

FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD  
CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT:  
*A LARGER PERSPECTIVE*

Course Reader

REVISED EDITION

INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT: A LARGER PERSPECTIVE

This Course Reader is specifically designed for use in the Foundations of the World Christian Movement course.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD  
CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT:  
*A LARGER PERSPECTIVE*

– COURSE READER, Revised Edition –

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INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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# Foundations of the World Christian Movement: *A Larger Perspective*

## Course Reader

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The Kingdom Strikes Back</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 7   |
| <b>The Story of the Battle for Our Planet:<br/>Declaring God's Glory among All Peoples</b> - compiled by Beth Snodderly ..... | 25  |
| <b>A Summary of Ralph D. Winter's Warfare Missiology</b> - compiled by Beth Snodderly .....                                   | 33  |
| <b>Overview of the Mysteries</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....  | 37  |
| <b>The Christian and Old Testament Theology</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 41  |
| <b>The "First Chapter" of the Bible, I</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....  | 47  |
| <b>"Historification" of the Big Picture</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 51  |
| <b>The People of God and the Other Nations</b> - Roberta H. Winter .....  | 57  |
| <b>Exegesis and Hermeneutics of Isaiah 49:1-6</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 63  |
| <b>The Times of the Gentiles</b> - Walter Russell .....   | 69  |
| <b>Reshaping History: Alexander the Great and Global Civilization</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....                                 | 75  |
| <b>The Post-Exilic Period</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 79  |
| <b>The Political Landscape and Jewish Messianism</b> - Walter B. Russell .....  | 83  |
| <b>Some Thoughts on the Significance of the Post-Exilic Period</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....                                    | 97  |
| <b>The Gospels from a Global Perspective</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....  | 101 |
| <b>The Challenge of the Kingdom</b> - N. T. Wright .....  | 107 |
| <b>The Growth of the Church in Judea and Samaria: Acts 3-12</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....                                       | 117 |
| <b>Paul's Letter to the Romans</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....  | 121 |
| <b>Paul's Middle Missionary Letters</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 139 |
| <b>Issues in the New Testament Church</b> - Ralph D. Winter and James Emery .....   | 145 |
| <b>The First Four Hundred Years (0-400 AD)</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....  | 153 |
| <b>Disciples of All Nations</b> - Philip Jenkins .....  | 159 |
| <b>The Second Four Hundred Years (AD 400-800)</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 173 |
| <b>The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 179 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>The Third Four Hundred Years (AD 800–1200)</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....                            | 189 |
| <b>The Significance of Medieval Christianity</b> - Lynn T. White, Jr. ....                           | 195 |
| <b>The Fourth Four Hundred Years (AD 1200–1600)</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                           | 211 |
| <b>The Fifth Expansion</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....  | 215 |
| <b>The Evangelical Awakening</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 219 |
| <b>Student Movements in Missions</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....  | 223 |
| <b>Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                 | 229 |
| <b>The Retreat of the West</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 237 |
| <b>The Legacy of Edinburgh, 1910</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 241 |
| <b>To the New Asian Society of Missiology: Greetings from the West</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....        | 247 |
| <b>The Kingdom Era Is Now</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....   | 253 |
| <b>I Was Bombed by an Explosive Idea!</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                                     | 257 |
| <b>A History of Transformation</b> - Paul Pierson.....   | 261 |
| <b>Twelve Frontiers of Perspective</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....  | 267 |
| <b>Churchless Christianity</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....  | 283 |
| <b>The Analysis of a Movement</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....   | 287 |
| <b>The Role of Western Missions in the 21st Century</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....                      | 299 |
| <b>Making Sense to Today’s Scientists</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                                     | 303 |
| <b>Where Darwin Scores Higher Than Intelligent Design</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                     | 309 |
| <b>Join the World Christian Movement</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                                      | 313 |
| <b>A Blindspot in Western Christianity?</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                                   | 319 |
| <b>Theologizing Prehistory: Implications for Mission</b> - Ralph D. Winter.....                      | 323 |
| <b>The Warfare Missiology of Ralph D. Winter</b> - Beth Snodderly .....                              | 329 |
| <b><i>Shalom: The Goal of the Kingdom and of International Development</i></b> - Beth Snodderly..... | 343 |
| <b>The Story of Our Planet</b> - Ralph D. Winter .....   | 351 |

# The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History

*Ralph D. Winter*

**M**an 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

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tersely summed up: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 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 Jn 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 *become* 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.

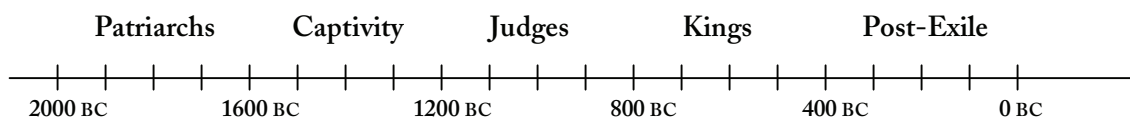
## The First Half of the 4,000-Year Story

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.

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## 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 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, Sabeans (of the land of Sheba), Babylonians, Persians, Parthians, Medes, Elamites and Romans.

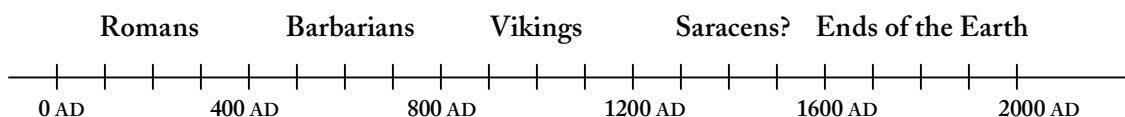
## The Second Half of the Story

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

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



unique blessing and 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 page 21. 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 Moses," but to those unfamiliar with the Mosaic law, he preached the "law of Christ" in such a way that it could be fulfilled dynamically and authentically in the new circumstances. While to some he appeared to be "without law," he maintained that he was not without law toward God. 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 struc-

ture 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 auton-

omy 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 invad-

ers 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 coun-

try 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. 84).<sup>1</sup>

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 con-

cept 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 unparalleled 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 be-

fore 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 outweighed 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 re-formation 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 overreaching 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.

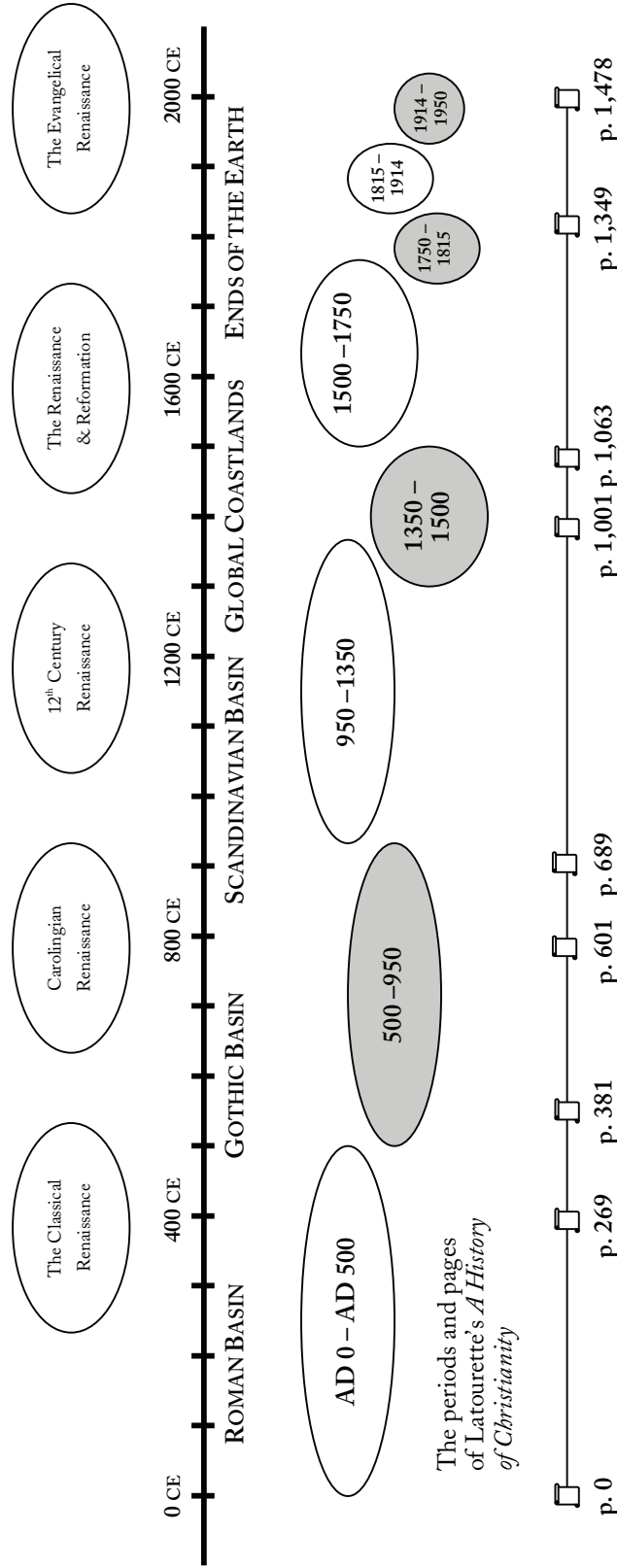
### **Period V: To the Ends of the Earth, A.D. 1600–2000**

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

# 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."



## 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.

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 worldwide 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.





# The Story of the Battle for Our Planet

## Declaring God's Glory among All Peoples

*Excerpts compiled by Beth Snodderly*

### Restoring God's Glory

God is at work in history through the Holy Spirit, reestablishing His glory through “general” and “special” revelation, partnering with humans, in the task of defeating The Evil One and restoring Creation through Jesus Christ.

### The Mission Task

The Bible makes it clear that our mission is to glorify God among all peoples and that this is essentially a battle against “the works of darkness.” “The chief end of man is to glorify God” goes the familiar catechism, but to do that requires us, together in mission with the Son of God, to “destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8). Thus, the task of humans who accept Christ as Lord and Savior is to discover God's glory through His Word, and through His works (nature, science, history), appreciate it (worship) and to join Him in mission to declare that glory by seeking to destroy the “works of the Devil.”

### Five Mysteries

In setting out in this awesome, cosmic mission certain matters may never be completely clear. As we look into these mysteries there are implications for our present role in the overall story.

#### ***First Mystery: Where did the universe come from?***

Where did matter come from?

Robert Jastrow's book, *God and the Astronomers*, suggests that at the point scientists thought they were getting closer to answering the question of the origin

of the universe, suddenly and unexpectedly they discovered many inexplicable things:

- matter seems to have come literally from nothing
- what were thought to be stars were actually whole galaxies.
- the universe is incredibly delicate: with a slight change in the amount of hydrogen or other elements, the whole universe would collapse or blow apart.

St. Augustine asked, “Who can understand this mystery, or explain it to others?”

Ralph Winter has called this the “Age of the Dumb-founded Scientist.”

It is our task to take the book of God's words without ignoring or despising the book of His works. This is very much a part of the missionary task. Wherever you go in the world, you will find the people are much more alive to the realities of science than of the Bible, through sheer exposure. Those who would declare His glory must be prepared fully and worshipfully to recognize God in His handiwork in creation.

—Ralph D. Winter

#### ***Second Mystery: How did life get started? What is its story?***

In addition to the mystery of the appearance of the “inorganic” universe, which consists of atoms and their subatomic particles, gyrations of electrons, the molecules that they form, crystals, and electromagnetic radiation, which is a whole world in itself and itself an amazing pantheon of beauty in creation, there is an even more incredible reality in the appearance of the world of “living matter.”

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The excerpts that compose this article were compiled (2006) by Beth Snodderly, the Vice President of Academic Affairs for William Carey International University in Pasadena, California. These excerpts are from various lectures and writings of Dr. Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Mission and Chancellor of William Carey International University.

All forms of life are variations of inorganic matter, built, however, around one atom, carbon, and defined by the zipper-like DNA, the double-helix molecule which itself has two billion atoms in each molecule, and replicates itself. This is the nature of life. Organic matter is far more complex in many ways than inorganic matter.

However, man's best attempts to understand life have relentlessly revealed a jarring factor. The apparent fact of "intelligent design" in both inorganic and organic matter strongly argues for an "intelligent designer," whom we would like to believe is also benevolent. Not often discussed is one of the most distressing aspects of life, namely, the appearance (fairly late in the story of the development of life) of vicious, predatory forms of life at all levels of size, from bacteria to visible creatures. This jarring, puzzling factor could be called the sub-mystery of the incongruous presence of "intelligent *evil* design."

In one sense Foundations of the World Christian Movement is substantially a course in enjoying the incredible beauty and complexity of God's handiwork. At this time in history we are surfeited with a profusion of evidences of God's creative power, and, therefore, we should be the most worshipful, the most joyous, the most exuberant of all believers in history. Yet at the same time we are forced to be seriously aware of the evidence of violence and distortion in the picture .

—Ralph D. Winter

***Third Mystery: When, why, and how did God create human life: an unusually intelligent, reflecting, thinking species— homo sapiens?***

The fact that the DNA molecule can be programmed in such a way as to produce a human being so radically different from all other life is itself incredible. It just awes you. It's a basis for worship. It's grounds for amazement about God, and leaves all science befuddled. At the same time there continues to be the "jarring factor"—a major feature of homo sapiens, as with earlier forms of life, is the amazing prominence of violence and evil. The earliest remains of human life are bashed in, roasted skulls. The "when" is not so mysterious as the "how" and "why," which lead us to further wonder and challenge.

***Fourth Mystery: Where did civilizations come from? How did they begin?***

From what we have been able to discover about the early

endeavors of true homo sapiens there do not seem to be gradually more sophisticated precursors to the high ("archaic") civilizations. Rather they seem to appear suddenly as already complicated social reality.

What we do find, however, is the opposite, namely, a gradual *decline* in almost every case. That is, the people who built the Stonehenge monument were more sophisticated than those who centuries later added huge monoliths in trying to "repair" it. The Sumerian civilization was already 800 years in decline at the time of Abraham. The story of Egypt is a story of decline since there is no story building up to the place where they could figure out how to make the incredibly precise pyramids—which appear at the beginning of Egyptian history. The Indus Valley displays advanced civilization at its earliest point. The Aztecs, the Incas, each had more advanced civilizations behind them.

Again, within this mystery is the demonic element. The ancient civilizations buried alive hundreds of people with their god-kings. Human sacrifices and violence were central to the ancient sophisticated civilizations.

Atrocities have been committed between different forms of animal life and human life for a long time. If God is not the author of that kind of behavior it would seem to be work of The Evil One. Even at the level of the DNA molecule, something has obviously been tampered with or we would not see suddenly toward the end of the long story of life so many forms of life that destroy life. Throughout all of history then, we see evidence of a demonic distortion of creation.

***Fifth Mystery: What is God going to do about the vast distortion of His purposes?***

This is the mystery, now, which is the major theme of the Bible itself—a plan to counteract evil, the single story of God's re-conquering of a planet which has been distorted from God's intent and seduced out of His fellowship. An understanding of this mystery begins to bring meaning into all else. All of written history is the unfolding of this fifth mystery.

The Divine response: a plan to defeat The Evil One, restore creation, and reclaim all the peoples of the earth. A principal means for this is the redemption of man through a chosen nation, on the basis of "the lamb slain before the foundations of the world."

—Ralph D. Winter

All this was not supposed to have been a mystery down through Jewish history, since it was made clear to Abraham in Genesis 12:3—that a chosen people was called to be blessed and to be a blessing, called to special service not just survival.

However, this way of looking at things—radically different from current Evangelical thinking—allows us to understand the appearance of human beings as an additional creation for the specific purpose of aiding in the restoration of what already had been created—a process referred to as advancing God’s Kingdom. In 1 John we read (3:8) “the Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.” By contrast, however, through the seduction of homo sapiens, human history has become for the most part a story of human self-salvation rather than of redeemed humans being counted among the forces seeking the conquest of evil.

Once restored in repentance and faith, in the blessing of God, redeemed man is now expected to resume his original purpose, to work with God for the restoration of all creation, and in the process make crystal clear that Satan and not God is the initiator of evil and depravity.

It may well be that neither a full restoration of creation nor even the full restoration of humans will take place before the end of time. Meanwhile, humans must continue not just to resist but to fight Satan, joining with the Son of God in the destruction of all Satan’s works.

What has been the brief, 4,000-year record of Kingdom advance, that is, what is the record of events since the plan of reconquest was given to Abraham—a story so complex that for most people it is simply meaningless?

## **The Kingdom Strikes Back:**

### **The First 2000 Years**

There really are only two main subjects in the last 4000 years: the biblical revelation itself and then the impact of that revelation. All of human history in the last 4000 years relates directly or indirectly to that simple, single picture.

All through the Old Testament you can see that God is in the mission business, whether His people recognized their role in redemption or not. This portion of our Bibles, earlier called the “Septuagint,” portrays the groping and stumbling experience of a chosen nation reflecting marvelous and brilliant godliness and yet tragic, human shortcomings.

The children of Israel were pushed into Egypt and eventual slavery there, but apparently left a witness behind. The northern group virtually disappeared in dispersion possibly planting synagogues throughout the Roman empire.

### **Examples of God’s Mission in the Old Testament:**

- Abimelech is an example of those who fear God without knowing Him through special revelation. (Mission strategy: look for and expect to find “a man of peace” who has been seeking God and will welcome knowledge of Christ.)
- Pharaoh recognizes the work of God in Joseph’s life
- A witness to God’s power and glory is left in Egypt during slavery and the Exodus.
- Naaman the Syrian receives a witness from the Jewish slave girl.
- Many of the Psalms speak of declaring God’s glory among all nations.
- Isaiah 49:6: “You are to be my salvation to the ends of the earth, a light to the nations.”
- Jonah was a reluctant witness in preaching to Ninevah.
- Babylonian captivity: God meant for Israel to go to the nations with their knowledge of God. (This experience also enabled God’s people to better understand the existence of an Evil One without accepting the Zoroastrian dualistic concept of an evil God as well as a good God.)
- The selection of documents which we call the Old Testament and then their translation of it into Greek (the Septuagint) was a key mission milestone.
- Before Jesus appeared, genuine biblical faith had expanded through a Jewish ethnic vehicle into the whole Roman empire and in the form of tiny enclaves to the ends of the earth.

Old Testament salvation is in continuity with New Testament salvation which gives even greater knowledge of God through Jesus: “in His face we see the glory of God.” Of course, God’s grandiose plan to bring about the reconciliation of all of the peoples of the earth becomes glaringly apparent with the coming of Christ.

## **The Kingdom Strikes Back:**

### **The Basis for the Second Half of the Story**

Global history has seen no greater impact from any other person than Jesus. —Ralph D. Winter

Shortly after Jesus' ministry, different ethnic vehicles accepted and carried the biblical faith further into all the earth. Biblical faith was no longer carried along simply through the ethnic-specific vehicle of grace of the Jewish people. (Much later, in the 20th century, the biblical faith spoken of here would go even beyond what people traditionally call "Christianity.")

### *New Testament Contributions to the Story:*

- The major new factor is the incarnation, death and resurrection of the very Son of God, which confirms and greatly enhances the very real power of General Revelation, making it much easier to extend the glory of God to all nations.
- The Four Gospels make clear the disturbing discrepancy between the meaning of the Bible and religious traditions. The basic theme, first established in the Old Testament, is underscored: heart faith—not just outward compliance with religious forms—is essential to please God.
- The rest of the New Testament describes how faith flowed beyond Jewish ethnic boundaries.
- The gospel was taken in all directions: China, India, Africa, Europe. But some versions of Christianity did not survive or prosper or did not become missionary. What made the difference? Rodney Stark and Philip Jenkins suggest several reasons:
  - \* A state religion, not heart-felt by the people (Stark: where you have a state church, you have a weak church.)
  - \* Nominal Christianity, perhaps imposed by conquest, not heart-felt by the people
  - \* Lack of Scriptures in the common language
  - \* Over-accommodation with the local culture; pagan cultures are glad to add on another god
    - Judaizers: required proselytization (cultural conversion) to be acceptable to God.
    - Peter had to explain his experience with the household of Cornelius to the Jerusalem elders.
    - Marcion, on the other hand, monoculturally Greek, wouldn't acknowledge any validity in the Hebrew tradition.
- The New Testament anticipates the opposition that may arise every time the Gospel takes on new cultural clothing. Tension between heart faith and culturally defined obedience arises again and again down through history

whenever the faith flows from the forms of one cultural tradition to another. —Ralph D. Winter

Arabic garments for the faith were fashioned in the 7th century to avoid the Roman culture. The tensions ever since between Islam and Christianity are legendary.

We need to perceive clearly that the Bible is a handbook for missionary cross-cultural strategy that portrays and predicts how authentic biblical knowledge of God and the cause of His advancing Kingdom can transcend cultural boundaries. —Ralph D. Winter

The New Testament portrays evil embodied in an adversarial personage, Satan. To this day Western Christianity is confused by Augustine's neoplatonic perspective of a God who is Himself the author of evil and suffering. But he was reacting against the Zoroastrian dualism (belief in two gods: one good and one evil) which was believed by the Manichaeans with whom he had belonged. As a result, the Western tradition of Christianity we tend to be "resigned" to evil as something we must allow God to work through for good *without any deliberate effort on our part to understand and destroy the source of evil.*

Thus, the New Testament often speaks in military terms. The Kingdom of God manifested in the church will contest the kingdom of darkness ("the gates of hell will not prevail against it"). We are called as soldiers, not just survivors who are mainly candidates for heaven. The love of Christ constrains us to go and to deliver people (and God's creation) from the actual power of sin and disease and fear. These people are then enlisted in the mission to which God has called us all, the destruction of the works of Satan, that His Kingdom might come as His will is done on earth, and His glory rightfully restored.

The Bible makes it clear that our mission is to glorify God among all peoples and that this is essentially a battle to recapture them from darkness and evil.

## **The Kingdom Strikes Back:**

### **The Second Half**

Once Jesus appeared, a new element entered into human affairs. His blood was already the basis of the Gospel, although previously not clear to the people of God. Those who came to know the details about the person of Jesus began to grow into a new transnational movement,

greatly hastening the extension of the Kingdom of God. This movement built significantly on the foundation of centuries of Jewish witness and has changed the world.

A good way to tell that story is in 400-year epochs; each beginning in chaos or extreme difficulty and ending in a flourishing of the Gospel in a new cultural basin.

#### ***0–400: The Gospel Goes to the Romans***

- Persecution of Jews and Christians occurred relatively rarely from the time of the book of Acts until the 4th century AD.
- In 300 AD even the most severe persecution under Diocletian failed to conquer Christianity.
- Constantine seized the emperor's throne and made peace with the Christian movement.
- State funds were diverted from pagan to Christian leaders. (This eventually resulted in state-supported priests who often knew little of the truth of the Gospel.)
- The faith became identified with a major military power and caused immediate, massive persecution of Christians outside the Empire. (This was a major factor later in the felt need for a Semitic-Arabic-Muslim version of the faith.)
- Relative peace allowed the preservation of records including firming up the contents of the New Testament and the translation of the Bible into Latin.
- The last hundred years of this period could be called the Classical Renaissance, culminating in the triumph of the faith in a major cultural basin—the Roman empire. This included outlying populations such as Celtic and Gothic tribes.

Only to the extent that our faith can put on other clothes can it ever become a truly universal faith.

#### ***400–800: The Gospel Goes to the Barbarians***

- Constantine had moved the seat of the empire to Constantinople.
- Due to pressure from the steppes of Asia, the Romans were forced to withdraw their legions out of southern England; invasion of former Roman Britain then by Angles and Saxons caused chaos and uncertainty.
- The tribes pushed out of the steppes of Asia by the Huns eventually over-ran Rome and much of Western Europe.
- The chief and most durable social reality in Western Europe was the monastic movement that planted hundreds of Bible study centers.

- In the middle of this period, Christians outside the empire, to the south and east, became absorbed in the Semitic alternative, Islam, which won over Christians in the anti-Roman areas of the Middle East, and North Africa.
- From Celtic Christianity in Ireland and northern Britain came the most advanced scholarship. Such scholarship brought literacy and Biblical knowledge back to the continent after it had been lost in the chaos of conquest.
- The final century of the 400–800 period is called the Carolingian Renaissance ending in a flourishing of the faith in central Europe under Charlemagne.

#### ***800–1200: The Gospel Goes to the Vikings***

- By now Europe is confronted by what Churchill called “two massive external assaults”: Muslims from the south and Vikings from the north.
- The Vikings' eventual conversion to Christianity prepared the way for the Crusades.
- After 250 years, the Viking raids were a horror of the past, and a number of positive developments had begun:
  - \* Cluny reform
  - \* Cistercians
  - \* Universities
  - \* Cathedrals
  - \* Friars (Franciscans and Dominicans) who moved out into the rest of the world, taking the Gospel with them.
- At the end of this period we have thus a flourishing often called the Medieval Renaissance.

#### ***1200–1600: The Gospel Fails to Go East***

This 400 year era does not showcase a new cultural basin. The expansion of the faith had run into a dead end street. Western Europe was a geographical cul-de-sac, open only to the East. The Crusades went that direction, but were doomed to failure because the Crusaders (descendants of the Vikings) were not far beyond tribalism, while the societies they tried to conquer had the culture and training of the Roman Empire.

- As with the other eras, this one begins with chaos: the Black Plague.
- It ends with “The Renaissance.”
- The Friars and the Universities began to be a major influence.

- The greatest surge forward derived from the Bible through the invention of moveable type.
- Printed material entered the bloodstream of Europe stimulating science, statesmanship, industry and technology: Western Civilization.
- This development, starting in Gutenberg's day (when there were more Muslims in the world than Christians) produced twice as many Christians as Muslims and brought profound changes in society which decisively moved beyond Islam.
- According to Rodney Stark, true science arose only once in history: in Christian Europe. A necessary condition was the belief in one true God who had created an orderly universe and who wanted His people to investigate and admire his handiwork.
- Within this period is a major transition parallel to the transition from Jewish to Greek culture, the shift from Latin to German: the Reformation; a release of northern peoples from Mediterranean customs in which the faith had been packaged.

### ***1600–2000: The Gospel Goes around the World***

- Catholic missionaries encompassed the world on colonial ships.

Between 1600 and 1800 Catholic missionaries encompassed the world with a massive head start over Protestants who 200 years after the Reformation had still not found the Great Commission in the Bible.

—Ralph D. Winter

- The French Revolution and the following Napoleonic wars massively disrupt this period of Catholic missions midway by causing Catholic missionaries to lose their sending base.
- The British empire began to rise and Protestant missions as well, going out to the Coastlands, later Inland. William Carey in India and Hudson Taylor in China were pioneers in these early eras of Protestant missions.
- The third era of modern missions has focused on specific overlooked people groups. Cameron Townsend (founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators), Donald McGavran (Church Growth Movement), and Ralph Winter (best known for the call to reach the hidden or unreached peoples, but also a pioneer in missiological thinking in a number of other frontiers) are examples of pioneers in people group thinking.
- This period concludes with the Evangelical Awakening.

(Although massive secularization also takes place, revealing superficiality in the shallow faith of the majority.)

- Toward the end of the period, African, Indian and Chinese followers of Christ are forging new cultural vehicles, often taken for heresy.

### ***The Final Moments: Beyond World War II***

Perhaps the most significant event of the second millennium occurred just after World War II. After 500 years of Western conquest of the entire planet, the whole non-western world was by 1945 under the direct or indirect control of Western political states.

But in the next 25 years following World War II something happened on the world level that had never happened before and would never happen again. Over thirty years ago Ralph Winter wrote about this period of “Unbelievable Years” in a small book by that title.

While at the beginning of 1945, 99.5% of the non-western world was controlled by the West, 25 years later, at the end of 1969, only .5% was still under Western control. Empires that had lasted centuries collapsed.

Take another 25 years and it became clear that many of the original regimes of these new nation states would not make it. Robert Kaplan's famous essay on “The Coming Anarchy” predicted a breakdown into pervasive chaos. Meanwhile totalitarian regimes were replaced as embryonic “democracy” was chosen over either Communism or Fascism. This shift often has escalated to extreme governmental instability.

Today it seems as though nuclear weapons are available to any nation, as the West's technology is rapidly adopted in much of the world.

Three major factors in the 21st century are competing for allegiance: Free market economy, Christianity, and Islam.

Rodney Stark asserts in his book, *One True God*, that in those times and places where pluralism, tolerance and civility have been upheld between the religions an increase in personal piety manifests in every religion involved in this peaceful situation. In the above described situation, religion becomes the choice of the common man and not the state religion which is often accepted only on casual basis. Because of free market competition between religions all parties involved must put forth effort to explain one's faith to others. The result is a faith that is kept stronger and more alive than a faith which can be accepted with ease and

without defense. But conflict is inevitable between the people of monotheistic faiths when the public square does not welcome such principles of tolerance and free market ideals of competition. Philip Jenkins believes international politics of the coming decades are likely to revolve around interfaith conflict, above all, the clash between Christianity and Islam.

Because of this likelihood there is a need for priority to be given to fruits of the Spirit, the distinctive character of Christ-followers, especially humility. New Testament warnings about humility and discretion are not just laudable Christian virtues, they can make the difference between life and death.

Jenkins' main thesis in his work *The Next Christendom* is that the era of Western Christianity has passed and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning. The South's Pentecostal style of Christianity will become the norm as they become the majority of Christian believers on this planet.

Across the global South, Jenkins sees a common pattern of development.

- Initially westerners try to impose their own ideas of Christianity as it should be, often backed up by the force of colonial political power.
- This evangelism gains some followers, usually people on the margins of society
- Other people move beyond the colonial matrix, as they demand ever more accommodation with local ways
- In yet other cases, believers form wholly new churches, so different that traditional minded observers wonder whether these have moved beyond the bounds of Christianity itself.

In this light, training for leaders of the mission movements of the Global South becomes crucial. This can help the new surge of missions avoid the mistakes of the past and profit from what has been learned from those mistakes. As people move to the cities, Christian congregations replace the family networks that prevailed in the older villages. The growth of Southern churches in response to urbanization compares to similar growth in early Christianity in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The gospel is not just about dispensing good news. It's also about waging a battle. Humans were created to restore creation by advancing God's kingdom. The corruption of creation by intelligent evil has turned the

story of our planet into the story of a battle. Unfortunately, there is a widespread blindness to the corruption of all creation and our responsibility to restore it.

What valid generalizations can we make about the near and far future? And how does all this fit into our story of God's kingdom expanding without retreat, beginning just yesterday with the appearance of homo sapiens?

There are gigantic, unprecedented changes taking place in the world. The number one evidence of this change is found in the skyrocketing global population, due principally to the conquest of many diseases and the relative reduction of war. (In 2002 more people died in traffic accidents around the world than in war.)

Furthermore, despite the amazing progress medicine has made in understanding and treating many diseases after they occur it is not at all clear that we are making any permanent gains against the pathogenic origins of disease. And, in regard to war—that other major menace of mankind—the worst rash of wars may be just ahead.

So where is the kingdom of God in all this?

One generalization is safe: things are getting both worse and better at the same time. It is by no means a completely uneven contest much less one that favors evil. Many believers see only the negatives and grasp at teachings about a rapture that will rescue the faithful before things get too bad. Others see only the good and are unprepared to seriously attack the evils, some of them having the opinion that this is “The best of all possible worlds” and that evils themselves originate with the mysterious purposes of God rather than a Satanic intelligence.

But is it merely an expanding Kingdom we should keep in sight? Or can it better be stated as the restoration of the true glory of God and the progressive defeat of a major, celestial counter being?

In this light I personally have come to the conclusion that the most serious frontier in missions is the high wall between our faith community and a world truly awed by the explorations of science. These two books—nature and scripture—have been given to us to enable us to get closer to God, the former speaks in a voice heard in every language and tongue, the latter must be painstakingly translated into thousands of those tongues.

—Ralph D. Winter





# A Summary of Ralph D. Winter's Warfare Missiology

*compiled by Beth Snodderly*

## The Tension and the Strategy

All my life I have assumed that the big tension is between human beings and God. Since Adam fell out with God, his entire lineage has been estranged and needs reconciliation through the blood of Christ. But the larger picture is that the biggest tension is not between humans and God but between vicious, hideous plotting evil and God. Humans were then created to be on God's side in that conflict with evil.

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

I think we need to speak of four levels of strategy and purpose, whether in reaching the unreached or in evangelizing within our own culture:

Level 1: Getting people "saved"

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

Level 3: Glorifying God

Level 4: Fighting "the works of the devil" as a means of glorifying God.

That is, understanding the lordship of Christ as involving us in an all-out war against evil, disease, and corruption. This is a war in which we can expect suffering, hardship and death.

## Obstacles:

### What is evil and where does it come from?

A major obstacle in reclaiming God's glory is that much of the evil in this world is not known to be evil, but merely "the way things are," as if God created

things that way. Furthermore, where there is confusion about whether evil is from God or not, our power in evangelism and missions is greatly weakened.

An example of our confusion about what is evil and what is not is how we view the pervasive violence and suffering in nature. Unlike Luther and Calvin, we now know that nature includes all of the invading viruses, bacteria, and parasites. Many shrug their shoulders and say that God has simply decided to create the world in this way. The violence at both the microbiological and visible levels in nature is accepted as being God's will.

Yet in the very first chapter of the Bible both the animal life and humans mentioned there are clearly described as non-carnivorous, meaning that they did not kill each other (Genesis 1:29). In the future, that will also be the case when

"the wolf will live with the lamb, ... the infant will play near the hole of the cobra and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:8, 9).

Violence in nature is *not* God's plan. But lack of explanation for pervasive violence keeps thousands of intelligent people away from faith. If we are to glorify God, is it not essential to free Him from the accusation that He, not Satan, is the author of evil? A great deal of evil in this world is blamed on God. How attractive is our invitation to people to return to and yield to their Father in heaven if they continue to believe that he is the one who contrives for most everyone to die in suffering? Unless Satan is in the picture and we are known to be fighting his deadly works, we are allowing God's glory to be marred and torn down.

## Theories on Genesis 1

To understand how we have come to the place of attributing violence in nature to God, it is necessary to go back to Genesis 1. If I can help people clear up a long-standing misunderstanding of the first chapter of the Bible, I hope they will be able to see that once we are saved, our mission is to participate wholeheartedly and without reservation in an onslaught against Satan and his works. We are not called to simply lie back and await the reward of heaven.

All my life I had assumed, along with most casual readers of Genesis in English, that Genesis 1:1 refers to the creation of the universe. However, if this was the case, then the universe must have been created only recently. Meanwhile, during my lifetime, thousands of intelligent observers have been studying the earth and have continued to dig up bones of huge violent creatures that seem to have lived a very long time ago. Even in my teens my *Scofield Reference Bible* had taken this apparent age of the earth, which is continuously attested to by science, into account by concluding that there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Today, however, that “gap” theory is seldom mentioned. The gap theory is not as popular anymore because there are problems with believing that when God created the universe He began with a situation that could be called “destroyed and desolate” (Genesis 1:2, Hebrew: *tohu wabohu*).

More often people have interpreted this passage understanding the periods of time mentioned in terms of “long days.” They have concluded that the six days of creation were longer than 24 hours, perhaps millions of years. However, for me the chief problem in inserting all of the old earth into the long days of the first chapter of Genesis is that most of these old bones we have been digging up are bones of shockingly vicious and life-destroying creatures. If they were what were being created in those elongated days, then, why would the first chapter of Genesis repeatedly include the following statement, “and God saw that it was good”? Or why would we read at the end of the chapter that neither man nor beast was carnivorous but instead was only plant eating?

The problem in interpretation here becomes so severe that in recent years many have decided to simply deny that there is any great age to all the millions of old bones that have been dug up. To proponents of the “Young Earth” theory, the bones only look old, and things like the

Grand Canyon did not take many years to form, but were formed almost overnight as a result of a global flood.

However the “Young Earth” concept is the laughing stock of the entire secular world simply because evidence is growing stronger every day that the old bones we have dug up really are old. What I am suggesting here actually accepts the events of Genesis 1 and the 24 hour days of (re)creation as mentioned being only 6,000 years ago—as well as the “old earth” *before* Genesis 1:1. However, whether the Earth is both old and young or either old or young—we should be cautious in our assertions, for if one interpretation is presented as the only possible meaning of the Bible, and consequently is proven to be wrong, then the world will label the Bible wrong rather than the interpretation. This happened with Calvin and Luther who thought the Bible taught that the earth is the center of the universe. Because of erroneous assumptions like these made during the Reformation, scientists have claimed the Bible is wrong ever since.

It is very likely that at the time that the book of Genesis came into being, people did not know they were living on a round ball hanging in space. When the ancients spoke of going “to the ends of the earth”, as in Isaiah 49:6, they were talking about their own known world. When they talked about “the whole world” they were talking about the world they knew, not about the entire planet. When they said the flood covered the world they were not talking about the entire planet. The ark thus contained all the animals in that area of the world to be destroyed, but not all of the other animals in the world, and certainly not dinosaurs, some of which were 100 feet long and weighed multiple tons.

Thousands of intelligent investigators all over the world, Christian and non-Christian, have concluded that the earth is old, not just six thousand years old. If they are right, the question arises, “Does the existence of an old earth indicate that the Bible is wrong?” We surely don’t believe the Bible was dictated by God, as has been alleged for the Muslims’ *Qur’an* and the Mormons’ *Book of Mormon*. We believe our Bible was written by human men inspired by God to write for human understanding in their time and place. That is why it behooves us to understand Bible times if we want to really understand the Bible and do it justice.

## Dr. Winter on Genesis 1: The Battle

Now the reason this issue is important to me and to a better understanding of the Christian mission is simple.

*If...*in a vastly earlier period of time before Genesis 1:1, Satan turned against God and distorted God's good creation into the incredible suffering and violence we still see all throughout nature,

*if...*Satan has from that time been the perverter of microbes into deadly germs such that all forms of life suffer from microbiological attack

*if...* all this occurred before Genesis 1:1

—then the events of Genesis chapter one may well display the relatively recent recreation of plant-eating animals and humans in their original God-designed form. This act of re-creation can be seen as the establishment of a new beachhead intended to assist in the defeat of Satan and the restoration of all creation.

However, Genesis explains that almost immediately thereafter, Satan (who already had a long crime record) also penetrated Eden and brought down the newly created humans and the new beginning of undistorted animal life. Ever since this time, humans and animals have been born genetically perverted along with all the rest of nature. As a result, the new forms of life created in God's image in Genesis 1 are victims of Satan and now are in dire need of salvation themselves. This salvation and redemption must be accomplished for these beings before they can work effectively with God in the defeat of Satan.

The Cross was then the turning point in the battle against Satan. The Bible says, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Jesus had a job to do; he dealt a definitive blow against Satan. But, the war is not over yet. Jesus said, "as the Father sent me, so send I you." The immense tragedy is that the entire Christian world has been significantly duped by Satan, and has only vaguely understood this larger mission. The war against evil and against things that tear down our understanding of God is still going on. All over the earth people

are dying prematurely in suffering and pain due to an onslaught from the microbiological world. This is a world which we are only beginning to understand and which no one has understood theologically. It is *not* God that is inflicting the casualties, but the enemy. Let's not be confused about this fact of God's innocence and let us not stand idle and inactive in this war!

## Conclusion

Gregory Boyd has said, "To follow Jesus is to do battle with the ever-present prince of darkness." (Boyd 1997:280) It is not a coincidence that the unreached areas of the world, where the Bible has had the least influence, overlap with those areas where there is the most suffering, disease, war and poverty (Myers 1996). These manifestations of evil are the works of the devil. A medical missionary to India from 1939-1969 wrote in his journal,

"this kingdom of disease, death, ignorance, prejudice, fear, malnutrition and abject poverty is most surely a kingdom which ought to be overthrown by the Kingdom of our God." (Rees 2003)

The Kingdom of God began striking back when God gave the Great Commission to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. As Abraham's children, we have inherited the family responsibility of God's concerns and purposes, which are to become our concerns and purposes. It is not to seek high pay or perks, but the war that must be won! Our lives and careers need to yield to this warfare reality.

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# Overview of the Mysteries

*Ralph D. Winter*

## What Is a “Mystery?”

**W**e have referred to “Seven Mysteries” in our materials, and it’s important for us to understand what a “mystery” is. The Bible actually speaks of the Great Commission as a mystery—something that was not understood properly or correctly. *But it was not supposed to have been a mystery.* The Jewish people, as with Gentile nations since, did not readily get the point that they were blessed by a God of love whose love sought—through them—to bless all the rest of the nations of the world. Paul did not even begin to understand this until his Damascus Road experience. For much of his life and for most of his hearers this commission was a “mystery.”

There are some mysteries, however, which we may never fully understand. Thus, for people of faith it is important to recognize that God does know more than we know, and that some things that He knows will always be, in this life, mysteries to us.

## The Mysteries Explained

Now just so you get these seven mysteries clear, the **first mystery** is simply the appearance of matter itself. The universe—where did it come from and where did matter itself come from? The latest theories are really quite spectacular. I know from my experience and my readings that some scientists, especially those who may not be eager to be accountable to a living God, have somewhat resisted the idea that there is any such a Person as a Creator. And it is true that in current scientific circles a professional does not have free reign to easily talk about God.

On the other hand, perhaps there are things that people might have found difficult to believe about the existence of God or of His creative intent. However, I am convinced that the most implausible proposition that has ever been made, that is the assertion which is unjustified and difficult to embrace, is the proposition made by some that there is no God. Or, as is current in scientific circles, take into consideration the bizarre idea that the whole universe simply exploded out of a tiny little particle. This particle was so tiny you couldn’t see it and yet all the vast billions of stars in our one galaxy, and the billions of galaxies within sight, all came out of this pinhead of matter. Surely, if you can believe that, then you can believe anything! And that is actually where scientific leaders really are today. They are realizing that it might be easier to believe that things are more complicated than they thought.

In an article published in *Time* magazine, entitled “Science, God, and Man,” Robert Wright wrote,

One intriguing observation that has bubbled up from physics is that the universe seems *calibrated* for life’s existence. If the force of gravity were pushed upward a bit, stars would burn out faster, leaving little time for life to evolve in the planets circling them. If the relative masses of protons and neutrons were changed by a hair, stars might never be born, since the hydrogen they eat wouldn’t exist. If at the ‘Big Bang,’ some basic numbers—the ‘initial conditions’—had been jiggled, matter and energy would never have coagulated into galaxies, stars, planets, *or any other platform stable enough for life as we know it.* (1992:40; italics added).

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But who did the “calibration?”

There was a time when the emergence of life wasn’t thought too amazing. With Darwin having explained how specks of life became us, the question of where the specks came from seemed minor, such a small step compared with the ensuing big ones. Presumably, if you let simple molecules reshuffle themselves randomly for long enough, some complex ones would get formed, and further reshuffling would make them more complex, until you had something like DNA—a stable molecule that just happened to make copies of itself.

But more recently, more careful analysis suggests that even a mildly impressive living molecule is quite unlikely to form randomly (1992:40).

So the plot thickens.

And our final quote from Wright:

Deism is, in many ways well suited (as religions go) to an era as scientific as this one. But 20th century science sketches *a universe stranger than the one the deists imagined*. It is a universe that seems not to run as predictably as a clock, a universe *whose inmost workings may not be fathomable. The deeper our insight, the more baffling things become* (1992:43; italics added).

Remember that Deism is the idea that God created the universe and then walked off while we all watched it perk along by itself.

Now the quote we just encountered presents a rather awesome thought. Others have put it differently, that the diameter of our knowledge increases, and perforce, the circumference of our ignorance increases more than three times as fast as the diameter. So the more we know, the less we know. And this isn’t exactly what many scientists would like to believe.

One of the most sensible things that I have ever heard stated was first uttered by a well-known Muslim from Cairo.

“God, the Creator of the universe, can never be against our learning the laws of what He has created.”

How true this statement is. With this in mind, let’s explore the mysteries of this universe. We should take a look at the different mysteries here. First of all, there is the mystery of the origin of matter itself. And that so-called “small step” now is recognized to be a very, very massive and totally unfathomable step. The only

explanation that modern science has presented is really a non-explanation: matter came out of nothing. It came out of a tiny little particle, which is essentially nothing. Now that’s as close to a non-explanation as anyone could propose.

However, the entire universe came into being, its mere existence would not necessarily imply the further incredibly complex event—**the appearance of life itself**. Now whether you’re talking about a plant, or an insect, or an animal—or a dinosaur—they all are born out of a DNA molecule. As you are probably aware, this DNA which is within us all is an incredibly small object; and yet it is incredibly complex. One such molecule—found in every human cell and every cell of any kind of life—has two billion atoms in it. It is an organization together of incredible intricacy shaped in the framework of what is called a double helix. And there are billions of these DNA molecules in any given form of life. Is this not so complex as to boggle your imagination? Its origin is a real mystery.

John Templeton and Robert Herrmann, both noted scientists, have written works that describe the incredible complexity and mystery of the composition of organic matter. Take for instance the brain. It seems that even within a single human brain, more neural connections can be found than the number of stars that can be found in the entire universe. So, with the phenomenon of life, the tiny things are just as complicated as the big things. Thus the appearance of life is the **second** of the great and unfathomable mysteries.

Another mystery, which we’ll just mention in passing, is the appearance of a special kind of life: thinking, feeling, sensible and reflecting life; namely, **the human species**. This also seems, like the other things that are so baffling, to have been very sudden in its appearance. The so-called discontinuities of earth’s geologic record are as perplexing as the parts that are explainable. Suddenly, things happen! The evolutionary suppositions of gradual progress fall to the ground in the face of the evidence, and this is more and more troubling to all kinds of scientists, both people who are Christians and those who are not.

Now, let’s move on to another form of complexity. Not the complexity that a human being represents, but the complexity of associations of human beings. Once again, in a sort of discontinuous, sudden appearance, all over the planet you have high civilizations. These

were very complicated civilizations: civilizations that, in some instances, possessed scientific insights that rival those of today. For instance, some civilizations created calendars that are superior to our own. The amazing and perplexing and, really, infuriating thing is that these civilizations are everywhere noticed in their decline. They are always in a declining state. There does not seem to be any record of build-up.

Take Egypt for example. The most advanced architectural achievements of Egypt were made in the earliest appearances of Egyptian civilization—the pyramids, the Sphinx, and so forth. Nothing that followed involved anything equivalent to the complexity of accomplishments we see in the earlier period.

Or just take a single monument in England, the Stonehenge monument. Scientists are still very puzzled about this monument. Indications are that the earliest form of that astronomical observatory, if you wish to call it that, was more sophisticated than the later one when great huge stones were added to fix it up and to see if it could be made to work better. That would be like the designer of an automobile, who knew exactly how it worked, turning it over to some young person who took it apart and put it back together. The problem then would be that it did not work quite right so he tried to patch things up. But after that it never quite worked the way it was intended.

So here we have evidence of an earlier, more sophisticated peoples and later peoples who had forgotten what the earlier peoples had once known. Yet these people lived in the very same place, viewed the same monument, and yet could not understand how it worked. Thus, **civilization itself is a mystery**. Now that is mystery number four.

The Bible itself refers to a profound mystery. The Bible introduces the concept of evil, of things that have gone wrong because of some intentional opposition to the purposes of God. And this is where the Bible comes into the picture. All of a sudden, we know more about a man called Abraham than we know about any other man who ever lived that long ago. A sudden spotlight of detail!

In this abrupt, Biblical picture, we see a plan set in motion to correct the evil, to confront that evil, to push back the Prince of darkness and disorder on this planet. The fall of humanity is the entrance of that evil into the earthly situation. The fall of humanity, and then the confusion, the hopeless result, is the introduction to

the Bible, Genesis 1-11. Then in Genesis 12, right at the beginning of the Bible (in fact, I like to think that Genesis 12 is the beginning), you have the introduction to the whole Bible and not just to the so-called “Book” of Genesis. Anyway, right there in Genesis 12, you have this plan presented, which is later in the Bible referred to as the Great Commission. While the Bible itself does not refer to it as the Great Commission, today we talk about it as the Great Commission. This commission that appears in Genesis 12 then reappears, as Jesus restates it with ultimate authority in the Gospels. However, this plan itself was obscured by the very forces which it was designed to counteract.

Remember the verse, “the gates of hell cannot defend themselves against the work of God,” the kingdom of God, the Church (Matthew 16:18). Yes, gates of hell will not be able to defend themselves against that outreach, extending kingdom and power of God. Trying to understand this is itself battling with a mystery. This is the one mystery of the five which we can at least partially grasp. Maybe God did not intend for us to understand the other four so completely at this stage in our existence. But this fifth mystery is the mystery of the Bible itself. Most people do not understand the thrilling, single story of God’s re-conquering of what some have called “the dark planet”—a planet out of fellowship with God. The unfolding of this mystery begins to bring meaning into all else.

As you look back on these mysteries, one realization for today is that more than at any time in human history, more than at any time in my lifetime or in your lifetime, the scientific community could be referred to as the era of the dumbfounded scientist. We know so much that we did not know before, and as a result know so little. In fact, there is so much we do not know that scientists, if they are honest at all, are truly and profoundly dumbfounded.

Now, for a Christian, there is no problem in being dumbfounded at God’s greatness. That should not surprise us. We ought to welcome the realization that God is bigger than we are, and that many things that He knows, we do not know. It should be exciting and wonderful to us, even though we probably will not ever know in this life the answers to all these mysteries. For whether we or scientists look through telescopes or microscopes, look back in history or try to understand what is going on today, the reality faced is the baffling confusion of constantly increasing complexity.

One of the unique features of our generation is that there are more people on the earth. More studying is being done. For example, in recent years there has been an explosion of energy released in the area of the study of our planet, of our universe, of our past. In all fields, you see a profusion of new information boiling forth that both rewards and gratifies, and also mystifies profoundly.

For example, there are 20,000 sites today where dinosaurs have been dug up. In almost all cases, some new form of dinosaur life has been discovered. Other illustrations involve the cosmological wonders, where we are informed of new ideas that we now understand less—because of new things we have learned.

This is a most amazing period. More scientists live today than have ever lived in all of human history, simply because of the exploding global population and relative peace which makes that possible. What the future could hold begs the imagination. Many processes of human life and association are racing so rapidly toward threatening conclusions that it is not even clear that anybody will be around in the future.

So we are in for great excitement, both in our studies together and in the world in which we live. As a result, we need to have our hearts open for whatever God wants to reward us and tell us.



# The Christian and Old Testament Theology

*Ralph D. Winter*

**B**efore we launch into Kaiser's input, we should consider the significance of Kaiser's writings on the Old Testament. To illustrate, let me just give you an anecdote about Kaiser and my own reflections along this line. For fifteen or eighteen years I had been teaching the story of the Gospel beyond the Bible, that is, the story of the *impact* of the Bible down through history. There really are only two subjects in the last four thousand years: the biblical revelation, and then the impact of that revelation. All of human history in the last four thousand years relates directly or indirectly to that simple, single picture.

During the years in which I was teaching this whole four thousand year period, I was trying, naturally, to track the continuity throughout. That is, my professional assignment while teaching for ten years at the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary was to teach what happened *after* the Bible. Of course, I was focusing on the Great Commission. But, as a former missionary on the field coming home and taking up this kind of a scholarly activity, I soon discovered to my dismay that the Great Commission, which was *so* important to me and which I had acted on in a decision that changed my life, was a subject virtually absent from all Christian literature following the Bible itself!

Following the Bible, the great Christian Fathers of the ancient church—like Tertullian, Ambrose and Augustine—never talked about the Great Commission. The Nicene Creed makes no reference to our obligation to the nations. Neither is it evident in the Chalcedonian Creed, the Second Helvetic Confession or the Augsburg Confession. None of the theological traditions demonstrate awareness of the Great Commission.

My problem as a professor was to figure out how to explain that oversight. As I was teaching over the years about the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth centuries to the present, I noted to myself that these

people had surely received the Great Commission. It was in force. Jesus did not say, "Now, here is a Great Commission, which is not to be taken seriously until William Carey comes along, and then I want you to take it seriously." That is not what Jesus said. Yet, after the Protestant Reformation, it was hundreds of years before the Protestants clicked in even though during the same period of time the Catholics took it seriously. But in the early centuries and in most of the Christian tradition, the Great Commission is absent in the theological literature. And I had to figure out how that could be.

How could the Great Commission have been given formally and officially by Jesus Christ Himself and be found in all four Gospels, yet be so completely absent in Christian history? You can buy books which present at a sweeping succession the great sermons preached throughout Christian history. But you will not find the Great Commission there. Whatever set of sermons you look at, the editor seems to be as unaware of the Great Commission as are the preachers from which he quotes!

Now here is the key point. If a whole massive global Christian tradition can get along for century after century with virtually no reference whatsoever to the Great Commission, could it also be true that the Jewish people received the Great Commission at the time of Abraham but also did very little about it?"

Now, I knew about the Abrahamic Covenant. I knew that it talked about all the peoples of the world. But for many, many years I did not think, "Well, the Jewish people didn't take it seriously. Or they didn't know it was in force even if it was in force." It never even occurred to me that it was in force, and that God actually expected His chosen people to be missionaries.

Sometimes I think that people talk as though the Jewish people did understand God's concern for all people as expressed in the Abrahamic Covenant! And I play-

fully say that Joseph's brothers took up an offering and sent him off as a missionary to Egypt. Right?

Wrong! That was not the brothers' purpose. But *God* did have that in mind! Years later Joseph's brothers were completely under his power and could easily have supposed that he was going to harm them in retribution. Joseph looked at them and said, "You sold me..."

You can imagine that like a bad dream what they had done to him years before swished through their minds. They knew that the man they were looking at had complete power of life and death over them. Then Joseph goes on with his sentence, "You sold me, but God sent me!" He saw clearly that it was *God* who had sent him.

But his brothers did not understand that point. They did not have the Great Commission clearly in mind. They were not rehearsing those key verses in Genesis 12:1-3. Obviously not. But does that mean those verses were not intended to be taken seriously?

This is a key point. There is, for example, what I call a "Mickey Mouse" theory that in the Old Testament the mission of the church was in effect only for those who *came* to Israel but that in the New Testament, Israel was to *go* to the nations. In other words, the idea of *going* was a new idea given by Jesus. The fancy words used for this theory are "Old Testament mission is *centripetal*, New Testament Mission is *centrifugal*." It is simplistic.

As I look further on in the Bible, I feel almost sick that most of my life I understood that God was *punishing* the Northern tribes when He sent them out in the *Diaspora* (a term for the *dispersion* or for *being sent away*). Well, it was a punishment. But it was more than that. *God* was in the Mission Business, whether Israel was or not.

All through the Old Testament, looking at it once the scales fall off your eyes, you can see that *God is in the Mission Business*, whether His people recognized their Commission or not.

You can say the same thing about the period following the Bible. Twenty centuries have gone by after the Great Commission clearly was given. During most of that period Christians do not understand about the Commission. But God was in the Mission Business, whether they were or not.

Going back to my personal story—what I'm saying is that this new perspective on the Bible was boiling

through my mind when I ran into Kaiser's 1978 book, *Towards an Old Testament Theology*. This was in 1980 or 1981—the year the Billy Graham Center was inaugurated. I was at that meeting and was asked to give a little talk one afternoon.

Kaiser was asked to give a talk every morning. After his first morning's talk, I went up to him and asked, "Why did you put the word *Promise* in the heading of every chapter of this book you have written? Every chapter employs the word *promise*. Promise isn't the right word. You know that the Abrahamic Covenant wasn't just a *promise*." I was troubled with that word due to this new perspective I now had.

He looked at me, smiled, and said, "Well, I called it the *Promise* because Paul did."

Oh yes! That's right. Paul did.

"Well, why did Paul call it the Promise?" I answered back. "It is because He was talking to Jews who had misunderstood the Commission as merely a Promise, and so Paul employed the term they knew, saying, 'Now what you call the *Promise*...' and he went on to refer to it as a *mysterious* phenomenon."

This is why we call this phenomenon a great *Mystery*—the Mystery of God's Plan which became clear in Christ, or maybe when William Carey finally dug it up, but which should have been clear from the time Abraham first received it. There is a great mystery here.

Kaiser said, "As a matter of fact you can call the Abrahamic Covenant the *Great Commission* if you want."

At that I was staggered. I had never heard anyone important say that before! I could hardly believe an eminent scholar like Kaiser would say that!

So I said to Kaiser, "I don't have the standing as a Bible scholar to go around saying Genesis 12:1-3 is the *Great Commission*. People would laugh at me, and run me out of town. I simply could not get away with it. We are trying to put this kind of perspective into a course"(what we now call our *Perspectives* course). So I said, "I need to be able to quote someone like you, somebody who is a Hebrew and Old Testament professor and the head of a major seminary. I need to quote you. Do you have that statement in print?"

This is the phrase I will never forget. Kaiser said to me, "You go ahead and quote me, and I will put it in print."

I asked, "Quote you saying what?"

He said, “Well, you know, those verses in Genesis 12:1-3, which don’t speak simply of a Promise. You can call that the Great Commission if you want.”

To understand, therefore, Kaiser essentially elicits all the different Bible passages that he refers to: Luke 24; Matthew 5; John 5:39, 45-46; Romans 15; Hosea; I Corinthians 10; Hebrews 6:18. All these passages assure us in one way or another that the Old Testament is really an up-to-date book. He also hints that the term “Old Testament” is not a Biblical designation. Isn’t that interesting? See, he says, “Now that’s the ancient church tradition.” But we get the impression that there is something defective about the phrase *Old Testament*. “Old” is a word which steers you incorrectly. I refer to the Old Testament as Part I of the Bible.

To illustrate, in the Second Century there was the Marcionism heresy condemned by the church because it perceived the Old Testament and its Creator-God as inferior and embraced a truncated new Testament and Father of Jesus Christ as a superior, distinct God. Marcion is the wealthy businessman who had time to dabble in spiritual things, and probably was an earnest person. We have had many earnest Marcions down through history who have somehow gotten the idea that the Old Testament is out of date and no longer applies. The possibility of reading it that way may exist because in the New Testament, Paul, Jesus, and all of the church leaders are trying to throw off the legalistic burden that the Jewish religious tradition had accumulated. But in throwing off that legalistic burden, they were not throwing off the Old Testament but a *misunderstanding* of what we call the Old Testament. Our Old Testament was their Bible, their scripture. They were not throwing out the Scriptures.

Probably the clearest example of that is something that I myself remember vividly understanding for the first time in my life when I was probably just out of my teen years. I had always read and heard people refer to Matthew 5:21,27,31,33,38,43 as, “You have heard it said, but I say unto you.” Ah! There you’ve got it. The Old Testament said these six things, but Jesus trumped them. He came out with something better.

Note well that he started out this whole series of six illustrations by saying, “Look, I am not here to overthrow the law” (Matthew 5:17). So, does He go ahead to overthrow the law in six ways? Does that sound reasonable? No, but people do interpret it that way, insisting that

the Old Testament—the Law—says one thing, but that the Gospel says something else. Such people face this problem: *the Gospel is in the Old Testament*. You cannot contrast the Gospel with the Old Testament.

The telltale clue in finding out what is really going on, is the sixth of the six illustrations when Jesus says, “You have heard it that way; I tell you this way.” We take it to say, “Moses said, the Torah said, the Pentateuch says, the Old Testament says clearly, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’”

How did this happen? This is really embarrassing, and I don’t mean to be anti-Jewish at all because most people have probably come to the same conclusion in their weak moments. People latched on to the love part and simply assumed the hate part. They said, “Yeah, love your neighbor. Oh yeah, That means you can hate your enemy! Right, right, right! Hate your enemy but love your neighbor.”

Well, Jesus said, “You have heard it said (by your teachers), ‘Moses said you should love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ And I tell you that that was not what Moses said. That is a misquotation. Look back in the Old Testament. It doesn’t say to *hate your enemy*. That isn’t in the text. The text merely says love your neighbor. It doesn’t say hate anyone!”

Oh! So now you realize that Jesus is not comparing His teaching with the teaching of Moses but with the contemporary interpreters of Moses. Jesus is not quoting Moses, He is quoting Moses’ misled expositors.

Let me make sure you understand this. Every one of those six examples of popular teaching to which the hearers of Jesus had been exposed—where He has to make a correction—He is not making corrections of Moses. These are not updatings of Moses. These are updatings of their *misunderstanding* of what Moses had said.

Jesus starts right out in verse 17, saying, “Don’t think I came to abolish the law.” Okay! Then He goes on, “Now, here’s some examples. You heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder.’ I say to you that everyone who’s angry shall be guilty...” Jesus is not overthrowing Moses; He’s pointing out the true significance of Moses.

In other words, the key phrase is, “I did not come to abolish but to fulfill—to reinstate, to clarify, to reinforce.” And all six of these are like that one.

For example, “You have heard it said to you, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I want to point out that you can commit adultery in your heart.”

The Old Testament talks about the heart. The heart is the heart of the matter, whether you are in Deuteronomy or Genesis or wherever. Right? And so it is not as if the Old Testament says, “All you need to do is to do things outwardly, and you’ll get along just fine” but that in the New Testament it says, “Well, we’re going to go to higher things! We’re going to talk about the heart!” That is a fallacy—a dreadful, ghastly, tragic fallacy. Such thinking throws the whole Old Testament into a shadow. Unfortunately for many people that has very commonly been the case.

In any case, I am elaborating to a degree what is said in this passage in Matthew, because Marcion obviously thought that Jesus was condemning the Old Testament in these statements. So he throws the whole Old Testament out except for certain narratives. But, alas, he finds that he has to throw out much of the New Testament, too. By the time he gets through, he’s got a kind of a theoretical gospel that sounds a lot like some of the modern heresies. “Easy believism,” for example, is a modern heresy; it is neo-Marcion talk, or a resurrection of the Marcionitic point of view. This neo-Marcion perspective is a danger that constantly surrounds us. We dare not minimize the Old Testament at all!

Another passage to consider in relation to the Old Testament are the events of Luke 24 which overviews the time from the resurrection of Christ through the story of the Road to Emmaus and Christ’s appearance to the disciples to His ascension. How did these events bring mission vision to the disciples? Is Luke 24 merely a clarification as to the reason Jesus had to die, or is it also a clarification as to why the whole world should have been in their perspective?

While Luke 24 records an amazing story, both clarification elements are very much a part of Luke 24:47. Jesus says very clearly that the whole world is in the picture *as it should have been*, and essentially asks, “How come you didn’t understand this?”

Now I don’t think Jesus was trying to belittle these people in Luke 24:25 when He says, “Oh, foolish men,” so much as to point out the incredible foolishness of what they were saying. I would prefer to translate Jesus as saying, “Look, you guys! You are incredibly foolish in this thing!” It is not that they were dummies;

they were perfectly intelligent people. But the problem was that they were slow of heart to believe.

The Luke 24:23-34 passage is fantastic. I know of no more powerful, dramatic event in the New Testament that talks about the nature of faith and belief and obedience and of why our understanding hinges upon our obedience. For years this passage has been one of great excitement to me. I contend that these two men were downcast; their vision was shattered. They were in a hopeless mood, just trudging out of the city with all of their hopes dashed. And they were probably a little bitter. Why did things turn out the way they did? Why did everything go wrong?

And then this Man joins them. They do not pay any attention to who He is. Of course, they do not recognize Him. So when He asks, “Hey, what’s the problem?” I believe that they just burst out in anger. How else can you interpret the phrase, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn’t know what has gone on there the last few days?” I mean, that answer is very much a put-down. They snarled at him. And it came out of anger.

Stop and think how far removed these two were from the realities. Jesus was by no means “the only one in Jerusalem who didn’t understand.” He was in fact the only one in Jerusalem who *did* understand what was going on.

What a cataclysmic difference between those of us who many times in our lives may be stumbling along in despair and dismay and hopelessness simply because we were not aware of what God was doing. And the difference between what God is doing and our understanding of that is sometimes just black and white. In our weak moments we may think He is the one who does not understand. He is the only One who *does* understand!

And so, this is a momentous passage. We are talking about that which hopefully will burn in your hearts also: this recognition of the genuineness and the usefulness and the up-to-dateness of the Old Testament. These truths must permeate our thinking, both in respect to the Redeemer that was to come, and also with respect to the whole globe that was in the picture from the beginning, from Genesis 12 on.

Note that from the first announcement of the Plan, there was nothing more to be added. The Great Commission was there in all its splendor—right there in Genesis! And when you realize that, then all of a

sudden the story of the Jews is a story which could be the story of any nation. It could be the story of a group who had the glory, had the Gospel, had the blessing—everything that God wanted them to have—but somehow did not push on in that belief to the rest. Too many forgot or ignored the crucial fact that blessing was to be *shared*, that glory was to be *shared*, that inheritance from the Father was not just for them but *for all peoples of the earth!*

When that understanding suddenly comes upon you, it's like a second conversion. It's an incredible experience. These disciples were staggered when they finally understood. They should have known. They were exposed. There was no reason for not understanding. It was a *mystery*, as Paul said, that they did not understand.

Some of them did, however, all the way down through history. The Psalmist speaks of declaring His glory among all nations. Isaiah talks about, "You are to be

My salvation to the ends of the earth, a light to the nations" (Isa 49:6).

Looking back I cannot believe that I used to think that the Jewish people were essentially waiting for the commission for 2000 years. I can't believe I was such a dummy (*I'm* using that word now!). I had the idea that the Jewish people were just supposed to behave in the meantime; just supposed to be good boys and girls—as if God merely said, "Just don't get into trouble..." The point was, I thought that they didn't have any mission, any message, any mandate, any purpose. They were just supposed to keep out of trouble, and then, one day, 2000 years later, God was going to say, "Now, by the way, I've got a job for you to do."

But no! That commission in Genesis 12:1-3 was no "hibernating mandate." It was always in force.

This whole subject has got to be revolutionary. I hope it will be for you.



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

*Ralph D. Winter*

## The Introduction of History

**I**n 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:

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*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 five-fold 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.



# “Historification” of the Big Picture

Ralph D. Winter

*This reading centers around two supplementary exercises. The first exercise asks you to draw a grid, or a chart, that will enable you to visualize the various historical events important to salvation history that have been discussed thus far in the course. Details on how this grid is to be drawn will be given in the reading. The second exercise asks you to write a synopsis of the most important events in salvation history in a short enough presentation that one could read your synopsis in under 60 seconds. The details of how to write this presentation are given within the reading.*

As we think together of *The Historification of the Big Picture*, some clarification may be of assistance. By *historification* (an atrocity of verbal phrasing), I refer to the use of time as an organizing factor in the understanding of history. History is not always studied so much in terms of time as it is in content. There are people who study the details of great events without any reference to the previous or following periods of history, or without any reference to contemporary events in other parts of the world. That is still history. History, basically, is simply writing down what has happened, with or without regard to time.

## The Grid

At this point in the course we will use a grid to study the history in question. I am suggesting the use of a grid composed of 400-year periods. Therefore, when this grid is completed you will have included five 400-year periods in total. Now, nobody, certainly not myself, is proposing that things happened in an exact 400 years, and then something else started after 400 years.

These periods of 400 years seem more useful, however, than 100-year periods when you’re talking about long spaces of time. Because a person may get confused with minor divisions like 100 years, it seems easier to talk about 400 years.

In this grid, nothing will necessarily fit precisely, although the Patriarchal Period starts somewhere in the earliest of those five 400-year “super-centuries.” And it is true the Bible now and then makes sweeping statements about 400 years in Egypt or 400 years here or there. Let us not take that too seriously; let us just try to fit the major events of the Old Testament on this grid.

The drastic problem which all will have to face—no one has any advantage in this—is the fact that there are two radically different views of the time of the Exodus from Egypt: the so-called early date and the late date. I do not personally care in which year the event occurred. I am not going to spend a lot of time trying to figure it out, as I do not see any particular advantage to knowing. In drawing your grid, it does not matter in particular whether you feel that the Exodus happened at an earlier or a later date.

In drawing this grid, where will you place the major personalities of the Old Testament? For instance, where would you put Moses? Obviously, you’d put him either at the early or the late date. Where do you put Abraham? You put him at the beginning. Where do you put David? (Now, the question of when we are to date the life of David has a little more definite answer; we have a little more agreement as to when David lived). What about the personality of Solomon, or Jo-

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Winter, Ralph D. et al, eds. (2006) *Global Civilization, Ancient World: Lesson Overviews*, 5th ed. Pasadena: William Carey Library, pp. 208-212.

siah, or Ezra, Nehemiah, and so forth. To put these on a grid will give a perspective on sequence. Some people go through Sunday School all their life and still do not know whether David or Moses came first. That is really too bad because it is not such a complicated picture if you have in mind the overall scheme of salvation history. In fact, it is so relatively simple that I think you ought to be able to tell the story in 60 seconds.

## The Story

I'm sure that you can tell the whole Old Testament story in 60 seconds, if you keep to the major periods and events and geography. Abraham and Ur of the Chaldees is where you start. Then you move to the so-called "Promised Land," which is the bridge between the great mass of Africa and the great mass of Europe and Asia, the two largest land masses on the globe. They are hooked together with this narrow bridge, which is where Abraham went. Then you see other events unfold from there. So you can tell the whole story of the Old Testament within 60 seconds. That will perhaps be a help to you in drawing a picture. If you can say it in 60 seconds, you ought to be able to fit this story on a single sheet of paper. Why don't you try to write this story out? Remember, you will need to be able to read this story in 60 seconds or less- and that is without "speed" reading! You are welcome to read on a bit as you might gain more insight into what should be included in this story, but do try out this helpful exercise.

## The Canon

There are two different sequences of the canon. The Septuagint does include more than we call the canon. The Apocryphal books are not part of our canon (the Apocrypha is considered an important collection of books by Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches). The canon means "standard or norm"; and both Jews and Protestant Christians accept the same canonical list of books (as far as what Christians commonly term as the "Old" Covenant or Testament; Jews obviously do not consider the New Testament canonical), but not in the same sequence. So if on your chart you put down the sequence of books by the Hebrew or the Septuagint canon, you will end up with a different sequence. Lines may be going back and forth, and may be crossing, to relate those two to the same time line. That's part of the complexity of the study of the Old Testament.

There are many edifying questions to be asked about the various books of the Old Testament canon. Let us take the book of Samuel for instance: When was Samuel written? We should not concentrate solely on the question, "What is Samuel written about?" but it is important to explore the question, "*When* was it written?" as well. It could have been written at the time the events it describes occurred. That is not true with 1 Chronicles, because Chronicles begins with Adam. And Chronicles leaves out the Northern Kingdom. 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings are books that include the Northern kings, the Northern tribes.

You can peruse all of your textbooks to gain insight into what I believe will be a growing concern when considering the Canon: *What were the spiritual events that created the Bible?* To ask such a question is not to belittle the Bible, but to magnify the importance of true, spiritual, national revival.

It is no secret that Constantine, the Roman emperor, in becoming a Christian and making it legitimate and legal for Christians to operate, simultaneously allowed a man named Eusebius to collect books and documents describing the early church. It also made possible the coming out of the catacombs the various translations of the Bible so they could be widely duplicated. Humanly speaking, perhaps we would not have a Bible if it were not for the political/spiritual event of Constantine's conversion. His conversion allowed for public toleration and, later, public support of the Christian religion.

Events similar to this transpired in the Old Testament as well. For instance, Josiah's revival brought the book of Deuteronomy into prominence and power, and perhaps encouraged the writing of other parts of Scripture. So I think it is helpful to ask yourself, "When were these books created?" and to try to put a little arrow in your diagram in that respect.

## The Big Picture

Hopefully, this will not be the only time in your life that you do the 60-second story exercise. This exercise should be done throughout your life, for each time you gain more insight into history you will gain more insight into those important events of salvation history. You can get that 60-second story together; you can start drawing your time-line. The time-line is absolutely impartial; it's absolutely equally divided into five equally wide divisions across the piece of paper. But from then on, chaos begins

to appear, because many aspects do not fit so neatly into time. This is what I have called, playfully, *The Historification of the Big Picture*. You can put the various empires outside of the Bible in there. Assyria comes into the Bible; Babylon comes into the Bible; Persia comes into the Bible; Ur of the Chaldees is referred to. You can put Egypt in there. If you want, you could even put the events of China and India. Why not?

As we go along in the course, we want to get a feel for things that are simultaneous or nearly so, like Confucius, Buddha, Zarathustra, Socrates a little bit later, and Isaiah. These men are all roughly simultaneous. There is no particular reason for them to be studied in different books at different times in different places, and never be related together. The Spirit of God in the Bible says, “the eyes of God run to and fro throughout the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9). What does this actually mean? What did all these influential people really believe? We do not know for sure. But were they seeking God? Was God favoring them in any respect because of their heart conditions?

Now, their followers have gummed up their teaching unimaginably. Buddha would be quite astonished if he saw the huge Buddhas in Thailand. The same is true, I feel sure, if the Apostle Paul saw some of the great cathedrals’ million-dollar organs dedicated to the simple Carpenter of Nazareth. You can not blame founders for their followers. You cannot assume that the current followers of anybody, good or bad, reflect accurately what those initial founders really believed.

### **What is God doing in history?**

So, what we are really interested in is this question, “What is God up to? What is going on?” We have no interest in simply studying a mass of facts about things that simply occurred and not attach any significance to these things. We want to understand what was going on, so that we can participate with God in His on-going activity today. What was going on then is going on today, in terms of a changeless, purposeful God. We as His disciples do well to take very seriously these kinds of questions.

After you have taken time to work on your grid and then write out the 60-second presentation, then you can read on to the following reflections.

## **Reflections**

The title *The Historification of the Big Picture* is somewhat playful. Remember, this should not be the only time you consider God’s activity throughout history. This may take you 10 or 15 years to finish to your satisfaction, maybe never to your satisfaction, because there’s a great deal of information about this 2000-year period that we probably will never know in this life.

But it is very important about this time during the course to begin to pull aspects of what we are learning together, so that as further items come, they can be attached to a single “Big Picture.” Since we are using time as the inflexible dimension, we have called this *historification*. Please take note that I have only invented this word as a playful way of looking at the significance of events throughout all of global history

### **The Story Exercise**

Now the exercise was to write up a story that could be read without hurrying within 60 seconds. Let us consider a 120-second story which was written by a student who took this course in the past. Then we will critique this story and consider other possibilities and vantage points.

*Student:* God created the universe out of nothing at the beginning of time. After He had made the earth and filled it with plants and animals, He made Adam and Eve, the first people. Adam and Eve had close fellowship with God, but they chose to sin, and that broke the fellowship. Because of their sin, all men everywhere are sinners and need to have their fellowship with God restored. God lovingly decided to make it possible for men to be forgiven of their sin. First, He split the world up into nations by giving each nation a different language. Then he chose a man named Abraham to build into a nation. He had decided to fulfill His plan by using one nation to bless all the other nations. He promised to bless Abraham and to use Abraham’s seed to bless all the nations.

Abraham’s descendants ended up in Egypt, where they grew from 70 people to several million people. After 400 years, they were truly a nation, the nation of Israel. God chose Moses to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt, where they were slaves. Their exodus from Egypt, with many miracles, became a famous story in that part of the world.

God gave Israel the land of Canaan for their own. He established a covenant of fellowship with them. At first

they were ruled by judges; then later, they had kings. God renewed the promises of blessing He had made to Abraham, when He had settled Israel in their new land. But the Israelites were disobedient and rebellious. God had to warn them over and over again not to worship anyone else but Him. The prophets had a full-time job keeping the people informed about what God was saying. Finally, the Israelites were conquered by other nations, and some were taken off into exile. This punishment taught them to worship only God. When they returned to Canaan, they renewed their promises to obey God. They also looked forward more and more hopefully to the long-promised seed, the Messiah, the One who would restore fellowship between God and man forever.

*Dr. Winter:* This is a story which I consider to be very good. What follows is a critique.

Different ways are available to approach a critique. One way to conduct a critique is to ask if there's anything in this account that is not correct, especially in a factual sense. Obviously, the problem is to state as much that is true as possible; but it might be that now and then you unknowingly write something that is incorrect.

To point out a very small error, it seems to me it would be better to speak of 70 households than 70 people that went to Egypt, because the 70 people, essentially, were men: no wives were mentioned, and no children. We can assume that the number of 70 given in the scriptures is in reference to households. Now, that does not actually make the difference between feasibility or infeasibility of 70 people growing into two million in 430 years; both of them are equally possible. This is not an unusual growth rate for human populations. But I mention that for fun to give an example of what you would want to avoid.

For example, later on, the student wrote that *some* of the Israelites were taken into captivity. I think most scholars feel that *most* of them were taken into captivity, and *some* of them came back: rather than some of them going and all of them coming back, *most* of them went and *some* of them came back. That means the community of Israel at the time of Christ was only about a third of the Jews as two-thirds of them were still back where they had been taken into captivity. This begins to help us understand the rising up of the Zoroastrian tradition, because, during the Babylonian exile, there may very well have been a good deal of contribu-

tion from Jewish thought to this tradition centered farther to the east from Palestine.

The other approach to critique would be not just considering what is not true, but also reviewing the proportions of emphasis given to different events and themes as presented in the story? You could, for instance, say that since Genesis 1-11 is the Introduction to the whole Bible. In this way, the story could potentially stay in Genesis 1-11 entirely if you as a writer wanted to do this. On the other hand, I'm sure more influence was given to some of the earlier events than to some of the later events simply because those later occurrences have not yet been considered in the course, and they are not quite as vivid in one's mind.

I did this 60 second exercise when I first went to seminary many years ago. At that point I did not have much missiological insight. But over the years, I have periodically—once every ten or fifteen years—written up a 60-second story. I did this for fun recently, without consciously injecting any new missiological insights that have come to me in the last 10 years—which are many. So now you will have to critique what I am saying from that point of view. This is my 60-second story. You can actually time me if you want. Here we go:

"After a good creation, evil entered the planet; and out of all the lost and straying nations, God chose one person, Abraham, to launch a new nation that would be a means of re-conquest. Abraham was told to relocate from one of the most advanced early civilizations, Sumeria, to a neck of land connecting Africa and Europe-Asia. There his lineage prospered in the era of the patriarchs, fell into Egyptian captivity for 400 years, was brought out by Moses in a series of miracles, balked at retaking the Promised Land, delayed 40 years in the wilderness, finally entered and, with mixed success and failure, re-occupied the land. After 400 years of judges, kings were introduced—David and Solomon, for example. In a series of ups and downs, the northern ten tribes were dispersed, and finally the southern kingdom was carried into Babylonian captivity. After 70 years, a partial return set the stage for new obedience, but continued failure, leading up to the appearance of God's own Son."

You can see that my emphasis was a little different; but in both cases, it seems perfectly possible in 60 seconds to give the overall picture of the Old Testament. Now, I do not think we are going to publish a book with one

page, or let's say a third of a page and say, "The Short Story of the Old Testament," and sell the book.

The purpose of this kind of story, however, is to make it necessary to see the broad outlines. It forces you to drop out details, and choose the most important events. I did not get very much missiological theory into my 60 second story. I used the phrase *reconquest*, for example, whereas the student used the words *bless all the nations*. I do not think there is any difference in meaning. The blessing can only come through the subordination of people to their Heavenly Father in a loving, reconciling relationship. To call this *blessing* easily falls into the trap of thinking of prosperity, physical or material prosperity. On the other hand, *reconquest* sounds harsh and militaristic. So you may do something different from either of these two words. In any event, it is possible to review this overall story in a short period of time.

### The Time-Line/Grid Exercise

A critical assignment which may take ten years—it will certainly take more than one day—is to put the key components of the story into the form of a time line. Draw a time line from 200 BC to the birth of Christ, giving each period of 400 years equal space. The idea of stretching out the time period of 2000 years, with evenly spaced 400-year periods, is just a purely arbitrary but somewhat objective grid. We are not expecting that anything will necessarily fit that grid; but at least it can be located on that grid. Whole periods of time, which we normally gloss over, come into view, simply because the Bible itself does not give equal attention to each day in the 2000-year period.

Then the *great epochs* of Old Testament drama which consist of "Patriarchal", "Egyptian Captivity," "Judges," "Kings," "Postexilic" should be included on the grid. For pedagogical purposes, I applied these five epochs to the five 400-year periods. I know they do not fit precisely, but at least there are these five epochs in sequence. They are major epochs; they do last centuries long; and they do give an overall sequence. At least for the person who can't remember which order Moses and David come in, this will help. You could also plot *five major personages* and add the books of the Old Testament in the periods to which they refer as a step further.

### The Bible

A most important dimension to consider is one to which I do not feel qualified to give a good or full

answer. I believe it would be so valuable to review the great spiritual events in Abrahamic and Israel's history and conjecture the relationship of these events to the writing of the various "books" of the Bible. I wish Biblical scholarship more often referred to *the great spiritual movements of history*. While the major state universities of the country buy more religious books than all other libraries put together, their faculties are almost uniformly non-Christian, non-believing, non-religious scholar faculties. It is very rare that you will find a devotionally believing, scholarly Christian working in a secular university. In fact, the university logic may be to deliberately choose people who have no personal loyalty, lest that "color" the objectivity of their scholarship. Well, of course, the other extreme is what usually happens. People who have no personal interest in fellowship with God are not going to be looking for spiritual events related to the Biblical narrative. So we have a frighteningly secular interpretation of scripture.

Most of the scholarly books that one sees even at the Society of Biblical Literature are written from a secular viewpoint. When the largest meeting in all their history of over 8,000 people took place, the vast majority of attendees were not believers. So it is more and more difficult to find the scholarly resources that we need to consult that give us answers about the significance of Biblical events. These are the kind of answers that we want here.

Yet it is also true, whether we can find out the details of the historical processes or not, that the Bible was not let down from heaven in the form it is now in. It was an accumulating document and was created in the context of a culture in the midst of history. That may sound a little scary. But, obviously, Abraham did not go around with a pocket New Testament, a pocket Old Testament, or even a pocket copy of the Torah, the first five books, the Pentateuch. It was obvious that God was able to deal with people apart from written Scripture. We must remember that for much of Old Testament history, the saints and prophets of that era were without the final form of Scripture that we call the Bible today.

Also obvious is that, in all of the last 4000 years, written Scripture has been the primary means of dealing with humanity—in addition, of course, to the appearance of His own Son. But our knowledge of God's Son is given to us only because of written Scripture. And so, through God's Son as presented in Holy Scripture God has reached out across the world.

Of course, the printed Bible is not of less importance simply because of the fact that not everyone through history has had access to the full Bible. Amazingly enough, even in the period following the apostles, when the full Bible was available to some, most Christians in history have *not* had access to the full Bible.

This is a very embarrassing reality about the Christian tradition itself. Even those of us who have the Bible do not use it. They say that 1 out of 40 households in France has a Bible. In the United States, there are five Bibles per household. In my household, there are a lot more than five Bibles, even if I just counted the ones that have been given to me. But the number of Bibles

is not as important as how we treat the Bible: how we deal with it, how we make use of it. I think that we are now in the era of cosmetic Bibles, micro-print Bibles that are complete Bibles; so you can get credit for carrying the whole Bible with you to church in beautiful leather binding or a hand held computer. On the one hand, they say the average camera in the United States takes only one picture per year. I would say the average Bible doesn't get read one page per year in the United States. So there could be a false confidence built up around written Scripture, even though it is exceedingly precious to those who seek it and cannot find it.



# The People of God and the Other Nations

*Roberta H. Winter*

## Introduction

**A**t this time, we are going to look into the background of the other kingdoms that surrounded Judah during the period of the Old Testament prophets. One of the reasons to give more background to the kingdoms that were surrounding Israel and Judah during this time is because it helps to understand why the people of God reacted the way they did. Such also helps to understand what God was doing and why. Now in the period of the prophets, we need to know more about Assyria and Babylonia and Persia. What on earth was the situation in those areas, and why did they come to such prominence at the time that they did?

## God's Plan: The Exile

Before we consider that question, other major mis-siological questions that we need to ask include, What was God thinking about it? What was God's plan, for instance, for the deportation of the children of Israel? What was His plan when they went into Egypt and then fell into captivity in Egypt? Did God have a plan? When they went to Babylon, was it only that they would be punished? Or did He intend them to be missionaries there, like He intended Jonah to go as a missionary? Was the book of Jonah just a sample of one individual whom God was dealing with? Was it a sample, for instance, of a nation that He was trying to awaken to His purposes? So what does this mean for us today?

Ralph Winter speaks of the "Go-Come Mechanism" of missions. That means that throughout the whole Bible, you have the sense of God sending people, and also bringing people back to where His people are resident, where the gospel is resident. In both cases, they *go*, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes kicking and screaming like Jonah did. Sometimes the people who did not know God come voluntarily, like the Queen of Sheba. Today, they may come involuntarily, like the people arriving in our country as refugees. This is true also in the time of the Bible, and it is particularly noticeable when we get to the period of the prophets. When God sent off His people into Babylon—did He expect them to be a witness? Do we have any evidence of that kind of a situation in the Bible?

## Assyria

It is important to study what the Assyrians were like because they were the first great empire mentioned in this period of time. There had been other empires: the Hittite empire and, of course, we know about the Egyptian empire. The Hittites, interestingly enough, we knew very little about until the last century, when suddenly a whole library of clay tablets were discovered in a place called Ecbatana. Investigations demonstrated that the Hittites were a massive empire at one period of history. But about 1200 BC, they just disappeared. Disappeared! And we do not know for sure whether it was because of the sea peoples (the Phoenicians) who destroyed them, or who destroyed them. But they were gone.

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After serving as a missionary to a Guatemalan tribal group for ten years, Roberta H. Winter co-founded the U.S. Center for World Mission. Roberta was a mother of four daughters, all of whom are involved in missions work. Roberta was also a voracious reader and writer.

After that, possibly because the Hittites were no longer a force to contend with, the Assyrians began to rise. The Assyrians were originally farmers and were not a well-educated people. As they began to rise, they began to send some of their people down to Babylonia to learn how to read and write, and they picked up some of the Babylonian skills of carving. One of the things that we know the Assyrian empire for is their massive carvings—beautifully done, but quite often very vicious.

We catch the names of several Assyrian kings in the Bible. We mainly know about Shalmaneser, for example, because he was the one that invaded Israel and carried the Israelis off into essential oblivion (2 Kings 17:3-7). And Sennacherib was the one who came against Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18.

One fascinating aspect about the Assyrians was that, by this time, they had become quite an advanced civilization. Not only was strong military might evident, but they also had devised a new kind of warfare. They were the ones who decided that chariots were not the best way to go about fighting; instead they had cavalry. They got rid of the chariots and fought from off the horses themselves. It was much faster.

They were the ones who decided that you could divert rivers, and change the course of a war by just digging. In a major river they had, they decided to dig a number of little channels so that the water would be shallow and they wouldn't have any trouble crossing it. That same idea has been used many times since then, most recently perhaps during the American Civil War by the Northern general Grant in a siege on Vicksburg.

In addition, the Assyrians invented siege machines that were double-deckers. On the one level they would ram gate, but on the upper level they would shoot arrows with fire that would then catch their enemies' buildings on fire. The Assyrians were the ones who first built huge earthen ramps leading up to the gates of the city they were besieging. Because of these ramps, they were able to get so close to the walls that their infantry was able to shoot the people defending the walls while their siege machines were ramming the gates below. It was a rarity for any city to withstand such a siege for more than just a few months. Incredibly, Israel's capital, Samaria, was able to withstand the Assyrian siege for three years. But it was most difficult.

The Assyrian armies also used inflated goat skins to

cross rivers when they needed to. They would get underneath the water and not be seen as an army crossing because of the goat skins that they would get under.

