, too, may have helped him in his leatherworking tasks. He also accepted gifts from churches so as to cut down on his need to do leatherworking—that is, he apparently valued his other ministries more highly than his leatherworking as a ministry to customers. Thus, he fits all of these patterns except the one we most often associate with tentmaking, namely becoming an employee in a foreign country.

How is the Business Viewed by the Customer?

I firmly believe there is ample room for businesses owned by believers who work with Christian principles. Those principles, however, may not always be clear to everyone. I mentioned earlier a hardware chain founded by Swiss missionaries. It astonished people by the fact that if a customer bought something that had the wrong specifications or that did not work he could exchange it or get his money back. Thus, for a business to be effective mission, it needs to be perceived by onlookers as a service, not just a way for businesses to make money for the owners, although, frankly, most onlookers will still suspect the latter.

Here in America, of course, all businesses loudly proclaim their desire to serve the customer. We get used to that. We don't really believe it. Businesses in many overseas situations don't even claim to be working for the customer. Neither the customer nor the business owner views the money received as simply a means of continuing the service rendered, but as a contest to see who gets the best end of the deal.

It is also true that no matter how altruistic an owner is, what pulls down many a business or ministry is the very different attitudes of the employees. The owner may have high purposes. The employees may not.

Furthermore, once a business starts overly siphoning off “profits” (whether to increase the owner’s wealth or to help fund some Christian work), the business may be unable to withstand competitors who plow almost all profits back into what they do, either to refine it or to lower their prices below what the Christian-owned business—with its extra drain on profits—can afford to offer.

One of our board members, Ted Yamamori, has edited an excellent book entitled *On Kingdom Business, Transforming Missions through Entrepreneurial Strategies*. In several chapters, the various authors wisely question businesses run by missionaries as a “front” or a disguise for mission work. And they should. To “see through” such disguises is not at all difficult for governments or private citizens. It is questionable whenever “business-as-mission” is simply a clever disguise.

We also read that “micro-enterprises” have their problems. If one woman in a village gets a micro-loan enabling her to utilize a sewing machine, she may produce more for less and be better off. At the same time she may simply put a number of other women out of work in that same village, which is not the most desirable witness.

Special Circumstances with Unreached Peoples

Most of the chapters in Yamamori's book do not distinguish between the attitudes people have where mission work has been long established, and where it is just beginning.

Consider this example. When I first went to Guatemala, as I neared the Mexico-Guatemala border it occurred to me that the border officials of a predominantly Catholic country might not welcome a Protestant missionary. It also occurred to me that, since my most advanced education was in the field of anthropology (not theology), I might get through the border with less hassle if I presented myself as an anthropologist.

I had to give up that idea the moment we got out our passports at the border and I noticed that mine (back in those days) plainly labeled me a “missionary.” As it turned out, when we got out of the car at the border station, our two little daughters (ages two and three at that time) worked their magic, wandering around among the desks of the customs officials and charming everyone with their blond hair. We had no difficulty getting into Guatemala.

Two years later I experienced an “aha” moment when I found myself down at the capital renewing my passport at the U.S. Embassy. For a brief moment in that process the thought again flew through my mind: “Now I can change my designation from missionary to anthropologist.” But instantly, I recoiled at the thought. After two years in Guatemala I had the decades people had learned the difference between a missionary and an anthropologist. Anthropologists are often possessed of the idea that culture is completely relative, so it does not matter how you act. Mountain villages had seen anthropologists whisk in for a few weeks and go out again, leaving behind a reputation of totally immoral behavior. Missionaries, by contrast, came and stayed—for years on end—and were accorded the very highest respect. If I were in a mountain town and needed some cash, as a missionary I could write a simple IOU on a scrap of paper and borrow five dollars from anyone, believer or not. Moreover, the rural towns of Guatemala, even if solidly Catholic, almost always chose a Protestant believer to be the town treasurer.

Thus, in much of the world, even governments with formal restrictions on mission work know the difference between missionary personnel and others. Even where formal government barriers exist, if there has been any long-standing missionary work, there will likely be an ocean of good will among the people toward missionaries.

However, forget all that if you seek to work among a truly Unreached People. In such cases you may wonder how you can ever gain the trust of the people. Whatever you

do, business or missionary, will be subject to suspicion. Any good deed, no matter how generous, will be interpreted as somehow to your benefit. The constant question in the people's minds for perhaps years will be "What's he up to now?" Even in Guatemala, where I had instant respect due to the missionaries who came before me, the people were quite surprised when we returned for our second five-year term. Knowing a bit about the affluence of the society from which we came, they were more likely to wonder why we would want to come back than to discern good will when they saw it.

No Matter What

In any case, "no matter what," every society needs many basic functions and services. Whether as formal businesses or as an aspect of standard mission work, all societies need certain things. They need a banking system. They need fully reliable channels of raw materials and finished products. Curiously, they need guidance in the production of many things they have never seen and for which they can see no use. Think of all the seemingly bizarre novelties coming out of South China these days! And now rural people in the remotest spots around the world can use cell phones to find out what the prices are in a distant market.

Yet in all of this there is absolutely no substitute for honesty and reliability. Honesty is so rare that the absence of integrity alone is the chief drag in many societies. There will always be room for integrity and good will, for the one who keeps his word. In the growth of our young republic, when westward expansion was rapid, connections between suppliers and buyers East and West were tenuous. Two Evangelical businessmen in New York, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, founded a company to compile a list of businessmen west of the Appalachians, mainly those encompassed by revival—people whom they could trust. Today that company is called Dunn and Bradstreet.

J. C. Penney, in the early days, attempted quite successfully to found a business-in-mission. A devout Christian, Penney sought to deliver at the lowest price what people truly needed. A mother in Nebraska could send her two children down to the J. C. Penney store with a note for the storeowner to outfit them for the fall school term. She did not have to worry that they would come home with things they did not need.

In the early days of IBM, any salesman would be fired who ever oversold IBM machinery or services to any company beyond their real needs. As a result, companies no longer put out competitive bids because they could trust the advice and wisdom of the IBM salespeople. Indeed, at IBM even the highest executives had to get out and do sales work once a month in order to stay close to the customer. IBM became strong because it truly served.

Thus, there will always be a tension, real or suspected, between business services and business profit. In one sense, when a customer pays for a good or service, he turns those funds over to a business owner who might do well to consider those funds as held in trust. That money is needed to buy more goods of the kind just sold, to pay wages to the employees serving the customer, and to keep the owner in food and lodging. Those funds may also be needed to pay the equivalent of interest on any business loans that are making the enterprise possible. Certainly, customers' payments ought to be spent on improving the service rendered. The funds the customer gives ultimately and most legitimately should be used to benefit the customer, to maximize the service rendered. It

ought not be a question merely of how much a business can “get” for something it is selling.

Now what if the product the customer is paying for is scarce or unique and a high price can readily be charged? The income beyond cost can effectively be spent in improving the product or streamlining the service. Can it legitimately be diverted to a Christian ministry unrelated to the customer's interests?

Polarization

Here at our Center in Pasadena we also have a university, the William Carey International University. The latter is committed to what we term “International Development.” This phrase refers to any and all types of contributions in a society—religious or secular—that contribute to the building up and healthy development of that society. This is what beneficial businesses are doing. This is also what missions are doing. The latter more often renew hope and vision, while the former deal with more concrete things, the essential stuff of daily life. At times, the missions are more heavenly minded than they are of earthly good. Businesses are sometimes the opposite, of genuine earthly good but with no thought whatsoever for eternal values. This is an unfortunate polarization.

In our own midst, we sense this same polarization. We have three staff families in India. One has started a business that is owned and operated by Indians. In the second, the husband has held an academic position in a university there and still is able to witness among a wide range of intellectuals that church people in India could hardly touch. The third is working with church leaders on a curriculum with mission vision, even though the husband has an advanced degree in science.

All this can be confusing. Right on our campus we have a university devoted to development, mainly run by missionaries without business experience. Some people may find it hard to understand why it exists because they don't understand the full spectrum of missionary concern as exemplified by the broad perspective of William Carey after whom the university is named. Even in this book to which I have referred I sense this same polarization.

When I was in Guatemala I lay awake many nights pondering the problem of a vast mountain Indian population that had cut down all the trees for fuel and heat, eaten every animal form of life for food, and tilled every square inch of flat (and even very steep) land. Among these dear people were thousands of faithful believing (and slowly starving) Christians.

For my own thinking process I wrote a paper entitled “The Future of the Rural Man.” I showed it to a State Department official who happened to be visiting a missionary friend out in our area of the mountains. He showed it to the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City and suddenly I got invited down to the capital to talk it over with about twenty of the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) workers assigned to Guatemala.

When I was done with my presentation, one man asked me what I would do if they allocated \$10,000 to my work. I told them that what my people needed were raw materials light enough to be imported economically, the capital to buy those materials in advance and to pay for essential equipment, the know-how for which their patience and hand skills were appropriate, and reliable connections to outside markets. I realized that

they could never get out of poverty selling to each other (why do the microenterprise people not see this?) Thus, I said, if given \$10,000 I would use it to place ads in the *Wall Street Journal* seeking multinational businesses to discover the potential labor market these Indians constituted. I never saw any of their money.

I perceived at that time a subconscious polarization between five different spheres:

1. *USAID type (money-giving) agencies.* They have often worked as if they can solve any problem by throwing money at it.
2. *The commercial world.* Whatever people say, this is a substantial backbone to any country, but which is an activity not expected to be altruistic.
3. *Political people at the State Department level.* For these people governmental reform is the most vital matter.
4. *Peace Corps people.* They were assigned a variety of good things to do, such as starting chicken farms. In Guatemala they were instructed to have nothing to do with missionaries.)
5. *Finally, religious agencies.* These entities, like my own Presbyterian mission, were involved in building schools and conference centers, doing Bible translation, church planting and literacy work, founding hospitals and medical clinics, and even fielding fulltime agricultural specialists, etc.

An Example

The Peace Corps man, who lived in a village near where I worked, always avoided me. But once I found myself going up a steep narrow street and saw him coming down. I instantly knew that we would at least have to exchange a greeting. I had heard that his two-year term was soon to end and wondered what he had understood of what I was doing. When he approached I stuttered out a hello and asked him how the chicken farm was going. "Lousy," he complained. "I don't think it will continue when I leave." I knew he had put his heart into it, so I asked him what was the problem. He snarled, "You can't trust these Guatemalans. When I leave each month to go to the capital for our Peace Corps briefing, the egg production drops on exactly those two days. No, you can't trust these Guatemalans."

By this time I had been in Guatemala for almost ten years, so I took some offense. I found myself replying, "Look, you want to find an honest Guatemalan? That's the business I'm in. I can find you an honest man in any village of Guatemala." By then every village in Guatemala had at least one Evangelical congregation of humble people whose lives had been renewed because of a heavenly hope and a new earthly Master for whom deceit and dishonesty were detestable.

I could tell he didn't believe me. Maybe I exaggerated a little. Nevertheless, mission work still has an inherent advantage. The diversity, mutual antagonism, and lack of coordination of the earnest efforts of the agencies I have listed above is a real burden and hindrance to development and hope. This burden and barrier is really only nearly erased when you get into the world of the religious agencies, particularly the standard missions. By "standard missions" I don't mean the specialized religious relief and development agencies. They also cannot be effective in most cases unless the religious agencies get there first and generate honest people. All agencies need enough renewed

people to create the minimal integrity required to manage the essential developing infrastructure of a country.

Not even in this country do we have enough renewed people of that kind. I am disappointed with the amazingly popular (and good) book—Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life*—which is entirely devoted to all the good things church members can do in helping their local churches in their after-hours time. I can’t find one word about the quality or focus of the believer’s work during their forty-hour week. Not even in this country are there very many visible Christian businesses, for that matter.

But there is one more consideration.

The Cultural Mandate?

A number of people these days refer to the Genesis “Cultural Mandate” which was given to Adam, note, before the Fall. This way they feel they can rightly and reasonably justify earnest Christian efforts in just about any good business which is essential to the growth and welfare of society. These people also speak of what is called “The Evangelistic Mandate,” which arose of necessity after the Fall, and was intended to advance the Kingdom and thus redeem the fallen creation.

However, these are not complementary mandates. They are sequential. The cultural mandate came first, and assumed no emergency. The cultural mandate is like what happens in peacetime. But, when an emergency strikes (such as a tsunami or war), while cultural (read domestic) activities cannot totally cease, they will be radically modified. As I look back on my experience during the Second World War, I remember both civilians and servicemen being totally caught up in the war. I vividly recall that even domestic activity was extensively bent and refitted to support both the true essentials of society as well as the war effort.

The gasoline being burned up by war vehicles on land, armadas of ships and submarines at sea, and hundreds and even thousands of fuel-burning planes in the air, did not leave enough gasoline for anything but truly essential use at home. You could be fined \$50 (today that would be \$500) for going on a Sunday drive with the family if that trip did not include some war-related or crucial civilian-related purpose. Nylon stockings vanished in favor of parachute cords. Coffee totally disappeared as a non-essential.

What I am saying is that, while the vast array of activities that can be included in a business or Cultural Mandate are good and important—and while the Cultural Mandate has never been rescinded—after the Fall of Adam the Cultural Mandate is no longer enough. Nor can the Evangelistic Mandate be purely “heavenly-oriented.” After the Fall it is no longer merely a matter of getting people prepared for heaven, it is a case of preparing them both for heaven and for all-out, knock-down, drag-out war against the powers of darkness and evil. Emergencies, both physical and spiritual, now exist and must be dealt with on a wartime basis or the glory of God will continue to suffer.

Two Mandates or One?

It is impelling that both mandates should be merged into a single “Military Mandate,” which, in this life, in the story of a reconquering Kingdom of God, may well be the only mandate we should be concerned about. A Military Mandate logically includes all the essential civilian functions. It must also include fighting evil and the works of the devil, which is essential to the “reglorification” of God. This is in addition to

true reconciliation of humans and the new life of Christ within them and whatever is necessary to accomplish that redemptive and recruiting function.

The Second World War definitely unified these two mandates. When the Allied forces were poised to invade the continent on D-Day, they were, of course, seeking to liberate the French (Belgians, Dutch, etc.) from the oppression of Nazi occupation. But that could not be their only purpose. To do that they first had to track down and defeat Hitler and destroy his evil empire. In fact, defeating an evil empire was no doubt more prominent in their minds than liberating Paris.

Today in business or missions, then, we cannot simply go out to do good to people in need. People don't just happen to be poor. They are oppressed. Yes, by humans, but also by intelligent, evil powers behind both social and biological evils. Human societies are riddled with graft and corruption and greed and unscrupulous operators of all kinds, for whom human life is meaningless. Furthermore, all poor populations, more than anything else, are dragged down and decimated by intelligent evil attackers too small to see with the naked eye.

Missions and businesses are both good at helping people who get sick. In fact, money from sick people fuels the single largest industrial complex in this country next to education, namely the medical/pharmaceutical complex. But virtually nowhere is many needy and crucial activities for which sick people are not paying, that is, the eradication of the very pathogens that haunt most human societies on the face of the earth. Even in the U.S.A., these deadly but tiny terrorists kill millions per year, dragging down nine out of ten Americans to a premature death. Note that in this arena we can find no insights in Luther or Calvin's writings because they did not know about germs.

But, in any case, where there is no income there is no business. The medical/pharmaceutical complex gravitates to artificial substances that can be patented and sold at a very high price, and to medicines for chronic diseases which ensure that their customers will be long term. That's just "good business." This means that market remuneration will not as effectively support a business if it seeks outright cures or especially if it seeks to eradicate the causal pathogens. Only a supported "mission" can deal with those things. That sort of "mission" can be found in the Carter Center (which is attempting to eradicate five major diseases), and also in the nearly unique Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The latter, unlike most universities and even the National Institutes of Health, is not dependent on funding and bonuses from the pharmaceutical industry.

Lamentably, most of the research done by universities and our government is extensively subsidized (and in effect controlled) by outside commercial interests. Thus, the monetary investment in all the world's efforts focused on eradicating pathogens amounts to pennies when compared to the energies expended when humans notice and must pay for help with their illnesses. It simply is not "good business" to create medicines for poor people.

If we wish truly to glorify God in all the earth, we need to realize that we cannot go on allowing people to believe that our God is not interested in defeating the Evil One. The Bible plainly states that "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil" (1 Jn 3:8). Only that way can France and Belgium be truly liberated. Only that way can we do as Paul described in his mandate to Agrippa: "To open

[peoples'] eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18).

Unfortunately, I don't see business being of any great help in this. And, while I see missions focusing on both earthly and heavenly blessings, I don't see any significant effort—mission or business—aimed specifically at the defeat of the works of Satan, beyond rescuing humans from their spiritual problems. They are certainly not significantly recruiting them for war and the casualties war expectably entails. In this case, I refer to everything from auto accidents, diseases, addictions, marital distress—you name it—things that we do not usually attribute to an intelligent enemy, but which drastically curtail effective ministry. We seem to assume that the world is simply the absence of good rather than the presence of both good and dynamic, intelligent evil. Is there even one substantial Christian agency (or even secular or Christian business) in the world focused specifically on the eradication of pathogens that tyrannize the entire world to this day?

Realistically, in a given country either sluggish or lagging Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) is more likely the result of disease than any other single factor. We are almost blind to that fact, even if we ourselves get sick. During ten years in Vietnam we lost ten American soldiers per day. In Iraq we are losing ten a day. But in this country due to cancer and cardio-vascular disease alone we are losing 300 times that many per day. In other words, our losses due to heart disease day by day equal 300 Vietnam or Iraq wars. Meanwhile, note that while we poured billions of dollars into Vietnam and are pouring multiple billions into Iraq, not one percent of the money spent on patching up heart patients is focused on deciphering the now clear evidence that infection is the initial and major factor in heart disease.

What is our "business" under God? Is it good enough for us to traverse the globe with good but relatively superficial remedies? Or, does our mandate derive from the larger, Biblical purpose of defeating the intelligently designed works of the Devil and in that way restoring glory to God (which, incidentally, benefits man)?

Or, is it good enough simply to make people feel secure in this life and hopeful about eventually getting out of this sin-filled world and through the pearly gates? Right now that is the main thing the church is doing. In stark contrast are things like restoring creation, restoring God's glory, rediscovering Satan's works, and deliberately destroying his deeds and deadly delusions. You can't win a war simply by caring for the wounded. The fruits of evil—sickness, poverty, illiteracy, and inhumanity—draw our attention when we need to be concerned with the roots of evil.