Primarily, we remember the Assyrians as a nation that used terror as a means of controlling the people. They would even skin people alive. Fifteen hundred corpses were found buried outside the city of Lachish, which was a Judean city that they had conquered. By the time they came to the area of the major capitals, they had already destroyed the minor cities of the country they wished to conquer.

When Sennacherib was besieging Jerusalem, Hezekiah went to prayer. This is one of the stories that is told in three different places: in Kings (1 Kings 18:13 - 19:36), in Chronicles (2 Chron 32:1-22), and in the book of Isaiah (chapters 36 and 37). Not a lot of stories are evident in the book of Isaiah, but this one is very prominent because God delivered Jerusalem in a way that was just incredible. Usually, after a siege of maybe three months, the city would capitulate.

Sennacherib tried the same tactic. But after Hezekiah's prayer, God sent his angel to destroy 185,000 of the Assyrian troops overnight, and the army departed in terror. In his own secular records, Sennacherib said he shut up the king of Judah in a cage like a bird, but he never claimed to have conquered him. Jerusalem was one of the few places that he did not conquer.

The Assyrians were also great builders. When Sennacherib went back home, he started massive building projects using the people that he had taken captive from Israel to build beautiful parks, massive buildings, and to make all those beautiful carvings. Another accomplishment of the Assyrians was that they paved roads all over the empire so that if one of the king's officials needed to inform him of a rebellion in the making, he could get to him within a matter of a few days, and the rebellion would be squelched. To pave roads for this purpose was very common among the Romans later on; but the pattern started away back in 600 BC with Assyria.

## Samaritans

You will remember that in 2 Kings 17:24-35, the Bible speaks of Shalmaneser bringing in other peoples from other places he had conquered, and settling them in Israel and Samaria. These people became what we know in the New Testament as Samaritans. One of the synonyms that

they used for them is the *Ambararis*. After they were forcibly resettled in Israel and other areas, the people began to feel that they were being attacked by the many lions in the area because they didn't worship the god of the land. So they sent away and asked the king for some of the Israeli priests to be sent to them to teach them how to properly worship the gods of this land. Shalmaneser sent them one priest, who began to instruct them. But they mixed their own pagan worship with the worship of the God of Israel. Also the Israelites who had been left in the land began more and more to intermarry with these other peoples, and the result was the group of people known in the New Testament as the Samaritans.

The theology of the Samaritans was, of course, considered very heretical, especially by the people down in Judea. This is why, when Jesus came to Judea from Galilee with his 12 disciples, all of whom except Judas Iscariot were from Galilee, the leaders in Judea did not respect them. They were not Samaritans, yet because they came from the wrong place—north of where the Samaritans lived, and far removed from southern Judea—they were “tainted.” You might say that to come from Galilee caused trouble for Jesus. But He deliberately chose to come from there. Remember, that Isaiah 9 speaks of “the land that has sat in darkness has seen a great light”—the land of Naphtali. Way back in the time of Isaiah, God purposed to bring the light back to the Children of Israel who were not yet taken away into captivity, but who had forsaken the worship of God for a number of generations.

## Babylonians

Let us move on to the Babylonian Empire. They were much less cruel than the Assyrian Empire. In fact, when we speak of the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians, we need to recognize that each succeeding empire seemed to be kinder than the one which preceded it. It's almost as if God said, “I will not tolerate this kind of cruelty,” and sent another empire to destroy the one which was so cruel. An extremely cruel people, their kingdom did not last very long; partly because the minute somebody important died, the people rose up in rebellion and tried to take over—and did.

This is what happened with Babylon. Babylon had been a major empire before and had gone under; and now, when Sennacherib and the ones who immediately followed him died, the people in Babylon—the

Medes and the Babylonians—rose up and conquered Assyria. Here you have this massive war machine; so that within three months Nineveh was destroyed. At that time Nineveh had a very large library. It too, was completely destroyed.

Well, the Babylonians were not faint, either, as we know from Scripture. But instead of slaughtering people wholesale, like the Assyrians had, they deported a lot of them. In fact, in the first major deportation of Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C., they took away ten thousand of the leading citizens of Jerusalem. You remember that Daniel was one of the princes of the kingdom. In the first deportation, a lot of those carried off to Babylon were of royal blood. But the fact that he put some of them into positions of authority was a pacifying thing to do. If you give the people a little bit of authority, and a little bit of prestige, they are less likely to rebel. He had a certain amount of wisdom in that.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was a very superstitious kind of person. He had all sorts of fears. For example, he thought that if he did not cater to the gods carefully and with fear then something terrible would happen to him. Nevertheless, his rule over the people and his methods of doing warfare, though brutal, were not nearly so brutal as those of the Assyrians. The reason why Scripture speaks a lot of the Chaldeans and the Babylonians (more or less interchangeable terms) is because the Scripture by that time reflected only Judah. The people in Israel had already been carried away. Remember that Judah—at least its seat of government and its king—was not captured by the Assyrians. They were carried away by the Babylonians. So you have that as the emphasis there.

Very interestingly, when the Babylonians took over Assyria, the Medes had helped the Babylonians. Babylon rose to its height of power, but Nebuchadnezzar was now dead. Nabopolassar who followed him had died while he was out on a campaign. Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son, is the character in the Bible who saw the writing on the wall which Daniel interpreted. This period of time was a period of unrest, but not nearly as much as it had been before.

## Persians

The Persians at that point were under Median influence; and the Medes were under Babylonian influence. But when the Medes and the Persians collaborated together and came into Babylon, it was one of those events that

could not have been expected. They were not, you would think, technically strong enough. But Cyrus came from the place of a nobody into a place of power.

The various minor prophets have a great deal to say about Assyria—especially Nahum and Jonah. But the major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel—speak a lot about the Babylonians. Especially interesting is that 200 years or so before it was to happen, Isaiah 21 speaks of the fall of Babylon. In verse 5, he speaks of the great banquet, interrupted by an attacking army. Daniel in chapter 5 fills in the details. Isaiah (21:5) warns, “Put a watchman on the city wall to shout out what he sees. When he sees riders in pairs on donkeys and camels, tell him, ‘This is it!’”

According to secular sources of history, when Cyrus attacked Babylon, he came with not only small horses but also with camels—the first time they had been used as cavalry animals in an attacking force. Their presence so frightened the chariot horses of the Babylonians, that they bolted.

Also, Isaiah 45 says that the gates of Babylon will not be shut any more to Cyrus. Again, history tells us that Cyrus had his soldiers divert the Euphrates river so that all the water tunnels leading into the city became dry and the invading army slipped into the city through these tunnels.

After conquering Babylon, within one year Cyrus had decided to send the Hebrews home. He felt that you needed to be as kind as possible to all the peoples who were subjugated if you wanted them to stay happily within your kingdom. The way to prevent rebellion was not to threaten violence, as the Assyrians did, but to treat subjugated people with kindness. So he deliberately set out to be kind. And one of the first peoples he was kind to were the Hebrews that were in the Babylonian Empire. The kings who followed him were not necessarily that kind; but he was.

Cyrus was a rather humble man. Whereas most of the kings made magnificent carvings telling about all their exploits, he did not. Even his tomb is a very simple tomb that still exists today. He exists as almost an enigma among the rulers of these huge empires, he was so different. It helps you understand a bit more why he is spoken of in Isaiah as “Cyrus, My servant.”

One of the reasons why some people feel that there were two different people who authored the book of

Isaiah is because it was a long time after Isaiah had penned the passages about Cyrus before anybody even knew anything about this Persian king to come. How did Isaiah get his name, and so forth? But most evangelicals feel that this is one of the things that God revealed—that there was a man who would come whose name was Cyrus, who would be kind and who would see that they got back to their home.

So they were under Persian rule for the next period of time, with God having His hand on them, even then. There was Daniel, there was Darius and the stories you read in the Bible. Here again you have example after example of the children of Israel being a witness to those who had conquered them.

One question for your consideration is as follows: In Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, we have magnificent prayers of repentance on the part of these people—Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah—for their rebellious nation. Not a single one of them mentions any sense of failure to be a light to the nations, even though, several hundred years before, Isaiah had spoken of their need to be a light to the nations. Why? Enjoy your reflections on these various issues.

## Reflections

In addressing the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Empires, why does God allow a nation as brutal as Assyria to conquer His people? Are the “go-and-come mechanisms” of missions involved here?

Before I give an answer to that, I want to comment on what we mean by the word missiology. *Missiology* is not a field concerned solely with the facts of missions. It is rather looking at not just missions, but whatever (events, theories, developments) may be occurring around the globe and trying to see the implications of what God is doing in terms of evangelizing the world. In other words, we could be talking about terror attacks and bring in a missiological question. We could be talking about a “March for Jesus” and bring in a missiological question. It does not matter what we talk about; missiology is the way we look at it. *What is God doing or allowing that is impacting the nations of the world?*

So when we speak about the three conquering empires—Assyria, Babylonia and Persia—we are not just interested in the facts. We are interested in facts because we need to know a bit about these empires in order to understand what God was doing. But in addi-

tion to this, we want to look at the facts of history and ask the questions, “What is God doing? Is it just that these things are happening and God has nothing to do with it?” No, of course the answer to that final question is that, as a follower of God you know that He has His hand over all things. As it says in Scripture, even secular kings are underneath His control (Pro 21:1).

So a missiological question is, “Why did God allow a nation as brutal as Assyria to conquer His people?” Of course, the first answer is the one that’s given repeatedly in Scripture: because He wanted to *punish* them. They had gone after other gods, and had disobeyed Him. He had told them through Moses, back at the time of the Exodus, that if they did not follow Him, if they turned aside from Him, He would allow them to be taken captive by other peoples.

But are the go-come mechanisms of missions involved? Yes, we believe they are. God wanted His people not only to be punished, but to be forced into the midst of this brutal, brutal nation in order to be a witness to these people. You say, “How could slaves be a witness?” Well, we have examples throughout Scripture of slaves being witnesses. The prime example that you might think of is the little Hebrew girl who became a witness to the wife of Naaman, the Syrian, and told her about Elisha. It is not God’s best way, of course, of sending missionaries. But if we understand history, we understand that often God has used this mechanism of forcing His people out involuntarily, in order to make them be a witness to a people group who were very brutal and very cruel, much more so than their own people.

A follow-up question may be, “Why is it that the first nation that conquered them, the Assyrian nation, was so much more brutal than the second, the Babylonian, which in turn was more brutal than the Persians?” In other words, as time progresses, it seems that each conquering empire was less brutal. Was this perhaps because of the witness of the Israelites during this time? By the time they got down to the Babylonians, you already had Nebuchadnezzar choosing Daniel to be a force in his empire. You have the magnificent chapter in Daniel 4, where there is a wonderful testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, after he lost his mind and was out in the fields for those seven years. Daniel’s testimony of had a part to play here— Daniel was a witness, even to the king! So you have evidence, especially in the Babylonian Empire, of the witness of the children of Israel.

That witness must have been there also in the time of the Assyrian Empire. We know, of course, that Jonah was a witness, at least in the city of Nineveh. Why is it surprising that the book of Jonah is in the canon? It is surprising because Jonah did not want to go there; he was very reluctant. Like Jonah, the nation was very reluctant—they were taken captive, but they did not want to be a witness, either. They felt that the Assyrians were not deserving of a witness. To look at it from the human standpoint, they *did not* deserve it; but they desperately *needed* it.

Why is Jonah in the canon? Well, it must be that by the time they were putting together the books of the Old Testament canon, there were some people who were godly enough to see what God was doing. Maybe they knew and understood that this book was not just a book about a prophet going to Nineveh, but it was a book about God’s expectations of Israel, of His own people. God wanted them to be a witness to the nations, even the most brutal nation. Although I do not know if it is true, I have heard it said that of all the books in the Old Testament canon, the book of Jonah is the one that is never read in the synagogues today. If this is true, it would be understandable, because again, it is really a very critical book of the stand of the whole nation, the people of Israel. To clarify, I am using the word Israel here not to refer to the Northern Kingdom, but the descendants of Jacob. Jonah is a critique of them.

As a whole, Israel was not willing to be the Suffering Servant. While some understood what Isaiah was talking about when he spoke of the Suffering Servant, others may have thought he meant the Messiah. I doubt that many understood the significance of what it means to live as a suffering servant because they did not recognize Christ when He came and proved that he is the true Suffering Servant. A few were living who understood that God intended Israel as a nation to be a suffering servant. Even today, there are a few godly rabbis in Israel who understand why Israel has had to suffer, not just for punishment, but in order to be a witness.

In coming to Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, we notice a number of magnificent prayers of repentance on the part of these men for their rebellious nation. But not a single one of them mentions anything about a failure to be a light to the nations, as Isaiah 49:6 implies that they should have been. Why is there no mention of this calling? Interestingly enough, the prayers being referred to are each one in the ninth chapter of those

books by that name—Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9. Certainly, these godly men had a strong desire for their people to turn back to the Lord.

Local evangelism is a wonderful, necessary thing; but it is different from the desire to pray for the other nations of the world, not just for a person's own nation. I think that it's a tremendous temptation, especially when you have people that feel under bondage, not to look beyond your own problems. We all tend to ask God to solve our own problem. Yet, for those who truly understand the Word of God, He wants us to look beyond our own problems and to pray not only for our own people, but for the other peoples of the world.

After this period of time, we do not have any more books to be added to the Old Testament canon. Oh, you have a few when Israel was building the temple; but the people had just come back from Persia under

Cyrus. But we do not have the 400-year record following this time in our canon.

We know that, during this next period of time, the synagogue pattern was set up. We know that during this time, the time between the testaments, the Pharisaic movement began. According to Jesus, the Pharisees went all over the known world to where the Children of Israel had been dispersed in order to try to renew them in their faith. We know these things partially because of what is said about this period of time in the New Testament. But we know that this period of time—the captivity by Assyria first, by Babylonia second and by Persia third—was something which really reached deep into the Hebrew soul and changed their character. It should have prepared them for the Suffering Servant to come, who was Jesus. But this was not the case for most of them.

# Exegesis and Hermeneutics of Isaiah 49:1-6

*Ralph D. Winter*

## Exegesis and Hermeneutics: An Inductive Approach

**W**e have talked a lot about *exegesis*, digging out the original meaning, and *hermeneutics*, handing off that meaning to the present generation. But we've never really tried it on a specific passage as a thoroughgoing study. We're not asking you in this case to write a whole book; although whole books, doctoral dissertations and term papers have been written on this passage. But this is just one day's assignment, a kind of flexing of the muscles. It's the attempt to pull together some of the different skills that you've already been developing, and to try to employ them on a passage which is probably one of the most important passages in the entire Bible.

I have a special problem in introducing this lesson: I would just love to tell you what I think this verse means. I would just love to tell you some of my own struggles with it over the years, and the nifty little things I've figured out, which may or may not be true from your point of view. But I've got to let that be for the Review, and let you do the thinking for yourself.

Our approach to knowledge in this course is *heuristic*, which is to say, the *discovery approach*. We want you to discover truth, as well as develop the skills of discovery, because learning is actually retained better when you come into it through a discovery process.

There are two reasons for reading the Bible in an inductive manner. You are doing it partly because you want to be able to arrive at the conclusions yourself. In addition you want to be able to measure your opinions against

someone else's, without having the other person's opinions before you look at the text. We have an emphasis upon this approach because it pays rich dividends in how long you retain as well as how much you understand and get out of a passage.

The inductive method considers *the larger context* of the whole Bible, a whole book, or a whole section of a chapter; and how that might throw light upon Isaiah 49:1-6. This passage is one of the four *Servant Songs* in Isaiah. The four so-called Servant Songs have always been a matter of great interest. You might look back at chapter 42, for example, or some of the other Servant Songs, in measuring the flavor and the meaning of this particular one.

Take time to look at *the passage itself*. Look at the unfolding structure of the passage, how it builds, what it's trying to say. It may seem very mysterious to you at first. The imagery may clog your mind as to the meaning at first.

Then take a look at *the phraseology*. Hebrew *parallelism* is a marvelous invention! *This Hebraic way of writing draws synonyms and equivalent meanings of phrases into parallel*, and allows you to be sure that you understand what you are reading. You will find some of that here.

Finally, go down to *the word level*. Trace the key words—like the word *servant*, or figure out what the *remnant of Israel* is, or *light*, or *nations* (or Gentiles, depending upon your translation), or *salvation*, or *ends of the earth*. To trace a word, a concordance will be important, but you will need to use a computer if you want to *trace a phrase*.

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Then, *lastly*, go to a Commentary and a Bible Handbook, which introduce not only the book, but maybe even the passage. In the footnotes of certain Study Bibles you will find comments on some of these passages. Those notes are the *last* things to consider. You can go there first, get an idea, and forget it quickly. If you think about the relevant issues on your own first—before considering another person’s point of view, then you will likely remember that other person’s point of view better once you get to it.

This is a very generalized introduction to considering Isaiah 49:1-6 with an inductive approach. Please take time to thoughtfully follow these steps and read Isaiah 49:1-6 before proceeding further in this article.

## Thoughts on Isaiah 49:1-6

The extent of the significance of this passage, Isaiah 49:1-6 is difficult to explain adequately for it is a central passage in the Bible.

A personal story may help. I recall crossing one of the tourist lakes of Guatemala where there was an Israeli newspaperman in the same little boat. It took 45 minutes to cross the lake, and with the roar of the engines we could hardly talk. In such cramped quarters it was impossible not to talk about something. He found out that I was a Presbyterian missionary. Of course, Jews are not very excited about missionaries. But to be polite, instead of asking me, “Why are you a missionary?” he said, “Do you think the Jews should send missionaries?”

Aha! Just the right question! Because what I told him was, “Jews did send missionaries for centuries, and prior to the birth of Christ they were sending hundreds of missionaries all over the Roman Empire. Jesus actually made reference to the fact that they would traverse land and sea to make a single proselyte. But,” I said, “look, do you have a Bible with you?”

And he said, “Yes, I have one right across the lake in that hotel over there.” It was a Jewish Bible, and I began to think, “Would it be the same verses?” I was not sure. Regardless, I wrote on a little slip of paper “Isaiah 49:6.” Even in those days, this was an important verse to me.

Not until many years later, however, did I begin to ask questions of Isaiah 49:6: “Is this comment here about the Jewish people being a light to the nations of the world so that the salvation of God might go to the ends of the earth? Is this a prediction? Is this something that

had already happened? Was this something that was supposed to be worked at by the Jewish people?” I had never, ever thought before that it was actually a Commission that was simply being re-stated from Genesis 12, and that Israel, so long as the nation had existed, had held this obligation to be a light to the nations.

## A Priestly Nation

You may remember that Exodus speaks of the idea of a *priestly nation*, an intermediary nation between God and the other nations. This was, by the way, grossly and tragically distorted in the Reformation theology into what is called the “priesthood of all believers.” The idea being that you do not need a Roman priest, i.e. that you can pray directly to God. Coming to this doctrinal conclusion on the basis of the *priestly nation* of Exodus is the result of a complete misunderstanding/misinterpretation that took place in the Reformation. The far more important Biblical truth more readily proclaimed in Scripture is this: *the people of God are in a priestly relationship between God and the other nations.*

The “priesthood of all believers” ought to be a missionary truth rather than an iconoclastic truth or an anti-clerical or anti-Roman truth. An egalitarian “priesthood of all believers” is the furthest thing from the idea of the Bible in this case. It’s an exalted position, but it’s a relationship to people that you despise or hate or war against, rather than a benefit to yourself and your children by giving you direct access to God. It is a heavy burden and a difficult task which is found in that calling to be a “priestly nation,” however precious that other truth might be (that we all have direct access to God).

In reviewing Isaiah 49:6, therefore, we come to probably *one of the most pivotal events in the Old Testament.* Now, I don’t mean to downplay the events of the life of Christ; but beyond that, what other more pivotal event could there be?

Well, Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus was a pivotal event right? But we do not know fully what that meant, until he sets out and is in the act of preaching his first recorded sermon. He probably gave other sermons before this, of course; but in Acts 13, a very significant event happened. He goes to this mountain village and he talks to the people in the synagogue there. On the second Sabbath the people finally rustle up an opposition to him, and essentially force him out. Then he quotes Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47. This, of course, is



the verse of the Old Testament, if there ever was one, which the people should have been familiar with (but probably did not understand), that justifies the outreach to the Gentiles. This was his justification for addressing in a synagogue not only the true Jews in the front rows, and the proselytes (maybe) in middle rows, but also the God-fearers or devout persons, those who were still Gentiles—in the back rows.

The fact that Paul directed this comment over the heads of the Jews, essentially telling the people in the back rows that God was equi-distant to them in love and concern and access, infuriated the Jews, who held the keys to the Kingdom and so felt privileged as the ones who could bargain with these outsiders who wanted to be part of the people of God. At this time, Gentiles had to put on Jewish clothes, adopt Jewish New Moons and Sabbaths, adopt dietary restrictions, and all kinds of terrible barriers before being truly incorporated into the people of God. Just like in parts of India today, to “become a Christian” you have to give up a vegetarian diet and start eating meat in many cases. So this was a very crucial passage in the Old Testament.

Now, the *context* here is, first of all, the four Servant Songs found in the second part of the book of Isaiah. This second part has a new flavor and tone to it in comparison with the previous sections of Isaiah. However, the two halves show signs of significant continuity as well. In fact, if you look up the words for Assyria and Babylon and Persia and Cyrus and so forth, those words just stream right through this book. The continuity of Isaiah is very clear. But when you come to these words in chapter 49, it seems somehow more quaint, more graphic or distinct than in any other book or other part of Isaiah, that God has a purpose for His people—maybe not all the people. There is a Servant who some conceive to be a faithful remnant within.

For a current illustration, look at American Christendom today and ask: How many Christians go to bed at night thinking about the Great Commission? Not very many! How many of them have never even heard the phrase? On how many Sundays in the 350,000 plus churches in America would there not be a single reference to the Great Commission: the theme of the Bible? But there are, nevertheless, a faithful few who are very interested in the subject, and God apparently is speaking of them when He speaks of “My servant.” Thinking of a remnant within the remnant gives a basis for further reflection.

## Knowledge of God: Creation and Christ

Before this nation of Israel was born (Isa 49:1-6), the purpose was clear: “From my birth, He has made mention of my name.” The imagery is of a sharp sword and a polished arrow, and so forth. “Israel, in whom I will display My splendor.” This is not something that you would probably think of.

In the *festschrift* (a volume of articles, essays, etc., contributed by many authors in honor of a colleague) on the retirement of Arthur Glasser, a chapter was included which had been written by Ralph Covell. Ralph Covell is a retired professor from Denver Seminary in Colorado and a long-standing friend of mine and wrote in this *festschrift* about “Christ and the World Religions.” Although a remarkably fresh, summary of the different views and trends of thought in evangelical missions circles about the uniqueness of our faith vis-a-vis the other major religions, there is a reference to Adoniram Judson; something I’d never heard before. Judson was dealing with the people in Burma, probably the tribal people, who had all kinds of weird ideas about eclipses and the changing shape of the moon. These phenomena were things they did not understand, for they had little astronomical insight. He knew better than they did. But Covell points out with apparent, but I would say doubtfully valid, approval that Judson did not want to take advantage of them and persuade them to be Christians by some kind of a magical flourish of insight about astronomy. He wanted the gospel to reach through to their hearts.

Now, I think Judson’s decision reveals what is an artificial distinction between knowledge of God in creation and the full knowledge of God in Jesus. I have been so troubled by this perspective, since it’s so different from my own, that I have labeled it the “The Judson Fallacy.” I would not call it a heresy. Judson was in many remarkable respects a marvelous man, way ahead of me and many others. But on this point, I do not believe that missionaries should withhold information about the creation of God in order for the gospel to be more fully understood.

The gospel includes all that we know about God the Creator as part of the Good News. The goodness of the news is, in part, the greatness of God; and simply to withhold the information about what makes the moon change shape, and let them continue in superstition, seems me to be worthy of so negative a categorization

as “The Judson Fallacy.” In this Isaiah 49 passage, it says, “Israel in whom I will display My splendor.” And that splendor includes all sorts of scientific wonders, including the marvel of the DNA molecule.

But, you know, this continues to be a problem. When you go to church, you would not expect an enterprising pastor to have a big model of a section of the DNA molecule. You go to scientific lectures at the California Institute of Technology where you will find marvelous models of this incredible, double-helix molecule. It is astonishing, impressive, awing, subduing! The scientists are almost worshipful about it, it is so impressive. They need to be; they ought to be. There is nothing wrong with this. This is a holy response to the creative beauty of God and His wisdom.

The reality is that these models should be jerked out of the science lab and taken into the church. They ought to be properly presented as part of the splendor of the living God, in my opinion. But do not be too impatient. I doubt if our artificially battered, distorted and perverted society, has the capacity to rediscover the God of creation in modern times, the way we ought to. But here it is in the text of Isaiah.

### **Failure or Opportunity?**

There is also the reference in Isaiah 49:4 to: “I spent my strength in vain and for nothing.” Here is a nation that has been going for over a thousand years, and yet they do not seem to have arrived. They did not have their land in hand. The splendor of Solomon’s empire is gone, and they are now in captivity. Humanly speaking, and from a limited, non-spiritual, non-missiological perspective, they *had* failed.

Now, they had made a great achievement, in actual fact, by being transported (even against their will) to a foreign country, where they could be missionaries. The nation of Israel did not think that was a great achievement; they thought in terms of their human objectives of self-serving salvation and human survival. They looked at the razing of the Temple and the ruins of their country as being “back to square one.” If you trace back “for nothing” here, one of the two words is exactly the same word as in Genesis 1:2, that the earth was “without form.” In other words, “We’re back to square one! How, O God, can you make anything purposeful out of us?”

Frankly, this was not just a curious question directed heavenward. This was a rebellious question, a question

of faithlessness that could not penetrate the purposes of God, through disobedience and recurrent sin. These people did not know and were angry, and were shaking their fists in the face of God and saying, “You promised! You promised! You haven’t delivered on Your promises!” This cry is not found so much just in this passage, but this was the tenor of the situation in general. So, this Isaiah passage goes beyond this kind of anger, and turns things upside down, and says, “Now, wait just a minute.” The person He’s using here—whoever it is—the “Servant” is saying, “The Lord is my hope. God has been my strength.”

Then, finally, you come to verse 6, which is just an incredible statement, an electrifying statement! “That you should be My servant to save yourselves is a secondary matter. Your national salvation is not all that important. You’ve got to have enough faith— *to die*. Then and only then the will of God might be accomplished.” Jesus said, “He who seeks to save himself shall lose his life; he who will lose his life for My sake and for the gospel’s will find it” (Mark 8:35).

They recognized that they had lost their life; they lost their national identity; they lost their land. They lost everything that they thought was important, except the most important thing that they had been promised, that they should be the conduits, the intermediary priests between God and the other nations. And they were now, right now, stationed in their new assignment, so to speak, at the ends of the earth. (Persia, the mountains of Iran—this curtain of mountains across there was considered the ends of the earth. It was literally “the ends of the plains,” and in the battering of translation the phrase comes into our language in such a way that we can also understand it to mean “the ends of the planet.”)

The point is this: they were literally where God wanted them to be. They were literally able to do what was most important in their commission. And in that moment of great opportunity, they felt failure and hopelessness.

Now, suppose some great force would smash our cities to bits. I live in California. Suppose an earthquake, the great earthquake, would come, and every building in California crumbled into ruins. I can imagine a lot of people saying, “Oh, now we really have a hopeless situation.” Humanly speaking, there would be no hope. But God uses all kinds of events for His purposes. In this case, the two aspects of hope and hopelessness are

kept in juxtaposition. In Genesis 12 and Matthew 28, the Great Commission is given as a single, positive statement. But I believe that the positive commission is given in Isaiah 49:6 alongside the contrasting idea of self-aggrandizement. This is an effort to highlight the true task of the people of God as opposed to what we so often mistake as our calling.

By the way, the NIV translation throws you off course here. This is a poor translation, where it says, “It is too small a thing for you to be My servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept.” The parallelism is there, of course, but this translation does not show the contrast I am speaking of. You can see it: to restore the tribes of Jacob, to bring back those of Israel. This is Jacob and Israel (the same people here) and “to restore” or “bring back”—these are the same things. That restatement for the purpose of clarity is so common and marvelous in the Hebrew language. But the great physical, political achievement of restoring this nation was secondary, was a means to the end at best.

But the salvation and restoration of Israel was not too small a thing for God! Our salvation is never too small for God; it is just secondary. If we focus on self-salvation, we lose it; if we will give it up, we will gain it. It is just that simple. The whole Bible reverberates with this perplexing statement of faith, that we can gain by losing, or that we can’t gain without losing. “Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die” (John 12:24), it will not be reborn in productivity. So it is with the Christian faith at every point: we gain by losing. “The meek shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). The earth is not inherited by great military victory.

This was, perhaps, part of what Judson did not want to do. He did not want to overawe the Burmese people with whom he was dealing. Now, a legitimate modern thing to avoid, for example, would be for a missionary, or even a village exile, to come back from the city with flashy clothes and a car and things—that would be a wrong and ineffective kind of overawing. The result of

this approach would be the “Rice Christian” syndrome. This is the situation where the people want to become Christians because of what the Christians *have*. No, this is not good enough! But the sheer knowledge that Judson could have shared—not about himself, not about his civilization, but about God—seems to me to be a little bit different.

### Key Words

As we trace these verses, notice how many *key words* are here. You have, of course, the servant. You have the nations; you have light; you have salvation. You have the phrase “to the ends of the earth.” There is, loaded into this passage, 49:1-6, all kinds of marvelous and wonderful insights. Let me encourage you to do further Inductive Bible Study to freshen your minds so that you are then prepared for reading about the things which others have thought about the passage in question. At the point when you have wrestled with the text for yourself; then you can begin to determine whether you fully agree with others’ points of view or not.

### Conclusion

Of all the passages in the Bible, at least for me, Isaiah 49:1-6 is an absolutely central passage. Long before I rediscovered this passage from a new light (the missiological light which understands that this was a missionary mandate in force since the time of Abraham), I revered this passage, and even spoke on the passage. People would ask me, “*Where is the Great Commission in the Bible?*” I would say, “*Isaiah 49:6.*” It is here, and only here, contrasted with the pseudo-commission to save ourselves. Wherever you go, you hear: “Heal *our* nation, revive *our* people, revive *our* church.” The revival of the church is not a meaningful goal unless it prepares us and equips us to reach beyond. Many a revival has been simply a “flash in the pan” that has swept past ever so quickly in history. But, often, a true revival is related to a missionary vision. Here in Isaiah 49, the revival spoken of most certainly is.



# The Times of the Gentiles

*Walter Russell*

## Introduction

**H**ow lonely sits the city that was full of people!  
How like a widow is she, who was great  
among the nations!

The princess among the provinces has become a slave!  
She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks;  
Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her.  
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they  
have become her enemies.

Judah has gone into captivity, under affliction  
and hard servitude;

She dwells among the nations, she finds no rest;  
All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits.  
The roads to Zion mourn because no one comes  
to the set feasts.

All her gates are desolate; her priests sigh.

Her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

Her adversaries have become the master, her  
enemies prosper;

For the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude  
of her transgressions.

Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy.  
And from the daughter of Zion all her splendor  
has departed.

Her princes have become like deer that find no pasture,  
That flee without strength before the pursuer.

(Lam 1:1-6, NKJV)

How mournful is this lament of the weeping prophet Jeremiah at the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC. The last remnant of the proud nation of the Israelites has been carried into captivity by the powerful Gentile empire of Nebuchadnezzar. His third and final capture of Jerusalem in 586 followed the first and

second waves of the warlike Babylonians in 605 and 597 BC. However, the third defeat was particularly devastating because it occurred after a lengthy siege of Jerusalem. This siege saw the Israelites commit unbelievably heinous and barbarous crimes against their own children:

The hands of compassionate women boiled their own children;

They became food for them because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

The Lord has accomplished His wrath, He has poured out His fierce anger;

And He has kindled a fire in Zion which has consumed its foundations.

(Lam 4:10-11)

How did God's people sink to such a tragic condition and deserve such an all-encompassing judgment? Was Israel cast off as God's people as the Gentiles trampled Jerusalem and defiled the temple of God (Lamentations 1:10; 2:7)? And what is to become of the relationship of Israelites to the Gentiles now that the seed of Abraham has been terribly shattered at their hands? A quick survey of Israel's history should help to answer some of these crucial questions.

## God's Plan for Israel, Abraham's Seed

The beginning of the nation of Israel was the gracious choice of Abram of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 11:27-32) to become the father of this great people. This initial calling and promise of God is recorded for us in Genesis 12:1-3 against the backdrop of the repeated universal failure of the people of the world to respond in faith to God

(Gen 3–11). The failure of Adam and Eve to respond in full obedience to God in Genesis 3 is only the beginning. Their offspring, the people of the world, continue the rebellion. Rather than worshipping Yahweh, the people of the world multiply wickedness and precipitate the judgment—flood of Noah in Genesis 6–8. The new beginning of Noah and his family in Genesis 9, however, quickly degenerates into the third failure of this period: the building of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 10–11 by the people of the world. God’s responding judgment of these people with the confusion of languages thereby creates the division of the world’s people into the world’s peoples or people groups (Gen 11:6–9). It is at this point that the reader is brought to a sense of despair at the repeated cycle of God’s new beginnings and the recurring rebellious responses of humankind in Genesis 1–11.

The three cycles of God’s gracious beginnings and humanity’s willful failures in these pre-patriarchal chapters in Genesis seem to underscore that Yahweh has a persistent desire to bless the people of the world. However, the people have a tragic and willful desire to establish their own name, not God’s. Therefore, if God is to establish His presence among them, it appears that He will need to work through a different means. Moreover, the task will be far more complex now due to the multiplicity of peoples through the confusion of languages at Babel. Therefore, the stage is set for the appearance of that means—the one small people among the many peoples of the world—the seed from the man named Abraham.

God’s plan to bless the peoples of the world through Abraham is a part of the covenant that God made with him initially in Genesis 12:1–3 and repeated in various forms in Genesis 15:1–21; 17:1–27; 18:16–21; 22:14–19. For our purposes, the important part is God’s promised blessing to the peoples of the world through the seed of Abraham: “and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3c).

God’s vehicle through Abraham’s family continues to be very small during the patriarchal period of Genesis, which covers four lengthy generations:

Abraham (Gen 11:26–25:8)

Isaac (Gen 25:9–27:46)

Jacob (Gen 28:1–38:30)

Joseph (Gen 39–50)

However, by the end of Genesis this small family of twelve sons and their wives and children is safely embedded within the unlikely womb of Egypt. At this point, Joseph can boldly assert about his brothers’ disdain for Abraham’s seed that God was superintending their callous and blinded perspective: “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Gen 50:19b–20). Israel, Abraham’s seed, is safely preserved for the time being in Egypt where she can grow into a great nation within the confines of a nation.

The stage is now prepared for Yahweh’s great redemption of Israel out of Egypt (Exodus), His structuring of the civil and religious life of the nation (Leviticus), His leading of Israel to the gateway to the land at Moab after the great unbelief of the first generation at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers), and His instruction through Moses of the new generation about their covenantal obligations to Him before they possess the land (Deuteronomy). At this point, Moses, the first great leader, dies and Joshua, his assistant, assumes the leadership of the nation.

Under Joshua’s leadership, Israel roughly subdues the land, but not to the degree that Yahweh had instructed (Joshua). This leads to the turbulent and cyclical period of the Judges (including Ruth; roughly 1380–1050 BC). During this period of incomplete obedience and consistent waywardness, Israel develops the desire for a king like her neighbors. The persistent failure to subdue the land in its totality feeds the desire to replace the theocracy with a monarchy. Additionally, the chaos when “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6 and 21:25) helped create the momentum for a king.

The last judge of Israel was Samuel and he anoints the first king of the period of united monarchy, Saul. Because of Saul’s disobedience to Yahweh, he is soon replaced by David (1 Samuel). David’s reign is a part of the high water mark for Israel’s united monarchy and, perhaps, the beginning of one of the better periods of ministry to the surrounding nations (2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles). David’s son Solomon completes the period of the united monarchy by initially enhancing the wealth and ministry of the nation, but then falling into covenantal compromise by introducing pagan religions into Israel again (1 Kings 1–11 and 2 Chronicles

1–9). Upon Solomon's death in 931 BC, the kingdom of Israel is then divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (1 Kings 12—2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 10–28).

## The Fall of the Northern Kingdom

The northern kingdom of Israel was born in apostasy regarding her priesthood, her place of worship/temple, and her dynasty (i.e., non-Davidic kings). Therefore, the northern kingdom never really recovered from this tragic and apostate beginning. From her birth at the division of the united kingdom in 931 BC to her end at the hand of the Assyrians in 722 BC, Israel was plagued by unbelief and covenant unfaithfulness throughout her history. None of her twenty kings ever achieved any meaningful level of covenant faithfulness to Yahweh. Therefore, as one might guess, the ministry of the northern kingdom to the nations was one of failure and false doctrine. In the end Yahweh disciplined her almost as severely as He had the Canaanites whom Israel had dispossessed from the land (2 Kings 17).

The prophet Amos (approx. 765-755 BC) challenged the northern kingdom to look beyond her temporary financial prosperity at the impending judgment for her greed, injustice, and hypocritical religious practices. God wanted the citizens of the northern kingdom to know that their forthcoming judgment was just and deserved because of her spiritual and social immoralities. This unpolished farmer and shepherd from Tekoa in Judah (Amos 1:1) was given the daunting task of proclaiming to the kings, priests, and aristocracy of the northern kingdom that Yahweh was about to roar from Zion (Amos 1:2). He proclaimed impending judgments upon the surrounding nations (Amos 1–2) and upon Israel herself (Amos 3–9). However, at the end of his prophecies of doom, Amos did give a word of hope (9:11-15):

In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; ... Also, I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, ... (Amos 9:11, 14a).

Israel's prophets decried her sins and bemoaned the lack of virtue in the land of the northern kingdom. Hosea (approx. 760-710 BC) married an adulterous wife to present a heartbreaking picture of Israel as the adulterous wife of Yahweh (Hosea 1). God's alienation from

Israel was vividly portrayed by Hosea's estrangement from the wayward Gomer. Hosea pictured the tragic downward spiral of sin in both Gomer's and Israel's lives. Sin would extract an exacting toll for its fleeting pleasures (Hos 2:1-13; 4:1-10:15). However, as Hosea did with Gomer, so Yahweh would do with Israel. He would redeem her out of her bondage to sin and return her from her wanderings among the peoples of the world (Hos 2:14-3:5; 11:1-14:9). Yahweh will restore Israel as His wife after He redeems, purifies, and renews His relationship with her: "Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days" (Hos 3:5).

## Judah's Struggle Alone

After the fall of Israel in 722 BC, the little kingdom of Judah struggled on by herself for almost 150 years (2 Kings 16–25 and 2 Chronicles 28–36). She eventually fell to the hordes of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 BC. However, on the way to this catastrophe, Judah had a remarkable mixture of a few good, yet mostly evil kings:

Ahaz (735-715 BC) – evil (2 Ki 16)

Hezekiah (715-686) – good (2 Ki 18–20)

Manasseh (696-642) – terribly evil (2 Ki 21:1-18)

Amon (642-640) – evil/assassinated (2 Ki 21:19-26)

Josiah (640-609) – good (2 Ki 22:1–23:30)

Jehoahaz (609) – evil (2 Ki 23:31-35)

Jehoiakim (609-597) – evil (2 Ki 23:36–24:7)

Jehoiakin (597) – evil (2 Ki 24:8-16)

Zedekiah (597-586) – evil (2 Ki 24:17–25:30)

The prophets Habakkuk, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah ministered during this time of downward spiral for Judah. In the end her story looked very similar to the northern kingdom of Israel's demise: spiritual unfaithfulness to Yahweh, social injustice to one another, and defective ministry to the peoples of the world. Could Yahweh do any other thing than judge His unfaithful people? Could He do nothing else but judge those whom He privileged to be His light in the world because of their darkness? Could He do nothing else but devastate Judah in light of Yah-

weh's plan for the world's peoples? Another way would have to be found.

## The Times of the Gentiles

"The times of the Gentiles" is a phrase that Jesus uses in Luke 21:24b when He says, "Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." We can infer from Jesus' words that "the times of the Gentiles" cover the period of time that Jerusalem and the temple are ultimately under Gentile control. And when did this era begin? Daniel tells us in Daniel 2:36-45 that this era apparently began when God sovereignly and divinely authorized the transfer of world supremacy to Gentile power.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the times of the Gentiles began when God allowed Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to achieve political supremacy, as Daniel explained to King Nebuchadnezzar:

This is the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king. "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy." (Dan 2:36-45)

However, the vision that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel interprets in Daniel 2 also includes three succeeding Gentile empires that will follow the empire of the Babylonians. We know from the expansion of this vision in Daniel 7-8 that these empires are those of the Medes and Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Apparently, these successive Gentile kingdoms will trample Jerusalem and the temple under their God-given authority until the return of Jesus the Messiah (Luke 21:27).

The following chart sketches the progression of these four Gentile empires and some of the key events from the beginning of the times of the Gentiles to the birth of Christ.

### Key Events of the Times of the Gentiles

*All events are BC*

#### 586 BABYLONIAN ERA BEGINS:

Jerusalem is destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and Babylonians in 3 waves in 605, 597, and 586

#### EXILE

#### 539 PERSIAN ERA BEGINS:

Babylon falls to Cyrus and the Persians (Jews allowed to return to Palestine; only a remnant choose to do so in 538; temple rebuilding begun in 537 and stopped; resumed in 520)

515 Second temple completed by Jewish remnant in Palestine (Haggai and Zechariah = motivating prophets)

#### 331 GREEK ERA BEGINS:

Alexander the Great gains control of Palestine

323 Death of Alexander; 4-fold division of his empire in 320 (see Dan 8)

301 Egypt and the Ptolemies gain control of Palestine

198 Syria and the Seleucids gain control of Palestine

172 Jerusalem made a Hellenistic city by the Seleucid, Antiochus IV (Epiphanies)

168/167 Persecution of Jews by Antiochus and "abomination of desolation" set up in the Jewish temple (Dec., 168), Mattathias the Maccabee inspires revolt against Seleucids

164 Rededication of temple by Maccabees (Dec., 164: Hanukkah)



164-142 Continued Maccabean success against weakening Seleucids; Simon the last Maccabee establishes independence in 142

142-67 Expansion of the quasi-autonomous Jewish kingdom under the “Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty”

67-63 Civil war within Hasmonean kingdom

### 63 ROMAN ERA BEGINS:

Pompey conquers Jerusalem and makes Hasmonean kingdom a Roman protectorate

40 Herod the Great crowned King of the Jews under Romans; begins rebuilding temple in 20 BC; dies in 4 BC; 3 heirs rule

As the times of the Gentiles begin, an interesting phenomenon also occurs with the temple in Jerusalem. This is recorded by the prophet Ezekiel through a series of visions he has while in exile in Babylon. Ending eight centuries of God’s Shekinah Glory in the midst of Israel, in Ezekiel 8–11 the prophet records the departing of the Glory of God from the temple. The progression is as follows:

Ezekiel 8:4—the glory of the God of Israel was still there.

Ezekiel 9:3—the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple.

Ezekiel 10:4—the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple.

Ezekiel 11:23—the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, on the east side of the city.

What is the significance of this? Concurrent with the ending of Israel’s political autonomy as a nation under an earthly king is the ending of Israel’s existence as a nation with the personal presence of her Divine King in her midst. The Glory of God has departed from Israel! And soon, Israel herself will depart from the land her Divine King gave her and will languish in exile. The time of Israel’s ministry as a people in her own land has ended for now. Her ministry to the peoples of the world is now entering a new phase.

The ministry of the people of Israel to the nations will now be taking place in a new context. Rather than standing as an autonomous people within her own

land, she will now be a subjugated people with varying degrees of freedom and rights until the Messiah comes to liberate her. Israel’s ministry to the various peoples of the world will occur from “underneath” rather than “on top.” She will generally minister as those who are aliens in a Gentile land and who stand outside the structures of political power. She will huddle together in ghettos. She will create new institutions to try to perpetuate the worship of Yahweh and her language and culture. She will seek to survive in hostile communities in the midst of hostile peoples. She will cling to the Mosaic Law as the hope of her ongoing covenant with a God Who is angry with her. However, in the midst of the sin and despair of the exile, God graciously gave Israel a hope for the future. Through the prophets who saw the tragedy of the exile, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, God gave a hope to Israel for a New Covenant with Him. We read these promises of a new day in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-27:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jer 31:31-34)

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” (Ezek 36:24-27)

Therefore, the real hope of Israel is that she will be able to enter into this new covenant with God and be

restored as a people. However, in the meantime, she must live in a dispersed state among the Gentiles and seek to minister from her position of weakness.

## What Is God Doing in History?

God's plan to bless the peoples of the world through the seed of Abraham is not derailed! Complicated? Yes! Using a different means than a free and autonomous nation? Yes! Decentralized? Yes! Perhaps more effective because of this? Perhaps. Therefore, we should not despair that God is in the heavens wringing His hands. No, He is continuing to work out His plan to bless all the peoples of the world through their faith in Him—by any necessary means! Throughout the intertestamental and New Testament eras, this means was primarily through Israel in her dispersed, decentralized state. This is true because 85%-90% of the Jews in the world never returned to the land after their initial dispersions. During the times of the Gentiles, Israel is primarily living among the Gentiles.

Secondly, Israel now enters a very different era as a people as the times of the Gentiles roll in. In particular, the Bible says that Israel will actually go through two phases during the times of the Gentiles. First is the subjugated phase that will continue until Messiah returns to deliver her (Luke 21:24-27). Second is the phase of actually becoming an enemy of God's plan for universal blessing (Rom 11:28-32). Apparently, this phase began when Israel rejected Jesus of Nazareth as her Messiah. The Apostle Paul discusses this in Romans 11. Only a remnant of Israel will believe in

Jesus at the present time (Rom 11:5). This is because "a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom 11: 25b). Therefore, from the time of Paul's writing of these words (AD 56-57) to the return of Jesus Christ, we can assume that Israel will be in this second phase of the times of the Gentiles. Her ministry to the peoples of the world has been given to others during this time and she has largely assumed an adversarial posture. She is now a recipient of the message of blessing, not the proclaimer of it. However, Israel can look forward to that day when she will once again be reunited with her estranged husband, Yahweh:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" [Isa 59:20-21]. From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Rom 11:25-29)

## Notes

- 1 This is the phrase of Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974; originally published by Moody Press, 1968), 125.

# Reshaping History

## Alexander the Great and Global Civilization

*Ralph D. Winter*

One of the most influential people in human history was Alexander the Great. The phrase rolls off our tongues, but it would take a great many books to describe the full complexity of this person. Alexander the Great was a very interesting, exasperating, and amazing person. Like some of the Roman emperors after him, he was both a god and a man, and in different parts of the territory he overran, he appeared in different roles.

He was a very mercurial, impatient, impulsive, brilliant, powerful, resourceful person. At the same time, recognition needs to be given to the fact that he came into a situation that favored what he did. The Persian Empire was one of the largest and most peaceful empires, yet just preceding this it was gasping for breath in some respects. In other ways, also, the situation he came into was very much in his favor.

There were two people who had a lasting impress on history who came from Macedon. One was Aristotle, who trained under Plato and under Socrates, and who went much, much further than the other two men in terms of what he wrote and thought about. He was one of ancient history's Renaissance men, and he was called back to Macedon when Philip, Alexander's father, became an influential military man in that area. It was Philip's conquest of all the different city-states of the Greeks that launched, or provided a basis for the launching of, the so-called Asian Crusade.

Philip had been talking about doing this. But when Alexander came into power at the age of 20, he was impatient to get rid of his father. This may have been his idea or that of his mother, Olympia, who actually plotted to kill off Philip. Philip himself had killed off other contenders for power in his younger days. Philip

came into power as a regent, at the age of 23; Alexander came into power at the age of 20. But he did not just inherit power; he earned it in many ways. He pushed much further in terms of the unity of Greece than Philip did, and then was able to use that as a launching pad to push back the Persians.

To push back the Persians was something that all the Greeks favored so that was, itself, a unifying tactic. Alexander's record march into Persia is absolutely unparalleled. There were other empires after Alexander that were larger, but there was never an empire produced by a single warrior, before or since, that had the breath-taking audacity Alexander produced.

Another aspect Alexander inherited was what his father had copied from the Thebans: a special type of military formation called the phalanx, which he improved upon. The lengthy spears and phalanx tactics were what turned the tide against the Persians. But they only barely turned the tide against the warrior elephants when they got through the Khyber Pass into India. That was the end of the road. Alexander's soldiers would not go farther and so they trekked back along the coast. Ten thousand of them were dead by the time they got to Susa, and some suggest that Alexander was half out of his mind.

There are slightly differing reports about various aspects of Alexander's journey as much of what we know about Philip and Alexander was written centuries later. Ancient historians did not flinch at creating dialogue. Many of the quotations are simply some later historian's conjecture. But rather than try to convict them of falsifying the record, we should realize that created conversations, while they may never have existed, nevertheless accurately portray their understanding of what happened. This is a marvelous literary device for retention, especially in the

field of pedagogy. Our purpose is not to study the person of Alexander so much as the impact of what he did.

## Christianity and Alexander's Empire

The reality is that Christianity could not possibly have flourished had it not been for Alexander's empire. Just as the Apostle Paul's ministry could not have flourished without the Roman roads and the peace—the Pax Romana—so it was true also of Alexander's day. This is also of interest: Alexander's brief, incredible conquest very easily could have crumbled when he died—felled by a mosquito, according to some. But the effects of it lasted. While it may have provided the basis for the expansion of Christianity—that is not in question—it is also not to be questioned that it was Christianity that brought that information down to us.

One of the world's greatest Medievalists pointed out that we have only four documents that come down to us from the Roman period, much less the period of Alexander. Everything else we know came down to us only because of the quiet literary centers of the monastic movement in the Christian tradition. They were the scholars who retained and copied documents now lost to us. We have an incredible amount of information about the Roman Empire even though no more than four documents come down to us from that period.

When we read about the medicine, politics, laws, science, and all the wonders of the Greeks, it is amazing to us that they were preserved at all. There were many very brilliant people who lived before that time of whom we know very little. For example, about 600 BC someone carved a tunnel almost a mile long, digging it from both ends, and they came out at almost exactly the same place in the middle. How they accomplished this exactly is not known. The philosophy that was wrought in Georgia may have eclipsed that of Plato, or anything of the Greeks, but simply no record exists.

Though Alexander and this massive extent of the Greek language and culture provided a basis for Christianity, it is also equally true that without Christianity we probably would not have heard very much about the amazing exploits of Alexander's.

## The Role of the Septuagint

After Alexander's death, the empire itself almost immediately crumbled. One of the sections of that crumbled

empire was the part that was in Egypt. The fact that the Greek language was the dominant political, commercial and maybe literary language, explains why the origins of Christianity as a movement in the form of a book could have actually been created. Many different stories exist as to how and why that book was created, but scholars lean to the conclusion that it was not merely the initiative of the Jews. It was more the political necessity of Ptolemy II, whose literary interests and massive library of over 700,000 volumes required some record of the Hebrews. It was because of his official sponsorship, as much as it was because of the interest of devout Jewish families for the sake of their children, that the translation of the Septuagint began.

It is very unlikely that the Septuagint was translated as one document to another. The Torah was obviously the first part to be translated, and may have been translated in the first part of the third century BC. But other parts in the Septuagint as it developed actually describe events a hundred or more years later. Obviously the Books of the Maccabees, and other parts of the Septuagint which go beyond our accepted canon, were not produced until 260 BC. But the document itself is almost unmentioned in secular readings. Yet the Septuagint became the world's most influential document, even in ancient times.

Luther's translation of the Bible into normal German established that language. So the Septuagint established not only the orthography, but also the vocabulary of the Greek. It went a long way to produce what we give credit to Alexander for: the unification and the Hellenization of much of the ancient world.

One caution: we so often hark back to the Greeks because that is our background, as Westerners. Nevertheless, we use a lot of words carelessly. We speak of the Sophists, the Cynics, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and so forth. But we don't realize that the Sophists were not sophisticated in that sense; the Cynics were not cynical, the Epicureans did not have epicurean tastes, even the Hedonists were not hedonistic, and the Stoics—a magnificent bunch—were not necessarily stoical. This demonstrates the discrepancy between popular understanding and reality. Many of the words that float around in popular vocabulary seem to have a historic significance, but there is no basis for these popular meanings of the terms.

At the same time that the Septuagint, the backbone of the Christian movement, became a document in Greek,

there were many other brilliant Greeks in that period. Archimedes is one of the most brilliant men of history, and Aristarchus actually proposed that not the earth but the sun was the center of the universe. He was out-voted by the Aristotelians, so to speak. Thanks to Alexander, Aristotle had a greater influence than he did, so he was over-run. For fourteen hundred years we had to think that the earth was the center. Eratosthenes actually measured the size of the earth, using clever techniques of slight differences of angle of view, and amazingly he came within 15% of the circumference. Another source indicates that he came within 1%.

We think of Hippocrates and others who were amazing thinkers of that early period. We really do have to respect that tradition, even if one of the only reasons we have that tradition influential in our society is due to that strange movement called Christianity.

## Success of Christianity and Its Reasons

To say that Christianity would not have spread as far as it did had it not been for the achievements of Alexander's empire would be an overstatement. The fact is that Christianity has made its way in many other parts of the world without the benefit of such lavish continuity and homogeneity of language and culture. It simply seems to me to be a providential benefit to the Christian movement, rather than saying it "permitted" Christianity to develop.

Certainly Christianity took good advantage of the *lingua franca* of this vast Greek-speaking basin. And it is true that the form of Christianity that resulted was, of course, in many ways more Greek than Hebrew, more Greek than Latin, even in the Latin sphere in the far West, in England and Ireland. The Greek version of Christianity had more influence in the early stages than the Latin version. So it is true that Christianity made its way against the grain of other languages, but it did utilize the Greek language as a carrier vehicle to a great extent, and we need to give that credit.

Another Christian scholar makes a statement that Christianity could not have really succeeded had it not been for the windfall benefit of an empire. Why would a Christian go so far out on a limb as to say that? Other religions were more popular than Christianity at an early stage. They all had the same advantage of a windfall communication basin. But it was not the mystery religions, but specifically the Christian religion that succeeded.

A big difference exists between Christianity and mystery religions like Zoroastrianism, for example, which had a head start. None of those other movements had a book. The distinctive and absolutely significant feature of the Christian movement is that it had a collection of documents that were selected with great care and sensitivity. I, personally, would attribute the success of Christianity more to that book than to the windfall head-start that the Alexandrian conquests gave. It is important to realize that in the Greek period, in all the four major kingdoms after the breakup of Alexander's specific territory the Septuagint, the Greek Bible, was able to make its way. And there were converts both in the East and in the West.

Alexander had the great insight of allowing the people to retain their own religious and cultural traditions to a great extent. Thus the Greek language itself was not such an offensive thing as it was a valuable *lingua franca*.

But when Christianity went west, overtook and became accepted by the Roman-speaking people of the West, it began to be identified for the first time with a political power that approved it. Christianity became identified with the Roman and the Latin tradition, and finally in AD 475 it became the official expression of the Roman Empire. By this time the Empire had become an oppressor and an enemy of much of the eastern area of Alexander's empire, specifically in Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. Samuel Moffett's monumental treatise on Christianity in *A History of Christianity in Asia*, Vol. 1, which came out in 1992, makes this clear that when the political tables were turned and the Roman-Latin speaking enemies of the Persian and the eastern Greek spheres loomed into power, immediately the Christian church went out of fashion. It seemed to be the religion of a foreign power, and more Christians were killed after Christianity became officially Roman than before.

Christians in the English-speaking West hear a lot about the persecutions of the Roman emperors against Christianity: the loss of life, the martyrs, the catacombs, and so forth. But there is no awareness of the fact that far more Christians were killed as a backlash to the Roman Empire's becoming Christian. Christianity in the East continued, but never became indigenous. In the West, the Septuagint was translated into Latin, and became the Latin *Vulgate*. This was done by Jerome in the fourth century. In the East the Bible was never translated into Arabic, the Greek spoken by the churches that survived the persecutions in the East being to some extent still a foreign language to them.

This was a great disadvantage, which was, however, ironically filled when Muhammad came along. Muhammad sensed very accurately that the Christianity with which he was familiar and which he greatly respected was nevertheless foreign to the extent that it was Greek or Latin. Essentially, Islam came to fill that void and had incredible expansion all across North Africa. Most of the Christians there were anti-Roman politically, even though subjugated by Rome. So Islam essentially took the place of what could have been a far superior Arabic Christianity, or Syriac Christianity, had two things been possible. First of all, if the Roman Empire had not become officially Christian, the Christian movement would not have been set back so far. Secondly, if in fact the Arabic type had become an actual indigenous variety of Christianity, the story may have been different.

In some ways Islam is the indigenous variety of Christianity. But Islam did not have the Bible in its own native language. The Bible to which Muhammad was exposed was that of some Tri-theist Christians whose theology we would reject today. He himself was on good footing in rejecting the tri-theism and emphasizing the unity of God. In addition, this tri-theist form of Christianity did not even have the entire Septuagint available to it. Apparently, only the Torah—the first five books—the Psalms, and the four Gospels were part of that Christian tradition. So Muhammad never really had a good chance to build on that foundation.

In any case, it is probably an overstatement to say that Christianity could not have succeeded in any other environment than the Alexandrian empire. The reality is that it has succeeded in many other environments.

## Macedonia and Galilee

An interesting aspect for our consideration is the parallel we can see between the role of Macedonia in the development of Alexander's influence and the role of Galilee in the development of Jesus' influence. Stop and think for a second: Macedonia was the "hick" mountain area of Greece. The Athenians scoffed and sneered at the Macedonian dialect. But Aristotle came from Macedonia; Philip and Alexander came from Macedonia.

In Palestine it was Nazareth, a despised section of despised Galilee, from which Jesus came. How interesting that God sometimes takes the weak things to confound the wise. William Carey also came from

that kind of a despised town in England. His northern linguistic twang would have been very unacceptable in London. It was better to go to India if he wanted to continue to speak as he grew up speaking in Paulerspury, a tiny little town in northern England.

To this day God is still taking the weak things to confound the wise. It apparently is not necessary for the noble-born Athenians to run things, as Alexander demonstrates. William Carey not only came from the wrong part of England, he came from the wrong stratum of society. He did not have a Cambridge education. Yet his contribution to language, to translation and to typography exceeds that of anyone else since Gutenberg perhaps. We find such parallels in terms of the influence of the Gospel all over the world today. You don't have to come from London or Athens! We will let the case rest at that point.

## Dialogue

*Questioner:* While Christianity did succeed, how would you respond to the idea that it may be hard to imagine Christianity *initially* succeeding?

*Winter:* Notice the initial success of Christianity was not in the eastern part of the Alexandrian Empire; it was right where Greek was spoken. Greek was spoken in Ephesus long before Alexander was born. So in a sense, Christianity succeeded in areas in the Grecian world that had nothing to do with Alexander's conquest. Now, mainly unknown to us in the West, Christianity did succeed in the areas of his conquests, too; but the initial success of Christianity was very close to Greece.

*Questioner:* If Alexander hadn't come along, would Asia Minor have had any kind of economic, cultural or linguistic unification, for Christianity to make its way as well as it did?

*Winter:* Of course, we must admit that were it not for the Greek language in which the Septuagint was cast, the challenges would have been greater. Even in Nazareth they probably had access to the Septuagint. There are some scholars today who conjecture that because no reference is made in the Gospels to Jesus having the need of a translator as he walked around through the Decapolis, which was a Greek-speaking area of Galilee, Jesus himself probably was bilingual. But in any case, since our scholar does not make any qualifications to this statement, it's a rather astounding statement.

# The Post-Exilic Period

*Ralph D. Winter*

The so-called *post-exilic* period had significance for the Jews. One of the hazards of nationalism is the exclusion of data that does not fit into that nationalistic perspective. It is perfectly understandable that the Jewish people would want to trace *their* history in their land; but it is true that by the time you get to this period of history, the Jews are mainly elsewhere. They are in Babylon, or in Alexandria, a Greek city; and whether they are one place or the other, they end up in Greek influence. Their durability in their own land suffers all the hazards of the instability of the periods of kings that preceded them. You could safely say that once the Northern Kingdom was removed by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom was removed by the Persians, that was the end of the story of the Jewish people geographically.

The Jews did not forget where they came from; they had that living, burning image of their land, and they still have it wherever they are in the world. Today, of course, there are a lot more Jews in the United States by far than in Israel, and there have always been more outside Israel than in, since that final, forcible removal of the Southern Kingdom. So when we think of Jerusalem, or of Israel, or of Palestine (Judea), we are really thinking of an *idea* more than of a people. As we plunge into this period that is such a jumble of names and people and assassinations and confusion, let us not get overawed by the details. What we want to do is not memorize facts, which themselves may be irrelevant, but to understand what was actually happening.

Realize the possibility that when their land was no longer more than an idea, when their dispersion was so extensive, when great and learned communities of Jews arose in both the east and in the south (in Egypt) you

might even conclude that God was taking away the concept of a political kingdom. Was he trying forcibly to focus their attention upon a spiritual kingdom? Remember that Jesus said before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." That was a revolting thought! They thought it *was* of this world. They sang "Hosanna," which means, Let's get rid of the Romans now! They misunderstood the triumphal entry, and many modern Christians even misunderstand. Many modern Christians think that it is very important that Israel become a kingdom again. Now, it is beyond the remotest thought that Jewish people would ever rule the world as Alexander tried to, or Hitler; but they tried. They really worked hard at it. Solomon's kingdom was an enormous place, and when the Maccabeans took over and eventually extended the territory far beyond what is today Palestine, they must have had such thoughts in mind.

In fact, it is quite possible in view of the spectacular achievement of Alexander. He probably accomplished more for good as well as more for evil than almost any other person. The youthfulness, the drama, the vigorous military achievements of Alexander were probably in the minds and hearts of the people who seized control from the Persians and the Seleucids and began a new, faltering, very brief empire. A hundred years is not so brief, but the Hasmonean period really went downhill from the beginning; it was not really very likely to become a new Alexandrian type of empire.

But Alexander has remained an evil model for many young people who somehow dream that they can do what he did in one way or another. By putting to death every single man, woman and child in the city of Thebes at the very onset of his conquest, he proved what kind of a person he was. When in the

New Testament we see John's head on a platter, or the cross of Christ, we should not be especially revolted, because that was not unusual at all. There were 800 of the more zealous Jews who were put on a cross by one of the Hasmonean-Herodian tradition, which theoretically was Jewish. Even Herod was part of that Edomite or Idumean (two words that mean the same thing) kingdom south of Jerusalem, which had been converted wholesale by the Maccabees. Herod was not really accepted as a Jew. But in all that confusion and violence and assassinations and counter-assassinations, we do not see anything that looks as if it is going to become a secular kingdom, or even a cultural tradition that will endure.

The irony is that those Jews who lost the political kingdom, but who hung on to their cultural traditions, went equally wrong. They did not really accomplish very much, any more than Christians who would hold on for dear life to their Lutheran or Latin or English traditions and would split hairs over formalities. (Some have called this "morphological fundamentalism," which means that it is not theological, but has to do with liturgical fixity.) Such people, hanging on for dear life to outward forms, have obviously, whoever they are—Jew or Christian—missed the deeper point that apparently God had in mind. One of the things that we need to realize, then, is not to pay too much attention to the political externals or even the cultural forms, but to understand the purposes and the spiritual meaning behind all of this, especially in global terms.

One other comment: it may very well be that you never realized how many books there were on these subjects beyond the Bible itself, and why we would have to bother with other materials. Although we do not need to be overawed by all this mass of literature, we certainly ought to be friendly to it. It was the Christians preeminently, as well as the Jews and the Muslims, who preserved literature. I would say the vast proportion of all the literature we have in either its original form or its copied form is due to the instinct, if you want to call it that, of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims to preserve it. It is impossible to find anywhere else the detailed information as far back in history as in the Bible and the other books that were also carried along with the Bible. The Bible included, until modern times, other books called the Apocrypha. The Christians copied other books called the Pseudepigrapha and many other totally secular books without which we simply would

not know a tenth, or maybe even a hundredth, of what we know about ancient times.

We need to bear in mind that our focus is not to memorize all the dates and details. The point is a growing globalization of a very significant faith, and we do well to keep our eye on the main idea.

## Reflections

### Reflection #1

You might wonder why the Bible is not a growing document, updated by God every century and covering all of history, so we would know what God's point of view at every point is. On the other hand, if the Bible makes plain a divine understanding of history, and we are to continue to follow it, then we should not be too upset that the Old Testament essentially stops 400 years before Christ. We ought to be able to look at the next period of 400 years through the eyes of the earlier periods for which we do have a Bible. I think basically this is what is called the biblical philosophy of history.

There is a very distinct set of factors in this biblical philosophy of history. I believe that God intends us to look at our own nation from that point of view, as well as at other nations and other periods of history. We simply gain a certain perspective from the OT, and we are supposed to continue on with that perspective.

### Reflection #2

"What mission significance is there in the Jewish loss of (or inability to gain) secular power?" This loss of kingdom in the secular, political sense freed the Jewish people and forced them back to their own faith as a universal and intercultural entity. Now it is true that very few actually saw this clearly. The transmission of the faith in the Greek language was of incredible significance, and to this day it is considered translatable. This is different from the Jewish tradition, which still holds to its own language. Something very special and sacred about their own cultural tradition and their own language is believed.

On the other hand, the Islamic tradition, which has the same attitude, refuses to translate their book, which is both a strength and a weakness. Everywhere in the world little children are memorizing portions of the Qur'an in sing-song notes that drone the book into their heads, but with little real value. This allows for an external uniformity that unifies the global Islamic



tradition to some extent, although there are great differences between different forms of Islam. But Christianity does not have that formal exterior in terms of its Book; and this has, on balance, been a far greater advantage than a disadvantage.

### Reflection #3

“How do we know what happened outside the Bible and what does it matter?” Well, the Bible itself regards other writings as valuable. In 1 Kings 15:7,23,31, for instance, other books are referred to, but there are dozens of references in the Bible to other books, both direct and indirect. Paul refers to writings of his time and appeals to them as would modern sermonizers appeal to current literature. But the Jewish and, especially, the Christian and Muslim traditions have held other writings of all kinds as of high significance. You find great libraries being cared for by Christians and by Muslims. In fact, the Muslims often employed Christians and Jews to care for documents. Most of our knowledge of ancient times is the result of this high view of truth wherever it is found. A way of putting it that Tertullian is noted for is that all truth is God’s truth.

### Reflection #4

“In what three ways did Jewish messianism defectively reflect the biblical concern for the salvation of all people?” Here we are specifically indebted to Dr. Russell, who actually lists these three versions, or reactions, all of which are in some way defective, to the biblical concern for the salvation of all peoples. I might add, this is not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon. You can see exactly the same thing occurring in the Christian tradition, as we are very aware: the Christian tradition itself for the most part shuts out all peoples. Witness the fact that missions itself is an almost unknown phenomenon, even in American churches which have, relatively, a very strong mission tradition. But as Russell states, the biblical concern for all peoples, which is definitely there, is understated.

But secondly, and much more virulently, Jewish messianism actually reversed the biblical concern for all peoples, and the Gentiles became enemies rather than objects of love and outreach. Thirdly, any kind of nationalism, if extreme, will make other nations second in importance. We find this very often in the Christian tradition, not just in the Jewish case. It is rather astounding that not even the people who followed Jesus closely really understood clearly this biblical concern for all peoples. I think the most astounding passage of the

Bible is where Jesus overtakes two of his followers after the resurrection, which is not yet fully clear to them, and they are grumbling (Luke 24:13-35). The downcast attitude of these two men is very obvious. They are unhappy; they may have been part of the crowd that sang Hosanna, hoping for instant results and national rescue. All that is gone; they are really shattered in their attitude. Jesus says, “Hey, fellas, what’s the problem?” They snarl at Him; they lash back and say, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn’t know what happened?” They’re really angry, and actually, He is the only one who *does* know what is really happening. It is one of the most astonishing passages in Scripture.

Then they spill the beans. He says, “Well, no, tell me.” He leads them along, and they come up with this statement, which I will read verbatim, and you ask yourself what kind of implicit messianism does this involve? They say, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people.” So far, so good. Okay? “And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.” Again, they are just being descriptive. This does not in itself reveal what they had hoped. But the next few words are incriminating in the extreme. Yet I think many modern readers just figure, “Hey, why not?” Anyway, they go on to say, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel (*NASB*).” They obviously had a political concept in mind.

Now, we throw around the word *redeemed* all the time. We talk about people being redeemed, not, I hope, in a purely mercenary sense like a prosperity gospel. That is a form of individual messianism: in other words, what can God do for me? But we do see here a very clearly deficient understanding of His purposes. This passage perhaps more than any other shows the great distinction between the concept of a Messiah as Jesus understood it and the messianism, the political, nationalistic and cultural durabilities to which they clung. This is something that is very important in our understanding. We, too, should not expect and hope that our country will do all the right things at the right time and will somehow perform God’s will for us. We need to believe that other countries and other peoples have just as much right as ours to grope their way into the will of God, and not to expect the kind of messianic or Zionist hopes that we find in the Bible. We certainly cannot and must not assume that the Jewish people

were worse off in their understanding or were more disobedient or more sinful than others who tried and sought to follow the living God.

All the way down through Christian history, as well as Islamic and Jewish history, you find these same en-

croaching misunderstandings which are contrary to the biblical perspective. So we have, then, a very muddled and muddled picture if we read the Bible cursorily. Too often, we do not understand what it is that God is really up to. That is the great challenge of our time.

# The Political Landscape and Jewish Messianism

*Walter Russell*

## Introduction

**T**he nation of Israel began the difficult period of “the times of the Gentiles” as a nation in exile. After a small percentage of her people chose to return to the land of Canaan from their various places of exile, she then continued as a nation unequally divided between a homeland and a broad dispersion. How would she survive such a broken state? How would the worship of the one true God be continued in the midst of the peoples of the world who worship many diverse and malevolent “gods”? How would God’s plan to bless the peoples of the world now be carried out if He must use a people who have no sovereign status? Can any people survive in such a state, let alone maintain a distinct identity as a people and maintain their customs and worship? In regard to their identity, how would Israel survive the onslaught of the seemingly superior culture of Alexander the Great and the Greeks? How would her people fare under the Greek, and later, Roman overlords? These are questions that we have attempted to answer in the previous two chapters.

We now turn to the specific political aspects of Israel’s time under the Gentiles from the time of Alexander the Great’s conquest of Israel in 331 BC to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Our goal will be to provide a brief survey of this four hundred year period which shaped and enveloped the time of Jesus and Paul and most of the events of the New Testament. In particular, we want to see how the Greek and Roman domination of Israel fed the various types of Jewish messianism. In other words, we want to see how the Jewish people responded in all their diversity to the times of the Gentiles by longing for and theologizing about the coming of the

Messiah. Of particular interest to us will be the connection between the coming of the Messiah and God’s program of blessing the peoples of the world. How did Israel connect these seemingly diverse plans within God’s program for history? In fact, does God still have a plan to bless the peoples of the world now that some of these peoples have crushed his own people? This will be the second topic of this chapter after a survey of the eras of Greek and Roman domination.

## Major Events of the Greek and Roman Eras

### *331 BC Greek Era Begins*

Alexander the Great gains control of Palestine

323 Death of Alexander; 4-fold division of his empire in 320 (see Daniel 8)

301 Egypt and the Ptolemies gain control of Palestine

198 Syria and the Seleucids gain control of Palestine

168/167 Persecution of Jews by Antiochus and “abomination of desolation” set up in the Jewish temple (Dec., 168), Mattathias the Maccabee inspires revolt against Seleucids

164-142 Continued Maccabean success against weakening Seleucids; Simon the last Maccabee establishes independence in 142

142-67 Expansion of the quasi-autonomous Jewish kingdom under the “Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty”

67-63 Civil war within Hasmonean kingdom

**63 BC Roman Era Begins**

Pompey conquers Jerusalem and makes  
Hasmonean kingdom a Roman protectorate

40 BC Herod the Great crowned King of the Jews  
under Romans; begins rebuilding temple in 20  
BC; dies in 4 BC; 3 heirs rule

AD 70 Destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman le-  
gions under Titus after the Jewish revolt (AD  
66-70)

## The Political Landscape from Alexander the Great through the Roman Era (331 BC to AD 70)

### A. Alexander the Great and His Successors (331-143 BC)

#### 1. *Alexander the Great (ca. 356-323 BC)* (cf. *Dan 2:39;* *7:6; 8:5-8; 11:3*)

Alexander was born about 356 BC, the son of Philip I, king of Macedonia. Philip had united the northern region of Macedonia, then proceeded to expand his power southward. He sought to assert Macedonian domination throughout Greece and to consolidate the independent and federated city-states of Greece, perhaps in part in order to assemble an army capable of taking back western Asia Minor from the Persians. Philip was assassinated in 336 BC. Alexander's role in the murder is unclear, though he had recently had a falling out with Philip and the latter had taken a new wife who had borne him a son, thus endangering Alexander's status as the royal heir.

Alexander was educated by Aristotle, the famous philosopher, a teacher appointed by Alexander's father Philip (Macedonians were thought by some Greeks to be uneducated ruffians). After his education, Alexander consolidated Greece, a collection of city states, while 20 years old (ca. 336-335 BC) through a cunning mixture of conciliation and conquest. He undertook to prepare for war with the Persians, who controlled most of Asia Minor, Egypt and the Middle East, in Asia Minor in 335 BC. He faced a number of significant disadvantages: 1) He was badly outnumbered. 2) The Persians had an almost inexhaustible supply of money (some of which they used to foment opposition to Alexander in the Greek cities). 3) The Persian navy controlled the seaboard of Asia Minor, Syria and

Egypt. 4) Among the Persians there existed minimal internal division (unlike Greece under Alexander).

The conquest of the Persians began with the battle of Granicus in western Asia Minor 334 BC. Alexander reached the eastern portion of Asia Minor, Issus, by 333 BC. Issus virtually bordered on what we now refer to as Syria. There he met the Persian king Darius in battle and soundly defeated his armies.

Over the next two years Alexander would conquer Syria, the Phoenician coastal towns, Israel and Egypt before returning to advance eastward past Syria through modern Iraq onto Iran and India. India was approached in 327 BC and fell shortly thereafter. Ultimately, the Macedonians in his army refused to cross the Hyphasis River in northwest India. He had apparently intended to march to the Ganges, on the supposition that it bordered the Ocean on the East. Alexander, it seems, intended to conquer the world, to Hellenize it and to exploit it for the commercial interests of Greece. He returned through the conquered lands, taking special care to punish governors and satraps who had abused the power which Alexander had vested in them.

Of interest to biblical students are the comments of one historian who noted that

Throughout the Asiatic campaigns of Alexander we are struck by the perfect organisation of his transports and supplies; but we are struck even more by the certainty of his movements through strange lands, as if he had a map of the country before him. His intelligence department must have been excellent, and though our records give us no intimations on the subject, it has been supposed with much plausibility that here the invader received help from the Jews, who ever since the Captivity were scattered about Media and Babylonia. It is certain that Alexander had shown special favour to the race of Israel and the foundation of Egyptian Alexandria; he had invited a Jewish colony to settle there, enjoying the rights of citizens, and yet living in a separate quarter and keeping their own national customs.

(J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, 760)

Alexander died about 323 BC. As conqueror, he was responsible for Greek becoming the *lingua franca* in a very large portion of the world—from Macedonia in northern Greece to India. He also permitted each country to retain its national institutions, including religions, rather

than attempting to impose an artificial scheme on the peoples he conquered. Additionally, Alexander divided authority in a country between a governor, financial officer and military commander in order to lessen the likelihood of rebellion (and, perhaps, corruption). While at first he sought to plunder inferior Asia, Alexander gradually came to view it in less condescending terms (this was disquieting to his Greek contemporaries). He also sought to fuse Asia and Europe into a homogeneous unity by transplanting Greeks and Macedonians into Asia, and Asiatics into Europe; by the promotion of intermarriages between Persians and Macedonians; and by the institution of equal military service—Hellenic military schools were established in every province and the local youths conscripted.

## **2. Alexander's successors (ca. 323-143 BC)**

*(cf. Dan 8:6ff.; 11:4)*

After Alexander's death, his kingdom was divided among four successors. The most important of these for the subsequent history of Israel were the dynasties established by Ptolemy and Seleucus. The Ptolemaic dynasty was established in Egypt by Ptolemy, with Alexandria as its capital. The Seleucid dynasty was founded in Syria by Seleucus with Antioch as its capital. Judea was ruled by the Ptolemies until 198 BC, after which it fell under Seleucid control.

Under the Ptolemies (323-198 BC) (cf. Dan 11: 5-39), the Jews were treated with consideration. In Alexandria, Ptolemy II founded a great library and sought, by various means, to establish the city as a rival to Athens. The Old Testament was translated into Greek here over the course of several decades. This seems initially to have been done because the Jews in Alexandria no longer understood Hebrew. The Jews may also have wanted to have the translation to counter Egyptian hostility. It had been rumored, for example, that they had long ago been expelled from Egypt because of leprosy. In addition, there was a respect for antiquity among the ancients and the Old Testament would help establish the antiquity and dignity of the Jews. Further, the LXX would, perhaps, enable the Alexandrian Jews to function independently of the hierarchy at Jerusalem. The project of translation was probably begun about 250 BC and completed around 130 BC.

Under the Seleucids (198-143 BC) (cf. Dan 8:9ff.; 11:5-39), life proved to be more difficult and tumultuous for the Jews. The Seleucids wrested control of Palestine from the Ptolemies in 198 BC in a victory won

at Paneion, near the Caesarea Philippi of the Gospel narratives. Initially, they continued to grant to Judea a large degree of autonomy. In 190 BC the Seleucids were defeated by Rome at the battle of Magnesia in southwest Asia Minor. This came about because Hannibal of Carthage, who had been defeated by the Romans in 202, fled to Antiochus III. He convinced Antiochus to invade Greece in 194. Rome declared war against Antiochus in 192 and defeated him. This together with the ensuing Peace of Apamea (188 BC) deprived them of the wealthy provinces in western Asia Minor and imposed severe war reparations on the Seleucids.

In the following years the Seleucids were hard pressed to raise revenues, and on two occasions accepted bribes from Jewish religious leaders to make them high priests rather than follow the Zadokite (Old Testament) prescriptions. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) attempted to alleviate the situation by venturing to Egypt in search of revenue. He was rebuffed by the Romans in 168 BC. When news of his defeat reached Jerusalem, Jews there sought to depose the high-priest, Menelaus, whom Antiochus had appointed. Antiochus saw this as blatant rebellion.

On his return to Syria he passed through Judea, intending to use that region as a buffer against the Romans. While there (cf. Dan 8:9), Antiochus confirmed Menelaus in the priesthood, and forbade Sabbath observance and customary festivals and sacrifices. He also forbade the circumcision of children and destroyed copies of the Torah. Additionally, he tried to establish the cult of a Syrian deity in the Jerusalem Temple; he sacrificed swine in the Temple (December 167 BC; cf. Dan 11:31-32; 1 Macc 1:41-64; 2 Macc 6:1-2).

In Modein, northwest of Jerusalem, Mattathias Maccabaeus (an old priest of the Hasmonean family) and his five sons inaugurated the resistance to the Seleucids by assassinating a Jewish priest who had agreed to offer the defiled sacrifice. Antiochus eventually saw the futility of continuing to war against the guerrillas, and reached an agreement with them under which the proper sacrifice was re-instituted December 164 BC (the feast of Hanukkah).

## **B. Jewish Independence (143-63 BC)**

The Hasmoneans continued the struggle for liberty for another 20 years after the proper sacrifices were re-instituted. National autonomy was won under Simon, the last survivor of the sons of Mattathias (142 BC).

**The Maccabean/Hasmonean Rulers**

|                                    |         |       |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| Mattathias                         | 168–166 | BC    |
| Judas Maccabeus                    | 166–160 |       |
| Jonathan Maccabeus                 | 160–142 |       |
| Simon Maccabeus                    | 142–135 |       |
| John Hyrcanus I                    | 135–104 |       |
| Aristobulus                        | 104–103 |       |
| Alexander Jannaeus                 | 103–76  |       |
| Hyrcanus II vs. Aristobulus II     |         | 67–63 |
| (Pompey establishes Roman rule 63) |         |       |
| Hyrcanus II                        | 63–40   |       |
| Antigonus II                       | 40–37   |       |
| (Parthians put on the throne)      |         |       |

The seeds of future difficulties were sown when Jonathan Maccabaeus accepted the high priesthood from a Seleucid ruler in 152 BC. When Simon, his younger brother, had at last liberated the country, he accepted the popular bestowal of the high-priesthood. However, he was not a Zadokite, that is, not a lawful (according to the Old Testament) candidate for the post. This defilement of the high priesthood precipitated the separatism of the Essenes (who sought to replace the Hasmoneans). These “separatists” were pious Jews who were deeply troubled by the ruling of illegitimate high priests. Additionally, in response to the combining of the Hasmonean kingship and the high priesthood, other pious Jews in Israel formed the sect of the Pharisees (who sought to influence, rather than replace, the Hasmoneans). The first mention of the sects of the Pharisees and the Sadducees occurred by 135 BC.

Simon’s descendants ruled the country and became more and more corrupt, leading to a certain disillusionment among the people and opposition from those Jews concerned with strict observance of the Torah.

The growing weakness of the Seleucids allowed the Hasmonean rulers to enlarge their kingdom. Beginning with Simon in 142 BC and reaching its zenith under Alexander Jannaeus in 103–76 BC, the Hasmonean rulers expanded the territory under Jewish authority by conquest. In particular, they totally destroyed Samaria, Gaza, Gadara, and Pella, and colonized with Jewish settlers and garrisons cities like Joppa and

Gazara. They “Judaized” the people of Idumea (south of Judea; Herod’s home area) and Galilee (north of Samaria) by forcing them to adopt circumcision and the observance of Torah (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.257–8; 13.318). Aristobulus was the first Hasmonean ruler to adopt the title of “king” in 104 BC and his successors followed his pattern.

**C. Roman Dominance (63 BC–AD 70)**

In 64/63 BC Syria was made a province of Rome and Judea had to acknowledge Roman overlordship. Prior to this Rome had expanded its dominance eastward from Italy, but about 120–88 BC there was persistent disarray in many of Rome’s eastern territories. This culminated in the rebellion of Mithridates VI, king of Pontus (in northern Asia Minor, along the southern border of the Black Sea). He was a capable leader who had come to occupy most of Asia Minor and, on occasion, to encroach into Greece. He led these territories to oppose Roman rule. In 66 BC the Roman senate vested the general Ptolemy with extraordinary power to put an end to the problems once and for all. He journeyed from Rome and retook Asia Minor and made Syria a Roman province.

Hyrcanus II, a Hasmonean and great-grand-son of Simon Maccabaeus, was confirmed as high priest by Pompey. Leading up to this, three groups of Jewish representatives had approached Pompey concerning his appointment of a ruler in Judea. One group favored Hyrcanus II, the legitimate heir to the throne; another favored Aristobulus II, the younger, more able and more ambitious brother of Hyrcanus; yet another wanted Pompey to set aside both Hasmoneans and re-establish a Zadokite priesthood in conformity to Old Testament law. Pompey chose Hyrcanus II. Antipater, an Idumaeen, seems to have recognized the weakness of Hyrcanus II and chose to support him in the belief that he could have his way with him. Antipater was his chief counsel and the real power behind the throne.

Pompey was forced to put down subsequent unrest in Jerusalem, at the Temple mount. Aristobulus II, Hyrcanus’ younger brother, had attempted to resist Pompey but was not able to do so. He gave up the effort. A number of his followers, however, would not submit to the Roman governor and were slaughtered on the Temple mount in 63 BC. Pompey judged the city severely for its opposition, but took care to insure that Temple worship should continue undisturbed.

Hyrchanus II and Antipater were able to secure benefits for themselves and the Jewish people through their support of Julius Caesar after the death of Pompey. Julius Caesar became emperor in 49 BC and civil war erupted shortly thereafter at Rome. After the death of Pompey in Egypt (48 BC), Hyrchanus II and Antipater lent valuable assistance to Caesar in fighting the resurgent Ptolemies in Egypt. Caesar confirmed Hyrchanus as hereditary high-priest and ethnarch of the Jews in 47 BC while Antipater was nominated as procurator of Judea, made a Roman citizen and exempted from taxation. Favors for Jews living outside Palestine were also secured. Antipater secured for his sons, Herod and Phasaël, the governorships of Galilee and Jerusalem, respectively.

In the disarray following the murder of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, Antipater and his son Herod supported Cassius, one of the conspirators. Antipater was himself assassinated in 43 BC by a would-be usurper, who was in turn killed by assassins hired by Herod.

After the murder of Caesar in 44 BC, Marcus Antonius sought to avenge Caesar's death against Brutus and Cassius. Cassius journeyed to Syria and assumed power there. Antipater and Herod supported him. A period of disarray followed. Anthony and Octavian (later known as Augustus) defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 BC. Anthony took up residence in Syria and granted Herod and his brother Phasaël favored status.

While Anthony was distracted by Cleopatra in 40 BC, Palestine was overrun by the Parthians (a kingdom stretching from the Euphrates River in modern day Iraq to the Indus River in India) who installed a rival, Antigonus, as priest and ruler. Herod was dispossessed and his hopes now rested solely and simply on Rome.

#### **D. Herod the Great**

Herod was declared king of Judea at a formal session of the Senate about 40 BC. Herod had journeyed to Rome to seek Roman assistance, and he got it. He began to exercise sovereignty in 37 BC. A Roman legate under the authority of Anthony expelled the Parthians from Syria in 39 BC, yet fighting continued until 37 BC, when the Parthians were decisively defeated and expelled from Syria and Palestine. Herod's rival Antigonus was captured and beheaded. Herod thus came to possess the sovereignty in 37 BC.

Herod began a period of consolidation from 37-25 BC. He eliminated his enemies by executions, bribes

and bestowal of favors. For example, he appointed Hananel, a Babylonian Jew of priestly lineage, as high-priest, thus displacing a Hasmonean. His mother-in-law Alexandra (the daughter of Hyrchanus II) thought a Hasmonean should be appointed priest. She lobbied Cleopatra to intervene with Anthony, in order to have him induce Herod to appoint Aristobulus III as high priest (he was 17 years old at the time and Herod's brother-in-law). Anthony agreed and Herod was forced to have Hananel resign (unlawful, since high-priests were to serve for life). Herod felt threatened by the popularity of the boy and conspired to have him drowned. This is a typical example of the sort of intrigue in which Herod often involved himself.

Herod received the support of Octavius (Augustus) in 30 BC despite Herod's earlier support for Anthony. In 32 BC when war broke out between Octavian and Anthony, Herod sided with Anthony. In September 31 BC the battle of Actium was fought in which Anthony lost his power for good. Herod went before Octavius (Augustus) with humility and was granted the royal power.

From 25-14 BC, Herod and Israel experienced a period of prosperity. He began massive building programs in Palestine, including whole cities. Herod also built theaters, amphitheaters and hippodromes. Large buildings were also financed and constructed outside Palestine, including pagan temples (a source of irritation to pious Jews). He undertook the reconstruction of the Temple (about 20/19 BC) and finished about AD 63 (see John 2:20). New territories were acquired (e.g. Trachonitis, Batanea, Auranitis, etc.). There was support for games, culture and Greek education. His sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, were sent to Rome for education. These ideals of the polis—Greek language, culture, literature and religion—would have been problematic for most pious Jews, since they were at odds with Jewish, or biblical, ideals. Moreover, many Greeks were entrusted with important administrative and diplomatic posts (this naturally led to resentment among the Jews).

Herod was dominated by domestic troubles during the last years of his life (14-4 BC). He had 10 wives. His sons Alexander and Aristobulus were committed to prison, accused of high treason, found guilty and executed (7 BC). The "slaughter of the innocents" recorded in Matthew 2 is a testimony to Herod's paranoia. His son Antipater was caught in a plot against Herod and imprisoned and found guilty, then executed (5 BC). Mercifully, Herod finally died in 4 BC.

### E. The Divided Kingdom (Herod's Posterity)

Herod Antipas (ruled 4 BC–AD 39), son of Herod the Great and Malthace, received Galilee and Perea with the title “tetrarch” upon his father’s death. He had John the Baptist killed (Mark 6:14-29), tried Jesus (Luke 23), and had his territory taken by his ex-father-in-law, the Nabataean king Aretas in AD 36. Antipas appealed to the emperor Tiberius, but Tiberius died before his order to the Syrian governor to capture Aretas dead or alive could be carried out. He was banished to France by Caligula in AD 39 and was probably executed there.

When Caligula succeeded Tiberius, he assigned Agrippa, Antipas’ brother-in-law, the territory which had formerly belonged to Philip (see below) and gave him a royal title. It seems that Herod Antipas’ wife Herodias (the one we read about in the Gospels) was envious of this (even though Agrippa was her brother) and encouraged Antipas to seek a royal title for himself. He went to Caligula; however, he was followed there by an agent of Agrippa’s who charged that Antipas had a large store of weapons, presumably for use in a rebellion. Caligula found Antipas guilty of this and other misdeeds and took action against him.

Philip, son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra, received the regions of Batanaea, Trachonitis and Auranitis and the title “tetrarch.” He ruled quietly, built Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13) and rebuilt Bethsaida. Jesus went to his territory to feed the 4,000 and 5,000. He died in AD 34 without any offspring.

Archelaus, son of Herod the Great and Malthace, ruled Judea and Samaria from 4 BC–AD 6 (Matt 2:22).

Archelaus was confirmed by Caesar against the wishes of the Jewish people (who argued against any Herodian successor) and of his brother Antipas (cf. Luke 19:11-27—the parable of the nobleman going to a far country). Archelaus was awarded Judea, Samaria, Idumaea and given the title “ethnarch.” He engaged in great building programs like his father and also faced popular hostility. After nine years of rule, a deputation of Jewish and Samaritan aristocracy journeyed to Rome to complain to Augustus about Archelaus’ rule. Augustus listened and Archelaus was eventually deposed and banished to France. He may have died in Palestine (according to Jerome his grave was there). He was replaced by the direct rule of a Roman prefect (Pilate was one of these).

King Herod Agrippa I (ruled Judea and Samaria; AD 41-44) was a grandson of Herod the Great. He

received the tetrarchy of Philip in AD 37 and that of Herod Antipas (Galilee and Perea) in 40. He was rewarded with Judea and Samaria by Claudius when the latter assumed power after the murder of Caligula in AD 41. Herod Agrippa was an unusually pious observer of the Law (inside Palestine). However, he put to death James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1-19) and died suddenly in Caesarea in AD 44 (Acts 12:19-23).

### F. The Roman Governors

After Archelaus was deposed, he was replaced by a Roman governor of equestrian rank. This was somewhat unusual, since governors were normally men of senatorial rank.

Only a few provinces were by way of exception placed under governors of equestrian rank, namely those in which, owing to a tenacious and individual culture, or a lack of it, the strict implementation of ordinary regulations seemed impossible. . . . it was in particular territories inhabited by semi-barbarous peoples that were administered in this manner. (Schürer, *Jewish People*, 1:357-8)

These governors were headquartered in Caesarea, not Jerusalem, with small garrisons throughout the region. They commanded auxiliary, not regular (legions), Roman troops. These were non-Jews. They exercised supreme judicial authority as well as financial administration and military supervision.

The following governors served:

1. Coponius (Judea & Samaria; AD 6-9)
2. Marcus Ambibulus (Judea & Samaria; AD 9-12)
3. Annias Rufus (Judea & Samaria; AD 12-15)
4. Valerius Gratus (Judea & Samaria; AD 15-26)
5. **Pontius Pilate** (Judea & Samaria; AD 26-36)
  - a. Charged with greed, vindictiveness and cruelty in Philo and Josephus.
  - b. Tried and sentenced Jesus.
6. Marcellus/Marullus (Judea & Samaria; AD 36-41)
7. Cuspius Fadus (all of Palestine; AD 44-?46). Put down the uprising instigated by ‘Theudas’
8. Tiberius Iulius Alexander (all of Palestine; ?AD 46-48)
  - a. A Jew by birth who had given up the ancestral religion.



- b. A severe famine in the land during his governorship.
  - c. Executed James and Simon (nationalists), the sons of Judas the Galilean.
9. Ventidius Cumanus (all of Palestine; AD 48-52)
- a. Squashed an angry crowd of Jews who had been offended by a Roman soldier; 20-30,000 killed in the resultant melee.
  - b. After Samaritans had ambushed and murdered a number of Jews on pilgrimage, the Jews retaliated with a large slaughter. The Roman intervened and went so far as to bring the matter to Claudius' attention.
10. Antonius Felix (all of Palestine; AD 52-?60)
- a. Captured the Jewish resistance leader Eleazar ben Deinaeus and sent him to Caesar in Rome for trial.
  - b. Crucified a large number of brigands and their sympathizers among the people.
  - c. Squashed an uprising led by an Egyptian false prophet (the prophet escaped).
11. Porcius Festus (all of Palestine; ?AD 60-62)
12. Luceius Albinus (all of Palestine; AD 62-64)
13. Gessius Florus (all of Palestine; AD 64-66)
14. (Jewish Revolt, AD 66-70)

## G. The Significance of These Events

1. The world had been prepared for the proclamation of the gospel by people and means, which at first glance, might appear not to be divinely ordained. However, upon a little deeper reflection, it is not difficult at all to see how the Apostle Paul could boldly assert that, "But when *the fulness of the time came*, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4).
2. In Palestine, the period of Roman rule between the death of Herod the Great (4 BC) and the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) was marked by repeated outbreaks of hostility and civil disturbances. This created an often tense and dynamic political context within which Jesus ministered.
3. The authors of the Gospels and Acts make it clear that both the preparation for the coming of Jesus and all that happened to Him was done kata; ta;~

grafa;~ ("according to the Scriptures"). The Apostle Peter also proclaimed that Jesus was delivered up "by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). The Jerusalem Church prayed along the same lines:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:27-28)

God was working out His plan through the tangled web of Jewish and Gentile political leaders.

## Jewish Messianism in the Light of Gentile Domination

### A. Old Testament Expectations

The literature of Judaism, both biblical and post-biblical, evidences a much greater interest in the Messianic Age itself and the activity of God during the age than in the person or persons whom God would use to bring about and to accomplish his purposes.

(Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, 63)

The faith of the Old Testament rests on two certainties, equally profound and indissolubly bound together. The first is that God has come in the past, and that he has intervened in favour of his people. The other ... is the hope that God will come anew in the future.

(Georges Pidoux, *Le dieu qui vient*, 7)

The Old Testament regularly looks forward to the time in which God will intervene in human affairs to establish Israel and to mete out justice and mercy to the nations. Although the phrase "kingdom of God" does not appear in the Old Testament, the concept is unmistakably present. We see this manifested from at least four perspectives, one of which is focused on the Messiah, the one who will be God's agent to implement God's plan.

1. *The coming of God* (Judges 5:4-5; Psalms 68:7-8; Micah 1:2-7; Nahum 1:5-8; Isaiah 2:19-21; 35:4-10; 40:10-11; 64:1-7; 66:15-16). The coming of the Lord causes the creation to tremble in fear at His presence, and the language of God's sudden appearing recalls Yahweh's acts in the creation account.

2. *The Day of the Lord* (Hosea 2:18-23; Joel 1: 15-20; 2:1-11; 3:1-21; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Micah 2:1-4; 4:1-3; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Isaiah 2:2-4; 13:6-16; Zechariah 14:9-11). The Day of the Lord brings judgment and deliverance both for His people and the nations. This day is the day when both Israel and the peoples of the world acknowledge that Yahweh is the one true God.

3. *The new era resulting from the coming of God is an era characterized by peace and righteousness.*

Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

When Yahweh comes to bring his kingdom, it is to this world that he comes and in this world that he establishes his reign. The hope of Israel is not for a home in heaven but for the revelation of the glory of God in this world. As God's claim on man encompasses the totality of his life, so God's salvation for man encompasses the totality of human existence, including our historical existence. (G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 25)

4. *Old Testament Passages about the Messiah*

One has only to scan the Old Testament passages which look towards the distant future to note that the greater emphasis is given to a description of the Age itself than to God's anointed instrument who will usher in that Age. While sections and chapters are devoted to the former (e.g., Isaiah 26-29; 40ff; Ezekiel 40-48; Daniel 12; Joel 2:28-3:21), definite references to the latter are confined, in the main, to a few specific verses (e.g., Isaiah 9:6ff; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9).

(Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, 63)

a. Davidic sonship is foundational to Messiah's identity and this is based upon God's covenant with David:

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever. (2 Samuel 7:12-16; compare Psalm 89)

b. However, Messiah's identity is also associated with the priesthood of Melchizedek:

The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet." The Lord will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies." Thy people will volunteer freely in the day of Thy power; in holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Thy youth are to Thee as the dew. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at Thy right hand; he will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country. He will drink from the brook by the wayside; Therefore He will lift up His head. (Psalm 110)

c. As Herod discovered (Matthew 2:1-6), the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem:

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. (Micah 5:2)

d. The Davidic Messiah will restore the glory of David's house:

"In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name," declares the Lord who does this. (Amos 9:11-12; see also 9:13-15)

e. The Davidic Messiah will again shepherd Israel wisely as her king:

"Behold the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will

reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 23: 5-6; see also Jeremiah 23:1-4 and 33:14-18)

f. However, the Messiah will present himself humbly as King to Israel, but will have a universal dominion:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10)

g. Messiah's kingdom will clearly be a universal one over all the peoples of the world:

Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed: "Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cord from us!" He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury: "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware." Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! (Psalm 2)

h. The Davidic Messiah will bring an unending universal reign of peace:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from

then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7; see also Isaiah 9:1-5 and 11:1-10)

i. Apparently, the Messiah is also described as one like a "Son of Man" who is designated the universal ruler by God the Father:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

These passages should give some indication that while the "messiah" was not the central figure in Old Testament expectations—Yahweh was—nevertheless, there is a very clear picture that emerges from the biblical data. The Messiah is seen to be the ultimate Davidic Son who will be Yahweh's agent in bringing about Israel's restoration and the establishment of justice among the peoples of the world. About these points the Old Testament gives clear and definitive statements.

However, among the various sects of Judaism, the concept of "messiah" was not without ambiguity. In some circles, there were other types of messiah than the "royal." By the time of the New Testament, the messianic expectations were not homogeneous. Nonetheless, political expectations connected with a coming son of David were dominant in the Old Testament and intertestamental period. We now turn to examples of the theologizing of some of the sects within Israel regarding the coming Messiah.

## **B. Extrabiblical Expectations about the Messiah**

The presence or absence of messianism was primarily determined by the political attitudes and circumstances of the different groups within Judaism. Those who placed their hopes in the institutions and leaders of their day, whether the High Priests, the Ptolemies, or the Maccabees, had little interest in messianism. Apocalyptic groups developed the idea of a transcendent savior figure, either as an alternative or as a complement to earthly messianism. Only with the rise of the Qumran community do we find a group with a strong and developed interest in messianism, and then again in

the first century BCE in the Psalms of Solomon. (John H. Collins, "Messianism in the Maccabean Period," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, 106)

### 1. *The Expectations of the Pharisees (e.g. The Psalms of Solomon 17-18)*

Closest to the biblical expectations of any of the groups of Judaism were the expectations of the Pharisaic sect. The following selections from the Pharisaic Psalms of Solomon were written in the first century before Christ, perhaps by this group of pious Jews in response to the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 BC.<sup>1</sup> Note how closely these psalms emphasize some of the biblical aspects about the Messiah. Additionally, while they do include some blessing for the Gentiles when Messiah comes, they, nevertheless, are clearly biased toward Israelites as the blessed people. This is significant because this perspective would represent, perhaps more than any of the following sets of expectations, the view of the mainstream of Judaism. This is because of the widespread success of the Pharisees in perpetuating their theology among the majority of the Israelites.

Lord, you are our king forevermore, for in you,  
O God, does our soul take pride.  
How long is the time of a person's life on the earth? As  
is his time, so also is his hope in him.  
But we hope in God our savior, for the strength of our  
God is forever with mercy.  
And the kingdom of our God is forever  
over the nations in judgment.  
Lord, you chose David to be king over Israel, and swore  
to him about his descendants forever, that his kingdom  
should not fail before you. (Psalms of Solomon 17:1-4)

See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of  
David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known  
to you, O God.  
Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous  
rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample  
her to destruction; in wisdom and in righteousness to drive  
out the sinners from the inheritance;  
To smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar; to  
shatter all their substance with an iron rod; to destroy the  
unlawful nations with the word of his mouth;  
At his warning the nations will flee from his presence; and  
he will condemn sinners by the thoughts of their hearts.

He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness; and he will judge the tribes of the people that have been made holy by the Lord their God. (17:21-26)

And he will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke, and he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole earth.

And he will purge Jerusalem (and make it) holy as it was even from the beginning, for nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out, and to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her.

And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.

(For) he will not rely on horse and rider and bow, nor will he collect gold and silver for war.

Nor will he build up hope in a multitude for a day of war. The Lord himself is his king, the hope of the one who has a strong hope in God.

He shall be compassionate to all the nations (who) reverently (stand) before him.

He will strike the earth with the word of his mouth forever; he will bless the Lord's people with wisdom and happiness. And he himself (will be) free from sin, (in order) to rule a great people.

He will expose officials and drive out sinners by the strength of his word.

And he will not weaken in his days, (relying) upon his God, for God made him powerful in the holy spirit and wise in the counsel of understanding, with strength and righteousness. (17:31-37)

O Lord, your mercy is upon the works of your hands forever. (You show) your goodness to Israel with a rich gift. Your eyes (are) watching over them and none of them will be in need. Your ears listen to the hopeful prayer of the poor. Your compassionate judgments (are) over the whole world, and your love is for the descendants of Abraham, an Israelite.

Your discipline for us (is) as (for) a firstborn son, an only child, to divert the perceptive person from unintentional sins.

May God cleanse Israel for the day of mercy in blessing, for the appointed day when his Messiah will reign.

Blessed are those born in those days, to see the good things of the Lord which he will do for the coming generation; (which will be) under the rod of discipline of the Lord Messiah, in the fear of his God, in wisdom of spirit, and of

righteousness and of strength,  
to direct people in righteous acts, in the fear of God, to set  
them all in the fear of the Lord  
A good generation (living) in the fear of God,  
in the days of mercy. Pause. (18:1-9)

## 2. *The Expectations of the Qumran Community (the Essenes?)*

The Qumran community appears to have expected a double Messianic appearance in that they expected both the traditional Davidic leader and a priestly leader from the sons of Zadok (the proper high priestly family from the tribe of Levi) who stood alongside the Davidic Messiah. In the performance of priestly functions, the son of Aaron had precedence, but in the overall role of leadership it is the Davidic leader who plays the more important role. Both are involved in bringing about the coming kingdom of God.

And they shall not depart from any maxim of the Law to walk in all the stubbornness of their heart.

And they shall be governed by the first ordinances in which the members of the Community began their instruction, until the coming of the Prophet [i.e. the Messiah, Deut. 18:15] and the Anointed of Aaron and Israel. (Manual of Discipline, 9:9b-11) <sup>2</sup>

The books of the Law are the hut of the king; as He said, "I will raise up the hut of David which is fallen." [Amos 9:11]

The king is the Assembly; { } and the faithfulness of the images is the books of the prophets whose words Israel has despised.

And the Star is the Seeker of the Law who came to Damascus; as it is written, 'A star has journeyed out of Jacob and a scepter is risen out of Israel.' [Numbers 24:17] (The Damascus Rule, 7:15b-20a) <sup>3</sup>

[And] Yahweh [de]clares to thee that He will build thee a house; and I will raise up they seed after thee, and I will establish his royal throne [fore]er. I wi[ll be] a father to him and he shall be my son. [2 Samuel 7:11c, 12b-c, 13-14a]

This is the Branch of David who will arise with the Seeker of the Law and who will sit on the throne of Zion at the end of days;

as it is written, 'I will raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen [Amos 9:11]. This tabernacle of David

which is fallen (is) he who will arise to save Israel.' (4Q Florilegium, 10-13) <sup>4</sup>

[Concerning the mee]ting of the men of renown [called] to assembly of the Council of the Community when [Adonai] will have begotten the Messiah among them. [Psalm 2:7]

[The Priest] shall enter [at] the head of all the congregation of Israel, then all [the chiefs of the sons] of Aaron the priests called to the assembly, men of renown; and they shall sit [before him] each according to his rank.

And afterwards, [the Mess]iah of Israel shall [enter], and the chiefs of [the tribes of Israel] shall sit before him, each according to this rank, according to their [position] in their camps and during their marches; then all the heads of fa[mily of the congre]gation, together with the wise me[n of the holy Congregation], shall sit before them, each according to his rank.

And [when] they gather for the Community tab[le], [or drink w]ine, and arrange the Community table [and mix] the wine to drink, let no man [stretch out] his hand over the first-fruits of bread and [wine] before the Priest; for [it is he who] shall bless the first-fruits of bread and w[ine, and shall] first [stretch out] his hand over the bread.

And after[wards,] the Messiah of Israel shall [str]etch out his hands over the bread. [And afterwards,] all the Congregation of the Community shall [bl]ess, ea[ch according to] his rank.

And they shall proceed according to this rite at every mea[re] at least ten persons [are as]sembled.' (The Messianic Rule or Annex to the Manual of Discipline, 2:11-22) <sup>5</sup>

## 3. *The Expectations of Various Apocalyptic Groups*

Apart from the Qumran community, there are various other apocalyptic writings that reflect a perspective similar to that held by those who lived on the shores of the Dead Sea at Qumran. In particular, the common expectation about the Messiah is that there may, in fact, be two Messiahs: a Davidic one and a priestly one. Apparently written during the time of the Hasmoneans and the king-priest era of Israel's history, the pious writers of material like the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs pictured a priestly leader who would arise with messianic

warlike qualities and purge the now-corrupted Hasmonean priesthood. In this sense, this messianic priest would even have precedence over the Davidic Messiah.

For at no time did I bring grief to Jacob, my father, because everything he said, I did. And Abraham, my father's father, blessed me as destined to be the king in Israel; and Jacob blessed me similarly. And so I know that through me the kingdom will be established. (Testament of Judah, 17:4-6) <sup>6</sup>

The Lord will instigate among them factions set against each other and conflicts will persist in Israel. My rule shall be terminated by men of alien race, until the salvation of Israel comes, until the coming of the God of righteousness, so that Jacob may enjoy tranquillity and peace, as well as all the nations. He shall preserve the power of my kingdom forever. With an oath the Lord swore to me that the rule would not cease for my posterity. (Testament of Judah, 22:1-3) <sup>7</sup>

And after this there shall arise for you a Star from Jacob [Numbers 24:17] in peace. And a man shall arise from my posterity like the Sun of righteousness, walking with the sons of men in gentleness and righteousness, and in him will be found no sin. And the heavens will be opened upon him to pour out the spirit as a blessing of the Holy Father. And he will pour the spirit of grace on you. And you shall be sons in truth, and you will walk in his first and final decrees. This is the Shoot of God [Isaiah 11:1] Most High; this is the fountain for the life of all humanity. Then he will illumine the scepter of my kingdom, and from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations, to judge and to save all that call on the Lord. (Testament of Judah, 24:1-6) <sup>8</sup>

For this reason, I say to you, you will vie with the sons of Levi and will seek to be exalted above them, but you will not be able: For God will perform vengeance in their behalf, and you will die an evil death, since God gave Levi the authority, and to Judah with, [as well as to me and to Dan and to Joseph], to be rulers. It is for this reason that I command you to give heed to Levi, because he will know the law of God and will give instructions concerning justice and concerning sacrifice for Israel until the consummation of times; he is the anointed priest of whom the Lord spoke. I call to witness the God of heaven that you do the truth, each to his neighbor, and that you show love, each to his brother. Draw near to Levi in humility of your hearts in order that you may receive blessing

from his mouth. For he will bless Israel and Judah, since it is through him that the Lord has chosen to reign in the presence of all the people. Prostrate yourselves before his posterity, because (his offspring) will die in your behalf in wars visible and invisible. And he shall be among you an eternal king. (Testament of Reuben, 6:5-12) <sup>9</sup>

And they said to me, "Levi, your posterity shall be divided into three offices as a sign of the glory of the Lord who is coming. The first lot shall be great; no other shall be greater than it. The second shall be in the priestly role. But the third shall be granted a new name, because from Judah a king will arise and shall found a new priesthood in accord with the gentile model and for all nations His presence is beloved, as a prophet of the Most High, a descendant of Abraham, our father." (Testament of Levi, 8:11-15) <sup>10</sup>

When vengeance will have come upon them from the Lord, the priesthood will lapse. And then the Lord will raise up a new priest [Psalm 110] to whom all the words of the Lord will be revealed. He shall effect the judgment of truth over the earth for many days. And his star [Numbers 24:17] shall rise in heaven like a king; kindling the light of knowledge as day is illumined by the sun. And he shall be extolled by the whole inhabited world. This one will shine forth like the sun in the earth; he shall take away all darkness from under heaven, and there shall be peace in all the earth. The heavens shall greatly rejoice in his days and the earth shall be glad; and the clouds will be filled with joy and the knowledge of the Lord will be poured out on the earth like the water of the seas. And the angels of glory of the Lord's presence will be made glad by him. The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water]. For he shall give the majesty of the Lord to those who are his sons in truth forever. And there shall be no successor for him from generation to generation forever. And in his priesthood the nations shall be multiplied in knowledge on the earth, and they shall be illumined by the grace of the Lord, but Israel shall be diminished by her ignorance and darkened by her grief. In his priesthood sin shall cease and lawless men shall rest from their evil deeds, and righteous men shall find rest in him. And he shall open the gates of paradise, and he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life. (Testament of Levi, 18:1-11) <sup>11</sup>

#### 4. *The Expectations of Philo, a Philosophical Jew of the Diaspora*

At best, Philo's messianism might be understood as a 'realized eschatology' in which exegetical elements that might be nationalized and identified with specific mythical or historical figures in other systems of Jewish thought or in other Jewish communities became allegorical designators for the Logos in Philo. The first line of meaning for Messiah and Messianic Era was the inner experience in which the soul was transformed. The Logos turns man from the chaos of the senses and pleasure toward the intelligible world. ... While other forms of Jewish messianism might have been rejected because of their disastrous results, Philo attempted to accommodate it by transforming its historical and particularistic elements. In neutralizing messianism Philo gave it a new life apart from the particular political energies it might release. (Richard D. Hecht, "Philo and Messiah," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 162-163)

## Conclusion

We can now draw some conclusions after surveying the period from 331 BC to AD 70 when Israel suffered under the domination of the Greek and Roman overlords. We have also briefly overviewed the Jewish theologizing about the Messiah in both the Old Testament and in the post-biblical writings of the various Jewish sects. We can draw three general conclusions:

1. The Old Testament states clearly and unequivocally that Messiah will focus on the peoples of the world as a part of his work. The Messiah will bring judgment, rulership, and blessing to the nations when he comes. A variety of Old Testament voices proclaim these facts: Psalm 2; Zechariah 9:9-10; Daniel 7:13-14; and Isaiah 9:6-7. Isaiah 11:10 gives this hopeful word to the world's peoples: "Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious."
2. However, this clear universal focus gets modified in at least three ways by Jewish groups during the period of Greek and Roman overlordship:
  - a. It is muted and understated at times (e.g. in the apocalyptic writings).

b. It is reversed at times and Messiah is primarily pictured as being opposed to the Gentiles (e.g. in the Pharisaic Psalms of Solomon 17:21-26).

c. It is overlooked and Messiah's focus is shrunken to reforming Israel and her priestly ministries (e.g. in the literature of Qumran and other apocalyptic groups).

3. Nevertheless, because of the clear universal focus and ministry that the Messiah will have, we can expect pious Jews to recognize this when Messiah comes. This is, in fact, what we see recorded in the New Testament in the responses of godly Jews like Simeon, who was looking for the consolation of Israel. At the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple by Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:22-28), Simeon, moved by the Holy Spirit, blessed God and said,

Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. [quoting Isaiah 49:6] (Luke 2:29-32)

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This is the view of R. B. Wright in his introduction to the *Psalms of Solomon, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:639. The following translations are from that same work, 2:665-669.
- <sup>2</sup> Translation from A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, 94.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 134.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 313.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 108-109.
- <sup>6</sup> Translation from James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 799-800.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 801.
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 801.
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 784-785.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 791.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 794-795.





# Some Thoughts on the Significance of the Post-Exilic Period

*Ralph D. Winter*

From the time of David and Solomon, the Hebrews tended to associate their ethnic existence—their “peoplehood”—with the existence of lineages of kings. But after the definitive deportation of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon self-rule was never again to be a very long-lasting reality. In the absence of Kings the Jews began to focus on scripture which described and confirmed their roots, their covenant with the Living God. Furthermore, large bodies of Jews were to be found not only in Babylon (and Persia) but more and more in Grecian Egypt. The “Babylonian Talmud” is much more extensive than the Palestinian Talmud. And it is in Alexandria of Egypt that the great bridge translation of Hebrew scripture, the Septuagint was initiated.

Amazingly, even though the Jews did not have a king of their own during the four hundred years prior to Christ, except in the Hasmonean period, which rapidly went awry, the unifying backbone of their faith—considerably stiffened by its foundation in the coherent, historical account in the Bible—enabled them to wangle their way with their overlords whether Persian, Greek, or Roman, to the extent that they governed themselves and provided fairly obedient subjects to their overlords.

There was a great amount of shuffling back and forth between external domination from the North and South, that is between Syrian and Egyptian control over Judea (e.g., Selucid vs. Ptolemaic). However, such details

are almost irrelevant in the face of the simple fact that for three centuries before Christ both Egypt under the Ptolemies and Syria under the Selucids were Greek-speaking, highly Hellenistic governments.

Thus, from the time of Alexander’s campaign of conquest over Judea (331 BC) until the rise of Muhammad a thousand years later, Judea was exposed to virtually unending Greek and Latin influence.

Between the declining power of the Selucids and the rising power of Rome, the Maccabean revolt (against increasing assimilation to outside influences) provided the Jews with rulers of their own (the Hasmoneans), but this was not to last very long, even though, beginning with Aristobulus I they employed the word *King*. They reunited as a single political entity the whole of the earlier North and South Kingdoms, and temporarily even more, but they were unable to please both the extremely faithful and the secularized (Hellenized) elements—any more than has modern Israel.

When these native rulers fell to quarreling among themselves the Romans moved in and first propped up the Hasmonean dynasty as a subservient state, under John Hyrcanus II, and then sided twenty years later with Herod, a despised Idumean (Edomite), who, as a convert, tried very hard to be accepted, going so far as to build the magnificent “Herod’s Temple,” as well as many other imposing civil structures. Note how little regard the Jews had for converts!

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Written for this volume.

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In any case, the “patching over” of the Hebrew faith into the Greek language and culture had the double effect of releasing the influence of that faith into an enormous communication basin, and at the same time enabling that expanded faith to perpetuate itself through its new language and culture down through many centuries into modern times. There is no other example of a religion preserving a language and culture from ancient times so successfully. (According to Lamin Sanneh, the Yale professor, Christianity has more successfully preserved native cultures by honoring their languages—in Bible translation—than has any other religion.)

Thus, not only was this faith borne along by the Septuagint, that is by documents, but it carried with it a healthy respect for other ancient documents. Virtually all of the literature we have today from Roman and Greek times comes to us through the lengthy succession of monastic learning communities which prized the written word so highly. Only four manuscripts exist from the Roman period which were not copied by monastics.

But, as noted, this universalized religion is not only the explanation for our relatively spectacular knowledge of Greece and Rome, it explains the existence of a body of literature and knowledge about events far back in history which has no parallel in any other sector of the planet. That is, the vast bulk of ancient literature which has been preserved, the vast majority of all the knowledge which historians mull over as they sift information about these ancient times and places, comes from books which would not exist today had it not been for the monastic libraries and their durability throughout many turbulent centuries. Turbulence has always characterized the entire planet in general, but in this one portion of the globe the ancient literatures were uniquely prevented from man’s own self-destructive tendencies by a specific scholarly and religious tradition.

Back to the main point: the political instability and the inability of the Jews to form a coherent, long-lasting political state served again as a vital pressure toward their leaning on *their faith and their scriptures* rather than on a visible, earthly kingdom. If their faith was intended to be given away to other peoples and other languages, then a political power representing that faith officially would have been a drawback. The Jewish “fundamentalists” of Jesus day, despite their earnestness and godliness and even their missionary efforts (“traversing land and sea to make a single proselyte”), did not eventuate in any great insight into how

they might “free” the Gospel from their particular cultural tradition. Had they had a political state they could call their own it would have been even harder to give their faith away.

As it was, their social unity was damaged extensively by the existence of various attempts to absolutize the faith *culturally* and by attempts to make it a *civil power*. Jewish messianism was, according to Jesus, focused on power in this world rather than upon a Kingdom which was not of this world. Most Jews did not see how they could be “saved” without being politically rescued. This is probably what Jesus was talking about when He said, “Seek to save yourself and you will lose your life.”

But the very geography which God gave them as a springboard to the world made them into a doormat between the continents of Africa and Asia when they sought cultural and political durability. The see-saw of powers ruling over that tiny land bridge doomed all but wishful thinking about the achievement of a worldly power.

The many verses Russell quotes show how easily it was for the Jews to interpret God’s purposes in earthly, political terms. They explain how readily the crowds shouted Hosanna (“save now”), thinking that Jesus should proceed directly to the Roman barracks and throw Roman soldiers into the sea. It shows how readily modern readers misunderstand the nature of the triumph on that “day of triumphal entry.” It explains how readily activist Christians today confuse the physical for the spiritual, the social for the evangelistic, the ethnocentric for the cross-cultural.

God did have a plan for all the nations of the world, but it was not for a Jewish state to become a world ruler (requiring either an Alexander or a Hitler to force unity on all peoples). Then, what was it? Jewish messianism to this day, with its mirror image in strands of evangelicalism today, is a grave and great distraction from a globalized faith.

Let’s note the simple fact that even in Jesus’ day the “locus” of Judaic faith was no longer in their promised land. That land served them well. Though it was a bridge to the nations, when they considered it a fort of defense it became a doormat. Meanwhile both in Babylon and in Egypt there were far more godly Jews than in Palestine. By Jesus’ day, it had become almost meaningless what did or did not happen in the Temple in Jerusalem. As Jesus said, “The time will come when neither in this

mountain nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the father” (John 4:21).

While the Old Testament treats over 1,000 years, the first half of the New Testament focuses primarily on three years, and the rest of it treats a handful of additional years. We will be much distracted if we suppose that the details of the pushing and shoving of nations is the essence of the story. The Old Testament shows us how God looks at history. We can look at the Intertestamental period with the same perspective. We are not given Biblical treatment of either this period or any other in the next 2,000 years, except for the reality check of the pages of the New Testament for those brief years.

Virtually all literature in world history has been lost. The most detailed and reliable ancient information is in the Bible, and most of the rest is the result of the Christian tradition that has been the most successful in preserving information about the story of man. At this very moment, it is the great libraries of the Christian countries which outshine all other libraries past and present.

But one of the main points is the fact that the Christian tradition began in a liberation from political and cultural wrappings. Judaism and Islam continue to suffer in canonized culture. Christians base their faith on a Bible which is both Semitic and Greek—and Roman. The faith is not to be entangled or confused with any of those cultures, and indeed around the world today it is brilliantly contextualized with no loss of full dynamic. Our task is to retrace the durability of

that faith as it survived the tumult of the Intertestamental period, and to notice carefully how easily that transmission both went right and went wrong.

In successive lessons we will see right in the New Testament passages the tug of war between Semitic and Hellenistic clothing. This is not meant for us to choose between the two, although we will find that we are much more likely to be influenced by Hellenic thought than Semitic thought. We are to understand our faith to be reflected in both but to be tied to neither. This is easy to say but fascinatingly and even puzzlingly difficult to fathom. Almost all of the differing strands of the Christian faith, including Islam, are to a great extent basically variations on the axis between no immersion in Hellenic culture, e.g., continuing Judaism or differing forms of Marcionism, which rejects all that is in Jewish clothing.

The entire chapter of Romans 14 is Paul’s attempt to bond those who continue with a great deal of Jewish culture and those who are coming from a Hellenic background. He did not think that it was necessary for either of them to condemn the other. In most of his letters he is expounding the Hellenic way of Christian faith. In Romans 14 he is pleading with Hellenic believers to accept those who prefer Jewish cultural norms. In neither case is the faith itself to be confused with the cultural carrier vehicle without which it cannot survive. Like a crustacean, it must have a shell, but the life is not in the shell.



# The Gospels from a Global Perspective

*Ralph D. Winter*

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

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

How electrifying to try to see the Bible for what it really is. What is it? You may wonder, for example (before you really look at them closely), why we have four different Gospels. Why not have just one? Well, you could ask

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And John does! The Upper Room Discourses—my, what we would miss! In John, he is far enough away from Palestine at this point, apparently, so that he can

refer to the Jews as Jews. The other Gospels do not. Behind all this, we may have the thought that maybe the New Testament is unfair in its criticism of Jews. But is the Bible unfair? I mean, John comes right out in John 1:10, that the people—the Jews—did not understand the living God. When his Son came, he came to his own people, but his own people did not receive him. The fact that they did not receive him is not probably as important as that they did not know who he was. They were not close enough to God.

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

As you go into these Gospels, from now on til the rest of your life, realize how easy it is for the Jews to misunderstand, for the disciples to misunderstand, and for us to misunderstand—in every single case because of self-interest rather than God's interest. So take care! We are walking on holy ground.

## Reflections

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

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

little part of the picture, but not seeing the picture itself. We need to look at the larger picture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For example, Jesus never refers to himself as the *logos*. John picks this up because it is meaningful and arrests the attention of the Hellenistic world to use that phrase. This liberates us to do that in missions. It frees

us to use the vocabulary of the people, the similes, the metaphors, the proverbs, and so forth, in order to convey the essential meaning of what is being talked about. It is very significant!

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

The connection between love, and believing, and information that you already have, is manifestly demonstrated in this book in this verse. “He who keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and,” listen to this, “I will disclose myself to him.” This is very significant in the book of John, because again and again in John, in 6:69 and 10:38, he talks about *believing in order to know*. Now, we would think you have got to know in order to believe. That is also true. But the precious thing is that the very process of believing leads us into knowledge. Incidentally, John is the book that throws into parallel the words *believe* and *obey*. Look for the verse which says: “If you believe,” and as you go on, obeying is a synonym for the word believe in that case.

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

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



is not only revealing more that we can understand, but much more that we do not understand.

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

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

**Reflection #3:** *Although we only have abbreviated space to reflect on Jesus being mentioned outside the Bible, this is really very interesting.*

This article (*Document and explain*) is very powerful in explaining that no Christian could have ever concocted this material because it is not put in the right vocabulary or the right perspective. A much more powerful testimony is evident in this article by Josephus, even though it does not correspond precisely to what we know to be true. This writing refers to Jesus and refers to John the Baptist. Josephus is quite a politician sort of guy, who would write anything in order to please. Political correctness would be perfectly acceptable to him so we cannot believe everything he writes. But these begrudging references certainly tell the story.

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



# The Challenge of the Kingdom

*N.T. Wright*

**W**hat did Jesus mean when he said the Kingdom of God was at hand? Or to put it another way, what did the average Galilean villager hear when a young prophet strode into town and announced that Israel's God was now at last becoming King? The great majority of scholars down the years have agreed that the kingdom of God was central to Jesus' message; but there has been no agreement on what precisely that phrase and the cognate ideas that go with it actually meant. In this chapter, therefore, we must first outline the central core of meaning that the phrase would have for a first-century Jew and then explore Jesus' announcement from three different angles.

## Inside First-Century Judaism

To answer our question we have to make a journey as difficult for us in the contemporary Western world as that undertaken by the Wise Men as they went to Bethlehem. We have to think our way back into someone else's world, specifically, the world of the Old Testament as it was perceived and lived by first-century Jews. That is the world Jesus addressed, the world whose concerns he made his own. Until we know how Jesus' contemporaries were thinking, it will not just be difficult to understand what he meant by "the kingdom of God"; it will be totally impossible, as generations of well-meaning but misguided Christian readers have, alas, demonstrated.

At once I sense that some may say, with a measure of reluctance, "All right, I suppose we have to get into that first-century Jewish material; but the only point will be so that once we've seen how Jesus addressed his

own culture we can learn to address ours in the same way." There is a tiny grain of truth in that but a much larger hoop of misunderstanding. The most important truth lies much, much deeper. Before we can get to the application to our own day, we have to allow fully for the uniqueness of Jesus' situation and position. Jesus, after all, was not just an example of somebody getting it right. Jesus believed and acted upon two vital points, without which we will not even begin to understand what he was all about. These two points are foundational to everything I shall say from now on.

First, he believed that the creator God had purposed from the beginning to address and deal with the problems within his creation *through Israel*. Israel was not just to be an "example" of a nation under God; Israel was to be the means through which the world would be saved. Second, Jesus believed, as did many though not all of his contemporaries, that this vocation would be accomplished through Israel's history reaching a great moment of climax, in which Israel herself would be saved from her enemies and through which the creator God, the covenant God, would at last bring his love and justice, his mercy and truth, to bear upon the whole world, bringing renewal and healing to all creation. In technical language what I am talking about is *election* and *eschatology*: God's choice of Israel to be the means of saving the world; God's bringing of Israel's history to its moment of climax, through which justice and mercy would embrace not only Israel but the whole world.

Put these two beliefs into the first-century context and see what happens. The Jews of Jesus' day, as is well-known, were living under foreign rule and had been

for several centuries. The worst thing about that was not the high taxation, the alien laws, the brutality of oppression and so on, awful though that often was. The worst thing was that the foreigners were pagans. If Israel was truly God's people, why were the pagans ruling over her? If Israel was called to be God's true humanity surely these foreign nations were like the animals over which Adam and Eve were to rule. Why then were they turning into monsters and threatening to trample on God's defenseless chosen people? This state of affairs had existed ever since the Babylonians had come and destroyed Jerusalem in 597 B.C., carrying away the Judaeans captive into exile. Thus, though some of them had returned from *geographical* exile, most believed that the *theological* stale of exile was still continuing. They were living within a centuries-old drama, still waiting for the turn in the story that would bring them out on top at last.<sup>1</sup>

Nor were local politics any better. Zealous Jews had long regarded their own local rulers as compromisers, and the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day fell exactly into that category. The powerful Chief Priests were wealthy pseudo-aristocrats who worked the system and got what they could out of it. Herod Antipas (the Herod of the main body of the Gospels, as opposed to his father Herod the Great) was a puppet tyrant bent on wealth and self-aggrandizement. And the popular frustration with the overall rule of Rome and the local rule of the priests and Herod brought together what we must never separate if we are to be true to the biblical witness: religion and politics, questions of God and of the ordering of society. When they longed for the kingdom of God, they were not thinking about how to secure themselves a place in heaven after they died. The phrase 'kingdom of heaven,' which we find frequently in Matthew's Gospel where the others have "kingdom of God," does not refer to a place, called "heaven," where God's people will go after death. It refers to the rule of heaven, that is, of God, being brought to bear in the present world. Thy kingdom come, said Jesus, thy will be done, *on earth as in heaven*. Jesus' contemporaries knew that the creator God intended to bring justice and peace to his world here and now. The question was, how, when and through whom?

With a certain oversimplification we can trace easily enough the three options open to Jews in Jesus' day. If you go down the Jordan valley from Jericho to Masada, you can see evidence of all of them. First, the

quietist and ultimately dualist option, taken by the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran: separate yourself from the wicked world and wait for God to do whatever God is going to do. Second, the compromise option taken by Herod: build yourself fortresses and palaces, get along with your political bosses as well as you can, do as well out of it as you can and hope that God will validate it somehow. Third, the zealot option, that of the Sicarii who took over Herod's old palace/fortress of Masada during the Roman-Jewish war: say your prayers, sharpen your swords, make yourselves holy to fight a holy war, and God will give you a military victory that will also be the theological victory of good over evil, of God over the hordes of darkness, of the Son of Man over the monsters.

Only when we put Jesus into this context do we realize how striking, how dramatic, was his own vocation and agenda. He was neither a quietist nor a compromiser nor a zealot. Out of his deep awareness, in loving faith and prayer, of the one he called "Abba, Father," he went back to Israel's Scriptures and found there another kingdom-model, equally Jewish if not more so. And it is that model we are now to explore. The kingdom of God, he said, is at hand. In other words, God was now unveiling his age-old plan, bringing his sovereignty to bear on Israel and the world as he had always intended, bringing justice and mercy to Israel and the world. And he was doing so, apparently, through Jesus. What could this mean?

## God's Plan Unveiled

Throughout his brief public career Jesus spoke and acted as if God's plan of salvation and justice for Israel and the world was being unveiled through his own presence, his own work, his own fate. This idea of the plan being unveiled is, again, characteristically Jewish, and Jesus' contemporaries had developed a complex way of talking about it. They used imagery often lurid and spectacular, drawn from the Scriptures, to talk about things that were happening in the public world, the world of politics and society, and to give those happenings their theological meaning.

Thus, instead of saying "Babylon is going to fall, and this will be like a cosmic collapse," Isaiah said, "The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven."<sup>2</sup> The Jewish Bible is full of such language, which is often called

“apocalyptic,” and we would be quite wrong to imagine that it was all meant to be taken literally. It was a way, to repeat the point, of *describing* what we would call space-time events and *investing* them with their theological or cosmic *significance*. Jews of Jesus’ day did not, by and large, expect that the space-time universe was going to come to a stop. They did expect that God was going to act so dramatically within the space-time universe, as he had before at key moments like the Exodus, that the only appropriate language would be the language of a world taken apart and reborn.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus inherited this tradition and made it his own in one way in particular. He told stories whose many dimensions cracked open the worldview of his hearers and forced them to come to terms with God’s reality breaking in to their midst, doing what they had always longed for but doing it in ways that were so startling as to be hardly recognizable. The parables are Jesus’ own commentary on a crisis—the crisis faced by Israel, and more specifically, the crisis brought about by Jesus’ own presence and work.

Jesus was not primarily a “teacher” in the sense that we usually give that word. Jesus *did* things and then commented on them, explained them, challenged people to figure out what they meant. He acted practically and symbolically, not least through his remarkable works of healing—works that today all but the most extreme skeptics are forced to regard as in principle historical. In particular, he acted and spoke in such a way that people quickly came to regard him as a prophet. Though, as we shall see, Jesus saw himself as much more than a prophet, that was the role he adopted in his early public career, following on as he did from the prophetic work of John the Baptist. He intended to be perceived, and was indeed perceived, as a prophet announcing the kingdom of God.

But, like many of Israel’s prophets of old, in doing this he confronted other kingdom-dreams and kingdom-visions. If his way of bringing the kingdom was the right way, then Herod’s way was not, the Qumran way was not and the Zealot way was not. And the Pharisees, who in Jesus’ day were mostly inclined toward the Zealot end of the spectrum, were bound to regard him as a dangerous compromiser.<sup>4</sup> We shall see the results of this in the next chapter. Let me, then, unfold briefly the main thrusts of Jesus’ kingdom-message under three headings: the end of exile, the call of a renewed people, and the warning of disaster and vindication to come.

## The End of Exile

Jesus embarked on a public career of kingdom-initiation. His movement began with John’s baptism, which must have been interpreted as a coded dramatization of the exodus, hinting strongly that the new exodus, the return from exile, was about to take place. But Jesus soon became better known for healing than for baptizing. And it was his remarkable healings, almost certainly, that won him a hearing. He was not a teacher who also healed; he was a prophet of the kingdom, first enacting and then explaining that kingdom. I take the healings as read, then, and move on at once to the explanations.

Jesus’ parables were not simply shrewd stories about human life and motivation. Nor were they simply childish illustrations, earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Again and again they are rooted in the Jewish Scriptures, in the Jewish narratives that were told and retold officially and unofficially. We could look at these at great length, but there’s only space here to glance at two of the best known and to suggest dimensions to them that may be unfamiliar.

I begin with the parable of the sower in Mark 4:1-20 and its parallels.<sup>5</sup> This parable is not simply a wry comment on the way in which many hear the gospel message and fail to respond to it appropriately. Nor is it merely a homely illustration taken from the farming practices of Galilee. It is a typically Jewish story about the way in which the kingdom of God was coming. It has two roots in particular, which help to explain what Jesus was about.

First, it is rooted in the prophetic language of return from exile. Jeremiah and other prophets spoke of God’s *sowing* his people again in their own land. The Psalms, at the very point where they are both celebrating the return from exile and praying for it to be completed, sang of those who sowed in tears reaping with shouts of joy. But above all the book of Isaiah used the image of sowing and reaping as a controlling metaphor for the great work of new creation that God would accomplish after the exile. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand for ever.” “As the rain and snow water the earth, so shall my word be. It shall not return to me empty but it will accomplish my purpose.” New plants, new shrubs, will spring up before you as you return from exile.<sup>6</sup> All this goes back to the story of Isaiah’s call in chapter 6, where the prophet sees Israel like a tree being cut down in

judgment, and then the stump being burnt; but the holy seed is the stump, and from that stump there shall come forth new shoots.<sup>7</sup>

It is that last passage—Isaiah 6:9-10—that Jesus quotes in Matthew 13:14-15, Mark 4:12 and Luke 8:10 by way of explanation of the parable of the Sower.<sup>8</sup> The parable is about what God was doing in Jesus' own ministry. God was not simply reinforcing Israel as she stood. He was not underwriting her national ambitions, her ethnic pride. He was doing what the prophets always warned: he was judging Israel for her idolatry and was simultaneously calling into being a new people, a renewed Israel, a returned-from-exile people of God.

The second Old Testament root of the parable of the sower is the tradition of apocalyptic storytelling we find in, for instance, the book of Daniel. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a great statue composed of four different metals, with gold at the top and a mixture of iron and clay at the bottom. The statue is demolished, the feet of clay being crushed by a stone, cut out of a mountain, which in turn becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth. So too, in Daniel 7 the four beasts make war on the human figure, one like a son of man, until God takes his seat and the son of man is exalted over the beasts. Even so, says Jesus, the story of God's people is being encapsulated, recapitulated, in his own work. Some seed falls on the path; some on the rock; some among thorns. But some seed falls on good soil and bears fruit, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. The kingdom of God, the return from exile, the great climax of Israel's history, is here, Jesus is saying, though it does not look like you thought it would. The parable itself is a parable about parables and their effect: this is the only way that the spectacular truth can be told, and it is bound to have the effect that some will look and look and never see, while others find the mystery suddenly unveiled, and they see what God is doing.

The second parable that opens a dramatic window on the kingdom of God is the one we call the Prodigal Son, in Luke 15.<sup>9</sup> Among the dozens of things people regularly and often rightly say about this parable, one thing is missed by virtually everybody, though I submit that it would be blindingly obvious to most first-century Jewish listeners. A story about a scoundrel young son who goes off into a far pagan country and is then astonishingly welcomed back home is—of course!—the story of exile and restoration. It was the story Jesus'

contemporaries wanted to hear. And Jesus told the story to make the point that *the return from exile was happening in and through his own work*. The parable was not a general illustration of the timeless truth of God's forgiveness for the sinner, though of course it can be translated into that. It was a sharp-edged, context-specific message about what was happening in Jesus' ministry. More specifically, it was about what was happening through Jesus' welcome of outcasts, his eating with sinners.

This story too, has a dark side to it. The older brother in the story represents those who are opposed to the return from exile as it is actually happening: in this case, the Pharisees and lawyers who see what Jesus is doing and think it scandalous. Jesus' claim is that in and through his own ministry the long-awaited return is actually happening, even though it does not look like what people imagined. The return is happening under the noses of the self-appointed guardians of Israel's ancestral traditions, and they remain blind to it because it doesn't conform to their expectations.

In these two parables and in dozens of other ways Jesus was announcing, cryptically, that the long-awaited moment had arrived. This was the good news, the *euangelion*. We should not be surprised that Jesus in announcing it kept on the move, going from village to village and, so far as we can tell, staying away from Sepphoris and Tiberias, the two largest cities in Galilee. He was not so much like a wandering preacher preaching sermons, or a wandering philosopher offering maxims, as like a politician gathering support for a new and highly risky movement. That is why he chose to explain his actions in the quotation from Isaiah: some must look and look and never see, otherwise the secret police will be alerted. Again, we should not imagine that politics here could be split off from theology. Jesus was doing what he was doing in the belief that in this way Israel's God was indeed becoming king.

Throughout this work Jesus was seeking to gather support for his kingdom-movement. He was calling out a renewed people. This is the second aspect of the kingdom-announcement that we must study.

## The Call of the Renewed People

When Jesus announced the kingdom, the stories he told functioned like dramatic plays in search of actors. His hearers were invited to audition for parts in the king-

dom. They had been eager for God's drama to be staged and were waiting to find out what they would have to do when he did so. Now they were to discover. They were to become kingdom-people themselves. Jesus, following John the Baptist, was calling into being what he believed would be the true, renewed people of God.

Jesus' opening challenge as reported in the Gospels was that people should "repent and believe." This is a classic example, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, of a phrase whose meaning has changed over the years. If I were to go out on the street in my local town and proclaim that people should "repent and believe," what they would hear would be a summons to give up their private sins (one suspects that in our culture sexual misbehavior and alcohol or drug abuse would come quickly to mind) and to "get religion" in some shape or form—either experiencing a new inner sense of God's presence, or believing a new body of dogma, or joining the church or some sub-branch of it. But that is by no means exactly what the phrase "repent and believe" meant in first-century Galilee.

How are we to unlearn our meanings for such a phrase and to hear it through first-century ears? It helps if we can find another author using it at around the same place and time as Jesus. Consider, for example, the Jewish aristocrat and historian Josephus, who was born a few years after Jesus' crucifixion and who was sent in A.D. 66 as a young army commander to sort out some rebel movements in Galilee. His task, as he describes it in his autobiography,<sup>10</sup> was to persuade the hot-headed Galileans to stop their mad rush into revolt against Rome and to trust him and the other Jerusalem aristocrats to work out a better *modus vivendi*. So when he confronted the rebel leader, he says that he told him to give up his own agenda and to trust him, Josephus, instead. And the word he uses are remarkably familiar to readers of the Gospels: he told the brigand leader to "repent and believe in me," *metanoesein kai pistos emoi genesesthai*.

This does not, of course, mean that Josephus was challenging the brigand leader (who, confusingly, was called "Jesus") to give up sinning and have a religious conversion experience. It has a far more specific and indeed political meaning. I suggest that when we examine Jesus of Nazareth forty years earlier going around Galilee telling people to repent and believe in him or in the gospel, we dare not screen out these meanings. Even if we end up suggesting that Jesus meant more than Josephus did—that there were

indeed religious and theological dimensions to his invitation—we cannot suppose that he meant less. He was telling his hearers to give up their agendas and to trust him for his way of being Israel, his way of bringing the kingdom, his kingdom agenda. In particular, he was urging them, as Josephus had, to abandon their crazy dreams of nationalist revolution. But whereas Josephus was opposed to armed revolution because he was an aristocrat with a nest to feather, Jesus was opposed to it because he saw it as, paradoxically, a way of being deeply disloyal to Israel's God and to his purpose for Israel to be the light of the world. And whereas Josephus was offering as a counter-agenda a way that they must have seen as compromise, a shaky political solution cobbled together with sticky tape, Jesus was offering as a counter-agenda an utterly risky way of being Israel, the way of turning the other cheek and going the second mile, the way of losing your life to gain it. This was the kingdom-invitation he was issuing. This was the play for which he was holding auditions.

Along with this radical invitation went a radical welcome. Wherever Jesus went, there seemed to be a celebration; the tradition of festive meals at which Jesus welcomed all and sundry is one of the most securely established features of almost all recent scholarly portraits. And the reason why some of Jesus' contemporaries found this so offensive is not far to seek (though not always understood). It was not just that he as an individual was associating with disreputable people; that would not have been a great offense. It was because he was doing so *as a prophet of the kingdom* and was indeed making these meals and their free-for-all welcome a central feature of his program. The meals spoke powerfully about Jesus' vision of the kingdom; what they said was subversive of other kingdom-agendas. Jesus' welcome symbolized God's radical acceptance and forgiveness; whereas his contemporaries would have seen forgiveness and a God-given new start in terms of the Temple and its cult, Jesus was offering it on his own authority and without requiring any official interaction with Jerusalem. (The exception proves the rule: when Jesus healed a leper and told him to go to the priest and make the required offering, the point was of course that an ex-leper needed the official bill of health in order to be readmitted to his community.)<sup>11</sup>

Those who heeded Jesus' call to audition for the kingdom-play that God was staging through him found themselves facing a challenge. Christians from quite

early in the church's life have allowed themselves to see this challenge as a new rule book, as though his intention was simply to offer a new code of morality. This has then become problematic within the Reformation tradition in particular, where people have been sensitive about the danger of putting one's human "good works" logically prior to the faith by which one is justified. But that was not the point. Jesus' contemporaries already had a standard of morality to rival any and to outstrip most. They never supposed—and nor did Jesus—that their behavior was what commended them to God; for them—and for Jesus—behavior was what ought to follow from God's initiative and covenant. Such anxious theological discussions miss the real issue. The key thing was that the inbreaking kingdom Jesus was announcing created a new world, a new context, and he was challenging his hearers to become the new people that this new context demanded, the citizens of this new world. He was offering a challenge to his contemporaries to a way of life, a way of forgiveness and prayer, a way of jubilee, which they could practice in their own villages, right where they were.

This is the context, I suggest, within which we should understand what we call the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), though we do not have the space to look at it in detail here. The Sermon (whether or not it was delivered all at once by Jesus, it certainly represents substantially the challenge he offered to his contemporaries) is not, first and foremost, a private message for individuals to find salvation in Jesus, though of course it includes that in its wider reaches. Nor is it simply a great moral code (though it does of course contain some shining examples of great moral precepts). It makes the sense it does because it depends, all through, on Jesus' kingdom-announcement and on the fact that Jesus himself was, through this announcement, summoning people to follow him in the new way of life, the kingdom-way.

The Sermon is a challenge, in particular, to find a way of being Israel other than the normal revolutionary way. "Do not resist evil"; "turn the other cheek"; "go the second mile"; these are not invitations to be a doormat for Jesus but constitute a warning not to get involved in the ever-present resistance movement. Instead, Jesus' hearers are to discover the true vocation of Israel—to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. The city set on a hill that cannot be hidden is obviously Jerusalem, designed to be the place where the one true God

will reveal himself for all humankind. But at the heart of Jerusalem is the Temple, the house built on the rock. The sermon ends with a coded but very sharp warning. The real new Temple, the real house-on-the-rock, will consist of the community that builds its life upon Jesus' words. All other attempts to create a new Israel, a new Temple (remember that Herod's Temple was still being completed in Jesus' lifetime), a pure or revolutionary community, would be like building a house on the sand. When the wind and storms came, it would fall with a great crash, Jesus was calling his hearers to take part in God's new drama, the great play in which Israel would at last fulfill her ancient vocation to be the light of the world. This was to be the way of true love and justice through which Israel's God would be revealed to the watching world.

Many of Jesus' hearers could not follow him on his travels, but there were several whom he summoned to do just that. As well as the close circle of the twelve—itsself, of course, a deeply symbolic number, clearly indicating Jesus' intention to reconstitute Israel around himself—there were many to whom he issued a challenge to give up all and come with him. Some he commissioned to share in the work of announcing the kingdom, including the actions, the healings and the table-fellowship, which as we shall see later, turned the announcement into symbolic praxis. To take up the cross and follow Jesus meant embracing Jesus' utterly risky vocation—to be the light of the world in a way the revolutionaries had never dreamed of. It was a call to follow Jesus into political danger and likely death, in the faith that by this means Israel's God would bring Israel through her present tribulations and out into the new day that would dawn.

If, therefore, Jesus was embodying and announcing and summoning others to join in with the reconstitution of the people of God and their new direction at the great turning-point of history, the world of thought within which he lived indicated that he would also have expected that this would result in a great turnaround in the history and life of the non-Jewish nations as well. When Israel's God finally does for Israel that which he has promised, then, in much Jewish thought, the effects will ripple out to reach the whole world. The coming King, in many Old Testament texts (e.g., Is 42), would bring God's justice not merely to Israel but to the whole world. Many, said Jesus, will come from east and west and sit down with the patriarchs in the



kingdom of God. Jesus does not appear to have said much else on this subject. (This is in itself an interesting sign that, despite much current scholarship, the writers of the Gospels did not feel free to invent all kinds of new sayings to suit their own setting and place them on Jesus' lips; the church was heavily involved in the mission to the Gentiles and its attendant problems, but we would hardly guess this from the Gospels.) He seems to have been conscious of a vocation to focus his own work quite sharply on Israel; once his decisive work was done, then the kingdom-invitation would go out much wider, but the time was not yet.<sup>12</sup>

What, then, did Jesus think was going to happen? How would his kingdom-announcement reach its decisive and climactic moment?

## Disaster and Vindication

I have argued thus far that Jesus' kingdom-announcement consisted of his telling and reenacting the story his contemporaries were longing to hear but giving it a radical new twist. The kingdom was coming, was coming indeed in and through his own ministry; but it was not going to look like what they had expected. In the final section of this chapter I want to highlight the conclusion of the story as Jesus was telling it.

He and his contemporaries were living within a controlling story, a great scriptural narrative through which the puzzles of their own times could be discerned (though how this should be done and what might be the results of doing so were of course fiercely contested). The controlling story was often told in terms of the new exodus: when the Egypts of the day, not least their Pharaohs, vaunted themselves against God's people, God would deliver Israel by mighty acts within history and bring his people through their great trials to vindication at last. Sometimes this story was told in apocalyptic terms: the Syrian crisis of the early second century B.C. precipitated one such retelling, with the megalomaniac dictator Antiochus Epiphanes portraying Pharaoh and (at least in some tellings) the Maccabean resistance fighters playing the gallant Israelites carving out a way for the slaves to be freed. The Syrians were the monsters; the Jews were the human beings, threatened, embattled, but to be vindicated. It was not difficult for Jesus' contemporaries to reapply such stories and such imagery to their own day. The stories that formerly featured Egypt, Babylon and Syria now focused on Rome.

Jesus stood firmly against the retelling of the story that had become customary in his day. God's purpose would not after all be to vindicate Israel as a nation against the pagan hordes, winning the theological battle by military force. On the contrary, Jesus announced, increasingly clearly, that God's judgment would fall not on the surrounding nations but on the Israel that had failed to be the light of the world. Who then would be vindicated in the great coming debacle? Back comes the answer with increasing force and clarity: Jesus himself and his followers. They were now the true, reconstituted Israel. They would suffer and suffer horribly, but God would vindicate them.

A good deal of the material in the Synoptic Gospels is taken up with warnings about a great coming judgment. Christians from very early times have applied this material to the question of what happens both to human beings after their death and to the world as a whole at the great final judgment that is still awaited at the end of history. When we read such passages in their first-century context, however, a rather different picture emerges. The warnings that Jesus issued were, like those of the great prophets before him, warnings of coming judgments of YHWH *within history*; like Jeremiah he prophesied the fall of Jerusalem itself. Jeremiah saw Babylon as the agent of God in punishing his wayward people; Jesus seems to have cast Rome in the same role. And the judgment would come, not as an arbitrary "punishment" by God for Israel's failure to obey some general moral standards but as the inevitable result (not that its inevitability meant that God was not involved in it) of Israel's choosing the way of violence, the way of resistance, rather than following in the way Jesus himself had grasped and articulated in his own life and message. If they would not follow the way of peace, they would reap the consequences.

Some obvious examples: In Luke 13 Jesus' followers tell him about some Galileans whom Pilate had had killed in the sanctuary itself. Jesus' response is interesting: Do you suppose those Galileans were worse sinners than all the others? No, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or what about the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed? Were they worse sinners than all the others in the Jerusalem area? No, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. This is not a warning about frying in hell after death. This is the warning that if Israel refuses to repent of her present flight into national rebellion against Rome, Roman

swords in the Temple and falling masonry throughout Jerusalem will become the means of judgment.

The warnings reach their height as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey and bursts into tears (Lk 19:41-44). “If only you had known, even now,” he sobbed, “the things that make for peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes! For the days will come when your enemies will raise up a bank against you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you into pieces, you and your little ones, and leave not one stone upon another, because you did not know the day of your visitation.” Once again, this was not a warning about the judgment that faced individuals after their death, nor even, in the first instance, the judgment that, in most Christian tradition, awaits the whole world at the very end. It was the solemn and tragic warning about the fate that Jerusalem was courting for itself by refusing the way of peace that Jesus had held out. These warnings became very specific. Jesus seems to have regarded himself as the last prophet in the great sequence; part of his message was precisely that there would not be another chance. The generation that refused to heed him would be the generation upon whom the judgment would fall.

These warnings cluster together within the so-called Little Apocalypse of Mark 13 and its parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. The whole chapter is to be read, I suggest, as a prediction not of the end of the world but of the fall of Jerusalem. The critical thing, here and elsewhere, is to understand how apocalyptic language works. As I said before, the language of the sun and the moon being darkened, and so forth, is regularly used in Scripture to *denote* major political or social upheavals—the rise and fall of empires, as we say—and to *connote* by the use of this language the cosmic or theological significance that they ascribe to these events.

The language in Mark 13, then, about the Son of Man coming on the clouds should not be taken with wooden literalism—as, of course, generations both of critical scholars and uncritical believers have taken it. The language here is taken from Daniel 7, where the events referred to are the defeat and collapse of the great empires that have opposed the people of God and the vindication of the true people of God, the saints of the most high. The phrase about “the son of man coming on the clouds” would not be read, by a first-century Jew poring over Daniel, as referring to a human being “coming” downwards toward the earth

riding on an actual cloud. It would be seen as predicting great events in and through which God would be vindicating his true people after their suffering. They would “come,” not to earth but to God.

Jesus was thereby using some standard themes within second-Temple Jewish expectation in a radically new way. He was taking material about the destruction of Babylon, or Syria, or whomever, and was applying it to Jerusalem. And he was redirecting onto himself and his followers the prophetic predictions of vindication.

It is sometimes suggested that views of this sort are in some way anti-Jewish. This misses the whole point. One of the noblest and most deep-rooted traditions in Judaism is that of *critique from within*. The Pharisees were deeply critical of most of their Jewish contemporaries. The Essenes regarded all Jews except themselves as heading for judgment; they had transferred to themselves all the promises of vindication and salvation, while they heaped anathemas on everyone else, not least the Pharisees. That did not make the Pharisees, or the Essenes, anti-Jewish. The other side of the coin of Jesus’ free and open welcome to all and sundry was the warning that those who did not follow in the way he was leading were, by that very refusal, indicating their commitment to the way of being Jewish that involved confrontation with pagan Rome and so puffing down on their own heads the great historical devastation that would result. But the fall of Jerusalem, when it came, would indicate clearly enough that Jesus’ way had been right. This would not be the only vindication for Jesus and his kingdom-announcement, but it was a central and essential part of his message. It was a characteristic, if radical, position for a first-century Jew to take.

## Conclusion

We may now sum up what we have seen so far about Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom. He told the story of the kingdom in such a way as to indicate that Israel’s long exile was finally coming to its close. But this was not simply to be good news for all Jews, no matter what their own attitudes to his agenda might be. His retelling of the story was deeply subversive, with sharp polemic reserved for alternative tellings of Israel’s story. Jesus was claiming to be speaking for Israel’s true ancestral traditions, denouncing what he saw as deviation and corruption at the very heart of Israel’s present life.

This picture, I believe, makes very good sense historically. It locates Jesus thoroughly credibly within the world of first-century Judaism. His critique of his contemporaries was a critique from within; his summons was not to abandon Judaism and try something else but to become the true, returned-from-exile people of the one true God. His aim was to be the means of God's reconstitution of Israel. He would challenge and deal with the evil that had infected Israel herself. He would be the means of Israel's God returning to Zion. He was, in short, announcing the kingdom of God—not the simple revolutionary message of the hard-liners but the doubly revolutionary message of a kingdom that would overturn all other agendas, including the revolutionary one. As we shall see in chapter four, he was thereby claiming both the role of Messiah and the vocation of redemptive suffering. As we shall see in chapter five, he was claiming that this was the vocation of Israel's God himself.

It may seem a huge step from the historical Jesus of the first century to our own vocation and tasks, whether professional, practical, academic or whatever. Let me conclude the present chapter by pointing forward to the two ways, about which I shall say more in the final two chapters, through which Christians today might make all this their own.

First, all that we are and do as Christians is based upon the one-off unique achievement of Jesus. It is because he inaugurated the kingdom that we can live the kingdom. It is because he brought the story of God and Israel, and hence of God and the cosmos, to its designed climax that we can now implement that work today. And we will best develop that Christian vocation if we understand the foundation upon which we are building. If we are to follow Jesus Christ we need to know more about the Jesus Christ we are following.

Second, the foundation serves as the model for the building as a whole. What Jesus was to Israel, the church must now be for the world. Everything we discover about what Jesus did and said within the Judaism of his day must be thought through in terms of what it

would look like for the church to do and be this for the world. If we are to shape our world, and perhaps even to implement the redemption of our world, this is how it is to be done.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The clearest example of this belief is Daniel 9:2, 24, where it is stated that instead of the exile lasting for seventy years, as Jeremiah had prophesied, it would actually last for "seventy weeks of years," that is, 490 years. The same belief, in the continuation of a theological state of affairs that can fairly be described through the metaphor of "ongoing exile," is witnessed in literally dozens of places in second-temple Judaism. See now the essay by Craig A. Evans "Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel," in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's "Jesus and the Victory of God,"* ed. Carey C. Newman (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pp. 67-90; and cf. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), pp. 268-72; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 1996), pp. xvii-xviii, 126-29 and frequently elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Is 13:10.

<sup>3</sup> On this whole topic see especially chapter ten of Wright, *New Testament*; and at a more popular level chapter two of N. T. Wright, *The Millennium Myth* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox; London:SPCK, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> On the Pharisees see especially Wright, *New Testament*, pp. 181-203.

<sup>5</sup> See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 230-39.

<sup>6</sup> Is 40:8; 55:10-11,13.

<sup>7</sup> Is 6:9-13; cf. Is 10:33-11:1.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jn 12:40; Acts 28:26-27.

<sup>9</sup> See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 125-31.

<sup>10</sup> Josephus *Life* 110.

<sup>11</sup> Mk 1:44.

<sup>12</sup> See Mt 10:6; 23; 15:24, alongside 8:11-12. This perspective seems to have been acknowledged and respewed in the early church; see, e.g., Rom 15:8-9.



# The Growth of the Church in Judea and Samaria: Acts 3–12

*Ralph D. Winter*

**W**e have been working through the Gospels. Now we are plunging off the end of the Gospels to beyond the Resurrection, and the book of Acts is our guide for a while. Specifically, we are moving out of Jerusalem into the rest of the world. In a certain sense, you could say this is the most momentous moment for all history. Obviously there would be other candidates for that distinction like the cross of Christ and all kinds of other important events. But in terms of God's plans to reconquer this planet, certainly this period is significant. The decisive move of the church in Jerusalem into the rest of the world is taking place in fulfillment of Acts 1:8, which states, "You shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." That kind of outline for the book of Acts, of course, is very basic. But this move beyond Jerusalem initiates a decisive change in all of world history.

We do not want to over-emphasize the changing of plans. At the same time, we must recognize by any comparison that in the 2,000 year period between 2000 BC and the birth of Christ, and the period of 2000 years beyond, that there is an absolute, fantastic difference. The difference begins right here in Acts. There is a difference, but the difference is not total. It was Abraham, 2,000 years before, who was pushed into Egypt in God's providence. The word of God, the power of God, the Gospel of God (Gospel is what Paul talks about in Galatians 3 as having been preached to Abraham) begins to move out of Palestine into Egypt, a really major regional power.

Of course, later on many other activities we have already studied indicate that God is concerned, he is interested, and he is working. He is accomplishing the pushing out

of the witness of the power of his Spirit into the darkened peoples of the world long before this. What is so unique about this? Paul sums it up later on in Romans 11 when he talks about the natural branches being cut off and artificial branches being grafted in. That never took place before. He assures the reader that does not mean that the natural vine will never bear fruit of itself. He talks about the time of the Gentiles as being fulfilled. It is not as if Israel is cut off forever, but there is a distinct change that can be observed.

Again, a qualification may be helpful as the change was not necessarily very obvious. The twelve disciples themselves did not seem to be fantastic missionaries, at least within the pages of the book of Acts. Peter is a very reluctant missionary. The cultural obstacles immediately loom very, very large. His ethnocentrism would lead him to believe that you cannot be acceptable to God if you eat the wrong kind of food. In any event, you have a distinct change of mood and pace. This is a momentous moment!

If you consider Walter Russell's lesson, "The Growth of the Church in Judea and Samaria" (chapter 14 in *Intertestamental and New Testament Periods from a Mis-siological Perspective*), I am not real excited about that title if I can be very technical for a moment. The key phenomenon here is the bursting out of Jerusalem into larger spaces and that is not called growth. In a way, the church did grow, take root and grow in the rest of Judea and in Samaria. But the central motif is that of moving out, of *expansion*.

Let us understand that this period is not just simply the growth of something that was there already. This is a brand new movement. Peter's experience is decisive.

In Chapter 15 of Acts, Peter refers to the fact that in every city, Moses is already being preached. What is new then about the moving out of Jerusalem? The new dimension is in this case highlighted by Peter's experience—the sheet let down from heaven (Acts 10:1-48). “Oh, no, Lord, I couldn't do that!” The missionaries that had gone before Peter were extending not just the Gospel. There was an element of the Gospel in which the Gentiles were very interested. That is why they crowded in the synagogues in the back rows and were treated as God-fearers and devout persons.

The fact is that no one ever clearly understood that the salvation of the Living God is not a matter of *meat* or *not meat*, of eating this or not eating that. It is not the cultural tradition. All of us fall prey to our own religious ethnocentrism again and again if we assume that the way we do things, the way we say things, has got to be what new believers are to do. The shock we have introduced here is that even going beyond Judea into Samaria, where they had a somewhat similar cultural tradition even though distinct in many ways, there was a huge obstacle of communication. Peter had a crisis of missionary strategy, you might say. Instead of traversing land and sea to make a single proselyte, they were now going to make not proselytes, but *believers*.

In our era we talk very loosely about making converts. We really ought not to use that word. What we mean to say is just fine. The only catch is that in general English the word *convert* means the wrong thing. It means exactly what Peter expected, rather than what he was forced to accept. The word *convert* implies a conversion externally as well as internally perhaps. But that external dimension is decisively lifted in this section of Scripture, and even more so when we get into the next section.

Now I have to argue with the English language. In English it can be so glib, the reference to the Gentiles and to this man, Luke, for example, who was a Gentile. The English word is clear. We know what that phrase means: “Luke was a Gentile.” He's the only Gentile who wrote that much in the New Testament. In fact, he wrote more than anybody else in the New Testament! This in itself is an arresting fact—that God would employ a Gentile for the biggest single section of the New Testament. How about that? But in any case, the very phrase, “Luke was a Gentile” already throws us off. I want you to think about this. The word *Gentile* is usually the translation of the word *ethnos*,

or in the plural *ethné*. In our mentality as American individualists, we can easily conceive of the Germans instead of the German nation, or the Jews instead of the nation of Jews. How very interesting that when the New Testament uses the term the *ethnos* of the Jews, which you find in Acts 10:10, the translators can no longer translate that “Gentile.” You can't speak of “the Gentile of the Jews.” But when you say the word *ethnos*, you're always referring to a *group*. You're never referring to a person.

You can check this out both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament. But in the English language, the word *Gentile* in the singular rarely if ever refers to a group. You could say in English, by stretching things a little, there was a *Gentile group*, but you almost have to add the word *group* for it to have the same meaning as the word *ethnos*. Here you have the peculiar situation. American individualism dives into the New Testament and translates the words *ethnos/ethné* faithfully as *Gentile/Gentiles*. But our culture forces the word to mean what the words *ethnos* and *ethné* do not mean. At key points where it just is not possible to think in terms of individuals or an individual, then the translators shift over to what they should have chosen in the first place, namely *nation*. It would be much better, when you see the word *Gentile* in the singular, to read *nation*, and in the plural, read *nations*. That is not always the case, but almost always.

The word *spirit* in English, coming from *pneuma* in Greek, is another one of these words that gets hijacked, in a sense. We practically never use the word *spirit*. If a window broke out in a tornado and the wind burst in through the classroom, we wouldn't say, “Oh! There's a spirit moving here.” We reserve the English word *spirit* for something that has distinctly to do with the life of a person, or an inner reality, or a theological concept. When Jesus said, “the wind bloweth where it wills and you don't know where it comes from or where it's going,” he used the word *spirit* (John 3:8). This same word can no longer be translated as *spirit* elsewhere because the word never means *wind* in English. But there is absolutely no distinction in the Greek between that word, here and elsewhere. You can verify this for yourself both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament.

Of course, there is so much in this section that cannot be dealt with in a limited time frame. Sit back and enjoy the phenomenal significance of this first moment in all of history, when God is really getting the move-

ment “to the ends of the earth” off the dime, on to a new plane.

## Reflections

We have noticed during the ministry of Christ with his disciples, that the disciples lagged considerably in their grasp of what Jesus was intending. Probably the most regrettable series of episodes has to do with their denial, or refusal, with regard to his death. They could not accept it. In Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34, where this announcement of his death comes up, the disciples in each case do not want to hear this kind of thing. Peter takes him aside on one of those occasions and says, “You’ve got to cut this out! You’re really breaking down the morale of our guys here. You’ve got to think more clearly when you say stupid things like that.”

In the third occurrence (10:34), Jesus introduced for the first time the word torture. They knew what that meant. Most of us do not know what that means. That should have shocked them to the core. But in this third incident, James and John were somewhat flippantly saying, “Okay, are you through with your little paragraph, Jesus? We’ve got something important.” They had their little slip of paper they wanted him to sign to clarify the leadership structure. They had been reading Peter. It is important to have clear lines of leadership. They were on the right track. It’s probably the most phenomenal *non sequitur* in all the world’s literature. At the termination of his much more detailed account of what was up ahead of him, the disciples say, “Jesus, we’ve got to talk to you about something.” They were just waiting for him to get through with this nonsense or this irrelevancy. Of course, Jesus says, “Do you know what you are asking?” He is saying, “Go ahead and sign the little slip of paper. Get this thing straightened out.”

By the first chapter of Acts, they knew that Jesus got very upset when they talked about who is the most powerful and when are they going to get power. When are they going to *get, get, get?* They knew that there was something very *verboten* about that. They had a new tack. They got out their little diary books. They said, “Now, Jesus, we’re not really interested in great things for ourselves. We just want to make sure we have the schedule right. When is it that *you are* going to come into your power, come into your kingdom?” They were talking about him, not them. They thought that they would ride into power with him. Jesus saw right through them.

The verse that for most of my life has always been a wonderful promise, “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you,” all of a sudden is seen in a different light. It seems as if Jesus is saying, “Okay, if it’s power you want, these are the terms.” They would have said, “Oh! We didn’t say anything about power. Hey! No, no, no! We’re just trying to get our schedules straight.” But Jesus goes on, “Yes! You will receive power when the Spirit of God takes over your life, and you are on your way to the ends of the earth.” I think that is not so much a promise as a put-down. A direct contradiction of their own interests and motivation occurs here. This, of course, is still prior to the coming of the Spirit in the Upper Room. Some pretty significant aspects are happening here.

In considering the meaning of these Greek words, I think we have to realize different cultures look at things very differently. Although the American individualization process may have some merit, our culture does not even allow us to talk in these terms. The American translators go astray again and again. For example, in the Pauline Epistles where Paul says, “You,” he means plural. He talks to the group. The promises of God, the presence, the power of the Holy Spirit, are almost always directed to a fellowship: “where two or three are gathered together in my name” (Matthew 18:20). But the American translators translate those verses as if to say, “you, you personally.” As you read along in the New Testament, it is speaking to *you*. “Oh, that’s great! I’ll make it personal.” But it does not work when there is just one person. I am only saying that the New Testament is gravely distorted on this very subject of whether we talk about a group or an individual. The key point here is not in regards to these two words. The big point is the drastic difference between cultures.

**Reflection #2:** Acts 12 is one of the great, great passages in my whole life. The besetting sin of the disciples was not that they were immoral, or even goof-offs. Their problem was they could not believe. They could not follow. They did not have the ideas, or the goals or purposes. They could not really believe as Jesus wanted. He spoke to the slow of heart to believe.

There is no more grave indictment of anyone than “slow of heart to believe” (Luke 24:25). In my opinion, the most graphic illustration of that is where Peter is in prison. He gets out; then he is in prison again. The Lord delivers him. He ends up in prison a third time. Believers are praying for him. (Naturally, they want

to be faithful in their religious duties.) He comes out of prison a third time—not the first time, the third time—and he is knocking at the gate. The little girl, she can believe. She comes to the prayer room, and they say, “Will you shush up!” I mean, it is just hilarious here! They tell this girl, “You’re crazy!”

Now, when believing that God can do great things becomes crazy, this is a desperate situation. This is beyond Pentecost. This is beyond the giving of the Holy Spirit. Those people presumably were filled with the Holy Spirit, but they were still slow to believe.

**Reflection #3:** Another opportunity for reflection pertains to the time-table of expansion of the kingdom of God. We often remark that the whole Bible could be called “The Reconquest,” or “The Story of the Kingdom.” It is the story of God’s recovering a darkened world, like C. S. Lewis put in his book *Out of the Silent Planet*. A planet was out of contact with the Living God. All across the centuries, if you look closely in the Old Testament, you see God’s insistent, relentless love for all peoples. The rather spectacular occurrence of Gentiles in the genealogies is one example—a very discordant phenomenon for those who would be pure-blooded types. But the Bible relentlessly portrays that universal concern of the Living God. Don Richardson counts 480 times that this global commission of the Living God looms into the picture.

Earlier, I implied a question whether this is so unusual that here in Acts things are going to be moving out for the first time. Remember that there were proselytes all over the Empire. The Pharisees had little missionary bands going out. The synagogues and the missionary bands were both borrowed structures that God had no

trouble using for his purposes. The synagogues were clusters of extended families whose elders formed a collegiate ministry. This is very different from our modern churches, which are essentially the gathering of broken pieces of pottery, fragments of families put together. Our mission agencies today are like the Pharisee bands that reached out. Paul employed the same sort of thing. But the thing that was new, that was radically different, was that *God was using other languages and other cultures* in which the treasure could be invested.

Always before, the idea was that a person had to put on Jewish clothes to be acceptable to God—not an unreasonable assumption at all. This assumption is evident in one way or another by almost every missionary in every situation around the world. Only when the planted church gets completely loose from missionary influence, sometimes, can really flourish within the garments and the structures of its own society.

This movement to Christ throughout the world was clearly out of the Jewish control. Even today, the workers, the powers of the kingdom, are in full pursuit of the enemy. The enemy is still there. But we are over the top, over the hump, coming down the other side. We are in the final stretches of this campaign.

What a marvelous, incredible opportunity was begun through a radical *contextualization*. This allowed the full freedom of the Spirit within the personalities and the cultures where the gospel went, rather than a legalistic conforming and bending of persons and cultures to fit something that is foreign. There is still a great deal to be learned here.



# Paul's Letter to the Romans

*Ralph D. Winter*

*An introduction to a "transparent" commentary/translation with partial "transpositions" throughout.*

This is not so much a new translation of Paul's letter to the Roman congregations as it is an attempt to employ the format of a translation as a means of commentary. While it could be called a free translation, I would prefer to call it a sparse, "transparent" commentary, meaning that it reads like a translation, even though an interpretive commentary is woven into the text wherever that seems both possible and beneficial.

It has often been said that our first task as we approach the Bible is to determine what the text *meant* in its ancient context. Only then can we hope to understand what it *means* today. And these are two different exercises.

But this puts the would-be translator on the horns of a dilemma:

- 1) We probably cannot fully understand the ancient context, or the meaning *then*. Merely putting English words into Paul's mouth does not automatically clarify what was "meant" back then.
- 2) Much less can we readily understand what the text then would or should mean *now*. Why? Because it would be ideal but impossible to find an exact parallel today to the particular configuration of Paul's circumstances, however instructive it would be to try to do so. Furthermore, if a translator were to attempt to interpret (and re-write) the text as though a contemporary person were writing, that endeavor would perhaps need

to be considered more a *transposition* than a *translation*. But it would still be of great interest.

I have settled for a middle way. I feel that the best we can probably do is to find partial modern parallels to certain specific elements of the ancient scene. At least, that is what I have done here and there throughout the letter. That is how the American Revolution gets into the scene where Paul is talking about God working through civil governments.

Obviously, my middle-way approach falls short of the more radical path: to attempt to conceive of Paul in modern times, as a modern writer making his comments in the context of the world as we now know it—that is, a full *transposition*. Since that would be ideal if it were possible, let's consider a couple of ways in which that might be attempted. One attempt jumps from Paul to a real 18th century figure who was in somewhat similar circumstances. A second attempt jumps right down to today, but to a fictional person.

First of all, in making such jumps we need to recognize the need for the entire relationship of the chosen people (the Jews) with all other peoples ("Gentiles") to be replaced by a parallel: can today's Protestants be Paul's own favored people, the Jews, and the Gentiles be, say, the Hindus? This would mean, by extension, that Protestants today are in the position of the privileged Jews of ancient times, and that, for example, in the context of the Letter to the Romans the Protestants today are those who pride themselves on having the Word of God, and a lengthy tradition of righteousness.

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## Transposition A

Okay, let's take the Protestants of the eighteenth century. The role of Justinian von Welz comes to mind. A devout German Lutheran nobleman, he became very serious about the New Testament references to global mission (as well as being influenced by vigorous Roman Catholic examples of missionary work). As a nobleman he was able to exercise a certain amount of influence in his day, but after going from bishop to bishop attempting to promote the idea of missions to "the heathen nations" he made little progress and finally, in obedience to his own vision, went off by himself to the New World and died of dysentery on the shores of Dutch Surinam.

Suppose we pretend for academic purposes that Paul's letter to the Romans was actually a letter written by someone like Welz. He would refer to his own German Lutherans who would be the ones who had the sacred oracles (the Bible) in their hands. He would strenuously argue against any Germans who would suggest that the heathens could not become Christians. He would actually be writing (here is where the parallel would have to be fudged a bit) to a cluster of Protestant churches in Surinam, some of which had a lot of Germans in them and others which had a lot of New World "Indians" in them. He would hope that if he visited them for a while that they would help him to go further into other colonies where staid Lutheran congregations might have allowed a few Indians into the back rows, and through whom he would hope to set up some solidly Indian congregations, if necessary.

He would start the letter out by making clear that God was equally concerned about Indians and Germans, and that the Germans, with their history of possession of the Bible would not profit from what they already knew about God if they did not live up to the light they had received, any more than the New World Indians would be acceptable if they did not live up to the light they had. But he would boldly suggest that the Indians, even without the whole Bible in their own language, might actually come closer to true righteousness in their hearts than legalistic Lutherans—that even initial missionary work might uncover seeking souls in wholehearted obedience to God's word.

He would make clear that his undying loyalty to his own people was still strong, and that nominal Lutherans might still be able to discover the meaning

of heart-obedience, just as Indian believers were now doing, and that therefore the Indian believers ought not to scoff at German settlers with their formalistic churches but to make sure their Indian congregations were entirely genuine in their own worship. Etc.

## Transposition B

An even more contemporary parallel might be for us to cast Paul as an American Evangelical missionary pastor who had walked away from increasingly dead Evangelical churches which are more and more preoccupied with the unfulfilled successes of their own people in their own society—in contrast with Paul who is completely wrapped up in the growing expansion of the Gospel into other cultures and societies.

This second kind of parallel would reveal Paul's agony of heart for his own people, the state-side, increasingly wandering Evangelicals, who had lost touch with the heart of God for all peoples. Paul would insist that non-Christians around the world, with nothing like the Biblical resources of this country, might fare as well or better even without the whole Bible in their own language as yet. But, as in the previous parallel he would defend his own people against any possible criticism from the new "mission field Christians" on the grounds that true heart obedience, not Biblical sophistication is what counts with God, and that this central fact can cut both ways.

If the ideal *transposition* is not attainable perfectly it does not mean that many of the issues which Paul raises do not have fairly clear and significant "transpositions" in today's world. I have tried to insert those from time to time, either through a sheer choice of terminology or, at times, in added phraseology. Thus, I have chosen neither extreme, but a middle way between making the ancient clear and a complete transposition into modern times.

## A Special Emphasis

There is one feature of this endeavor which I wish to point out specifically. It is one of the primary reasons for me to undertake project. You will note that all through Paul's letter I am trying hard to correct what I deem to be a widespread contemporary misunderstanding of the nature of *faith*. Apparently very few people understand *faith* as a divine *light* in which we are to walk in *believing* obedience.

This is an example of the dread influence of what could be called “the cultural misinterpretation of the Bible.” It is too big a subject to explore here. I would simply note it in passing. All cultures tend to misinterpret the Bible in the direction what people want it to say. Our American culture socializes us in the direction of personal independence of thought and action, sometimes to an extreme that could be called “individualitis.” We are brought up to question authority from any source. We fight free from any kind of normative obligation. When we get a job we do not submit to authority so much as strike a bargain and work compliantly to the extent that we can get what we want, the quality and value of the service we are rendering being quite secondary. Our American perspective would lead us to feel that civil authorities could not possibly be acting in God’s behalf, for example. The Reformation was also a rejection of Latin authority. It tended for some to bring the seeds of rebellion into peoples hearts. The American Revolution was another impulse in the direction of the rejection of all authority (except that which we concede through the power of our own electorate). This kind of cultural influence makes certain things in the Bible harder to understand, to translate.

I have known for many years—ever since I studied with the Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1948—that there is very little difference in most missionary translations between the word *believe* and the word *obey*. To such linguistic specialists it is important for the word *obey* to carry the meaning of *obeying from the heart* (not just complying externally). Many people think that faith is jumping into the dark (and it may look that way to those whom God has not given the same faith). But, *believing*, in the Greek NT means *walking confidently in the light of faith that comes from above*. Faith is, in effect, heavenly *light*; believing is walking in that light—which God often rewards with more light/faith. Faith is a substantial reality, not a vague hunch. Faith is *evidence* in advance of things hoped for. It is *confidence* in the absence of sight. (Heb 11:1)

Let’s look at some key passages.