This is a "wartime" and Biblical perspective, yet it has apparently evaporated into the thin air of the current mood, which is defined by an artificial and inadequate (albeit pervasive) peacetime mandate. The Biblical mandate is "the Gospel of the Kingdom," not merely a "Gospel of salvation." The Gospel of the Kingdom is the central matter of God's will being done "on earth as it is in heaven." It is a mandate that is distinctly larger than getting along in this life with the help of business, and getting to heaven with the help of missions. God's glory is at stake. His glory is our main business. ■

What Are Mission Frontiers

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http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_4_PDFs/155-158%20RDWMissionFr.pdf

I appreciate very much the invitation to address this important body. I have been asked to talk about the nature and background of “frontier missions.” I will begin by quoting the unofficial definition of *mission frontiers* which has been used by the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*.

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, “to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.” (Acts 26:18)

Background of Mission Frontiers

The World Missionary Conference of 1910 was held at the city of Edinburgh, Scotland. It has been one of the most influential forces in the history of missions. It formed a “Continuing Committee.” It left behind many volumes of speeches and research. It founded the *International Review of Missions* (now edited by the World Council of Churches and called the *International Review of Mission*). The Continuing Committee convened a meeting in 1921 which formed the International Missionary Council. Later meetings eventually led to the formation of the World Council of Churches. Finally, in 1961 the International Missionary Council was merged into the World Council of Churches. This resulted because the national-level councils which formed the membership of the International Missionary Council had for the most part become councils of churches rather than councils of mission agency representatives.

In 1910, however, the concept of “frontiers” was mainly envisioned in terms of the number of individuals to be won to Christ. World population was divided into groups of 100,000 people, for example, and Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, etc. were sup-posed to commit themselves to winning a certain number of *individuals*.

By the end of the 20th century numbers of individuals were still taken seriously but goals were much more likely to be defined in terms of the number of human societies yet to be penetrated. The phrase “Unreached Peoples” became the basic term. Lists of Unreached Peoples became the basis for defining the remaining task of frontier missions. The key point was that planting more churches where some already exist is a task that is relatively simple and easy compared to the much more difficult task of planting churches in a society where there are not yet any Christian churches.

It has gradually become clear, how-ever, that to plant churches among unbelieving people it is necessary to do far more than to convey to them a recipe for how to get to heaven.

In the past few years in our work we have encountered frontiers of various kinds. I have been making a list. These are simply things which we have perceived as frontiers. All of them relate directly or indirectly to glorifying God in all the earth, among all peoples.

I will list these “frontiers” roughly in the order of our encountering them. Originally a two-part article in *IJFM* 20:3/20:4, it is now Chapter 10 of my recent book, *Frontiers in Mission* (William Carey International University Press, 2005), which describes each one in greater detail.

1. *Unreached Peoples*—the idea that for some groups no one has ever conveyed the Gospel effectively in their language and culture. That is, there has not yet been a “missiological breakthrough” to these groups.

2. *The Great Commission and Abraham*—the idea that Genesis 12:1-3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4-5, and 28:14-15 actually constitute the Great Commission Jesus relayed in Matthew 28:18-20. The wording in the Greek OT for Genesis 28:15 is very close to that of Matthew 28:20.

3. *From the Unfinished Task to the Finishable Task*—the idea that the task of gaining a “missiological breakthrough” to every remaining Unreached People can be finished. This is no doubt only an intermediate goal but it is at least “finish-able.” The number of Christian congregations around the world is far more than 500 times as large as the number of remaining Unreached Peoples!

4. *Failure with the large groups and the off-setting trend to “radical contextualization”*—the idea that huge groups such as the Japanese have not yet gained a truly indigenous fast-growing church movement, and the need to rethink our approach along more radically contextualized lines.

5. *Reverse Contextualization, the Recontextualization of Our Own Tradition*—the idea that missionaries ought not only to “contextualize” their methods with unreached peoples but also to re-examine the extensive cultural adaptations which have been made historically in their own form of Christianity.

6. *The Reclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom*—the idea that for the Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth, much more must be done than simply get individuals saved.

7. *Beyond Christianity*—the idea that missionaries may start movements which will in turn create other movements which may be far less Western in their cultural orientation, and may not even use the word “Christian.” Today there are millions of such believers in Jesus Christ in Africa, India, and China.

8. *A Different Type of Recruitment*—the idea that it is unwise for mission agencies to wait until young people are college graduates to recruit them for the cause of missions. If they can be contacted years earlier they can be advised about the courses to take in college and the answers to intellectual problems they encounter. By the time they graduate from college, whether or not they feel led into missions, they will be far better missionaries or lay people.

9. *A Trojan Horse?*—the idea that school books in both Christian schools and secular schools are very misleading, but that there is a way to directly impact what is

taught. It would seem urgent for churches and missions to work together to develop supplemental booklets that will augment and contradict the books used in schools. Such supplementary booklets could then be employed 1) in Christian schools, 2) in home-school contexts, 3) by Christians teaching in public schools, 4) very importantly by Sunday Schools, 5) but most importantly by concerned parents (who may not be able to count on any of the first four).

10. *Needed: a Revolution in Pastoral Training*—the idea that young people are not the right ones to fill our pastoral training schools around the world. It is better if pastoral selection is made after people grow up and prove their maturity and leadership gifts. Only then is it more likely that the right people are being trained. Otherwise, those who become pastors are young people who may be smart and well trained but not gifted. The result is that the churches suffer from such pastors. As it is all around the world, our seminaries are training the wrong students, with the wrong curriculum (no science), and with the wrong degree names.

11. *The Religion of Science*—the idea that God has given us two “books” of revelation 1) the Bible which is His Book of Scripture, and 2) nature, which is His Book of Creation. He does not want us to slight either one. Yet the sad situation is that, in general, millions of intelligent people (the scientific community) are studying the second and despising the first, and millions of church and mission leaders are studying the first and ignoring or rejecting the second. We cannot win people to Christ whose own knowledge of nature is denied by the church.

12. *The Challenge of the Evil One*—the idea that our present theological tradition is more influenced by Augustine than by any other theologian. Augustine started out Manichaean and eventually reacted so violently against it that he essentially banished references to an Evil One. In his writings, as in Neo-Platonism in general, all things are to be seen in terms of God’s often mysterious purposes. For Augustine, facing tragedy and harm and disease is simply a case for us to trust God not only to work things out for good but to trust that God had some good reason to bring it to pass in the first place.

Much could be said about this, but for me the key point is that if God does everything and we do not employ both of the Biblical perspectives about the work of God and Satan we see in the Bible, we will find ourselves unable to fight against the causes of evil for, in that case, we would be fighting against God. John Calvin did not know about deadly germs. Even if he had known about them he might not have seen them as having been designed by Satan. Now that we know about deadly germs we have no theology to fight them and no mission to destroy them. We let people get sick and then try to make them well. As Christians we sense no mission mandate to glorify God by destroying the works of the Devil.

This is not a comprehensive list of mission frontiers but it can serve the purpose of illustrating the concept. All of these relate directly or indirectly to the winning of Unreached Peoples.

However, there are also certain strata of society which need special attention.

Special Unreached People Problems

Some social units within all people groups, usually including leaders, present special problems. People within these spheres cannot readily be won by the evangelistic message we ordinarily use. Some strata in societies, some spheres of activity—such as

the realm of the scientists around the world, or that of business leaders—are environments in which people want to know more than a formula for getting to heaven. They are struggling with various questions our traditional evangelism is not answering.

These questions may be considered intellectual frontiers. They are just as important to the Christian Mission as geographical frontiers, cultural frontiers, or linguistic frontiers.

1. Some scientists, business leaders, and university professors are perhaps alarmed to hear reports that the Bible teaches that the world is only six thousand years old.

2. Such people may be concerned to hear that Christians don't believe in medical approaches to disease, just prayer. They may think Christians believe that first century knowledge about healing is all we need to know, on the basis of the Biblical statement that "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

3. Such people may be worried by the idea that the God of the Evangelical Christians does not care or isn't very eager to help in fighting disease despite the fact that diseases around the world cause both the suffering and premature death of almost all human beings even in the industrialized countries.

4. Worse still, such people may hear that the Bible teaches that God is the author of all bad things—but that He has mysterious reasons. For example, Evangelical proponents of seeing "intelligent design" in nature are now being faced with Harvard professors asking why God would design a para-site that blinds millions of people.

Such questions are frontier barriers for key leaders in all parts of the world today, keeping them from believing in Christ. Rural uneducated people we can still win. Rural people and poor people may still be willing to leave such questions unanswered. They may have nothing to lose if they accept an entirely new religious culture. But, such questions are constantly making young people, college students and thinking adults lose their faith. Thousands of American Evangelicals may have already lost their faith. They may still go to church and appear outwardly to be believers, but they now live in two separate worlds intellectually.

I personally have no such double mind in such matters for I have had many more years to think about these questions than people who are 20 or 30 or 60 years younger than I am at 80.

I can, in fact, briefly explain my own answers to these four intellectual frontiers.

1. As to the accusation that the Bible teaches that the world is only six thousand years old, I would point out that the very conservative Evangelical Bible scholar, Merrill Unger (taught at Dallas Seminary), and also the famous C. I. Scofield, have in their writings acknowledged or insisted on the same thing: the possibility of the great ages of the old earth preceding the events of Genesis 1, thus giving room for both the "Old Earth" and the "Young Earth" positions.

2. In regard to the Christian faith restricting itself to the healing methods of the first century, it may well be a widespread tendency but the Bible surely does not lend itself to this kind of an interpretation. The Bible, by contrast, urges us to know all we can about God's creation and to employ that knowledge to do His will.

3. Unfortunately, the accusation that Christians do not have a theology for fighting against evil in the form of deadly germs is true to some extent. Too many of us have assumed that commercial processes would deal with disease. But it is plain that the

huge global pharmaceutical industry is first concerned for profits. This does not lead them seriously to combat disease pathogens but mainly to produce medicines they can sell to people who are already sick.

However, if a substantial new Biblical vision among Evangelicals can be created, and if that new vision will go on to effectively promote the necessary efforts for the conquest of disease origins (not just sickness), Christians can set a much better example. We need to encourage young people not just to be “missionaries” but to accept the mission of Christ to “destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8).”

4. In the fourth case I must admit that to whatever extent we teach a theology which ignores the ongoing power of Satan to destroy and distort God’s creation, that will inevitably expose us to the accusation that we worship a cruel God. It is not enough to explain suffering and tragedy as merely the result of “God’s mysterious purposes.” We must acknowledge that Augustine allowed Neo-Platonism to obscure his understanding of the on-going activity of Satan. And we must recognize that God expects Christians, not just secular scientists, to join forces in the war against “the works of Satan.”

This last frontier leads to two further considerations, two massive frontiers which are a much bigger subject than can be properly addressed at this time. I can at least point them out.

1. American churches usually sponsor “Sunday Schools,” and sometimes grade schools on their church property. But what they teach is often totally unrelated to what their youth from 1st grade through graduate school are learning. Students at any level are unable to find answers at church week by week. Children learn about Darwinism during the week and learn about David slaying Goliath on Sunday. College students no longer attend their home churches and even if they did there is no relationship between what they are taught and what the more balanced Christian perspective might be.

The future of missions is dangerously damaged as long as all our young people are raised without proper exposure to the Christian answer to the problems that come up almost every day in their school classrooms. Keeping them in Christian schools is not the answer. They need to know the problems and they also need to know the answers.

2. A second, equally serious frontier is the fact that all of our lay people who are now out of school are working at least 40 hours a week in many different jobs. We want them to be good people and to witness for Christ, but we do not, as a church or mission, assist them to see Christian meaning in the work they do. They may not realize that “getting saved” is just the beginning. God is not asking them to seek the highest paying job. He is asking them to do whatever is the most urgent contribution to the Kingdom.

Preachers may be happy for their lay people to earn lots of money and be generous in giving their time and money to the church. Do preachers ever tell their lay people that they ought to seek another job because the work they are doing is not an important contribution to the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth? The very famous book *Purpose Driven Life* makes not the slightest reference to the holiness of the 40-hour week.

For example, do we ordinarily discuss in church the work which Samsung does? Is the work that corporate giant does something which God approves? Can the many different tasks Samsung performs be for all its workers “a holy calling”?

Surely cell phones and TV sets are a helpful contribution to conquering evil on a global level. But huge TV screens in private homes may burn up the Lord’s money in

ways that subtract from more important uses of money. Many computer games are as harmful as addictive drugs and are destroying future generations of missionaries and mission leaders.

The theology of the Puritans evaluated every human endeavor to make sure it constituted “a warrantable calling.” For them, for all believers, our work must be our ministry and our ministry must be our work. It is not just a way of earning money to live. It is our main contribution. We live to work. We do not work to live. And the needs of the Kingdom must define the choices we can make in our work. I don’t see either pastors or missionaries emphasizing this truth.

The Bible tells us that “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8).” Jesus also said, “In the way my Father has sent me, in that same way I send you (John 20:21).” This is the Biblical definition of our mission. Most believers have not yet discovered that they are all called of God to fight the works of darkness and thus to glorify God. “Let your light shine in this way: your good works will glorify your Father in heaven (Matt 5:16).”

I am not talking about individual good works. I am not referring merely to people of morality and integrity, as important as those things are. I am talking about teams of people working together, mission societies, mission agencies accepting responsibility for engaging major evils in the Name of Christ.

The tragedy is that, if fighting evil is a divine mandate, this mandate today is actually being carried out by many thousands of earnest and intelligent non-Christian people in the world, not by members of the church. This ought not to be.

Frontier #1: Restoring God's Glory

(2008) (Foundations Lecture #19)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035f239f92865859c06885/1594056486339/Foundations%2BLectures.pdf>

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 Unfolding Story of Scripture: Part 1

(2008) (Foundations Lecture #4)

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When I was growing up I was constantly bombarded in Sunday School and in sermons in church with an endless stream of stories coming out of the Bible. I became familiar with key figures like the Good Samaritan, Moses, Peter, David, Abraham, but I never knew that they are all part of one unfolding drama. I did not know if Isaiah came before Moses, after David, before Job, etc. It just never occurred to me that the Bible was one big story.

Gradually it became clear to me that the life of Christ was a story told over and over again in the gospels. Then I realized Paul the apostle came into the picture and wrote lots of letters, but I never got it straight which letter came first. Finally, I got interested in John and the Book of Revelation and I assumed John came last.

But the Old Testament was still a massive confusion. I guess I knew that Genesis started things off but the rest was a trackless wilderness.

In my twenties while at Princeton Theological Seminary, I was assisting in a local church where I taught an adult class. For the first time I got it in my head that it ought to be possible to tell the story of the entire Old Testament in sixty seconds!

Everybody in the class learned how to do it. I'm really not sure what this accomplished for the people in the class, but I know that for me it was very helpful. I began the story with Abraham leaving Ur and going to the promised land; then later being forced down into Egypt due to a drought; after 400 years then Moses came out of Egypt with the children of Israel; 40 years wandering in the wilderness; Joshua taking the people into the promised land once again; ushering in a period of 400 years of confusion called the judges; the prophet Samuel reluctantly choosing a king; David and all that; the northern tribes break away and get captured by the Assyrians; finally, after 400 years of kings, the southern kingdom is taken off to Babylon and after 70 years about one third dribbled back right up to the date of Jesus' birth, completing 400 years from the end of the southern kingdom.

That's about sixty seconds. In addition, over the years, growing up in a missions-minded church, I gained the idea that there were some significant verses in the Old Testament that talked about missions so that it was plain in a vague sense that God always had missions in mind but was apparently waiting for the ascension of Christ to set things in motion.

For example, I actually preached sermons here and there on Isaiah 49:6. The verse seemed plain to me that it was a secondary matter that the children of Israel in bondage in Babylon would get back to their land compared to the importance of sending missionaries to the ends of the earth. Little did I realize for many years that the phrase "ends of the earth" actually referred to the area where they were captives. "It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth." That sounds like a missionary verse, doesn't it? But actually God wants them

to witness to their captors— which was probably much more difficult for them than sending missionaries at a distance. In other words, earth was the flat plain, and where the plain ended in the mountains of Iran or Turkey was the ends of the earth.

This radically altered my understanding.

Psalm 67 was another Old Testament reference possibly to missions where in the 7th verse it speaks of “all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

However, the biggest sea change in my thinking came from Genesis chapter 12 where, as we saw in the previous lesson, the concept of missions is reiterated five times. All the families of the earth are to be brought into the family of God.

Thus now we have a continuous story running from Abraham to Christ. In the earliest period of the patriarchs, according to Martin Luther’s commentary on Genesis, Abraham was a witness to seven other surrounding peoples.

Then in the period of the Egyptian captivity, God had a mission purpose of reaching out to the Egyptians. Who knows what actually happened. Some of the documents discovered in the tomb of King Tut apparently can be found in the Psalms, though that would have been quite a bit later.

The period of the judges was more like the Crusades than it was a witness to the surrounding nations, although there is no question that many of the nations gained a real fear of the God of Israel.

In the period of the kings we see the Queen of Sheba coming to learn from Solomon. We read of the Syrian Naaman coming to Israel to seek the healing power of the God of Israel. We read of Jonah being sent to Nineveh.

Then once again as a result of the Babylonian captivity they are, as we have seen in Isaiah, expected to be salvation to their very captors.

One missing element in this story is what happened to the northern tribes. We don’t know for sure but we do know that in Jesus’ day (as Peter put it in the book of Acts) Moses was preached in every city of the empire. Perhaps some of the northern tribal peoples were involved in that kind of diaspora (or dispersion).

By mechanisms of going or coming and whether voluntarily or involuntarily, it would seem that God was in the mission business whether His chosen people fully understood that fact or not.

It seems like today most believers “live and move and have their being” with only the slightest awareness if any at all of the grander plans of God. This is the reason why, after Paul spent three years in Arabia rethinking his understanding of the Bible, he felt he had to refer to God’s plan of the ages as being a “mystery.”

In doing so he was no doubt aware of his own earlier ignorance of that plan and the general ignorance of his hearers, and he excused them by saying it was a mystery. But clearly it should not have been a mystery. Today it’s the same—it shouldn’t be a mystery, but it is.

It is terribly unfortunate that the overall purposes of God are either unknown or nearly totally ignored by believers in the contemporary church. That grim fact is the reason for the importance of a course like this one.

You can go back through the whole Old Testament yourself, and there are glimmers of a larger story at a number of points. One of the clearest is in Exodus 19 where God says to Moses beginning in verse 4,

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

A clear New Testament reference to this is in 1 Peter 2. Peter says,

You also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

If you stop right there, you get the impression that the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is what is being mentioned. However in verse 9, Peter goes on,

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

This latter statement does not negate the Reformation idea that we all have direct access to God somewhat like priests. But it emphasizes the more important role of a priesthood to declare the praises of Him Who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light. In other words, the missionary significance of Exodus 19 is clearly preserved in what Peter says in I Peter 2.