In the relatively literal translation of the *New American Standard Bible*, a key phrase, “obedience of faith” occurs twice in Romans. In 1:5, “bring about the *obedience of faith* among all the Gentile nations,” and, then at the end, in 16:25,

the revelation of the mystery (of the Gospel for the Gentiles) ... has been made known to all the nations leading to *obedience of faith*.

This same phrase is rendered in the NIV in the two passages, respectively, as “the obedience that comes from faith,” and “so that all nations might believe and obey Him.” These passages display the very close association of the concepts of *believe* and *obey*, and help to unravel the age-old tension—the wholly *artificial tension*—between law and grace, between the OT and the NT in this area. It is not as though the OT asks us merely to go through religious rituals while the NT asks us merely to “believe” in some purely mental assent without any ritual or literal obedience.

*This letter of Paul’s, if rightly understood, clarifies the crucial difference between outward compliance and inward obedience, a powerful theme clear back in Deuteronomy, for example. At the end of chapter nine, Paul makes one of the most important statements to be found in the entire NT. He points out that the reason Jews did not find life through the law was because, simply (in 9:32):*

They pursued it not by faith but as *if* it were by works, (NIV).

They did not pursue it by faith but as *though* it were by works, (NASB).

I have, as follows, “translated” this passage employing more words than I have any other passage, since it is so exceedingly crucial:

The physical descendants of Israel pursued scripture as though mere outward compliance was good enough. In general, they did not render heart obedience. Too often they responded religiously not spiritually. They treated the law as something to which mechanical adherence was required—rather a divine expectation of a true heartobedience of faith. (9:31-32)

You will note that I have added the phrase, “in general” since, earlier in the same chapter it is clear that “not all who are descended from Israel are Israel,” (9:6). This comes up later, too, in the early part of Chapter 11, where Paul, with ringing phrases and vivid imagery, defends the existence of a true remnant within Israel.

However, our contemporary society seeks to rid itself of all authority and thus downplays any form of obligation or “obedience” as OT legalism. This makes

it easy to oppose the OT to the NT and to contrast Law and Grace, as though these things were opposites. Simply, there is law and grace in both testaments. Paul's letter, rightly translated, makes this clear. Dr. Daniel Fuller's classical statement of this is his book *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?*

The most famous error of translation in the Reformation period is Luther's addition of the word *alone* in the phrase (Rom 5: 1) "Therefore we are justified by faith *alone*." It is proper to emphasize faith *instead* of works, but that does not mean we think faith does not require works. The true balance is simply to emphasize the inner as the only valid origin for the outer. Luther's instincts in reacting to the heavy hand of legalism in the Roman popular tradition of his time were valid, but he did not have to go so far as to disparage "works," since true believing is manifested in good works—such that "faith without works is dead" as it says in James (an epistle which for many years Luther rejected as "an epistle of straw" precisely due to his Catholic-corrective point of view).

In a practical sense it is exciting to recognize the astonishing process whereby God gives faith to us in small amounts, just enough to tax our capacity to believe-and-obey these increments of faith. If we believe (obey), additional faith is forthcoming. If we draw back, the light of faith ceases to grow. If we walk in the light, the light will move ahead of us. In all cases the crucial element of "obedience of faith" must be present—an obedience which almost inevitably displays fruits that can be *seen*. If others mimic those fruits in seeking to be "like" some great man of faith, those attempts will likely fail unless there is also present in their lives the same kind of heart obedience which the great man of faith rendered in the first place.

This is likely what Jesus was talking about when he made the statement, "Unto him who has shall more be given, but unto him who has not, even that which he has shall be taken away." Faith is a divine light that is perishable. If we walk in it, it expands. If we stop walking in the faith we have the light of faith may go out altogether. This shows the intimate and indissoluble relationship between faith and obedience. Many translations of Romans fail to reveal this key Pauline emphasis, which is much clearer here than in Galatians 3, for example.

RDW, July 1994

P.S. I know that I would greatly profit from any feedback on these thoughts, or on the translation itself. Please feel free to contact me at home. Here is contact information:

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## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> As a servant of Jesus Christ, I, Paul, was assigned the role of a missionary, ordained to the Gospel of God.

<sup>2</sup> I speak of the Gospel that came to us long ago, as we have it in the Bible. <sup>3</sup> It concerns God's Son, born in human terms as a descendant of King David, but <sup>4</sup> revealed to be the powerful Son of God as indicated by the very fact of His resurrection by the Holy Spirit.

Yes, Jesus Christ is our Lord. <sup>5</sup> Through Him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the heart obedience of faith among all of the nations of the world for the sake of His Name. <sup>6</sup> This is how you yourselves became called by Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> I write to all of you in Rome who are beloved of God and holy people. Power and peace be to you through God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>8</sup> First of all, through Jesus Christ I thank God for you because your obedience to Him is talked about all over the place. <sup>9</sup> I, myself, talk about you all the time. God, whom I serve in my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, is my witness to that. <sup>10</sup> And, I always pray that I may eventually, in God's will, be able to visit you. <sup>11</sup> I yearn to see you in order to contribute something spiritually to you so that you might be established—<sup>12</sup> that is, that we might each be encouraged together by the other's obedience.

<sup>13</sup> Remember that for a long time such a trip has been my plan. I have hoped to visit and minister among

you and other Gentile groups, but up until now I have been prevented.

[So what I am doing in this letter is sending you in advance a written summary of the kinds of things I have been teaching wherever I go. This will enable you to evaluate my ministry. It will also give you advance insight into my teachings. I will start out by stating what it is that drives me.]

<sup>14</sup> I am convinced that I have a responsibility to share the Gospel with both citizens and foreigners, with both the literate and the illiterate. <sup>15</sup> This is what leads me to Rome.

<sup>16</sup> The Gospel is nothing to be ashamed about; after all it is the saving power of God to all who obey—the Jews were first, and through them all the other nations. <sup>17</sup> In it the righteousness of God becomes ours, from one step of faith to the next. Remember the verse that says, “The righteous person’s very life consists of walking in the light and yielding moment by moment to the truth of God—this is the ‘heart obedience of faith.’” (Hab. 2:4)

[But, now let me begin this letter with a discussion of the fundamental problem—namely the sinfulness of man, both outside and inside of the Jewish community.]

<sup>18</sup> It is clear, first of all, that God is angry about man’s sin, angry about every kind of ungodliness and unrighteousness—all that which essentially suppresses the truth of God.

It is not as though God has not revealed Himself. <sup>19</sup> From the beginning God has made known certain things. And these things are innately known by man,<sup>20</sup> even His “invisible” traits—that is, his eternal power and divine nature. All this has been very clear even in the workmanship of the created universe which is evident to us. There simply is no excuse for man not knowing God.

<sup>21</sup> What happened is that man ended up not knowing God. Human beings chose not to honor Him as God much less give thanks to Him. This, in turn, caused their minds to be confused and their hearts darkened.

<sup>22</sup> Their pride and boasting turned their attention to things which are utterly foolish—<sup>23</sup> they turned from the glory of the incorruptible God to images in the form of corruptible man and even birds and animals and insects!

<sup>24</sup> God thus gave them over to hearts filled with lust, leading to horrible bodily degradation. <sup>25</sup> See, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served what God has created rather than the Creator God is, who is the permanently Blessed One—Amen!

<sup>26</sup> This is why God gave them over to the inevitable degradation of their own passions. <sup>27</sup> Both women and men have reversed natural functions in homosexuality and, as a result, getting into serious trouble physically and spiritually. <sup>28</sup> When they turned away from God, God turned away from them, giving them over to depravity of mind and distortion of body, <sup>29</sup> filled with all kinds of evil, wickedness and greed—envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice. Such people are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> ununderstanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful. <sup>32</sup> In a word, though they know God’s will that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only keep on doing such things but encourage others to do the same. However, we need to look at this from a new perspective.

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the vile practices of certain non-Christians, for example, don’t excuse Christians in general. Our very criticism of them holds us guilty as well—for what they do wrong we do wrong as well, <sup>2</sup> and it is undeniable that God’s judgment applies equally to us. <sup>3</sup> How can we suppose that God will judge them and not us when we both do the same things? The divorce rate, crime rate, prison rate, drug rate, is the highest in the world in the very country of the world with the most Bibles and trained Christian workers.

<sup>4</sup> Really, have we been taking for granted all of God’s mercy and forgiveness and patience with us? Ought this not to lead us to greater sensitivity to sin and to repentance? <sup>5</sup> Let’s face it, to the extent that we are not yielding and repentant we are accumulating a great deal of judgment when God’s full righteousness is revealed.

<sup>6</sup> Why? Because God “will judge us not by what we say we believe but by what we actually do,” (Ps 62:12) whether we are non-Christians or Christians. <sup>7</sup> He will give eternal life to those who persevere in doing good as they seek glory and honor and immortality,<sup>8</sup> but He will give wrath and anger to those who basically serve themselves, resisting the truth and giving in to unrighteousness.

<sup>9</sup> It boils down to this: there is going to be big trouble for everyone who does evil, first to Christians and then to non-Christians, <sup>10</sup> just as there will be glory, honor, and peace to everyone who does good, first to the Christians and then to the non-Christians. <sup>11</sup> Why? God will not pamper those who have had special blessings. <sup>12</sup> Those who have sinned without the Bible will be judged apart from the Bible. Those who have the Bible and have sinned will be judged by the Bible itself.

<sup>13</sup> Just possessing a Bible doesn't help. It is what we do with it that counts. <sup>14</sup> If some non-Christians instinctively do what God wants, without a Bible to consult, they are in effect living Biblically. <sup>15</sup> They reveal the truth of God written in their hearts, being kept sensitive by their consciences—<sup>16</sup> because there is coming a day when (as I teach everywhere) *God is going to judge the inner thoughts of men through Jesus Christ.*

<sup>17</sup> OK, you call yourself a Christian. You put stock in your knowledge of both the Bible and God himself. <sup>18</sup> You know what His Will is. You think you know what really counts with Him. You've got the Bible behind you. <sup>19</sup> You are confident you can give guidance to those who do not see all these things clearly, people who don't know anything of the Bible. <sup>20</sup> You can teach the young and the young in faith because you feel confident that you have the very embodiment of knowledge and truth in your Bible.

<sup>21</sup> All right. You who think you can teach others—have you taught yourself? For example, you preach against stealing, do you fudge on your income tax? <sup>22</sup> You preach against sexual sin. What about the record of your famous ministers? Do you yourself court evil thoughts? <sup>23</sup> You boast of Bible knowledge. Just how seriously, really, do you take the Bible? Do you dishonor God the way you treat it? <sup>24</sup> The fact is, the Christian's God is blasphemed among non-Christians because of the behavior of Christians, just as the Bible itself predicts.

<sup>25</sup> Baptism, or church membership is of no value if you don't obey the Bible. If you play fast and loose with the Bible, it matters nothing that you are a church member. <sup>26</sup> And if a non-Christian fulfills Biblical righteousness, isn't that as good as Baptism? <sup>27</sup> That is, the person who has not actually been baptized—if he is in heart obedience to the Bible will he not stand in judgment on those who have both the Bible and Baptism but are unfaithful to the Bible? <sup>28</sup> To be a true Christian is not to buy a Bible and be baptized.

True Baptism is not something that is merely a ceremony. <sup>29</sup> A true Christian is one inwardly, and true Baptism is of the heart, by the Spirit of God, not by the power of a ritual. It is not a matter of what *you* think or *people* think, but what God thinks. Your personal reputation is irrelevant, ultimately.

## Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> So of what value is it to be a Christian instead of a non-Christian? Of what benefit is it to be brought up in Christian faith? <sup>2</sup> Great in every respect. Most important: Christians have the Bible. <sup>3</sup> Even if some Christians do not take the Bible seriously, does that nullify God's faithfulness? <sup>4</sup> Certainly not! Human beings lie but God doesn't. Remember the verse in Psalms 116:11, "God's Word always holds true when tested; so does His character."

<sup>5</sup> Suppose someone says that we actually demonstrate the existence of what is right when we go wrong and that God therefore ought not to penalize us for going wrong! What nonsense! <sup>6</sup> If that were true no one in the world would be under judgment—<sup>7</sup> it would be as though by lying we bring glory to the truth of God and shouldn't be classified as sinful! <sup>8</sup> Some even say (in fact, they quote us as saying) "Let us do evil that good may come of it." They are rightly condemned. I'll pick this up again in a minute.

<sup>9</sup> Back to my point. Are Christians going to get by more easily at judgment than others? In no way. As we have already seen, everyone has gone wrong. <sup>10</sup> Here are a few verses that underscore that fact:

Psalms 14:3 "No one is righteous, not a single person . . . <sup>11</sup> no one understands, no one really seeks God, <sup>12</sup> they have all turned aside, going astray together as an entire society. Not a single person is unwaveringly good, not a single one."

Psalms 5:9, 13 "Their mouths are as filthy as a dead body you might dig up, their words pure deceit."

Psalms 140:3 "Their tongues are as poisonous as a snake's."

Psalms 10:7, 14 "Nothing but swear words, lies, and harshness comes out of their mouths."

Isaiah 59:7f, 15 "Their feet carry them into violence. <sup>16</sup> Theirs is a trail of destruction and misery. <sup>17</sup> Their lives are devoid of real peace."

Psalms 36:1, 18 "The fear of God they do not know."

<sup>19</sup> We cannot deny that the Bible applies to those who possess it. Thus, Christians are also under judgment—the whole world (including Christians) is accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> Remember that merely owning a Bible does not do you any good. Even if you read it you don't become righteous merely by finding out about your sins!

<sup>21</sup> However, in addition to the Bible—and concerning which the whole Bible is a witness—<sup>22-25</sup> is the living person of Jesus Christ. Now. There you find an additional display of God's righteousness, and *by yielding to His Lordship in a heart of faith* is how we gain true righteousness. This is the grace of God, the forgiveness and power of God given to us freely on the basis of a payment consisting of a blood sacrifice for sins. <sup>26</sup> This is how God can both be absolutely just in condemning our sins and at the same time a redeemer of all those whose hearts are open to Him.

<sup>27</sup> Notice, then, that this banishes anyone's boast of superiority before God, and the principle behind this is not a matter of how much we read the Bible but has to do with what happens with our internal heart response to God. <sup>28</sup> That is, we are acceptable to God through yielding in faith not putting on a show.

<sup>29</sup> So, then, is God the God of just the Christians? <sup>30</sup> No, He is the judge of all men. God will show Himself strong in those whose hearts are perfect toward Him, whether they are Christians or not. <sup>31</sup> Does that mean we do away with the Bible? By no means. It is simply that Bible *believing* not Bible *reading* is what counts.

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> We can see all this more clearly if we consider the case of Abraham, our great forefather. What was the significant element in his life?

<sup>2</sup> Was he accepted by God due to certain religious practices—was this his boast before God? No way. <sup>3</sup> In Genesis 15:6 we read simply, "Abraham *believed* God, and God *considered* him righteous."

<sup>4</sup> Look at it this way. If a person undertakes a lot of religious practices as if he is working for wages, he is then going to be paid what he has earned—wages that are due him, not wages that are given to him as a favor.

<sup>5</sup> But suppose a person had no religious habits at all, but was the kind of person who yields to God in his heart—that person would be acceptable to God. The key thing is not what *we do* but what God *thinks*.

<sup>6</sup> David, for example, in Psalm 32:1 says, <sup>7</sup> "Blessed is the man whom God accepts despite his wayward deeds and inner failures. <sup>8</sup> Blessed is the man whose shortcomings God (for some other reason) is able to accept."<sup>9</sup> Note well: is this blessing David speaks of something which is available only to those who follow a religious pattern of life? That is, to Christians? Or is this something that people far removed from Christianity can receive? Going back to Genesis 15:6, it says simply, "Abraham believed God and God considered him righteous."<sup>10</sup> Nothing is said about his being baptized as a Christian, because at that time he had not yet been baptized. <sup>11</sup> In fact, God's acceptance of him apart from baptism makes baptism out to be simply a seal upon something that has already happened. This makes Abraham then to be the forerunner of *all those whose hearts are right before God* and who live the kind of life Abraham did *before* he was ever baptized (or circumcised). <sup>12</sup> At the same time he is the forerunner of all who are not only baptized (and come into the kind of Christian tradition with which we are familiar) but who, like Abraham, are truly believing in their hearts.

<sup>13</sup> Remember that Abraham's original commission—the Great Commission—was given to him long before he became involved in a religious set of duties, long before the Bible existed as a book. His righteousness was clearly a matter of the heart. <sup>14</sup> If people are made righteous by being religious then matters of the heart go out the window! <sup>15</sup> The Bible can make you feel guilty in ways you would have never thought of otherwise. <sup>16</sup> But the key question is the matter of the heart. That way it becomes a matter of grace—e.g. forgiveness and power. That way, any of the peoples of the world, whether they ever take on the religious pattern of Christianity or not, can be counted by God as children of Abraham. <sup>17,18</sup> In the sight of Him who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist, Abraham believed. He thus became the father of all who believe, just as God said to Him (Genesis 17:5), "A father of many peoples have I made you." Yes, Abraham believed "in hope against hope," that is, without any concrete proof of anything, thus becoming the father of many nations, as it says in the same verse, "your descendants will be as difficult to count as the stars in the heavens."

<sup>19</sup> Stop and think. He believed what God said about his descendants even though he was an old, old man, and physically it was unthinkable that either he or

his wife could have children.<sup>20</sup> Even so, this astonishing Great Commission did not stagger him. His faith grew mightily and he praised God,<sup>21</sup> believing totally that what God had promised God was able to produce.<sup>22</sup> That's why it says, simply, "*God considered him righteous.*"<sup>23</sup> But note, this was not just for his sake<sup>24</sup> but from then on it means the same for all who follow in the footsteps of his faith, for all who believe in the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead—<sup>25</sup> The Jesus, who was sacrificed for our sin and raised from the dead by the very same power that enables us to live authentically and acceptably before God.

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> In view of our acceptance by God through this crucial kind of heart-obedience-of-faith, a whole lot of things are now in our favor. Let's stop and reflect on this. In order to adequately explain this I commonly use a whole lot of illustrations.

Basically, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>2</sup> This is based on the grace (the power) of God, and allows us to "exult" in the awaited glory of God.<sup>3</sup> It also allows us to *exult* in our problems, because problems give us perseverance.<sup>4</sup> Perseverance, in turn, underlies true character, while character underlies true hopefulness,<sup>5</sup> the kind of hope that will never be disappointed because even now, at this very moment, the love of God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

<sup>6</sup> All this came about because Christ died for us in the nick of time, when we were completely helpless. Just think: it is very rare for anyone to die for someone else, even for a good, godly person.<sup>8</sup> But Christ gave His life for us when we were foul, evil, rebellious!<sup>7</sup> Wow, that's love, God's love!

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, this does not merely mean we have become acceptable to God. It means we are being literally rescued out of evil.<sup>10</sup> That is, if we were reconciled while we were enemies by His death, our lives are now rescued from evil by His life.<sup>11</sup> This is something to exult about, a deep rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ, the One who has reconciled us.

<sup>12</sup> But let's reflect further. Here is still another way to look at it:

First of all, death has spread from one man to all humanity, because of the sin of one single person—

Adam.<sup>13</sup> Now, it is true that prior to the giving of the Law through Moses, sin was not recognized in quite the same way,<sup>14</sup> nevertheless (as we have seen) even without the law people have sinned against the law "written on their hearts" and thus death clearly reigned prior to Moses even for those who did not, like Adam, go against a specifically stated command. In this sense Adam is an example of those who sin against the specific provisions of a written law.

<sup>15</sup> To go on: thus, while Adam "gave" us death, another man "gave" us life. But this second gift, from a second person, is far greater—for through it the power of God, working through the power within the second person has affected the entire human race.<sup>16</sup> This second "gift" is inherently different from the first. The first brought judgment and condemnation out of a single sin. The second brought righteousness out of a multitude of sins.

<sup>17</sup> In other words, death reigned over everyone because of the transgression of one person, but the gift of righteousness now is able to reign in abundant power through the one person, Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> That is, one man's transgression brought condemnation to all men, now one man's act of righteousness has brought justification and life to all mankind.<sup>19</sup> One man's disobedience made many sinners, through another man's obedience many are made righteous.<sup>20</sup> And even though the spelling out of the law in specifics increased the sensation of sin and guilt, nevertheless where sin abounded, so the powerful grace of God increased still more—<sup>21</sup> such that although sin reigned in death, righteousness now reigns in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> These momentous facts, incidentally, bring up a bizarre thought: if we wallow in sin will this produce even more righteousness?<sup>2</sup> This is ridiculous because—and here is a new thought—we have actually "died" to sin, and therefore cannot therefore "live" or wallow in it.<sup>3</sup> I hope you realize that everyone who has been baptized into Christ Jesus has been, as it were, "baptized" into His death.<sup>4</sup> That means that we have been "buried" with Him in order that just as God raised Him from the dead we are raised from the dead through the majesty and power of God to walk in newness of life.<sup>5</sup> If we have been united with Him in His death we are united with Him in His resurrection.<sup>6</sup> Why? Because,



in effect, our former person was nailed to the cross thus doing away with our body of sin—<sup>7</sup> our slavery to sin ceasing with our release in death. <sup>8</sup> And if we have died with Christ we shall also live with Him. <sup>9</sup> We know that He was raised never to die again, death no longer being a master over Him. <sup>10</sup> He died to sin, once for all. Now the life He lives He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> In the same way you must consider yourselves now dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Thus, you must not let sin reign in your mortal body, guided by its lusts. <sup>13</sup> Don't continue to yield your hands and feet and eyes and ears to evil, as weapons of evil, but present yourselves to God as people alive from the dead, the members of your body being weapons of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> You are not just dealing with the law—the *knowledge* of what is good. You are dealing with grace, the power actually to be *good*. That true goodness frees you from the condemning power of the law. That is why sin cannot be your master.

<sup>15</sup> Once again, some might say, if grace makes us free from law, can we then go ahead and sin without restriction? By no means. <sup>16</sup> Isn't it clear that in yielding yourselves in obedience to someone you are then bound to do what that person tells you—whether you are obeying sin which brings death or you are obeying the truth which brings righteousness? <sup>17</sup> We thank God that we were slaves to sin but now by being obedient from the heart to the teachings of Christ <sup>18</sup> we are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness.

<sup>19</sup> I am using the slave analogy, of course, simply to try to make things clear: for just as you once gave yourself over to impurity and lawlessness, leading to further lawlessness, so now you must present yourselves as slaves of righteousness which leads to purity. <sup>20</sup> As slaves of sin you had no heed for righteousness. Now as slaves of righteousness you need pay no heed to sin. <sup>21</sup> Back then surely you were not benefitting from that life of shame, leading to death. <sup>22</sup> Now, freed from sin and enslaved to God, the outcome is purity and eternal life. <sup>23</sup> The wages of sin is death. The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup> Here is still another way to describe all this. Those who are acquainted with legal matters understand that the law applies to a person only as long as he is alive.

<sup>2</sup> For example, a married woman is bound by law to

her husband—as long as he is alive. If he dies she is released from her marriage vows. <sup>3</sup> Thus, while her husband is still alive if she is joined to another man that is adultery. But after he dies the law does not keep her from marrying someone else—that is not adultery.

<sup>4</sup> OK, in the same way, dear people, you too died to the Law in the death of Christ's body, and are now married to another, the One Who was raised from the dead, so that you can now bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> Once we bore fruit for death as our sinful passions were aroused by the Law. <sup>6</sup> Now we are released from the Law, having died to what we were bound. Now we can serve in the newness of the Holy Spirit's power rather than simply struggle with the Law's demands.

<sup>7</sup> But does this line of thought imply that the Law itself is sin? By no means. I'll speak personally.

It was the Law that pointed out to me that coveting was sin. <sup>8</sup> Sin took advantage of the Law and rebellion of every kind surged through my life. Without my coming upon the details of the Law sin could not have done that. <sup>9</sup> I wasn't rebelling against anything specific before that, but the Law made sin powerful unto death. Knowing God's will more specifically, made rebellion even more likely. <sup>10</sup> That is, the known will of God that was intended to bring life killed me off, <sup>11</sup> sin taking advantage of the many details in which I was now consciously falling short.

<sup>12</sup> In other words, the Law itself—the knowledge of the Will of God—is holy. It is righteousness spelled out. It is itself good. It was not the Law that made me sinful, it was sin that was aggravated by that knowledge of what I ought to be and do. Thus, sin became powerfully sinful.

<sup>14</sup> The basic problem is that while the Law is spiritual I am by nature under sin. <sup>15</sup> I don't by nature seek what I want to do but I am inclined to do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> However, note that insofar as I abhor my sinful inclinations I am agreeing with the Law (what describes what is good). <sup>17</sup> Note, also, that this very awareness makes clear the new and important difference between the "I" who wishes to do good and the sin that dwells within me!

<sup>18</sup> Thus, now it became clear to me that my natural estate is evil—I can yearn to do good but, in natural terms I lack what it takes to do good. <sup>19</sup> The good that I wish—I do not do—while the natural "I" would

practice the evil which I do not wish.<sup>20</sup> The key thing is that *the one doing the evil is not really I but sin that dwells within!*

<sup>21</sup> It works out this way: evil is present in me; but also the person who wishes to do good.<sup>22</sup> In the inner man I joyfully welcome the Law of God.<sup>23</sup> But there is something else within me, warring against my inner person, seeking to make me its prisoner.

<sup>24</sup> Doesn't it sound hopeless! How can I triumph over this body of death?<sup>25</sup> Aha, through Jesus Christ my Lord. I am able consciously to follow the Will of God even though my body is subject to sin.

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup> All this means those who live in Christ don't need to live with a sense of guilt, and awareness of on-going sin.<sup>2</sup> The New Law—the inner power of the Spirit of God—has set us free from a code which merely described what was right without itself rescuing us from sin and death.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the Bible plus our own human efforts would be futile if it were not for the fact that God sent His own Son in human flesh to abolish sin and the power of the flesh,<sup>4</sup> such that the kind of life the Bible asks for is *actually possible* for those who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

(It's like a good dog and an evil dog are fighting in your heart: the one you feed is the one that wins.)<sup>5</sup> Some people *set their hearts* on earthly things, but those who are of the Spirit *set their minds and hearts on Spiritual things*.<sup>6</sup> The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. It does not subject itself to the law of God—it lacks the ability.<sup>8</sup> And those that are “in the flesh” cannot please God.<sup>9</sup> However, if the Spirit of God really dwells within you, then you are no longer “in the flesh” (everyone who belongs to Him has the Spirit of Christ).<sup>10</sup> Thus, if Christ actually lives within us, then, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is alive because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> Since the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, there is surely no problem in His giving life to your mortal bodies through that same Spirit.

<sup>12</sup> That means, then, brethren, that we are not obligated to the flesh *in any sense*—to live lives *guided* by fleshly goals and desires.<sup>13</sup> If you are driven by fleshly goals

and desires you are heading for death! But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will truly live—<sup>14</sup> those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God!

<sup>15</sup> You have not been given the fearful spirit of a slave. You have not been purchased at a slave market. You have been *inherited* and are now sons in God's family. (That's what the “blessing” in Genesis 12:2, 3 means.) It's truly amazing. We can now call God “Father”!<sup>16</sup> We understand this because the gentle Spirit of our Father in heaven makes it plain that we are actually His children!<sup>17</sup> And since we are truly children in God's own family, we are then heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ!

But, note, being a fellow heir with Christ includes suffering with Him that we might be glorified with Him.<sup>18</sup> That puts suffering in a new light: sufferings are small compared to the magnitude of the coming glory.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the revelation of glory in His sons is something<sup>20</sup> the whole universe looks forward to. Satan and his angels have perverted God's creative purposes so that now all throughout nature we see living things destroying living things. God has allowed this only because of the hope—<sup>21</sup> the hope that creation itself will be set free from its “bondage in self-destruction,” whereby virtually all life is both prey and predator,<sup>22</sup> an incalculable agony and evil that cries out for healing, a redemption that will take place along with the revealing of the Sons of God.<sup>23</sup> Being adopted into the family of the Living God, we await eagerly this final revelation of the Father and the redemption of our body.<sup>24</sup> This is the hope we have had since the day of our salvation. It is not a hope we can see clearly in advance—in that case it would not really be a hope.<sup>25</sup> Rather, we hope for something we cannot now imagine, and we await it with confidence and determination.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. We don't know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself prays for us, praying with an agony of heart which cannot be expressed in words.<sup>27</sup> Since the Spirit is God, who searches our hearts, obviously God knows what the Spirit is saying since the Spirit pleads for us in harmony with God's will.

<sup>28</sup> Brethren, we also know that God is fully in charge and that everything, ultimately, is coming out according to His will, for all who are called into His will and purpose.<sup>29</sup> His intent from the beginning was that everyone who comes to Him (and He has always known

who it would be) would become transformed into the kind of Person He is. His own Son is, then, the Eldest Son of many younger brothers and sisters.<sup>30</sup> Those thus known in advance are called, and being called they are made righteous, and those who are righteous will be glorified in the final day.

<sup>31</sup> Let's stop and think for a minute. If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> God did not even spare His own Son. He gave His Son—just as Abraham was willing to do, but because of the Cross did not need to do. Thus we know God the Father is willing to give us everything. <sup>33</sup> We cannot even be accused successfully, since God is the one who settles things! <sup>34</sup> Who could possibly condemn us? Jesus the Christ has died on our behalf! And He has been raised from the dead and at God's right hand intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> What could possibly separate us from the love of Christ? Is there any trouble, any pressure, any stress, any persecution, any kind of war or danger, or hunger or handgun that can defeat that love? <sup>36</sup> How about the verse that says,

Due to our belonging to Thee, we are being destroyed day by day. We are like sheep being led to the slaughter. *Ps 44:22*

<sup>37</sup> Do you know what that verse means? It means that even in the midst of destruction we are overwhelmingly the ones who are conquering—due to His love.<sup>38</sup> I am utterly convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor demon powers—whether now or later—not the rulers of darkness,<sup>39</sup> not height nor depth nor any other force in all the universe can come between us and the love God has for us, expressed in Jesus, the Christ, our Lord.

## Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> But now let's go on. I want to make something very clear to you—and I am not stretching things, the Spirit is my witness—<sup>2</sup> that I grieve and sorrow constantly over the state of my people, my ethnic kinsmen. <sup>3</sup> I would even choose separation from Christ if that would help. <sup>4</sup> Just think, they are descendants of Jacob, Israel. They were the ones originally adopted as Sons of God, as we have mentioned. Theirs is the glory, the Covenants, the giving of the Law, the temple tradition and the promises, <sup>5</sup> Our forefathers in whose very physical lineage appeared the Christ, who is over everything, may God be blessed forever. Amen!

<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, it is not as though all the physical descendants of Israel have been unfaithful—<sup>7</sup> nor are all who are faithful and Sons of God physical descendants. Remember the verse where it says, “Your lineage will go through Isaac, no other?”<sup>8</sup> Obviously not all of Abraham's physical lineage was included <sup>9</sup> (the word of Promise applied only to Sarah's son—see Gen 18:10), it was to be just the children of Promise, that is, the children of faith. <sup>10</sup> Thus, God was never talking about all of Abraham's physical descendants. We see this principle confirmed in the case of Rebecca—it was Isaac to which she was married—<sup>11</sup> before her twins were ever born, and before any difference of behavior could be taken into account <sup>12</sup> it was said, “The older shall serve the younger” (*Gen 25:23*)—that is, <sup>13</sup> God sovereignly chose Jacob not Esau (see Malachi 1:2,3).

<sup>14</sup> Let's not stumble on this. Forget the very idea that God is not being fair. God does not have to follow human social customs (such as the firstborn always carrying the on-going responsibility in the family). <sup>15</sup> He said to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” (*Ex 33:19*) <sup>16</sup> It is not a case of human perceptions about which person wanted to do right or did the right thing. God is the one who decides. <sup>17</sup> Take the case of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. God said to him, (*Ex 9:16*) “I raised you up for the specific purpose of showing you My overarching power, and I have done this so that My Name might be proclaimed throughout the earth.”

<sup>18</sup> OK? Doesn't that settle it? God is perfectly able to decide whom He blesses and whom He does not.

<sup>19</sup> But, you say, on what basis can He ever condemn, if no one can resist His will? <sup>20</sup> Well, a better question might be, “Who are you, O Man, to ask things like that?” Since when did the pot being molded say to the potter, “I'll tell you how to make me?” <sup>21</sup> Isn't it obvious that the potter is the one who decides in one case to make a garbage receptacle and in another case a serving dish?

<sup>22</sup> After all, God could have simply demonstrated His power in pure wrath against the entire distorted creation, against vessels that were slated for destruction. <sup>23</sup> Instead, He has exercised infinite patience in converting vessels of wrath into vessels of mercy—vessels He all along planned for glorious use—<sup>24</sup> a global fellowship drawn from both Jews and Gentiles. <sup>25</sup> This is summed up in Hosea 2:23: “I will call ‘My people’ those who were not my people. I will call ‘Beloved’ those who were not loved. <sup>26</sup> Precisely those peoples who have been considered untouchables and

outcasts will be called Sons of the Living God.”

<sup>27</sup> Listen to Isaiah. “Though the physical descendants of Israel become as numerous as sand particles on the oceanside, only a selection will be saved. <sup>28</sup> God will exercise His judgment thoroughly and decisively ...

<sup>29</sup> if the King of Kings had not chosen out His own posterity we would all have become judged along with Sodom and Gomorrah.

<sup>30</sup> The upshot, then, is clear as a bell. The Gentile nations which had none of the advantages of the physical lineage, who have not availed themselves of the religious heritage of my people ... they are the ones who have actually attained true righteousness through heart faith. <sup>31</sup> The physical descendants of Israel, on the other hand, despite all their advantages including possession of the Bible, have not attained life through that precious Word. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because, in general, the physical descendants of Israel pursued scripture as though mere outward compliance was good enough. In general, they did not render heart obedience. Too often they responded religiously not *spiritually*. They treated the law as something to which mechanical adherence was required—instead of realizing the divine expectation of a true heart-obedience of faith. <sup>33</sup> Thus, the Bible itself says (referring to Christ), “Behold, I will put a stumbling block in their way, a rock of offense. But those who approach this Rock believing in their hearts will not suffer shame.

## Chapter 10

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, you can surely sense my heart's earnest desire and prayer to God for my people and their salvation. <sup>2</sup> I am a witness of the fact that they have a certain zeal for God but have lost their way. <sup>3</sup> Failing to understand true righteousness they have set up all kinds of rituals that allow them to escape from true subjection to the Living God. <sup>4</sup> (Those who truly believe readily recognize the Christ as the fulfillment of righteousness.) <sup>5</sup> Moses is commonly understood to mean that if you fulfill every detail of the law you will live. <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness which is based on the surrender of the heart talks in very different terms.

Let me give the gist of what Moses was saying starting at Deuteronomy 30:11,

Do not give alibis like “We are waiting for someone to ascend into heaven to bring the Christ down to

us,”<sup>7</sup> or “We need someone to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead,”<sup>8</sup> No, no, no, “I say the Word and Will of God is with you right now,” e.g. the concept of justification by faith which we preach, namely,<sup>9</sup> “You will be saved if as you confess with your mouth the Lordship of Christ you are truly believing in your heart the meaning of His Resurrection. <sup>10</sup> For it is with the heart man becomes righteous through believing obedience, and in that testimony he is saved.

<sup>11</sup> Remember, the verse I quoted above? “Those who believe in their hearts will not suffer shame.” (Isaiah 28:28:16)

<sup>12</sup> There simply is no distinction between Jew and Greek, Evangelical or Hindu, for the same Lord is Lord of all, and He abounds in riches for all who call upon Him. <sup>13</sup> “Whoever will call on the Name of the Lord will be saved.” (Joel 2:32) <sup>14</sup> Moses might well have gone on to say, “Don't pretend that you cannot call on Him without believing, and that you cannot believe someone you have not heard about,<sup>15</sup> and that you cannot learn about that Lord without some additional preacher being sent to you.”

“Sure, you can quote the verse, ‘Beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.’” (Isa 52:7)<sup>16</sup> But the unavoidable fact is that Israel has not wholeheartedly embraced the glad tidings. Isaiah commented, “Who has believed our report?” (Isa 53:1) The report did not help them if they did not listen to it—yield to it, “hear” it. <sup>17</sup> Believing is the obedience of faith; Believing consists of hearing the report, believing right now is a matter of authentic inner, heart yielding to the word of Christ.

<sup>18</sup> Thus, can I get my people off the hook by saying that they have never heard? Alas, they have at least heard what non-Christians have heard, namely the witness of Creation—“The heavens declare the glory of God, the heavenly expanse displays the work of His hands.” (Ps 19) Note that this is a 24-hour witness that penetrates every human society no matter what language is spoken or what world view is in operation.

<sup>19</sup> Or, can I make the point that Israel really did not understand? Again, Moses said, (Deut 32:19-21) well in advance, that Israel would make God jealous by turning to other Gods and that God would then have to make His people jealous by turning to other peoples.

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah is very bold in quoting God as saying, “I was found by peoples which did not seek me, and I became manifest to peoples who did not ask for me.” (Isa 65:1)

<sup>21</sup> God continues on to say, “All day long I have stretched out my arms to a disobedient and rebellious people.” (Isa 65 :2)

## Chapter 11

<sup>1</sup> However, let none of this imply that God has rejected His people in any final sense. I myself am an Israelite, a physical descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> God did not make a mistake in choosing a special people. Surely you have not forgotten the passage where Isaiah pleads with God against Israel?

<sup>3</sup> “Lord, your people have killed the prophets. They have torn down your altars. I am the only faithful one left—and they are trying to kill me too.” <sup>4</sup> What was God’s response to him? “I have kept for myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

<sup>5</sup> The same thing is true today—today there is also a remnant of God’s gracious favor. <sup>6</sup> Just remember they did not get that way because of their religious works, but through the empowering grace of God within them.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, this is the situation with Israel. What they sought through religion they did not attain. Some have, by the grace of God, but most of Israel has become hardened, <sup>8</sup> just as it is written, “God gave them up to a drunken stupor. They thought they could see, but their eyes could not focus. They thought they could hear but they could not make out the message. This is true to this day.” (Deut 29:4, Isa 29:10) <sup>9</sup> David says, “Their prosperity has given them false hope, becoming a stumbling block and actually a *punishment*.” <sup>10</sup> Let their vision be dimmed and their pressures unceasing. (Ps 69:22-23)

<sup>11</sup> I would point out, however, that though they surely stumbled, but they did not utterly fall. By no means. One reason salvation is now going to the Gentiles is to make Israel jealous! <sup>12</sup> And, if that is true—that their stumbling gives opportunity to other nations, and their failure the blessing of other peoples—just think what can come through their salvation!

<sup>13</sup> In this vein I am really talking now to Gentiles—since I am an Apostle to the Gentiles. I would emphasize this matter <sup>14</sup> in order to somehow move my fellow countrymen to jealousy and through that means save some of them. <sup>15</sup> Remember, if their rejection is leading to outreach to the ends of the earth, will not their acceptance be equivalent to the raising of the dead? <sup>16</sup> The lump of bread dough rises only if the

starter dough is vital. Branches are holy only if the root is holy. <sup>17</sup> If you Gentiles are being grafted into a vital root after the natural branches were broken off, note well that your blessing derives from the same root, <sup>18</sup> and don’t be arrogant about the branches broken off. Just remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

<sup>19</sup> In other words, there is no use in boasting about replacing the natural branches. <sup>20</sup> Remember that they were broken off due to *unbelief*. That can happen to you, too. Take care. There is nothing stopping a “Christian” tradition from becoming hardened and dull of hearing.

<sup>21</sup> If God did not spare the natural branches, do you think he will treat you differently? <sup>22</sup> Take a good look at both the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, to those who believed, kindness. But you must continue in His kindness or you, too, will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> By the same token, in so far as they do not continue in their mere religiosity but enter into the heart obedience of faith, God is perfectly able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> Coming, as you do, from another root, a wild root, your branches are even harder to graft in than theirs!

<sup>25</sup> This whole thing must not continue to be a mystery to you. You must not feel any pride in your new status. Israel has been hardened only in part and only as the remaining Unreached Peoples are in the process of hearing for the first time. <sup>26</sup> But Israel will eventually be saved. Take a look at these passages:

“The Deliverer will come from Israel,  
and He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.

<sup>27</sup> This is the ultimate unfolding of my Covenant with Israel—I will indeed take away their sins,” (Isa 59:20-21, Jer 31:33).

<sup>28</sup> See? From the standpoint of the Gospel they are just now enemies for the sake of you Gentiles. But from the standpoint of God’s choice, they are still His chosen people for the sake of the Patriarchs—<sup>29</sup> for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup> Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now been shown mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so, OK, they are now disobedient so that God’s great mercy poured out on the Gentiles may surely cover them as well. <sup>32</sup> God actually sees all nations as disobedient and without hope apart from His mercy.

<sup>33</sup> Really, though, it is incredible just how deep and rich is the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearch-

able are His decisions; how unfathomable are His ways!  
<sup>34</sup> “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been His teacher?” (Isa 40:13f) <sup>35</sup> “Has anyone given to Him first before getting something from Him?” (Job 35:7, 41:11)  
<sup>36</sup> From Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory throughout the ages. Amen.

## Chapter 12

<sup>1</sup> In the light of God's great mercy—all that I have been talking about up to now—I urge you, therefore, my brothers and sisters, to make your very bodies live sacrifices to God. This is like a new type of temple worship. It replaces the dead animal sacrifices which we Jews for so many centuries employed as symbols of what was necessary. Now we should offer our *living* bodies as symbols—our human lives lived *out for Him*. <sup>2</sup> This means to work incessantly to avoid the cultural pressures of our time, to be determined to develop a new way of looking at everything, a perspective that takes social convention seriously but does not let it snow you under. It means to develop a whole new way of life that is based simply on what is good and acceptable and proper *in God's eyes*—a life in which our human perspectives and social conventions are continuously subordinate to His and continuously under fresh scrutiny.

<sup>3</sup> But, remember, the only reason I can say things like this is that my own life has been massively changed by the power of God's grace. Yes, I'll go on to say that all of you need to recognize your own personal inadequacy apart from powerful divine grace flowing into your life—in fact, to each a different kind of faith. <sup>4</sup> You need soberly to accept the fact that you are part—just part—of a “body,” in which each member contributes to the whole and in which no member is sufficient in itself or “better” than the other, <sup>5</sup> yes, as it has been said, we are each a small part of the “body of Christ,” belonging to each other. <sup>6</sup> And in view of the fact that we are each different—according to the particular grace poured into our lives, giving us each a certain kind of faith in which to obey—we need to make sure we exercise those strengths. For example, if prophetic insights, then to share those. <sup>7</sup> If a service to perform, then to it. If teaching, then teaching. <sup>8</sup> If exhortation, then be sure to do that. If giving, then do so with generosity. If guidance, then lead with diligence. If mercy, then cheerfully go for that.

<sup>9</sup> Basically, seek to live a life energized by genuine love not driven by self-interest or tyrannized by what

others might think, but live a life in which you determinedly skirt evil and grasp what is good, <sup>10</sup> where you allow genuine love to enable you to honor and care for others, <sup>11</sup> not living a life of studied mediocrity but one of all-out diligence, empowered by His Spirit, serving Christ as your Lord. <sup>12</sup> Then your joy will flow from hope, carrying you in difficult times, calling you constantly to prayer. <sup>13</sup> This kind of love surfaces in hospitality and service to other believers. <sup>14</sup> It will allow you to be kindly to people who try to hurt you rather than letting you to bear a grudge. <sup>15</sup> You will be able to rejoice with those who are thrilled but also weep with those who disheartened.

<sup>16</sup> To do this you must accept your own limitations and give up trying to see yourselves as superior to others or always seeking praise. Trying to bolster that kind of self-esteem is surely a worldly way to go. <sup>17</sup> Don't try to get even but try to emulate what is clearly praiseworthy. <sup>18</sup> Let there not be one person with whom you are on the outs—at least as far as your initiative is concerned. <sup>19</sup> Never ever take revenge. Let God do His work. He is the one who will repay evil. That's not your business. The Bible says, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay . . .” <sup>20</sup> your part is to feed your enemy, give him to drink—he may burn with shame as a result.” <sup>21</sup> Evil is not stopped by lashing back. Love alone will conquer evil.

## Chapter 13

<sup>1</sup> Here is something else. Do you realize that by accepting Christ as Lord you accept the fact that His authority will in part come to you in the form of the authority of civil rulers over you? You cannot assume, for example, that by following your conscience you can do away with the orders and rules that come to you from the civil authorities. They stand in God's place in their own spheres. <sup>2</sup> Resisting them means resisting God's will. (As Jesus said, “I am come not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.”)

Americans may no longer have second thoughts about their Revolutionary War and what in all honesty must be seen as their tortured reasoning for disobeying their English rulers in that key event. That event was truly “a shot heard around the world” but has extensively fomented rebellion all over the world, too, with uncounted violence and evil. <sup>3</sup> After all, the British government was basically preserving order not pursuing evil.

Do you want to end all worry about the law? Do what is good. You will receive praise not condemnation. [Don't be fooled. It's almost as though the entire American cultural tradition seeks to portray government in a bad light. For example, our fiction writers contrive in every way possible to show that it is often the government itself which is the evil force. This is a marked theme of American culture.]<sup>4</sup> But Government is actually an agent of God for your good. True, if you do evil you will find the government opposing you with force. It acts in God's behalf in bringing down wrath on those who do evil.<sup>5</sup> We must yield, therefore, to the law not just to avoid that wrath but also *because we are conscience-bound to do so*.<sup>6</sup> That's why we pay taxes.

Our government is serving God in its function.<sup>7</sup> It is up to us to live lawfully in everything, paying all taxes, importation fees, not just *respecting* the power of the law but *honoring* it as God's servant.<sup>8</sup> We must owe nothing to anyone ... except the love which God commands us—for our love for our neighbor will automatically lead us to fulfill the law.

<sup>9</sup> Let me give some examples. Take the well known commands against the four sins of adultery, murder, theft, and covetousness. All four are covered by "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>10</sup> Because love will not harm a neighbor, love is the fulfillment of the law. When Jesus said, "I am come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it" that is exactly what He meant—that through Him real love wells up in our lives and leads us willingly to do what the law prescribes.

OK, so really concentrate on the presence or absence of love in your life—don't measure your spirituality by the works you perform.

<sup>11,12</sup> I say this especially in light of time slipping away, in light of the approaching Day when no darkness will cloak our shortcomings and sins. Are you asleep to all this? The Day of Salvation is coming closer!<sup>13</sup> Let us behave *now* as we will want to *then*—not in silly activities, surely not giving ourselves to sexual promiscuity and hedonism, surely not in grudge-bearing or jealousy.<sup>14</sup> No! Take on the life of Christ! Be able to say "Not I, but Christ lives within me!" Don't at any time be tyrannized by the lusts of the flesh.

## Chapter 14

<sup>1</sup> Let's move on to another delicate subject. I am concerned about present and potential disharmony among

you due to things that are purely a matter of religious conviction—cases in which your faith may differ from someone else's.

For example, what about Jewish customs? On the one hand, I freely admit that my own Jewish tradition has over the centuries accumulated a huge mass of rules which don't need to be applied to Gentile believers who do not have and never have had any concern for such matters. Many of these customs don't need to be applied to Jews, for that matter. Some of us may feel that all meat is unclean. Others don't really think so.

<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, I want you to be very tolerant of differences of this kind. It is not right to ridicule or scowl at people who have religious compunctions about eating certain foods, observing certain days, or abstaining from using motor vehicles.<sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant—isn't his master the one to decide? We all serve One Master and we stand or fall before Him, not before human judgment.<sup>5</sup> What is important, whether we honor certain days or not, is that we be absolutely faithful to the light we have.<sup>8</sup> We live "unto the Lord" and we die "unto the Lord," and whether we live or die we belong to Him.<sup>9,10</sup> That's why Christ died and rose again—that He, not we, might be the judge of both the living and the dead. Thus, we must not despise the servant of another, for we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ—on our own.

<sup>11</sup> The Bible says, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall give praise to God"—<sup>12</sup> we will each give account of ourselves before God.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to not judging one another in such purely religious matters we must also be sure we do not put a stumbling block in a brother's way.<sup>14</sup> For example, I may believe (in the theoretical sense) that no food is unclean in itself unless you think it is unclean.

<sup>15</sup> But, clean or not, hurting a brother's conscience is not walking in love. Would you destroy someone for whom Christ died through your choice of food,<sup>16</sup> letting what you consider clean appear to others as evil?

<sup>17</sup> The Kingdom of God is not defined by our behavior in these religious matters but by evidences of goodness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> That is how we can please both God and man.

<sup>19</sup> What all this amounts to is that we need to pursue that which leads to harmony and which builds up each other.<sup>20</sup> Please! please, let's not divide the Kingdom over

arguments about details of custom! <sup>21</sup> I can't think of anything we should allow ourselves to eat or drink—if it offends the conscience of others in our midst. <sup>22</sup> Let the light you have in these matters be something between you and the Lord. Your fellowship with God depends on your faithfulness to your own faith. <sup>23</sup> Don't urge people to go against their consciences because for them to do that is sin—whatever is not of faith is sin!

## Chapter 15

<sup>1</sup> Instead, let's bear with those who may not have as strong a faith as we have. Our purpose is not to please ourselves, <sup>2</sup> but to encourage a neighbor for his good, for his edification.

<sup>3</sup> Remember, Christ did not seek His own pleasure. Psalms 69:9 says, "What people blamed you for they now hold against me." That is, He took upon Himself all kinds of criticism that He did not deserve because he had Hope.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, the main thing we get out of the Bible from all earlier generations and their holy writings, is that we might live lives characterized by that kind of transforming Hope. <sup>5</sup> This is my prayer: that the same God who encourages those on my team as we endure hardships on your behalf might also somehow bring about a genuine spirit of unity among you people, too. <sup>6</sup> That way, *with one voice* you might *together* glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Why can't you accept one another just as Christ accepted us? That is the path to real glory.

<sup>8</sup> This, in fact, is God's whole purpose in working through the Jewish people—<sup>9</sup> to enable the Gentiles to glorify God along with them. One passage says, "Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles."

<sup>10</sup> Another says, "Rejoice O Gentiles, with His people."

<sup>11</sup> Again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, let every people praise Him."

<sup>12</sup> Finally, Isaiah says, "There shall arise from the root of Jesse the one to rule over the Gentiles. In Him shall the Gentiles Hope."

<sup>13</sup> So, brothers and sisters, may this God of *hope* fill you with all joy and peace as you walk in obedient faith, abounding in *hope* by the power of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> But, folks, without denying that there is real goodness and knowledge among you, and that you are fully able to admonish one another, <sup>15</sup> it is true that I have

written some things here that may seem fairly critical. Yes, I have written rather boldly. Please accept what I say as you sense the grace God has given to me <sup>16</sup> as a special envoy of Jesus Christ to non-Jews, ministering as a priestly intermediary the good news of God's love toward all the world's peoples. In this regard, please also pray that my priestly "offering to God" of the non-Jewish peoples will be truly acceptable and holy in God's eyes due to the work of the Holy Spirit Himself.

<sup>17</sup> That kind of an offering is the only basis on which I would ever boast in a spiritual sense. <sup>18</sup> I do not wish to speak of any other attainment than the fact that there are non-Jewish peoples which have yielded up heart obedience to God in word and deed. <sup>19</sup> I have preached in every Synagogue from Jerusalem clear around to the coast across from Italy, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in a ministry blessed by signs and miracles. <sup>20</sup> My strategy has been to keep going where people have not yet heard of Christ, rather than to build on work already in progress, where Christ is already known. <sup>21</sup> This is to fulfill what Isaiah said, "Those who had no word of Him shall hear, and those who had never heard shall finally understand."

<sup>22</sup> Getting around to synagogues in this area, seeking out the non-Jewish "devout persons" in these congregations has been what has been keeping me from going further West. <sup>23</sup> Now, finally, having been to every single Synagogue here I am eager <sup>24</sup> to go West to Spain, stopping off for a while—as I have long wanted to do—to see you believers in Rome, and to build up your support of my ministry when I leave for Spain.

<sup>25</sup> Only one thing is going to delay me further. <sup>26</sup> I have obligated myself to carry gifts from the believers in Greece and Macedonia back to the believers in Jerusalem, who are suffering so much these days. <sup>27</sup> These gifts were given with real gratitude for what have been, after all the gift of the Gospel itself which has come through Jewish believers. If the Jewish believers have shared Spiritual riches, why shouldn't the non-Jewish believers share material riches?

<sup>28</sup> However, once I safely turn over this trust, I will be heading for Spain, with your backing. <sup>29</sup> And when I come to you I am confident I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

<sup>30</sup> All right, then, my brethren, through our Lord, Jesus the Christ, and by the love that comes from the Holy Spirit, please strive in your prayers to God for me <sup>31</sup>



that while I am in Judea I may not fall into the hands of those who reject God, and that the gifts I bring to Jerusalem will be gratefully received.<sup>32</sup> This way I will be able to arrive with you in joy and the will of God, finding rest in your company.<sup>33</sup> May the God of peace be with you, AMEN.

## Chapter 16

<sup>1</sup> P.S. In closing, let me ask some specific favors.

First, allow me to recommend to you Phoebe, from the congregation at Cenchrea.<sup>2</sup> Please accept her in a worthy manner as a fellow believer in the Lord, giving her whatever aid she needs, for she has certainly aided many others including myself.

But then, here is a list of people to whom I want you to extend my personal greeting:

<sup>3</sup> Prisca and Aquila, fellow workers in Jesus the Christ.<sup>4</sup> They risked their lives for me and both I and all the non-Jewish churches are deeply grateful to them.<sup>5</sup> Also, send a note of appreciation, please, to the church that meets in their house.)

Epaenetus, whom I dearly love—the first convert in the county of Asia.

<sup>6</sup> Mary, who has worked so hard for you.

<sup>7</sup> Andronicus and Junia, fellow Jews and fellow prisoners with me, outstanding apostles, in Christ before me.

<sup>8</sup> Amplius, dearly loved in the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ.

Stachys who is very dear.

<sup>10</sup> Apelles, proven in Christ.

All who are of the household of Aristobulus.

<sup>11</sup> Herodion, a fellow Jew.

All the believers in the household of Narcissus.

<sup>12</sup> Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord.

Persis, who has worked so hard in the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Rufus, a choice man in the Lord.

His mother, who has been like a mother to me.

<sup>14</sup> Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the believers with them.

<sup>15</sup> Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas and all the believers with them.

<sup>16</sup> Give a warm *abrazo* to each other for me. All of the churches of Christ greet you.

<sup>17</sup> A final word to the wise: it is clear that a few in your fellowship are pulling people into their own camp, teaching things contrary to what you have learned. Turn away from them.<sup>18</sup> Driven by personal motives, and by being especially nice to people, they are turning peoples' hearts against you.<sup>19</sup> I don't bring this up because I doubt your capability of carrying out the discipline of the Lord—we all know of your staunch obedience to Christ—but, as Jesus put it, we must “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”<sup>20</sup> I have no doubt that the God of Peace will soon crush Satan beneath your feet along with his meddling in your fellowship.

So, may the power of God's grace be with you, dear people.<sup>21</sup> Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings. So also Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, fellow Jews.

<sup>22</sup> [I Tertius, who has written this letter, greet you in the Lord.]

<sup>23</sup> Gaius, who is my host and whose house is open to all believers, sends greetings. Erastus, the city treasurer send his greetings—as well as his brother Quartus.

<sup>24</sup> May the grace of our Lord, Jesus the Christ, be powerfully among you—AMEN

<sup>25</sup> Now, Oh God, let me turn to You and give You the glory. You are the one who is establishing these precious people in accord with what I preach—what Jesus Christ preached. This is the unfolding of what was promised when God gave the Great Commission to Abraham (yet through unbelief has been little understood down through the centuries, and is still mysterious to many of the brethren).<sup>26</sup> Now, however, in Christ what has been there all the time in the scriptures, in the prophets, has been manifested once and for all, in line with the eternal, unchanging plan of God which reaches out to all the peoples of the world seeking those with obedient faith.<sup>27</sup> Yes, He is the only Wise God, and to Him alone be the glory.



# Paul's Middle Missionary Letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians

*Ralph D. Winter*

## Romans

Coming to Romans now we find that we are nearing the end of Paul's missionary activity. Paul stands at a very significant point. This is probably the best time to take stock of what he was, what he was doing, and how he was getting along. From now on, he really does not have the freedom to travel around and visit churches. Paul's letter to the Romans is the pinnacle of all his writing, and one of the most influential documents of all human history. How exciting to be able to consider this particular situation.

Many people feel that he wrote this letter in Corinth, and it seems likely that he spent about three months doing it. Most people do not take three months to write a letter of course. But, when Paul writes a letter, he is not happy to just write a mundane document... He writes the theological foundation much of later Christian theology! Now that was a letter! Those who have tried to make Romans out as something other than a letter- as if Paul just used the letter genre as a pretext to write a systematic theology volume- probably have failed. So, this letter was written (and I am sure that all of us have done this) to one person, but with the thought that it might be helpful to other people at the same time. He was writing to a lot of different people in Rome. It is possible that Paul was even writing to different congregations. He was probably consciously setting up his field ministries for his own sake and for other people's sake. In this sense, the book of Romans is a very balanced overall statement. But who was Paul, and what was he doing?

## Paul's Methods

First let us look at Paul's methods. Many people understand Paul's Methods as revealed in the New Testa-

ment through the prism of a very famous book on the subject. In the famous book *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* by Roland Allen a number of interesting observations and assertions are made concerning Paul's missionary methods. I must say here that I feel that Roland Allen's writings present a rather peculiar point of view. He was a rather peculiar person and was not really a missionary for very long. Allen spent 40 years just tinkering with what he wrote after he came back to England. And yet he had very strong opinions that have been very influential.

Allen says that if we assume that,

“the existence of a synagogue and the presence of some God-fearing Greeks in a city so alter the problem of church building that methods used by St Paul under these circumstances cannot possibly be applied to any modern conditions, I think we are labouring under a delusion” (p. 22).

Allen here frames the issue in extremes. It almost seems that Allen is saying that there is no value in Paul's ministry whatsoever, because of the fact that there were Greek-speaking Jews and God-fearers in the synagogues of the first century. I have summarized his position in an exaggerated manner in order to highlight why Allen has been criticized on this point. In fact, Roland Allen offers some nuancing of his own position on page 22 in the footnote of the second edition of his book. In this footnote he says: “Critics of the first edition said that I had underestimated here the importance of the converts from the synagogue.”

Allen is rather vague when he uses the word “converts”. Actually, the God-fearers that we hear about in the book of Acts were a very different class of people from the “converts.” The word *convert* usually means *proselyte*.

This conversion then does not include the “change of heart” meaning of conversion usually thought of in evangelical circles. To become a proselyte means something very similar to putting on a new set of clothing. We must get used to the fact that we as evangelicals use the word “convert” and “to convert” in one way; whereas the general populace usually uses the word in quite a different way. For instance, what if you are a missionary going into a particular country and you are stopped at a border. The border guards could very easily ask, “Are you here to convert Muslims?” You could very honestly respond, “My religion forbids me to convert anyone.” This is an honest answer because the guards, along with many other people, misunderstand the word “convert” to mean what we mean by the word “proselytizing.” Our religion is anti-proselytizing. To proselytize someone is to demand of them a wholesale cultural change. We are dealing with the hearts of people, not with their customs and cultures, primarily.

Now, back to the New Testament. The converts in the New Testament who came from the synagogue consisted of three kinds of people, potentially. There were full Jews and phony Jews. That is to say, the full Jews were proselytized Gentiles who had come over culturally into the Jewish clothing, into Jewish customs, adopting a Jewish diet, and trying to become Jews completely in every way—these were the complete proselytes. Then there were God-fearers, who were often very significant people in the wider community outside of the synagogue. The Roman Empire had many respectable elements of morality and ethics built into it. The Romans were not a licentious people to the extent that the Etruscans were, for example. They looked down on the Etruscans for their licentiousness. Many of these high-mannered Roman philosophers and citizens were very earnestly attracted to the Jewish tradition, which was omnipresent in a certain sense. Remember, Peter said: “Moses is preached in every city” (Acts 15:21)—probably a rather general statement. But many thousands of Roman citizens of various backgrounds across the empire were attracted to the synagogues. Some of them proselyted; others merely attended. The latter were probably just as devout; they were called devout persons or God-fearers. In some cases, they were catered to because they were leaders in the community and gave a kind of protection to the synagogue. They may even have been big donors. They were, no doubt, esteemed people. They were in a

very different category from the proselytes and from the Jews.

Paul drew from all three groups, but probably mostly from the last. That means that the overall casts of the fellowships that were established under his ministry were Gentile rather than Jewish. Although here in the book of Romans, we see him forthrightly addressing both what Christian Jews and also former God-fearers. These are outright Gentiles still in their culture, but who are followers of Christ.

Now, if you go back to Allen (p. vii), you notice that he says: “Critics almost invariably fixed on two points: (1) that the gulf between us and the people to whom we go” (nowadays in the pioneer mission field situation) “is deeper and wider than that between St Paul and those to whom he preached.” I think this is absolutely true. The critics also say, “(2) that he could rely upon converts from the synagogue to preserve his churches from dangers only too plain to us.” Again, I believe that is certainly true. Now, “the conclusion drawn was that what was possible for him in his day is impossible for us in ours.”

A vague parallel may be going to the most devout Muslims, who were the most understanding of the Qur’an and of the monotheistic religion which Islam consists of. A closer parallel would be that of Christianity going church to church and putting a supercharger on every church. This again is reasonable to do. Going around and reviving the churches, as many traveling evangelists do, is not an unholy task.

Paul was a traveling evangelist, reviving the faith of Jewish synagogues. But when opposition mounted, he often split those synagogues. Although that was not his main purpose, that was the practical result. Those who went with him, then constituted a new synagogue. Or, if it was not large enough to be a synagogue, it was a new *εφκκλησιωα*. The *εφκκλησιωα* is a smaller fellowship, usually referring to the “house.” The *house church* is probably the best translation of the word *εφκκλησιωα* in most cases in the New Testament.

So, Paul certainly did build on that foundation. Rather than a cop-out or an easy path, it was simply the logical, impelling and reasonable thing to do.

Further, Allen states, “St Paul always began his work by preaching in the synagogue, to Jews and God-fearing Greeks” (p. 19). He could have said: “to Jews *and*

*proselytes* and God-fearing Greeks.” That statement alone makes very weak his assumption that Paul’s ministry was that of a pioneer missionary. The two times when Paul spoke to people without that synagogue background were at Lystra, where there was kind of a mob situation. The other occurrence was at the Areopagus where he was actually invited by some fascinated Greek philosophers whom he met in the marketplace. Probably even in the marketplace he was dealing with Jews, for the most part, but other people listened in. Athens was a place where everybody was very curious about different points of view. So he got invited to this rather auspicious situation.

In both Lystra and the Areopagus, he came out with a message that was radically different. So radically different was the message, some people have thought maybe this was spurious or Luke did not catch on. But here we see the difference in approach that would be reasonable if you are dealing with people without any background, compared to people with a tremendous background. The Jewish movement prior to Christ is drastically underestimated in its power, its scope and its teaching. The preaching of Paul clearly built upon a vast prior group of people.

Thus whether we should follow, or try to follow, literally what Paul did is a significant issue. At least, I believe, there is reason for us to build on people who are seeking God, rather than on people who are fleeing their own religion. Although there is nothing wrong with doing both, most of our missionary work has focused on people who are already disaffected with their own religion—maybe for good reasons, maybe not for such good reasons.

Another major consideration that could take hours of discussion is the possibility of Romans balancing a potential conflict between James and Galatians. Take a good look at the key passage in Romans which, in my opinion, balances out both James and Galatians. Galatians was the first letter that we have of Paul (maybe not the first that he wrote, but the first we have). At the end of chapter 9, Paul sums up the nature of the law and of faith which is a very satisfactory conclusion. He states, “What shall we say, then?” Paul comes to a sort of conclusion here. “Okay. The Gentiles—they’re not noted for pursuing the kind of righteousness that we think about; but they attained righteousness of a sort, the kind of righteousness which is that heart-seeking of God.” That is a free translation. “But Israel,

pursuing a law of righteousness, a written description of righteousness, did not arrive. Why? Because they did not pursue it in faith.”

As Paul states elsewhere in Romans, the law is holy, just, and good. It is not bad. It just is not by itself salvific. Anybody who simply goes through the motions is not going to get anywhere. On the other hand, it is no great advantage *not* to have that law. In Romans Paul is doing a balancing act of marvelous finesse between both the Jewish believers in Christ and the Gentile believers in Christ. Ultimately Paul defends one against the other all the way through this book.

For us, of course, one of the brilliant questions regarding Romans relates to, Is there any missiological significance in this book? Carson does point this out. He talks about Paul’s desire to go on to Spain, and the missionary nature of this. He floods you with other people’s views of all kinds, and shows how most of the effort expended by Christians on the book of Romans has been uninterested in or unaware of the missiological significance of the letter. The vast number of writings on the book of Romans ignores that totally. But fortunately, Carson, Moo, and Morris do not; and for that we are grateful.

This is an exciting moment in Paul’s ministry, having just finished his magnum opus. This is also the last of his visiting of churches. Although he visits a few people on the way to Jerusalem, there he is captured. From now on he is a prisoner. He writes the so-called prison epistles in Rome. But his actual field missionary work, when there is not much time to write a lot of letters, is behind him. This is a very key point in his ministry.

## Reflection

Upon further reflection on Allen’s book, it might be pointed out that in his chapter on preaching, he has some rather devastating comments that could be construed as being anti-contextualization. For instance, he mentions there must be “a complete break with the past” (p. 70). Then he says faith in Jesus Christ requires “breaking from the old law” (p. 71). “It meant the abandonment of the old conception of life. . . . It meant the casting away of all the former things.” This gives you the feel that his intuition would be wherever a missionary works, the people have to break with the past, turn from Satan to the living God. This is, of course, language from Acts 26. Although valid, he is unaware, I believe,

of the modern, more recent emphasis on contextualization. This is pre-anthropological talk.

Interestingly, he has the most devastating statement I have seen in print of the idea of reviving the true meaning of the old religion. According to Allen, it is a wrong thesis to say that “the work of the Christian missionary is not to call men from the heathen temple into the Church of God but to trim the dimly glowing lamp of God in the heathen temple, and to pour into it a few drops of the oil of Christian doctrine till it shines with a new radiance” (p. 71) This is what he is against, and I think it’s valid.

On the other hand, you could also make a very different meaningful statement, because people do not shed *all* of their culture and their tradition, nor even their sense of what is right and wrong. Although that does not necessarily coincide with our Christian ethical and moral tradition. I am not sure, for example, that when Allen was writing, he was aware that a spring goddess of fertility celebration at the time when the sun came up earliest or latest, the Easter sunrise service was a *pagan* service. And the missionary letters of Gregory the Great in Rome to Augustine communicated, “You don’t need to throw out that ugly, evil ceremony; let’s transform it.” You know we still throw rice at weddings. That’s not a clean break with the past; this is what they were doing in the Roman Empire before Christ was born. We have so many things that come from the past, that to say in a careless fashion, “We’ve got to make a clean break with the past” is probably unwise.

Also indicated is Allen’s talk about the power of the Jewish tradition. “Those churches were composed almost entirely of Greek converts” (p. 19), and he contrasts this to Jewish converts. He apparently does not stop to think that the Greek converts could have been out of a synagogue. There were Jews and proselytes and God-fearers in the synagogue. The latter two categories were Greeks. So, when he says the churches were full of Greek converts, he cannot really say that these converts came from some other place than the synagogue. He certainly emphasizes “proselytes and God-fearing Greeks brought into the Church . . . that were elements of the utmost value for the future life of the body” (p. 21).

I am not saying that every single person in the Pauline churches had been reading the Torah and hearing the readings of the Old Testament for years and years. My contention is that there were enough such people to

constitute a strong foundation. This seed-planting base, in a certain sense, asks whether it is absolutely fair to say that Paul was a church-planting missionary. In almost all cases, he was building on another. He was building on the marvelous and significant impact of Judaism all across the Roman Empire.

Allen combats this by saying, “You know, this caused him more trouble than it helped him, because he started up the hostility of the Jews.” Obviously, Paul was not trying to make things hard for himself by deliberately stirring up the Jews. Rather, he was trying to make things easy for himself, if you wish, by going where the people were seeking God. And that’s what he did. So when he said: “I have preached the gospel all the way from Jerusalem to Yugoslavia” (to use a modern phrase—or Bosnia, or Croatia), he says he covered all the synagogues in those places. That was his *modus operandi*, and an excellent strategy. Such is not exactly the kind of strategy that people today would be able to follow. That, of course, is the major weakness of Allen’s particular treatise, which is so valuable in many ways.

Additional reflection on Romans and the potential conflict between James and Galatians should involve the key realization that we are not looking from a legalistic Jewish tradition into a Greek tradition; we are looking from a legalistic Greek tradition into a renewal of that tradition. The Greek state church today has all of the legalistic characteristics of the Jewish tradition from which Paul was moving. So it was not just a case of Jews and Greeks, but also a case of legalism versus vitality. That is critical to our understanding.

Luther very validly applied this situation to the legalistic Roman situation. The fit was not there, however, when he tried to apply it “willy-nilly” on top of the Germans. Paul was able to utilize this kind of emphasis at that point as well. Luther, as with Paul in Galatians, was so unhappy about that legalistic imposition that he reacted very negatively. Luther actually said: “Hey, the letter of James is an epistle of straw.” Only later in his ministry did he realize that maybe there was something to James. So we need to realize that the balance that we see in Romans 9 and in other parts of Romans is a very important correction.

Then as we consider how Romans relates to the Great Commission, Carson’s point on the significant aspect of Spain in this picture is helpful. He makes a wonderful statement. Speaking of certain expositors’ claims,

he says that “the general theological tenor of the letter is due to Paul’s desire to prove that he is orthodox and worthy of support” (p. 249). Most commentators would not go quite that far.

I believe that Paul had other reasons besides just saying, “Look, I’m worthy of support.” But this occasioned a full-dressed treatment of his preaching. When you go to a church to get support for missionary mobilization or missionary fieldwork, it is only legitimate that people know exactly what you stand for, what you believe and preach. So Paul spent a good part of three months writing Romans. For me, it took a year and a half in my devotions every day to put this into my own words. Romans is a marvelous letter for that reason. But certainly, in its occasion for writing and explicit purpose for writing, it is a means of bonding with the Roman congregations and with the hope of going on to Spain to go to more and more of the synagogues.

One other aspect in Carson, Moo, and Morris is the writing about God’s first “word” to the Jews and his second “word” to the Greeks or Romans—the Church (pp. 254-255). Although that may be an interesting approach, frankly, it was the same word. The assumption that God changed his message, and especially the idea that a new dispensation occurred in which things were radically and totally different, is completely unwarranted.

The dispensational scholars of the past have done a great blessing to everyone by pointing out differ-

ences. But the interpretation of those differences can vary with the passing of time. “We’ve changed our plan now; we’re going to say things differently and do things differently; we haven’t been focused on the Gentiles before, but now we are.” A change of chronology and of strategy may be common. Far better, it would seem to me, is to consider this the same word in a different context. The contextualization of that word occasions the differences, rather than some chronology which says, “Let’s see, God’s going to try a new trick.”

The simultaneity of the Cross itself and the cross-cultural move of the Word are what confuse people. It is as if the Cross enabled or created the possibility of speaking directly and impellingly to the Gentiles. I do not believe that to be true. The Cross enabled the Word of God to come to people before it happened, just as well as after it happened. The continuity or discontinuity can be interpreted, obviously, in several different ways.

This book of Romans is not something that we are going to cover in a brief period. Our whole purpose in this course is to introduce you into riches that may take years to digest. We are perfectly happy for that process to lengthen out across the years. Our expectation is not that you will lay aside the book of Romans from this point on because you have gotten it all already. Instead, let us anticipate a rich future in contemplation of these different matters.





# Issues in the New Testament Church

*Panel: Ralph Winter, James Emery*

**M**oderator Ben Sells: Let's go to the question: Was Paul a missionary? Presenting on that question is Dr. Ralph Winter, the general editor of the World Christian Foundations curriculum.

*Ralph Winter:* This question is only a kind of teaser to bring in the idea that many things that are settled understandings do not always turn out to be really true. This is especially true of ancient materials. Unfortunately, it is possible for truth, somewhat out of the normal circulation, which is referred to again and again, to gradually gravitate away from the reality.

Previously, I mentioned the ancient classical categories of philosophers, the different kinds of scholars and leaders. Take the Stoics for example. We think of stoical as a very specific thing in English. But the Stoics were not really stoical. We speak of epicurean tastes, but the Epicureans did not have epicurean tastes. We think of things that are platonic, but Plato was not necessarily platonic. Even if you get out of the world of so-called secular thinkers into the Christian world, you find similar misunderstandings about key words. I remember being shocked some years ago reading Latourette's account of Pelagius. Towards the end he says, "Well, really, Pelagius was not a Pelagian." In other words, what we speak of as a theological concept, Pelagianism, is not something that Pelagius himself would identify with, certainly not completely. According to Latourette, the best you could say is that he was a semi-Pelagian. People have even said that Calvin was not a Calvinist. Certainly the truth is that the Puritans did not necessarily have puritanical tastes. Many words, terms, and concepts, in their popular use, do not correspond to the reality. So we should not be too surprised if, when we look closely at Paul, we do not really find what we normally think of as a missionary.

Many different phenomena exist in missions today. Almost nothing is not "missionary," the way the word is stretched and used all over the world. But it is true that mission fields of the world often turn up bicultural people that are very valuable to the missionaries. Missionaries are unwise if they do not make good use of these bridge personalities. Paul was bicultural. He did not even grow up in the mission-sending land, if that is Palestine or Judea; he grew up on the mission field itself. Native born into the Greek language and culture, Paul did not go to language school. Neither did he have to worry about what the people really meant by what they said. Going through a monolingual linguistic contortion in order to figure out what their language meant was not part of Paul's process. We normally associate the missionary role with that of crossing cultural boundaries from the known to the unknown. Paul did not cross to the unknown. Not only was he well acquainted in the Greek culture, but also he was a Roman citizen himself. So, immediately, we do not see the ordinary missionary character of that situation.

Another factor that is momentous and truly different from most missionary situations is evident in this period. Long before Paul ever ventured further west from his location in what we now call Asia Minor or Turkey—centuries before—there were other Jews that went ahead. There were so many that Peter could refer to the fact that Moses was preached in every city (Acts 15:21). Although probably a general statement, it is remarkable and a very significant fact that Paul for the most part went to people who already knew the Bible (the Bible at that point in history being a little more than the Old Testament, for the Septuagint included additional materials).

So here you have a massive *diaspora*, which is just a Greek word for dispersion. But that dispersion was not

really a voluntary dispersion. The northern tribes were forcibly relocated. The pressure of trade and financial problems and the demands of commerce and economics also dispersed the Jews to a major extent. Several remarkable points are evident about this dispersion.

The Jews learned other languages, like Paul and his parents. But they kept the faith. One reason for the dispersion in the first place was that the Jews had not kept the faith. Times come to mind personally when I lived in a foreign land where English was not the normal means of communication. I would see people maybe once every three or four months who were probably American tourists. I could just feel welling up within me the desire to figure out some reasonable approach to those people so I could talk English to them. Now in this country of English speaking, I would not even think of stopping and conversing with the average person on the street. But when you are in a strange situation, the differences in your homeland grow very much smaller. The different points of view within the Jewish background probably were smaller in those outposts like northern England, for example, where synagogues were to be found. This context which happened many years before Paul was a very special missionary advantage, even if you insist that Paul *was* a missionary. Most missionaries cannot go where there are years and years of Bible study and devout people.

Then a second consideration relates to the fact that not just the Jews kept the faith. There were Gentiles also attracted to the faith. In one sense, this was even more significant to Paul's ministry for there existed a pre-prepared situation into which he went. If Paul was a missionary, he was a lucky missionary to have that kind of outreach situation! This reality was an interesting testimony to the power of the revelation in the Word of God. In the Old Testament, no less! In addition, it testified to the openness of the Gentiles compared to the Jews. The fact, however, that the Jews opened up their worship services to people who came is instructive.

Two kinds of people came. Some had totally embraced the Jewish tradition. Their background was still there. They could still speak Greek, their own relatives perhaps were Greek and had not embraced the Jewish tradition. These were called *proselytes*. This word is kind of a funny word in the New Testament. That there were lots of proselytes and that these people were in every synagogue is important. Such proves the openness of the Jews to other people coming into their world. They

might not have been really excited about their daughters marrying a proselyte boy, but they at least allowed them in the church, and they respected them.

On the other hand, there were other Gentiles who came into the situation, who had not quite made up their mind to become proselytes. They were also respected. The normal term for them is *God-fearers*, or devout persons. Again, for Paul's missionary career, the existence of such people was a very significant fact. A missionary does not normally have a situation with truly devout people who know the Word of God and have studied it for years. They needed a corrective and additional insight that was not easy to explain and was revolutionary, but it was not the whole story. The word gospel refers to that additional revelation or understanding which took so long for Paul to understand; and it probably took a long time for his hearers to understand.

The fellowships that gravitated out of the Jewish synagogues into these Greek fellowships apparently consisted of both proselytes and maybe even some Jews. Certainly there were both proselytes and God-fearers because there was that delicate problem of what do you do with people who have embraced Christ but who come with Jewish customs and concerns. This is addressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 where Paul says: "I go as a Jew to the Jews, a Greek to the Greeks," and he is talking about different kinds of people. But in Romans, especially Romans 14, he's saying: "You don't have to be circumcised, you don't have to be Jewish to be accepted by God." Here he's saying: "Nevertheless, those who carry into the Christian faith their Jewish culture, Jewish traditions, Jewish ideas and who are very conscientious about this, are people that we should take seriously." If for them meat offered to idols is unthinkable and atrocious, horrible and sinful, then don't brandish your sense of freedom in eating meat offered to idols. If your faith is strong enough to allow *you* to digest that kind of meat, do not force that in the face of these other believers who may have been proselytes or even Jews, and who still continue to keep those traditions very seriously.

So here we have a situation where Paul had very difficult and complex people to deal with in the fellowships which were called *ecclesias*. We often think of Paul as a church-planting missionary. I question if that phrase applies to Paul, because he did not create churches. He went deliberately, systematically, to synagogues, which were clusters of households. Those households were

built around extended families, but they had slaves and servants and other people that they generously involved. All of them were governed, you might say, by elders. Some of those households went with Paul; some stayed with the synagogue. The households that went with Paul were Pauline Christian fellowships. They were no more *ecclesias* than they were before. The word *ecclesia* is in the Greek Bible, which goes clear back to the Old Testament and means *fellowship*. A synagogue is a cluster of *ecclesias*. Paul did not really *establish* *ecclesias*—he *converted* *ecclesias*. He gave them a new insight; he gave them the gospel. But he did not have to tell them how to operate. Instructions were not given on how to have a worship service within their own fellowship. He referred to “the church that is in thy house” when he wrote to Philemon, who was an elder of one of these households. It was obviously a fellowship that was already operating before Paul ever came into the situation.

Again, it is not my purpose to detract from Paul’s ministry, but simply to preserve and protect the other kind of mission: *going where there are no biculturals*. And even if there are, the missionary himself is not a bicultural person. In the world in which we live we still need people who are willing to become that kind of a missionary.

If you wish to call Paul a missionary, you can call everybody a missionary in one sense or another, which is okay by me. But the fact is that Paul’s ministry was very distinctly different from the ordinary missionary concept. This means we cannot ask the question Roland Allen asks seriously in his book, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul’s or Ours?*—unless we answer: Right! Paul had his methods for his situation, but we cannot use those methods. We can learn a great deal because he was involved in a process of contextualization which is always a constant. In his situation, there were lots of biculturals who had feet in both worlds. There was not the absence of Biblical foundations that have been such a headache to most missionaries.

We really need to stop and think when we think of ancient terminology. The words *missions* and *missionary*, like Socratic or platonic or stoic or puritan or Pelagian, may not actually be what we think they are, if we look more closely a second time.

*Moderator Ben Sells:* Presenting for the second question is Dr. Jim Emery, our curriculum consultant. As churches are established in other cultural contexts,

many conflicts arise regarding ethics and morality. *How does one decide if a given custom in that group is moral or immoral?*

*Jim Emery:* First of all, do you know what is moral? Do you know what is ethical? We have a lot of conflicts, for instance, in the debates in our government about ethics. Most of us probably have a difficult time stating what is really moral and what is ethical. I was confronted with this some time back in the Latin American context. I knew they had very different views on certain issues of morality and ethics. But all of a sudden I realized they separated the two, ethics and morality, as two distinct ideas.

We need to realize that anywhere we go around the world, in any cultural group, there are characteristics and activities that are approved and things that are disapproved. There are activities according to the customs of this particular group which are all right to do, even considered to be favorable. Others that are not and that are completely proscribed.

What, then, is moral? What is ethical? We need to look at this in detail, not only from a Christian standpoint, but also from the standpoint of the people in different places of the world. What I would say is that what is right in God’s sight is moral; what is not right in God’s sight is not moral. But see, this is coming from a very particular perspective. This comes from an assumption that there is a God and that this God has created a moral universe in which we live. Therefore, since we are responsible to him; he is the one who sets the criteria.

Many people do not accept these criteria and deprecate Christian values. Recently, I had a letter from a person who was running down a particular group of Christians because of their values. The person writing this letter was trying to indicate that he was really above and beyond values. When you begin to probe, however, all people have values because they are all making judgments. They make judgments against Christians for doing certain things, and these judgments come from their own set of assumptions.

What, then, is moral? What is ethical? In some places, ethics would be considered to be a kind of philosophical background, whereas morality has more to do with people’s day-to-day actions. When we look at this from a Christian standpoint, it leads us to the Ten Commandments and then the Two Great Com-

mandments. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) lay down strict directives: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” “Thou shalt not murder”—all expressed in a negative sense. Yet these come to be the basic criteria. One problem we have when we move to other worlds and to other peoples is how do we define these? Is it murder, for instance, to kill somebody from another tribe? Or is it murder only if we kill somebody within our own group? Is it adultery if I take the wife of somebody from another tribe? When we go out and raid a village, we kill the men and take the women. Is this adultery?

In later times, the Jews acted differently, but in Exodus and in Leviticus there are many passages that tell the Jews that they are to treat the Gentiles among them the same as they treat their own people. Most people around the world operate with an in-group/out-group perspective. Within your in-group, you have to be very moral, you have to uphold very strict standards. With respect to the out-group, however, you have more freedom to do what you wish. We know that in later years, this in-group/out-group mode was practiced in Judaism. In the Middle Ages, and even later, the Jews could provide loans at interest, whereas the Gentiles in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches were not allowed to. So people would go to the Jewish money-lenders to get funds. They needed it, and others would not give it to them because they did not get any interest for it. Here again you have this in-group/out-group picture.

In many places around the world, many of what we consider to be basic moral issues are defined according to very different standards. We need to be aware of these. What do we do with such standards? Obviously in certain areas, some of these contentions have become extremely hot topics. A topic of concern in the U.S. and in some other countries has to do with homosexuality. Is it moral? Is it ethical? Is it immoral? Take time to examine the different passages in the Bible regarding homosexuality. As you read, be careful to note the logic of the argumentation. Are their arguments cogent? From what assumptions do their discussions flow?

We also need to look in the Bible to see what it means to worship idols. What is idolatry? In Ephesians 5:5, for instance, greed or covetousness is considered idolatry. Yet in how many of our churches is there ever any condemnation of greed?

When I worked in Central America, churches there frequently put people under discipline if they violated certain categories of activities. Some of those, of course, were very straightforward biblically. If there was a case of fraud or theft or adultery, they were condemned and put under discipline. In many other cases, however, some of the elders of the church were using discipline for vengeance on other people. Questionable evidence was being used. These elders were not confronting nor bringing forth evidence as to whether these accusations actually happened. So you may have many different motivations for discipline. What, then, is ethical? What, then, is moral in a situation?

As a missionary going into other cultures, one can meet numerous situations that do not fit our preformed categories. What do we do with these? On the one hand, we do have the clear readings of the Bible. But every statement of the Bible has to be interpreted. What does it mean to lie? On one occasion I was working with a person in Venezuela conducting a seminar. He really had to have a projector for his presentation. He asked the fellow who was running the seminar, “Will you get me an overhead projector?” The fellow said, “Sure, sure.” “Will you have it here for me tomorrow?” “Sure, sure, no problem.” He showed up the next day for the seminar—no projector. “This guy lied; it was a flat-out deception. He didn’t have any intent of getting me an overhead projector!”

Now, what did the Latin mean? In all probability, he was saying, “Yes, I’ll see what I can do to get an overhead projector. If I can’t, there won’t be one; but I’ll do what I can.” Now, the one giving the seminar was purely North American monoculture. He had no way really to adjust to this situation, and from then on he always condemned the person as a liar. “You can’t trust these people. There’s no way you can deal with them. Completely immoral!” I worked with many of these same people later and had no problems. Different reasons probably, but this is a typical kind of confrontation which occurs.

What is the interpretation of a lie? What constitutes a lie? Does it involve the expectations that people have? I understand that in Japanese they never use the word *no*. They have a variety of ways to move around it. The negative comes through, but a flat-out, “No!” is never used. Are those deceptions? Are they lies? Or within the cultural context, do you understand these contortions? Here is a place where we need to look at our understanding of morality and of ethics.

*Moderator Ben Sells:* This concludes our two presentations. Let us turn to some reflections and final thoughts by our presenters.

## Reflection Session

*Moderator Ben Sells:* Let us reflect further on the question, *Was Paul a missionary?* Dr. Winter is going to come and listen to your reflections, and share some of his as well.

*Ralph Winter:* Was Paul a missionary? I did want to stir up our thinking by my earlier response.

*Student:* Romans 15:20 says: “I’m not going to build on another man’s foundation.” Do you restrict that to the synagogues? I mean, is he only talking about Jewish outreach?

*Ralph Winter:* I believe Paul totally restricted his ministry to synagogues. The only apparent meaning the Romans passage could have is that there were other renewal teachers like Paul who were telling people that a legalistic fulfillment of God’s will was not good enough, and that the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel had a far more vibrant, exuberant, dynamic life to offer. Paul did not want to go where any of those teachers had been. “I’m not going to build on another man’s foundation.” But all the followers of Paul in the business Paul was in were building on foundations that were there years ago. I believe that Paul would never stay seven years in one place. Neither would a modern missionary who had the foundations upon which Paul was building. Paul was building on foundations of 700 years, or 200 years, or 100 years, or 70 years, not just 7 years. Obviously he could move on, because he was essentially interpreting for the people something that had a strong foundation that already existed.

*Student:* I like your definition when you said Paul was a *bridge* personality because he was trained in both Jewish and Greek cultures.

*Ralph Winter:* Would that all missionaries had the knowledge of the target culture that Paul had, but they don’t. So the parallel really is not very helpful. There are many marvelous parallels to draw, but it is not safe to feel the parallel should be complete.

Speaking of this foundation, not only did Paul respect the faith of the Jews who were already there, but he respected the response of the people who were not Jews. Probably as Christians today read the New Testament,

they tend to underestimate the incredible advance accomplishment of the Jewish Diaspora. The tendency is to believe that these Jews really had nothing. We like to believe that Paul brought everything to the situation, sort of like a supercharger. We tend to underestimate and understate, maybe even intentionally, the power of the Word of God. The Word had been working in the lives of the Jews to make them exemplary people who would attract others into their very culture as well as into their faith. Others would at least come through the door and listen and hear the Word of God. We underestimate and underrate all of that foundation simply because we would like to believe that Christianity is totally new, something they did not have anything of at all. Yet that really is not the situation.

Stop and think: the response of the Gentiles was genuine. The Septuagint was no doubt produced by Jews for Jews, to a great extent. But as soon as it got into the Greek language, watch! That book was practically pulled out of the hands of the Jews; the Gentiles ran with it. The Gentiles in a way were more interested in the Bible than the Jews were. Then stop to think: Who wrote most of the New Testament? It was a Gentile! The largest body of wording in the New Testament by any one person was written by Luke, and he was a Gentile. Who was it in the New Testament who did the most careful reconstruction of the events of Jesus’ life, of Paul’s life, even though he was not there in the earlier period of Paul’s ministry? It was a Gentile. So we need to recognize that when God’s love is shed abroad to all peoples, it isn’t that we’re the good people. Just since we have been responsive, we cannot expect rejection and hardness of heart on the part of other peoples. If the New Testament says anything, it says that the people who did not have the Word were more responsive than those who did.

*Roberta Winter:* Would you say that at Lystra and at Athens, in those two situations where Paul was not involved in a synagogue but was speaking to pagans on the one hand and intelligentsia on the other hand, that he was acting as a real missionary there?

*Ralph Winter:* In those two situations, he did not have believing people to wrestle with and to talk to—true. But they were Greeks. He did not have to learn their language. Like most mission-field Christians, these people did not have to wrestle with what is the missionary saying now? Often it can be hilarious the troubles and difficulties that mission-field people hear,

not just the Christians, but especially the people who are not acquainted with the missionaries' damaging of the language. Paul never faced that problem.

*Roberta Winter:* Except that at Lystra, he had a real culture clash—whether he was a god or not. Evidently it didn't bother these people that here was a god who had come among them.

*Ralph Winter:* Yes, but he wasn't surprised. He understood perfectly their reaction. The average missionary would be flabbergasted! "What do I do now?" He would look in the book to see what he should do now. We have a great deal to learn from Paul's experiences, but we're not going to be able to match the patterns. I think a missionary who would go to Greece and deal with Orthodox Christians, to try to turn them on to the vibrant reality of dynamic faith, would be a closer parallel to Paul today than a pioneer frontier mission field would be.

*Henrietta Watson:* What about the people, maybe not Christians, but who have been very sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of what they have heard? I've seen things like that happen.

*Ralph Winter:* I think that's exactly what I'm trying to say. The Septuagint was actually torn out of the hands of the Jews. It was used so widely by Gentiles that the Jews themselves distanced themselves from it even though they produced it. It took the Jews 800 years to come out with their own Hebrew edition. They have blamed the Septuagint for all kinds of twisting of verses, and so forth, and maybe they have twisted the verses in the Hebrew.

I'm only saying that it's astounding that the people who didn't have a chance were more responsive in many ways than those who had been under the blessing for centuries of the revelation of God. That, of course, is not just an indictment of the Jews. It's an indictment of Christians, who have had the Word for centuries. There are more Bibles in America per household than any place in the world, but very few of these Bibles are read. So we ourselves are facing a similar situation.

*Moderator Ben Sells:* Let us move on to the next question. *As churches are established in other cultural contexts, many conflicts arise regarding ethics and morality. How does one decide if a given custom in that group is moral or immoral?* Dr. Emery.

*Jim Emery:* This is truly a reflection question. Does anybody have a response to this?

*Roberta Winter:* I think the whole problem of what do you do is very interesting. For example, when your family is pagan with expectations, how are you supposed to act at a funeral? This is a difficult matter with no easy answers. One consideration is that the Christian community should be brought in to help you decide what to do. Do not make a decision on your own. When you make it on your own, two things may happen. You could compromise your own standing in the community as a Christian. The other is that the community itself may discipline you to the extent that you fall away eventually.

*Jim Emery:* Any other comments?

*Student:* Pretend that you are Elisha, and you healed Naaman. Naaman says, "Okay, I now realize that you, Elisha, are the servant of the true and living God. But I've got to get along with my boss. I'll have to go in when he goes in to worship in the temple of Dagon. Would this be okay? What should I do?"

*Jim Emery:* Elisha had the advantage. He stayed in the back room and sent his servant out. Of course, that may be what I would like to do also: send my servant out and avoid the situation. This, incidentally, is what a lot of missionaries do at this point.

*Student:* What I was really after: Are there any guidelines that we can use that give us any indications as to the direction we should go in this?

*Jim Emery:* In the case of Naaman and his boss, I think there are some things that might be useful. One is obvious from a Christian standpoint. We need to start off from the Bible, particularly those principles that God has laid down as very clear, which to my mind is expressed in the Ten Commandments. If I interpret the Ten Commandments correctly, and also the Two Great Commandments, what God is really concerned about is our relations with other people and what our actions do to other people.

With respect to this whole issue of idolatry, as I mentioned earlier, Paul says in Ephesians: greed is idolatry. Is there a sense in which the thing, activity, or person to which we pay most attention is an idol? In other words, we are taking our focus off of God, and putting it on something else, be it a creature or ourselves—this is idolatry. It's what we do to God in our relationship with him. In the other commandments, it is what we do to other people. The issues that come

up do not have anything to do with what we touch or taste, or places we go. Are you violating the Christian tradition if you go into a bar? Many would say, yes. Is it violating tradition if Naaman goes into the temple with his boss? Does that imply that he is negating his own faith? Here we come into the ambiguity. Maybe, maybe not. What did people interpret that to be?

Here are the criteria I consider. The first one is an understanding of the Word of God and its application. The second relates to whether it harms the relationships that we have with other people. An old missionary that worked with us in Guatemala was recognized as a true Christian gentleman. How does a gentleman live? Wherever he goes, he respects other people. Can we be respectful of others and not hurt them? This

would be my other criterion. The third one maintains the integrity of the group in that society. In other words, don't do things which really damage that group of people. Take the issue of polygamy in Africa, for instance. If you force a person to get rid of all his other wives on becoming a Christian, the only recourse the former wives have is to go into prostitution. In other words, am I breaking up the integrity of this society?

One thing I regret, and it's common to almost all missionaries. When I went to the field, I did not take one man's advice. When he wanted to learn another language, he went and sat down where people were and listened. I did not spend enough time listening.

*Moderator Ben Sells:* This concludes "Issues in the New Testament Church." Thank you.





# The First Four Hundred Years (0-400 AD)

*Ralph D. Winter*

**W**e have for convenience divided the whole of history into 400-year periods rather than focusing on what happened in every century. I am not very interested in getting people to remember unrelated details. I think the ability to remember something is almost useless unless what you remember is tied into some concept. So I would like now to talk about concepts that relate to the first 400-year period, 0 to 400 AD.

## Historiographic Difficulties

First of all—and almost preliminary to any discussion of what happened so far back in history—is the question that could be called historiographic. It is a question of how you know what you know.

One of the most eminent professors in the world in the field of history, Lynn White, Jr., made the statement that if it were not for the Carolingian Renaissance we would know no more about the ancient Roman Empire than we know about the ancient Maya, which is not very much. There are only four documents available at this time in history that come directly to us from the era of the Roman Empire. Everything else we know results from the literary output of converted savages in the forests of Europe and the Bible study centers they established. In each center they treated the Bible with great care. These were the first Bible schools where they studied not only the Bible, but secular literature as well. They copied and recopied especially the Bible, but also a lot of the ancient Roman literature. Except for those four manuscripts, the ancient Greek or Roman literature we have today was preserved due to that intervening “Bible school” activity after the fall of the Roman Empire. And this rescue of the litera-

ture came just in time before the Vikings swept in and burned most of it to ashes again.

In other words, we are looking back over many centuries—many mountain ranges, leaving valleys of darkness in order to get back to Latin Rome. It is really amazing that we know anything at all about events that far back.

There is a second dimension of difficulty, however, that is not just a physical problem. It has to do with blankets of prejudice. Everything we do has that complication. For instance, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon is a very detailed and lengthy set of volumes which scrounges its information from many other documents, most of which are still available. But it is a highly selective, biased and colored account. His whole purpose is to prove that the Christian faith wrecked the Roman Empire. And the fact that he has a hard time proving this is at least one positive thing, but the record he gives is a distortion due to his prejudice. There is not a single unprejudiced document in history (except for the Bible itself that attacks its own people over and over again).

For example, the Roman Catholic tradition with determination and thoroughness has tended to revise and twist the entire Christian history in order to make its own church lineage look like one single beautiful, continuous phenomenon. This means that a Roman Catholic document talking about the Celtic church should be treated with a healthy dose of distrust. Neither can an English document be trusted when it talks about the Celtic church: the English church was even more irritated about the Celtic Church than were the Romans.

We constantly run into vast prejudices. The art of the interpretation of history is to a great extent catching on to the prejudices, and then, by allowing for them, figuring out what must have been true.

Let me give you one example. Those of you who have heard of Pelagius immediately think of him as a heretic. During Pelagius' period of time, Augustine of Hippo was the orthodox theologian who argued with Pelagius, telling him and everybody that Pelagius' theology was heretical. To this day church historians usually consider his theology to be a notable heresy. They base their comments to a great extent on Augustine's judgment. The church historian Latourette did his research on Pelagius and made the statement that Pelagius probably didn't believe exactly what his antagonists said he believed. It is almost always true in an argument if only the documents written by one side are available. The persons criticized may not have said all the things their opponents ascribe to them. So Latourette made the rather astounding statement that Pelagius was probably not Pelagian! He was, at the most, a "Semi-Pelagian."

The question that an anthropologist might raise over this situation is why these two theologians were arguing in the first place. Since hardly anything written by Pelagius himself is in existence today, we cannot simply read the text of his argument and decide for ourselves; all we have is what his accusers said about him. Why was there an argument? That is the most important preliminary question.

It is not very hard to find out that Pelagius came from the wrong side of the tracks. He was not even a citizen of Rome. He came from the Cornwall area—the lower south end of Britain in the Celtic belt where the Roman legions were still in charge. Apparently, some of the people there were highly educated but were not first-class Romans. When Pelagius went down to Rome, he already knew Greek, Hebrew and Latin, whereas Augustine, a first-class Roman citizen, knew only Latin and could not read either Greek or Hebrew.

Picture Pelagius walking into Rome, much about him betraying his background from the sticks—he may even have had the wrong color of hair, blonde instead of Mediterranean black—but, nevertheless, with such sophisticated academic credentials (better than Augustine's). You can well imagine that this would provoke an argument, no matter what Pelagius believed.

After visiting Rome and (Roman) North Africa, Pelagius went on his way to the Middle East. We next hear about him when he got into Jerome's sphere, and

Jerome called him a "Celtic pig"—not a very scholarly evaluation. He not only called Pelagius a pig, but actually said, "that stupid pig like all the other Celts"—a comment which gives us insight into the "broad research" Jerome had done.

Then Pelagius disappears from the pages of history except for other occasional references to him in the documents from the period of the Carolingian Renaissance which were faithfully and mechanically copied. These are still available to us, and when we read about Pelagius, we tend to say, "Oh, what a terrible heretic this guy was."

Thus, when you go back and try to find out what happened, you encounter not only mechanical problems in just getting the data, but also cultural factors—enormous prejudices, which may cause even more misunderstanding.

One other example is the Venerable Bede, who was one of the very few historians during the first millennium, and one of the most trustworthy. He wrote a very detailed account of the English-speaking church. Even he had to deal with political correctness. Bede lived in a post-Celtic era after the Synod of Whitby when the English church had supposedly adopted the Roman (Catholic) tradition. Although an Anglo-Saxon, he was educated in a Celtic area, but was politically unable to write anything that was pro-Celtic. Thus, all the way through his rather thick and very interesting book, *An Ecclesiastical History of the English-Speaking People*, Bede is constantly taking pains to point out that Celtic scholars were wrong about the Easter date, the "tonsure" (the haircut that monks wore), and other equally "important" things.

However, leaking into the narrative, either subconsciously or very likely consciously, is a steady campaign. If you read the whole book and stop to think about what is really being said, you get a different point of view. Bede is quite pro-Celtic. Before the Synod of Whitby, most of the Celts in Britain were followers of Pelagius; indeed, many continued to revere him for four hundred more years. In his book, Bede presents these Celtic Christian leaders as humble, godly people. In his detailed story of the exchange at the Synod of Whitby, the Roman church leaders come across as insufferable snobs, even though they are the ones who happen to have the correct theology. In other words, Bede bows to the political necessity of following Rome, but we can tell where his sympathies really lie

if we read the entire book carefully, being aware of the racial tensions of the time.

So here is a piece of literature that is superficially prejudiced in order to get published, but is more accurate and sympathetic in its between-the-lines message. These are just examples of how historiography must discover and grapple with prejudice.

One more point under historiography: what is it then that we do know? Most of what we know about the phenomenon of Christianity in the first 400 years after Christ comes from only one or two documents. It either comes from the New Testament itself, which is a blazing beacon of truth and light in the early part of this 400-year period, or it comes from one other set of documents, the work of Eusebius, the official chronicler of the Roman Empire.

Most historians are embarrassed to admit that they have to trust Eusebius. When Christianity became officially tolerated, he was asked by the government to pull together a lot of the documents that had survived from the catacombs and the earlier period. So, Eusebius put together a massive multi-volume set of writings. He quoted from hundreds of documents which are no longer available to us. The problem with Eusebius is probably not that he is misquoting the authors of those documents, because, compared to the original documents that we do have, his quotations are fairly accurate. But, he quoted what he wanted to quote and left out what he did not want to quote. Inevitably, hundreds and hundreds of documents are completely lost sight of except for quotations that come from Eusebius.

Thus, almost always when we are reading the Early Church Fathers—Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others—we are reading what Eusebius pulled together. Direct knowledge of this period is very scarce. And it is absolutely amazing how much we actually do know about Rome, the Roman Empire, or the Early Church, considering the problems of historiography and the heroic work of the monasteries.

## **Between the Beginning and the End**

We do know the beginning and the end of the period. The beginning is in the New Testament, and the events at the end were written down when Constantine and others allowed Christianity to flourish in the last hundred years of the 400-year period—from AD 300

to 400. Thus, we know a lot about the church in the fourth century. But we do not know anything, except indirectly, about the period between the New Testament and the fourth century.

However, if you know the beginning and the end of a story, it does not take too much imagination to figure out what happened in between. Let me give you three examples.

First of all, we know that at the beginning of this period the gospel was in a stable; at the end of the period it was ensconced in the Lateran Palace of Rome. The very palace of the emperors was taken over by the Christian church when Constantine, due to his wife's deriving from the eastern part of the empire, finally yielded to her wishes and moved the headquarters of the empire from Rome to what was thereafter to be called Constantinople. That move left behind this palace which was then turned over to the most reliable people in town, who by that time happened to be Christians.

In contrast to the West, Christianity had a sizable slice of the population in the eastern part of the empire. Perhaps as much as 30 percent of Greece was then Christian, for example. By then it was simply impossible to ignore this movement. It is utterly ridiculous to assume that, just because Constantine became a Christian, that gave the Christians an unfair advantage. Whether or not Constantine was converted, Rome would have had to tolerate Christianity anyway because by AD 300 there were so many Christians throughout the empire.

The second example of being able to conjecture because we know about the beginning and the ending is that we know the gospel went from Galilee of the Gentiles to the Goths during this period. The arguments that took place in the fourth century were so virulent and the heretics driven out so systematically that those heretics became reluctant missionaries in the Gothic areas. As a result, most of the Gothic peoples became at least nominally Christian by the end of the 400 years ("Gothic" in this case refers to all the different tribes of Middle Europe of that period). That is an end product that we know about. The mechanism whereby they were converted is not very clear, but we know that they were Christians of a sort by the end of the period. In some cases, the Goths accepted Arians exiled as heretics because they welcomed the heretics as enemies of Rome!

Thirdly, we know that the gospel went from Galatia to the Celtic peoples. We don't know that it went literally

from Galatia to Galicia (in northeast Spain), but we can at least conjecture. There was probably a connection, likely by family, by traders stretching from Galatia of Asia Minor all the way to Ireland—across the northern part of Greece through former Yugoslavia, up to the Celtic peoples in what is still called the “Celtic belt” which stretched across Southern Europe. There was likely some kind of fairly constant communication between the Celtic tribes, by ship from Asia Minor going west through the Mediterranean and Gibraltar, then into northern Spain, into what is called Galicia (another Celtic name) in the Northwest tip of Spain, into Brittany (another Celtic name) in France, and into South Wales and Cornwall or Wales and Ireland.

For Paul the Apostle to have gone to the Galatians, who were Celtic peoples, or at least to have visited among them and to have implanted the gospel into that Celtic belt gives us the possibility of imagining that it was the means whereby the gospel got so early into Ireland. Otherwise we have no explanation.

I’m not saying that the Galatians of the New Testament were Celts. They could have been. They lived in the Celtic belt, in an area named after the Celts, who landed there in 284 BC. The Greek word for Galatians, *galatoi*, is phonetically parallel to the word *celt*, the three consonants—g/k, l, t—are the evidence.

We also know that the gospel that landed in Ireland was not Western but Eastern. It was not Roman in the Latin tradition of Christianity; it bears strong evidence of Greek and Egyptian Christian background. This, of course, is another tell-tale evidence as to why Celtic Christianity must have come from the eastern end of the empire.

## The Spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire

As mentioned before, Constantine’s conversion was not the main reason why the Roman Empire became tolerant to Christianity. Constantine did not proclaim Christianity as the official religion of Rome until over a half century after his conversion.

It is interesting that even after it became official, there was a case of a short reversal. In the fourth century the emperor Julian tried to get the people of the empire to go back to their pagan tradition. That is why he is known as “Julian the Apostate.” He grew up a Chris-

tian, but apparently didn’t like the politicization of the Christian religion. Also, he had a sort of deep inherent concern for the past, and perhaps Christianity was still not sufficiently indigenized.

So he tried to reinstate the pagan tradition. He ordered the priests in the pagan temples to try to keep up with the Christian preachers. The Christian tradition emphasized helping the widows and the orphans and being kind to the slaves, often even liberating them. He ordered the pagan priests to do the same and to preach to their followers that they should do similar good works. But Julian’s intended pagan reform didn’t work. It lasted just about three years, and then collapsed when Julian lost his life in a military battle and the next emperor was a Christian.

The interesting thing about Christianity in this period, however, is that, as it began to move out of its Palestinian background, it did not carry a Palestinian trait or culture with it. In Paul’s hands it was no longer simply a Jewish tradition. To this day across the world Christianity has no homeland; there is no holy place like Mecca to which we turn nor any particular Christian culture, if we are careful not to canonize a particular tradition. It is the most nearly non-cultural religion in the world. Islam, wherever it goes, has people facing toward Mecca. They believe that the Koran cannot be adequately translated, or at least they do not like it to be translated. Christianity is characterized as a world religion. In some respects, it is the only world religion—the only multicultural religion—by the fact that it is not held down by a particular ethnic origin. This is why it was able to conquer the Roman Empire and in doing so became a potentially unifying faith among a wide diversity of peoples. It did not represent a particular language or cultural background.

Of course, there were many other reasons why the Christian religion was able to race around the empire. Very crucial was the communication system made possible by the hundreds of thousands of miles of roads paved with stones, which enabled messages to go from the far reaches of the empire to Rome itself in the matter of a few days. Secondly, the Pax Romana produced a (forced) military peace which stretched across a large section of the world. Because of this peace and the comparative ease of travel, Christianity could even cross the English Channel to Britain, thereby introducing another phrase, the Pax Britannica, or the Peace of Britain. Centuries later it was possible for the British to

rule the seas of the world without fear of pirates because they followed the example of Julius Caesar who had effectively destroyed the ability of pirates to harass ships on the Mediterranean Sea. Except for storms, travel by sea became as safe as on the roads of the empire, making it possible for the faith which had no ethnic origin to expand with linguistic and geographical freedom.

Another characteristic of this early period is the fact that there was no organized missionary work. When Paul was headed for Spain, he was part of a missionary team. But inevitably he went to the synagogues. When he wrote that “all Asia has heard the gospel,” he did not mean that he had preached to all the people in Asia Minor, as we now call it, much less what we call Asia today. In those days Asia merely meant a small “county” at the western end of what we now call Asia Minor. Nobody in the Roman era would have referred to Asia Minor, much less to China, as part of Asia. By saying that all Asia had heard the gospel Paul undoubtedly meant that he had been to every synagogue in Asia, a small eastern section of Turkey, because that was his approach. He focused on the synagogues because he was trying to find the God-fearers, those Gentiles who had been drawn to the Jewish faith but had not become Jewish proselytes. He was also trying to win godly Jews over to an evangelical faith in Christ.

Only at Lystra and at Athens do we find him preaching to pagan Greeks, and he did not do so well in those cases because his specialty was working with people who had already become friendly to the Jewish tradition. Of course, he knew about all the various kinds of people: the Jews, the Greeks, the Barbarians and the Scythians. And he was willing to become a Jew to the Jews, a Greek to the Greeks, and, I suppose, a Scythian to the Scythians, although we don't know of any work he did among the Scythians. He just named them as part of his anthropological list.

Although Paul, a Jew who had grown up in a Gentile setting, was not really evangelizing cross-culturally, he was nevertheless doing missionary work because he was planting a church where there was no church in those particular cultural traditions—that is, there was no indigenous type of Christianity there. Later on, Cappadocian prisoners who had come to Christ within the empire witnessed to the Goths to the north, as did the exiled Arian bishops kicked out by the more orthodox leaders. To the east of the empire the so-called “Nestorian” bishops were also forced to leave and carried the gospel further east beyond the boundaries of the empire.

Barbarians to the north and the west invaded the empire and captured Christian girls who spoke of their faith and sometimes won their pagan husbands.

For centuries, however, there had been colonies of Jews spread all over the Roman world. In a certain sense they made up what might be called a “missionary compound.” A synagogue in northern England, for example, was not a missionary outpost in the usual sense. But those who came to that synagogue revered their Bible, which was mostly the same as the one we have in the Old Testament today. And they learned in this Bible that God wanted all the nations to hear the gospel. Although that synagogue did not have missionary purposes like we would expect from a mission compound, nevertheless, it did have a missionary function because the God-fearers (Gentile believers) were drawn into that synagogue, and hundreds of others like it scattered all over the Roman Empire. For all we know, in Britain the synagogues preceded the witness to Christ and in that sense actually had a very valuable function.

As a matter of fact, it is very likely that, looking back at their origins, Christians have failed to realize the mighty contribution of these thousands of Jewish synagogues. There may have been one million of the God-fearers associated with the ten million Jews in the empire. And ten million Jews is about 10% of the Roman citizenry. These synagogues for centuries radiated the light of God and paved the way for a faith that would eliminate almost entirely the Jewish cultural vehicle which they unconsciously embodied.

It should be difficult to ignore the missionary significance of this fact. In all of subsequent history Jews have been upright, industrious, family-loving, God-fearing people. That they could have consciously or unconsciously attracted a million Gentiles to their Bible (and maybe 100,000 Gentiles to convert completely over to their culture—called proselytes) is something Christian historians have tended to overlook. We may have tended to write off the vast Jewish diaspora as a purely legalistic and non-functional faith, meanwhile thinking, superficially, that the Gentile version of that faith—later to be called Christianity—was pure.

We know that the first 400-year period ended with a blaze of glory by the year 400 (what I have named The Classical Renaissance) simply because the world's most powerful empire up to that point in history had been taken over by the faith of our Lord. But before Paul

ever set to work, the Jewish diaspora was in place. Peter said that “in every city Moses is preached” (Acts 15:21). What this means is that the presence of believing Jews throughout the Roman Empire was a de facto missionary movement to which we see an amazing parallel in the diaspora of Western Christian culture today. Today, then, the Biblical faith is also to be found “everywhere,” but mainly in the garments of a particular (Western) cultural tradition. Only to the extent that it can put on other clothes will it ever become a truly universal faith.

In the era of the Roman Empire the Biblical faith in the enculturated form of the Jewish diaspora was found “everywhere” within that empire, and to a much less significant extent beyond its boundaries. We hear of Jewish synagogues in India and Korea, for example.

Today, however, the Biblical faith is to be found “everywhere” to a great extent in an enculturated form called Christianity. And, like the Jewish diaspora, it is unevenly leavened by true faith. There are masses of purely wooden “followers” of this faith crowding the ranks of Christians just as there were the equivalent within the Jewish diaspora, which Paul at times downgraded harshly as a legalistic deadness. In other

cases he insisted that faith was still to be found in that diaspora—that “not all Israel is Israel” (Rom 9:6).

We would have to say the same about the modern expansion of Christianity around the globe. It is a mixed movement, not just a pure faith. Millions of “Christians” East and West are mere nominal followers. The true faith is found only partially but, nevertheless, vitally.

Thus, both Judaism or Christianity are enculturated vehicles of true faith—fairly specific cultural vehicles. The mission task is apparently then not to extend either of these vehicles but to extend the Biblical faith, preaching Christ, not Christianity, preaching the Bible, not all the twists and turns of our enormous theological tradition. And we return to our earlier conclusion: only to the extent that our faith can put on other clothes can it ever become a truly universal faith.

[But this is happening before our eyes. Africans have taken the ball and run with it—in the enormous AIC movement. The same thing has happened in the phenomenal Chinese house church movement, and in the “Churchless Christianity” movement to faith in Jesus Christ in millions of Hindu homes 20 years later.]

# Disciples of All Nations

*Philip Jenkins*

As I travel, I have observed a pattern, a strange historical phenomenon of God “moving” geographically from the Middle East, to Europe to North America to the developing world. My theory is this: God goes where he’s wanted.

*Philip Yancey, Christianity Today, February 5, 2001*

As Christianity moves South, it is in some ways returning to its roots. To use the intriguing description offered by Ghanaian scholar Kwame Bediako, what we are now witnessing is “the renewal of a non-Western religion.”<sup>1</sup> Founded in the Near East, Christianity for its first thousand years was stronger in Asia and North Africa than in Europe, and only after about 1400 did Europe (and Europeanized North America) decisively become the Christian heartland. This account challenges the oddly prevalent view of Christianity as a White or Western ideology that was foisted on the rest of an unwilling globe, under the auspices of Spanish galleons, British redcoats, and American televangelists.

In this popular image, Christianity becomes not just an aspect of Western imperialism, but an essential justification for that whole era. When twentieth-century African Americans sought religious roots distinct from the mainstream culture that spurned them, a substantial minority opted for the Muslim faith, which they regarded as authentically African. Christianity, in contrast, was seen as the tool of the slave masters. (Few Westerners pay any attention to the long history of Arab Muslim slaving enterprises in Africa.)<sup>2</sup> As “everyone knows,” the authentic religions of Africa and Asia are faiths like Hinduism, Buddhism, animism, and, above all, Islam. Not just among Blacks, a common assumption holds that when we do find Christianity outside the West, it must have been brought there from the West, probably in the past century or two. Images of Victorian missionaries in pith-helmets are commonly in the background.

The power of this hostile picture is all the more surprising when we realize how easily available are the historical sources and modern scholarly studies that utterly contradict it. We do not have to excavate obscure scholarly collections in order to read the rich and ancient histories of African and Asian Christianity. Based on this very large literature, we can see that at no point did the West have a monopoly on the Christian faith. And even at the height of the missionary endeavor, non-Western converts very soon absorbed and adapted the religion according to their own cultural needs.

## **The Myth of Western Christianity**

The whole idea of “Western Christianity” distorts the true pattern of the religion’s development over time. The conventional picture of Christian origins, presented in any number of popular history books and television documentaries, is commonly illustrated by a graphic of the Mediterranean world and Europe, with Jerusalem at an eastern extreme. Christianity grows from its roots in Palestine, spreads through Asia Minor and Greece, and ultimately arrives in Italy, the center of the map and presumably of the world. The faith then spreads through the Roman world, until by the fourth century, it becomes coterminous with the Roman Empire.

Tracing later developments from the seventh century on, animations or sequences of maps show Eastern Christianity being overwhelmed by the forces of Islam. As Muslim forces conquer each territory of the eastern or southern Mediterranean, the land affected is often

depicted, literally, fading into darkness. For a modern viewer, it is easy to understand why lands like Egypt, Syria, and Palestine would quickly be lost to the faith, since anyone can see that they were only clinging lightly to the far skirts of the Roman (and Christian) world. After the rise of Islam, maps generally shift their focus to the lands of Western Europe, especially to what will later become France and Britain. The Christian center of gravity shifted decisively from the Jordan to the Rhine, from Antioch to Chartres. In the east, all that remains by this point is the long-enduring, if ultimately doomed, presence of the Byzantine Empire, based in Constantinople. Barring this single bastion, the usual graphic representation implies that by 800 at the latest, the time of Charlemagne, Christianity was more or less synonymous with Western Europe, and grew or shrank with European fortunes. Long before this point, Christians had abandoned their perverse habit of writing sacred texts in Greek, Syriac, and Coptic, and confined themselves to good, Christian, Latin.

Popular histories always oversimplify, but in this instance, the inaccuracies are serious. To imagine the early history of Christianity, we would do much better to use the standard map of the world that was regularly offered in medieval times. In these older pictures, the then known continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia all appeared as more or less equal lobes conjoined at a central location, which was Palestine, with Jerusalem at its center. This image made splendid theological sense, in that Jesus' sacrificial self-giving occurred at the very center of the world that he was saving. Theology apart, the tripartite model is far more useful for understanding Christian expansion, which occurred simultaneously into the three continents.<sup>3</sup> When we think of the missionary endeavors of the early apostles, we look first at Paul's career in the eastern Mediterranean, because this happened to be recorded in the Acts and Epistles that form so large a part of the New Testament. Appropriately enough for the modern Europe-centered view, the book of Acts ends once St. Paul established himself in Rome. This Pauline movement became all the more important in hindsight because of the relative success of the Gentile churches after the Jewish revolt of 66-73. At the time, though, the richest fields for missionary expansion were unquestionably in Africa and Asia, rather than Europe. During the first century or two of the Christian era, Syria, Egypt, and Meso-

potamia became the Christian centers that they would remain for many centuries. Christian art, literature, and music all originated in these lands, as did most of what would become the New Testament. Monasticism is an Egyptian invention.

By the time the Roman Empire granted the Christians toleration in the early fourth century, there was no question that the religion was predominantly associated with the eastern half of the empire, and indeed with territories beyond the eastern border. Of the five ancient patriarchates of the church, only one, Rome, clearly stood in the west. The others were at Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria—three on the Asian continent, one in Africa. If we can imagine a Christian center of gravity by around 500, we should still be thinking of Syria rather than Italy. Africa, too, had its ancient Christian roots. Apart from Egypt, much early Christian history focuses on the Roman province known as Africa, roughly modern Tunisia. This was the home of such great early leaders as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, the founders of Christian Latin literature.<sup>4</sup>

## The Eastern Churches

Christianity has never been synonymous with either Europe or the West. In fact, theological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries tended to isolate European or Western Christianity from the traditional Christian lands, and leave it out on a geographical and cultural limb. Repeatedly, Christians engaged in furious debates over the nature of Christ, debates that seem arcane to most modern observers but would be crucial for defining cultural frontiers. The core question was the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ. The Catholic or Orthodox position, which ultimately triumphed, held that there were indeed two natures, which were conjoined and commingled. Most Egyptians and Easterners, however, accepted the Monophysite teaching that Christ had only one nature, and was purely divine. Nestorians accepted the two natures, but held that these were not absolutely united, so that it was blasphemous nonsense to speak of the Virgin Mary as "Mother of God." Following violent controversies, the Nestorians were cast out of the fold in 431, while the Monophysites were deemed heretical at the great ecumenical council at Chalcedon, in 451. This left the Orthodox in command of the empire and the mainstream church apparatus. Over



the next two centuries, many of the traditional centers of Christianity saw themselves as oppressed by the tyrannical rulers of Rome and Constantinople. Already, Christianity was bitterly divided between Western (European) and Eastern (Asian and African) models. Denominations arising directly from these theological squabbles survive today, and have only barely patched up their differences.<sup>5</sup>

This mutual hostility helps to explain why European Christians had little sympathy for or knowledge of some of the truly ancient Christian societies of the East, and why our historical view of the Eastern churches is often blinkered. When we refer to Christianity forming a relationship with the secular state, Western historians think first of Constantine, who granted toleration within the Roman Empire in 313. Far less celebrated are the other early states that established Christianity as their own official religion in the fourth century, namely Ethiopia and Armenia. Almost certainly, Armenia was the first state anywhere to establish Christianity as an official faith, which it did around the year 300. Armenian Christianity became increasingly separated from the Western tradition in the fifth century after it adopted the Monophysite position. Even so, Christianity survived and has flourished there up to the present day, developing a rich literary, musical, and architectural culture.<sup>6</sup>

The Ethiopian church is equally ancient, and an Ethiopian court official is one of the first Gentile converts identified in the book of Acts. Like its Armenian counterpart, the organized church in Ethiopia also owed much to Syrian missionaries of the third and fourth centuries. By the time the first Anglo-Saxons were converted, Ethiopian Christianity was already in its tenth generation. Although scarcely known by Westerners, the Ethiopian church offers one of the most heroic success stories in Christianity. Not surprisingly given its location, the church drew heavily on Egyptian influence. Through the Middle Ages, the symbolic center of the Christian kingdom was at the ancient capital of Aksum, long a point of contact with Pharaonic Egypt. An episcopal see was founded here around 340, and this remained the “home of the Ark of the Covenant, Ethiopia’s original New Jerusalem.” The Egyptian connection created a potent monastic tradition that endures to this day. It also meant that, like the Armenians, the Ethiopians followed the Monophysite teaching, which reinforced their separation from European Christianity.

Far from being concerned with the opinions of Rome, the story of the Ethiopian church for most of its history constitutes a battle between local control (the monastic leadership) and the *abunas*, the representatives of the Coptic patriarchs in Alexandria. On every side, this was a wholly African affair.<sup>7</sup>

The Ethiopian church has many aspects that would surprise a Westerner, including practices that stem from Judaism.<sup>8</sup> Believers practice circumcision, some keep a Saturday Sabbath, and many churches feature an ark. Claiming Solomonic tradition, the kings practiced polygamy. We really do not know whether early Ethiopians had been converted to Judaism before they found Christianity, or if (more likely) they just treated Old Testament models with much more reverence than would European Christians. As we will see, many modern-day African Christians likewise feel very comfortable with the world of the Old Testament, and try to revive ancient Hebrew customs—usually to the horror of European Christians.

But for all the Ethiopian church’s quirks, it would be a daring outsider who would venture to suggest that the faith for which Ethiopians have struggled and died over 1,700 years is anything less than a pure manifestation of the Christian tradition. In 1970, in the last days of the old royal regime, the church had “61,000 priests, 12,000 monks, 57,000 deacons, 31,000 *debteras* (choir leaders) and 827 monasteries.”<sup>9</sup> Even today, after lengthy conflicts with Muslims and, more recently, anti clerical Marxists, the church claims some 25 million members. To put this in Western terms, that is roughly the number of North American Methodists of all denominations combined.

## Survival

Both Armenia and Ethiopia maintained a stubborn independence for most of their history. Ethiopia was one of the last portions of Africa to be swallowed by European imperialism, and even then only briefly, during the 1930s. Yet these nations were far from unusual in keeping their distinctive religious identity alive through the Middle Ages. Even in those African and Asian regions subjugated by Islam, Christian loyalties survived for centuries.

Contrary to the historical maps with which we are familiar, Christian lights did not just fade out following the arrival of the Muslims. Initially, Muslim rulers

made little effort to encourage conversion, partly for the solid practical reason that converts to Islam ceased to pay the special taxes levied on unbelievers, so that it literally paid to keep Christian subjects Christian. The persecutions that did occur were sporadic, and usually directed against monks and clergy rather than ordinary believers. Not until the later Middle Ages did the mystical Sufi orders begin the process of popular evangelism for Islam, and they did this by offering former Christians a package of familiar practices that included saints, shrines, relics and pilgrimages, and a veneration for the ascetic Prophet Jesus. The genius of the Sufis was to present the Muslim faith in catholic forms.<sup>10</sup>

Under Muslim rule, patriarchates like Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch continued to be vital centers of ecclesiastical authority, still commanding the allegiance of millions of followers. Through the tenth century, the patriarchs of Alexandria occupied a powerful role under the Muslim rulers, and when the royal capital moved to the upstart city of Cairo, so did the patriarch's residence. Christian primates "were often used as ambassadors, consulted for political advice, or even solicited for prayer." Muslim rulers respected the countless distinctions they found among their Christian subjects. They recognized each denomination or theological tradition as a separate *millet*, a community under its own laws and courts and governed by its own particular clerical structures.<sup>11</sup>

Christians enjoyed nothing like what modern Americans construe as religious liberty, and there were stringent limits on any kind of Christian expansion. Seizures of church property are painfully symbolized by the fate of Constantinople's church of Hagia Sophia, once the greatest church in the world, which in the fifteenth century became a mosque. (Today, it is secularized as a museum.) Still, most Christian groups survived quite successfully into modern times. For many so-called heretics, like the Monophysites, Muslim rulers were no worse than Christian Byzantine emperors, and were less intrusive.

Egypt offers a telling example of Christian persistence. Partly, the Egyptian church retained such a mass following because of its enthusiastic adoption of the native Coptic language. At least the gospels and psalter were already available in Coptic by around 300. Elsewhere in North Africa, the church's insistence on speaking Latin meant that it never evangelized far beyond the cities, so that Christianity did not long sur-

vive the Muslim conquests. But Egypt offered a very different picture. At the start of the twentieth century, Coptic Christians here comprised 10 or 20 percent of that nation's people. Today, the official figure is around 5 percent, but most observers believe that is a serious underestimate. The modern Coptic Church claims 10 million members.<sup>12</sup>

The fact of Coptic survival is all the more remarkable when we recall just who these "Copts" are. Their name is a corruption of Aigyptos, that is, native Egyptians, and their language descends from the tongue of the pyramid builders. When modern scholars translated the hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone, they did so by using the language they found spoken in the liturgies of the Coptic Church. The Syrian Orthodox churches, similarly, still use a kind of Syriac that is close to the Aramaic spoken by Jesus himself. At so many points, the living Christianity of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Ethiopia, and Armenia takes us back to the earliest centuries of the faith, a time when the followers of Jesus were developing cells of believers within a still vibrant Roman Empire.

Far from being merely a tattered remnant, Christian communities would on occasion emerge as leaders within the Middle East, and seldom more so than in the twentieth century. As Arab countries struggled to respond to the dual challenges of modernization and Western domination, it was mainly Christian activists who created a ferment of ideas and policies, who initiated the various nationalist and socialist movements that swept the region in mid-century. Christians founded the Arab nationalist Ba'ath movement that still rules Syria and Iraq. Writing of Syria in the mid-1990s, William Dalrymple observed that "Five of [President] Asad's seven closest advisers are Christians." Christians led the Arab Communist parties, which have always had their strongest support in the Christian areas of countries like Palestine and Iraq. Christians founded and led many of the most militant groups in the Palestinian nationalist cause. Across the nationalist and socialist spectrum, we regularly find Arab leaders bearing characteristically Christian names like Michael, Anthony, and George. Edward Said, probably the best-known Arab intellectual in the Western world, comes from a Palestinian Christian family. Arab Christians remained politically powerful until the rise of a new Muslim fundamentalism in the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

## Numbers

Just how numerous were the Christian communities that survived under Muslim rule? As late as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Christians still made up a large proportion of most former Roman territories that had fallen under Muslim rule, in societies like Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, and it is not easy to tell when Muslims actually gained majority status in these communities. A reasonable guess would place the transition around the time of the Crusades, about 1100 or 1200. As late as 1280, the patriarch of the (Monophysite) Jacobite sect still “oversaw 20 metropolitans and about 100 bishops from Anatolia and Syria to lower Mesopotamia and Persia.” By way of comparison, the English church at the same time had just two metropolitans (Canterbury and York) and twenty five bishops. And the Jacobites were just one Christian denomination among several.<sup>14</sup>

As in Egypt, large Christian communities survived until modern times in nations like Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Turkey, indicating that they must have been still more numerous in bygone years. Even in 1900, Christians and Jews combined might have made up 30 percent of the total population of the Ottoman Empire. In the core Ottoman lands of Anatolia, the area that we today call Turkey, a substantial Christian population lasted until the early twentieth century, and Muslims were not even a majority in Constantinople itself. Christian communities survived until they were destroyed by a series of wars, expulsions, and population exchanges between 1915 and 1925. At the time of the establishment of the state of Israel, perhaps 20 percent of Palestinian Arabs were still Christian. Even today, after decades of decline and sporadic massacres, perhaps 10 percent of Syrians are Christian.<sup>15</sup>

Modern notions of medieval Christianity draw heavily on images of France and Western Europe, which are portrayed as priest-ridden, theocratic states, with little tolerance for Jews or heretics. We may be surprised to realize that through much of the Middle Ages, a large proportion of the world’s Christians themselves lived under the political power of a hostile faith. Not just in Roman times, substantial numbers of Christians lived as despised minorities. In pre revolutionary Russia, the common word for “peasant” was *Krest’ianin*, which derives from “Christian,” recalling a time when the rural masses preserved their faith in the face of Tatar and Muslim invasion. As so often in medieval times,

the Christians were the oppressed poor and ignorant, rather than the sophisticated town dwellers.

In some areas, Eastern churches actually expanded through missionary successes beyond the bounds of the Muslim world. Most spectacular among the growing churches were the Nestorian Christians, who had been labeled as heretical in late Roman times. From their bases in Syria and Persia, Nestorian missionaries penetrated deeply into Central Asia and China by the seventh century, following the silk route. The Nestorians and their “luminous doctrine” were welcomed at the imperial court, and in 638, a church was erected in the capital of Ch’ang an, then perhaps the largest city in the world. The church enjoyed 200 years of peace and toleration, before succumbing to persecution by the tenth century. Even so, the Nestorian church revived in China in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and launched missionary efforts still farther afield, probably into Southeast Asia. Christianity has been in China for a very long time—about as long, in fact, as Buddhism has been in Japan, or Christianity in England.<sup>16</sup>

Another mission field was in southern India, where the ubiquitous Syrian missionaries founded native Christian communities that claimed to follow St. Thomas, *Mar Thoma*. (Since long-established trade routes connected southern India with the Mediterranean world, Christianity may indeed have reached India as early as the second century, or even the first.) Reflecting the vast sphere of Eastern Christianity, these Indian Christians spoke Syriac and retained their links with the Nestorian patriarch of Babylon, who resided at Baghdad. Today, the Indian state of Kerala has some 7 million “Thomas Christians,” divided among Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions. The oriental triumphs of the Nestorians gave rise to the persistent Western myth of Prester John, a great Christian priest-king dwelling beyond the Muslim world.<sup>17</sup>

The size of the Christian communities in the East is significant because in the Middle Ages, the Eastern lands were more densely populated than those of Europe. Medieval England and France were Christian states, while the regimes of Egypt and Syria were solidly Muslim, but there may have been more Christians all told in the Eastern states than the Western, and the Easterners possessed at least as active a cultural and spiritual life. When judging the population of “Christian Europe,” we should also recall that large parts of Europe did not even nominally accept Chris-

tianity until well into the Middle Ages. Russia and the Scandinavian lands were both converted around 1000, but Lithuania, then a major state dominating much of Eastern Europe, did not formally accept Christianity until 1387. In the thirteenth century, the height of medieval Christian civilization in Europe, there may have been more Christian believers on the continent of Asia than in Europe, while Africa still had populous Christian communities.

My estimates differ from those of the standard reference source, namely the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, which has made a valiant effort to

**TABLE 2.1**

**Distribution of Christians in Ancient and Medieval Times**

| Continent     | Christians (in millions) |      |      |      |
|---------------|--------------------------|------|------|------|
|               | Year                     |      |      |      |
|               | 500                      | 1000 | 1200 | 1500 |
| Africa        | 8                        | 5    | 2.5  | 1.3  |
| Asia          | 21.2                     | 16.8 | 21   | 3.4  |
| Europe/Russia | 14.2                     | 28.6 | 46.6 | 76.3 |
| GLOBAL TOTAL  | 43.4                     | 50.4 | 70.1 | 81   |

Source: David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1982), 796.

quantify Christian strength through history (see table 2.1).<sup>18</sup> According to the first edition of this work, Europe gained its preeminence earlier than I have suggested, probably around the tenth century. It is hard to be certain about any of this. Historical demography is a painfully uncertain science, especially where religious minorities are concerned. Even today, governments underplay the size of inconvenient minorities, and in earlier times, it was much easier for dissidents to live far removed from centers of government, from elite agencies and census takers. But the figures offered by the *Encyclopedia* are multiply unlikely. The Christian population of Egypt alone in 1200 was probably around 3 million, and that takes no account of Ethiopia and Nubia, so the figures suggested for Africa probably understate Christian numbers by about half. The undercount for Asia may be just as serious. On balance, I would argue that at the time of the Magna Carta or the Crusades, if we imagine a typical Christian, we should still be thinking not of a French artisan, but of a Syrian peasant or Mesopotamian town-dweller, an Asian not a European.

The persistence of Christian communities under Islam challenges contemporary attitudes toward historical conflicts between the two faiths. In recent years, a powerful social movement has demanded that the West, and specifically the churches, apologize for the medieval crusading movement. In this view, the Crusades represented aggression, pure and simple, against the Muslim world, and nobody can deny the resulting wars involved their share of atrocities. Underlying the movement for apology, though, is the assumption that religious frontiers are somehow carved in stone, and that the Muslim-ruled states of the Near East must always and infallibly have been destined to form part of the world of Islam. An equally good case can be made that the medieval Middle East was no more inevitably Muslim than other regions conquered by Islam and subsequently liberated, like Spain and Hungary. Nor, curiously, do Westerners suggest that Muslims apologize for the aggressive acts that gave them power over these various lands in the first place. Westerners have simply forgotten the once-great Christian communities of the Eastern world.

## Ruin

If Christians survived the Muslim conquests so successfully, then why are they such a small minority in the Middle East today? The answer must be sought in political events of the later Middle Ages, when interfaith relations were transformed, swiftly and horribly. The change was heralded promisingly enough in the early thirteenth century, when rumors told how Prester John's forces were on the march, and were on their way to assist the West against the Muslims. Great military forces were indeed operating in Asia, but they were in fact the Mongol hordes, the first of a wave of invasions that over the next 200 years would devastate most of the centers of civilization in the Middle East. In the process, some of the most ancient Christian communities would be eliminated. The ruin of Mesopotamia in the 1250s was a catastrophe for Christians no less than Muslims.

Yet Christians could still take hope from these events. Middle Eastern Christians initially saw the Mongol invaders as potential liberators from the Muslim yoke, and they took the opportunity to revenge themselves on their Muslim conquerors. The Mongol king who sacked Baghdad in 1258 had a Christian queen, and at her behest, the Mongols destroyed many mosques. There were prominent converts at the Mongol court,

due in large measure to Nestorian efforts, and it was quite feasible that the whole nation could be converted. Seeing glorious prospects, the Western crusaders allied with these Asian invaders. Christian hopes culminated during the Mongol invasion of Palestine in 1260, which was led by a Christian Turkish warlord. This campaign ended though with the battle of 'Ayn Jalut, where the Muslim Mamluk Turks won decisively. Inexplicably, 'Ayn Jalut has escaped the attention of those counterfactual historians who like to ask "what if?" and who imagine alternate scenarios. Had the Mongols won, their victory could well have consolidated Christian power across much of Asia, virtually destroying Islam in the process.

In reality, it was the Christians who suffered ruin. The Mongols were driven out, and the last crusader states perished shortly afterward. Seeing the wave of Muslim victories, the Mongols came to believe that it was the God of Islam who was favoring his worshipers, and they accepted conversion. Meanwhile, the remaining Middle Eastern Christians found their situation dreadfully changed, as they were persecuted as quislings for their actions during the Mongol onslaught. Since 'Ayn Jalut was such a decisive disaster for Asian Christianity, its location has an awful irony: it stands very close to the source of the faith, at Nazareth. Conditions grew still worse for Christians in the fourteenth century, when Asia was struck repeatedly by plague and a general population contraction. The cumulative disasters resulted in the rise of new regimes, which were intolerant and inward looking. While European Christians blamed the Jews for the disasters of the age, Muslim governments turned against Christians, who suffered repeated pogroms and forced mass conversions.<sup>19</sup>

In China too, Christians were associated with the Mongol regime, and they fell victim to a nationalist reaction when the Ming dynasty came to power in 1368. This movement was disastrous for Christian communities, who at their height may have been several hundred thousand strong, counting both Nestorians and Roman Catholics. In the early fifteenth century, the bloody career of Timur (Tamerlane) uprooted Christian societies across Eurasia, marking the end of the great Nestorian adventure. By the sixteenth century, there is no evidence of any organized Christian activity in China, and precious few remnants of the faith anywhere in Central Asia. Table 2.1 indicates the catastrophic decline of Christian populations across the continent between

1350 and 1500. In Africa also, Christianity stood in deep peril. The Christian state of Nubia succumbed to Muslim pressure around 1450, and Ethiopia was almost wiped out in a deadly jihad in the early sixteenth century, "a systematic campaign of cultural and national genocide." Although the church and kingdom survived, Ethiopian culture was all but annihilated.<sup>20</sup>

Even in Europe, the late Middle Ages witnessed a steep decline in Christian power in the face of Muslim expansion under the Ottoman Turks. Ever larger numbers of Christians found themselves under Muslim rule, and the trend did not begin to be reversed until the 1680s. This point deserves stressing in view of the modern image of a predatory Christian West ever seeking to expand its dominion over an unsuspecting world. As late as the seventeenth century, Muslim power was still pressing hard on the frontiers of Germany; and in the age of Shakespeare, Muslim pirates regularly raided the coasts of northern and western Europe, taking tens of thousands of Christian slaves. If we want to picture the lights of Christianity fading on an imaginary map of the world, with the Christian faith largely confined to Europe, then this is the point at which we should do so, a full thousand years after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West.

## The Catholic Missions

At this point, too, about 1500, we can first glimpse the pattern of Christian expansion familiar from popular stereotypes, namely a religion borne by European warships and muskets to vulnerable natives in Africa or South America. Yet even then, these missions (if we can so dignify them) succeeded only to the extent that they created a religious structure that meshed with local cultures and beliefs. Even when carried by the armed force of European empires, the newly planted Christianity in Africa, Asia, and South America swiftly acquired local roots.

From about 1500, western powers like Spain and Portugal began a global expansion, ostensibly under the flag of Christianity. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church looked more like a genuinely global institution than at any time in its history, and far more so than during the time of the Roman Empire, which it had long outlived. Whereas the Romans merely dominated the Mediterranean world, the standards of Catholic powers like Spain and

Portugal were flying in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. By 1580, the Iberian powers had largely completed their conquest of the New World to the west, while soldiers and merchants were pushing eastward from Europe into the Indies. When the Spaniards established an imperial sea route from Mexico to Manila, the twin ventures were merging into a global strategy on a scale never before witnessed on the planet. The popes supported Iberian missionary endeavors, above all in South America and the Philippines. Manila had an archdiocesan see by 1595, and over the next century the nation would be extensively Christianized. To put this chronology in context, regions like Mexico, the Philippines and the Kongo first received their Christianity only a century or so after the conversion of Europe was completed by the submission of Lithuania.<sup>21</sup>

In religious terms, the greatest long-term Catholic successes would be in Central and South America, where the conquered peoples all accepted forms of Catholicism, heavily mixed with local beliefs. This particular expansion of Christianity remains one of the most controversial, since it was undoubtedly associated with a brutal conquistador regime at least as interested in winning treasure as in saving native souls. When challenged with his failure to convert and teach the natives of Peru, the conquistador Pizarro replied, frankly enough, that “I have not come for any such reasons; I have come to take away from them their gold.” As far as we can reconstruct the voices of the native peoples, they saw the coming of Christian civilization as an undiluted disaster. One Mayan prophetic book records of the coming of the Spanish: “Here they arrived, with the true God, the true Lord, the cause of our misery.” When the conquerors tried to destroy every written remnant of the ancient Meso-American civilization, all its literature and science no less than its religious materials, they were perpetrating one of the gravest crimes in the history of civilization.<sup>22</sup>

It is a mild defense to say that at least some of the worst charges about the conquest are false. Twentieth-century scholars produced vastly inflated estimates of the pre-Columbian native population, which implied that the European contact had caused one of the worst acts of genocide in human history. More realistic population figures show that while the new Catholic world was initially founded upon conquest and exploitation, the “American genocide” charges are no more than a contemporary academic myth. Yet the

new Christianity was unquestionably associated with robbery and tyranny, leaving a sinister heritage over the coming centuries.<sup>23</sup>

In formal terms, the conversion of Central and Southern America was steady and impressive. Already in the 1520s, there were eight bishoprics in the Antilles, and the first sees were appearing in Mexico itself. By the 1570s the continent had an extensive network of bishoprics looking to metropolitan sees at Mexico City and Lima, and Lima was ruling congregations spread over what would later be the nations of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile. Natives were baptized in vast numbers, on occasion running to thousands in a single day. Some religious orders, especially Dominicans and Jesuits, struggled heroically to prevent natives from being exploited by greedy European colonists.<sup>24</sup>

Yet at least in the initial decades, the depth of these conversions was questionable. For the first century or two after the conquest, the church made little effort to educate or evangelize, once native peoples had given formal assent to the faith. This severely limited penetration outside the cities and provincial towns. Moreover, native converts were granted admission to communion only on the rarest occasions, a policy that acknowledged the shallowness of conversions. Just as seriously, natives were almost never ordained to the priesthood. Learned councils reserved ordination for purebred Europeans, who were untainted by Indian or African blood. This excluded not just Indians but also the growing population of mixed blood *mestizos*. Papal instructions tried to overrule these prohibitions, but in practice they were not entirely lifted until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Far from being a formula for effective conversion, the record of colonial Latin America sounds potentially like a story of disaster, so much so that it is baffling that Catholicism would ultimately plant such deep roots in this continent. Yet the ordinary people who were ignored and despised by the churches created their own religious synthesis, which became the focus of devoted loyalty. Lacking priests and access to church sacraments, Latin American people concentrated instead on aspects of the faith that needed no clergy, on devotions to saints and the Virgin, and they organized worship through lay bodies like confraternities, the *cofradías*. These practices flourished in the magnificent churches built by the conquerors at once to inspire and overawe their subjects. As a result, Catholicism not

only established itself, but became an integral part of the cultural identity of Latin Americans, in all parts of that very diverse landscape. As an institution, the church made an impact that was partial and often inadequate, but Christianity itself flourished. It is a distinction we will often see.

## Beyond the Borders

It is easy to see the Catholic expansion efforts in terms of imperial arrogance, of imposing European standards upon the rest of the globe, but in many cases, the missionaries found themselves in no position to enforce their will politically. Catholic missionaries also sought converts beyond the immediate reach of the European empires, in lands where they could not call on fleets and armies to protect them. Naturally, the Christianity of these other regions developed very differently from that of Peru or the Philippines.

Portuguese Catholics introduced Christianity into the territories they dominated along the western coast of Africa, but in most areas, European control was confined to trading and military centers. Yet missionaries also penetrated independent kingdoms inland, as in Angola. In the powerful realm of Kongo, a king was baptized in 1491. Observers over the next two centuries remarked on how widely the Kongolesse people knew and accepted Catholic Christianity, at least as thoroughly as their South American counterparts. This was no mere conversion for convenience, for the purpose of securing European guns and gold. One of the first Christian Kongo rulers, Mvemba Nzinga, has been described as “one of the greatest lay Christians in African church history.” In 1516, a Portuguese priest wrote of Kongo’s king Afonso that “Better than we, he knows the prophets and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the lives of the saints, and all things regarding our Mother the Holy Church.”<sup>26</sup>

Already in the sixteenth century, a Kongo monarch received the papal title “Defender of the Faith,” which had hitherto been bestowed on England’s Henry VIII. Unlike Henry’s family, though, the Kongolesse monarchy devotedly upheld the Catholic religion. In 1596, São Salvador became a diocese in its own right. During the next century, Christianity thoroughly penetrated the local society and thought world, although without supplanting traditional African lifestyles. The kingdom was dominated by “a literate elite, dressing partially in Euro-

pean clothes, and professing Catholicism.” Native kings and dukes bore names like Andrew, Peter, John, and Afonso, and the state capital was named São Salvador, for the Holy Savior. By 1700, Kongolesse Catholicism was already in its sixth generation.<sup>27</sup>

## The Silk Strategy

Catholic missionaries became particularly creative when they encountered the unfamiliar social environments of China, Japan, and the Indian states. Lacking imperial backing, the missionaries (above all, the Jesuits) had to insinuate themselves into local societies, and in so doing, they had to deal with many of the later dilemmas about adapting the traditions of a European church to a non-European reality. Christian leaders were forced to redefine the relationship between Christianity and Europeanness, and to ask whether accepting the faith implied a need to take on board the assorted cultural baggage. How far should strict ideals of orthodoxy be sacrificed in pursuit of a successful missionary strategy? And how many of the church’s accepted practices were in reality reflections of European custom and prejudice, rather than essentials of the faith? All are, of course, very relevant questions today. Equally sensitive, then and now, was the matter of European political control. Time and again, missions collapsed when those being introduced to the new faith feared that they might be subjecting themselves to some kind of foreign imperial domination.

Issues of accommodating local customs and practices surfaced repeatedly. In seventeenth-century India, the Jesuit Robert De Nobili succeeded by effectively posing as a Hindu guru, who instructed his disciples in the mysteries of Christianity. He wore local dress and respected the complex Indian caste system. His doing so was controversial because caste symbols implied a belief in reincarnation and former lives. Also, acknowledging caste meant refusing to treat the poorest on terms of equality, violating the teachings of Jesus. Still, this represented a successful missionary strategy, and perhaps the only one that could have worked in the setting of the time.<sup>28</sup> For future missionaries, the lesson was obvious. Adapting the gospel to local cultures was the path to growth, while trying to force Asians or Africans into a Western straitjacket invited disaster. The enlightened Jesuit position was that as long as converts accepted Catholic Christianity, it could certainly be Catholicism of a Chinese, Indian, or Japanese variety,

just as Europe had its French and Spanish species of the common truth.

A similar cultural dilemma arose in Japan, over the seemingly trivial issue of preference in dress: should Christian priests wear silk or cotton? If cotton, missionaries were identifying with the poorest and most despised, and following appropriate rules of Christian humility, but Fathers dressed thus would not be welcomed into the homes of the upper classes. If they chose silk—as they ultimately did—this identified them as members of the social elite, who could win the respect of lords and gentry. The silk strategy worked splendidly in gaining the adherence of Japanese elites, who would in turn order the conversion of their followers and tenants. For decades, success followed success, so that by about 1600, it seemed that Japan would soon be a Catholic nation. Nagasaki became a bishopric in 1596, and the first ordinations of Japanese priests followed in 1601. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese were baptized.<sup>29</sup>

Disastrously, though, the extent of Catholic successes provoked a nationalist reaction. Hostility was all the more intense when the Japanese heard some European Catholics talk wildly of turning the nation into a Spanish colony just as subservient as the Philippines. Catholic hopes of mass conversion were dashed by a severe persecution, which claimed thousands of lives. The story is familiar from the novels of Shusako Endo, creator of some of the greatest Christian writings of the past century. Japanese Catholicism survived clandestinely into the twentieth century, when its vestiges received a far greater blow than could have been inflicted by all the native regimes. In 1945, the second atomic bomb used against Japan destroyed the city of Nagasaki, the country's Catholic stronghold.

Despite the Japanese debacle, Catholics found that another door opened promptly as Jesuit missions began to achieve stunning successes in China, then as now the world's most populous nation. Here too, Catholics followed the silk approach, presenting themselves in the familiar garb of scholars, and converting nobles and intellectuals. They offered prospective converts whatever Western learning might be of interest to the highly developed Chinese civilization. The pivotal figure in the missions was the celebrated Matteo Ricci, who arrived in China in 1589. The Jesuit venture survived the collapse of the Ming regime in 1644, and won at least equal favor from the succeeding Manchu dynasty.<sup>30</sup>

The Jesuits were very sensitive to issues of cultural adaptation, and spurned attempts to impose European values. From the first, the missionaries tried to transform Christianity into a form that would be comprehensible and relevant to the Chinese. The liturgy and scriptures were translated into Chinese, which meant choosing one of several possible Chinese terms for God. In the event the missionaries chose *T'ien*, a term familiar in Chinese philosophy and usually translated as "heaven"; they addressed God as *Shang-ti*, Lord of Heaven. The Jesuits took a relaxed attitude to deep-rooted Chinese customs and practices, preferring to absorb peacefully anything not flagrantly contrary to Christian teaching. The missionaries were supported by the Vatican and its *Propaganda* office, which in 1659 asked, perceptively, "What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them but only the faith. It is the nature of men to love and treasure above everything else their own country and that which belongs to it. In consequence, there is no stronger cause for alienation and hate than an attack on local customs, especially when these go back to a venerable antiquity."<sup>31</sup> This principle meant respecting the Chinese veneration for ancestors and the philosophy of Confucius.

The late seventeenth century was a glorious time for the Chinese missions, as in 1692, Christians earned an edict of toleration from the ruling Emperor Kang Xi. The prospects were intoxicating: Kang Xi was arguably the most powerful ruler in the world at the time, ruling perhaps 150 million subjects, a population equivalent to that of the whole of Europe, including Russia. Historically minded Catholics recalled that the conversion of the Roman Empire had also begun with an edict of toleration from a friendly emperor. Yesterday, Rome; tomorrow, China? Winning many converts, the missionaries advanced Chinese clergy, and Luo Wenzao, the first Catholic bishop of Chinese origin, was consecrated in 1685. By 1700, China had around 200,000 Catholics, many of whom were well-placed politically.

The Catholic missions in China can be regarded as one of the great might-have-beens in world history. If China had been converted in the seventeenth century, the impact on the future history of Christianity would have been incalculable, as would the effects on the religious balance in Europe itself. A converted China would have provided a cultural beacon for Japan, Ko-



rea, Vietnam, and ultimately the whole of Asia. But of course, it was not to be.

The Jesuit cultural compromise fell apart at the end of the seventeenth century, when the Society's enemies succeeded in turning the popes against them. Within a few years, Jesuits came under repeated attack for permitting the Chinese to worship ancestors, canonizing Saint Confucius, and including the names of pagan gods in the translated scriptures. By 1704, the Vatican ruled decisively against the Society of Jesus, prohibiting the Chinese Rites and ordering the suppression of recent Bible translations. Henceforth, religious services were to be held strictly in Latin. Just as bad, the papal envoys who declared the new regulations also made high claims for the political role of the Vatican, a foreign presence that could not be tolerated by the Chinese emperors. As the emperor understood, prophetically, "I know that at the present time there is nothing to fear, but when your ships come by thousands, then there will probably be great disorder."<sup>32</sup> In 1724, the Chinese government responded to these accumulated insults by proscribing the Christian faith. As the Catholic Church became ostentatiously a foreign body, it invited persecution on a scale that eliminated most of the Jesuits' successes by the end of the eighteenth century.

The effects of the new policy were not confined to China. In the same years, the Church began to insist on similar conformity among the Catholic Christians of India, and the effects there were almost as severe. From about 1700 too, the Kongoles church now began a long period of decline, which represents one of the greatest wasted opportunities in the story of African Christianity. Political fragmentation in the Kongo state was partly to blame, but much more significant was the Church's refusal to approve native liturgies and its reluctance to ordain African clergy. Nor was the Vatican willing to grant other key concessions to African values, including a married clergy—a model that was accepted elsewhere, in parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The Chinese Rites debacle, and the cultural rigidity it symbolized, crippled the progress of Catholic missions worldwide for over a century.

## The Great Century

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, large-scale missionary efforts were strictly the preserve of the

Catholic powers, a point of superiority proudly stressed by Catholic controversialists. How could the upstart Protestants claim to be a true church since they self-evidently neglected Jesus' Great Commission to preach the gospel to all nations? In the 1790s, however, Protestants took up this challenge. This was partly a consequence of the evangelical revival and partly due to the unprecedented power and reach of the British Empire. Protestants, particularly from the British Isles, now entered the missionary movement in earnest. In the space of a decade, global missions acquired the kind of enthusiastic backing that they would retain through the colonial era. In 1792, modern missionary work began with the formation of London's Baptist Missionary Society, a venture that was soon challenged by the London Missionary Society (Congregationalist, 1795) and the Anglican-sponsored Church Missionary Society (1799). The new United States shared in the missionary excitement, with its own newly founded missionary Boards and Societies.<sup>33</sup>

Missions now became a major focus for Protestant activists. In 1793, William Carey began his fanatical campaign to convert India, under the famous slogan that would inspire countless successors: "Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God." China, too, attracted the rapt attention of European evangelicals. By 1807, the first Protestant missionary had set up shop in Canton. Africa also attracted fervent interest, partly due to the greatly enhanced knowledge of the continent's geography. In 1799, Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* alerted European Protestants to the vast mission field awaiting harvest in the western parts of the continent. Also, new political footholds now developed. Colonies for freed slaves were created—at Sierra Leone in 1787 and Liberia in 1821—and in each case, the new settlers had had extensive firsthand contact with Christianity. When the British established themselves at the Cape of Good Hope in 1806, Protestant mission work began in earnest across southern Africa.<sup>34</sup>

These events began what is justifiably regarded as the great missionary century. As we have seen, though, this was quite different from the sudden Christian expansion so often portrayed in modern accounts of European imperialism. In many cases, as in India, China, and large parts of Africa, Christian missionaries were not so much breaking new ground as reopening ancient and quite familiar mines. In the 1880s, missionaries in

the Kongo met with mass enthusiasm that would be difficult to explain if we did not realize that the people were rediscovering what had been the national religion only a century or so earlier.<sup>35</sup>

Undeniably, the Christian missions of this historical phase were intimately connected with political and imperial adventures, and Protestant and Catholic fortunes followed the successes of the different empires. Protestant expansion across Africa neatly followed the spreading rule of the Union Jack, while the French led the way for the Catholic cause in both Africa and Asia. The linkage between religion and empire is neatly epitomized by the experience of southern Uganda, where Catholics were colloquially known as *baFaransa* (“the French”) and Protestants were *balngerezza* (“the English”).<sup>36</sup> Both British and French colonial authorities combined missionary endeavors with struggles against African slavery, so that imperial power was justified by both religious and humanitarian activities.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the missionary impulse reached new heights as most of the African continent came within European reach and the military defeat of China opened that country to new activity. In 1858, a new generation of prospective missionaries was inspired by the appearance of David Livingstone’s book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. Many of the legendary missionaries of this era began their career in mid century, while whole new areas of Africa were opened in the 1870s by the establishment of missions around Lake Malawi and in Uganda. Catholic evangelism also flourished, institutionalized in new orders like the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) and the White Fathers. The French even tried to evangelize in the Muslim world, and a bishopric was created at Algiers in 1838. It was an archbishop of Algiers, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1865–92), who had the most systematic vision of a concerted imperial campaign to convert the whole of Africa. For Lavigerie, Christianity was resuming its ancient dominance in Africa, in which the Muslim age had been merely an unhappy interval, a thousand-year night that was now ending. Reinforcing this claim to ancient continuity, the pope gave him the title of Archbishop of Carthage and primate of Africa. Lavigerie dreamed of a kind of modern-day crusading order, a well-armed militia Christi, which would wander Africa defending pilgrims and fighting slave-traders.<sup>37</sup>

In later decades, these Anglo-French successes attracted jealous imitators. Across Africa, each new entrant

into the imperial stakes sought to justify its existence by the rhetoric of missionary endeavor: Germans, Italians, Belgians, all were ostensibly there to convert the poor heathen. Elsewhere in the world, American Christians in particular saw their destiny in China. By the 1920s, at the height of the Euro-American adventure in China, perhaps 8,000 Western missionaries were active in that country. Americans claimed their nation had a special role in the divine plan. In 1893, a World Parliament of Religions that met in Chicago was intended to celebrate the imminent global triumph not just of Christianity but of that religion in its liberal, Protestant, and quintessentially American form. In this view, the age to come would be the American century, and also, inevitably, the Christian century (the magazine of that name was founded in 1902). If anyone doubted the truth of this vision, they would be reassured by the vast achievements of American missionaries throughout Africa and Asia, and especially in China. By the 1950s, the United States was supplying two-thirds of the 43,000 Protestant missionaries active around the world.<sup>38</sup>

For all the hypocrisy and the flagrantly self-serving rhetoric of the imperial age, the dedication of the missionaries was beyond question. Knowing as they did the extreme dangers from violence and tropical disease, it is inconceivable that so many would have been prepared to lay down their lives for European commerce alone, and many certainly viewed missionary work as a ticket to martyrdom. Their numbers and their zeal both grew mightily after each successive revival in the West, especially when such an event coincided with a spectacular tale of exploration and martyrdom.

Also, for all their association with imperialism, nineteenth-century missionaries did make important concessions to native cultures. Crucially, Protestants from the very first recognized the absolute necessity of offering the faith in local languages, so the Bible was now translated, in whole or in part, into many African and Asian tongues. In many ways, Protestant missionaries were just as shortsighted as the Catholics in their willingness to respect colonized peoples, but in the matter of language, Protestants had a clear advantage.

Both Protestants and Catholics were often realistic about the cultural problems they faced in presenting a universal faith in a colonial European guise. In fact, they faced exactly the same debates that their predecessors had encountered over how far they should go native in

order to win converts. Particularly when venturing into dangerous territories, the temptation was to rely on the protection of European bureaucrats and soldiers, but a Christianity established by those means was not likely to gain many converts. At its worst, this policy threatened to create a segregated veranda Christianity, in which paternalistic European clergy literally refused to admit native converts into their houses.<sup>39</sup> Farsighted evangelists recognized this peril. The founder of the Holy Ghost Fathers warned trainee missionaries that “You are not going to Africa in order to establish there Italy or France or any such country .... Make yourselves Negroes with the Negroes .... Our holy religion has invariably to be established in the Soil.”<sup>40</sup> On the same principle, some Protestant missionaries in China abandoned the European clothing and lifestyle that gave them protection and prestige, but also separated them from ordinary people. One of the great Protestant movements of this period was the China Inland Missions (CIM), founded in 1865. Members wore Chinese dress, and sported the pigtail or queue that symbolized submission to the imperial dynasty: they were to be “all things to all men.” By 1900, the CIM was directing some 800 missionaries.<sup>41</sup>

In their openness to native cultures, missionaries were sometimes far in advance of secular politicians. Imperialist statesmen were slow to imagine a future in which the colonized peoples might be emancipated to independence. Even as late as the 1950s, few British or French leaders thought they would live to see the end of direct European control of Africa. In contrast, at least some early missionaries happily accepted that their own contributions only represented a temporary historical phase. Even in the 1850s, Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society knew that missions would give way to churches on the banks of the Niger or the Congo, just as they once had in the lands of the Rhine and the Thames. Venn spoke, unforgettably, of the coming “euthanasia of the mission.” The transition would come through a “three self” policy, in which the church should be built on principles of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation. The result would be “a native church under native pastors and a native episcopate.”<sup>42</sup> These visions became clouded during the years of highest imperialist fervor, when, drunk with sight of power, some church leaders were speaking of an indefinite period of global white supremacy. Even so, ideas of future native autonomy never vanished entirely.

For any missionary venture, the ordination of native clergy must be the acid test of commitment to moving beyond an imperial context, to leaving the veranda. In this regard, the churches of the Great Century offered a mixed picture. Some bodies recorded early successes. In 1765, the Church of England ordained Philip Quaque of the Gold Coast as its first African priest. A century later, in the 1860s, the same church chose the Yoruba Samuel Adjai Crowther as its first non-European bishop, and deputed this learned “black Englishman” to found a missionary diocese in West Africa. Other churches followed suit in their respective territories, particularly the Protestant missions, and Chinese clergy were being ordained by the 1860s. Yet although the principle of native leadership was well established, it was not followed with any consistency. In 1914, the Roman Catholic Church worldwide had no bishops of non-Euro-American origin, except for a handful serving the Indian Thomas Christians in communion with Rome. In the whole of Africa, the Catholic Church ordained only a handful of native priests before 1920.<sup>43</sup>

Yet for all the uncertainties about native clergy, all the mixed messages about presenting Christianity in native terms, the successes were very striking. In 1800, perhaps one percent of all Protestant Christians lived outside Europe and North America. By 1900, that number had risen to 10 percent, and this proved enough of a critical mass to support further expansion. Today, the figure stands around two-thirds of all Protestants. Catholics also reaped their harvest. In 1914, the Catholic Church in Africa had 7 million baptized believers and a further million catechumens; these figures doubled by 1938. Put another way, in the late nineteenth century, Africa had about 10 million Christians of all denominations, including the Copts, about 9 percent of the continental total. By 1950, that figure had risen to 34 million, or 15 percent; by 1965, there were 75 million Christians, a quarter of the whole.<sup>44</sup> And although less spectacular, expansion in China nevertheless achieved more than in any previous age of Christian evangelization. Taking Protestants and Catholics together, China’s Christian population stood at around 1.2 million in 1900, but 5 million or so by 1949.

Most modern Europeans or Americans cringe at the claims their ancestors made about their “civilizing mission” to the rest of the world. Still, where the Victorian enthusiasts proved more right than they could have

dreamed was in their belief that Christianity would indeed make enormous strides in the years to come. In most ways, the twentieth century was anything but a Christian Century, since the horrors of those years made it look more like a new dark age than a golden age for any religion. Even so, Christianity would indeed enjoy worldwide success. To quote the late Ste-

phen Neill, one of the great historians of the missionary movement, “in the twentieth century, for the first time, there was in the world a universal religion—the Christian religion.”<sup>45</sup> In the third millennium, like the first, the faith would once again be a truly transcontinental phenomenon.

# The Second Four Hundred Years (AD 400–800)

*Ralph D. Winter*

## Overview of the Period

Now we come to the “Barbarian invasions.” Shortly after the year 400 there was chaos—the beginning of the first of the two Dark Ages. The two Dark Ages are the hundred or so years after the years 400 and 800. The first was just after 400, when the so-called Barbarians—the Germanic tribes—swept into Rome and Southern England. The second Dark Ages occurred just after 800 when a new and different type of barbarians, the Vikings, swooped down from Scandinavia upon the by-now Christianized earlier kind of Barbarians. Between those two Dark Ages, however, there was the marvelous Carolingian Renaissance, named for Charlemagne. Once again, at the end of the second 400-year period, there was a blaze of glory far brighter in many ways than the parallel blaze of glory at the end of the first 400 years. Thus, although there were two Dark Ages, there were also two Light Ages. There was an age of Light between 300 and 400, and another Light Age, renaissance, between 700 and 800, beginning a little before 700.

At least one historian has noted that what was “dark” for the Roman world was actually the dawning of a great light for the Barbarian world. No matter how you look at it, the time between 700 and 800 was a period of consolidation and scholarship, Bible transmission and Bible study, etc.

It is possible to observe that in the four-hundred-year period between 1200 and 1600 a third Dark Age occurred. This was not due to a military invasion so much as to the widespread devastation of the Bubonic plague in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The plague, which might be called a bacteriological invasion, was far more destructive than either of the two earlier invasions.

Now, with this rough canvas before us, let’s go back and pick up some of the traces of the Celtic tradition. The Celtic tradition in this period is usually passed over in our history books, partly because it does not have any modern advocates. We are dealing once more with the phenomenon of prejudice.

## The Celtic Movement in AD 400-800

In 410 and after, everything was cut to ribbons by the Germanic tribal peoples, who took over Rome itself. The result was such chaos that the people in Rome began to lose the ability to speak Latin. During the fifth century the only outpost of peace and quiet was in Ireland. Even England was under tremendous stress because with the fall of Rome and the withdrawal of the Roman legions from Britain, other Barbarians—the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes—had invaded England from across the channel. Simultaneously, the Celts (by and large still semi-pagan) of Ireland and Scotland also invaded from the west and north. But St. Patrick and other Christians who had been captured in Britain brought the Gospel to them early in this period. And they responded almost *en masse*.

Eventually it was from Ireland that the Gospel came *en force*, bringing scholarship, the Bible, and documents. At this point there was no Celtic church as such, just monastic centers, which were both scholarly and missionary outposts. To them, the transmission of the Bible and the transmission of the faith were one and the same. These Celtic monks knew not only Latin but Greek and Hebrew. Thus, the people of the city of Rome, now dominated by Gothic invaders, asked for teachers from Ireland to come to teach them how to speak Latin again.

What an amazing twist! It is as if the Chinese were to invade the United States, and after a hundred years everyone was speaking half Chinese and half English and didn't know which was which; so U.S. government officials had to go to Nairobi to bring some Oxford-accented Africans to come and teach English in the United States. That is exactly parallel to the situation in Rome. Because of the chaos of the invasions, the aqueducts no longer brought fresh water to the city. Indeed, the whole city was practically a malarial swamp. They forgot skills they had known, and for a long time the situation was getting worse and worse. This is the “fall of Rome”—the city of Rome, not the seat of the Roman empire, which long before had been shifted to Constantinople.

But the Irish “church” (that is, the Celtic Christian movement) was a different kind of a structure. Nevertheless, it was a “church” of a sort which retained and extended the faith wherever it went. The Celtic *peregrini*, or “wandering monks” of which Latourette writes, went all over England and Europe, spreading the Gospel.

However, as you read the usual church history texts, it is hard to find even hints about Celtic Christianity. Until recently the only decent book on the subject was a book called *The Celtic Churches: A History 200–1200* by John T. McNeill. Only in the last few decades has research on the Celtic church begun to be significant. It is a big reversal of the study of Western civilization to uncover the vitality and the power of this Celtic movement.

### **Vitality and Early Roots of the Celtic Church**

Until almost the eighth century the Celtic Christians in general were beyond the Mediterranean sphere, like Pelagius, whom Augustine of Hippo and others in the early fourth century considered a heretic outsider. Thus, some might ask if the theology of these Celtic Christians was orthodox. They were certainly more Orthodox than Catholic, since their faith originally came from the East. Also, their theology was sound. The basic book for them was the Bible, revered above all others. They were a bit bizarre, like all of our cultural traditions.

The forbears of Celtic monks, only a few decades earlier, were head-hunting savages, and only the transforming power of the Gospel can account for the radical change in the lives of those people. But like every other tradition after its first encounter with Christ, it took the Celts a long time to root the remaining evil out of their society. Thus, when we look at the Celtic churches and

monastic centers in the 400-to-800-year period we must take into account the background of these people and try to understand how far they had come from where they were before the Gospel got to them.

There are evidences of the early existence of Christianity in southern Britain when Constantine became the emperor of Rome and made it legal to be a Christian. That is what happened in 312 in the edict of Milan when Constantine declared that there would be no more persecution of Christians. Christianity was already deeply entrenched, though still greatly persecuted in the east. But Western scholars have not in general realized just how many Christians there already were in Britain by the year 200.

When Constantine took over and sensed just how widespread Christianity was, he convened a council in 314 in a little place in southern France called Arles. Three bishops—Celtic Christians—are recorded to have come to this council from southern England. Evidently, Christianity was already flourishing in Britain because the Celtic church there already had at least three bishops!

Later in that same century Pelagius came to Rome. He was a highly educated and sophisticated Celt even though he came from the wrong side of the tracks. But culturally, he was quite different from the Christians in Rome and North Africa. Even more difficult for them was the fact that his theological stance was not considered proper, being much closer to that of the eastern end of the empire than it was to that of Augustine of Hippo and the church of Rome in the West. Whatever is true about his theology, we know that the followers of Augustine of Hippo had monumental arguments with Pelagius. In fact, all we know about him is what some of his opponents said of his thinking.

Here was a highly sophisticated scholar coming out of southern England, way out in the western sticks in Cornwall. His scholarship and Biblical knowledge show that even in the fourth century there was a relatively advanced kind of Christianity in England in a situation which today might be called a mission field.

It is perfectly possible, and many scholars admit this, that Patrick was not the first missionary to Ireland when he went there in 432. Some historians believe that there was a lot of Christianity in Ireland before Patrick ever went there. Not all scholars are even sure that there was a man named Patrick. But there are some documents attributed to him that are breathtakingly beautiful, high-minded and spiritual. Obviously someone wrote them.

However, the Venerable Bede, the historian in the second period of Light, 700 to 800, does not say anything at all about Patrick. In Bede's most complete narrative of the story of Christianity in the British Isles there is no reference whatsoever to Patrick, not even negative. That is very confusing and mysterious.

It is very hard to find out the truth about the Celtic Christian situation. But one thing we can perceive comes from the effect they had on the pagans they evangelized. We do know that the Celtic Christian monks certainly had a lot of Christian vitality.

### **Celtic and Roman Traditions Clash**

Around the year 500, Columba, the second son of an Irish chieftain and a member of a Celtic order, started the first missionary training center in history. At that time Scotland was totally pagan, so Columba discretely set up his community on the island of Iona, just a few miles off the coast of Scotland. Later on, a similar missionary training center was established on the other side of Scotland just below the point where it joins England. It was also on an island, at least when the tide was up, but otherwise a peninsula. This second outpost was called Lindisfarne. Both of these training centers began sending missionaries not only into Scotland, but also into England, which was now mainly occupied by the pagan Angles, Saxons and Jutes. They also began sending missionaries across the English channel. Columban, not as well known as Columba, went to the continent in the late 500s. He traveled all over Europe, as far down as northern Italy. There the various other kinds of Christians—mainly those who had followed Augustine of Hippo and called their theology Catholic—were as mad at him as the Jews were at John the Baptist. To try to bring some resolution to the argument, Columban ended up writing scholarly epistles to the Pope.

There were many Celtic missionaries, and they established monastic missionary centers in so many places both in the British Isles and on the continent that finally the Pope (of what is now called the Roman Catholic church) decided that his "catholic" brand of Christianity ought to gain control over that area. So in 596 he sent Augustine of Canterbury to England (not to be confused with Augustine of Hippo, whose disciples 200 years before had argued theology with Pelagius).

This later Augustine timidly settled in Canterbury, a small peninsula jutting out into the English channel in the south of England and as close to the continent as

it was possible to be and still be in England. There he converted the king and queen of the area and established the Roman Christian tradition.

To this day there are two archbishops in the English church—the Archbishop of York representing the Celtic tradition and the Archbishop of Canterbury representing the Roman tradition. The fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury is considered in a popular sense the top leader of the Anglican church shows that eventually the scales tipped very slightly in favor of the Roman tradition. But, the fact that, technically, the Archbishop of York is equal to the Archbishop of Canterbury (the latter is "first among equals") shows that in actuality the Celtic tradition held very strong.

York is in northern England, where the Celtic tradition held on the longest, and Canterbury is in southern England where Augustine first landed. To this day in the English church the Archbishop of York by his vestments represents the Eastern form of Christianity and the Archbishop of Canterbury, with vestments derived from the Latin Roman secular magistrates, represents the Western form of Christianity. Is it any wonder that Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Catholicism eventually split?

The Celtic tradition, as we have seen, originally derived mainly from the eastern part of the Roman Empire, revealing this fact by their slightly different theology, their tonsure (hair cut of the monks) and their method of calculating the date on which Easter was celebrated. (The Celts celebrated it on the first day of spring according to the solstice, whether or not that was on a Sunday. In this custom they again followed what had been the pattern of the church in the east.)

Thus, in 597 Augustine of Canterbury was sent as a missionary to England by Pope Gregory, the first pope of any significance and one of the most revered of all popes since. Since the very title "pope" was invented later, Gregory was simply known in his era as the bishop of Rome. He was a very dynamic and godly man, a product of the Benedictine monastic tradition. (Most of the best early popes came from the monastic tradition, which has continued to be true for most of Roman Catholic history.)

This second Augustine, the missionary, was not in any sense as capable as Gregory the Great. And he did not have the same sense of missionary calling as was true of the Celtic missionaries who wandered all over England and the continent. Augustine had not been trained as

a missionary. He really did not want to go to England and try to evangelize the pagan Angles and Saxons. He was afraid of them. He went only out of obedience to Gregory. That became the beginning of Western or Roman Christianity in England, long after—note—Celtic Christianity had been well established.

Why did the Angles and Saxons respond to the Roman missionaries more than to the Celtic ones from the north? They responded best when a missionary lived among them. It is also true that when they had invaded England after the withdrawal of the Roman legions, the people they fought with to take over the land were all Celts, whom they pushed over into the western seaboard of present-day Cornwall and Wales. Taking over the religion of a conquered people is not something that conquerors do. Also, Celtic Christianity stressed humility and a simple lifestyle. By contrast, Roman Christianity loved ceremony and pomp. It also had the status of the immensely prestigious, although now quite defunct, Roman Empire in the West (still alive in the East).

So, at this time Christianity in England was mainly Celtic except in the southeast near Canterbury in Kent. Celtic missionaries from the West and North had already penetrated deep into middle England, setting up and reestablishing monastic houses wherever they went. But coming mainly from the two missionary training centers, both in the north, they had not yet really established themselves strongly in the south. Augustine landed at the right place.

The clash begun two hundred years earlier with Augustine of Hippo and Pelagius came to a head with Augustine of Canterbury and Aidan and other Celtic abbots from Lindisfarne, Iona and the many monasteries they had founded. Augustine's assignment was not just winning Angles and Saxons, but turning heretical Christians (Celts, followers of Pelagius) into Catholic Christians. He was successful to a certain extent, especially in winning the king and queen in the area of Kent to Roman Christianity.

Also, when the king of Northumbria, King Oswy, was converted by Celtic missionaries to their brand of the faith, he looked around for a suitable Christian bride and chose the daughter of the king in Kent. It wasn't long before the couple recognized how awkward it was for him to be Celtic and for her to be Roman in her faith, especially as it related to when to fast or feast for Lent and

Easter. So in 664 King Oswy called a council to be held at the Celtic monastery of Whitby in the north-central part of England. Bede gives a detailed account of the council, albeit from the Roman Catholic viewpoint, but showing between the lines the respect and appreciation he has for the genuine humility and faith of the Celtic monks who came to the Synod of Whitby.

This Synod is considered by Roman Catholic historians, and to some extent by Protestants as well, to be the great watershed of the conflict between the Celtic and (as both Protestants and Catholics might say) "true Christianity."

As we have already pointed out, the Celtic church at this time was probably truer to the faith of the early apostles than was the Roman church. The final outcome of the Synod of Whitby supposedly hinged on which brand of Christianity was more true. Rome's followers claimed as their founder the Apostle Peter who, they said, was given the "keys of the kingdom" by Christ himself. The Celts followed the Apostle John, probably because of their long-standing connection with the Christianity of the Middle East where John resided for so many years. King Oswy, it seems, was partially persuaded by the matter of "the keys of the kingdom," though he had great respect and love for the Celtic missionaries from Lindisfarne.

Today, if in a book on church history you come to a section that talks about the conversion of the English and Augustine of Canterbury is praised, you know that you are reading a Roman Catholic perspective, even if it is a Protestant textbook. Such a book has a distinct Roman Catholic bias obvious from the fact that the great missionary work of Celtic Christianity is rarely mentioned, if at all. And yet, except for the very minor work done by Augustine in Kent, missions in England at this period did not come from the south but from the north, not from Rome but from Iona and Lindisfarne.