This idea of a distinct plan unfolding from Genesis 12 on is fairly easy to establish. In more recent years I have gained an even larger picture, more difficult to see, and it has to do with events prior to Genesis 12. When you stop to think about it, it does not seem very impelling to suppose that at Genesis 12, with Abraham, God launched an entirely new plan. What kind of a plan would it be that would unify the Bible not just from Genesis 12 on but unify the Bible from Genesis 1:1 on?

One reason we cannot easily see the connection between the first 11 chapters of Genesis and what follows is because our cultural heritage, for most of us, is the Reformation, a period during which the big issue was how to get to heaven. The Catholics seemed to be saying you work your way to heaven or even pay your way to heaven, while the Protestants insisted that you must believe your way to heaven. I think that the Protestants by emphasizing belief were more safely right, although their emphasis has often been understood to mean "belief in certain doctrines," not the kind of heart belief the Bible talks about. Of course, the Catholic emphasis on works is not entirely wrong either. In fact, biblically you cannot separate heart faith from heart obedience. They are two sides of the same coin.

Thus, in a sense, the Protestants gave a better answer to the wrong question, a better way of going to heaven, but the question was not central in scripture. Jesus even went so far as to say "He who would save his life will lose it but he who will lose his life for my sake and the Gospel will find it." In other words, a better answer to the wrong question or at least to a lesser question.

Back to the point. If Genesis 12 is interpreted to be merely the beginning of a global campaign to get people out of this planet and into heaven, then the earlier part of Genesis does not easily fit in.

However, if, as we saw in the previous lesson, the blessing of God through Abraham actually inducts those who respond into a kingdom at war, then we can easily note that that war began with Genesis 1:1, the first defeat coming when Satan seduced Adam and Eve; God struck back with the choice of Noah and the elimination of an evil generation. Then God's choice of Abraham is seen as another "selectivity" which enables another new beginning to be played out in the text of the rest of the Bible and the subsequent centuries of the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

Thus, what unifies the Bible is not simply the redemption of humans but their redemption to fight a war against evil. We look almost in vain for reflections of this war in David's prayers and Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. It is hard not to think that their own salvation from their enemies is the most important thing. God's concern for "the foreigner" is there but very marginally so.

Meanwhile God's chosen people are not necessarily the only people on earth who seek His face. His people will both bless and be blessed in their Babylonian captivity. They will regard it as mere punishment rather than an opportunity to witness or an opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of Satan's continued intelligent opposition, yet witness they did, and learn they did, despite their overwhelming preoccupation with their own situation, their own land, etc. (Isa. 49:6).

In preparation for the next lesson there is one thing to note about the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In Genesis Joseph tells his brothers, "You did not send me to Egypt, God did." This gives us an example of how the Old Testament often looks at things from the point of view of God's purposes in an event. This statement does not constitute a denial of what the brothers did. It is simply a different way of looking at it.

Something similar exists in the case of David sinning by counting the people. In 2 Samuel 24:1-25 the text has God being the one who "incited" David to do this wrong. The same 25 verses, verbatim, occur in a centuries newer document, 1 Chronicles 21:1-25, where the only difference is that this text says that Satan "incited" David to do wrong.

Note that Chronicles was written after the Babylonian captivity took place and it is possible that the Jewish theologians had had their awareness sharpened regarding Satan due to their many years of living in the domain of the dualistic Zoroastrians who acknowledged two equal Gods, one good and one bad.

The Jews rejected the dualism but may have recognized more clearly than before the existence of personal opponent and destroyer of God's work. The word "satan" occurs in the Old Testament over 20 times mostly in the sense of "adversary," but as an evil person only in 1 Chronicles and Job. When Jesus called Peter a "satan" he was no doubt saying Peter was an adversary. Most of the time in the NT the word "satan" refers to an evil intermediate being working to tear down the works of God and thus His reputation.

The result of the Babylonian experience is a striking difference between the Old Testament perspective on evil and the NT point of view, which incorporates in numerous passages the existence of Satan as a person, something rarely represented in the OT. But that will have to wait until next time. This is merely Part I.

The Gospels and Christ: A Global Perspective

(2008) (Foundations Lecture #7)

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“If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Luke 11:20).

There is a perfectly huge amount of literature on the subject of the Kingdom of God. You can find endless discussions about when such a Kingdom is going to come and if it is already here. The New Testament talks about it in both ways. You can even read about the supposed or possible difference between the Kingdom of God, which is a phrase most frequent in Mark and Luke, and the Kingdom of Heaven, which occurs in parallel passages in Matthew. John has very few occurrences of the Kingdom of God.

This particular statement, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you,” is not found in Mark or John, but in Matthew and Luke. In Matthew it is one of the only four instances where “Kingdom of God,” not “Kingdom of Heaven” occurs. The phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” occurs 32 times in Matthew and no other place in the entire Bible.

Many scholars believe that Matthew and Luke build on Mark to begin with, which is the shortest of the Gospels, but that Matthew and Luke were able to employ an additional document, called “Q,” which is merely the first letter of the German word for “source.” Thus, possibly some of the four references in Matthew to the Kingdom of God rather than Kingdom of Heaven may have come in from the Q document.

The best explanation for Matthew’s use of the Kingdom of Heaven in place of the Kingdom of God, as I see it, is the fact that Matthew was beamed to Jews and they did not believe in pronouncing the word “God” but tended to use the word “heaven” instead. Jesus Himself may have done that in the Lord’s Prayer, where the word “God” does not occur but rather it says, “on earth as it is in heaven”—that is, as it is in the domain of God’s rule.

In any event, if someone on the mission field who has never heard of the Bible were to read the Gospels for the first time they would clearly get the idea that the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven), is the main subject—not in the sense of “how to get to heaven” but how the power, the rule, the authority of God—of Heaven—can get to earth, how His Will can come on earth as it is in heaven.

By contrast, the religious mutation of Christianity that emerged from the Reformation focuses on the opposite, turning the New Testament upside down, allowing us to misread dozens of passages.

Apparently in the long, slow history of Western civilization, before the Bible was really widespread, Christianity did not present a challenge for change in this life so much as it helped people otherwise lacking in any conceivable earthly hope to submit to the “as is” situation and fix their hopes on the afterlife.

The Bible much more focuses on God’s will, His Kingdom, becoming a reality in this life. I am still enough of a fundamentalist not to think that the world is going to get

better and better until Jesus comes to congratulate us on our accomplishments, but I do think He expects us to work toward that end whether it is attainable or not as a means of glorifying His Name, and empowering our evangelism. What rings in my ears is the phrase in the parable, “Occupy ‘till I come.”

If Jesus had just gone around and urged people to wait out the next world, the Gospels would have been very different from what they are. Jesus challenged every kind of evil. Your readings this time make reference to the series of very unusual concerns He had, which contrasted sharply and unexpectedly with the perspectives of the devout and religious disciples.

Indeed, to this day we extensively misunderstand the NT. We don’t often hear people interpreting the Parable of the Prodigal Son as primarily presenting the older son as the Jewish people who did everything right but could not understand the Father’s love for the other nations, who, in their perspective, were unredeemable.

You see the same modern confusion about the parable granting equal wages to workers who were not there all day. This procedure would logically have astonished the earlier workers, who, in this case, typify the Jews who are consternated over God’s goodwill to the gentiles as seen in the behavior of Jesus.

This missiological issue became a very drastic situation as recounted in Luke 4, when Jesus deliberately pointed out two Old Testament instances where God was good to non-Jews. In that case the synagogue crowd exploded in fury and surged forward to kill him.

In other words, standing back, removing our religious glasses that seem to see everything in terms of how we can have our sins forgiven and get to heaven, we can begin to glimpse an almost entirely new scene in which the issue is not so much salvation as mainly service, that is, what we do after we get forgiven. In fact, Jesus actually said, “he who seeks to save his life will lose it and he who will lose his life for me will save it.” Very slight variations of this statement occur in all three synoptic gospels, actually twice in Matthew and Luke—verses rarely quoted by Evangelicals.

This repeated emphasis of Jesus has a very different meaning from a common approach in evangelism where you begin by asking a person if they were to die right now would they go to heaven, thus focusing attention in the very beginning on how they might seek to be saved.

Jesus’ “message” is summed up in the Gospels as two words: “repent and believe,” which probably meant something like, “give up your own pursuits and follow and obey Jesus Christ.” Yet we interpret it to mean, “ask forgiveness and assent to a short list of theological statements and you’ve got it made.”

Look at John 17:1:

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”

Or, John 17:2:

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Or John 4:33:

Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?” “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

This verse makes clear that God has work on earth to do. Connect that statement with the following (John 17:4):

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

In these verses you can see clearly the New Testament balance—the New Testament indissoluble connection—between the recruiting of human beings and new life in Christ and the work of the Father.

For Jesus to glorify the Father it was necessary for the Father to glorify Him. In some sense it’s the same with us. But for God to glorify Himself in us is not an end but a means to the end that we might glorify Him.

However, we normally take all this to mean that God’s main purpose is to rescue men and to glorify them, when the fact is that He is equally recruiting men to serve Him as Jesus did in glorifying His Name. Jesus recruited people into the Kingdom of God which was an important achievement, but He also was recruiting them to do as He did—as He said, “As my Father has sent Me even so send I you.” He didn’t say, “As my Father saved Me so save I you.” That’s the Evangelical interpretation which essentially ignores the entire larger cause of redemption. Seeker churches and Evangelicals in general are usually seeking people who seek to be saved rather than people who are willing to repent and believe and be God’s servants in following Jesus and serving as He served—both saving men and seeing them glorify God.