Although Ireland and Wales did not have such well-known missionary training centers like Iona and Lindisfarne, Celtic Christians from there also reached out to the admittedly pagan Anglo-Saxons in central and even southern England. Indeed, the Celtic *peregrini* (which means "wanderers" and refers exclusively to the Celtic missionaries) evangelized and set up monastic houses not only on the continent and in eastern Europe, but also in Italy, Iceland, and on the Faro and other islands to the northwest of Ireland. There are even some evidences that Irish missionaries may have



arrived in Greenland or in some of the northern areas of the United States.<sup>1</sup> All told, Celtic Christianity and its missionary movement in particular was very virile. Ireland can be said to be the only nation in the first thousand years of Christian history that was a truly “missionary” nation.

## Implications for Today’s Missions

What are the missionary lessons we can learn from the invasion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons into England in this second 400-year cycle after Christ? We know that the Anglo-Saxons who invaded and conquered Britain (a Celtic name) were completely pagan, whereas those they conquered, the Celtic peoples, were to some extent Christian. It is usually very hard for the conquerors to take the faith of the people they have conquered. Therefore, we have to admit that it was a good thing that the Romans arrived with a different form of Christianity—they were culturally more acceptable to the Anglo-Saxons. It was useful because then the Anglo-Saxons could become Christians without saying that they were now becoming Celts.

Likewise, it is a good thing today for another denomination to arrive if the Christians who are already in a given place represent a different ethnic or cultural tradition from the people they are trying to win. To give a modern-day example, it would be much easier for Southern Baptists to win the Turkana people of Kenya than for Presbyterians to try to win them. The Presbyterians of Kenya are mainly Kikuyus, who for many generations have been enemies of and have despised the Turkana. Therefore, in evangelizing the Turkana, it is better for some other denomination to take on that task than for the Turkana not to become Christians at all. Unfortunately, the Southern Baptists do not happen to be involved in reaching the Turkana.

For the same reason some of the Brahmins and middle caste peoples of India need to become Christians without having to imply that by so doing they have become untouchables. This parallel seems to be very close to what happened so long ago in England.

There is also another parallel. In contrast to the general lack of missionary passion in the Roman tradition back then, where did Celtic Christianity get theirs? Every Celtic monastery had a scriptorium where they constantly copied the Bible. Evidently, as they copied and lovingly illustrated these scriptures, they also read them

and understood the Bible, even the Great Commission. There is no other reason that can account for the fact that the Celtic Christians were such avid missionaries. This is why the Roman church feared that without a Roman missionary presence in England the Celtic tradition would win over the Anglo-Saxons and thus expand the non-Roman Celtic base that was already there. Believing that Celtic Christianity was heretical, inevitably, Pope Gregory must also have reflected that if the church of Rome did not send their Roman brand of faith there, Anglo-Saxons would become Celticized.

You can see the parallel to some Presbyterians worrying that a more recent church tradition, for example, the Assemblies of God, might move into a vacant portion of an area which had long been considered Presbyterian mission territory. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was sometimes a case of a mission trying to move in with what it considered to be a superior theology rather than missionaries simply going where there was no faith at all.

Earlier a statement was made that it is difficult for conquerors to accept the religion of the people they have conquered. There are a few cases when this happened. The Romans conquered the Greeks, but eventually took over a lot of the Greek culture. It was certainly true that the Vikings took over the Christianity of the people they conquered. But where this has occurred historically, the conquerors were usually crude savages coming out of the forest into a more sophisticated situation. And it is not too hard to conjecture that they were overawed by what Christianity had produced rather than by the kind of faith that the Christians possessed.

Let me point out another missiological technique. Almost always the differences between cultural traditions come out in the form of arguments over trivialities. The surface differences between the Celtic Christians and the Roman Christians at Whitby were over the Easter date, the way they cut their hair, and the type of monastic order they had. They were also aware of many more other little cultural differences between them. Culturally antagonists, they irritated each other (today we call it culture shock) and argued over the surface issues. Practically all the theological arguments in history resolve down to trivialities which hide much more significant and deep-seated prejudices as well as ethnic differences.

In this situation, Pope Gregory the Great made a move of unbelievable wisdom and major missiological in-

sight. He chose as the Roman church representative to the Celts in England a certain monk, Theodore of Tarsus, who came from that city in the eastern part of the empire. Tarsus had to be very significant for Celtic Christians whose Christianity harked from the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Before he went to England, however, he was kept in Rome long enough so that his Eastern tradition haircut could grow out to be combed like the Roman tonsure.

It was a very strategic move to send Theodore into that situation because he came from the East, which the Celts trusted. Coming from his background, he could now tell the Christian Celts, “Look, I used to cut my hair just like you do. I used to celebrate Easter according to the solstice of the sun, just like you.” But now, here he is, a respected senior, coming from the right place but wearing Roman garments. The Roman strategists rightly calculated that Theodore was the kind of person who would be acceptable to the Celtic people, mollify them and perhaps even win them to the Roman faith. And he did, to a considerable extent. This was in the 7<sup>th</sup> century just after the Synod of Whitby in 667. When he came to England he could talk sympathetically with both traditions and, amazingly, was able to accommodate Roman ideas of ecclesiastical structure to the dispersed independence of the Celtic monastic centers. In this structural process, the young Wilfred, the proud and often heralded Roman hero of Whitby, had his immense diocese whittled down into pieces by the elderly Theodore.

A possible reason for Roman scholars not often recognizing Theodore’s strategic contribution is his suspect Eastern background. In fact, after he had been invested with authority by Rome, Rome apparently felt it had to send another man named Hadrian along with him to England just to make sure he did not stray from the Roman tradition.

But let’s not fail to apply the missiological lesson here. In the mission field we are trying to win people who, like everyone everywhere, have certain predispositions and prejudices. We need to use wisdom as to whom to send as a missionary to the group we are trying to reach. This was the strategy of the Romans in getting Theodore. And all through the history of the church anybody with any common sense has been willing to try and figure out which cultural terms would make the most sense, be the most acceptable in their situation.

So, if you are working in a former British colony like Ghana, it would not make sense to get people from France to witness there. But if you are in Niger or Gabone, it is better not to get the missionaries from the Anglo-Saxon background, but send someone who can represent the French tradition—people in Francophone Africa do not particularly like the British or the Americans. We have to use the simple wisdom of the ages when we try to win people to Christ. Their predispositions must be taken into account.

## Endnote

- <sup>1</sup> I want to comment just a bit more about the possibility of Irish missionaries coming to the U.S. hundreds of years before Columbus “discovered” America. Twenty years ago people laughed at the idea that not only Celtic voyagers but also Canaanites had visited our shores way back in history. But archeologists have found Canaanite and Phoenician inscriptions in Massachusetts. And there are early but very rare signs of Celtic influence as well. Such evidence really disrupts all of our previous ideas, but the fact is that this Celtic church went far and wide. Although in Latourette you’ll find a very significant Celtic Christian movement discussed, much more data has come to light since he wrote his books. Today, scholars studying the situation tend to be from France, Scandinavia and Germany with a few from England (mainly women) and recently a few from the U.S.. Among the Anglo-Saxon English there is still a real bias against the Irish and anything pertaining to them historically.

# The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission

*Ralph D. Winter*

*In an address given to the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul, Korea, in August 1973 (the founding of the Asia Missions Association), Ralph Winter describes the forms that God's two "redemptive structures" take in every human society, and have taken throughout history. His thesis has two major implications: (1) We must accept both structures, represented in the Christian church today by the local church and the mission society, as legitimate and necessary, and as part of "God's People, the Church"; and (2) non-Western churches must form and utilize mission societies if they are to exercise their missionary responsibility.*

**I**t is the thesis of this article that whether Christianity takes on Western or Asian form, there will still be two basic kinds of structures that will make up the movement. Most of the emphasis will be placed on pointing out the existence of these two structures as they have continuously appeared across the centuries. This will serve to define, illustrate and compare their nature and importance. The writer will also endeavor to explain why he believes our efforts today in any part of the world will be most effective only if both of these two structures are fully and properly involved and supportive of each other.

## **Redemptive Structures in New Testament Times**

First of all, let us recognize the structure so fondly called "the New Testament Church" as basically a Christian synagogue.<sup>1</sup> Paul's missionary work consisted primarily of going to synagogues scattered across the Roman Empire, beginning in Asia Minor, and making clear to the Jewish and Gentile believers in those

synagogues that the Messiah had come in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; that in Christ a final authority even greater than Moses existed; and that this made more understandable than ever the welcoming of the Gentiles without forcing upon them any literal cultural adaptation to the ritual provisions of the Mosaic Law. An outward novelty of Paul's work was the development eventually of wholly new synagogues that were not only Christian but Greek.

Very few Christians, casually reading the New Testament (and with only the New Testament available to them), would surmise the degree to which there had been Jewish evangelists who went before Paul all over the Roman Empire—a movement that began 100 years before Christ. Some of these were the people whom Jesus himself described as "traversing land and sea to make a single proselyte." Saul followed their path; Paul built on their efforts and went beyond them with the new gospel he preached, which allowed the Greeks to remain Greeks and not be circumcised and culturally assimilated into the Jewish way of life. Paul had a vast foundation on which to build: Peter declared "Moses is preached in every city (of the Roman Empire)" (Acts 15:21).

Yet not only did Paul apparently go to every existing synagogue of Asia,<sup>2</sup> after which he declared, "...all Asia has heard the gospel," but, when occasion demanded, he established brand new synagogue-type fellowships of believers as the basic unit of his missionary activity. The first structure in the New Testament scene is thus what is often called the New Testament Church. It was essentially built along Jewish synagogue

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lines,<sup>3</sup> embracing the community of the faithful in any given place. The defining characteristic of this structure is that it included old and young, male and female. Note, too, that Paul was willing to build such fellowships out of former Jews as well as non-Jewish Greeks.

There is a second, quite different structure in the New Testament context. While we know very little about the structure of the evangelistic outreach within which pre-Pauline Jewish proselytizers worked, we do know, as already mentioned, that they operated all over the Roman Empire. It would be surprising if Paul didn't follow somewhat the same procedures. And we know a great deal more about the way Paul operated. He was, true enough, sent out by the church in Antioch. But once away from Antioch he seemed very much on his own. The little team he formed was economically self-sufficient when occasion demanded. It was also dependent, from time-to-time, not alone upon the Antioch church, but upon other churches that had risen as a result of evangelistic labors. Paul's team may certainly be considered a structure. While its design and form is not made concrete for us on the basis of remaining documents, neither, of course, is the structure of a New Testament congregation defined concretely for us in the pages of the New Testament. In both cases, the absence of any such definition implies the pre-existence of a commonly understood pattern of relationship, whether in the case of the congregational structure or the missionary band structure which Paul employed earlier as Saul the Pharisee, and later, at the time the Antioch congregation in Acts 13:2 released Paul and Barnabas for missionary work.

Thus, on the one hand, the structure we call the New Testament church is a prototype of all subsequent Christian fellowships where old and young, male and female are gathered together as normal biological families in aggregate. On the other hand, Paul's missionary band can be considered a prototype of all subsequent missionary endeavors organized out of committed, experienced workers who affiliated themselves as a second decision beyond membership in the first structure.

Note well the additional commitment. Note also that the structure that resulted was something definitely more than the extended outreach of the Antioch church. No matter what we think the structure was, we know that it was not simply the Antioch church operating at a distance from its home base. It was

something else, something different. We will consider the missionary band the second of the two redemptive structures in New Testament times.

In conclusion, it is very important to note that neither of these two structures was, as it were, "let down from heaven" in a special way. It may be shocking at first to think that God made use of either a Jewish synagogue pattern or a Jewish evangelistic pattern. But this must not be more surprising than the fact that God employed the use of the pagan Greek language, the Holy Spirit guiding the biblical writers to lay hold of such terms as *kurios* (originally a pagan term), and pound them into shape to carry the Christian revelation. The New Testament refers to a synagogue dedicated to Satan, but this did not mean that Christians, to avoid such a pattern, could not fellowship together in the synagogue pattern. These considerations prepare us for what comes next in the history of the expansion of the gospel, because we see other patterns chosen by Christians at a later date whose origins are just as clearly "borrowed patterns" as were those in the New Testament period.

In fact, the profound missiological implication of all this is that the New Testament is trying to show us *how to borrow effective patterns*; it is trying to free all future missionaries from the need to follow the precise forms of the Jewish synagogue and Jewish missionary band, and yet to allow them to choose comparable indigenous structures in the countless new situations across history and around the world—structures which will correspond faithfully to the function of patterns Paul employed, if not their form! It is no wonder that a considerable body of literature in the field of missiology today underlies the fact that world Christianity has generally employed the various existing languages and cultures of the world-human community—more so than any other religion—and in so doing, has cast into a shadow all efforts to canonize as universal any kind of mechanically formal extension of the New Testament church—which is "the people of God" however those individuals are organized. As Kraft has said earlier, we seek dynamic equivalence, not formal replication.<sup>4</sup>

## The Early Development of Christian Structures within Roman Culture

We have seen how the Christian movement built itself upon two different kinds of structures that had pre-ex-

isted in the Jewish cultural tradition. It is now our task to see if the functional equivalents of these same two structures were to appear in later Christian cultural traditions as the gospel invaded that larger world.

Of course, the original synagogue pattern persisted as a Christian structure for some time. Rivalry between Christians and Jews, however, tended to defeat this as a Christian pattern, and in some cases to force it out of existence, especially where it was possible for Jewish congregations of the dispersion to arouse public persecution of the apparently deviant Christian synagogues. Unlike the Jews, Christians had no official license for their alternative to the Roman Imperial cult.<sup>5</sup> Thus, whereas each synagogue was considerably independent of the others, the Christian pattern was soon assimilated to the Roman context, and bishops became invested with authority over more than one congregation with a territorial jurisdiction not altogether different from the pattern of Roman civil government. This tendency is well confirmed by the time the official recognition of Christianity had its full impact: the very Latin word for Roman magisterial territories was appropriated—the diocese—within which parishes are to be found on the local level.

In any case, while the more “congregational” pattern of the independent synagogue became pervasively replaced by a “connectional” Roman pattern the new Christian parish church still preserved the basic constituency of the synagogue, namely, the combination of old and young, male and female—that is, a biologically perpetuating organism.

Meanwhile, the monastic tradition in various early forms developed as a second structure. This new, widely proliferating structure undoubtedly had no connection at all with the missionary band in which Paul was involved. Indeed, it more substantially drew from Roman military structure than from any other single source. Pachomius, a former military man, gained 3,000 followers and attracted the attention of people like Basil of Caesarea, and then through Basil, John Cassian, who labored in southern Gaul at a later date.<sup>6</sup> These men thus carried forward a disciplined structure, borrowed primarily from the military, which allowed nominal Christians to make a second-level choice—an additional specific commitment.

Perhaps it would be well to pause here for a moment. Any reference to the monasteries gives Protestants

culture shock. The Protestant Reformation fought desperately against certain degraded conditions at the very end of the 1000-year Medieval period. We have no desire to deny the fact that conditions in monasteries were not always ideal; what the average Protestant knows about monasteries may be correct for certain situations; but the popular Protestant stereotype surely cannot describe correctly all that happened during the 1000 years! During those centuries there were many different eras and epochs and a wide variety of monastic movements, radically different from each other, as we shall see in a minute; and any generalization about so vast a phenomenon is bound to be simply an unreliable and no doubt prejudiced caricature.

Let me give just one example of how far wrong our Protestant stereotypes can be. We often hear that the monks “fled the world.” Compare that idea with this description by a Baptist missionary scholar:

The Benedictine rule and the many derived from it probably helped to give dignity to labor, including manual labor in the fields. This was in striking contrast with the aristocratic conviction of the servile status of manual work which prevailed in much of ancient society and which was also the attitude of the warriors and non-monastic ecclesiastics who constituted the upper middle classes of the Middle Ages... To the monasteries... was obviously due much clearing of land and improvement in methods of agriculture. In the midst of barbarism, the monasteries were centres of orderly and settled life and monks were assigned the duty of road-building and road repair. Until the rise of the towns in the eleventh century, they were pioneers in industry and commerce. The shops of the monasteries preserved the industries of Roman times.... The earliest use of marl in improving the soil is attributed to them. The great French monastic orders led in the agricultural colonization of Western Europe. Especially did the Cistercians make their houses centres of agriculture and contribute to improvements in that occupation. With their lay brothers and their hired laborers, they became great landed proprietors. In Hungary and on the German frontier the Cistercians were particularly important in reducing the soil to cultivation and in furthering colonization. In Poland, too, the German monasteries set advanced standards in agriculture and introduced artisans and craftsmen.<sup>7</sup>

For all of us who are interested in missions, the shattering of the “monks fled the world” stereotype is even

more dramatically and decisively reinforced by the magnificent record of the Irish *peregrini*, who were Celtic monks who did more to reach out to convert Anglo-Saxons than did Augustine's later mission from the South, and who contributed more to the evangelization of Western Europe, even Central Europe, than any other force.

From its very inception this second kind of structure was highly significant to the growth and development of the Christian movement. Even though Protestants have an inbuilt prejudice against it for various reasons, as we have seen, there is no denying the fact that apart from this structure it would be hard even to imagine the vital continuity of the Christian tradition across the centuries. Protestants are equally dismayed by the other structure—the parish and diocesan structure. It is, in fact, the relative weakness and nominality of the diocesan structure that makes the monastic structure so significant. Men like Jerome and Augustine, for example, are thought of by Protestants not as monks but as great scholars; and people like John Calvin lean very heavily upon writings produced by such monks. But Protestants do not usually give any credit to the specific structure within which Jerome and Augustine and many other monastic scholars worked, a structure without which Protestant labors would have had very little to build on, not even a Bible.

We must now follow these threads into the next period, where we will see the formal emergence of the major monastic structures. It is sufficient at this point merely to note that there are already by the fourth century two very different kinds of structures—the diocese and the monastery—both of them significant in the transmission and expansion of Christianity. They are each patterns borrowed from the cultural context of their time, just as were the earlier Christian synagogue and missionary band.

It is even more important for our purpose here to note that while these two structures are formally different from—and historically unrelated to—the two in New Testament times, they are nevertheless functionally the same. In order to speak conveniently about the continuing similarities in function, let us now call the synagogue and diocese modalities, and the missionary band and monastery sodalities. Elsewhere I have developed these terms in detail, but briefly, a modality is a structured fellowship in which there is no distinction of sex or age, while a sodality is a structured fellow-

ship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership, and is limited by either age or sex or marital status. In this use of these terms, both the denomination and the local congregation are modalities, while a mission agency or a local men's club are sodalities.<sup>8</sup> A secular parallel would be that of a town (modality) compared to a private business (a sodality)—perhaps a chain of stores found in many towns. The sodalities are subject to the authority of the more general structures, usually. They are “regulated” but not “administered” by the modalities. A complete state socialism exists where there are no regulated, decentralized private initiatives. Some denominational traditions, like the Roman and the Anglican, allow for such initiatives. Many Protestant denominations, taking their cue from Luther's rejection of the sodalities of his time, try to govern everything from a denominational office. Some local congregations cannot understand the value or the need for mission structures. Paul was “sent off” not “sent out” by the Antioch congregation. He may have reported back to it but did not take orders from it. His mission band (sodality) had all the autonomy and authority of a “traveling congregation.”

In the early period beyond the pages of the Bible, however, there was little relation between modality and sodality, while in Paul's time his missionary band specifically nourished the congregations—a most significant symbiosis. We shall now see how the medieval period essentially recovered the healthy New Testament relationship between modality and sodality.

## The Medieval Synthesis of Modality and Sodality

We can say that the Medieval period began when the Roman Empire in the West started to break down. To some extent the diocesan pattern, following as it did the Roman civil-governmental pattern, tended to break down at the same time. The monastic (or sodality) pattern turned out to be much more durable, and as a result gained greater importance in the early Medieval period than it might have otherwise. The survival of the modality (diocesan Christianity) was further compromised by the fact that the invaders of this early Medieval period generally belonged to a different brand of Christian belief—they were Arians. As a result, in many places there were both “Arian” and “Catholic” Christian churches on opposite corners of

a main street—something like today, where we have Methodist and Presbyterian churches across the street from each other.

Again, however, it is not our purpose to downplay the significance of the parish or diocesan form of Christianity, but simply to point out that during this early period of the Medieval epoch the specialized house called the monastery, or its equivalent, became ever so much more important in the perpetuation of the Christian movement than was the organized system of parishes, which we often call the church as if there were no other structure making up the church.

Perhaps the most outstanding illustration in the early Medieval period of the importance of the relationship between modality and sodality is the collaboration between Gregory the Great and a man later called Augustine of Canterbury. While Gregory, as the bishop of the diocese of Rome, was the head of a modality, both he and Augustine were the products of monastic houses—a fact which reflects the dominance even then of the sodality pattern of Christian structure. In any case, Gregory called upon his friend Augustine to undertake a major mission to England in order to try to plant a diocesan structure there, where Celtic Christianity had been deeply wounded by the invasion of Saxon warriors from the continent.

As strong as Gregory was in his own diocese, he simply had no structure to call upon to reach out in this intended mission other than the sodality, which at this point in history took the form of a Benedictine monastery. This is why he ended up asking Augustine and a group of other members of the same monastery to undertake this rather dangerous journey and important mission on his behalf. The purpose of the mission, curiously, was not to extend the Benedictine form of monasticism. The remnant of the Celtic “church” in England was itself a network of sodalities since there were no parish systems in the Celtic area. No, Augustine went to England to establish diocesan Christianity, though he himself was not a diocesan priest. Interestingly enough, the Benedictine “Rule” (way of life) was so attractive that gradually virtually all of the Celtic houses adopted the Benedictine Rule, or *Regula* (in Latin).

This is quite characteristic. During a lengthy period of time, perhaps a thousand years, the building and rebuilding of the modalities was mainly the work of the sodalities. That is to say the monasteries were

uniformly the source and the real focal point of new energy and vitality which flowed into the diocesan side of the Christian movement. We think of the momentous Cluny reform, then the Cistercians, then the Friars, and finally the Jesuits—all of them strictly sodalities, but sodalities which contributed massively to the building and the rebuilding of the *Corpus Christianum*, the network of dioceses, which Protestants often identify as “the” Christian movement.

At many points there was rivalry between these two structures, between bishop and abbot, diocese and monastery, modality and sodality, but the great achievement of the Medieval period is the ultimate synthesis, delicately achieved, whereby Catholic orders were able to function along with Catholic parishes and dioceses without the two structures conflicting with each other to the point of a setback to the movement. The harmony between the modality and the sodality achieved by the Roman Church is perhaps the most significant characteristic of this phase of the world Christian movement and continues to be Rome’s greatest organizational advantage to this day.

Note, however, that is not our intention to claim that any one organization, whether modality or sodality, was continuously the champion of vitality and vigor throughout the thousands of years of the Medieval epoch. As a matter of fact, there really is no very impressive organizational continuity in the Christian movement, either in the form of modality or sodality. (The list of bishops at Rome is at many points a most shaky construct and unfortunately does not even provide a focus for the entire Christian movement.) On the other hand, it is clear that the sodality, as it was recreated again and again by different leaders, was almost always the structural prime mover, the source of inspiration and renewal which overflowed into the papacy and created the reform movements which blessed diocesan Christianity from time to time. The most significant instance of this is the accession to the papal throne of Hildebrand (Gregory VII), who brought the ideals, commitment and discipline of the monastic movement right into the Vatican itself. In this sense are not then the papacy, the College of Cardinals, the diocese, and the parish structure of the Roman Church in some respects a secondary element, a derivation from the monastic tradition rather than vice versa? In any case it seems appropriate that the priests of the monastic tradition are called regular priests, while

the priests of the diocese and parish are called secular priests. The former are voluntarily bound by a *regula*, while the latter as a group were other than, outside of ("cut off") or somehow less than, the second-decision communities bound by a demanding way of life, a *regula*. Whenever a house or project or parish run by the regular clergy is brought under the domination of the secular clergy, this is a form of the "secularization" of that entity. In the lengthy "Investiture Controversy," the regular clergy finally gained clear authority for at least semi-autonomous operation, and the secularization of the orders was averted.

The same structural danger of secularization exists today whenever the special concerns of an elite mission sodality fall under the complete domination (e.g. administration not just regulation) of an ecclesiastical government, since the Christian modalities (congregations) inevitably represent the much broader and, no doubt, mainly inward concerns of a large body of all kinds of Christians, who, as "first-decision" members, are generally less select. Their democratic majority tends to move away from the high-discipline of the mission structures, and denominational mission budgets tend to get smaller across the decades as the church membership "broadens."

We cannot leave the Medieval period without referring to the many unofficial and often persecuted movements which also mark the era. In all of this, the Bible itself seems always the ultimate prime mover, as we see in the case of Peter Waldo. His work stands as a powerful demonstration of the simple power of a vernacular translation of the Bible where the people were unable to appreciate either Jerome's classical translation or the celebration of the Mass in Latin. A large number of groups referred to as "Anabaptists" are to be found in many parts of Europe. One of the chief characteristics of these renewal movements is that they did not attempt to elicit merely celibate participation, although this was one of their traits on occasion, but often simply developed whole "new communities" of believers and their families, attempting by biological and cultural transmission to preserve a high and enlightened form of Christianity. These groups usually faced such strong opposition and grave limitations that it would be very unfair to judge their virility by their progress. It is important to note, however, that the average Mennonite or Salvation Army community, where whole families are members, typified the desire for a "pure" church, or what is often called a

"believers" church, and constitutes a most significant experiment in Christian structure. Such a structure stands, in a certain sense, midway between a modality and a sodality, since it has the constituency of the modality (involving full families) and yet, in its earlier years, may have the vitality and selectivity of a sodality. We will return to this phenomenon in the next section.

We have space here only to point out that in terms of the durability and quality of the Christian faith, the 1000-year Medieval period is virtually impossible to account for apart from the role of the sodalities. What happened in the city of Rome is merely the tip of the iceberg at best, and represents a rather superficial and political level. It is quite a contrast to the foundational well-springs of Biblical study and radical obedience represented by the various sodalities of this momentous millennium, which almost always arose somewhere else, and were often opposed by the Roman hierarchy.

## The Protestant Recovery of the Sodality

The Protestant movement started out by attempting to do without any kind of sodality structure. Martin Luther had been discontented with the apparent polarization between the vitality he eventually discovered in his own order and the very nominal parish life of his time. Being dissatisfied with this contrast, he abandoned the sodality (in which, nevertheless, he was introduced to the Bible, to the Pauline epistles and to teaching on "justification by faith,") and took advantage of the political forces of his time to launch a full-scale renewal movement on the general level of church life. At first, he even tried to do without the characteristically Roman diocesan structure, but eventually the Lutheran movement produced a Lutheran diocesan structure which to a considerable extent represented the readoption of the Roman diocesan tradition. But the Lutheran movement did not in a comparable sense readopt the sodalities, the Catholic orders, that had been so prominent in the Roman tradition.

*This omission, in my evaluation, represents the greatest error of the Reformation and the greatest weakness of the resulting Protestant tradition. Had it not been for the so-called Pietist movement, the Protestants would have been totally devoid of any organized renewing structures within their tradition. The Pietist tradition, in every new emergence of its force, was very definitely*



a sodality, inasmuch as it was a case of adults meeting together and committing themselves to new beginnings and higher goals as Christians without conflicting with the stated meetings of the existing church. This phenomenon of sodality nourishing modality is prominent in the case of the early work of John Wesley. He absolutely prohibited any abandonment of the parish churches. A contemporary example is the widely influential so-called *East African Revival*, which has now involved a million people but has very carefully avoided any clash with the functioning of local churches. The churches that have not fought against this movement have been greatly blessed by it.

However, the Pietist movement, along with the Anabaptist new communities, eventually dropped back to the level of biological growth; it reverted to the ordinary pattern of congregational life. It reverted from the level of the sodality to the level of the modality, and in most cases, rather soon became ineffective either as a mission structure or as a renewing force.

What interests us most is the fact that in failing to exploit the power of the sodality, the Protestants had no mechanism for missions for almost three hundred years, until William Carey's famous book, *An Enquiry*, proposed "the use of means for the conversion of the heathen." His key word means refers specifically to the need for a sodality, for the organized but non-ecclesiastical initiative of the warmhearted. Thus, the resulting Baptist Missionary Society is one of the most significant organizational developments in the Protestant tradition. Although not the earliest such society, reinforced as it was by the later stages of the powerful "Evangelical Awakening" and by the printing of Carey's book, it set off a rush to the use of this kind of "means" for the conversion of the heathen, and we find in the next few years a number of societies forming along similar lines—12 societies in 32 years.<sup>9</sup> Once this method of operation was clearly understood by the Protestants, 300 years of latent energies burst forth in what became, in Latourette's phrase, "The Great Century." By helping to tap the immense spiritual energies of the Reformation, Carey's book has probably contributed more to global mission than any other book in history other than the Bible itself!

The 19th Century is thus the first century in which Protestants were actively engaged in missions. For reasons which we have not space here to explain, it was also the century of the lowest ebb of Catholic mission

energy. Amazingly, in this one century Protestants, building on the unprecedented world expansion of the West, caught up with 18 centuries of earlier mission efforts. There is simply no question that what was done in this century moved the Protestant stream from a self-contained, impotent European backwater into a world force in Christianity. Looking back from where we stand today, of course, it is hard to believe how recently the Protestant movement has become prominent.

Organizationally, however, the vehicle that allowed the Protestant movement to become vital was the structural development of the sodality, which harvested the vital "voluntarism" latent in Protestantism, and surfaced in new mission agencies of all kinds, both at home and overseas. Wave after wave of evangelical initiatives transformed the entire map of Christianity, especially in the United States, but also in England, in Scandinavia and on the Continent. By 1840, the phenomenon of mission sodalities was so prominent in the United States that the phrase the "Evangelical Empire" and other equivalent phrases were used to refer to it, and now began a trickle of ecclesiastical opposition to this bright new emergence of the second structure. This brings us to our next point.

## The Contemporary Misunderstanding of the Mission Sodality

Almost all mission efforts in the 19th Century, whether sponsored by interdenominational or denominational boards, were substantially the work of initiatives independent of the related ecclesiastical structures. Toward the latter half of the 19th Century, there seemed increasingly to be two separate structural traditions.

On the one hand, there were men like Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, who were the strategic thinkers at the helm of older societies—the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in England and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), respectively. These men championed the semi-autonomous mission sodality, and they voiced an attitude which was not at first contradicted by any significant part of the leaders of the ecclesiastical structures. On the other hand, there was the centralizing perspective of denominational leaders, principally the Presbyterians, which gained ground almost without reversal throughout the latter two-thirds of the 19th Century, so that by the early part of the 20th Century the once-independent structures which had been merely related to the denominations gradually

became dominated by the churches, that is administered, not merely regulated. Partially as a result, toward the end of the 19th Century, there was a new burst of totally separate mission sodalities called the Faith Missions, with Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission (CIM) taking the lead. It is not widely recognized that this pattern was mainly a recrudescence of the pattern established earlier in the century, prior to the trend toward denominational boards.

All of these changes took place very gradually. Attitudes at any point are hard to pin down, but it does seem clear that Protestants were always a bit unsure about the legitimacy of the sodality. The Anabaptist tradition consistently emphasized the concept of a pure community of believers and thus was uninterested in a voluntarism involving only part of the believing community. The same is true of Alexander Campbell's "Restoration" tradition and the Plymouth Brethren. The more recent sprinkling of independent "Charismatic Centers," with all their exuberance locally, tend to send out their own missionaries, and have not learned the lesson of the Pentecostal groups before them who employ mission agencies with great effect.

U.S. denominations, lacking tax support as on the Continent, have been generally a more selective and vital fellowship than the European state churches, and, at least in their youthful exuberance, have felt quite capable as denominations of providing all of the necessary initiative for overseas mission. It is for this latter reason that many new denominations of the U.S. have tended to act as though centralized church control of mission efforts is the only proper pattern.

As a result, by the Second World War, a very nearly complete transmutation had taken place in the case of almost all mission efforts related to denominational structures. That is, almost all older denominational boards, though once semi-autonomous or very nearly independent, had by this time become part of unified budget provisions. At the same time, and partially as a result, a whole host of new independent mission structures burst forth again, especially after the Second World War. As in the case of the earlier emergence of the Faith Missions, these tended to pay little attention to denominational leaders and their aspirations for church-centered mission. The Anglican church with its CMS, USPG, etc., displays the Medieval synthesis, and so, almost unconsciously, does the American CBA with its associated CBFMS (now CBI), CBHMS

(now MTTA) structures. Thus, to this day, among Protestants, there continues to be deep confusion about the legitimacy and proper relationship of the two structures that have manifested themselves throughout the history of the Christian movement.

To make matters worse, Protestant blindness about the need for mission sodalities has had a very tragic influence on mission fields. Protestant missions, being modality-minded, have tended to assume that merely modalities, e.g., churches, need to be established. In most cases where mission work is being pursued by essentially semi-autonomous mission sodalities, it is the planting of modalities, not sodalities, that is the only goal. Mission agencies (even those completely independent from denominations back home) have tended in their mission work to set up churches and not to plant, in addition, mission sodalities in the so-called mission lands.<sup>10</sup> The marvelous "Third World Mission" movement has sprung up from these mission field churches, but with embarrassingly little encouragement from the Western mission societies, as sad and surprising as that may seem.

It is astonishing that most Protestant missionaries, working with (mission) structures that did not exist in the Protestant tradition for hundreds of years, and without whose existence there would have been no mission initiative, have nevertheless been blind to the significance of the very structure within which they have worked. In this blindness they have merely planted churches and have not effectively concerned themselves to make sure that the kind of mission structure within which they operate also be set up on the field. Many of the mission agencies founded after World War II, out of extreme deference to existing church movements already established in foreign lands, have not even tried to set up churches, and have worked for many years merely as auxiliary agencies in various service capacities helping the churches that were already there.

The question we must ask is how long it will be before the younger churches of the so-called mission territories of the non-Western world come to that epochal conclusion (to which the Protestant movement in Europe only tardily came), namely, that there need to be sodality structures, such as William Carey's "use of means," in order for church people to reach out in vital initiatives in mission, especially cross-cultural mission. There are already some hopeful signs that this tragic

delay will not continue. We see, for example, the outstanding work of the Melanesian Brotherhood in the Solomon Islands.

## Conclusion

This article has been in no sense an attempt to decry or to criticize the organized church. It has assumed both the necessity and the importance of the parish structure, the diocesan structure, the denominational structure, the ecclesiastical structure. The modality structure in the view of this article is a significant and absolutely essential structure. All that is attempted here is to explore some of the historical patterns which make clear that God, through His Holy Spirit, has clearly and consistently used a structure other than (and sometimes instead of) the modality structure. It is our attempt here to help church leaders and others to understand the legitimacy of both structures, and the necessity for both structures not only to exist but to work together harmoniously for the fulfillment of the Great Commission and for the fulfillment of all that God desires for our time.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> One can hardly conceive of more providentially supplied means for the Christian mission to reach the Gentile community. Wherever the community of Christ went, it found at hand the tools needed to reach the nations: a people living under covenant promise and a responsible election, and the Scriptures, God's revelation to all men. The open synagogue was the place where all these things converged. In the synagogue, the Christians were offered an inviting door of access to every Jewish community. It was in the synagogue that the first Gentile converts declared their faith in Jesus. Richard F. DeRidder, *The Dispersion of the People of God* (Netherlands: J.H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, 1971), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> In Paul's day Asia meant what we today call Asia Minor, or present-day Turkey. In those days no one dreamed how far the term would later be extended.

<sup>3</sup> That Christians in Jerusalem organized themselves for worship on the synagogue pattern is evident from the appointment of elders and the adoption of the service of prayer. The provision of a daily dole for widows and the needy reflected the current synagogue practice (Acts 2:42, 6:1). It is possible that the epistle of James reflected the prevailing Jerusalem situation: in James 2:2 reference is made to a wealthy man coming "into your assembly." The term translated "assembly" is literally "synagogue," not the more usual word "church." Glenn W. Barker, William L. Lane and J. Ramsey Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks* (New York: Harper and Row Co., 1969), pp. 126-27.

<sup>4</sup> "Dynamic Equivalence Churches," *Missiology: An International Review*, 1, no. 1 (1973), p. 39ff.

<sup>5</sup> Christians, it said, resorted to formation of "burial clubs," which were legal, as one vehicle of fellowship and worship.

<sup>6</sup> Latourette, Kenneth Scott, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 181, 221-34.

<sup>7</sup> Latourette, Kenneth Scott, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 2, *The Thousand Years of Uncertainty* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), pp. 379-80.

<sup>8</sup> Winter, Ralph D., "The Warp and the Woof of the Christian Movement," in his and R. Pierce Beaver's, *The Warp and Woof: Organizing for Christian Mission* (South Pasadena, CA.: William Carey Library, 1970), pp. 52-62.

<sup>9</sup> The London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Netherlands Missionary Society (NMS) in 1795, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1799, the CFBS in 1804, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) in 1810, the American Baptist Missionary Board (ABMB) in 1814, the Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) in 1815, the Danish Missionary Society (DMS) in 1821, the FEM in 1822, and the Berlin Mission (BM) in 1824.

<sup>10</sup> Winter, Ralph D., "The Planting of Younger Missions," in *Church/Mission Tensions Today*, ed. by C. Peter Wagner (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).



# The Third Four Hundred Years (AD 800–1200)

*Ralph D. Winter*

## Overview of the Period

**T**his third period, just like the second period, starts out with a massive Dark Ages of intrusion of invaders from outside—the “Second Dark Ages.” This time it is not pagan Anglo-Saxons but pagan Vikings pillaging newly Christian Anglo-Saxons. Toward the end of this period, as in the previous period, there is again a period of peace and quiet, productive outreach, scholarship and Bible study on the part of the Christian movement in the West, a flourishing of faith—in a word, a “renaissance.”

However, this period of peace toward the end of the second period started a little earlier than in the last 400-year period, considerably before 1100. If you were to diagram those two Dark Ages followed by the two *Light Ages*, or *renaissances* as they are called, you would find a striking parallelism. We have already referred to the Second Dark Ages being the result of the Scandinavian invasion. As in the First Dark Age, this period is marked by persecution of Christians in the early years, followed then by the period of peace and quiet called by historians the *Carolingian Renaissance*.<sup>1</sup>

## Charlemagne

Before we move on into this third period, let’s look at Charlemagne. Two generations before his reign, the Muslims had started moving up from North Africa into Spain, and Charlemagne’s grandfather, Charles Martel (the “hammer”) had stopped them at the Battle of Tours, just north of the Pyrenees Mountains which separate present-day Spain from France. Charles Martel had become a Christian of sorts, however rough, but his grandson was a literate, scholarly statesman and an outstandingly humble Christian.

One thing Charlemagne is notorious for is his treatment of the Saxons. He was convinced that the only way to protect his territory was to make the Saxons (still living and constantly raiding to the north of France where he ruled) into real believers. There was still pressure from the Muslims in Spain and increasing pressure coming down from the north with the Vikings. All the more, Charlemagne—or Charles the Great—had to keep his eye on unpredictable dangers from the Saxons, who were still pagans in Europe and right on the very border of his territory.

He imported thousands of Celtic monks from England and Ireland (by now perhaps quite a few were Benedictines) to come and set up schools all over his domain, which included the Saxon territory. He urged the monks not only to teach about Christ, but to teach the people to read the Bible.

But politically the Saxons hated the Franks and refused. They killed some of the missionaries, and eventually Charlemagne threatened them with extermination if they did not get baptized (at least that is what the legends say). And he very nearly did, although thousands were forcibly transplanted to the area today called Saxony, in Eastern Germany.

It has been thought that Charlemagne was illiterate. But some recent research indicates that he merely couldn’t read Latin, Greek and Hebrew, or perhaps not the Germanic script. He typically moved around the countryside in monk’s robes. In his private correspondence, he signed his name *David* after King David in the Bible and tried to emulate his piety and life, even to the point of having more than one wife.

Some historians claim that during a thousand-year

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period, Charlemagne stood head and shoulders (both literally and politically) above every other ruler on earth. He was truly a great man. He wanted to rebuild the Roman Empire with all its benefits, but without its vices, thus requesting the pope to crown him emperor of the *Holy Roman Empire*, which was done in the year 800, the symbolic year when the Vikings began to invade from the north. But the renaissance which he brought about in learning, Biblical studies, manuscript reproduction—all because of his importation of learned Celtic and Benedictine monks from England and Ireland—worked to preserve to a great extent what peace there had been until the Vikings came, and he set a significant pattern to follow.

## The Viking Invasions

Thus, the Second Dark Ages open around the year 800 with the increasing invasions of the Vikings. Churchill's series of books called *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* contain an exciting chapter on the Vikings. Churchill himself was an Anglo-Saxon, so he does not have any sentimental attachment to the Vikings, but he does have a powerful gift of description. In his chapter entitled "The Vikings" he talks about the effulgence of the gospel ultimately dazzling and holding captive these marauding tribals.

He describes the Viking ships in their sleek beauty, balance and gaudy color as having "a scent of murder" about them, and talks about the Vikings as the cruellest pirates in history. While this might not be a true fact, the description is still rather accurate. However shocking it might be to us, modern-day readers, we must admit that the gentleness of our culture is not native to our fallen nature. Whatever gentleness we have is purely the grace of God. To unsnarl the unbelievable complexities of Satan's power over mankind, the darkness and distortion of his purposes is impossible apart from the grace and the power of the gospel.

There is another equally exciting chapter on the Vikings in a book by Christopher Dawson called *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*. Dawson is one of the historians who uses the phrase "the Second Dark Ages." The picture of the Vikings as he tells it is ugly and gruesome. Dawson points out that the difference between the Vikings and the barbarians who invaded 400 years before was in part because the Vikings were not Christians at all. They slaughtered the people in the churches with an

almost special gusto. They tore the churches down with a venom that stems to Satan himself. They burned the Bible; they did almost everything you could think of to eliminate the Christian faith.

But the Christian tradition they were eliminating was by then stagnant in its ease and religious splendor. As far as Biblical perspective is concerned, I would conjecture that God's true judgment would not fall upon the Vikings but upon those Christians who failed to reach out to the Vikings, who did not send any missionaries to them. And because of this, they eventually had to suffer the invasions of these exceedingly rude, crude and vicious savages.

## Alfred the Great

One of the most significant missiological developments was that in the confusion the lines of communication were cut—what today would be all telephone lines and the transatlantic cables as well as the satellite communication centers. Thus, it was not possible for Rome to maintain its hold even tenuously upon the churches of England. But once again God brought to the fore a man to salvage the situation—Alfred the Great, the second son of the Anglo-Saxon king in southwestern England. Alfred had intended to go into a monastery and spend his life in devotion and scholarship. But his brother, after becoming king, was killed in a Viking invasion, and Alfred had to take over.

Eventually Alfred defeated the Vikings. They conquered every other place in England, but they never really conquered Wessex, King Alfred's area, the most southwestern part of England.

In the first of the two Dark Ages, the Anglo-Saxon forebears of Alfred had come in from the south, but in this period the invaders, the Vikings, came in from the north. They were Scandinavians—the Danish, the Swedish and the Norwegians. They came by sea, and many centers well fortified against land invasion were totally exposed to sea invasion. But Alfred was able to push them back. Consequently, they never quite triumphed over the southern part of England.

Alfred's personality is fascinating. He was very studious, in some ways almost like Charlemagne in his religious, scholarly and military characteristics. He decided that he would start translating the Latin scriptures and the various ecclesiastical documents into Anglo-Saxon. At that time in Western (Roman) Christianity Latin was

the only acceptable language, and Roman Catholicism the most respectable form. But due to the simple isolation of England from Rome the vernacular language began to break through in worship.

King Alfred's translation work is in curious contrast to the work of Cyril and Methodius in eastern Europe. As a matter of fact, it was already perfectly normal for Cyril and Methodius to use the Slavonic language. They are the ones who produced what today is known as the Cyrillic Script, named after Cyril. We find here this curious contrast between the patterns of western Europe—what I have called “uniformitarian”—and eastern Europe with its permitted diversity—what has been called “autocephalic,” which allowed each cultural tradition to have its own patriarch and its own equally legitimate form of Christianity. The autocephalic type resulted in a large diversity of different kinds of Christianity in the East, while in the West there was a single tradition (the Roman Catholic). Later this became one of the reasons that there had to be a Reformation in the West, and there didn't have to be one in the East.

## The Cluny Reform

Possibly due to the very terror of the circumstances there was another fascinating development in this period. It was the appearance of the Cluny renewal in the monastic tradition. What is there about the Cluny movement which was so influential?

First of all, it was the beginning of the flourishing, the renaissance that welled up toward the end of the period. It was the beginning of a reformation within the monastic tradition itself. Things had gone from bad to worse, mainly due to creeping affluence. Just as it is true today in many of the Korean churches, affluence overtook these outposts of Bible study. Amazingly, if you give time and space to a group of people who are godly, hardworking, abstemious, peaceful and productive, and you let them recruit other people for a hundred or two hundred years, pretty soon they become fabulously wealthy. Then, as a result of their wealth, they become targets for vandalism and robbery.

The monastic centers soon became the places where wealth accumulated. As a result, the secular chieftains began to cast greedy eyes upon them. And very often these chieftains would ride into one of those places with some horsemen and soldiers and take it over. Sometimes one of these chieftains would put his son

in as the abbot—a curious clash with the tradition that was already there. As a result, these monastic centers often went down hill faster than they had gone up hill. In other words, the wealthier they became, the more likely they were to be subjugated.<sup>2</sup>

The Cluny Reform also occurred just at the point when so many monasteries were being taken over by civil powers that this movement raised the issue of what later came to be called the *investiture controversy*. It had to do with who was going to put on the garment. Who is going to “invest” monastic leaders with authority, and thus put on the vestments of authority in a monastery? It is eminently clear that they did not think the members of the monastic community ought to elect their leaders. Would it then be a local bishop who would appoint an Abbot, a bishop who might well be subject to the string-pulling of the local chieftain? Or should it be the chieftain himself? Will the Abbot himself choose the new abbot at some point when his powers began to wane, as had always been the case? Or would somebody else have power over that monastic center?

This portrays a clash between the diocesan (parish) tradition and the monastic tradition in Christendom. What resolved the clash is, in a way, the single largest power play in the history of the Christian movement. It clearly established a new pattern, which is not what it seems to be. Although technically it was decided that the monasteries should be subject to the pope, he had no real power whatsoever over the monasteries. It was a sanctified subterfuge. It was a power play. It resolved the age-old tension over the question of who appoints a new abbot, essentially restoring to the monastic center self-rule.

Aquitaine (the area of the first Cluny house) is in southwestern France. In those days that was a long way from Rome. And even at our late date in history today there is no real possibility of the pope having any great influence over the monasteries. But by saying that the pope was in charge, they were saying that the bishop and the local chieftain were *not* in charge. This new appeal to the pope was a declaration of independence, so to speak. However, it was not so independent that it made the monastery a unique isolated island.

The Cluny Movement had tremendous spiritual power. It began to find other monastic centers and caught on everywhere fast. Pretty soon eight hundred other monastic settlements pledged their loyalty to Rome alone (which meant they pledged their loyalty to nobody lo-

cal) and adopted the lifestyle of the Cluny movement. This was called the Cluny Reform.

Notice there are two or three things happening here. First of all, Cluny established once and for all history the fact that the investiture of an abbot is not subject to the power of a local bishop. This eliminated any claim to power there might have been of a bishop over the leadership of a monastic center. Secondly, it established for the first time a connectional development within the monastic tradition.

There was now a connection between Cluny, the mother house, and the various daughter houses, although each of them had a certain amount of their own authority. The daughter houses submitted themselves to the mother house, just like they said they were submitting themselves to the pope in Rome. But in many cases they didn't know or care who the pope in Rome was. As a matter of fact, the pope at this particular moment was one of the least qualified in the entire history of the papacy, an absolute scoundrel, a violent, murderous man.

We must not overlook the fact of the connectional development within the monastic movement as a result of this Cluny reform. To this day virtually every monastery in the world in the Roman Catholic tradition is part of a connectional group. Such clusters of monasteries today are called—in the Roman Catholic vocabulary—“congregations.” A *congregation* in the Catholic world usually refers to a subdivision of one of the major orders. In other words, ten or fifteen monasteries in a certain region will be called a *congregation*.

The *Superior General*—the superior of an order who is general or leader over all the various congregations—may have his office in Rome. Then, because there are so many different Catholic orders, there is a group of Superiors General who live in Rome. Incidentally, they have a committee on missions.

Latourette describes the Cluny Movement with some care, and it is worth looking at. In my own opinion, the Clunys overemphasized the idea of worship. It seems that when they gave up working with their hands and decided just to pray, they were parting ways with Benedict himself. I do not think they did this intentionally because in their own minds they were still Benedictines, of course. Benedict was very balanced (the Benedictines had a saying that “to labor is to pray”), but I feel the Clunys lost some of that balance.

## The Cistercian Renewal

The Cluny Movement was established in 910. But after a relatively short time that movement itself became so opulent with beautiful buildings, chapels, paintings, and everything else, that another renewal movement arose called the “Cistercians.” I have a much higher regard for the Cistercians than I do for the Clunys.

Latourette, in his *A History of Christianity*, mentions five chief characteristics of the Cistercians, all of which are very significant. For example, the Cistercians went back into the swamps and started from scratch. They were determined not to get rich. They built their monastic houses either in the swamplands or on the steep hillsides. The only thing they could possibly do to make a living would be to graze sheep on the hillsides and to drain the swamps. They often did such things and in the process created vast areas of new and high-quality pasture land. And after a hundred years the Cistercians had unintentionally cornered the wool market of Europe. That is the story of the Roman Catholic monastic movement again and again.

## Other Developments

One other phenomenon in the flourishing of this period is the development of the scholastics. Long before 1200, even before the year 1000, the number of Christian scholars was growing. Anselm is one of the first scholastics and Abelard perhaps the second. Overlapping him was Maimonides, who was not a Christian scholar but Jewish. He did a fantastic job of fusing the Jewish Semitic cultural tradition with the knowledge and the philosophical tradition of the Greeks. That fusion then gave rise quite possibly to Thomas Aquinas' work. He is the most famous of all the scholastics, and he lived right around the year 1200. His work cast a long shadow into the future reconciling Christian thought with Aristotelian thought, just like Maimonides had done for the Jewish tradition.

This scholastic movement was not really the Bible-studying movement of the earlier monastic scholars by any means. These were now more nearly philosophers than simply Bible scholars.

Other developments of this period were the development of the universities of Europe and the beginning of the Crusades.

In the final flourishing of this period, “The Twelfth Century Renaissance,” cathedral building became a fad.



Almost all of the major cathedrals of Europe were begun during that period—many taking centuries to complete.

The most significant development missiologically is perhaps the most important—the appearance of the friars. Most of their work was in the next 400-year period, which will be discussed in further lessons.

Finally, towards the end of this third period the Vikings, once they became Christians, themselves literally became crusaders. All of the major crusades were led by former Vikings, the so-called *Northmen*. They had a great perception of distance and the ability to navigate and to travel. They also still had the lust for war. Even though they were now Christians, they still retained this rather unfortunate warring bent. As crusaders, they destroyed many Christian as well as Jewish communities in their rampaging.

We need to keep track of these major developments toward the end of this third period because things are really getting exciting now. We know far more about the next period we are going to look at than we ever knew about things happening before, and not only because there is more data available, but more things were happening as well.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Although it is almost impossible for me to say this because I respect Latourette so very much, in my estimation, the biggest single mistake that he ever made in his writings is to down-play the Carolingian Renaissance more than he should have. Because of that he does not talk in terms of two Dark Ages, as many of the more recent scholars do.

<sup>2</sup> Probably the most far-reaching example of the syndrome of wealth leading to downfall was what is called the “dissolution of the monasteries” in later history. When King Henry VIII decided to divorce Catherine, his main reason was not because he wanted to become a Protestant or even to divorce his wife and marry again, but simply because he needed money. And the money was in the hands of the monasteries. According to Luther, who lived about the same time, the monasteries were not valid. So King Henry VIII found it very desirable to dissolve all the monasteries in England and to seize their wealth as a political maneuver. This as much as any other reason was what made Henry VIII into a Protestant.

The wealth of the monasteries was undoubtedly the reason for their downfall. This is why I, no longer a field missionary, am still living on a missionary salary and even promoting in America an organization which will welcome any serious believer into its membership and allow him the privilege of living on a missionary’s salary. It is called *The Order for World Evangelization*. This order simply enables a person to choose a mission society and to adopt the salaried level of a furloughed missionary as his own lifestyle level. All the rest of his money then is made available, by his own decision, to the work of the Lord. This seems to me a perfectly logical way to fight affluence.

I’ll admit that we haven’t had a massive number of people charging in to become members. I have often thought that while many missionaries, to their credit, simply suffer along with their missionary salary level, if for any valid reason they could get out of the harness they wouldn’t feel bound by that type of lifestyle level. If, however, you would like a little encouragement to stay with this kind of lifestyle, then join the Order for World Evangelization. We are trying to combat the difficulty of staying poor by this approach.



# The Significance of Medieval Christianity

*Lynn T. White, Jr.*

## The Complexity of the Middle Ages

Even of the nineteen centuries since Golgotha are customarily grouped together as “medieval”; yet there is no agreement regarding the general implications of the term. From one point of view this span between Augustine and Luther is the Golden Age of Christendom, preceded by four hundred years of preparation for triumph and followed by four centuries of schism, scepticism, and disintegration. A contrary party holds that it is a valley of shadow between the pinnacles of the early Church and the Protestant Reformation. Both these views share the delusion that the so-called “Middle Ages” were a unified historical epoch. The Middle Ages as an entity is a fantasy which was originated by the neo-classicists of the Italian Renaissance who could see in the generations since the decay of Rome nothing save gothic degradation, a fantasy which was propagated by the reformers as well as by the philosophers of the Enlightenment who together identified such barbarism with popery and superstition. The same conception in inverted form was revived by nostalgic Catholic Romantics longing for an age unencumbered by either Protestants or illuminati.

The Middle Ages, however, have no significant unifying characteristics. They embrace a complex series of historical epochs and changes far more drastic than any which separate Merovingian France from Roman Gaul or Shakespeare’s England from that of Chaucer. The notion of the Middle Ages as a single and static period is as fanciful as are the illustrations of children’s books showing King Arthur, Richard Lionheart, and Joan of Arc all accoutered in the full plate armor of the

sixteenth century. In the Middle Ages everything from village customs to styles of handwriting altered with almost every generation. The reputation of the Middle Ages for conservatism and changelessness may perhaps be understood by the analogy of our popular use of the adjective “Victorian.” We all know that the Victorian age was one of radical experiment and mutation, yet because our grandfathers were Victorian, we use the expression to indicate the ultimate in mossbackism. Belaboring the past in the interest of present flexibility of mind may be socially salutary as well as pleasurable, but an historian must endeavor to keep his scientific activities uncontaminated by even the worthiest propaganda. He will recall that the newly invented windmill spread as rapidly in the late twelfth century as the railroad did in the middle nineteenth and will use the words “Victorian” and “medieval” without connotation of immutability, much less of atrophy.

Nor is medieval Christianity an entity; to discuss it as such is to produce a composite photograph corresponding to nothing which ever existed. Its thoughts, its emotional attitudes, and its institutions were in constant and often rapid flux. The river of the Christian tradition, rising in the high hills of antiquity, flows down to the modern world through broken country. Sometimes it is disturbed by rapids, sometimes serene, often muddied, often clear, receiving tributaries, gaining much, losing little, seemingly guided by the terrain through which it passes, yet, propelled by its own forces, in no small part responsible for the forms of the landscape.

Since the conventional limits of the Middle Ages are entirely arbitrary, one must trespass somewhat beyond

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them to gain any real understanding of the vicissitudes and significance of the various forms of medieval Christianity. The history of the Western Church since apostolic times has centered about three great crises: the Monastic Reformation, the Medieval Reformation and the Protestant Reformation. The early Middle Ages were dominated by the results of the first, the eleventh to thirteenth centuries by the accomplishment of the second, the later Middle Ages by preliminary symptoms of the third. Each of these three reformations marked a vigorous reaction of the Christian yearning for spiritual perfection to its changing environment and resulted in mutual adaptation between Christianity and the dominant social and intellectual forms. While none of these movements can be properly understood without reference to its general historical context, nevertheless, no purely secular economic or sociological interpretation of them is adequate. In each case the initiative towards change came from within the Church itself, arising out of deep spiritual discontent and concern lest the purity of religious life be sullied by worldly influences. Consequently, each of these reformations was essentially ascetic although, since each was dominated by a quite different view of religious perfection, each produced its characteristic type of ascetic in the monk, the friar, and the Puritan respectively.

### **The Monastic Reformation: Labor and Learning**

Despite the blood of martyrs and the ink of the Fathers, the early Church does not offer an entirely edifying spectacle. "Not many wise, not many noble" joined the new faith; the great mass of converts, however well-intentioned in their first enthusiasm, brought ignorant and tangled minds to the altars of Christ. As the decades passed, Ananias and Sapphira, those prototypes of the Christian-with-reservations, had much spiritual progeny. As early as the beginning of the third century Tertullian was so exasperated by the failure of Christians to live up to their professions that he left the main body of the Church and joined a small moralistic sect of heretics. Able and unscrupulous men, who may indeed have considered themselves devout believers, began to rise to positions of power in the Christian community. Hippolytus, a bishop of high repute, has left us an astonishing contemporary account of how a Christian slave named Callistus began his career by embezzling the deposits placed by his

coreligionists in his master's branch bank in the slums of Rome. After conviction he tried to achieve eternal bliss by smashing up a synagogue, but in place of the lions he was condemned to the mines of Sardinia whence he was reprieved through the influence of Marcia, a Christian concubine of the Emperor Commodus. After his return to Rome he rose from humble posts to increasing responsibility in the management of church properties until at last, in the year 217, he became Bishop of Rome. The fact that Pope Callistus is revered as a saint admirably illustrates the breadth of Christian charity.

The recognition of the legality of Christianity by Constantine and the favors which he heaped upon the Church made the new religion fashionable and adhesion to it expedient. Opportunists flocked to baptism, although the wealthiest, who could afford to keep a priest constantly in attendance, followed the Emperor's prudent example of postponing that sacrament until the hour of death when, by expunging all sin, whether original or accrued, it made heaven inescapable. The Church was increasingly clogged with nominal Christians devoid of conviction or of more than the most conventional morality. By the fourth century it seemed to many that the pagan Empire, far from being Christianized, had on the contrary paganized the Church.

The more earnest critics of this degeneration saw no solution save retirement from a world doomed to damnation. Soon the waste places were sprinkled with hermits, severed from human conversation, seeking the single blessedness of solitude. "How fares the race of men?" asked one such recluse discovered after years of absolute isolation. The early leaders of this ascetic movement had little hope or expectation of reforming either the corrupt world or the corrupted Church: there was no time for that. They believed that the end of the drama of salvation was imminent; the part of wisdom was to flee the wrath to come. Yet in their flight they created the monastic pattern of life and the institution of the monastery, a reservoir of spirituality from which the arid world and the parched Church might be irrigated. Their abrupt break with all the elements and influences tending to weaken the apostolic faith and zeal, their fervid indictments of demi-Christians, led to a revitalization of the whole Christian movement. For at least seven centuries thereafter the monastery was the citadel of the City of God, the monk the criterion of sanctity. The Last Judgment

having been indefinitely postponed, the ascetic reaction against worldliness, which had begun merely as a snatching of brands from the burning, became the Monastic Reformation.

In the Western or Latin-speaking Church this movement was molded and its impulses channeled by three great leaders of the sixth century: Benedict, Cassiodorus, and Pope Gregory the Great. The importance of their work can scarcely be exaggerated: it still influences the whole of the Occident and, not least, America.

The hermitic life, spent alone with God, has left us records revealing at times a profundity of religious insight, a humility of spirit, and a reticence concerning ultimate mysteries which cannot fail to stir all save the most impenetrably socialized modern reader. But these same accounts indicate that so lonely an existence might prove a path to psychosis as well as to salvation. Revulsion against the excesses of fanatics soon led to forms of corporate monasticism in which the vagaries of the individual were checked by the experience of other ascetics. Naturally such communities needed a constitution and laws of conduct. The *Rule* of Benedict was so practical, so moderate and so flexible that it quickly became universal in the Western Church.

As a youth Benedict had become a hermit, dwelling in a cave of the Apennines so inaccessible that his food is said to have been lowered to him in a basket by a kindly shepherd. His fame spread; disciples gathered; frictions developed. Benedict decided that in the interest of their spiritual development his followers needed organization and discipline. To this end he slightly modified the hermitic ideal of complete abandonment of the world: his was to be a withdrawn community. He founded his monastery on a mountaintop above Cassino, which as recently as the nineteenth century could not be reached by vehicles. To maintain its isolation and thus to fulfill its spiritual function such a community was of necessity completely self-supporting, a world in itself. This meant that Benedictine monks had to labor with their hands, hard and long.

His insistence on the spiritual value of manual work makes Benedict the pivotal figure in the history of labor. Greco-Roman society rested on the backs of slaves. Work was the lot of slaves and any free man who dirtied his hands with it, even in the most casual way, demeaned himself. Plato once sharply rebuked two friends who had constructed an apparatus to help

solve a geometrical problem: they were contaminating thought. Plutarch tells us that Archimedes was ashamed of the machines he had built. Seneca remarks that the inventions of his time, such as stenography, were naturally the work of slaves since slaves alone were concerned with such things. In the classical tradition there is scarcely a hint of the dignity of labor. The provision of Benedict, himself an aristocrat, that his monks should work in fields and shops therefore marks a revolutionary reversal of the traditional attitude towards labor; it is a high peak along the watershed separating the modern from the ancient world. For the Benedictine monks regarded manual labor not as a mere regrettable necessity of their corporate life but rather as an integral and spiritually valuable part of their discipline. During the Middle Ages the general reverence for the laboring monks did much to increase the prestige of labor and the self-respect of the laborer. Moreover, since the days of Benedict every major form of Western asceticism has held that "to labor is to pray," until in its final development under the Puritans labor in one's "calling" became not only the prime moral necessity but also the chief means of serving and praising God. The importance of frugal living and consecrated labor in building up fluid investment-capital and in fostering the rapid expansion of capitalist economy in the regions of Europe and America most deeply affected by the puritan spirit is a commonplace of the economic history of early modern times. The Benedictine ancestry of the puritan attitude towards work is less often emphasized.

Besides communal worship and periods of labor, the Benedictine *Rule* prescribes regular periods of devotional reading for the monks. There is, however, no indication that Benedict expected his abbeys to become centers of scholarship. It was his contemporary, Cassiodorus, who made the monasteries the custodians of culture during the turbulence of the early Middle Ages.

Cassiodorus was a scion of the Roman nobility, a man of excellent education who for many years dominated the bureaucracy of the Ostrogothic kings of Italy. But his chief concern was to halt the rapid decay of educational and cultural standards. Cassiodorus saw that the Church was the one stable institution in that age of growing chaos and realized that if anything of learning or of ancient literature was to survive, it would be under the patronage and protection of the Church. In 536 he proposed to Pope Agapetus the setting up in

Rome of a Christian university which should teach the entire range of the liberal arts in preparation for the specifically religious studies of theology, scripture, and ecclesiastical history. Agapetus was impressed but died shortly thereafter, and nothing came of the plan. Then Cassiodorus had an inspiration: the monastery, an ideal spiritual community being propagated from Monte Cassino by the now aged Benedict, would offer the perfect institutional framework for a Christian university. In 540 Cassiodorus retired to his ancestral estate in Calabria and there set up an abbey. To it he attracted scholars and pupils who studied the pagan authors as an integral part of their education. He established a library and a scriptorium for the copying of manuscripts including heathen works. He encouraged translations from Greek into Latin. Gradually he spread the idea that broad and deep learning was a necessary attribute of the monk and that to treasure and multiply books was a part of the monastery's religious function. As Benedictines spread over Europe, they carried a zeal for learning with them which was never entirely lost even in the most troubled centuries. It was their ceaseless and laborious copying of manuscripts which preserved for us all that we know of ancient Latin belles-lettres. None has reached us through translation into Greek, Arabic, or the lesser tongues. The barest fragments have been excavated at Pompeii, Herculaneum, or elsewhere. The rare extant Latin manuscripts of the pre-monastic period survived in abbey libraries. But for the enthusiasm of monks for the Latin pagans we should know as little about the writings of classical Rome as we do about the Mayan literature which once flourished in the jungles of Yucatan.

It was the genius of Cassiodorus which utilized the forces of the Monastic Reformation to preserve something of the continuity of secular culture through the longest and most severe winter which our civilization has suffered. In cloistered gardens the Benedictines cultivated flowers which would have been nipped by the icy winds of the outside world. Modern writers have at times accused the monastery of being an escape. A twentieth-century bomb shelter is likewise an escape. One of the unsolved problems of our own harassed generation is to find the cultural equivalent of the monastery for the present age. The quest is not promising, for no modern institution possesses the supernatural sanction needed to overawe barbarians bent on devastation.

Cassiodorus' fusion of learning with the ascetic tradition led likewise to a second result of the greatest importance for the modern world. Benedict had commanded his monks to labor; Cassiodorus had inspired them to be scholars: for the first time the practical and the theoretical were embodied in the same individuals. As we have seen, in antiquity learned men did not work, and workers were not learned. Consequently ancient science consisted mostly of observation and abstract thought: experimental methods were rarely used. The craftsmen had accumulated a vast fund of factual knowledge about natural forces and substances, but the social cleavage prevented classical scientists from feeling that stimulus from technology which has been so conspicuous an element in the development of modern experimental science. The monk was the first intellectual to get dirt under his fingernails. He did not immediately launch into scientific investigation, but in his very person he destroyed the old artificial barrier between the empirical and the speculative, the manual and the liberal arts, and thus helped create a social atmosphere favorable to scientific development. It is no accident, therefore, that his ascetic successors, the friar and the Puritan, were eminent and ardent in scientific experiment.

## **The Christianizing and Civilizing of Northern Europe**

Benedict and Cassiodorus formulated the ideal of the monk in the Latin West. Their younger contemporary, Pope Gregory the Great, directed the forces released by the Monastic Reformation to expansion of Christendom into the Teutonic North and incidentally to the civilizing of the converts.

Europe as an historical entity is the product of the seventh to the tenth centuries. While the primary reason for the shift of the focus of history from the Mediterranean basin to the northern plains was a complex of improvements in agricultural methods which lies beyond our present discussion, nevertheless, the monks were the agents of that process of religious and cultural unification which laid the foundation of Europe as we know it today. The Roman Empire had been Mediterranean rather than European; the conversion of the English, Germans, Scandinavians and western Slavs by the Benedictines and the assimilation by these peoples of the culture of Gaul and Italy produced a world which a Roman would not have recognized. The monks were the artisans who made Europe.

In his youth Gregory the Great, himself a Benedictine, had been moved by the sight of English slaves for sale in the Roman forum to vow that he would carry the gospel to that distant and barbarous island. He had started on his mission but was recalled by the ecclesiastical authorities. When at length he became pope, he sent out the prior of his own abbey at the head of a band of monks. They landed in Kent in the year 597, were well received by the local chieftain, and founded the abbey of Canterbury, the first Benedictine house outside Italy.

As one reads the records of the evangelization of the North, cynicism aroused by the methods employed yields to amazement at the results achieved. The usual strategy was to convert the chief man of a region, often through the influence of his wife. Minor notables and the common people would then be commanded or induced to enter the fold of Christ. At times conquered foes were compelled to profess the new faith. The average barbarian baptism would seem to have had little spiritual significance. But the rapid development of the Northern Church invalidates such a judgment. There is, to be sure, ample evidence that much Christianization was superficial even when the converts were zealous. One recalls the enthusiasm of the ninth-century Saxon poet, endeavoring to tell the gospel story of Peter at the garden of Gethsemane:

Wroth was that ready swordsman Simon Peter. He seethed within, speechless with rage that men should bind his Lord with bonds. Furious he drew the sword at his side and struck the nearest of the foe with his fists' strength, so that cheek and ear burst wide from the sword's bite and blood spurted boiling from the wound.

Here sounds the song of a skald whose heart indeed may have learned to love Christ, but whose harp, like Achilles' heel, has escaped total immersion! Yet, despite such indications of continued unregeneracy, it is clear that Christianity made astonishing spiritual conquests under the auspices of the monks. Within a century of the foundation of Canterbury the English had dotted their land with monastic schools and had produced in the Venerable Bede the most learned European of his time. Swept on by ardor for the faith, the Anglo-Saxons became the greatest of evangelists. In the eighth century they poured across the North Sea, reformed the decadent Frankish Church, and penetrated the swamps and forests of Germany carrying the gospel, founding abbeys, often suffering martyrdom. Almost

at once Germany repeated the experience of England: scholars and saints flourished in the monasteries; missionaries set their faces northward toward the Vikings and eastward toward Czechs and Poles. The grandsons of the savage Saxons who had dived into rivers to wash off the holy water after their forcible baptism by Charlemagne became pillars of Christendom.

Indeed, the rapidity with which Christianity took root and flowered among the Teutonic peoples cannot be explained entirely by the devotion of the monks from whom the barbarians received the faith. The tribes surrounding the North Sea and Baltic were in many ways primitive, yet we have examples of their jewelry and woodcarving which are unsurpassed in their combination of bold design and intricate detail. A society which fosters such an art contains tempered and subtle minds. We know little of the religious history of the heathen North, but there are indications that a considerable group among the fair-haired peoples was deeply dissatisfied with the traditional cults. In a famous passage Bede describes the consultation of an Anglo-Saxon king with his nobles regarding the adoption of Christianity. A chieftain arose and said:

It seems to me, my Lord, that this earthly life is as uncertain as a sparrow which flits in at one window and straightway out another, while you sit at dinner with your thanes and earls in the winter time, the hall being warmed by the fire in its midst, but the land abroad being chilled with rain and snow. For a moment it feels not the sting of icy storm, but only fair weather. Then, passing from winter to winter, it vanishes. Thus the life of man appears for a brief space, but of what follows or of what came before, we know nothing. Wherefore, if this new teaching has brought any greater certainty, it is worthy to be accepted.

Such was the sort of question which the Church answered with an authority which did not stoop to argument. To understand the real significance of revelation we should try to imagine what it meant to the sensitive and groping spirit of this Northumbrian warrior: to him Christian dogma must have seemed a liberation from darkness and ignorance. And, indeed, the acceptance of Christianity meant an immense intellectual advance: it offered to the barbarians the first coherent theory of the nature of the universe, of time, and of personality.

The old Northern religions pictured a world tossed about by the whims of a quarreling and disorderly so-

ciety of gods, supplemented by clouds of demons and fairies. In the context of pagan mythology no concept of natural law, either physical or moral, could grow up. Under such a polytheism any systematic investigation of natural phenomena would have seemed futile. Christianity, on the contrary, asserted the existence of a single God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, without whom no sparrow falls to the ground nor flits through a hall. This God has, to be sure, permitted a certain autonomy to all spiritual creatures, whether angels, men, or devils, and He himself occasionally performs miracles. But to the Christian, in sharp contrast to the pagan, the universe functions in an orderly and normally predictable manner. Monotheism is the necessary presupposition of a concept of natural law and consequently of any rigorous and wide-ranging scientific research. The preaching of a monk in the fastnesses of the German forests may seem far removed from the modern laboratory; yet the monk was an intellectual ancestor of the scientist. As the triumphant chant, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty," rang through the new churches of the northern frontier, another foundation stone of the modern world was laid, the concept of an orderly and intelligible universe.

Similarly, the old Teutonic paganism had no explanation of the nature of time or history. It was vaguely believed that all things were in decay and that at last the gods themselves would be destroyed in a universal catastrophe. Christianity, on the other hand, offered a perfectly integrated pattern of history, a pageant of salvation extending from the fall of Adam through the incarnation of Christ to the Last Judgment. Just as the physical world was ruled by divine supervision, so the historical process was a vast pilgrimage of the human race towards the new Jerusalem, an epic of the conquest of sin. As an individual the Christian looked forward to heaven; as a member of the human race he awaited the consummation of history: his eyes were fixed not on the past but on the future. Here again dogma furnished the seed from which a typical modern concept grew: Christian eschatology was the embryonic form of the idea of progress.

Finally, Christianity offered to the barbarians a new concept of human nature. So far as we can judge, the highest ideal of the Northern peoples was the warrior hero who maintained his personal honor through feats of arms and implacable blood feud. To this, Christian-

ity opposed a strange and difficult standard. In the eyes of God, it taught, all men from the mightiest king to the humblest peasant are equal. All are equipped in some measure with both reason and will, and by the right exercise of these faculties all may attain conformity to the will of God as revealed by the Church and thus gain salvation. Naturally peoples whose society was aristocratic and who instinctively thought in terms of human inequality were slow to grasp the implications of such doctrine. Yet every monastery was spiritually a democracy which by its very existence rebuked the world beyond the cloister. Generation after generation the monks intoned the words of the *Magnificat*: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted them of low degree." They kept molding the conscience of Europe until at long last the unnatural and rationally indefensible concept of the infinite worth of even the most degraded personality, a doctrine based ultimately on revelation, became the cardinal dogma of that Age of Reason and Nature, the free-thinking eighteenth century, and found political expression in the institutions of modern democracy.

Of the major upheavals in the history of Christianity the Monastic Reformation was probably the most far-reaching in its influence. It rejuvenated the apostolic faith and released the expansive forces which during the second half of the first Christian millennium were largely instrumental in preserving the remains of ancient Latin learning. It created modern Europe by uniting the Teutonic peoples religiously and culturally with their neighbors dwelling on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. It implanted among the barbarian ancestors of many citizens of the United States some of the basic ideas and presuppositions upon which our American society is built.

## Feudalism and the Medieval Reformation

Monasticism had commenced as a protest against worldliness and corruption, yet in the ninth and tenth centuries the whole Latin Church, including the monks, became entangled in satanic traps of new design. Feudalism, the social and political system which arose under the Carolingian dynasty, was posited on the assumption that property was merely the endowment of a public function, such as fighting, ruling, or praying; if for any reason the function was not fulfilled, the property was forfeited. Thus function and endowment fused: public



office became a form of heritable property, while property became subject to social control.

The effect of such concepts upon the Church was disastrous. If a lord built a parish church on one of his manors and set aside lands for its support, he would naturally think of the parish priest in feudal terms. The lower secular clergy was often married; if a priest left a son capable of filling his father's cassock, the lord tended to appoint the son to succeed the father as he would have done in the case of a military fief. Bish-  
oprics—that of Rome itself in the early tenth century—fell into the hands of powerful feudal families, who filled them with younger sons or sold them to the highest bidder. Religious considerations were secondary. In 925 Count Heribert of Vermandois made his five-year-old son Archbishop of Rheims and thus the greatest prelate of France. An archbishop of Narbonne was consecrated at the age of ten, his family having purchased the office for 100,000 shillings. He then sold all the treasures of his diocese to buy the See of Urgel in Catalonia for his brother. On one occasion a tough young baron was given the archbishopric of Trier. He was rushed through the various degrees of ordination, until, emerging archbishop, he distributed sixty endowed priestly offices of his church to as many knights to constitute the nucleus of a feudal army. Indeed, the martial prelate was a common figure in the feudal age. Bishop Odo of Bayeux, the half-brother of William the Conqueror, caused favorable comment by his observance of the canonical rule that a priest shall not shed blood. At the Battle of Hastings he was armed not with a sword but with a mace, which would merely mash.

Monasteries were in no way immune from the corrupting influences of feudalism. The great barons either annexed abbeys or, when founding them, retained the privilege of appointing abbots. With appalling rapidity learning and piety decayed. By the tenth century there were few communities where the *Rule* of Benedict was rigorously observed. Many monks lived openly with concubines. At the great Italian abbey of Farfa services were for a time abandoned even on Sunday. In the records of every age scandal looms disproportionately. Nevertheless, one cannot doubt that the feudalization of the Church brought spiritual catastrophe.

Not every part of the Church, however, was similarly affected. Since in theory, at least, church lands and offices were not heritable and since the upper clergy

were usually unmarried, the ablest monarchs everywhere tended to use clerics for political purposes and to endow bishops and abbots munificently not simply to support their spiritual functions but in return for the normal feudal obligations. Indeed, in the later tenth and eleventh centuries the German emperor gradually gave up the earlier policy of exploiting imperial lands directly and distributed them among the great ecclesiastics, who thus became in large degree the estate managers and agents of the imperial authority. Naturally the emperor kept close control of appointments to important bishoprics and abbeys since his power depended on the loyalty of the great prelates of the realm. The backbone of his army, as well as the more substantial part of his revenues, came from church lands. Clearly ecclesiastics appointed under such conditions would be selected primarily for their administrative ability rather than because of their dedication to the religious life. In externals the Church would thrive, but its spirit would soon wither. At its best, as in Ottonian Germany or the Norman kingdoms, feudalism proved an efficient and fairly stable form of government. At its worst it degenerated into local despotism and general anarchy. But good or bad, feudalism was a cause of decay in the Church.

The Medieval Reformation began as an attempt to extricate the Church from this mire of feudalism and thus to make possible the restoration of spirituality which clearly could not be accomplished so long as political and family interests dominated the clergy. In the year 910 Duke William of Aquitaine founded a little abbey at Cluny and populated it with monks from one of the rare monasteries where the pure Benedictine tradition was cherished. Duke William possessed the valley of Cluny without feudal obligations to any overlord, and in endowing the cloister he did not reserve the right to name future abbots. The pope alone was to be superior to the abbot of Cluny. Thus the monks of Cluny found themselves practically autonomous, entirely withdrawn from the feudal system. During the next two centuries they elected a sequence of six great abbots whose ardor for monastic reform was equalled only by their longevity. During the tenth century they revitalized the monastic life in scores of abbeys; but they found that such reformations were sadly temporary so long as a community of monks remained under feudal control. So in the eleventh century they bent their efforts towards building a monastic empire of

Benedictine houses subject only to the abbot of Cluny himself and, like Cluny, free of feudal obligations or baronial suzerainty. At the height of its power Cluny is said to have controlled 937 such establishments, chiefly in France but scattered in Britain, Spain, Switzerland, and northern Italy as well.

As a rule the Cluniac monks were solely interested in reforming monasteries. True to the Benedictine tradition that the religious life can be achieved only in separation from the world, they showed little concern with improving the standards of the Church in general. Cluniacs at times refused bishoprics and even the papacy itself, positions which would have given their reforming zeal wide scope had their concept of sanctity not discouraged the acceptance of such posts.

By the middle of the eleventh century, however, there appeared among the secular or non-monastic clergy, the parish priests, cathedral canons, and bishops, a vigorous movement, undoubtedly stimulated in part by Cluniac example, to free the whole Church from dominance by politically minded laymen. The leadership fell into the hands of Hildebrand, a reforming monk who dominated the policy of the papacy for many years before he himself became pope in 1073 with the name Gregory VII. Gregory was aware that until clerical marriage and the appointment of ecclesiastics by kings and nobles could be suppressed, feudal influences would continue to vitiate the spiritual life of the Church. He therefore started out to withdraw the entire Christian Church, together with its properties, from the dominant social order, feudalism.

Considering the place which the Church occupied in European society at that time, no more revolutionary program can well be imagined. It is doubtful whether any social structure could survive the secession of so important an element. Perhaps fortunately, the so-called "Gregorian Reform" was only partly successful. The German emperors were well aware that their power would be shattered if the movement should gain its ends, and they fought the reforming papacy by propaganda and by force of arms for two generations. At last, the issue was completely clarified in 1111 when the Emperor offered to surrender his right of appointing prelates if the great churchmen of Germany would surrender all lands held of him under feudal obligations. The Pope accepted, but a storm of indignation swept the German clergy, who were in no mood to give up their political and economic power. Conse-

quently, the struggle ended in a compromise which left the Church partly feudalized. But only partly, for the Gregorian Reform dealt a staggering blow to a feudalism which was already being undermined by an even more subversive radicalism, the new capitalist order. While the reformers tried to amputate the Church from society, the burgher communes were growing like cancerous cells in the feudal body.

## Early Capitalism and the Medieval Reformation

The first two phases of the Medieval Reformation, the Cluniac and the Gregorian, were efforts to cast off the feudal incubus from the Church. But the more perspicacious reformers were beginning to realize that the Church was rapidly being enveloped in an entirely new social context which offered unforeseen obstacles to the development of Christian spirituality. From the late tenth century onward there occurred an unprecedented increase in the size and number of cities. Population grew rapidly; industry and commerce underwent extraordinary expansion; standards of living and luxury were rising. European civilization was ceasing to be rural and agricultural; more and more it was coming to be urban and dominated by commercial interests. With startling suddenness the bourgeois capitalist had arisen to challenge the supremacy of the feudal aristocrat. Not the temporal power but gold, Mammon himself, was the new adversary of the soul.

Quite naturally the first reaction of the reformers was to attempt to apply the old solution to the new problem and to insist that sanctity involved complete retirement from the world. Paralleling the growth of the new economic prosperity came a series of movements looking towards a revival of the primitive monastic ideal. The Camaldulians and Carthusians repudiated even Benedict's work and reverted to the hermitic life of the Egyptian desert. Far more influential was the order of Cistercian monks, reformed Benedictines, who, led by Bernard, established hundreds of abbeys throughout Europe during the twelfth century. To emphasize their breach with the older black-robed Benedictine communities the Cistercians wore a white habit. Like the Cluniac abbeys Cistercian houses insisted on freedom from feudal obligations or connections. Yet the white monks of Cîteaux are best understood, not as a reaction against the spiritual dangers of feudalism, but rather as a revulsion against the new riches of capitalism. Their life

was of the greatest austerity: all elaboration, all beautification, was frowned upon. The ban against towers on Cistercian churches in an age when lofty steeples were rising to cleave the skylines of the burgeoning new cities is but the sign of the Cistercian determination not to drift with the tide of their time.

Yet the followers of Bernard miscalculated the force of the new economic and social order. They were so insistent on the spiritual necessity of manual labor that they forbade an abbey to possess more land than its monks could cultivate with their own hands. Shunning endowment, they tended to build their houses in uninhabited but potentially fertile valleys which by clearing and draining were quickly brought into production. Small groups of laboring monks were established at granges to exploit land not easily reached from the mother abbey. Thus the Cistercians were led by their own concept of asceticism to pave the way in working out capitalistic methods of agricultural management, freed from the restrictions of manorial economy. Indeed, they occasionally broke up established manors, enclosed the common lands, and turned out the peasants. They rapidly became the greatest wool-producers of Europe and thus furnished the raw material for the chief industry of early capitalism.

The Cistercian flight from the world had failed because the refugees did not understand the complexity of the movements from which they were trying to escape. To take architecture once more as a symbol, their denunciation of the elaborately carved and costly Romanesque churches of the Cluniacs led the reformed monks to cultivate the cheaper and leanly functional type of structural engineering which we moderns call "gothic." The Cistercian movement was one of the chief means by which the gothic style was spread throughout Europe. Little did the monks know that the burghers would seize this novel architecture, would bedeck it with the ornament of both worlds, would crown their cities with vast monuments in the new manner, and would make gothic the first major art form of capitalist society.

The Cistercian experience showed that there was no escaping this new age. A revised ideal of the holy life was needed and was emerging, an asceticism which, to sanctify men, would plunge headlong into contemporary turmoil. Neither the mountaintops of Benedict nor the green valleys of Bernard, but rather the clattering alleys and market places of the new cities were

to be the arenas of spiritual combat. The Cistercians had accepted without question the assumption of the Monastic Reformation that the achievement of Christian perfection required physical abandonment of the habitations of men. The mendicant orders of the subsequent period were to insist only that the soul dwell in retreat. As a pattern for saints the world-fleeing monk was yielding place to the world-transcending friar.

A movement contemporary with that stemming from Cîteaux showed the trend of the times. Increasingly the priests connected with a cathedral joined together to live in community under a semi-monastic rule. In a sense the development of these so-called "regular" canons represents a monasticizing of the secular clergy. But in the long view its significance is the exact reverse: it marks the first important step in creating a type of monastic who dwells in immediate and daily contact with pulsating urban life. To be sure, the weight of centuries of ascetic tradition proved strong, and many churches of regular canons appeared in rural areas where they represented a monastic ideal differing little from the Benedictine. But others remained in towns, and it was on these that Dominic based the rule for his order of Preaching Friars in the early thirteenth century.

The middle class was wavering in its religious allegiance. From the Balkans strange cults were carried along the trade routes in the bundles and bales of merchants. The word "weaver" became a synonym for "heretic." Peter Waldo, a burgher of Lyons, started a preaching mission which quickly strayed from the fold of the Church. By the year 1200 it seemed that a strip of territory extending from Bosnia through northern Italy and Provence to the Bay of Biscay might be lost permanently to a revived Manichaean dualism teaching the existence of two equally powerful beings, one good, the other evil. The Church, led by Pope Innocent III, fought back desperately with crusader's sword and inquisitor's stake. But it is doubtful whether coercion would have succeeded had it not been supplemented by a valiant effort to reformulate Christianity in such a way that it could be appropriated by the urban classes. The Medieval Reformation, commencing as an effort to save the Church from feudalism and continuing as an unsuccessful revulsion against the riches produced by early capitalism, culminated during the thirteenth century in the work of the two great orders of friars, Dominican and Franciscan. The former strove to reach the minds of the middle class; the latter, to reach their hearts.

## The Dominicans and the Work of Thomas Aquinas

The parvenu burghers were intellectually restless. For long centuries the clergy, and especially the monastic clergy, had monopolized speculation regarding the basic problems of existence. Very naturally they had reached solutions in harmony with their form of life: early medieval thought is saturated with the conviction, drawn primarily from Augustine but ultimately from Plato, that this physical world is the merest transitory and defective reflection of an immutable and perfect hierarchy of ideas contained in the mind of God. Moreover, the human reason was regarded as a blunt instrument indeed for piercing the veil of appearances: only by intuitive illumination could one attain the truth. It was too much to expect that the hardheaded bankers, the shrewd merchants, and practical artisans of the growing cities would long be satisfied with such monkish beliefs. Their lives and interests, the things they saw and did, the problems they had to meet, demanded a very different rationale. The Church had despised the world, whereas the burghers, led by the nature of their occupations, considered it very important indeed. The Platonizing theologians, having deserted the world for the desert, found it easy to regard sensory data merely as a springboard into the contemplation of spiritual abstractions. Not so the shopkeepers and craftsmen. They were very much in the world, intensely concerned with making and selling material goods and with judging their qualities and values. The airy disregard of concrete physical fact, the neglect of the natural for the supernatural, of this world for the next, so typical of the older theology, could arouse only scorn in the hearts of the burghers. Moreover, the city-dwellers were suspicious of the non-negotiable truths perceived under illumination. They lived by their wits; they were professionally sceptical of high falutin talk, demanding proof, preferably rational proof, of all things, even of the Christian faith.

The old intellectual formulations of Christianity disregarded the very elements which seemed most essential in the new world of the middle class—a healthy respect for human reason and for experience of the natural world. In the twelfth century, failing to find sympathy in the Church, a considerable group of adventurous intellectuals turned to the Orient for satisfaction, and a flood of translations from Greek and Arabic inundated the West. It is significant that the

material translated was overwhelmingly scientific and philosophical. It supplied the vitamins which the bourgeoisie found lacking in its inherited intellectual larder. In cultural as in social history, the leaders of revolution are not necessarily born of the revolutionary class but rather of the revolutionary situation. Nevertheless, we may note that in an age dominated intellectually by clerics, even though by clerics of all social extractions, a considerable number of these translators were laymen.

Of the utmost importance for an understanding of this movement is the almost complete neglect of Plato's works. Many of these were known in Arabic, and Byzantium was amply supplied with Platonic manuscripts. But the occidentals were not interested. The one exception only serves to emphasize the point: about 1156 a learned Sicilian translated the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, but his versions enjoyed very limited circulation. Clearly the translators knew what their public wanted, and nobody wanted Plato just then. Plato cared nothing for non-mathematical science; his essentially poetic genius had little patience with the self-imposed limitations of strictly rational thinking, save in geometry. But the new Europe was seeking tangible fact and rigorously disciplined thought in all realms of experience.

Aristotle, on the other hand, was able above all others to supply what the West was looking for. In ancient Greece the Stagirite had represented a reaction against the ethereality of his teacher Plato. He had turned to the minute examination of the natural world and to the formulation of the rules of logic. So, also, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he became the symbol of revolt against the older Platonic-Augustinian world-view. Every scrap of his extant writings was translated, usually in several versions, and eagerly read everywhere.

In the thirteenth century the peril to traditional orthodoxy arising from the new philosophy was heightened by the fact that Aristotle appeared in the robes of his Arabic commentators, notably those of ibn-Rushd, called Averroes in Latin. The Averroists took delight in sharpening the antagonism between Aristotle and orthodoxy, especially regarding the eternity of the world and the mortality of the soul. To many intelligent men it seemed that to accept the newly discovered benefits of rationality and of the experience of nature one must reject Christianity with all its inherited treasures.

When in 1215 Dominic established his order of mendicant friars in the teeming city of Toulouse, it was pri-

marily to retrieve the souls of dualistic sectaries and the followers of Waldo. But the friars soon saw that these superstitions were merely symptoms of a deeper discontent of spirit. The real problem was what it has remained ever since: the alleged opposition between science and religion or, to put it into thirteenth century terms, between Aristotle and Augustine. Must we accept the one and reject the other, or is there, perhaps, a middle path preserving the best elements of both? Only in the new universities which had seized educational leadership from the monastic schools was the issue really clarified. So to the universities, especially to Paris, the friars sent their ablest minds. The conservatives were trying to crush the Aristotelian serpent. The Dominicans perceived, however, that in a reconciliation of Aristotle with orthodoxy lay the best hope of making Christianity intelligible to the new age. To this task Thomas Aquinas dedicated himself. It was a daring experiment by a radical thinker.

A grandnephew of Frederick Barbarossa and second cousin to the Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, Thomas was destined from childhood to become abbot of Monte Cassino. But he rebelled against his family's ambitions and in the face of their apoplectic rage joined the Dominicans, this new order of begging friars lacking all social position or prestige, in a word, completely unsuitable for a young aristocrat related to the best families of Europe. Thomas, a hulking and taciturn man, equipped with the best brain of his century, evidently realized that these dusty mendicants had a relevance to their age which the Benedictines had lost. Here was the new school for sanctity. Thomas was every inch a saint in the new pattern and there were many inches of him. Throughout his career he moved back and forth across Europe, huge, imperturbable, absent-minded, mixing vigorously in the life of the time, yet carrying his cloister within. Indeed, it must have seemed that a kind Providence had made his frame so large to contain so vast an inner life.

The stakes in the battle between Thomas and the Averroists were high. On the outcome depended whether or not the Christian faith should continue to be a vital part of Europe's thinking and consequently of America's. Thomas' victory was recognized by contemporaries to be of the greatest importance, and in art the saint is generally depicted triumphant over the stricken Saracenic philosopher.

The Averroists followed Aristotle in denying that the material world had a beginning or would have an end.

God, they said, did not create the world; indeed, He may not be conscious of its existence. It flows eternally from Him as water flows from a spring. Therefore, according to the Averroists, time is an illusion and history is without a goal. All things, including God and man, are governed by immutable necessity. There is not the slightest element of freedom in the universe. Aristotle was believed to have held that the individual mind is a portion of the cosmic mind, to which it returns at death. The Averroists expanded this idea into the doctrine that all knowledge, all active thinking, comes to the individual mind from this one great cosmic mind. A man does not discover truth; he receives it ready-made. He does not really think; he is thought in. Clearly Averroism was in many ways an ancestral form of the mechanistic materialism of recent generations, with its belief in an inexorably grinding, completely purposeless universe in which the individual has neither freedom nor real significance. It is this which makes Thomistic thinking so vividly pertinent to the twentieth century.

Thomas took his battle position boldly upon the central datum of Christian revelation, the incarnation of God in Christ. He does not discuss it at length; he assumes it to be true; thence his thought issues. Surely, says he, if God Himself assumed flesh and became involved in matter, then physical nature and our sensory perceptions of the world are worthy of reverent attention. Here, indeed, Thomas baptizes Aristotle by incorporating into the Christian faith Aristotle's own feeling for the importance of nature. As we shall see, the new Eucharistic cult on which Thomas' profound piety focused was intimately related to the bourgeois concern for material substance. In his greatest hymn he cries, "Sing, oh tongue, the mystery of the glorious body!" *Corporis mysterium*—here is almost a Christianized materialism. Never again could theology be so over-spiritual, so disdainful of the physical creation, as formerly it had been. It is clear that Thomas, whether consciously or unconsciously, was reformulating the Christian faith in terms intelligible and acceptable to the third estate.

Having affirmed the incarnation, Thomas proceeded to defeat the Averroists by working out the rational implications of his prime axiom, which was admittedly non-rational (as were, indeed, the axioms of his opponents). Christ was a person, thinking, willing, loving. If Christ is God, then God is, at the very least, such a person, acting

with intention. God is, of course, far more than a person in the limited human sense, yet His non-human attributes in no way contradict His personality. The affirmation that Christ is God, therefore, is the insistence that personality is the greatest of realities.

With such a God it follows that the universe cannot be thought of as a timeless, necessary emanation, indifferent to human fate. On the contrary, as Dante was to express it in the last and consummating line of his epic, "Love moves the sun and the other stars." A purposive creation at the beginning of time must be assumed, and a culmination at the end of time when a spiritual goal is reached. Since the chief purpose of action motivated by love is to share one's own benefits, the primary intention of God's creation was to bring into being personalities made in God's spiritual image, endowed with the divine attributes of intellect and will. Personality is the highest thing in nature: *Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in natura*. The individual man, then, is not, as the Averroists thought, a momentary configuration of matter having no active intellect or freedom of choice. On the contrary, the individual is conceived to be the most important thing in the world, and the perfection of his personality through his own right exercise of intellect and will is declared to be the chief end of creation. Never before in all history had the supreme worth of the individual been heralded so loudly as by Thomas.

In fact, Thomas maintains the freedom of human will so stoutly that, in disagreement with most previous theologians, he very nearly gives man a Godlike authority not only over his own destiny but even over the rest of the world. Man is a vice-Providence, enjoying what have rightly been called "subordinate sovereignties and autonomies." Here is the complete negation of fatalism. Similarly, Thomas asserts that a free and active intellect is the very core of personality and that every man has a duty to God to exercise his own reason, preferably in the form of Aristotelian logic. This involves the repudiation of the Averroistic notion that we receive truth passively, predigested, from the cosmic mind. Our minds, said Thomas, "make" truth for themselves, almost aggressively, out of the raw material of experience which comes to us from the natural world through our senses. In maintaining this position, so important for an understanding of modern intellectual history, Thomas had to combat not simply the Averroists but also the old Augustinian theory that

truth is received from God by mystical illumination without the mediation of our senses. "There is nothing in the mind," he asserts, "which has not come to it through the senses." Here again Thomas' rationalism is closely linked to his naturalism, to his insistence on the importance of the physical world.

Legend tells us that shortly before his death Thomas rose from prayer and, looking towards the great volumes of his *Summa Theologica*, said to a friend, "It is to me as straw." But a modern scholar has added, "Of that straw European civilization was going to make its bed." For Thomas is, if not the father, at least the grandfather of all bourgeois philosophy, especially in the case of bourgeois who know no philosophy in the formal sense. In the year 1200 the burghers were rapidly drifting away from the Church; in 1900 radical critics sneered at the Church as a bourgeois institution. It was Thomas who formulated many of the basic middle-class Christian attitudes which are today perhaps more firmly entrenched in America than anywhere else in the world. As a people we believe that there is nothing more important than the individual and that the physical world and the historical process are neither meaningless nor alien to us, but rather that they are designed to aid the more perfect development of personality. We believe that each person is endowed in a mysterious way with the power of choice, and that by its use he helps to shape his destiny. Finally, we believe that each person enjoys in some measure the good of the intellect by which he may grow in knowledge through the rational exploration of the world in which he lives. These ideas of individuality, moral progress, freedom, and rational inquiry, which have been dominant in capitalist society, rest historically, be it noted, on the central Christian dogma of the incarnation. It was Thomas and his Dominican brethren who popularized and broadcast his ideas, who first showed the middle class the relevance of Christianity to the tendencies of thought which arose from its type of life.

## The Franciscans and Piety

Yet not only the thoughts of the new age but its emotions as well demanded incorporation into, and expression through, the Christian tradition. The piety of the early Church and of the Monastic Reformation had been restricted to a relatively narrow octave of emotion—awe, reverence, fear, exultation. Easter, the celebration of triumph over death, was the great feast of

the year. Christ was worshiped as Logos and Judge, but he was distant, enthroned between the cherubim. In such an atmosphere the religious arts were necessarily symbolic rather than naturalistic, impersonal rather than intimate. One who has sensed the cosmic ecstasy of the plainsong of Benedictine liturgy may suspect that most subsequent expressions of Christian emotion have been tintured with sentimentalism and even vulgarity. But the feverish life of the towns bred different patterns of feeling which were quickly reflected in an immense widening of the range of piety. The Medieval Reformation was permeated with new and unprecedented types of religious emotion. Heaven drew near to earth, and God to man. The crucifix, for example, was too brutal a symbol of God's humanity to be popular in the first Christian millennium. When it was used, the crucified Christ was shown passionless, bearing a regal crown, the new Melchizedek blessing his people. In the time of Bernard pain began to appear frequently in the visage of Jesus, the Cistercians centered their devotion upon the crucified Christ, and such hymns of the Passion as "Oh Sacred Head Now Wounded" emerged. In the thirteenth century the crown of thorns, the marks of the scourging, contortions of agony, jets of blood, all appear. A completely naturalistic, human, and dramatically moving image, which earlier Christians would certainly have regarded as indecent and even revolting, becomes the chief aid to devotion.

Similarly, the new social atmosphere, with its intimacy and vivid sense of the impact of individual character, led to the effective discovery of another great Christian symbol, the Nativity. That the omnipotent Creator should have cast aside all power in order to win men by love, that He should have lain a helpless infant in a manger—this was no less a marvel than that He should have hung as a bleeding victim upon the cross. From very early times the Church had celebrated both the birth and death of Christ, but it is no exaggeration to say that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the average Christian first really found Bethlehem and Golgotha. Thus the tender joy of Christmas and the agony of Good Friday were added to the older gamut of approved religious emotions with incalculably liberating effect upon all the realms of culture.

The Franciscan friars in particular picked up and amplified the vibrations of the new emotions. Francis himself is credited with constructing the first crèche or model of the Nativity. His own devotion to the cruci-

fied Christ was so intense that the five marks of the Passion appeared (either miraculously or under extreme autohypnosis) upon his flesh, marking him as the first in the long series of stigmatics who have ornamented the Latin Church. Such a piety appealed to the excitable city-dwellers, and such was the piety propagated among burghers and artisans by the gray friars.

But from the orthodox standpoint there were grave dangers in the new forms of religious expression sweeping Western Europe. Their first manifestations seemed entirely meritorious and were, in fact, eagerly embraced by the Church. Toward the end of the twelfth century the cult of the Eucharist experienced a sudden and extraordinary development. Reservation of the consecrated Host, the body of Christ, became habitual rather than exceptional; the elevation of the Host was introduced; monstrances appeared on altars enabling the faithful to see the very substance of their God. In 1215 the doctrine of transubstantiation was first rigorously defined. It was as though Europe had become populated by a race of doubting Thomases eager to thrust their fingers into the very wounds of Christ.

Clearly the new Eucharistic devotion involved a "personal religious empiricism" (to borrow the phrase of a learned priest) closely akin to the mood of the typical bourgeois. But this was indeed a sacramentalism with a new and peculiar flavor. Inevitably the notion spread that to partake of the Host was unnecessary: to see it exposed, or to say one's prayers before the altar where it lay reserved, became a sufficient means of grace. As symbol gave way before literal reality, sacrament yielded to spectacle.

This quite unconscious process can be traced through changes in the habitual representation in art of sacred scenes. It is perhaps most evident in the crucial case of the Last Supper. The early and monastic churches had depicted it at the moment of the institution of the mass: "This is my body." Then a new representation appears, the sop given to Judas. This is transitional, since it combines both sacrament and drama—the Host given by Christ to his betrayer to the latter's damnation. At last, there is a second mutation, and all sacramental interest is eliminated. The moment illustrated becomes the assertion, "One of you shall betray me." The disciples are thrown into a consternation which becomes increasingly individualized, culminating in the masterpiece of Leonardo. Thus the effort of the Medieval Reformation to keep the burghers in the

Church presented two related but very different trends. On the one hand, the sacramental system was so concretized that the later Middle Ages were the period of its greatest elaboration. On the other hand, there is visible a contrary tendency to develop a proto-Protestant religion bringing salvation primarily through introspection and psychological readjustment rather than through objective means of grace.

## The New Asceticism and the Protestant Reformation

The implications of this second essentially anti-sacramental movement were considerable. The basic reason for distinguishing clergy from laity was the need for a group of men ordained in succession from the apostles and capable of administering valid sacraments. As sacraments came in many minds to seem less important, so did the division of Christians into clerics and laymen. The next step was to re-examine the whole concept of the religious as distinct from the worldly life. Even the friars had assumed that while the religious life did not require retreat from the world it inevitably involved the traditional monastic vows of celibacy, individual poverty, and obedience to ecclesiastical superiors. But in the later twelfth century, especially in the towns of northern Italy, the seed of the third, or puritan, type of Christian asceticism began obscurely to germinate. Small groups of devout laymen, chiefly artisans, banded together under the name *Humiliati*, "the Humble," repudiating all the formal attributes of monastic discipline in favor of a normal active life and living in conformity with what they thought to be Christ's teaching. They reared families, remained in their businesses, and showed so little obedience that they quickly ran afoul the local spiritual authorities and were often driven from the Church.

The great impulse towards a non-monastic asceticism came from Francis. His preaching at times swept communities with such force that the entire population, men, women, and children, begged for admission to his order of friars. But Francis saw that he could not thus devastate towns, break families, and dislocate economic life. The friar-pattern of sanctity, like the monk-pattern, was vestigially aristocratic in assuming that the great majority of people could not or would not adopt it. Might it be that even the mendicant orders had failed to readjust the ascetic ideal sufficiently to meet the demands of the more democratic society of the

new age? It was all very well for the friars to repeat Jerome's dictum that while marriage populates the earth, celibacy populates heaven. But who, pray, would populate either monasteries or convents if everyone espoused the monastic ideal? The popular enthusiasm aroused by Francis forced the issue. Does God will that human society continue? If so, then there is a religious duty to beget children and to labor diligently at one's vocation. The traditional dual standard of a religious and a secular way of life is challenged, and the potential sanctity of lay life is affirmed.

Francis met the problem by reviving the essential idea of the *Humiliati*. He established a Third Order (the first two being for his friars and for his feminine followers, the Poor Clares, respectively) of those who would live holy lives while remaining with their families and trades. The Franciscan Tertiaries expanded rapidly and widely, and a similar movement was soon established by the Dominicans. North of the Alps, especially in the Rhine valley, the ferment spread, and there emerged among laymen a great variety of experiments in religious living, notably the Friends of God and the Brethren of the Common Life. Often ill-defined and amorphous, these movements shared a tendency to exalt the spiritual independence of the individual, to insist upon his right to appropriate divine grace wherever he might find it, in sacrament, Scripture, or mystical ecstasy, and to cultivate a kind of asceticism consisting solely of conformity to God's will. The mendicants had considered riches the greatest threat of capitalism to the religious life and consequently had made the vow of poverty central. But in the fourteenth century Tauler is already asserting that wealth holds no peril for a man truly consecrated to God's service. The emphasis of such devout laymen upon immediate personal experience rather than upon authority in matters of religion often made them suspected by the clergy, who exerted constant and partially successful pressure to bring them into conformity with older monastic precedents. But the new wine could not forever be contained in the old wineskins. A new pattern of sanctity was emerging which was neither Benedictine nor mendicant. It was expressed in its simplest form by Gerhard Groot in the later fourteenth century:

To love God and worship him is religion, not the taking of special vows. If, therefore, one aims to live a religious life, his way of living becomes religious in God's opinion, and according to the judgment of our consciences.



The key to an understanding of the Protestant Reformation, the third of the great upheavals of Christian history, is its repudiation of monasticism. Martin Luther, a renegade friar, marrying Catherine von Bora, an ex-nun, begetting children and establishing a family, is a spectacle which certain writers seem unable either to understand or to forgive. Protestantism is presented as the product of Luther's lechery, ably abetted by that of Henry VIII. But Luther's marriage is only a symptom of the final reformulation of Christian spirituality stimulated by the social context of capitalism. The monk had fled the world and had bound his life with triple vows; the friar had stayed in the world but had retained the vows which separated his existence from the normal human pattern; now at last the Puritan abandoned all rigid forms of the religious life, making the basis of his asceticism the pursuit of his "calling."

In both intent and practice Protestants were ascetic. Tourists have long noted the greater sobriety of the peasant costumes of Protestant villages in Germany as compared with neighboring Catholic communities, and one remembers Calvin's exhortation to his followers to marry homely wives, lest the beauty of their consorts distract them from contemplation of the divine omnipotence. When the Venetian ambassador called Cromwell's Ironsides "an army of monks," he was close to the truth. For if the Puritans rejected the distinction between a religious and a secular life, it was to monasticize the laity; if they destroyed abbeys, it

was to make an abbey of the whole world. Only so can one understand Calvin's Geneva, Knox's Scotland, or colonial New England.

The Protestant Reformation may be regarded either as the final phase of medieval or the beginning of modern Christianity. In either case it is clear that puritanism, the most vital expression of Protestantism, is the culmination of the late medieval effort to find a spiritual rationale of bourgeois life more consistent than that offered by the last, or mendicant, phase of the Medieval Reformation. But Americans, in particular, who have so much of the Puritan in their constitution, should beware of assuming that the sequence of the three great Christian reformations is an evolutionary series towards a higher form of spirituality. The soul striving for perfection has in every age beaten for itself a typical path of pilgrimage intimately related to contemporary forms of life. When the age changes, a new path must be found. The history of medieval Christianity consists of a group of such experiments in holiness which it would be rash to rank in order of success, since each was designed to meet the spiritual problems of a particular epoch. We of the twentieth century are heirs of them all and not merely the most recent. Each has left a rich legacy and has helped to mold the minds and hearts even of the millions who are conscious of no debt to them. Like God's rain the merits of His saints descend impartially.



# The Fourth Four Hundred Years (AD 1200–1600)

*Ralph D. Winter*

## Overview of the Period

The 1200-1600 period starts out with the pinnacle of Papal power in the “high middle ages,” about 1200, and ends with the permanent breakup of that Spiritual empire in the Reformation. The 14<sup>th</sup> century was the time of the Black Plague, a rather ominous time. Barbara Tuchman in her book is *A Distant Mirror, the Calamitous Fourteenth Century* compares that period to our times and finds many parallels. She feels that the way Europe fell to pieces as a result of the impact of the plague was very similar to the falling to pieces of the Western world as a result of the impact of the two world wars and the threat of a third.

Between 1200 and 1600 there is a type of suspension bridge. The year 1200 itself was a year of a pinnacle of ecclesiastical power. That was the year that Innocent III put all of France into an *interdict*, which means that the pope had the power to prevent every Frenchman in France from taking communion. Today far fewer would pay any attention, but it was a real problem then, showing an amazing contrast in the temper of the times. It also shows the kind of papal power that Protestants have always assumed to have existed, but has very rarely existed.

This period is noted for the apex of papal power, the tremendous power of the Crusades, the movement to build cathedrals (all the major cathedrals in Europe were started within a 50 year period), the university tradition, but, above all, the emergence of the friars.

## The Friars

In 1210 at the Lateran Council, the papacy finally approved Francis of Assisi and his work. In 1205 they had

allowed him provision ally to operate. Now they granted him full ratification, perhaps with a view that they could keep him under control as Francis’ home base was close to Rome, and Francis himself was a much less threatening figure than some other, more radical, preachers of the time.

Meanwhile, also in 1210, Dominic came down from France, and he saw Francis there in the Vatican with only a rope around his waist, not a fancy leather belt. So Dominic pulled off his nice black belt and cast it aside, and from then on the Dominicans and the Franciscans wore the same kind of rope for a belt. However, Dominic was a very different kind of person than Francis, a tough-minded, theological scholar who was determined to stamp out the Albigenses (Cathari) in southern France by theological argument. He made sure that in every one of the Dominican houses, the communities of friars had a resident theologian. They also were the forerunners of the Inquisition. They were determined to purify the church by power and occasionally violence. Their excesses are much overblown by Protestants, whose own excesses in controlling the newly freed slaves in the USA by thousands of lynchings are much worse.

Francis, on the other hand, was very different from Dominic. He was not inclined to read books, but was very much a mystical person whose followers had no written rules. As a result, there were many different splinters in the Franciscan movement even before he died. Today there are about 35 Franciscan groups, most believing they are closer to Francis than the others.

By 1250, forty years from the time Francis was given official full recognition, the pope very wisely required Francis to have a written rule or *regula*. His follow-

ers patched it together rather hurriedly, but it was not complete enough or done soon enough to forestall splintering. This requirement shows the very practical wisdom of church authorities who actually tried to help the Franciscans at that point.

But the Dominicans have not splintered; they are a disciplined, carefully organized group.<sup>1</sup>

The friars were always a part of the church. There never was a question that they were not part of the church. These friars were mobile evangelists who went all around the world. The friars were the major mechanisms of Roman Catholic outreach.

The friars are a little different from the *clerks regular*. This is where the Jesuits come into the picture, much later, about the time of the Protestant Reformation. *Clerks regular* is the official phrase for an organization like the Jesuits. Every organization since the Jesuits has followed a pattern similar to the Jesuits rather than that of the friars, although every organization founded soon after the friars followed their organization until the Order of the Jesuits appeared.

There are subtle differences between these various traditions—the Celtic monks, the early Benedictines, the Cluny tradition, the Cistercians, and the friars—and there is a kind of progression in terms of intentional intervention in the outside world. We must not succumb to the facile, simplistic stereotype that the monasteries were simply where people fled to get away from the world. Even in the very earliest days—by the year 700—the 800 monasteries sprinkled up through France and Germany were missionary outposts as well as sources of engineering, architectural and technological talent. They were not fleeing the world; they were penetrating the world. This is demonstrated by the simple fact that the world eventually accrued significantly to the organizational pattern, language, etc., of the monasteries.

In fact, almost every major city of Europe is a great oak grown from the acorn of an original monastic center, rather than vice-versa. This phenomenon is an interesting twist on the—sometimes overemphasized—contextualization and indigenization approach in which the missionary will mix completely into the culture without a trace of his own cultural background except for the pure gospel invested therein. In contrast, the monasteries totally ignored the outside culture. And after a considerable length of time, a thousand years

sometimes, the outside culture came to follow the pattern of the monasteries.

The monasteries were better than just mission compounds. Mission compounds are not meant to be self-sustaining, and they are not intended to acquire members from the local situation or provide services the people will pay for. A monastic structure as a mission outpost seems to be far superior to the often sterile mission compound in more modern history.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, in recent history a mission compound is propped up from abroad by subsidies. Therefore, it is inherently incapable of growing or duplicating itself. It cannot even absorb its own children. There was very little contextualization of theology especially, or even of church life. The monastery carried its own social structure which was exceedingly durable and not easily corrupted, so to speak, by the outside world. Rather, the language and culture of that monastic tradition eventually took over the outside world.

## The Black Plague

All this wonderful evangelistic power moving forward into the 1200-1600-year period was stricken with a mighty blast when the Black Plague appeared out of the blue. It burrowed into southern France, Italy and advanced by deadly waves, eventually killing off one-third to one-half of the entire population of Western Europe.

But it killed off nine out ten of the Christian leaders, friars in particular, because they attended the sick, and anybody who attended the sick was bound to die. Unlike the friars, the Pope didn't go near the sick, so he survived. There were some wealthy aristocrats who fled to their mountain resorts and were able to cut off all contact with the outside world for a year or so, and they survived. But the people who were in the stream of commerce, the ships that went up into southern England, etc., carried the plague into England. It swept over England and killed off enormous percentages of people. Social structure itself broke down in many cases. Some of the monastic settlements were so stricken that the members actually went insane and ran naked in the streets. The demoralization of society in general was enormous.

This was far worse than any Viking invasion because the Vikings never killed off a third of all the people. In some places they may have killed off 100 percent of the people, but they were not powerful enough to kill off

as many people as the plague did. The microbes were more powerful than the Vikings.

The Black Plague was able to transmit itself by three mechanisms: by air, by direct contact, and by fleas that would hop from one infected rat or person to another person. In fact, there is no medical reason why there could not be another outbreak of this plague. There is nothing we know of today that would have any ability to keep the plague from spreading throughout the world today—other than the caste system in India.

We can only speculate as to why the Black Plague happened. To some it might seem that God chastened Christianity in the 14<sup>th</sup> century—its best elements were eliminated. Maybe God felt that the people didn't deserve the friars?

## Age of Unrest

The drastic scarcity of peasants resulting from the Plague had the effect of increasing their wages. Furthermore, not only because of the plague, but because of the impact of the Bible there began to be a restlessness among the serfs. Somehow they sensed that their grinding poverty was not really according to God's will.

The result was violence—in part prompted by the Bible! In England, it started in Kent in the Canterbury area and swept over thousands of acres. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered in a mob that moved toward London in what is called the Wat Tyler rebellion. They demanded better treatment, very reasonable and very much based on the Bible. Because of rebellions like this, long before the Reformation, the Bible began to be seen as a very dangerous book. The complete Bible was translated into German fourteen times before Luther's superb translation.

The fertility of this period, the confusion, the breakdown of society ushered in more strongly than ever the secular Renaissance, a harsh, strident stream which is glorified by secular scholars but which was a tragic development in some respects. There were good things about it, but those good things came from the Christianity which underlay it. But there were also horrifying immoral extremes in the Renaissance, a harshness and worldliness which may be thought of highly by secular people today, but sensitive Christian insight would certainly not give the Renaissance the same grades that secular scholars do. All of this prepared in

western Europe the grounds not only for the political revolt of the serfs who complained about their conditions, but also for religious revolt. Thus, the Protestant revolt was 50 percent a political and cultural backlash against the Latin civilization and 50 percent part of the religious reform movement that was sweeping all of western Europe (not just Germany).

## The Friars' Missionary Efforts

The most remarkable thing in this period is how the friars tried to go overland to Peking as missionaries. By 1492 toward the end of the period, Columbus discovered America. That was also the year, roughly, when Savonarola was burned at the stake in Florence, when a young law student named Martin Luther was almost struck down by lightning and decided to go into a monastery. It was also the year when a saintly clergyman named Ximenes, who was also a great Bible scholar, became the chaplain of Queen Isabella of Spain—a tremendously important event. But equally important was the fact that in 1492 the last of the Muslims, who had been in control in parts or all of Spain for 700 years, were now finally expelled.

In fact, that year also had to do with navigation, which contributed to missions. Now the friars could go all over the world. They tried to go by land but could not get very far since land travel to Asia was quite difficult. But they finally got there by ship.

By 1535 the university of Mexico City had already been established by friars—two hundred years before Harvard in Massachusetts. A new contender within the Catholic sodality system for missions soon after was the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). And by 1600 Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit, was climbing the steps of the palace in Peking. This phenomenal world outreach through the Catholic mechanisms of the friars and the clerks regular had no parallel or counterpart in Protestant tradition for another several hundred of years. The Dominicans embraced the Great Commission 600 years before the Protestants started seriously thinking about missions, when William Carey went to India. Now, granted that 600-year advantage was considerably blunted due to the difficulty of land travel during the first half of it, but in the second half the Catholics encompassed the world by sea travel. And though they perhaps had a somewhat defective gospel, nevertheless, they got there and took their form of Christianity with them.

The 1200–1600-year period is full of exciting and amazing events. Probably the most disastrous single thing, however, was the violent attempt to convert the *Saracens*, another word for *Muslims*. This began a century earlier than the four-hundred-year marker of the year 1200. By contrast, in all our previous 400-year periods the major people groups were converted—the Romans, the Barbarians and the Vikings. In this period, although the Muslims were a major focus, the conversion attempt failed. The missionary methodology of the Crusades was obviously not the best method to use.<sup>3</sup>

By 1600 Catholic missionaries had at least superficially baptized millions of people in the Western hemisphere and in Asia. As in previous periods, the final century was one of an incredible flourishing of the faith. But while the major players were Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant, only the latter was uninvolved as yet in global mission.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I often think that there was a certain similarity between the InterVarsity movement and the Dominicans. The InterVarsity Movement, with its InterVarsity Press and piling up huge, thick theological tomes on all subjects, is very much of an egghead movement by comparison to Campus Crusade, which until recently did not even have a publishing arm and was more of a Franciscan type of operation.

These two movements started out very differently. One was anti-intellectual and wouldn't go near the universities; the other

was highly intellectual and lived within the university world. However, in the long haul, by looking at each other across the decades, they eventually began to try to keep up with each other. And by now they are very similar. I think that Campus Crusade, now with its own seminary and its own publishing company, will be moving more and more into an academic emphasis.

The point is that the way a movement starts has little to do with where it ends. Some groups have looked down their noses at Campus Crusade because of the simplicity of the ideas it is promoting, and because of its hierarchical structure. But I urge you not to underestimate the potential of that movement. InterVarsity is also flexing its muscles, moving in different directions. Today it is almost as strong on the campuses as Campus Crusade. The only difference is that Campus Crusade is doing seventy others things as well, and InterVarsity is still primarily a campus movement.

Navigators could be mentioned as a parallel to the friars. Some of them have preferred to think of themselves as the Jesuits of the present time. That probably is a little bit strange to say considering that the Navigators until recently have had very little academic emphasis, but it is a very fine organization.

<sup>2</sup> Both OM and YWAM have forged a network in which in all fields local people can join in. This is quite different from traditional missions which expects to plant a church movement which will be separate as well as maintain an unjoinable foreign mission presence which is not transferable.

<sup>3</sup> It is still true today that any organization which uses the word *crusade* in its title displays appalling ignorance of the most obvious facts of history, and in the Middle East today this is a terrible error.

# The Fifth Expansion

*Ralph D. Winter*

**A**t this point we need to get our perspective again in terms of our time grid that we lay on top of history in order to better keep track. We have seen the first two epochs, where we dealt with the Romans in the first 400 years, and then the barbarian tribes who flooded into Central Europe, blossoming as Christians by 800. Then came the Viking period, and toward the end of that third period, by 1200, we found a much more extensive period of flourishing. We talked about the Crusades, the friars, the cathedrals, the universities, and the tremendous burst of power. That flourishing took place after the Viking invasions subsided and the Vikings themselves had become Christians (of a sort) by 1050.

A vague parallel to the two Dark Ages, beginning in the middle of the fourth epoch, was the outbreak of the Plague, which ran for half a century in actuality and then for more than that in its tapering effects. It produced the unrest for the peasants uprisings that leaned into the period of the so-called Reformation. Because of the turmoil of the Plague and the resulting unrest, the Roman church ended up losing control over the outlying provinces. To some extent that was the political breakdown of Europe ending in the Reformation—the outer provinces began to struggle loose during the confusion and the difficulties of the Plague.

(A modern-day parallel would be World War II. This was a struggle essentially between Western powers. While the Western powers were locked in struggle, the non-Western colonial countries struggled loose and got free from the Western powers. During that war the French, the Spanish, the English, and the Americans

all began to lose their direct political control over the rest of the world.)

We will be looking at one only aspect of the fifth four-hundred-year period, 1600-2000, which has to do with the expanding missionary outreach during that time.

## Missions by Land

The most tragic impact of the Plague, as I see it, was its impact on the friars, the Roman Catholic missionary orders, which were able to go out across the world. They were the ones who tried to help the afflicted, and a huge number of people died in the Catholic orders. In Germany alone about 120,000 Franciscans died in the Plague. It was a tremendous setback!

Nevertheless, as early as 1210 (the time of the Lateran Council that formally approved the Franciscans and the Dominicans) Dominic was quoting the Great Commission to his followers and calling them to go to the ends of the earth to preach the gospel. But 600 *years* went by until the Protestants caught the missionary vision in 1810. (William Carey, of course, went out a few years earlier.) For six hundred years the Roman Catholic tradition was the only really extensive missionary effort. The first part of this 600-year period, up until 1492-1500, was mission effort characterized as travel by land. The friars attempted to cross the steppes of Asia and to go to Beijing, as we call it today—the legendary city of Cambaluc of the Mongols. They were very mobile, just like the Mongols were a very mobile nomadic people. The friars would raise a tent trailer up with the four canvas sides with the gospel message of Jesus Christ on it. That was their particular way of preaching the gospel.

We do not know exactly what message the friars preached (although we do know that throughout Europe there was an emphasis on a John the Baptist sort of repentance and forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ.) But we cannot account for the vitality, the durability, the patience, the many other virtues of these movements apart from the true influence of the Bible.

The friars could not go by any other method, so they had to go by land. In 1262, Marco Polo, one of several travelers of a family of merchants, brought back word from Cambaluc, today's Beijing, the headquarters of the Mongol Empire. The emperor there asked for 100 missionaries to come and teach them science and religion. We should never suppose that the gospel of Jesus Christ is purely spiritual. Christian insight has always involved salvation on a holistic scale, but Christians have not always understood that. The preaching of the gospel has *always* carried, or should have carried, in its very nature, elements other than purely spiritual. For they exist in God's own appraisal of his own creation, fallen to be redeemed, not only spiritually but physically. The emphasis on science in the Western tradition has its roots in the Christian movement. There is no other human historical tradition that conceives of nature as orderly, except that which stems from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Science is impossible without that kind of cosmology, which is uniquely Judaic.

One of the things that attracted the rulers in Cambaluc was this other insight into the nature of nature, which came along as a by-product of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup>

Out of the four missionaries sent to China in response to this request, two got scared before they ever got to the eastern end of the Mediterranean; the other two quit later on. Marco Polo's group did finally reach China, but without the missionaries. Twenty-five years later, John of Montecorvino finally got to Beijing, but by that time the Khan who had asked for the missionaries had died. It was one of history's greatest failures to respond.

## Missionary Outreach by Sea

Again and again after Marco Polo Europeans made massive attempts to go to China by land, but the land approach was not very successful. The next period of Catholic missions was to be by sea, and this was unimaginably more successful in reaching China. Navigation instruments, prepared by a godly man named Prince Henry the Navigator, were an achievement that

allowed these same people, these same organizations, to get to the ends of the earth. Without such instruments they couldn't have done so. This is a perfect example of an interplay between technology and missions!

When Europeans began to move out across the globe, they ran into strange people and could not understand them. A book written in 1772 by a German Jesuit, Johann Jacob S.J. Baegert, titled, *Observations in Lower California*, reveals some of the culture shock, the problems, and the inabilities Europeans faced when they encountered new cultures. Baegert spent almost 20 years in Baja California, at a Roman Catholic mission, reaching out to the Indians and trying to convert them. One of the most astounding things in this book is the culture shock of this Jesuit as he looks at Californians—the Indians, he called them. Probably the most humorous thing is his ethnocentrism with regard to languages. Baegert does not think these people are very bright. He describes their language as lacking a lot of words that describe emotions, feelings, abstract notions, etc., and comes to the conclusion that it is almost impossible to communicate the Gospel to these people.

We need to avoid the common stereotypes of our time, even though there are elements of truth in them. If these Native Americans did not have ways of expressing the concepts listed by this missionary, how could they reason? The Europeans looked back on their own savage past and they realized that there was a time when they themselves didn't have a civilization growing up apart from the coming of the Christian faith. Thus, when they went out to the rest of the world, they went not only with the spiritual gospel, but also with civilization, with science, because that is what they assumed the people would want. That, they felt, was part of God's concern. They assumed that if they were to take the gospel, they would also civilize the people. And if they civilized the people, then the people would be more useful. They could do more things. They could trade.

But we cannot say that the Europeans went just for commercial purposes. We have to say it was a double motivation, even if some claim that they were mainly motivated by commercial interest. It is quite impossible, I believe, to make a case for one of these two interests as being more prominent than the other. It is very easy to say that religion was just a technique, but it is an insufficient explanation.

In another section of his book Baegert the Jesuit challenges the Protestants of the day with the Great Com-



mission, saying that the Protestants cannot be the true church because they neglect missionary work, a clear demand in the Bible.

He goes on to say that the Protestants have an excellent opportunity of carrying out the work of converting nonbelievers in both the West and the East Indies, for there they have complete sea power. And (here's a theological barb!) it would be much easier for them, and they would be much more successful than the Catholics, because, as a matter of fact, all they have to preach to the pagans is their doctrine of faith. They, in fact, could permit the natives in the spirit of Luther to practice their wickedness thousands of times a day. In that spirit they could allow them to kill and yet throw the gates of heaven wide open for them, thanks to faith alone.

The fact is, that here is a man quoting the Bible, obeying the Bible, going across the world with the Bible, along with other Catholic missionaries, *during a period of 600 years prior to any stirring within the Protestant tradition along the same lines.*

### **The Chinese Rites Controversy**

The Jesuits apparently had a School of World Mission that produced in each of them a very similar, highly contextualizing strategy (Nobili in India, Ricci in China, and Valignano in Japan were all contemporaries). One of the things Matteo Ricci did was to absolutely master the Chinese classics. His people knew the literature as well as any Chinese. They dressed like the Chinese and spoke Chinese. The Jesuits became Chinese if any missionaries ever did!

When the Franciscans arrived in China (and, by the year 1600, they were characteristically less intellectual, less academic than the Jesuits, their intent being immediate witnessing), their immediate conclusion was that these Jesuits have syncretized Christianity: they have gone over to the Chinese. Instead of winning the Chinese to Christ, the Chinese have won the Jesuits to themselves. The Jesuits even allowed the Chinese to worship their ancestors! That was the heart of the Chinese Rites Controversy.

For many years both parties were writing letters to the pope trying to persuade him of their version of what was happening, Exaggerations and distortions were made and, of course, as each new pope took the office, he had to be reeducated; and the Vatican politicians had other things to do.

This controversy finally had to be settled, and they settled it wrong. The emperor of China wrote a letter

to the pope saying that he trusted the Jesuits and their approach, and threatened to throw all missionaries out of China if the Jesuits were denied their approach. The pope could not believe that anybody would have more authority than he did, and so he wrote a letter to that effect back to the emperor.

The emperor of China, very begrudgingly, expelled every missionary from China. It was a major setback. There were about a quarter of a million Christians by this time in China, and then all contact with the outside world and with Christianity elsewhere in particular was suddenly eliminated.

### **The Rebuilding of the Jesuit Order**

Some years after the Chinese incident, though not for this reason, the entire Jesuit order was closed down for about a quarter of a century, most of them actually killed off. Finally only a handful of white-haired men were left, but that is all it took to rebuild the order into enormous muscular strength again in a few years.

Why were the Jesuits able to rebuild so rapidly? They had already developed the social structure of their organization, which was well-oiled and clearly understood, and it made it much easier for them to recover than to start a new organization from scratch.

It is easy to build buildings; it is *not* easy to build social structures. We have to take very seriously and very respectfully the developmental accomplishment of any existing organization.

Social structure is just as complicated as language structure. And no one has ever attempted to start a new language from scratch, without borrowing from any other language. While the Jesuits do not represent a completely different social structure, they certainly represent an additional set of social norms which produce a community (in addition to what the general European background provided). Their structure is really a great accomplishment which enabled them to bounce back and recruit new missionaries again so readily.

### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> We see an interesting parallel four hundred years later, around the year 1600. The intelligence of the Jesuit order in Italy brought back the information that the rulers of China were very fascinated and attracted by two things: maps and clocks, which they did not have, but the Christians did. Clocks were invented in the monasteries in order to sound out the hours

and then to reduce the *regulas* into practically implementable orderly schemes. And the maps were the result of worldwide interest, based on the Great Commission. Prince Henry the Navigator was one of the great scholars of the seas and promoters of navigation, who had profoundly Christian purposes in sending ships out and refining their navigation methods. The maps were being developed also as the result of Christian concern and Christian faith.

Those two things—the clocks in the monasteries and the maps that would enable the Great Commission to the be

fulfilled—were the key that finally got the Jesuits to Cambaluc. In a Jesuit monastic center in Italy, the command comes to Matteo Ricci's superior to train a man in clock-making and maps and cartography. 11 years later Matteo Ricci was sent off to the East. Ricci could not get into China and so landed in Macão, which was Portuguese. He stayed there and provided information on what he knew about clocks. The word finally got to the emperor and after a number of years the word came from Beijing that Matteo Ricci was wanted in that capital city.

# The Evangelical Awakening

*Ralph D. Winter*

Since the Evangelical Awakening is the engine of the great renaissance of the Fifth Epoch, this topic is in some ways the most important. For most Evangelical Christians in the West, the “Evangelical Awakening” as a phrase has to be the most significant pair of words since the days of the apostles.

Protestantism was very different prior to the Evangelical Awakening. In the time of the Reformation there were the Roman Catholic armies and the Protestant armies. There were also the Anabaptists and other various nonconforming groups of the so-called “Radical Reformation.” That third force did not come to the surface until Pietism extended it. In Pietism the essence of the Radical Reformation, the third force, finally burst into full view. It appears, more clearly than in any other place, in the eighteenth-century England in the person of John Wesley, in what is called the *Evangelical Awakening*. Evangelicals today carry their several theological traditions, but also, even more importantly, they are more likely to trace their whole lifestyle and attitudes to the Evangelical Awakening more likely than to the Protestant Reformation.

## The Roots of the Evangelical Awakening

Most of the distinctive traits of evangelical Christianity were virtually invented—that is, they became public—in the Evangelical Awakening. The most obvious trait for this context is the fact that missions as theory and practice really didn’t exist in Protestantism to any extent until the Awakening. The only exception was the Moravians, who were ahead of the

times but were not, strictly speaking, Protestants. It was the Moravians whom John Wesley went to visit and whom he first met on his trip to America. On that trip in a big, terrible, horrifying storm the main mast was split, and everybody on the ship was just trembling in horror—except the Moravians, the depth of whose Christian faith was apparently such that they simply quietly prayed and sang hymns in the midst of that ghastly storm. John Wesley took note of that.

Later, back in London, John and Charles Wesley fellowshipped with a small group of Moravians. One of the leaders, as Latourette puts it, spoke to them of “self-surrender, instantaneous conversion, and joy in conscious salvation.” This is quintessential evangelicism. After that kind of an experience John Wesley made a trip to Germany. He got a terrible culture shock and went away with mixed feelings about the Germans and no longer eager to simply be Moravian. But the Moravians very definitely influenced John Wesley, even before he went to Germany. In Wesley’s Aldersgate experience, Peter Boehlar, the Moravian, had worked with him, and Wesley found that there was something richer and fuller in the Bible than the determined, almost ascetic obedience which was the pattern of his life before that point.

The theologians don’t know what to do with this so-called conversion of John Wesley. You can make out a case for him not being a true Christian before. If you do, you consign almost all Christians in history to the outer darkness. As one Christian leader said, “If John Wesley was not converted before Aldersgate, God help Christendom!” That is one approach. The other approach chooses

to explain what happened as a second work of grace. It was thus an evangelical experience of the type which became famous in the Holiness movement (directly derived from Wesley's impact on history) which emphasizes a second work of grace. In modern terminology, you can say that it was the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, Aldersgate was an important event. Here was this giant of discipline and obedience, a godly person, visiting the poor, the homeless and the prisoners, witnessing for Christ and reading the Bible every day—but there was something more. Somehow, whatever the experience was, it opened John Wesley's heart to the world on a scale and a level of intensity that had never before existed in his life.

There is no other way to describe the course of events in eighteenth-century England than to say that Aldersgate was the opening event.

## John Wesley and the Methodist Movement

Kenneth Scott Latourette pointed out that the Methodist preachers were in all functional respects similar to the friars. They lived up to the ideals of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Wesley's tremendous determination put steel and toughness into the fiber of that movement, derisively called the Methodists, who were so rigorous in their management structure and accountability. To this day, in no place on the face of the earth do you find a church structure of any size, or length of existence, with a tougher internal discipline than in the Methodist tradition. An Anglican bishop or a Roman cardinal has no power whatsoever compared to a Methodist bishop! This is John Wesley's legacy in that tradition.

Of course, there were many other things that came out of the Methodist movement. A tremendous holy glow was spawned in England. The hallmarks of the movement were not, as is often stressed, a return to the Bible, although that was part of it. But John Wesley wouldn't allow his preachers to make sermons up from the Bible. He gave them twenty basic sermons, and that was all they were supposed to preach! John Wesley didn't expect these people to develop their own sermons. These men's sole common denominator was their responsiveness to an absolute obedience—not to Christ, but to John Wesley; Wesley was the one who obeyed Christ. He said as Paul did, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ."

So it was that in this movement there was a fire, there was an assurance of salvation, a peace of heart and life that Calvinism despite its rich varieties never routinely gave people.

Both the Roman Catholic tradition and Protestantism, and even evangelicalism—any form of Christianity—tends to move in the direction of holding people in suspense. Guilt trips is the business we often are in, in our weak moments, trying to make our product more necessary to our people. But Wesley was very free and easy about this whole thing. Much too free and easy in terms of theology!

Unlike the Roman Catholic tradition and other forms of Protestantism, Wesley didn't have much concern about the fine points of theology, which allowed all kinds of liberalism in Methodist traditions. But he did use the Westminster Confession of faith and the slightly modified Westminster catechism, which is usually considered Calvinistic. For the most part, Wesley was a Calvinist. The so-called Arminians, who fought and debated with the Calvinists on the American frontier, were mainly Calvinists. Jacobus Arminius himself was a follower of Calvin, even though he disagreed with some of the Calvinists in Holland. In some respects, Arminius was closer to Calvin than the Calvinists were. Technically, it is nonsense to contrast Arminians with Calvinists. We may speak of the Arminian Calvinists versus the other Calvinists who claimed the name.

The new thing was not Arminian theology, but the *assurance of salvation*. As late as the nineteenth century, when Charles Finney went to Princeton Seminary to find out how to be saved, the president of the seminary said, "Young man, there is no way for you to be saved. There is nothing that you can do. All that you can do is go home and pray. And if God wants to save you, then He will." Finney's great revival and evangelistic efforts would have been hopeless with that kind of theology!

Within this evangelical movement, this assurance of salvation, this sense of holiness, this emphasis upon the life, not just the belief, was a very blessed thing, and it eventually seeped into all forms of Christianity all around the world.

Evangelicals, as is true when a new movement gets started, rethought through many things. They began to wonder about the dietary assumptions of secular society. John Wesley himself experimented with electric-

ity as a means of calming people who were mentally disturbed, and wrote and edited a number of books on science and other subjects. His interest in science and wide-ranging reading lead him into contact with a certain writer in America, whom he then introduced to the Royal Society of England. That American writer was Benjamin Franklin.

The Evangelical Awakening was not just a new theological tradition. It didn't build a new theological system—and for that reason it is down-played in seminaries today. Evangelical theology is sometimes equated with a fundamentalist emphasis. Certainly the so-called Fundamentalists (as a specific historical movement) were evangelical. But most of evangelical history portrays an evangelical as radical, not conservative!

The evangelicals were the ones who introduced into the churches Isaac Watts' poems, and they actually got people singing human poetry instead of the psalms! The Protestant movement had taken over the psalms from the monastic movement. The Protestant churches were themselves a substitute for the monastic houses. In the monastic houses they sang their way through the psalms every week, and so the Protestants also dutifully sang the psalms. But, due to the buoyancy of spirit and the new assurance of salvation and of God's willingness for all men to be saved, the evangelicals began writing, and then ultimately they introduced human hymns into church worship!

It took about a 100 years to do this. Evangelicals also introduced what became known as the Sunday School. They even allowed women to have meetings by themselves! They opposed the use of alcohol. They proposed the use of missionaries. They did a variety of radical things! The evangelical movement today is a complex of culture traits. It cannot be defined in purely theological terms.

Books on the evangelicals are increasing in number,<sup>1</sup> but in very few of them, to my knowledge, can you find any serious references to the subject of missions. These books do not really talk about the *mission* movement, which had its origins in the impetus and the spiritual fire of the Evangelical Awakening.

## Conclusion

To conclude, in its early stages the Evangelical Awakening itself was primarily a spiritual rebirth of Protestantism. Only later did it get into the subject of missions. It was not until the very end of Wesley's century that William Carey, clearly the product of the Evangelical Awakening, took that additional intellectual leap into the place where he felt that a missionary expression of this zeal was the only proper thing.

A modern-day parallel could be the charismatic movement which, after so many years of being a purely spiritual emphasis, seems to be finally getting to the place where it is interested in missions.

The Evangelical Awakening was a powerful spiritual movement, which overflowed into America in the Great Awakening and has extensively defined most of Western Christianity. There was not necessarily, however, any connection between this amazing spiritual rebirth and a clear-cut missionary organizational strategy. Spiritual rebirth in itself does not necessarily lead to missionary strategies.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Some of these books are: Bernard Ramm's *The Evangelical Heritage: A Study in Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981, 2000 reprint), Donald G. Bloesch's *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), David Wells' *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing* (Abingdon Press 1975; Rev. ed. Baker Book House, 1977).



# Student Movements in Missions

*Ralph D. Winter*

This reading will take us back to the Evangelical Awakening in England. Earlier you read about the Clapham Sect, which was a group of wealthy evangelicals. A number of them were in Parliament, and were involved in all sorts of things. Lord Wilberforce was one of them, and his chief accomplishment was outlawing slavery in England.

Another member was Hannah Moore, who produced what were called “penny tracts.” These were little bits of paper, which taught the poor people of the country how to read, and included moral lessons to raise their idea of how to live in a godly way. The young lawyer who helped Wilberforce prepare for all the battles he faced in Parliament was also connected with the Clapham Sect. They sent him as a common seaman on a slave ship to finally get the data they needed to present to Parliament.

There was another one of the Clapham Sect who became a great writer. They were an amazing group of people!

One of the other things that they got involved in was missions. They decided that it was not right for England to be sending colonial administrators to rule over India without being interested in India’s spiritual welfare. So they put out a request for a volunteer to go to India as a chaplain to the Britishers who were over there.

The young man who volunteered was Henry Martyn, the one who said, “Let me burn out for God!” He was a missionary saint and numerous stories have been written about him! A tremendously brilliant young man, he learned a number of languages in that short period of time. He was never actually a missionary in the sense of working mainly with the indigenous peoples there. But he did do a lot of work on the native languages.

Martyn was a student when he got caught up with this ideal, this goal, and this vision of missions. More than likely he preceded the group of young men who met together periodically, at Williams College in the United States.

## The “Ungodly” Years after the Revolutionary War

A book that our second daughter wrote as her senior thesis in history at Caltech is called, “*The Night Cometh: Two Evangelicals Face the Nation*.” The interesting thing about the beginning chapter of this book is that it tells you what it was like in those years; the years just after the American Revolutionary War.

We often think of that point in history as a very godly time, when actually it was just the opposite. At that point the USA was a nation just torn asunder by all sorts of evils.

The thesis reads,

It was 1836. Two brothers, both millionaires and both devout Christians, were under siege. Lewis had only three weeks earlier completed his new home on Rose Street in a quiet, middle-class section of New York City. Now, late at night, in his family’s absence, a mob had converged, hacked his doors, furniture and pictures to pieces and burned them in a huge bonfire. Arthur’s name, meanwhile, was being broadcast far and wide as a wanted man. Almost a million dollars, in today’s currency, was offered for his deliverance, dead or alive, to a New Orleans address. And the owner of the store across the street from his importing company had also offered \$150,000 to anyone who would kill him. Newspapers reviled them both in issue after issue. Even the police turned their

backs and ignored their danger. Arthur and Lewis must have felt utterly alone in their troubles.

Why would two men, so wealthy and so devout, absolutely infuriate so many people? That question begins a long story almost totally forgotten in our day, and believable only if we go back briefly to 1792 to an America we may not recognize, a nation with a new dream and with seemingly impossible problems. Washington, usually imperturbable, was alarmed. So was John Adams. It had been only a few short years since the Revolutionary War had been won, yet liberty had not brought the long sought peace. Like teenagers suddenly aware of their prowess, the newly independent Americans, now having no British authority to resist, resisted the newly established American one. They felt self-sufficient for any crisis, and did not want, nor feel the need for, any centralized leadership. Bad habits, useful in winning the war, proved irksome and even dangerous in establishing a nation (Winter 1977).

She goes on to speak of the privateers who had hassled the British shipping industry and how they still kept on with their pirating. Neither did the soldiers of the Revolution lay down their guns after the war. They now used them against their personal enemies. The whole business of taxation without representation, which had been their battle cry against England, was now being carried over into the American scene. They refused to give any support to any central government.

Part of the problem was economic, but not just economic. In France, right after the American Revolutionary War, it was the time of Lavoisier, d'Alembert, and Voltaire. The students in the American colleges called themselves by these famous names and delighted in being as anti-God as they could possibly be. It was said that in all of the colleges that had been established under Christian principles, as Christian institutes for training ministers, it was hard to find even one person who would admit to being a Christian.

In one school there were three Christian students, who finally had to ask for the president's permission to use his personal office in order to pray. They would lock themselves in because if the other students knew that they were praying, they would mob them.

Timothy Dwight, Jonathan Edwards' grandson, and perhaps one of the greatest of Yale College presidents, feared that "the great object of democracy was to de-

stroy every trace of civilization in the world, and force man back into a savage state." And Hamilton, when confronted with the idea of a government "by the people" as in France, exploded, "Your people, sir, your people is a great beast!"

There was so much rowdiness and drunkenness on the frontier that it was dangerous to go into Kentucky, for instance, and other such places. The custom of eye-gouging in fights was so common that it was said that hardly anybody in Pennsylvania had more than one eye.

Access to alcohol added to the problem. At a point when the population was 5 million, the United States had 300,000 drunkards and buried 15,000 of them annually. Alcohol was used as part of the pay for working men, even those who were building churches.

In that kind of society, clergymen were under a great deal of ridicule. Jefferson, in being critical of the church and anything Christian, vied with Thomas Paine, a known atheist, for the role of being the most hated man among conservative Christians. On at least one occasion, a Virginia senator complained that at Jefferson's dinner table (during a discussion of religion) only a Jew would join him in the defense of the character of Jesus.

This was the state of affairs just after the Revolutionary war.

## **The Haystack Prayer Meeting and The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions**

Williams College was not unlike the rest of the schools already named. It similarly experienced a situation where no one was Christian except for about five young men. Against the status quo these five young men decided to meet for prayer every week. They would go out into the fields where they would not be attacked by the unbelieving students, and they would meet there for prayer.

One day when they were meeting, a huge rainstorm came upon them. So they ran for a haystack close by and crawled in under the hay to finish their prayer meeting. Out of this *Haystack Prayer Meeting*, as it came to be known, was born the first Protestant missionary society in America.

These students themselves were not the ones who set up the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," but they did go back to their college pro-



fessors to insist that something be done. There was at least one Christian professor who took them to various church leaders and helped them to press their way through. Adoniram Judson, the famous missionary to Burma, was one of them. Samuel Mills was another. There were several others, such as Luther Rice, who went with Judson.

Dwight L. Moody followed on the heels of Finney, at about the same time as the Civil War. Moody was a shoe salesman in Boston who had an unusual gift. Later he went to Chicago and started a Sunday School class related to a local church. The class got so big that finally he started teaching the young people in an empty warehouse. That was where he learned his evangelistic technique. Moody was quite unlettered in comparison to Finney, but the Lord used him. He went over to England at one point. He was invited to Cambridge to preach, and many questioned how this unlettered guy could pull it off. The state of Christianity in England was about as bad as it was in the United States. But there was something about Moody's spirit and about his soul, that turned Cambridge University upside down!

A group of young men at Cambridge banded together and started to pray. At the same time, or shortly thereafter, young people in the U.S. colleges began to band together and pray.

One such group consisted of three young men at Princeton. The father of one, Dr. Wilder, was a professor there who had been a missionary in India. His son and his son's friends met in the home quite often for prayer, asking that the Lord would somehow open up people's hearts to the need to go as missionaries into the world. Wilder's sister was as much on fire for missions as he was, but she was not allowed to meet with them for prayer because she was a woman. So she would pray on one side of the wall while they met on the other; and they would all pray.

Then they decided that they had to do more than pray; they had to organize. Moody had been pressured to call a convention of college students to meet in Mt. Hermon in Massachusetts; and they had invited students from all over the United States. There is a book that lists all the students that came to that Mt. Hermon Conference. At that time there were even two young women from California, who were studying in Maine. Students from all over the States came to that conference. Wilder, his friends, and his sister Ruth went, too.

While there, they started to organize the mission, from which came "The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions." It is to Moody's credit that he did not force, or even encourage this. He himself was not a missionary. His sermons were evangelistic, reaching out to what we call E-0 and E-1 people, but he encouraged these youth in their missionary vision.

The SVMFM (Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions) became probably the most potent force for missions that we have ever known. In about 10 years time, there were 80,000 young people meeting together on a regular basis, praying that the Lord would send forth missionaries into the harvest. Of those 80,000, some 20,000 volunteered to go overseas (and actually went). The other 60,000 stayed home and formed themselves into a group called the *Laymen's Missionary Movement*. It was composed of male college graduates, who went on to become the businessmen, lawyers, bankers, and doctors of that day. They met regularly to pray for their colleagues who had gone overseas and eventually encouraged the giving of huge sums of money for their support. In fact, between 1907 and 1914, the Laymen's Missionary Movement quadrupled the amount of money given to missions because of their emphasis and their effort!

One of the people who was caught up in this movement was a young man by the name of Kenneth Scott Latourette. He was a student in Oregon and then went back East to Yale. There he got caught up in this missions movement that was vitally interested in praying that the Lord would send forth laborers. There were so many at Yale that they set up what they called "Yale in China" (a university in China where they would send Yale graduates to staff the university).

A name, which you may recognize from that time is Borden of Yale. There is a book by the same name. Borden was son of the founder of the famous Borden milk company, one of the wealthier companies in the States today. Adlai Stevenson, who ran for the U.S. presidency, came from that Borden family. Borden of Yale volunteered as a missionary and got as far as Egypt, where he became sick and died.

Another interesting thing about the Student Volunteer Movement was the amount of literature they produced. Huge numbers of books, pamphlets, and charts were put into print and scattered all over. At the same time, the Christian Endeavor Movement began on the high

school and grade school levels, picking up the same emphasis on missions, not to mention the missions emphasis in Sunday Schools, with penny banks for collecting money. It was a day when missions was a hot topic.

## Reviving a Movement

One of the things that we are trying to do is to start another student volunteer movement. There is a booklet written by John R. Mott called, *The Responsibility of the Young People for the Evangelization of the World*. Mott was one of those youth leaders who received his training in the Student Volunteer Movement and ended up becoming a very important man. One might think that this booklet was written for today. Similarly in a published address, Robert Wilder, one of the young men earlier mentioned, answers all the arguments that people put up for not becoming missionaries. One by one he touches on each concern, shredding any argument to ribbons. That address is as apropos today as it was then.

There is another book by David Howard called, *Student Power in World Evangelism*. He speaks of some of the students that have been involved in missions. Most adults feel that you have to be an adult to do anything missions-worthy, but the Student Volunteer Movement showed that you do not have to be an adult to start a major movement. One of the things they did show is that organization is very important. Prayer and organization together are vital; and that is what they did.

One of the problems today of starting a successor to the Student Volunteer Movement is that there has not been another organization like it that is exclusively focused on foreign missions—except for one. The full name of the SVM is the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVMFM); and it was not just a student Christian movement, nor just a campus Christian movement. It was specifically focused on what they called in those days *foreign missions*. The one exception was an organization that worked almost exclusively on Christian college campuses. It was called the *Student Foreign Mission Fellowship* (SFMF). This fellowship was consciously begun as a means of recouping the momentum of the Student Volunteer Movement. It got along fairly well for five or six years. Then along came InterVarsity from England, to Canada, and then to the United States.

J. Christy Wilson, Jr., when he became the head of the

SFMF (called FMF at that time) was able to work with InterVarsity to perform a marriage ceremony between the two organizations.

Now, no one can possibly accuse Christy Wilson (whose father was a missionary to Iran, and who himself grew up in that country) of trying to wreck the student missions movement; but in all honesty, I believe that is what happened. InterVarsity did not solely have the mission fields in its sight. It had other purposes, and added missions to what it was already doing at the time when the FMF joined in. Missions was added as something extra. The third purpose of InterVarsity became, “to promote foreign missions.” This meant that there were other things competing in their structure at the very beginning and in its continuation.

Today InterVarsity and Campus Crusade are about equal in size in terms of the numbers of the campuses and students they are reaching.

Both of them are working very differently and both of them are providing the functions of a denomination. They are sort of like a church away from home, on campus. Both organizations would be mortified and humiliated to hear me say this. They try very hard to avoid any implication that they are competing with the churches. My own feeling is that they are not competing with the churches but rather are going where the churches cannot readily go. Not every church lives next to a campus where 20–30,000 young people are.

The churches cannot go with these students onto campus. The students are simply fortunate that some organizations—Navigators as well as these other two organizations—are working on campuses and helping students with a broad spectrum of spiritual needs.

But, as my daughter found out when she was at UCLA, you cannot emphasize missions very much without overdoing it, in the eyes of some from these organizations. She wanted to start a missions prayer group, and they said, “Oh, no! That would be divisive.”

I am not trying to tell you that this has been the universal policy of InterVarsity and Campus Crusade. My daughter’s InterVarsity group said to her, “Why don’t you edit the InterVarsity Newspaper, and you can edit in stuff about missions if you want. No problem! Would you be willing to do that?” So she started to edit the paper called *The Fishwrapper*. Soon they were saying, “Look, you’re putting in too much about missions.” Toward the end of

her final year, she broke down, disobeyed the policies and got together a little group of students—about five—and began to study some missions books.

InterVarsity, working on secular campuses, has little missions emphasis, except once every three years when the Urbana missions convention comes along. They really promote Urbana, and you have to hand it to them that they have held on to that central event. But Urbana no longer has, as far as its function is concerned, a uniquely mission purpose. One of their very top people said to me, “We would promote Urbana whether or not we talked about missions. We cannot let go of it. That is the time when we raise all of our money for our international work for the next three years. There is no way we could stop promoting the Urbana Convention. It is our financial lifeline and it provides our psychological unity.”

I do not mean to say that InterVarsity is just doing it for the money, but the fact is that it has other functions to perform, and that missions, while featured at that triennial meeting, is not always the main focus.

It is a perplexing problem, even in InterVarsity, to figure out how a real cogent emphasis on missions can be rescued in their organization. My own opinion is that it is no more difficult to do within InterVarsity than it is within a denomination or congregation.

We are up against a serious problem. How do we, the people of God, the community of the faithful, remain loyal to a specialized concern (missions) within a generalized community structure?

The answer is: We can't.

My opinion, spelled out in everything that I write on the subject of modalities and sodalities, is that we have to have specialized organizations that harmoniously work with, in, through, by, and alongside the churches (the more generalized fellowships). These two types of organizations should not conflict nor compete with one another. If they cooperate, they will both be better off.

As for my daughter, the following summer in 1974 those five, plus four other students, went off to the Wheaton Summer Institute of International Studies (now called *Perspectives*). She had come back from the first summer's IIS program and was enthusiastic on the subject of missions (you can't imagine what 500 hours of mission studies does to a college student!). She was really on fire, and that was why she had been a problem to InterVarsity.

At the end of that next year, then, there were nine students who went off to this program called IIS (Summer Institute of International Studies), carefully disguised as an International Studies Program to facilitate the transfer of credits back to UCLA and other schools.

The IIS summer intensive program is an outstanding, wide-ranging program. For speakers, there may be thirty professors from all the leading schools in the country, as well as different mission executives. But while it has been successful, simply educating young people (as essential and as good as it is) is not the whole answer. At the US Center for World Mission, we have gone out on a limb to buy a whole campus in order to become a prototype for similar experiments as the IIS program, but there is something else that is necessary. What is needed is *a movement*.

Kenneth Scott Latourette is the chief example of someone caught up in a movement. Read his autobiography. He was a reluctant missionary. He was not a person who, against the crowd, decided to become a missionary and so went overseas. He went with the crowd.

You may say, “Well, we don't want missionaries like that.” Most missionaries are ordinary human beings. You certainly have to have some ordinary human beings in missions. You cannot have all eccentric, non-constructible, strong-willed individuals. There are too many of those kinds of persons in missions, precisely because the selection process, due to the attitude of society, is so adverse. How will we get the middle spectrum of fine, solid, balanced people, who are not always trying to do things differently from others? You all know missionaries characterized by the fact that they always think of things differently, to which it is very hard to get other missionaries to agree.

The Student Volunteer Movement allowed many “normal” people to say, “Yes, this is a good idea,” and to go out and do a fabulous missionary job. You cannot say that Kenneth Scott Latourette was a failure, even though, due to his health, he did not stay in China. The fact is that one's being swept up in a movement is a very normal thing. The Church, the people of God, is a movement.

We are studying *people movements*. I believe that the seminary level is an excellent place to begin. However, I think that Fuller Seminary, for instance, is less likely to see a student movement for world missions simply because the School of World Mission is there. Young

people are reluctant to get really excited and do things for themselves, when they have the looming, monstrous hulk of one hundred gray-haired missionaries all around.

We professionals in missions have to realize that we are sitting on a limb that is being sawed off. We have got to re-create and to do as they did in the earlier days: Seek and pray and work toward the goal of a *movement*.

How does a movement start? More than likely it is not possible to predict exactly what to do and how to do it,

but if we have any real mandate to organize, then why not organize a movement, a sodality? Let us not hold back, thinking that there has to be some holy, heavenly revelation to do what obviously needs to be done.

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# Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions

*Ralph D. Winter*

College students around the world used to be bowled over by Marxist thought. One powerful reason was that Communism had a “long look.” Communists claimed to know where history was heading, and that they were merely following inevitable trends.

Recently, evangelicals, too, have thought a lot about trends in history and their relationship to events to come. The massive response a while back to Hal Lindsey’s books and films about possible events in the future has shown us that people are responsive to a “Where are we going?” approach to life.

In comparison to the Communists, Christians actually have the longer look, backed up by a mass of hard facts and heroic deeds. Yet for some reason, Christians often make little connection between the discussion of prophecy and future events, and the discussion of missions. They see the Bible as a book of prophecy, both in the past and for the future. Yet, as Bruce Ker has said so well, “The Bible is a missionary book throughout. . . . The main line of argument that binds all of it together is the unfolding and gradual execution of a missionary purpose.”

Did I ever hear Ker’s thought in Sunday School? Maybe. But only in later years have I come to a new appreciation of the fact that the story of missions begins long before the Great Commission. The Bible is very clear: God told Abraham he was to be blessed and to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen 12:1-3). Peter quoted this on the day he spoke in the temple (Acts 3:25). Paul quoted the same mandate in his letter to the Galatians (3:8).

Yet some Bible commentators imply that only the first part of that verse could have happened right away. They agree that Abraham was to begin to be blessed right away,

but somehow they reason that two thousand years would have to pass before either Abraham or his descendants could begin “to be a blessing to all the families on earth.” They suggest that Christ needed to come first and institute his Great Commission—that Abraham’s lineage needed to wait around for 2,000 years before they would be called upon to go the ends of the earth to be a blessing to all the world’s peoples. (This could be called “The Theory of the Hibernating Mandate”). Worse still, one scholar, with a lot of followers in later decades, propounded the idea that in the Old Testament the peoples of the world were not expected to receive missionaries but to go to Israel for the light; and that from the New Testament and thereafter it was the reverse, that is, the peoples to be blessed would not come, but that those already having received the blessing would go to them. This rather artificial idea gained acceptance partially by the use of the phrase, “centripetal mission in the Old Testament and centrifugal mission in the New Testament.” Fact is, there are both in both periods, and it is very confusing to try to employ an essentially “Mickey Mouse” gimmick to explain a shift in strategy that did not happen. The existence of 137 different languages in Los Angeles makes clear that now, in the New Testament-and-after period, nations are still coming to the light.

A more recent and exciting interpretation observes that Israel, as far back as Abraham, was accountable to share that blessing with other nations. In the same way, since the time of the apostle Paul, every nation which has contained any significant number of “children of Abraham’s faith” has been similarly accountable (but both Israel and the other nations have mainly failed to carry out this mandate).

The greatest scandal in the Old Testament was that Israel tried to be blessed without trying very hard to be a bless-

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ing. However, let's be careful: The average citizen of Israel was no more oblivious to the second part of Gen. 12:1-3 than the average Christian today is oblivious to the Great Commission! How easily our study Bibles overlook the veritable string of key passages in the Old Testament which exist to remind Israel (and us) of the missionary mandate: Gen 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; 28:14; Ex 19:4-6; Deut 28:10; 2 Chr 6:33; Ps 67; 96; 105; Isa 40:5; 42:4; 49:6; 56:3; 6-8; Jer 12:14-17; Zech 2:11; Mal 1:11.

Likewise, today, nations which have been singularly blessed by God may choose to resist and try to conceal any sense of their obligation to be a blessing to other nations. But that is not God's will. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

Thus, how many times in the average church today is the Great Commission mentioned? Even less often than it comes up in the Old Testament! Yet the Commission applies. It applied then, and it applies today. I believe it has been constantly applicable from the very moment when it was first given (Gen 12:1-3). As individual Christians and as a nation we are responsible to "be a blessing" to "all families of the earth."

This mandate has been overlooked during most of the centuries since the apostles. Even our Protestant tradition plugged along for over 250 years, minding its own business and its own blessings (like Israel of old) until a young man of great faith and incredible endurance appeared on the scene. In this chapter we are going to focus in on the A.D. 1800-2000 period, which his life and witness kicked off. No other person can be given as much credit for the vibrant new impetus of the last two hundred years. He was one of four such influential men whom God used, all of them with severe handicaps. Three great "eras" of new plunging forward into newly perceived frontiers resulted from their faith and obedience (it took two of them to launch the third and final era). Four stages of mission strategy characterized each of these eras. Inevitably two perplexing "transitions" of strategy appeared as the fourth stage of one era contrasted with the first stage of the next. It is easier to see this in a diagram. Better still, to tell the story.

## The First Era: Coastlands

### William Carey, 1792

An "under thirty" young man, William Carey, got into trouble when he began to take the Great Commission seriously. When he had the opportunity to address a

group of ministers, he challenged them to give a reason why the Great Commission did not apply to them. They rebuked him, saying, "When God chooses to win the heathen, He will do it without your help or ours." He was unable to speak again on the subject, so he patiently wrote out his analysis; "An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens."

The resulting small book convinced a few of his friends to create a tiny missions agency—the "means" of which he had spoken. The structure was flimsy and weak, providing only the minimal backing he needed to go to India. However, the impact of his example reverberated throughout the English-speaking world, and his little book became the Magna Carta of the Protestant mission movement.

William Carey was not the first Protestant missionary. For years the Moravians had been sending people to Greenland, America and Africa. But his little book, in combination with the Evangelical Awakening, quickened vision and changed lives on both sides of the Atlantic. Response was almost instantaneous: a second missionary society was founded in London, two in Scotland; one in Holland, and then still another in England. By then it was apparent to all that Carey was right when he had insisted that organized efforts in the form of missions societies were essential to the success of the missionary endeavor.

In America, five college students, aroused by Carey's book, met to pray for God's direction for their lives. This unobtrusive prayer meeting, later known as the "Haystack Prayer Meeting," resulted in an American "means"—the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions.

Even more importantly, they started a student mission movement, which became the example and forerunner of student movements in missions to this day.

In fact, during the first 25 years after Carey sailed to India, a dozen mission agencies were formed on both sides of the Atlantic, and the First Era in Protestant missions was off to a good start. Realistically speaking, however, missions in this First Era was a pitifully small shoe-string operation in relation to the other preoccupations of most Europeans and Americans in that day. The idea that we should organize in order to send out missionaries did not come easily, but it eventually became an accepted pattern.

| STAGES OF MISSION ACTIVITY |                       |  |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| STAGE 1                    | A Pioneer Stage       | First contact with people group.   |
| STAGE 2                    | A Paternal Stage      | Expatriates train national leadership  |
| STAGE 3                    | A Partnership Stage   | National leaders work as equals with expatriates                             |
| STAGE 4                    | A Participation Stage | Expatriates are no longer equal partners, but only participate by invitation |

Carey’s influence led some women in Boston to form women’s missionary prayer groups, a trend which led to women becoming the main custodians of mission knowledge and motivation. Some years later women began to go to the field as single missionaries. Finally, by 1865, unmarried American women established women’s mission boards, which, like Roman Catholic women’s orders, only sent out single women as missionaries, and were run entirely by single women at home.

There are two very bright notes about the First Era. One is the astonishing demonstration of love and sacrifice on the part of those who went out. Africa, especially, was a forbidding continent. All mission outreach to Africa prior to 1775 had totally failed. Of all Catholic efforts and all Moravian efforts, nothing had remained. Not one missionary of any kind existed on the continent on the eve of the First Era. The gruesome statistics of almost inevitable sickness and death that haunted, yet did not daunt, the decades of truly valiant missionaries who went out after 1790 in virtually a suicidal stream cannot be matched by any other era nor by any other cause. Very few missionaries to Africa during the first 60 years of the First Era survived more than two years. As I have reflected on this measure of devotion, I have been humbled to tears, for I wonder if I or my people today could, or would match that record. Can you imagine our Urbana students going out into missionary work today if they knew that for decade after decade 19 out of 20 of those before them had died almost on their arrival on the field?

A second bright spot in this First Era is the development of high quality insight into mission strategy. The movement had several great missiologists. In regard to home structure, they clearly understood the value of the mission structure being allowed a life of its own. For example, we read that the London Missionary Society experienced unprecedented and unequalled success, “due partly to its freedom from ecclesiastical supervision and partly to its formation from an almost

equal number of ministers and laymen.” In regard to field structure, we can take a note from Henry Venn, who was related to the famous Clapham evangelicals and the son of a founder of the Church Missionary Society. Except for a few outdated terms, one of his most famous paragraphs sounds strangely modern:

Regarding the ultimate object of a Mission, viewed under its ecclesiastical result, to be the settlement of a Native Church under Native Pastors upon a self-supporting system, it should be borne in mind that the progress of a Mission mainly depends upon the training up and the location of Native Pastors; and that, as it has been happily expressed, the “euthanasia of a Mission” takes place when a missionary, surrounded by well-trained Native congregations under Native Pastors, is able to resign all pastoral work into their hands, and gradually relax his superintendence over the pastors themselves, ’til it insensibly ceases; and so the Mission passes into a settled Christian community. Then the missionary and all missionary agencies should be transferred to the “regions beyond.”

Take note: There was no thought here of the national church launching its own mission outreach to new pioneer fields! Nevertheless, we see here something like stages of mission activity, described by Harold Fuller of SIM in the alliterative sequence (see Table 1 above).

Slow and painstaking, though the labors of the First Era were, they did bear fruit; and the familiar series of stages can be observed. They go from no church in the pioneer stage, to infant church in the paternal stage, and to the more complicated mature church in the partnership and participation stages.

Samuel Hoffman of the Reformed Church in America Board puts it well:

The Christian missionary who was loved as an evangelist and liked as a teacher, may find himself resented as an administrator.

Lucky is the missionary in whose own career this whole sequence of stages takes place. More likely the series represents the work in a specific field with a succession of missionaries. Again, it may be the experience of an agency, which in its early period bursts out in works in a number of places, and then after some years finds that most of its fields are mature at about the same time. Rightly or wrongly, this kind of succession is visible in the mission movement globally, as the fever for change and nationalization sweeps the thinking of almost all executives at once, and leaps from continent to continent, affecting new fields still in earlier stages as well as old ones in the latter stages.

At any rate, by 1865 there was a strong consensus on both sides of the Atlantic that the missionary should go home when he had worked himself out of a job. Since the First Era focused primarily on the coastlands of Asia and Africa, we are not surprised that the literal withdrawal would come about first in a case where there were no inland territories. Thus, symbolizing the latter stages of the First Era was the withdrawal of all missionaries from the Hawaiian Islands—then a separate country. This was done with legitimate pride and fanfare, fulfilling the highest expectations, then and now, of successful progress through the stages of missionary planting, watering and harvest.

## **The Second Era: Inland Hudson Taylor, 1865**

A second symbolic event of 1865 is even more significant—at least for the inauguration of the Second Era. A young man, after a short term and like Carey still under thirty, in the teeth of surrounding counter advice, established the first of a whole new breed of missions emphasizing the inland territories. This second young upstart was given little else than negative notice, but like William Carey, he brooded over statistics, charts and maps. When he suggested that the inland peoples of China needed to be reached, he was told that he could not get there, and he was asked if he wished to carry on his shoulders the blood of the young people he would thus send to their deaths. This accusing question stunned and staggered him. Groping for light, while wandering on the beach, it seemed as if God finally spoke to resolve the ghastly thought: “You are not sending young people into the interior of China. I am.” The load lifted.

With only trade school medicine, without any university experience, much less missiological training, and with a checkered past in regard to his own individualistic behavior on the field, he was merely one more of the weak things that God uses to confound the wise. His early anti church-planting missionary strategy was breathtakingly erroneous by today’s church-planting standards, yet God strangely honored him because his gaze was fixed upon the world’s least-reached peoples. Hudson Taylor had a divine wind behind him. The Holy Spirit spared him from many pitfalls, and it was his organization, the China Inland Mission—the most cooperative, servant organization yet to appear—that eventually served in, one way or another, over 6,000 missionaries, predominantly in the interior of China. It took 20 years for other missions to begin to join Taylor in his special emphasis—the unreached, inland frontiers.

One reason the Second Era began slowly is that many people were confused. There were already many missions in existence. Why more?

Yet as Taylor pointed out, all existing agencies were confined to the coastlands of Africa and Asia, or to islands in the Pacific. Yet, people questioned, “Why go to the interior if you haven’t finished the job on the coast?”

I am not sure the parallel is true today, but the Second Era apparently needed not only a new vision but a lot of new organizations. Taylor not only started an English frontier mission, he went to Scandinavia and the Continent to challenge people to start new agencies. As a result, directly or indirectly, over 40 new agencies took shape, composing the faith missions that rightly should be called “frontier missions,” as the names of many of them still indicate: China Inland Mission, Sudan Interior Mission, Africa Inland Mission, Heart of Africa Mission, Unevangelized Fields Mission, Regions Beyond Missionary Union. Taylor was more concerned for the cause than for a career: At the end of his life he had spent only half of his years of ministry in China. In countless trips back from China he spent half of his time as a mobilizer on the home front. For Taylor, the cause of Christ, not China, was the ultimate focus of his concern.

As in the early stage of the First Era, when things began to move, God brought forth a student movement. This one was more massive than before—the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, history’s single most potent mission organization! In the 1880s



and 90s there was only 1/37th as many college students as there are today, but the Student Volunteer Movement netted 100,000 volunteers, who gave their lives to missions. Twenty-thousand actually went overseas. As we see it now, the other 80,000 had to stay home to rebuild the foundations of the missions endeavor. They began the Laymen's Missionary Movement and strengthened existing women's missionary societies.

However, as the fresh new college students of the Second Era burst on the scene overseas, they did not always fathom how the older missionaries of the First Era could have turned their responsibility over to national leadership at the least educated levels of society. First Era missionaries were in the minority by then, and the wisdom they had gained from their experience was bypassed by the large number of new college-educated recruits. Thus, in the early stages of the Second Era, the new college-trained missionaries, instead of going on to new frontiers, they sometimes assumed leadership over existing churches, not reading the record of previous mission thinkers. This often forced First Era missionaries and national leadership (which had been painstakingly developed) into the background. In some cases this caused a huge step backward in mission strategy.

By 1925, however, the largest mission movement in history was in full swing. By then Second Era missionaries had finally learned the basic lessons they had at first ignored, and produced an incredible record. They had planted churches in a thousand new places, mainly "inland;" and by 1940 the reality of the "younger churches" around the world was widely acclaimed as the "great new fact of our time." The strength of these churches led both national leaders and missionaries to assume that all additional frontiers could simply be mopped up by the ordinary evangelism of the churches scattered throughout the world. More and more people wondered if missionaries were needed any longer! Once more, as in 1865, it seemed logical to send missionaries home from many areas of the world.

For us today it is highly important to note the overlap of these first two eras. The 45-year period between 1865 and 1910 (compare 1934 to 1980 today) was a transition between the strategy appropriate to the mature stages of Era 1, the Coastlands era, and the strategy appropriate to the pioneering stages of Era 2, the Inland era.

Shortly after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, there ensued the shattering World Wars and the world-wide collapse of the colonial apparatus. By 1945 many overseas churches were prepared not only for the withdrawal of the colonial powers, but for the absence of the missionary as well.

While there was no very widespread outcry, "Missionary Go Home," as some supposed, nevertheless things were different, as even the people in the pews at home ultimately sensed. Pioneer and paternal were no longer the relevant stages, but partnership and participation.

In 1967, the total number of career missionaries from America began to decline (and it has continued to do so to this day). Why? Christians had been led to believe that all necessary beachheads had been established. By 1967, over 90 percent of all missionaries from North America were working with strong national churches that had been in existence for some time.

The facts, however, were not that simple. Unnoticed by almost everyone, another era in missions had begun.

## **The Third Era: Unreached Peoples Cameron Townsend, 1934**

### *(Linguistic Barriers)*

This era was begun by a pair of young men of the Student Volunteer Movement—Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran. Cameron Townsend was in so much of a hurry to get to the mission field that he didn't bother to finish college. He went to Guatemala as a "Second Era" missionary, building on work which had been done in the past. In that country, as in all other mission fields, there was plenty to be done by missionaries working with established national churches.

But Townsend was alert enough to notice that the majority of the Guatemalan population did not speak Spanish. As he moved from village to village, trying to distribute Scriptures written in the Spanish language, he began to realize that Spanish evangelism would never reach all of Guatemala's people. He was further convinced of this when an Indian asked him, "If your God is so smart, why can't he speak our language?" He was befriended by a group of older missionaries who had already concluded that the indigenous "Indian" populations needed to be reached in their own languages. He was just 23 when he began to move on the basis of this new perspective.

Surely, in our time the one person comparable to William Carey and to Hudson Taylor is Cameron Townsend. Like Carey and Taylor, Townsend saw that there were still unreached frontiers, and for almost a half century he has waved the flag for the overlooked tribal peoples of the world. He started out hoping to help older mission boards reach out to tribal people. Like Carey and Taylor, he ended up starting his own mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators, which is dedicated to reaching these new frontiers. At first he thought there were about 500 unreached tribal groups in the world. (He was judging by the large number of tribal languages in Mexico alone). Later, he revised his figure to 1,000, then 2,000, and now it is closer to 5,000. As his conception of the enormity of the task has increased, the size of his organization has increased. Today it numbers over 4,000 adult workers.

## The Third Era: Unreached Peoples

### Donald McGavran, 1935

#### *(Social Barriers)*

At the very same time that Townsend was ruminating in Guatemala, Donald McGavran was beginning to yield to the seriousness, not of linguistic barriers, but of India's amazing social barriers. Townsend "discovered" the tribes; McGavran discovered a nearly universal category, which he labeled "homogeneous units," which today are more often called "people groups." Paul Hiebert has employed the terminology, "horizontal segmentation" for the tribes which each occupies its own turf, and "vertical segmentation" for groups distinguished, not by geography, but by rigid social differences. McGavran's terminology described both kinds even though he was mainly thinking about the more subtle vertical segmentation.

Once such a group is penetrated by the gospel by diligently taking advantage of that missiological breakthrough along group lines, the strategic "bridge of God" to that people group is established. The corollary of this truth is that until such a breakthrough is made, normal evangelism and church planting cannot take place.

McGavran did not found a new mission (Townsend did so only when the existing missions did not properly respond to the tribal challenge). McGavran's active efforts and writings spawned both the church growth movement and the frontier mission movement, the former devoted to expanding within already penetrated

groups, and the latter devoted to deliberate approaches to the remaining unpenetrated groups.

As with Carey and Taylor before them, Townsend and McGavran attracted little attention for twenty years. But by the 1950s both had wide audiences. By 1980, 46 years after 1934, a 1910-like conference was held, focusing precisely on the forgotten groups these two men emphasized. The Edinburgh-1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions was the largest mission meeting in history, measured by the number of mission agencies sending delegates. And wonder of wonders, 57 Third World agencies sent delegates. This is the sleeper of the Third Era! Also, a simultaneous youth meeting, the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions, pointed the way for all future mission meetings to include significant youth participation.

As had happened in the early stages of the first two eras, the Third Era has spawned a number of new mission agencies. Some, like the New Tribes Mission, carry in their names reference to this new emphasis. The names of others, such as Gospel Recordings and Mission Aviation Fellowship, refer to the new technologies necessary for the reaching of tribal and other isolated peoples of the world. Some Second Era agencies, like Regions Beyond Missionary Union, have never ceased to stress frontiers, and have merely increased their staff so they can penetrate further—to people groups previously overlooked.

More recently many have begun to realize that tribal peoples are not the only forgotten peoples. Many other groups, some in the middle of partially Christianized areas, have been completely overlooked. These peoples are being called "Unreached Peoples," and are defined by ethnic or sociological traits. Thus, they are people so different from the cultural traditions of any existing church that missions (rather than evangelistic) strategies are necessary for the planting of indigenous churches within their particular traditions.

If the First Era was characterized by reaching coastland peoples, and the Second Era by inland territories, the Third Era must be characterized by the more difficult-to-define, non-geographical category, which we have called "Unreached Peoples"—people groups which are socially isolated. Because this concept has been so hard to define, the Third Era has been even slower getting started than the Second Era. Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran began calling at-

tention to forgotten peoples over 40 years ago, but only recently has any major attention been given to them. More tragic still, we have essentially forgotten the pioneering techniques of the First and Second Eras, so we almost need to reinvent the wheel as we learn again how to approach groups of people completely untouched by the gospel!

We know that there are about 10,000 people groups in the “Unreached Peoples” category, gathered in clusters of similar peoples, these clusters numbering not more than 3,000. Each individual people will require a separate, new missionary beachhead. Is this too much? Can this be done?

### **Can We Do It?**

The task is not as difficult as it may seem, for several surprising reasons. In the first place, the task is not an American one, or even a Western one. It will involve Christians from every continent of the world.

More significant is the fact that when a beachhead is established within a culture, the normal evangelis-

tic process, which God expects every Christian to be involved in, replaces the missions strategy, because the mission task of “breaking in” is finished.