One of the very key verses in this respect is 1 John 3:8,

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

In the New Testament “the works of the devil” to which Jesus could refer were drastically limited by His hearers’ limited understanding of creation and of the fallen condition of creation. For example, they knew no more about germs than John Calvin did. The challenge for us today is to discover what Jesus would have said to them had they known what we know about germs, in other words, would He have said that germs are one of the works of the devil which He and His followers are to set out to destroy?

It is common today among many Evangelicals to be content with the first century understanding of nature and to believe that if we can just build up our immune systems enough through eating the right things, in other words whole foods, organic foods, instead of degraded foods, that we will then be able to throw off any disease whatsoever. It is admittedly amazing to the extent that this is true. But there are still a large array of diseases from smallpox to SARS to Guinea worm to river blindness to tuberculosis to dengue fever which we have to go out and slay. The healthiest immune system will not guard you against malaria.

Challenge 1

In other words, a major challenge faces anyone who lives in the age where we can actually see tiny parasites like malaria in microscopes and we can trace the four very clever stages of their attack on the human body. We have even noticed their insidious

change in their human hosts to make the bodies of those infected attract more mosquitoes so their infected blood can be transmitted to still more victims. I point this out simply to illustrate the extensive difficulties in understanding for our day what Jesus wants to say to us if we merely focus on what He said in the first century. With increased insight into the works of the devil we have an increased span of responsibility. Our Christian mission becomes different and larger.

Challenge 2

The second major challenge to which we need to refer in this lesson is the very perplexing question of how the New Testament is different from the Old Testament. In the early centuries, Jews did not want to be persecuted along with the Christians and understandably sought to make clear to the government that the Christians were not Jews. Thus, lamentably, many Christians were tortured and executed because Jews made that point to the government. The Jews had certain rights of religious expression, on which the Christians, they felt, ought not to depend.

Meanwhile, there was an enormous cultural difference between the increasing numbers of followers of Christ who were Greeks, and the proportionately decreasing numbers of Jewish followers of Christ. The distance became isolation. The isolation bred prejudice, antagonism, and criticism which grew across the centuries.

For these reasons exaggerated contrasts were often drawn between the Old and New Testaments giving the general impression of the inferiority of the earlier testament. Walter Kaiser, Jr., an eminent Old Testament scholar, does not even think the phrase “Old Testament” is a helpful label. But his perspective is not the understanding of the mainstream of our Christian cultural tradition.

As a result, when we study the contrasts and continuities between the Old Testament and the New Testament we find ourselves walking on eggshells. Very few people are as willing to recognize the continuities as the contrasts. But the continuities are obviously the most basic doctrines of the entire Bible.

Just last Sunday I heard a sermon that stressed the fact of grace in the New Testament versus the fact of law in the Old Testament, when in fact Abraham was as much saved by grace as anyone in the New Testament. There’s no significant distinction between the grace of God and the power of the blood of Christ to forgive, whether you lived before or after His birth. It’s also true that faith is not something that was invented in the New Testament or that came to light only in the ministry of Christ or the apostles.

When Paul, in Romans 1:5, stated his commission under God “to bring about the obedience of faith in all nations” he wasn’t saying something that was brand new to the New Testament. When in the next chapter he insists that the meaning of circumcision is “circumcision of the heart” he’s not saying anything different from what we read in Jeremiah, or even back in Deuteronomy.

It is patently false that the Old Testament is where people got saved by obeying the law and in the New Testament people get saved by giving intellectual assent to a list of basic doctrines. This perspective is simply heretical, far removed from the thrust of the Bible. In both testaments obedience from the heart is described as faith, and this is the kind of faith that saves you. It’s not a case of believing that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for people’s sins. Faith and obedience in the Bible absolutely cannot be

separated in either the Old Testament or the New Testament, no matter what the Reformers thought, whether Protestant or Catholic.

There are other reasons for people making distinctions between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The so called dispensational school detects cultural differences that are significant enough to them to imply theological differences. For them the dispensation of the Old Testament is radically different from the dispensation of the New Testament. I grew up in that stream of thinking, but the longer I live the more it seems that the continuities between the two testaments are much more significant than the differences.

In the New Testament one of the major shifts is the departure from the symbolism depicting the slaying of animals for the forgiveness of sin. But it was never true that faith was not essential in the process of animal sacrifices. The Old Testament itself often makes that point—that obedience is even better than sacrifice. So this is not the basic distinction between the two testaments but simply a deeper awareness of symbolism which would be significant for both Jew and Gentile.

It is thus true that Christ's sacrifice has been interpreted as a replacement for Jewish sacrifices. But, notice, this is a replacement of symbol rather than a replacement of meaning.

Also, there is the shift in the New Testament from the misunderstanding of some, that only Jewish people could be saved, to an awareness of the access to God of all peoples. But even this is simply a heightened awareness rather than a distinction. Many Gentiles came to God in the Old Testament.

In any case, we must resist the thought that the Gospel is like a baton passed from the Jews to the Gentiles and was never really possessed by the Jews. That idea goes along with the thought that somehow true faith was first discovered in the New Testament and is now possessed solely by the Gentiles.

Take a look at Paul's generalization in Romans 9 about the failure of the Jews to attain righteousness (Rom. 9:30-32):

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.

If we don't understand this we will have a hard time evaluating the eternal prospects of people like Zechariah and Elizabeth or even Mary, the mother of Jesus. Contrary to what some people think, God did not just choose anybody to be the mother of Jesus. When Gabriel said to her, "You have found favor in the sight of God," he wasn't telling her she had won the lottery, but was speaking to someone whose character was appropriate to the assignment that God had for her. She had already, it would appear, the kind of faith that Abraham had who also did not know the details of the substitutionary atonement of the shed blood of Christ.

Challenge 3

In conclusion we can refer back to a previous lesson where we noticed the interrelations between the Jews in captivity in Zoroastrian territory.

This makes for a truly major difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is very important to realize that most of the Old Testament things are

described in the terms of God's ultimate control over all events—His sovereignty. We do not need to go over that again. We do need to understand that the New Testament recognition of an intelligent adversary who is in some sense “the God of this world” even after the Cross is both a major new perspective but also one that is rarely recognized.

In Summary

We can see at least three “challenges” as we seek to understand the New Testament:

- 1) the continuity of belief that works against evil
- 2) the general question of the continuities and differences between the testaments
- 3) the important and specific difference in the way bad things are described.

Thus, we see the indissoluble unity of the Bible in regard to the relentless purpose of God to reconquer a planet under the control of an evil one, and to recruit men and women to be involved in that task.

Eradicating the Causes of Disease as an Aspect of Kingdom Mission

(2008 and various dates; compiled by Beth Snodderly from Winter writings on this topic.

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The principal concern in all of this is the distortion we can see in many people's ideas of God. In coping with this, they may frequently attribute to God what is actually the work of an evil intelligence, and thus fatalistically give not the slightest thought to fighting back.

In scripture we see the prominence of the emphasis on the coming of God's Kingdom, and note that "the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil" (1 John 3:8). What if all disease pathogens as well as all violent forms of life are the work of Satan? How would that amplify and refocus our global mission?

When Satan Turned against God

When Satan turned against God precisely what kind of destruction and perversion did he set out to achieve? Where would we see evidence of his works? Would he set out to pervert the DNA of originally tame animals and micro-organisms? Would he employ powers of deception so that we would get accustomed to pervasive violence in nature and no longer connect an intelligent evil power with evil and suffering? Is this what Satan set out to do from the time he fell out with the Creator—that is, did he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into an arena "red in tooth and claw" that reigns today?

Distorted Ideas of God

There are very many people who are profoundly puzzled, perplexed, and certainly confused by the extensive presence of outrageous evil in the created world of an all-powerful, benevolent God. The principal concern in all of this is the distortion we can see in many people's ideas of God. In coping with this, they may frequently attribute to God what is actually the work of an evil intelligence, and thus fatalistically give not the slightest thought to fighting back.

Fighting Back against Disease

We need to recognize the very radical and significant decision of God to create beings, angelic and human, with true free will and to work through those intermediaries. God, we know, invites us to bind up the wounds we can see with our eyes and to ward off evil which is large enough to see without a microscope. But He also has seemed to await human collaboration in fighting the microbiological roots of evil.

Theology of Disease

Our theologies, that is, our formalized ways of attempting to think biblically, were hammered out during centuries that were totally blind to the microscopic world. Our current theological literature, to my knowledge, does not seriously consider disease pathogens from a theological point of view—that is, are they the work of God or Satan?

Much less does this literature ask the question, “Does God mandate us to eliminate pathogens?” We have an un-updated theology, thinking that we aren’t responsible to do something about something we can’t see (microbes). But now that we CAN see these microbes and now that we have new knowledge about the outside sources of several massive diseases, we cannot in good conscience fail to do what we can to mount new offensive warfare with those attacking sources.

Discovering Origins Rather than Treatment and Prevention

Surprising recent insights show that many diseases are basically caused by outside invaders which we need to fight in the same sense as we fight the crime of visible terrorists. Does nutrition, exercise, banishing anxiety, etc. protect you or cure you of malaria? Are our immune systems normally capable of defeating malaria, tuberculosis, smallpox, anthrax, etc.? No, not normally. And, if the latest thinking is correct, slow-acting microbes underlie heart disease as well as cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and schizophrenia. So, do we just go on praying in addition to doing what we can to prevent diseases (good nutrition, exercise, etc.)? It is understandable, of course, that we would not automatically think about going beyond prayer and taking concrete measures to quell the source of these destructive diseases if we did not know that they are caused by attacking pathogens which our immune systems, no matter how healthy, cannot always overcome.

Bringing Glory to God

To destroy the works of the devil in the realm of disease is one major way in which our testimony of word and deed can glorify the true nature of our living God, our heavenly father. It is to rectify our God’s damaged reputation. It is to avoid extending the implicit and embarrassing policy of almost constantly misrepresenting Him around the world.

In regard to horrifying disease and violence in nature, people have become so used to it, so accustomed to it, so hardened to it, that they have drifted into suppositions that this must be the way God created things. And then people get to thinking that a God who does not mind violence, cruelty, and suffering is not the most appealing kind of a God to serve. Attacking the roots of disease is part and parcel of our basic mandate to glorify God in all the earth.

Both believers and non-believers are stumbling about wondering over the amount, the harshness, and the unpredictability of evil in our world. Indeed, the credibility of an all-powerful and loving God is constantly being called into question by people who are no longer content to suppose “that God has His reasons.” We may indeed not know all His reasons. But do we have reasons for our inaction?

“The ‘First Chapter’ of the Bible: Genesis” 12–50

(2008) *Foundations Reader*, 47-49

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The Introduction of History

In our study of Genesis, it is important to recognize that Genesis is always broken into two parts, Genesis 1–11 and 12–50. In my estimation, Genesis 1–11 is the introduction to the whole Bible, not just to the book of Genesis. The reason this section of Scripture is an “Introduction,” not just to Genesis but to the whole Bible, is that it portrays a problem so serious that the whole Bible is centered around it. In some ways Genesis 1–11 introduces all of subsequent history. These passages start out by presenting the beauty of God’s creation. The entrance of evil is introduced. It talks about the hopeless result. And what better backdrop for the whole Bible could you present?

In fact, the opening chapters of Genesis confront the reader with an almost insoluble problem. All the efforts of humanity up to this point are hopeless. Humanity is set on committing evil continually. The stage is set, then, for a Plan (The Plan) that has yet to be announced. The Plan is announced in the “first chapter” of the Bible, Genesis 12-50.

If I was to print a Bible I would pull Genesis 1-11 out and use it as the divinely inspired *Introduction* to the whole Bible. That is because Genesis 1-11 presents the stage on which all the biblical events are played out. Then Chapter One would start with Genesis 12–50. Chapter Two would be Exodus and so on.

The First Chapter

For the actual drama, Act I, the curtain opens at Genesis 12. Genesis 12:1-3, is essentially the announcement of the subject of the entire Bible. From our point of view the Great Commission first appears, of course, in Genesis 12:1-3. The Commission also reappears four more times. It reappears more than that in fragments, but the key phrase “all the peoples of the world” occurs four more times. Two of these times are in the case of God’s relationship to Abraham (or Abram, and later Abraham), one time with Isaac, and one time with Jacob.

Now, Genesis 12:1-3 is a most amazing section of Scripture. First of all, a remarkable plan is launched that affects every human population on the face of the earth. It builds on the fact that those populations have been put out of communication with their Creator Father God. In addition, it proposes a solution for the reintegration of those peoples back into the Father Creator God’s global family.

Terms like *bless* are used. Now that word *bless* can be traced to mean more than the re-inheritance of a person, but also the *adoption* of a person. And this is consistent with New Testament terminology to that same effect.

Then when it comes to the second verse, Genesis 12:2, we come to an imperative verb: “You will be a blessing.” Now, this is the same word but with a different meaning. We as individuals do not go around the world pronouncing a blessing in the same sense that the Bible pronounces a blessing on the oldest son, who then officially inherits the

authority of the family and corresponding responsibilities. God is the one who blesses not only us but all other peoples; and through us other peoples will be blessed by God. That is very important. So the word blessing stretches to include several possibilities.

Then, when we come to this phrase *peoples* in Genesis 12:3, the reference is to a relatively small group: *mishpa'ah* in the plural in Hebrew. The same word does not occur in 18:18 where this same Commission comes up again, nor in 22:18 or 26:4-5, where you have the second two references to Abraham and then Isaac. The word does reappear, however, when Jacob comes into the picture in Genesis 28:14-15.

The Commission and the Plan

Several considerations need to be noted about the fivefold repetition of this Commission. First of all, recognize it is a *Commission*, not just a Promise. The Jewish people reduced it to a Promise. They considered it a promise God had made to them, not merely a promise that included and obligated them in their response. It was meant to be an opportunity and an obligation. A subtle and disastrous misunderstanding occurs when we understand in our own Christian lives that God is simply out to bless us, and He does not care about brothers and sisters in our own family, or our neighbors, or the peoples across the world. Such views turn salvation, which is global in its very essence, into an individual heresy.

American culture has upheld this heresy probably more than any other of the world's cultures. In America today, with terribly evil results in our own society and all around the world in so far as our perspectives pervade around the world, people have been taught that it is safe and sound, even reasonable and heroic to seek your own salvation. Jesus said in essence, "Seek to save yourself and you will lose your life." (Luke 9:24) Seeking self-salvation and self-limited promises is the most dangerous thing you could do! Yet our Constitution actually suggests that the pursuit of happiness is part of our national goal. While this may be true, it should not be. It is a disastrous goal.

So right here in Genesis, the Plan of Redemption of all the earth is announced and instituted. These early chapters of the Bible have a global perspective. God is not just interested in *only* us—his "chosen" ones. And we cannot fellowship with God if we assume we have His undivided attention. You know how small children sometimes want undivided attention, and they will push another sibling off because they want their mother's full attention. This is counter-productive behavior. We cannot love and fellowship with our Father in heaven or with this global family of Christians unless we can understand that God's love exceeds the existence of the Christian community and extends to *all* the peoples of the earth.

Now these first three verses of Genesis are so significant, that it is a tragedy that they are reduced to merely a "Covenant" or the "Abrahamic Covenant". What an absolute loss when this incredible Plan of Redemption is mentioned as a minor or marginal matter.

Let me give you a lurid example: I was at a huge city church in Des Moines, Iowa some years ago, and I was in the Pastor of Christian Education's office. There was sitting on his desk a brand new book, which consisted of nothing but cartoons. And there were cartoons, four per page, that ran clear through the Bible, from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. So, I thought, "I'll look up the Plan of Redemption. I'll see how this summary of the whole Bible treats this Plan of the whole Bible, this Plan of Redemption, which gives the theme for every passage in the Bible."

So, I found where Abraham came into the picture, and sure enough, God is telling Abraham to go some place. And then the next picture shows him fighting a lion on his way to Egypt. Well, that is right in Genesis: he is on his way to Egypt. Now, it doesn't say anything in the text about lions, but little kids like lions, so put a lion in there. Keep the kids awake, keep them on the subject.

This is clearly *off* the subject! To mention that God asked Abraham to go to a different country, and then just rush on to a lion on the way to Egypt, is totally to destroy the meaning of the Bible. When we attempt to teach the Bible and actually destroy it, this is really evil. Yet you find that same paradigm in book after book in the Christian libraries all around the world, as they treat the book of Genesis. They ignore or downplay or just comment in passing on this Commission, which actually is repeated four more times: twice to Abraham in 18:18 and 18:22, once to Isaac in 26:4-5, and once to Israel (or Jacob) in 28:14-15.

The Commission in Both Testaments

Remember that the Bible, the Old Testament, is in two different languages. It was originally, presumably, in Hebrew and Chaldean. Who knows exactly what dialects there were behind the various authors who crossed the large period of time that it took to produce the Old Testament? But the oldest documents that we have that refer to the text of the Old Testament are not in Hebrew, but in Greek. Hundreds and hundreds of years before our most ancient Hebrew manuscripts, there are Greek manuscripts that are translations by Hebrews who were bilingual in Hebrew and Greek.

We do not consider the Greek translation of the Old Testament scriptures as the inspired text; but we do not have the original documents of the inspired text. So Greek is a helpful reference to the Bible, and is probably less studied than it should be. It is important to realize that the Septuagint, this Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, was the Bible of the early church. There are some scholars who even believe Jesus had access to the Septuagint, as that translation was called. It was the most influential translation of the Bible ever made. Our current Bibles follow the order of the Septuagint, not the order of any Hebrew Bible. So the impact of that Greek Bible is very important, and it probably was accessible to Jesus Christ and certainly was accessible throughout the communities of the early church.

In order to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, early scribes had to engage in a kind of paraphrasing because of the differences in thought and language between Greek and Hebrew. Interestingly enough, the paraphrase from the original Hebrew into Greek of the passage in Genesis 28:15 reads very similar to the wording of Matthew 28:20. Following the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-19, and the Great Commission as stated in Genesis 28:14, you have the statement, "I will be with you even to the end." Now, of course in Genesis the text does not read "of the world," whereas in the Matthew 28 the text reads "of the world." But the great similarity of the actual wording in those two passages gives rise to the obvious thought that Jesus was consciously paraphrasing Genesis 28:14-15 when He gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.

Now why would He do that? Why would He not go back to Genesis 12? He gave this commandment in this way because He was speaking to the children of Israel. So, He

basically repeats the Commission as it was originally given to Israel, which is recorded in Genesis 28:14-15.

Thus, as consideration is given to the two parts of Genesis and the role of the Great Commission in the whole of the Bible, exciting dimensions are opened up for reflection.

The Last Act: Introduction

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Intro. The Five Mysteries in the Background

Early humans lived on a flat earth entertained at night by tiny lights in the sky moving in puzzling ways. Later they learned that they existed on the surface of a huge spheroid hanging in space, and still later discovered that the large hot, light-giving object daily crossing the sky was something their planet itself circled. Much later they learned that this immense hot object was just one of billions of stars in a swirled structured galaxy which could be seen as a whole swath of tiny lights across the sky they called “the milkyway,” so large that travelling in a space ship 186,000 miles per second it would take 100,000 years to cross it. This was hard-won knowledge. But it was nothing. Less than a century ago—in my lifetime—humans further discovered that our enormous galaxy was only one of at least 100 billion others.

Furthermore this huge reality—no matter how far away its scattered, distant parts—is apparently made up of a subset of mysteriously structured tiny atoms which run from the simple to the very complex, with centers comprised of some of the strangest realities of all. These atoms, plus an entirely different kind of reality variously called radiation, forces and fields—electrical, magnetic and gravitational—combine in thousands of ways to constitute basic, inert matter, that is, air, water, fire, sand, rock, mountains, clouds, thunderstorms, etc. However, most mystifying of all, the majority of our most experienced astronomers now believe that all of this enormous universe popped out of a very tiny object about 14 billion years ago, a phenomenon called the Big Bang. This is all hugely mysterious, a veritable bundle of mysteries. But let’s just call it Mystery One, The Inorganic Universe.

Mystery Two, Life. Additional to all of the above is the type of living entity that is peering up at those tiny lights. Those humans which have been doing the looking represent a whole different but equally mysterious reality called the organic, that is, life forms ranging from pheromones and viruses to hippopotamuses—objects while composed out of the inorganic, constitute a radically different, second, reality. The *inorganic* is like a piano. The organic is as different from it as the music that can be played on the piano. The music depends on the piano but the piano does not depend on the music. And, can you believe it, all the objects in the entire organic world also derive from something very small—each in a reaction which could be called the Little Bang—namely microscopic specks incorporating billions of coded molecules which predict the form of life that will develop from each such speck. For example, every human being, without exception, has developed out of a very tiny speck called a *zygote*. Create the *zygote* and you have created the human.

Furthermore, the very appearance on this planet of this phenomenon I have called the Little Bang is quite mysterious—even the very smallest and “simplest” forms of life being incredibly complex, and so far as is known, to be found on no other planet. While astronomical reality is enormously larger but mainly so far away as to be difficult to study, microscopic reality is much closer but so tiny as to be difficult to study. However,

whether scientists try to peer into the nucleus of an atom in the inorganic world, or into the nature of tiny pre-embryonic life in the organic world, they have come to no consensus whatsoever about origins, that is, where these things came from. Yes, once in existence, both astronomical reality and microscopic reality can be watched in ongoing development, tracked and predicted to some extent, but absolute origins are still absolutely mysterious.

You might say that scientists have no consensus about absolute origins, unless it is not to think about them. Even the most widely held conclusion of scientists, the supposed phenomenon of unaided, unguided, random evolution of life, is by no means universally accepted. In actual fact, the lengthy development of life forms may be more parallel to the 20th century development of the automobile, an evolution of a sort involving thousands of intelligent inputs at every moment in that century-long process.

Something only recently discovered is that long before the appearance of human beings, the record of the development of life suddenly burst into new complexity and for the first time predatory forms of life—at every level from, bacteria to dinosaurs. It is possible to speculate that if God was employing thousands of intelligent, angelic beings to elaborate and develop life, and if one of the leaders of those intelligent beings were to have turned against Him, would that not explain the sudden presence of life-destroying forms of life in the Cambrian period?

A Third Mystery looms into view as soon as we go from the common denominators of all life to notice the very significant difference between animal life in general and that particular form of animal life, *homo sapiens sapiens*—the one which has sought to interpret the tiny lights, or has been capable of selective breeding of both plant and animal life. Plant cultivation and breeding has been estimated to have first appeared about 11,000 years ago. The intelligent and intentional breeding of wolves into tame and friendly dogs began about that same time, according to very recent proposals. All of the major food sources in use today, rice, wheat, corn, potatoes, etc. are the result of this kind of very intelligent, patient selective breeding and resultant genetic alteration.

Other forms of life, called hominids—or human-like animals—distinctively lack such capabilities. But, how did this new, very recent, very intelligent, reflective animal come into being? Scientists, again, present no consensus. Various pre-human forms of life—the hominids and even the Neanderthals—had the opportunity in what would appear to be far more than 11,000 years to develop. But nothing like computer chips ever appeared in those lineages.

This introduces a Fourth Mystery, namely the phenomenon of human culture, or civilization. Neither computer chips nor the latest automobiles could have emerged from the work of an intelligent but solitary individual. Many things have happened only because a whole globe of intelligent humans have worked in an awareness of each other's progress. Just as computers working in tandem have greater capacity, so humans in advanced collaboration have done (and are doing) otherwise "undoable" things.

A curious aspect of the phenomenon of civilization is the fact that the so-called "archaic" civilizations (à la Toynbee) seem to appear without background. The Egyptian Sphinx and pyramids appeared in the earliest portion of Egyptian history. The Stonehenge circle in England was apparently more sophisticated in an earlier construction. The very sophisticated Sumerian society from which Abraham came had been in decline for 800 years; how it got started is a mystery. The Teohuanacans who preceded

the Inca empire created more exquisite pottery. The sudden appearance of these early advanced civilizations is, in fact, so mysterious a phenomenon that some secular scholars have suggested that they must have come already highly developed *from outer space*. So much for that mystery.

Our final (Fifth) mystery is what the New Testament actually calls a *mystery*. It was not supposed to have been a mystery down through Jewish history, since it was made clear to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. This mystery involved a radically different way of looking at things, which was courteously or euphemistically called by Paul a mystery instead of a blind spot. In Luke 24 we note that Jesus went further he bluntly stated that his hearers ought to have understood what they apparently did not—that a chosen people was called to special *service* not just *survival*.

This radically different way of looking at things allows us to see the appearance of human beings as created for the specific purpose of restoring creation by advancing God's Kingdom—even though, through sin, human history has become for the most part a story of human self-aggrandizement rather than conquest of evil. (Humans, unlike other animals, have more often fought their own flesh and blood than principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this earth.) This way of looking at things allows us to recognize in the early pages of the Bible the ingredients of the Great Commission in the call of Abraham and his foretold involvement in the redemption of all the peoples of the world.

Yet, the followers of Christ have to a great extent fixated on how, personally, to get to heaven. That has been an attractive emphasis, of course. The Evangelicals have done a bit more than that, in a sense, by setting aside a relatively small part of their hearts, lives and resources to assist others to get to heaven (especially those at the ends of the earth) But the idea continues to be that the advance of the Kingdom consists merely of the rescue of humans not the restoration of a *corrupted creation* and the defeat of the Evil One.

By *corruption of creation* we must recognize genetic damage (not just “defects”) both before and after conception, terribly hostile pathogens, viruses, bacteria, parasites, wild animals for eons, but now more recently, warlike and genocidal humans as well.

Jesus' death on the cross has been seen as a tragedy essential to the rescue of humans and the restoration of creation.

For most Evangelicals there is a massive “dis-connect” here. We can clearly see a monstrous, pervasive distortion in creation, but we don't realize how illogical it is to blame all that on God, as some do, instead of attributing it to an intelligent Evil One. A better explanation for the massive suffering in nature might be that many forms of life at all levels of size and complexity although earlier created benign, have been distorted into vicious mutations by a skillful, destructive tampering with their DNA by the Evil One and his evil servants (whether human or angelic).

But our disconnect blinds us to the theological significance of the corruption of all creation. We tend significantly to reduce our concerns to the purely immaterial—the emotional and mental—problems of humans. We let Jewish and secular doctors tend to the problems of disease control. They may at this point, unconsciously or consciously be operating from a more Biblical theology undented, as ours is, by Augustine's neoplatonism.

The curious truth is that our tendency is not only to allow God to be blamed for all appearance of evil, but to resign ourselves to “not understanding God” when evil

appears, thus excluding the instrumentality of intelligent evil powers. As a result our evangelism would seem to be drastically and unnecessarily enfeebled in so far as it does not portray our God as opposing such things, *and enlisting us in fighting against them.*

This ought not to be construed to be a pre-sumption of human success in quelling all evil but rather the alignment of human effort with God's purpose to defeat all evil. That kind of alignment will more fully portray to an unbelieving world the true attributes of our God, and thus forever remove a truly major barrier to belief—namely, the artificial and unnecessary question of why a good and all powerful God would sponsor evil in nature and human affairs. This, now, is merely the backdrop of what I am calling “the final chapter.” Why final? Because innumerable parameters indicate that what is not happening on this planet cannot proceed much longer. We are driving sixty miles an hour into a brick wall in regard to the rapid exhaustion of fossil fuel. We now see what the mere existence of too many people on this planet can do to alter even global climatic conditions. Our next four episodes will ask what has been the brief, 4,000-year record of Kingdom advance, that is, what is the record of events since the plan of conquest was given to Abraham—which is a brief, 4,000-year story so complex that for most people is simply meaningless.