Furthermore, “closed countries” are less and less of a problem because the modern world is becoming more and more interdependent. There are literally no countries today which admit no foreigners. Many of the countries considered “completely closed”—like Saudi Arabia—are in fact avidly recruiting thousands of skilled people from other nations. And the truth is, they prefer devout Christians over boozing, womanizing, secular Westerners.

But our work in the Third Era has many other advantages. We have potentially a world-wide network of churches that can be aroused to their central mission. Best of all, nothing can obscure the fact that this could and should be the final era. No serious believer today dare overlook the fact that God has not asked us to reach every nation, tribe and tongue without intending it to be done. No generation has less excuse than ours if we do not do as He asks.



# The Retreat of the West

Ralph D. Winter

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

## Defining the West

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

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

The ravages of communism across the world, as an

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

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

## Christianity: Faith or Religion?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **The Impact of Westernization**

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

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

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

When the Protestants got into the act, their first large-scale presence on the open seas were pirates! The pirates were Protestants; and you can imagine how easily this fit into the Catholic stereotype of Protestantism. Some of these pirates actually did have chapels in their hideaway-outposts across the Caribbean. They were religious men, with all their cutthroat piracy they were trying to do God's will. When Protestants got into the act, colonization no

longer had a Christian dimension to it. The Dutch were allowed into the ports of Japan without any problems at all, even after Japan was totally sealed off to all other colonization. The reason for that was because no one would have ever suspected the Dutch Protestants of bringing along Christian missionaries. The Dutch did bring chaplains with them into Taiwan; and at one time there was a fairly promising movement. They eventually did bring chaplains into Indonesia, the so-called Dutch East Indies, but they were simply less religious than other colonizing powers.

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

Christianity was what eventually percolated into the higher circles and, through John Wesley and the Evangelical Awakening, into the conscience of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. Clapham was a district of London where these evangelicals lived. They were called a sect, although they were really only a subordinate party in Parliament. They led the anti-slavery movement.

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

The impact can either be called colonialism (with an adverse twang to it), or it can be called a blessing. I

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

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

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

## The Only Source of Merit in Western Society

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

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

Whom are we kidding? Satan is the god of this world. We all come from a background of satanically-controlled cultures; and there is no intrinsic merit in

Western society apart from the impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ, direct and indirect. Science itself is a result of the cosmology that is unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. You cannot be a scientist if you do not believe in the laws of nature. You cannot be a scientist if you are merely a Hellenistic philosopher.

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

## **The Unbelievably Good Result of the West's Retreat**

There came a time when God obviously said, "Time's up" for Western societies. The crumbling of that vast

worldwide empire is the story of the Retreat of the West. The retreat of the West is the retreat of Western political and military power. It is not a retreat of the cultural or economic power, or of the religious influence of the West. Many people assumed—and maybe hoped—that with the withdrawal of the troops and the colonial offices of the Western powers, they would have withdrawn all other influences. But, as you see in my book, in many cases the cultural impact of the West actually escalated in the absence of the stuffy, censorious, and condescending colonial rulers.

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



# The Legacy of Edinburgh, 1910

Ralph D. Winter

Our topic will be the famous meeting at Edinburgh in 1910, the resulting International Missionary Council, and World Council of Churches. In addition we will be looking at the more recent Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization and some other structures that have developed having to do with the international missions scene.

I wish the out of print book called *Ecumenical Foundations*, by William Ritchey Hogg, were more readily available. The book presents a very interesting survey of what the author calls “movements of unity,” regarding the mission field in the nineteenth century.

One thing that you should take note of is that there are four different streams of coagulation—my word, not his—whereby different groups and strands of Christianity began to come together on the field or have an impact on the field in, say, India.

One was a series of field conferences, convened by missionaries; the second stream was conferences, held in the homelands; the third one was fellowships of mission executives (such as the IFMA and EFMA), held in the homelands. Finally, there was the student movement, the SVM, and eventually the World’s Student Christian Federation. I would add that even before the first of the four mentioned by Hogg, there were field fellowships of missionaries, without which the more formal “field consultations” would never have taken place.

## The Origin of Unity: The Mission Field

On most mission fields there is a variety of mission agencies. In Guatemala there were 40 different ones when I was there. By now that number has at least doubled. I was

the editor of the inter-mission newsletter at one point. I got to be editor by the simple fact that I suggested that there be such a newsletter.

The missionaries from the various agencies would get together once a year for a time of fellowship. Usually some American pastor would come down and treat the missionaries like his pastoral charge for a few days of retreat and spiritual renewal. That type of inter-mission fellowship brings together people of different kinds. If I had not been in that kind of a fellowship, I do not think I would have gotten to know the California Friends, the Central American Mission, the Nazarenes, or the Southern Baptists as well as I did. If I had stayed in California, it certainly would never have happened. The point is that in the nineteenth century, due to Americans from the same city, say Cincinnati, going to India, they felt a closeness to one another in India. I lived in a part of Guatemala where there were practically no other Americans. Now and then, when I would be in a nearby city, I would see an American tourist walking down the street with a wife and a couple of little kids. I would have to bite my tongue to resist the temptation to stop and talk with them in English. It would have been so nice. But I had to mind my own business and walk on past; for why, in the middle of a city, should I stop somebody and start talking to them? (I was a person starved for any kind of contact with my own people).

It really is not any great spiritual achievement or virtue that people from these different backgrounds of the Christian tradition got together, once they had gotten on the field; or at least, that was not the only explanation. We cannot easily say that because missionaries are holier than anybody else, they are able to see their unity in Christ more clearly. That might be part of it, but, basically, the missionaries were just stunned by the utter contrast be-

tween their Christianity, of whatever type, and the Hindu reality. So all of a sudden, Mennonites and Presbyterians felt very close together, because, comparatively speaking, they were. That kind of unity is almost inevitable—no great credit to the missionaries themselves.

It is a fact that movements toward unity in Western Christendom are preeminently, in terms of the originating energy and momentum, the result of mission-field events. Students from the same country found one another on their campuses; and, as missionaries from different countries, they found one another on the field. Various missions got acquainted; and then their field churches were brought together in councils of churches, which tended to weld Lutherans, Baptists, and Methodists together far sooner than it ever would have happened in the United States.

That is what the first hundred pages, or so, of Ritchey Hogg's book are about. Hogg was a doctoral student under Latourette, and his book is a history of the International Missionary Council (IMC).

## Edinburgh, 1910

In 1910 a very significant meeting took place in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was called the World Missionary Conference. There had been a meeting in the United States in 1900, the Ecumenical Missionary Conference. (It is rather amazing that they had used the word "ecumenical" in that year.) It had been a very large meeting—mainly of church people—a conference on mission mobilization, not a consultation on mission strategy. The assumption had been that every ten years they should hold a similar meeting. By 1910, John R. Mott, most readily characterized as the leader of the Student Volunteer Movement, was about 44 years old. The SVM got started in 1886, when he was about 20. After 24 years of faithful and energetic labor, he and his friends now had an immense, international influence through both the World Student Christian Movement and the Student Volunteer Movement. For example, he was the one (with an eye back on a strategy meeting of mission leaders that he had attended in Madras), who decided, almost independently, that the 1910 Edinburgh meeting would not be a church leaders' meeting, as back in 1900, but rather a mission leaders' meeting, to focus on strategy rather than on mobilization.

This set the Edinburgh 1910 meeting apart from all previous, or subsequent, meetings. Never before had

there been a world-level conference to which people were invited specifically because they were mission agency leaders! Never before had anything like that been convened (nor since).<sup>1</sup>

It was an absolutely unique meeting in the sense that it drew together, not church leaders, but mission leaders.

At the conclusion of that 1910 meeting, a continuation committee was formed. The continuation committee had its work blasted by the First World War; and it was not until 1921, at Lake Mohonk, New York, that the International Missionary Council (IMC) was formed.

The IMC, not the World Council of Churches, was the immediate result of the Edinburgh 1910 meeting of missionary executives. Thus the International Missionary Council drew together all the various associations of mission agencies. In North America, for example, having begun back in 1892, there was the Foreign Mission Conference of North America (FMCNA). That was a conference of mission executives in the United States. There was a similar conference in Norway, and one in England.

In England they called this one the British Foreign Missions Secretaries' Bag Lunch, or something like that. Mission executives got together in the various countries of the sending part of the world. There was a sending portion of the globe and there was a receiving portion. This is not a proper distinction today, but it was practical then. So in the sending part of the world, there was the FMCNA, the Norwegian Missionary Council (which still exists, full blast), the British Foreign Secretaries' whatever, etc.; and each of these sending associations was a member of the International Missionary Council.

On the receiving end, a subtle event took place. Immediately after the 1910 conference, a new phenomenon took place in various countries of the world. The different agencies working in a country such as India had been getting together for an annual inter-mission fellowship of some sort. Now they formed the National Christian Council of India. That Council and others like it in other mission fields also became members of the IMC, which was then composed of both sending councils in the home countries and field councils of missionaries in the target mission lands. The conjunction of these two kinds of councils would eventually be its undoing. Thus the International Missionary Council was exclusively mission-agency oriented at its

inception, but from the start a subtle transformation began to take place.

The immediate goal of missions is to plant the church. The mentality of the missionaries (later on, when there were not only mission agencies in the field, but also those national churches to which these missions were tied) focused on the question, “What will we do with the emerging national church leaders? Shall we incorporate them into the National Christian Council?” Of course, the answer was “Yes! Certainly. That is the purpose of our being in India, to produce national churches.”

Soon, then, you had two different kinds of leaders coming together in the field councils: you had expatriate missionaries, who represented spheres of financial and intellectual power and schools and hospitals, running their own little colonial empire in India. They met together, but they eagerly said, “The national church leaders should come to our meeting!” And the National Christian Councils throughout the mission lands more and more were formed with the idea that the churches would also be represented, and not just expatriate missionaries.

Now you had what I call in my writings an “oicumenical” gathering. (The phrase has never stuck, but what it identifies for me is a meeting where both church leaders and mission leaders are present.) “Ecumenical” today means church leaders; and there is no word for mission leaders only.

## Church and Mission Agency

We are talking now about 1850–1950. Pretty soon, in the mission lands, the churches became very important and the mission agencies not so important. (There may have been a few Johnny-come-lately mission agencies that did not produce much of a church.) You also had a few churches on the field that had no related mission agencies. But gradually, as the National Christian Council (NCC) of India included more and more church leaders, there came a day when somebody said, “Why do we have missionaries in this meeting? Who are the missionaries? What are they doing here? It’s the church in India that counts!”

It is an interesting thing that no one noticed that two mission agencies, born in India of Indian national initiative, already existed. They were both founded by Bishop Azariah of the Anglican Church. One was the National Missionary Society, a sort of home mission

society in South India, founded in 1905. But that was not quite good enough. About 1907 there came the National Indian Missionary Society. The point is that these two agencies were nation-wide and interdenominational. Two mission organizations existed, but nobody took them seriously.

I want to go back to something I said earlier:

The greatest strategic hiatus in modern mission strategy has been the near total absence of anybody saying that we have to start mission societies run by nationals.

We have started churches run by nationals, but no one (or practically no one) has thought of starting cross-cultural missions. Yet Bishop Azariah did! Actually, it was Sherwood Eddy, a Student Volunteer man in the YMCA movement, who encouraged him to do it. It was not purely a nationalized idea.

Then there was a parenthesis until around 1945, when some missionary leaders—not necessarily national leaders—suggested a change. It was not as if the national leaders had said, “Let’s get rid of these missionaries.” The foreign missionaries were the idealists, the armchair strategists, who had said, “We shouldn’t be the ones to be here, you know; we’re going to be retiring. Push the national leaders forward.” So here they were saying, “Let’s change the constitution of the NCC of India.”

Incidentally, what I am telling you now is happening simultaneously in many other mission lands: in the National Christian Council of Kenya, and in the National Christian Council of South Africa—it is all happening as we speak. The national churches are growing up. Their very presence and existence is lionized—the precious fruit of missionary work!

In 1945 they said that the mission organizations and their people are not even going to be members of these national councils. The National Christian Council of India should now be called the National Council of Churches of India. The National Christian Council became the National Council of Churches. In fact, in India you still have the National Christian Council; but it has a different function. In Melanesia they changed it to the National Council of Churches of Melanesia. And in most other places they changed the name from NCC to NCC, so to speak.

We are interested not in names, but in structures and forms and functions, and in what is really happening. The fact is that over a period of time in the receive-

ing areas of the world, a mission situation changed to a church situation. The receiving countries ended up with a bunch of National Councils of Churches, even though the sending countries still had a bunch of missionary-sending councils. One example is the Norwegian Missionary Council that still sits, abandoned, lonely in the West, an anachronism to the rising and transcendent missionary church reality!

And so these great missionary and church statesmen orbited the earth, talking about the New Era of the National Church. Archbishop Temple said, “The younger churches are the great new fact of our time.” Oh, what a thrilling and a fabulous development it is! The Church has come of age! In every nation of the world the Church is there; and the mission agencies can just take a back seat or wither away—which they themselves wish to do, in most cases anyway.

Henry Venn’s famous “goal statement” in the nineteenth century was “the euthanasia of the mission (structure).” Most mission agencies naturally wanted the national churches to be prominent. However, this produced what was a fundamental structural anachronism in the International Missionary Council. At one end of the scale were the National Councils of Churches (NCCs). These people are not the kind of people who, when they gather together, are going to pull out their Bibles and read the Great Commission for their devotional period. Back in the earlier IMC, when they pulled out their Bibles they refreshed their minds on the Great Commission. In the later NCCs, when they pulled out their Bibles they read about social justice and all other kinds of problems that are the normal, natural, inevitable, and perfectly reasonable concerns of national churches.

I do not want to excuse liberalism, nor excuse theological decay, nor erosion or anything like that. But in addition to all that we know about creeping liberalism, there is here a *structural transition*, which is not a theological change but a sociological change. This structural transition should not be charged as characterizing creeping liberalism. Just because the National Christian Council of India no longer talks about missions does not in itself prove that they have lost their faith. They just simply lost their missionaries. They lost the mission agencies as members. They ruled them out in the finest hour of their idealism.

Here is the fly in the ointment, and this is why I always use India as the example of this transition: they even

ruled out, structurally, two indigenous mission societies that were perfectly legitimate and totally national! In other words, they made a structural shift, not merely a national shift. *They shifted from mission agencies to churches*, not merely from foreigners to native Indians.

## Church Theology vs. Mission Theology

Church theology is different from mission theology. If you do not believe it, walk from the School of World Mission to the School of Theology in Fuller Seminary. The School of Theology is dominated by the concerns of the church. I believe that “church concerns” add up to nurture: nurture theology, nurture pastoral care, and nurture E-1 (at best) evangelism.

Mission theology is something else. I used to be told that missiology is not an academic field. I had to take the initiative, along with Gerald Anderson, to start the American Society of Missiology, because the President of Fuller Seminary told me that they can’t offer a Ph.D. degree in Missiology because there isn’t such a field. So we started a scholarly society and we started a scholarly journal. Now you can get a Ph.D. in Missiology at Fuller.

The fact is that there was a *structural shift* from missions to the needs of the churches, which meant a whole new agenda. It is inevitable, it is reasonable, and it is normal. After all, what do you talk about in the family circle? You talk about the family bank account and whether or not you should buy brown rice; but when you go to the office, you talk about office things. The office where you go to work is a task-structure. The home is a caretaker structure.

The churches, whatever else they are, have to be caretaker structures. When church leaders get together, they talk about caretaker problems.

Where is the link between mission theology and church theology? The Fuller Theological Seminary Statement of Faith was being revised a few years ago. They asked the School of World Mission to make some remarks about it. So for the second time I looked at it closely, the first time having been when I became a professor. I had realized the first time that the whole statement of faith structure was built, like any other Protestant statement of faith, to explain how it is that we are Christians and nobody else is. The element of the Great Commission, of redemption, is present in a secondary sense. So when we said that we did not

have any problems with the Statement of Faith, except for its fundamental structure, there was a tense little back-and-forth discussion for a time! It is basically a church creed. What about the Apostles Creed? Does it say anything about taking the gospel to the ends of the earth? No. It is a church creed.

Now, when the church leaders became ascendant in the field councils, an adjustment became necessary in the IMC itself. The IMC now faced a dilemma. The transition for the IMC took place between the meeting in Jerusalem in 1928 and that in Ghana in 1958. Already at the Jerusalem meeting you could see the predominance of church leaders crowding into the meetings. No longer, as in 1910, did they just invite mission leaders, and nobody else.

Bishop Azariah, who had helped to found the two mission societies of India in 1905 and 1907, was at the 1910 meeting at Edinburgh. He was there, but he was not there *as a mission leader*. He was there because the CMS (the Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church) invited him. The expatriate missionaries in India saw him as an outstanding church leader, and the mission was proud of the church. So he was there at Edinburgh 1910. But the Western missionaries ignored—unintentionally, I am sure—the enormous significance of the founding of a national mission society in India, run by Indians. And though Azariah was the founder, and was currently involved in both of those mission societies, it apparently did not occur to them to invite either of them to the 1910 IMC meeting. As a matter of fact, Latourette himself mentioned Azariah several times in his *History of Christianity*, but it did not occur to him to mention that he was a *mission leader* as well as a church leader!

That hiatus, however, was not due to a defect in the structure of 1910, it was a defect in the implementation of 1910.

Thus, the IMC met in Jerusalem and then in Madras; and then finally they went to Ghana to have a meeting in 1958 to consider the developing anomaly. At the Ghana meeting they said, “What are we going to do? We now have mainly representatives of national churches coming to our meetings.” (I happen to have a copy of the verbatim transcript of everything that was said at Ghana.) The next meeting was in New Delhi, then in 1963 in Mexico (by this time the IMC had merged into the World Council of Churches), then came Bangkok, and then Melbourne in 1980.

Thus, the IMC was eliminated, or, that is, it was incorporated into the World Council of Churches. It became an associated council of councils. It also became a WCC “Commission on World Mission and Evangelism”; and under the latter name it bravely met in Bangkok, and tried to pretend that it was still interested in missions. Yet what they really did at that meeting was to say that missions is over, it is a thing of the past! It is no longer legitimate to send missionaries from anywhere to anywhere! That is what you 1 *church* theology. Churches are now everywhere, so what’s the use of missionaries?

The new phrase is “Mission in Six Continents.” What a heresy! Notice that word *in*. In other words, mission takes place *within* each nation; it does not take place *between* nations. Well, yes, they have talked about “from six continents to six continents,” but what they are referring to is church-to-church workers, not mission outreach to unreached peoples.

The WCC (World Council of Churches), in preparation for its Melbourne meeting, devoted a whole issue of the *International Review of Mission* to an analysis of the IMC’s 1910 meeting, their 1928 meeting, their 1936 meeting, and all their meetings down to Bangkok, and then with a look forward to Melbourne.

I was asked—I do not know how this happened—to write the article on the Ghana meeting for that issue of *IRM*. Well, I was flabbergasted and pleased! I said, “Wow, what a privilege!” This was the crucial meeting in the whole history of the International Missionary Council! I wrote back and asked, “May I write not only about Ghana, but also about the structural changes that flowed up to it, and so forth?” The editor said, “Sure, that’s okay!” So I wrote an article analyzing this whole trend.<sup>2</sup> In that article, I said that what we need is not only Mission in Six Continents, but missions *from* and *to* six continents, if necessary. That was what had been dropped out of the picture.

## Conclusion

I have been unfolding to you a “plot” that was not the design of any human being, but was a very understandable transition. It nevertheless wrecked a Council founded to focus on missions. It changed because its pillars were now set upon a different entity. When all those church leaders came from around the world to the meeting at Ghana, the Western (minority) delegates from the Norwegian Missionary Council, the

German Missionary Council, etc., had said, “We can’t vote against all these nice national leaders, all these church leaders!” It was obvious by then (Ghana, 1958) that it was too late to do anything else. They said, “We don’t have any reason for existence because the World Council of Churches is a council of churches, and now we also have become a council of church councils! So what is the use for us to continue?” And so they invented a new category under the WCC called the Associate Councils of the World Council of Churches, to handle things like councils of churches. Up until this time the WCC reached around the whole world to churches (and denominations) by themselves, not to councils of churches. Individual churches are direct members of the World Council. Once the IMC was merged with the WCC, the latter gained a new department that takes the National Councils of Churches into membership. So now the IMC’s Council of Councils is a department of the World Council of Churches; and for many people that effectively takes the place of the whole missions sphere of reality.

For many people the churches are the reality, so it has been a shift that has gone full circle. The structure of

missions itself has thus been eliminated. At this point in history, then, the gatherings of the new WCC entity only invite those mission structures that are connected to member churches. This means that quite a few very significant structures simply do not fit into the normal pattern of participants in the formal meetings of the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism—such as a “World Mission” organization like Wycliffe Bible Translators, or an “Evangelism” organization like the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. This is in decided contrast to the tradition of the IMC and the Edinburgh 1910 tradition.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This statement was made in a classroom of missionaries in 1979. At the end of that class, a missionary (Leiton Chinn) agreed to serve as the secretary for a founding committee for a proposed 1980 meeting similar to 1910!
- <sup>2</sup> My article was given a name within the series of articles in that issue. The Ghana meeting is where the “marriage” between the IMC and the WCC was decided upon. Thus, I entitled my article (no doubt unwisely) “Ghana: Preparation for Marriage.” By itself that title is clearly misleading.

# To The New Asian Society of Missiology: Greetings from the West

*Ralph D. Winter*

In 1973, a third of a century ago, David Cho, Ph.D., invited several of us from the West to a meeting in Seoul, Korea which preceded the formation of the Asia Missions Association. On that occasion I presented a paper urging Asian mission leaders not to make the same mistake as Western leaders had made when the Foreign Mission Conference of North America shortly after 1900 had insisted that in God's Kingdom only denominational mission boards were legitimate. My paper was entitled, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," which spoke favorably of both "modalities" and "sodalities." By now, of course, there are many American as well as Asian structures that are interdenominational.

Later, I often pointed out in my classroom teaching the shocking failure of the Western missions to understand the possibility and importance of Non-Western believers to form their own mission agencies. By now, of course, Non-Western agencies are very numerous and enthusiastic.

It would seem clear that Asian mission leaders have potentially a great advantage in being able to learn from the mistakes of Western agencies. If not, Asian mission leaders face the danger of making some of the same mistakes. One problem is that Western leaders may not know what their mistakes are, and thus cannot warn Asian leaders of what Western leaders did wrong. It is also true that not all Westerners agree about the various issues in missiology. Thus, the twelve "mistakes" of Western churches and agencies, as described below, must be understood to be merely my own best understanding. Note that they are not problems of the distant past. They are all contemporary problems. In any case, Asians will have to judge their validity.

## 1. The Mistake of Starting Bible Schools, Not Universities

The Student Volunteer Movement, in which John Mott was a leader, is noted for the number of universities that it established around the world. The missionaries who went to China made sure there was a university in every province of China. However, in later years Evangelicals, who had never been to college, went out across the world and established Bible Schools, Bible Institutes or theological schools that either replaced or ignored the university tradition. In the last 50 years the majority of American mission agencies have not founded a single university.

The curious thing is that, even though western missionaries cannot be given credit (except in the earlier period) for establishing universities, the hundreds of thousands of national leaders who have been a product of western mission agencies have been able to see what the missionaries could not see. They have recognized the great influence of the university pattern. As a result they have taken the initiative to found over forty universities in the last forty years. I myself was, somewhat accidentally, part of the founding of an evangelical university in Guatemala which now after forty years has 37,000 students. No missionary can be given any credit for the founding of this university. In my case I merely stood up for a photograph of the founding board of directors two weeks before leaving the country to be a professor at Fuller Seminary.

Why is it that missionaries have not realized that Bible Schools, no matter how high the quality of instruction and curricula, simply do not represent the global mainstream of the university pattern? In the last 100

years in the United States 157 Bible Institutes eventually, after sixty or seventy years, have converted over to colleges and universities. Why haven't missionaries applied the same practical wisdom in their work overseas? This has been a serious strategic mistake. We can at least be glad that national leaders have taken the initiative to found universities without the help of western missionaries.

## **2. The Mistake of Only “Salvation in Heaven,” not “Kingdom on Earth”**

Earlier missionaries again were wiser than those in recent times. They realized that (as we see in the Lord's Prayer), Jesus told us to pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth. Yet we have mainly helped people escape this world. Unlike the 19th century, many missionaries in the 20th century, who have not been influential in the upper levels of society, have been content to talk about getting people into heaven but have no longer been concerned for transformation in this life. They have done many good things on the micro level of society—hospitals, clinics, schools, vocational training, agricultural developments—they even pioneered insights into leprosy and essentially conquered that malady. But there were many things on the macro level of society they couldn't do without greater social influence, such as stamping out Guinea Worm or malaria. Today, however, when Evangelicals have far greater influence than ever before, they are often asleep to the opportunities for transformation on the macro levels of society.

## **3. The Mistake of Congregations Sending Missionaries, Not Using Mission Agencies**

Today many congregations are large enough and strong enough to feel that they don't need a mission agency through which to send their missionaries. This is a new and widespread phenomenon which ignores the great value of the veteran mission agencies which can draw upon the insights of missiology and the vast field experience which are lacking in the average congregation. It may be true that some mission agencies are more experienced and wiser than others, but to my knowledge there is no example of a local congregation bypassing mission agencies with any great success.

## **4. The Mistake of Whole Congregations in Direct Involvement, Not Professional Missions**

A more recent phenomenon (which is characteristic of whole congregations which are highly excited about missions) is the idea of every family in a congregation briefly becoming a missionary family. In this plan, during, say, a four-year period, the intention is for every family in the church to go overseas to work on some sort of two-week project. This is a marvelous idea for the education of people in the church about foreign lands. Yet, it is incredibly expensive and it is a very questionable contribution to the cause of missions.

## **5. The Mistake of Insisting that Devout Followers of Jesus Call Themselves “Christians” and Identify with the Western Church**

Congregations may find it easy to believe that their people can win converts to Christianity in a ten-day short-term mission. But what very few congregations in America are prepared to understand is that dragging people out of their culture and converting them to what they think a “Christian” should look like, is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible talks of our conveying a treasure in earthen vessels. The earthen vessels are not the important thing, but the treasure is. The new vessel will be another very different earthen vessel. This is what happened when the faith of the Bible was first conveyed to Greeks. In that case the treasure of Biblical faith in an earthen Jewish vessel became contained in a Greek earthen vessel. Later it went to Latin vessels and to Germanic vessels and to English vessels, and is now contained in Muslim vessels, Hindu vessels and Buddhist vessels.

It is just as unreasonable for a Hindu to be dragged completely out of his culture in the process of becoming a follower of Christ as it would have been if Paul the Apostle had insisted that a Greek become a Jew in the process of following Christ. Amazingly, there may be more Muslims who are true, Bible-believing followers of Christ, than there are Muslims who have abandoned their cultural tradition in the process of becoming Christian. There are already more Hindus who are predominantly Hindu in their culture but who are Bible-reading believers in Jesus Christ, than there are



Hindus who have abandoned their culture and become “Christian.” In the New Testament there was no law against a Greek becoming a Jew. However, Paul was very insistent that that kind of a cultural conversion was not necessary in becoming a follower of Christ.

## 6. The Mistake of Sending Only Money, Not Missionaries

This has been a problem for many years. It can rarely be a good thing to send money to a mission field with little accountability for its use. There are many examples where foreign funds are used to “buy” national leaders away from their churches or away from their denominations rather than strengthening the existing churches. Money can be very helpful but there is no example of harm to the cause of missions that is more extensive than the careless use of money. Money is more easily corrupted than missionaries. This is the reason that wise national leaders talk about trade, not aid. What poor people need is the ability to earn money. With earnings they can buy food and medicines and not have to rely upon uncertain gifts from a foreign country. Missionaries are often ill-trained to establish businesses.

## 7. The Mistake of Sending Short-Termers, Not Long-Termers

This is not a case where one of these things is good and the other is bad. Neither should take the place of the other. However, there are now almost two million short-termers leaving the United States each year compared to 35,000 long-term missionaries. Note that the overall cost of short-termers is at least five times as much as the overall cost of long-term missionaries. This means that instead of doubling or tripling the number of long-term missionaries we’re investing at least five times as much money in short-termers. Short-term trips are wonderful education, but a very small accomplishment in missions. Worse still, a short term is often scary enough or useless enough to turn a young person away from being a missionary at all.

## 8. The Mistake of Not Understanding Business in Mission and Mission in Business

One of the latest explosions of interest in missions is the result of Christian businessmen in the United

States recognizing the value of thoroughly Christian businesses in a foreign land. There is no question that one of the greatest needs of churches across the world is for their members to earn a living. It is pathetic when we think of sending food around the world instead of sending businesses that would enable believers to earn the money necessary to buy their own food. Businesses can often do things that are very essential. They can enable local people to sell their products in foreign lands. They can produce goods of great value to the people. Unfortunately, it is true that few missionaries have business experience and often ignore opportunities to establish businesses that would employ large numbers of needy people.

One thing is true, however, that businesses cannot be relied on as a source of profit for missionary work. In the long run, businesses that divert profits to other things will lose out to competitors who don’t divert profits to other things. There is no great future in a plan to “milk” profits from a business to support ministry. It is equally true that micro loans may have a temporary value, but will also fall prey to competitors with larger capital resources employing inherently more efficient processes. In the early history of missions, Moravian missionaries started businesses and so did some Swiss and German missionaries. Sadly, American missionaries have not been as creative. However, the business process will never take the place of the mission process in situations where the people in need cannot pay for what is needed. Businesses have to recover their own expenses. The mission process is still essential in all situations where there is no realistic possibility of remuneration.

## 9. The Mistake of Healing the Sick, Not Eradicating Disease Germs

The activity of healing the sick is one of the most genuine means of portraying God’s love and His concern for hurting people. It is a perfect example of the importance of the essential relationship of word and deed. On the other hand with our increased scientific knowledge of microbiology God can expect us to go beyond healing the sick to the eradication of the germs that make millions sick. Missionaries have done well in establishing a thousand hospitals but very few of them are big enough or are properly structured to be able to drive out of existence the evil pathogens that cause millions of people to be sick.

Malaria is an example of a tiny parasite that drags 45 million Africans out of the workplace every day of the year. It is imperative that the malarial parasite be eradicated. Malaria is virtually as large a threat in Africa as the AIDS epidemic. We don't yet know how to eradicate the AIDS virus, but we do know how to rid this planet of malaria. That would be a significant transformation. Why then is there no Christian mission agency that is involved in the eradication of malaria rather than merely the healing of those who are attacked by malaria? It is very embarrassing to have to admit that the church of Jesus Christ is expecting billionaires like Bill Gates to do that job for them. Worse still, Christians are misrepresenting the love of God in Christ if they do not become noted for their relentless efforts in such a cause.

## 10. The Mistake of Thinking “Peace” Not “War”

Missionaries have for centuries moved out across the world with the idea that the Gospel is merely a message to be communicated rather than a “call to arms.” I grew up with the idea that the main problem the Bible talked about was how human beings can become reconciled to God. That is certainly a glorious part of the story! But the main problem the Bible is really talking about goes beyond man's reconciliation to God and is more precisely a war in which God-plus-man is fighting against Satan and his evil works. As a result our God is being blamed widely for rampant disease, poverty, injustice and corruption—since we as Christians are not fighting these works of Satan. People are asking what kind of a God would sponsor a world like this? They say this because they are unaware of the existence of Satan and his intelligent opposition to God. Thus, instead of God being glorified, He is being blamed for the work of Satan.

When things go wrong Evangelicals commonly say, “Why would God do that?” instead of blaming Satan. They do not realize that we are in a war and that casualties are to be expected because of the hideous strength of our opponent. We are lulled into inaction by the widespread belief that Satan was “defeated” at the Cross. In fact, the Cross was the turning point beyond which there have been centuries of ongoing conflict with a Satan yet to be completely defeated. Long after the Cross Paul told Agrippa his mission was delivering people from “the dominion of Satan.” Satan

was still around. Peter talked about Satan seeking to destroy. Christians today, with modern understanding of microbiology, for example, as well as the endemic corruption in business and government, now possess far greater responsibility than we have ever had before. Are mission agencies part of that war against Satan? Is it necessary for Christ's followers to be counted at the front lines of that war whether it be eradication of disease or the conquest of corruption in business and government? Do we misrepresent God if we are missing in action? I feel sure we do.

## 11. The Mistake of Assuming Science Is a Foe Not a Friend

When I was a young person missionaries were showing science films 2,000 times per day in the Non-Western world. The Moody Institute of Science films were shown even more widely in America. Many times in history Christian scholars have recognized that God has revealed Himself in “Two Books,” the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. As Psalm 19 indicates, the Book of Nature does not even need to be translated into the world's languages. Every missionary must take with him to the mission field both a microscope and a telescope if we are to properly glorify God. Even more important is the need to take to the field a true reverence for the glory of God in Creation. This requires a substantial knowledge of nature. Science is the study of God's creativity. Art is the study of man's creativity. We cannot truly expect educated people to accept Christ if our hymns in church reflect no awareness of anything discovered in nature in the last 400 years, or if our young people are being led astray by recent and superficial theories that the world is only 6,000 years old. That is an improper reading of Genesis 1:1, as well as a reckless ignoring of thousands of honest Evangelicals who are outstanding scientists.

## 12. The Mistake of an Evangelism That Is Not Validated and Empowered by Social Transformation

Several times in the points I have already made above have I contrasted the 19th Century Western missionaries and 20th Century Western missionaries. This is because a radical change in the perspective of American Evangelicals took place between the 1800s and the 1900s. In the 19th Century we were singing about the glorification

of God as His will is fulfilled “on earth.” Here is the final stanza and chorus of “America the Beautiful”:

O beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years  
Thine alabaster cities gleam  
Undimmed by human tears.

America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.

In the 20th Century we have been singing mainly about heaven:

This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through.  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.  
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

In the 1800s great revivals swept the country and Evangelicals in high places conceived and promoted equally sweeping reforms. Then, immigration of non-Evangelical people quadrupled the population and Evangelicals lost influence. Millions of non-college people were converted by D. L. Moody and others, but their 157 Bible Institutes did not feed the professions nor congress. Only recently, as Evangelicals have more and more been going to universities, are there sufficient

numbers of American Evangelicals to begin to think seriously about social transformation either in the USA or elsewhere in the world.

## Conclusion

I hope it is clear that I have not wanted to do more than point out what in my estimation are failings and shortcomings in the history of Western mission thinkers. My perspectives may be faulty. At least I have raised certain issues that Asian missiologists may also confront in their work. Furthermore, this must not be a one-way street. I hope that we in the West can learn from members of the Asian Society of Missiology as they share with us their own perspectives.

In 1972 I helped to start the ASM (American Society of Missiology, [www.asweb.org](http://www.asweb.org)) and its journal, *Missiology: An International Review*. A few years later I helped start the ISFM (International Society of Frontier Missiology, [www.ijfm.org](http://www.ijfm.org)) and the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. I have edited the latter for the last six years. It will be strategically helpful as Asian counterparts such as the Asian Society of Missiology arise and global sharing increases.

We of the West have already learned a great deal from you. We expect to learn a great deal more in the future. Thank you for this invitation to greet you in Christ's name!



# The Kingdom Era Is Now

*Ralph D. Winter*

The year Fuller Theological Seminary was founded, 1947, I was a student in the first class. One of the professors, Carl F. H. Henry, a former newspaper journalist, was very well acquainted with the secular world, more so than the average preacher. He had already written a book that came out in that same year called *The Uneasy Conscience of the Modern Fundamentalist*. He suggested that Evangelicals, whom he referred to as fundamentalists—and I still consider myself a fundamentalist in that sense—had focused on heaven and the future, eschatology/prophesy/return of Christ (all good and true things)—and criticized anybody who would lift a finger to change this world which we expected (and hoped?) was going to the dogs. The great hope was that Christ would soon return. I still believe that. The numbing assumption, however, was that the world would get worse and worse until finally He came. Therefore, anything that would indicate that the world was getting worse and worse would be good news. And, logically, there was no good reason to improve this world.

Dr. Henry's book challenged that assumption and harked back to an earlier time in American history when Evangelicals were active in changing this world. A chapter I wrote two years ago for a Southern Baptist book, and then cut down 50% for *Mission Frontiers* (Sept-Oct 07) referred to that period as First Inheritance Evangelicalism. In that article I suggested that in the 20th century when a sense of changing the world was lost, or given up intentionally, and the very idea of changing this world was considered liberal, a new kind of Second Inheritance Evangelicalism ensued. Henry was saying that we should feel uneasy about this perspective.

Ten years after Henry's book came out in 1947 another book was published, in 1957, which resulted from a famous speech by a man named Timothy Smith, a graduate student at Johns Hopkins. His book was called *Revivalism and Social Reform*—widely acclaimed as one of the most significant books in the analysis of American religious history. He didn't really speak theologically, as Henry did. He spoke of the simple historical fact that Evangelicals one hundred years earlier had been very active in changing society. Whether their theological underpinnings were correct or not, that is what they were doing. Incidentally, George Marsden, one of the more famous historians of American Christianity, made the statement that by 1870, no one questioned that this was a Christian country.

But 1870 was before the really momentous immigration inundated the country. Our population was quadrupled in forty years and most of the people coming in had no idea of the revival period or the Evangelical tradition. Thus, that whole concept of this being a Christian country was lost due to the shuffles in the digestion of this massive population avalanche. And then the First World War occurred which seemed to contradict any hope of this world getting better. And if anyone survived with such hopes, the Second World War destroyed what remained.

Yet, it was just after the Second World War that Henry published his book. The Second World War ended in 1945 and Henry's book was published in 1947. He was a prophet crying out in the wilderness. But holding exactly the same beliefs was Fuller seminary, backed by Harold Ockenga, who was the founding President (and the most prominent person in the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evan-

gical Foreign Missions Association). They all felt that we have to get away from what tended to be an almost exclusive heaven-orientation in the earlier Fundamentalist tradition epitomized by many of the 157 Bible Institutes formed after 1900. All of what Evangelicals were saying was true, but the Bible had a larger vision.

Ten years after Smith's 1957 book, in 1967, there was a third person, David O. Moberg, who came out with a book entitled *Evangelical Christians in Contemporary Society: How to Reverse the Great Reversal*. The "great reversal" phrase was borrowed from Smith. He later spoke of "Reversal" in his better-known 1972 book *The Great Reversal: Evangelism and Social Concern*. The Reversal was the idea of a retreat from "this world can and must be changed" into "this world is hopeless and does not have to be changed" (a reverse), the implication being that "the faster the world goes bad the better" and "let's get our eschatology straightened out so that we can get to heaven safely before the tribulation." Note that all of this is partially true and important. Before the reversal, as late as 1896 a New England schoolteacher could write a hymn that spoke of the USA with "amber waves of grain, purple mountain majesties" and "the dream of alabaster cities gleaming undimmed by human tears." After the reversal took place Evangelicals could truthfully sing, "This world is not my home. I'm just a passin' through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue."

I must say that one of the most galvanizing, arresting and astringent impacts on American sensibilities was the concept of the imminent return of Christ, the very idea that Christ could come back at any moment and was soon due. If you really believe that Christ could come back tomorrow, that can straighten you out faster than anything else. For example, I recall the experience of a friend of mine, Bill Reed, who had been a missionary to Brazil. He authored one of the first church-growth books, on Brazil. One of his sons had turned away from the Lord and had been alienated for years. While we were teaching together at Fuller, his son called his parents and said he wanted to come and see them. They made a date for 4 PM on certain day. But his parents had another obligation earlier and while Bill Reed and his wife were coming back they were stuck in traffic and didn't make it on time. When they arrived at their house, their son had somehow already gotten himself into the house and was sitting on the couch in the living room. As they came in the front door, he was abso-

lutely in tears. On the table in the living room there was the book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey. Waiting around for them to come he was overcome by the implications. I've never read it but the very idea that Christ could return at any time just turned this young man around completely. That was a tremendous change for him. In other words, there were many great virtues in this so-called fundamentalist period. However, one of the problems was, as I put it in my article a few months ago, they had very little social influence, and thus focused on the next world.

Back in 1870 Evangelicals ran the country. In 1920, they didn't. Why? The majority of Evangelicals were non-college people that Moody had won by the millions. They often looked askance at the upper class people who went to college. Only a few of the college trained Evangelicals were still left in government, and there ensued a great polarization between what came to be called liberals and conservatives. Many of the liberals still believed in the New Birth, but nevertheless there were many others in the wealthy class who said, "Forget about evangelicalism, and let's just change this world." As in the hymn *America the Beautiful* they prayed for a future of "alabaster cities gleaming undimmed by human tears" and "our good crowned by brotherhood."

The very liberal First Congregational Church of Los Angeles had for a long time a sign in front saying "One World at a Time." That was a specific, liberal reaction against the idea of the next world being our main focus. Rather, they thought, "Let's tackle this world now and let the next world come when it will." Ironically, while Liberals talked many Evangelicals did what was within their power, sending missionaries and founding inner city missions. Evangelicals simply refused to believe politics or social welfare in general was their obligation. Someone on the internet read something I wrote many years ago and wrote of "Winter's railing against the government for not spending enough on cancer research, and against the evils of gambling, tobacco and cocaine, as if the Church could somehow alleviate these problems." This polarization is still with us and is not a healthy thing.

Henry, Smith, and Moberg are early prophets—of what seems to me to be worth labeling the "Kingdom Era." They were trying to reverse the reversal. When we go back to the New Testament, we see Jesus preaching, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand" and telling His disciples to "pray that it will come and that

God's will will be done on earth." Note that His suggested prayer doesn't say anything about waiting until we go to heaven. Not to say that He did not elsewhere speak about heaven, but we realize today, if not before, that the Reformation was an era in which the Roman Catholic Church had produced what could be called the "commodification of the Gospel." They had found out that the easiest way to extract money from people was to sell them a ticket to heaven. Neat, sell what you don't have to deliver. This approach worked very nicely until Luther came along and told people that you can neither pay nor work your way to heaven.

At that point in history, of course, the general awareness of the extent of evil in society, and nature, and therefore the idea that our mission under God would logically be to attempt to conquer evil in society and nature—was accordingly very limited. In those days they thought that the highest good that they could achieve was to build great cathedrals, which is what they did. They were extracting money from the Germans. There was already animosity between the Germans and the Latins, and so fundraising in Germany didn't go over very well. The Old German had it that when the coin "clinked," your soul "sprinkled" out of purgatory. This is what finally did it for Luther. Remember, though, the answer to a works-righteousness is not a purely intellectual faith-righteousness. In a certain sense, both of the opposing sides in the Reformation were wrong: you can't work your way into heaven, and you can't "faith" your way into heaven, because, as James puts it, "faith without works is dead."

Luther didn't like that verse in James and wanted to remove the entire Epistle of James from the New Testament. But after a few years, he was persuaded to put it back. He simply didn't comprehend that true heart faith would inevitably result in works (Eph 2:8-10) and that was why "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20 and 26). Both sides were wrong and to recover from that artificial polarization has taken a long time. We're all children of the Reformation to a certain extent, we still have a "sales worthy" gospel, and we still have a commodity that sells. We've gone around the world and won millions of people selling them a heaven-oriented "salvation." People are very grateful and excited about that. But the Christianity that emphasizes mainly a belief about heaven and individual fulfillment isn't full-orbed enough to be stable or to last. Thus, we can see already a widespread phenomenon, especially in the Western world, of "relapsing" Christianity.

What shall we say about earlier missionaries compared to contemporary missionaries? In both cases love and holy intuition rather than formal theology have more often led the way. Two hundred years ago William Carey worked for extensive social reform in India, but eventually his supporters took away most of his land because they thought he had gotten off track. One hundred years ago Hudson Taylor focused so exclusively on evangelism that he directed his missionaries not even to stay with converts long enough to establish congregations. Shortly after Taylor upper-class Student Volunteers would follow Carey's example planting a university in every province of China. But in the last seventy years missions have rarely seen the value in establishing universities. They have been diligent in fostering good works on the small, local level. Bigger problems like global malaria have not been in the sights of even the two-billion-per-year World Vision, much less Campus Crusade. YWAM has been assiduous in tackling problems in this world on a local level. However, YWAM's Landa Cope has articulated a far larger vision for years. YWAM's new anthology of their top leaders, *His Kingdom Come*, begins with her chapter and poses a major new thrust for them.

Thus, it seems relevant to revise my article in the *Perspectives* book, which is called "Four Men, Three Eras: Carey, Taylor, Townsend and McGavran." When I wrote it originally, I described "Three Men, Three Eras." I was thinking about history—Carey, Taylor and Townsend. I didn't realize that McGavran, right next door to my office, still alive, was an early prophet of the idea that culture barriers as well as linguistic barriers can disguise people groups. So, I rewrote the article to be "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions." By this time John Kyle guided InterVarsity's Urbana program. He is a Wycliffe man, and preferred the original idea of Townsend without reference to McGavran, so InterVarsity reprinted the original "Three Men, Three Eras" brochure and passed it out to everyone attending Urbana.

It seems now that we need add another era and three men, to make "Seven Men, Four Eras and Three Transitions." In all of the first three eras, there was an awareness of the demands of the new era long before the era gained momentum and the men I chose were prophets crying out in the wilderness for many years. In each case they did not kick off bursts of mission agencies right away. Only Carey did. The others didn't. The eras, as defined, described things that were both difficult to

define and accept and had a certain inherent fuzziness of definition. They also all had precursors. So it is with the Fourth Era. People have been talking in terms of the Kingdom for a long time, especially in the 19th century, as described by the three books (1947, 1957, 1967) to which I alluded above. So it isn't as if these eras in any case announced something totally new, but sought to enhance appreciation of an existing insight.

Today, everywhere you look, people are not merely talking about doing little good deeds but are talking about dealing with huge things like world poverty and world health to an extent that has not ever been seen. Now is the time to emphasize that while this could become a second occurrence of a liberal reduction, it needs to be an emergence from a conservative reduction. It needs desperately to be a more faithful understanding of the Bible than ever before. We need to support this development. Is it not time, then, to name this Era the Kingdom Era, the Fourth Era? As in the earlier eras, everything preceding is still included. When we went inland we didn't stop going to the coastlands. When we went to the unreached peoples we didn't stop going to the major peoples. When we talk about the Kingdom Era, although the geographical eras are behind us, we are talking about a new dimension of mission obligation that has been to some extent ignored and which is still contested. We are not abandoning talk of unreached peoples but recognized a more effective, Biblical approach to them. We are

not giving up earlier insights. We are simply seeking to enhance an existing awareness.

In my thinking, the meaning of the Kingdom Era is vastly more complex and huge than it was for those living in the 1800's. It is a vastly greater challenge than Henry, Smith or Moberg conceived. In the 40 plus years since Moberg's book we have become aware of much more about evil in this world—for example in terms of medicine and sickness—than ever before. Unfortunately many leading Bible scholars are focusing only on human evil—N. T. Wright, Os Guinness, Brian McLaren, Udo Middelman and then have no Satan.

The whole history of mission changed with the advent of medical doctors. It wasn't until 1870 that medical doctors were sent out as missionaries and when they were sent out they weren't sent to help the people, but to preserve the lives of the missionaries themselves. However, intuitively (not theologically) they also started serving the people. In many mission fields, Christianity really began at that point to take hold. Now God's loving invitation was demonstrated and not just talked about.

What would it have been like if Jesus hadn't demonstrated His compassion for a man with a withered arm, sick people, children, women or Greeks? Most of His words would have been unintelligible. What He did enabled what He talked about to be taken with great authority and to have greater impact. Are we going to be followers of the real Jesus?



# I Was Bombed by an Explosive Idea!

*Ralph D. Winter*

**T**hirty years ago I was “bombed” by an explosive idea. I was not the only one. The idea was that thousands of remaining, forgotten, linguistically or culturally isolated groups should be considered additional mission fields, that is, “Unreached Peoples.”

I was asked to present the idea to 2,700 world leaders at the first “Lausanne” conference in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974, the International Congress on World Evangelization.

Six years later, in late 1980, the World Consultation on Frontier Missions at Edinburgh, Scotland, allowed this idea to capture the thoughts of mission leaders from all over the world. That was the largest meeting of purely mission leaders ever to occur on the global level and the first to attract as large a number of (so-called) Third World mission agencies.

Leaders from the non-Western world caught on easily and quickly. By contrast, some of the older agencies in the West were sometimes slow to understand and dragged their feet. In the USA, especially, there was a good deal of confusion. Quite a few church leaders, not necessarily mission executives, even raised the accusation “Racism”! Why did they say that?

## Clouded Acceptance

Curiously, Americans had long been fighting “racism” by beating the drum for “integration.” But they soon discovered that ethnic minorities in the USA did not necessarily want to be “integrated.” The term was dropped. Minorities considered integration attempts to be cultural imperialism on the part of European Americans! To them, integration *was* racism! But this second perspective gained its way only gradually.

Amazingly, this “explosive idea” was thus diametrically opposed to crass integration! However, the very idea of expecting ethnic minorities (approached as “unreached peoples”) to have their own forms of worship and even theology and to remain “segregated” within their own “homogeneous units” was still “racism” to some. Biblical sensitivity for cultural diversity died hard before the earlier (and understandable) American drive for a “melting pot” society. Once again the Bible conflicted with conventional thinking!

So, all of this clouded the acceptance of the now widely understood concept of by-passed or unreached peoples. There were other factors, too.

In the two years after the first Lausanne Congress I was invited to speak to associations of mission executives in England, Norway, and Germany, and present this new doctrine which would radically modify mission strategies. Then, in 1976 I was invited to give the opening address at the EFMA (Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies; now The Mission Exchange), an annual mission executives retreat. Leaders of the conference asked all of the agencies to bring a report the next morning of how many of the by-passed peoples they think their agency could engage by 1990, 14 years later. The tally exceeded 5,000.

However, the next morning I sat down at breakfast at a very small table for three, joining two others wrapped in conversation. One said to the other, “How many groups could your agency reach?” The other swept away the question with the reply, “Oh, we don’t have time for that, we have too many other things on our plate.” At that point he looked up and recognized me as the impassioned speaker of the night before and immediately mumbled something like, “We’ll see what we can do.”

But, this was an honest reaction. Most agencies really did not have extra missionaries they could fling out into totally pioneer fields (newly defined culturally and linguistically, not geographically or politically). Not only that, but in the past fifty years missions had become accustomed to serving the needs of already-existing church movements. There were few “pioneer”-type missionaries left. Most were busy with church work, not pioneer evangelism. You could say that the new Great Commission went like this, “Go ye into all the world and meddle in the national churches.”

Worse still, and I hesitantly speak of my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), many had officially or unofficially adopted what I consider a seriously bankrupt strategy of voluntarily tying their own hands with the policy of never doing any unilateral outreach to new fields, working solely in a new magic word “*partnership*.”

Bob Blincoe, the current U. S. director of Frontiers, years ago sought to be sent as a missionary to northern Iraq among the Kurds, a truly unreached people. However, his denominational board, the PC(USA), said he would have to work *in partnership* with the local Arab church. That church happens to be the Assyrian Church of the East, quite a few of whose people detested the Kurds. (That reminds us of the American gold rush immigrants into California who despised and slaughtered the Indians who were there first.) Such an invitation from Iraq would never come.

## Expectable Problems

Americans’ negative reactions to the idea of Unreached Peoples often took the form of arguing over a technical definition of the phrase, “an unreached people.” Its early definition by the Lausanne Strategy Working Group really was not workable. The US Center for World Mission in Pasadena, rather than fight for a more useful definition of the same phrase, chose our own definition—Hidden Peoples. Finally, in 1982 the Lausanne group joined with the EFMA to convene a large meeting of about 35 executives intended to arrive at settled meanings for new terms related to the new emphasis on reaching out to by-passed groups. At this meeting the consensus was to retain the widely circulated “Unreached People” phrase but to accept our meaning for it, namely, “the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understand-

ing or acceptance.” Then, if that kind of an entity were unreached it would not yet have “a viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement.”

Confusion continued. “Unreached People” was a phrase that employed such common words that many felt they ought to know what the phrase meant, and should develop their own definition. We dutifully used the phrase in our publications from 1982 on, but even before 1982 I had coined the phrase, “Unimax people” to hint at the necessary unity of a group and the maximum size of a group maintaining that unity.

A most difficult thing about the concept, no matter what terminology was employed, was the fact that there was no obvious concrete, verifiable measurement of the presence or absence of “a viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement.” I personally thought that you could at least report that a group was *clearly reached*, *clearly unreached*, or *not sure*. But the worst problem was that government sources and even Christian compilers did not think in those terms at all.

In fact, in terms of “obtainable data,” a group that extends over a national border will be counted separately in each country, perhaps with a different name. In Africa, by one count, 800 groups are cut in two by political boundaries!

What this confusion means is that there still is no definitive listing of unreached peoples. The 1982 definition came too late. Already different interpretations had arisen, as, for example, when eye-gate, printed-Bible workers (like Wycliffe) counted up what further tasks they needed to tackle, and ear-gate audio-cassette workers (like Gospel Recordings) estimated their remaining task which inherently requires a larger number of more specific sets of recordings.

## Milestone Events

But not only concepts were involved; several *organizational events* made contributions similar to the 1980 Edinburgh conference.

First, a mainline denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), allowed a small entity within its bloodstream called the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, which now raises more than \$2 million per year specifically for frontier missions. Then the Baptist General Conference declared that its denominational goal was to reach the Unreached Peoples. YWAM

declared the same thing and inaugurated a new major division to pursue that goal. In 1989, at Singapore, one of the leading speakers at the 1980 conference, Thomas Wang, at that time the Executive Director of the Lausanne movement, convened a meeting. This meeting, like the 1980 meeting, emphasized mission agency leaders. Out of this meeting came the astounding, globe-girdling AD2000 Movement<sup>1</sup> with the amplified slogan, “A church for every people *and the gospel for every person* by the year 2000.” The addition was not essential, being technically redundant but it helped those who did not quite realize the strategic significance of a “missiological breakthrough” whereby a truly indigenous form of the faith was created—and would then be available for every person.

At that Singapore conference were some highly placed Southern Baptists. Although they had attended the 1980 meeting, this one must have pushed them further because soon one of the most significant “events” in the entire story of Unreached Peoples took place: their entire International Mission Board decided to bring the cause of Unreached Peoples into their organizational center.

Once that happened, it was no longer possible for any mission to consider the Unreached Peoples a mere marginal issue. I remember talking with an International Students’ leader about the significance of choosing to work on campuses with precisely those students representing Unreached Peoples rather than with just any foreign students. They began to compile a list of high priority student origins.

With many different voices now speaking of ethno-cultural frontiers instead of countries, languages or individuals, a huge, significant strategic shift had taken place all across the mission world.

## Back to the Bible

Embarrassingly, the Bible has all along talked in terms of peoples, not countries. Now its basic perspective was becoming clearer. Speaking of Biblical perspective,

another major contribution to the rising interest in the Unreached Peoples has been the nationwide Perspectives Study Program. In 2004 it enrolled some 6,000 students with classes in 130 places in the USA alone. By then it had been adapted into a version for India, Korea, Latin America, etc. It became more popular in New Zealand than in the USA!

Okay, the issue has been clarified, but the implications and implementation have yet a long way to go. Japan, for example, still only has a very small, decidedly “Western” church movement. Scholars say there is not yet a true missiological breakthrough to the Japanese. If that’s true, they are still an unreached people because despite the presence of churches in their midst there is no truly *Japanese form* of the faith.

The same is true for India. The strong, fine, but relatively small church movement in India is still highly “Western,” although now millions of believers exist outside that movement among people who have retained much of their Hindu culture.

In Africa there are now 52 million believers in 20,000 movements which do not easily classify as forms of Western Christianity. This is a good thing, but it is profoundly confusing for those who do not realize that a true “missiological breakthrough” almost always produces a church movement considerably different from what might be expected. Paul’s work was very difficult to understand for Jewish believers in Christ, or Latin believers to accept Lutherans, Reformation style churches to accept Pentecostals, Charismatics, etc.

Thus, the rapid growth of our faith across the world is mostly a movement of new indigenous forms of faith that are substantially different from that of the missionary. Thankfully, the unique cultures of Unreached Peoples are now being treated with greater seriousness despite the added complexities! In this we rejoice as the explosion continues!

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Now, AD2000 & Beyond Movement.



# A History of Transformation

*Paul Pierson*

**T**he Church of Jesus Christ, especially its missionary arm, has generally understood the transformation of society to be an essential part of its task. While the focal point of mission has always been to communicate the Good News of Christ, calling people to repent and believe and be baptized into the Church, Christians have always understood their mission to be fulfilled in teaching the nations “to observe all things” that Christ has commanded. Expectation of people obeying Christ has always fueled hope that the culmination of this process of evangelization would bring about transformation of the social situations, the physical conditions, and the spiritual lives of believers. Sometimes changes were remarkable, at other times disappointing.

But even when there was great cultural misunderstanding and error, the desire to bring individuals and societies more into conformity with the kingdom of God has remained an integral part of mission.

Often missionaries moved into cultures which were already undergoing change. They helped produce some of that change, often channeling it positively, or working against some of its harsher aspects. Missionaries often envisioned a model of transformed communities that looked suspiciously like those they had known in their own cultures; however, there is no doubt this transforming dimension was an essential aspect of mission, and for the most part, beneficial.<sup>1</sup>

## **Monasticism: Communities of Preservation and Transformation**

Nearly all missionaries during the period from the fourth to the eighteenth centuries were monks. Though most

of the monastic movements were expressly missionary, others were not, but nearly all of the monastic movements brought about significant social transformation.

There were dozens of monastic movements, among them were the *Benedictines* and those movements which were born out of them, the *Nestorians*, who moved from Asia Minor into Arabia, India, and across central Asia to China, the *Orthodox*, who went north into the Balkans and Russia, the Celts, who arose in Ireland, then moved into Scotland and England, and back to the continent, and later, the *Franciscans*, *Dominicans*, and *Jesuits*.

Even though the *Benedictines* were not purposely missionary, they and the other groups moved into areas where the Christian faith had not yet penetrated, forming communities which modeled and taught the Faith to the “barbarian” tribes moving into central and Western Europe. The original intent of monasticism was to encourage men to develop lives of discipline and prayer, far from the concerns of normal life. But the monasteries and the soon-to-follow women’s houses became self-sustaining communities organized around rules for daily life which included both work and worship. Work was both manual and intellectual, in the fields and in the library. This was a revolutionary concept in the ancient world where manual work was seen as fit only for slaves. Monks also became scholars, thus for the first time, the practical and the theoretical were embodied in the same persons. So the monks have been called the first intellectuals to get dirt under their fingernails! This helped create an environment favorable to scientific development and the monasteries became centers of faith, learning, and technical progress.

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Monasticism's contribution to learning is well known, but its impact on agricultural development is not as widely recognized. Hannah wrote that in the seventh century "it was the monks who possessed the skill, capital, organization, and faith in the future to undertake large projects of reclamation over fields long desolated by the slave system of village life...and the barbarian hordes.... Immense tracts of barren heath and water-soaked fen were by the monasteries' hands turned into excellent agricultural land."<sup>2</sup>

In the twelfth century the *Cistercians* withdrew from society and cultivated new land in deserted places. They worked out new methods of agricultural administration and became the greatest wool producers in Europe, furnishing the raw material for the textile industry.

The *Nestorians*, who flourished from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries, moved across central Asia into India and China. Christians in the West know little about this remarkable movement because most of the fruit of its labor was lost. Yet as one scholar noted, "Nestorian missionaries introduced letters and learning among people who were previously illiterate, including Turks, Vikings, Mongols, and Manchus, all of whom are said to derive their alphabets from Syriac, the language of the Nestorians."<sup>3</sup>

*Orthodox* monks from the Eastern Church did the same. Ulfilas moved north of the Danube in the fourth century and was the first to reduce a northern European language to writing, doing so, of course, to translate the Scriptures. In the third century the Armenians were the first national group to adopt Christianity, and in AD 406 their language was reduced to writing so that the Scriptures and other Christian literature might be made available. Constantine (later known as Cyril) and his brother Methodius went to the Balkans and devised two alphabets used to translate the Scriptures and establish the Church. The Cyrillic script is still in use in Russia today.

When Patrick returned to Ireland from England he initiated the remarkable Celtic missionary movement that would continue for centuries, and which would be a source of missionary zeal and learning. His spiritual descendants moved from Ireland to Scotland, then to England, across the channel to the low countries, and finally into central Germany.

They were later instrumental in the conversion of Scandinavia. They combined a deep love of learning, spiritual

discipline, and missionary zeal. As a result "Ireland became literate for the first time in Patrick's generation."<sup>4</sup> The great monastery at Fulda, founded in the eighth century by St. Boniface from this tradition, became the main center of learning for much of Germany.

During the Carolingian Renaissance under Charlemagne, the monasteries of the Celtic tradition were again the major centers of education and change. Hannah wrote, "On the whole they were able to achieve their destiny as Christian leaven in a rude society, to implant and preserve a Christian culture like a cultivated garden amid a wilderness of disorder."<sup>5</sup>

## Forerunners of the Protestant Missionary Movement

For nearly two centuries after the Reformation Protestants engaged in very little missionary activity outside of Europe. But in the late sixteenth century several movements arose, the members of which sought to renew the Church and carry the Reformation further, from doctrine into life. These movements would form the launching pad of Protestant missions, and included *Puritanism*, *Pietism*, *Moravianism*, and the *Wesleyan/Evangelical* revivals.

The *Puritans* focused on conversion and a more authentic Christian life. They also developed the first Protestant mission theology. Two of their greatest mission advocates were Richard Baxter, an effective pastor and prolific writer, and John Eliot.

Eliot went to New England and became an effective missionary to the Algonquin Native Americans, translating the Bible into their language and forming a number of Christian villages. Rooy wrote of him:

He traveled on foot and horseback, taxing his strength to the utmost...to bring the gospel to the natives. He brought cases to court to prevent defrauding of Indian land, pleaded clemency for convicted Indian prisoners, fought the selling of Indians into slavery, sought to secure lands and streams for Indian use, established schools for Indian children and adults, translated books, and attempted to show a deep humanitarianism that accompanied their concern for salvation.<sup>6</sup>

*Pietism* laid the foundation for greater changes, and just in time. In the seventeenth century the Thirty Years War had devastated Germany. Misery abounded, class differences were exaggerated, the level of Christian under-

standing and life was low, and the Lutheran Church was dominated by the State. The truth of faith was seen in terms of propositions rather than experiential or ethical event or demands. Thus, between the irrelevance of the Church and the widespread despair and atheism brought about by the Thirty Years War, Christianity soon lost its healing and transforming power.<sup>7</sup>

Philip Jacob Spener, influenced by Puritan writers during his theological studies, found the situation of his parishioners deplorable when he became the pastor in Frankfort. He began to invite groups into his home for discussion of the sermon, Bible study, prayer, and mutual support, thus initiating a movement its opponents called Pietism.

Spener insisted that Christianity consisted not only of knowledge, but must also include the practice of the Faith. Along with his emphasis on the necessity of the new birth and a holy life, he included a great concern for the needy.

A. H. Francke was Spener's successor as leader of the movement. He taught that rebirth should lead to transformed individuals and then to a reformed society and world. For him faith and action were inseparable. He demonstrated this to a remarkable extent in his influence at the University of Halle and his parish at Glaucha. Piety meant genuine concern for the spiritual and physical well being of one's neighbor. So the Pietists fed, clothed, and educated the poor. Francke established schools for poor children, including girls, a novelty at the time. He also founded an orphanage and other institutions to aid the poor. These were supported by faith alone and became the model later for the ministry of George Mueller in Bristol and the China Inland Mission.

The first Protestant missionaries to Asia came from the Pietist movement. Influenced by his Pietist court chaplain, in 1706 Frederick IV of Denmark sent two men from Halle to his colony in Tranquebar, India. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plutschau were the first of about 60 Pietists who went to India in the eighteenth century. Ziegenbalg, who remained until his death in 1719, was remarkably holistic in his understanding of the task. He studied the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus, translated the Scriptures, planted a church, advocated the ordination of Indian pastors, set up a printing press, and established two schools.

The greatest of his successors, C. F. Schwartz, not only built up the church but worked with orphans

and became an ambassador of peace between Muslim rulers and the British. Arriving in 1750, he remained until his death in 1798. A great German missiologist wrote that "Pietism was the parent of missions to the heathen...also of all those saving agencies which have arisen within Christendom for the healing of religious, moral, and social evils...a combination which was already typically exemplified in A. H. Francke."<sup>8</sup>

The *Moravians*, with roots both in the Pre-Reformation Hussite movement and Pietism, were one of the most remarkable movements in history. Known for their 24 hour, 100 year prayer watch, they were a highly disciplined, monastic-like community of married men and women devoted to win "souls for the Lamb." During their early years, one of every 14 members became a missionary, often going to the most difficult fields.

The fourth stream leading to the Protestant missionary movement flowed from the *Wesleyan/Evangelical* revival in England, with John Wesley as its best known leader, and the First Great Awakening in North America. Since the awakening in North America was in many respects an outgrowth of Puritanism, we will examine only the movement in England.

Even before their salvation, the Wesleys and the other members of the "Holy Club" at Oxford showed concern for the poor and prisoners. At the same time they pursued the spiritual disciplines which earned them the name, "Methodists."

John Wesley began to preach immediately after his conversion in 1734. While the clear focus was on evangelism and Christian nurture, especially among the neglected poor, he wrote, "Christianity is essentially a social religion, to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it."<sup>9</sup> The impact of the movement on social reform in England is well known. Robert Raikes started Sunday schools to teach poor children to read and give them moral and religious instruction on the only day of the week they were not working.

Others organized schools among miners and colliers. John Howard tirelessly worked for reform of the appalling conditions in local prisons, then moved Parliament to pass laws for prison reform.

Evangelicals worked to regulate child labor in the emerging factories and promoted the education of the masses. A group of wealthy Anglican evangelicals at Clapham, a suburb of London, spent their time, for-

tunes, and political influence in a number of religious and social projects, including the long and successful campaign of William Wilberforce and others, to end slavery in the British Empire. The Church Missionary Society, the greatest of the Anglican societies, was established in 1799. Several other societies were established, all motivated by the revival.

## The Protestant Missionary Movement

*William Carey* is rightly called “the Father of Protestant Missions,” even though others had engaged in such missions earlier. In 1792 he formed the Baptist Missionary Society; the following year he sailed to India. His writing and example were the catalyst in the creation of similar societies in Europe and in the United States, leading to what has been called “the great century” of missions. His primary goal was to lead people to personal faith in Jesus Christ and eternal salvation; however he saw no conflict between that goal and his other activities in education, agriculture, and botany.

Carey labored widely to withstand social evils and bring change in Asia. He was better known as a horticulturist around the world than as a missionary. He fought valiantly against the practice of infanticide, the burning of widows, the inhuman treatment of lepers (who were often buried or burned alive), and the needless deaths at the great religious pilgrimages of the time. He also founded Serampore College, which was established primarily to train pastors and teachers, but also provided for the education of others in Christian literature and European science.

## False Recognition

Many nineteenth century missionary movements labored intentionally for social transformation, most without recognition, except at times in a false and negative light. For example, at Andover Seminary, Samuel Mills and his colleagues from the Haystack Prayer Meeting took the initiative in establishing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810. One of the early fields chosen was Hawaii (then known as the Sandwich Islands). Those early missionaries were maligned by James Michner; but the reality was much different from the picture he painted. Their major focus was the conversion of men and women to Christ and the gathering of converts into churches. But they also worked to protect the Hawaiian people

from the sexual and economic exploitation of the sailors and traders who came to the islands.

The missionaries worked to end infanticide and other destructive practices. After a few decades the islands were dotted not only with churches, but with schools in which Hawaiian children were taught by Hawaiian teachers. Several years later others devised a system of writing the language using Roman characters, translating the Bible and various textbooks. By 1873 they had published 153 different works and 13 magazines, along with an almanac in the local language.

## A Striking Comparison

Many lesser known missionaries have demonstrated great concern for the totality of human need. One of them was Willis Banks, an obscure Presbyterian evangelist who worked in a backward area of southern Brazil. He built the area's first brickyard, brought children to live with his family, taught them to read, and then sent them back to teach others. Using a home medical guide, he treated infections, tuberculosis, malaria, worms, and malnutrition.

Banks introduced better methods of agriculture and care of livestock. He built the first sawmill in the area and constructed machinery to cut silage. An anthropologist who visited the area 20 years after Banks' death gave a striking illustration of the resulting community development. He visited two isolated villages, both situated in virtually identical circumstances, with inhabitants of the same racial and cultural backgrounds. The village of Volta Grande was Presbyterian and had benefited from Banks' evangelism and leadership. The people lived in houses of brick and wood, used water filters and in some cases had home produced electricity. They owned canoes and motor launches for travel to a nearby city and cultivated vegetables along with the traditional rice, beans, corn, manioc, and bananas. They had two herds of dairy cattle and produced and consumed milk, cheese, and butter. They received and read newspapers, had the Bible and other books readily available, and all were literate. The community had pooled its resources to build a school and donated it to the State with the stipulation that a teacher be provided and paid. Consequently there was an excellent primary school there and many of its graduates continued their studies in the city. Religious services were held three times a week even though the pastor could visit only once a month.



The inhabitants of Jipovura, the other village, lived in daub and wattle houses with no furniture. They engaged only in marginal agriculture, and did not boil or filter their water.

They had no canoes, used tiny kerosene lamps for light, and were mostly illiterate. A school had been donated to the community by a few Japanese families who had once lived in the area, but the people showed no interest in maintaining it and had ruined the building by stealing its doors and windows. Leisure time was filled by playing cards and drinking the local sugarcane rum. Alcoholism was common.<sup>10</sup>

Virtually all missionary movements in history have been concerned about social transformation in one way or another. It has been seen as part of the ministry of communicating and living out the gospel. Major emphasis has been placed on education, health care, agriculture, and ministries of social uplift for girls, women, and other neglected and oppressed members of society.

## Establishing Education

Educational institutions usually had three goals: to prepare leadership for the church, to be an instrument to improve society, and to evangelize non-Christian students.

Degrees of success varied, but include the following examples:

- The tribal groups of Northeast India, which became heavily Christian beginning late in the last century, have the second highest literacy rate in the nation.
- In 1915 illiteracy among nominal Roman Catholics in Brazil was between 60 and 80 per cent, while that of Protestants (who normally came from the poor) was one fourth of that figure.<sup>11</sup>
- Most schools in Africa during the colonial period were established by missionaries. Leslie Newbigin pointed out in the 50s that in a 400-page United Nations document on education in Africa, not a single line revealed the fact that 90% of the schools being described were there because of missionaries.<sup>12</sup>
- Many of the outstanding universities in Asia were the result of missions, including Yonsei University and Ehwa Women's University in Seoul.
- Reporting on the educational work of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast (Ghana), the Phelps-

Stokes Commission reported in 1921, "The educational effort of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast has produced one of the most interesting and effective systems of schools observed in Africa. . . . First of all their mechanical shops trained and employed a large number of natives as journeymen. . . . Secondly the commercial activities reached the economic life of the people, influencing their agricultural activities and their expenditures for food and clothing."

- In addition to the primary and secondary mission schools, teacher training institutions were established to expand educational opportunities.

## Bringing Medical Care

Early in the movement a limited amount of medical knowledge was often regarded as necessary for evangelistic missionaries. But by the middle of the last century fully trained physicians were being sent to the field. The first was Dr. John Scudder, sent by the American Board to India. His granddaughter, Dr. Ida Scudder, later established perhaps the greatest of all missionary medical centers at Vellore, India. Dr. Peter Parker introduced eye surgery into China. His successor, Dr. John Kerr, published 12 medical works in Chinese, built a large hospital, and was the first in China to open an institution for the mentally ill. Presbyterians in Thailand established 13 hospitals and 12 dispensaries.

## Touching the Neglected and Oppressed

Along with educational, medical, and agricultural ministries, others focused on some of the most neglected and depressed members of their societies. Half of the tuberculosis work in India was done by missions, and Christian institutions took the lead both in treatment and the training of workers among those afflicted. Missions also took the lead in working with lepers in several Asian countries, and established orphanages for abandoned children.

A few missionaries went beyond social service and attacked the political and social injustices of colonialism. A celebrated example took place in the Belgian Congo at the turn of the century. Two Presbyterian missionaries from the United States observed the forced labor of the Africans in the rubber industry, and published articles calling the monopolistic economic exploitation "twentieth century slavery." This garnered international attention; the missionaries were sued for libel, with the suit finally dismissed.

## Serving Women

One of the most significant results of Christian missions in many societies came through their role in ministering to and raising the status of women. In many of the cultures women were relegated to a very low status and had almost no rights. Missionaries, usually single women, evangelized them, teaching them to see themselves as children of God. Then girls and women were encouraged to study, develop their gifts, and in some cases, enter profession such as education and medicine.

Focusing first on the evangelization of women in cultures where men could not have contact with most women, the missionaries soon branched out into educational and medical work with women. Soon women were employed as lay evangelists, called 'Bible women,' especially in China and Korea. Even though they were not yet given equal status with men, these faithful workers had a powerful impact not only on the growth of the Church but on the status of other women. When the first Protestant missionaries arrived in Korea in 1884 and 1885, a woman had virtually no status in society except as the daughter of her father, the wife of her husband, or the mother of her oldest son. By the middle of this century the world's largest women's university had been established in Seoul and its President, Dr. Helen Kim, was recognized as one of Korea's greatest educators as well as a leader in evangelization.

Women missionaries from the United States initiated the first medical work for women in India and China, established the first girls' schools, and eventually founded nursing and medical schools for women. This had a powerful impact on the medical care of women, as well as their status in society. As a result medicine is among the most prestigious professions open to women in India, and there are thousands of women physicians in that nation today. Dr. Clara Swain, the first woman medical missionary appointed to a field, arrived in India in 1870. Beaver makes it clear that Swain and others saw no separation between their medical and evangelistic work. Their manifestation of loving concern for their patients as individuals, and their mediation of the love of God in Christ for persons were as important as their scientific knowledge and technical skill. The writings and speeches of the women medical missionaries make it clear that they considered themselves evangelists.<sup>13</sup>

The story goes on. The Christian mission movement has had dramatic positive impact on every continent and continues to do so in even greater ways. Even though the basic aim of many of these mission efforts was to call people to faith in Him, and plant the Church, the effects of those efforts has been seen to eventually extend to every part of the societies in which the church has been planted.

There is much to disappoint and admire in the record; but overall, the Christian movement is bringing a measure of fulfillment of God's promise that Abraham's descendents would bring blessing to all the families of the earth.

## End Notes

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- <sup>6</sup> R Rooy, Sidney. *The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1965.
- <sup>7</sup> Sattler, Gary. *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*. Chicago, Covenant Press. 1982. p. 9.
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- <sup>9</sup> Bready, John W. *This Freedom Whence*. New York, American Tract Society, 1942. p. 113.
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- <sup>11</sup> Pierson, Paul. *A Younger Church in Search of Maturity*. San Antonio, Trinity University Press, 1974. pp. 107,108.
- <sup>12</sup> As reported by Ralph D. Winter. Winter, p.199.
- <sup>13</sup> Beaver, R. Pierce. *American Protestant Women in Mission*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980. p.135.

# Twelve Frontiers of Perspective

*Ralph D. Winter*

In this article, I am going to outline some of the major shifts or changes of perspective, each, in a way, a “frontier,” that has emerged at least in my own thinking since 1976 when I left my professorship at Fuller Theological Seminary. You might call these emerging perspectives *extensions of vision* because they represent additional insights into the factors not previously considered. This list can be looked upon as my own personal experience since 1976 that has profoundly modified and molded my perception of the mission task.

## Background

When we first set up the US Center for World Mission, the rationale was derived primarily from a new application of a McGavran perspective.

McGavran was a third-generation missionary from India who established as factual the idea that cultural factors are more important than language factors. Here’s a village in India which has only one language but 50 different hermetically-sealed caste groups. In some ways the people in these differing spheres don’t have anything to do with each other and a single church-planting outreach can’t penetrate more than one of these. In a practical sense you can only penetrate one of them with any one form of Christianity.

And so, McGavran said, if you happen to find a person in your congregation who comes from another group, even one person sitting in the back—look on that person as a “bridge of God.” McGavran wrote a book called *The Bridges of God*. The idea is that once you can go with even one person into one of these hermetically-

sealed compartments, then you might reach the rest of the group. At that point you can plan to “disciple to the fringes.” The movement that might result he called “a people movement to Christ.” The achievement of that kind of a result I have called “a missiological breakthrough.” This is one of the basic ideas of the so-called Church Growth School of Missiology.

## Perspective One: Unreached Peoples

However, after being steeped in that atmosphere for ten years, I began to realize that if his perception is true—that minor cultural differences can separate people and keep them from going to the same congregation, etc.—then this has horrendous implications for the existing mission movement. Many missions have gone around the world to major tribal groups and expected all the other groups with their differences to assimilate to that particular one, melting-pot style. Missions seeking simplicity often find it hard to take cultural differences within a country seriously. They do not want to seek two different forms of Christianity. They may expect that the form that develops in their first major beachhead ought to be good enough for all the other groups. Thus, it was a major insight for McGavran to emphasize the need for “Bridges of God” into other different cultures.

In fact, he sometimes implied, “If you don’t have a bridge, forget it. You can’t get into these groups. Spend your heavy time where you already have a bridge.” “Look for bridges. Don’t leave a bridge unattended,” etc.. So what about the other groups? He didn’t have a good answer. At this many took offense because what he said seemed logically to lead them to give up their work if a breakthrough bridge did not already exist.

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Statistically speaking, however, I discovered in time to present the case at the Lausanne Conference in 1974 that a very large proportion of world population is from this perspective sealed off for the lack of “bridges.” This further information, then, defined a huge frontier, which it took a few years for McGavran himself to accept. It meant that a major remaining frontier existed in the fact of thousands of remaining hermetically-sealed pockets of people around the world that had not yet had any kind of penetration.

From an extreme interpretation of McGavran’s point of view, it wasn’t practical to go to groups without some kind of a bridge into their midst. Nevertheless, I felt that it was at least required of us to compile these peoples in a list and take them seriously as a cogent definition of one aspect of the unfinished task of missions.

Thus, the US Center for World Mission was founded on the idea that there was a huge number of people in thousands of pockets that had not yet been penetrated, often right alongside some existing church movement. Too often the feeling had been that because we had planted a church, say, in Pakistan, we could assume that this church was good enough for everyone in Pakistan.

It’s interesting, though, that when we first started, no one had attempted to count the number of pockets not yet penetrated. The closest thing was Wycliffe’s *Ethnologue* which dealt with language groups not cultural factors. Amazingly, I myself had only undertaken to estimate the number of *individuals* that were within such groups. It was not until we published a chart of 16,750 unreached *peoples* that estimates of the *number of unreached peoples* rather than total population became important.

## Perspective Two: The Great Commission and Abraham

The second major new insight, or frontier, that we picked up along the way had to do with the Bible. My wife and I began writing a series of columns in *Mission Frontiers* called “Missions in the Bible.” We began with the Torah—the first five books of the Bible—and we moved on down through the history of the formation of the canon of the Old Testament, and talked about the presence or the absence of mission vision in each of those periods.<sup>1</sup> You can see that change of perspective and the resulting radically new idea (to us) that the

Great Commission was right there in Genesis 12. Now that was a revolutionary thought for me. I had toyed with the thought when I was still at Fuller, but it really came home to me as we began to write this series of articles, month after month.

This new frontier of understanding came to a head just as the first *Perspectives Reader* was going to press. This was in 1981. I was the only one who thought we ought to make sure this idea got into the book, and I was being outvoted by everybody else on the editorial committee. “No way,” they said, “no one else sees things this way, and so we can’t put it in.”

But, by Providence, I happened to be asked to be a speaker at the dedication of the Billy Graham Center (that was in 1980), and when I went back to that I ran into Walter Kaiser, Jr. (now President Emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary). I had been looking at one of his books even before going and between sessions questioned him about the way he was titling his chapters. He put into every chapter-title of his book on the Old Testament the phrase “The Promise.” I said, “Dr. Kaiser, isn’t that simply a Jewish misunderstanding of what was actually a *mandate*, a command? It wasn’t just a promise; it was more than that. Maybe they reduced it down to a promise.” I was very upset about that. He calmly replied, “Well, the reason I used the word *promise* is because Paul did. Paul referred to Genesis 12:1-3 as *the Promise*.” I staggered back fumbling for words and said, “Well, yeah, but Paul was only using the term that was common among his hearers. Surely it isn’t that he agreed with his listeners that the Abrahamic Covenant was only a promise.”

Then he looked right at me and said, “Well, you can call Genesis 12:1-3 the Great Commission if you want.” Again I staggered back and I said, “Oh, now wait a minute. I can’t go around saying that Genesis 12 is the Great Commission. I don’t have the Biblical credentials. I’m not a Hebrew professor. I need to be able to quote somebody who is. Do you have that statement in print?” So then, for the third time I staggered back when he answered, “Look, you quote me and I’ll get it in print.”

So I came back to the editors who were working on the final stages of the 1981 version of the *Perspectives Reader*, and I said to them, “Guess what, Kaiser agrees with me here. We can quote him.” But, that didn’t make much difference—I had nothing to prove this. However,

in a few days the mail brought a cassette which was the recording of a chapel talk Kaiser had just given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he was the Dean. Sure enough, he did in fact get his stirring statement into print—at least printed magnetically on tape! What he sent on cassette then became Chapter 4 in that first *Reader* (Chapter 2 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

That was a major insight for us, giving us a whole new Bible. And this element in the Perspectives course is one of the biggest jolts which especially seminary students get when they take the Perspectives course. The idea that the Great Commission is the backbone of the whole Bible—not just one of the teachings of the NT—is a major shift in perspective, a frontier yet to be crossed for most Christians. I have a feeling this was the same thing Paul was puzzling over for three years in Arabia. We used to joke that we would from then on refuse to talk on the *Biblical basis of missions*. We will not accept that topic. But we will be willing to talk on *Missions as the Basis of the Bible*. We think that the difference between missions being just one topic in the Bible, or the *one* theme of the Bible, is a pretty important question. The stories *in the Bible* are great, but the story *of the Bible* is even more important.

Luther's commentary on Genesis observes that Abraham in his day was to convey a blessing to other peoples, and Luther names off nine peoples so blessed. Luther in turn may have gotten this idea from a French commentator, and so on. Gradually we learned that many people had already taught what we are saying about the Great Commission in Genesis 12—notably Kaiser—or we couldn't have mentioned it!

We have since learned that the “blessing” being spoken of is not so much a blessing as a new relationship, such as the blessing conferred by Isaac on Jacob. Also, the Great Commission was further given to Isaac and to Jacob (Israel), and that in the latter case in Genesis 28:14,15, we may be looking at the very passage Jesus was paraphrasing as He spoke to the children of Israel in His day, the Greek wording of Matt 28:20 being very similar to the Greek wording in the Greek Old Testament (the LXX) which was currently in use in Palestine at that time.

### **Perspective Three: From the Unfinished Task to the Finishable Task**

Let's go on to the third major change of perspective. It emerged when we began to realize that it is a relatively

small task to reach all these thousands of peoples—in view of how large the global community of Christians is, and how many churches there now are to reach them! That is, it is a *relatively small* job, not a *relatively large* job. Of course, it's still a somewhat *new* job because many people don't yet think in these terms, that is, it is a frontier to be crossed.

We still point out that the task is larger than just establishing a Christian outpost in every country. For example, someone may say, “We now have a church in Pakistan; so cross off Pakistan.” We tell them that Pakistan is not the goal—it's the many *peoples* in Pakistan. In fact, the church in Pakistan has a Hindu background, not a Muslim background, and 98% of the Pakistanis are Muslims. By insisting on giving attention to many smaller groups we are still making the job bigger.

But now we also promote the idea that, relatively speaking, it is a finishable job to make at least a “missionological breakthrough” into every people group on the planet. This is the idea behind the phrase “A church for every people by the year 2,000.” And, relatively speaking, this *intermediate goal of initial penetration* is relatively concrete and measurable, and it is a task that is relatively *small*, not hopelessly *large*! *And in all mission strategy the breakthrough is the most difficult and crucial task.*

Unfortunately, some organizations have been so eager to drive down the numbers of groups to be reached. We at least continue to insist that an approach which only lists groups which are 10,000 or larger in population is one that inevitably omits some 4,000 groups that are smaller. That, however, does not totally negate the overall relative smallness of the task. Incidentally, I recently calculated that there are only 15 million people within the 4,000 groups that are smaller than 10,000 in population.

### **Perspective Four: Failure with the Large Groups and the Off-setting Trend to “Radical Contextualization”**

The third shift had to do with the fact that we had been focusing primarily on smaller groups around the world. This was because all the major groups had already been, supposedly, breached by Christianity in one form or another. We had rather highly Western beachheads in them, and our globalized culture was

permeating them, but, in the main, the major groups were continuing to be rather awesomely unfriendly to the Western form of Christianity. For example, Hinduism as a whole and Islam as a whole just aren't breached in any major way at all. We only have relatively small beachheads in these blocs. So we began to think, "Well, maybe we've got the wrong approach; we're not contextualizing sufficiently."

So here comes the idea of *radical* contextualization, and all of a sudden our eyes are opened to what is already happening. In Africa, 52 million people in the African Initiated Churches movement have radically contextualized (and by many are not considered valid Christians). Another example is India. According to *Churchless Christianity*, a book by Herbert Hofer, the Missouri-Synod Lutheran theologian/missionary, in the largest city of South India maybe four times as many Hindus are devout followers of Christ as the number of devout believers who are affiliated with the official Christian churches. In China, 50–80 or more million people in the so-called unofficial churches do not fit the pattern that we would consider normal Christianity. And in Japan, there are only 300,000 Christians out of 130 million people in the country. Apparently, there isn't a truly Japanese church yet, there is just a Western church.

Thus, the idea of *radical contextualization* is an incredibly new frontier. It's not just how many minority peoples are left. It's how many large blocs are still untouched or unchosen. It's how many peoples which are supposedly already "reached" are not really reached.

Is it possible that within these large blocs of humanity we have achieved (with trumpets blaring) only a *form* of Christianity that ranges from sturdy and valid but foreign, to maybe superficial or phony? Something which, from the point of view of these large blocs has been acceptable only to a minority and is not going anywhere? What is the meaning of the oft-quoted statement that Christianity in Africa is "a mile wide and an inch deep?" (Isn't that true in the USA too?)

Isn't it getting clearer that we're never ever going to persuade all the Muslims to call themselves Christians, and this itself is a very peripheral issue? Can't we recognize that it's not important, nor helpful—not merely impossible—to make many Muslims identify with the cultural stream called "Christianity"? If someone is a born-again believer, isn't that enough?

Take, for example, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Protestants in this country. As the Catholics streamed into this country after 1870, the Protestant churches spent about \$500,000,000 to win Catholics, and yet after 50 years of sincere home mission work had only won a handful of families. That is, we can't realistically set out to win over people to a new faith if we include the requirement that they identify with a different community in a substantially different culture. Thus, we can't make Catholics into Protestants in large numbers. And, apart from those who want to be Westernized, we can't readily make Muslims or Hindus over into our cultural form of Christianity.

This gives rise to the idea of a "Third Reformation." The first reformation was the shift from Jewish clothing to Greek and Latin clothing. A second happened when our faith went from Latin Christianity to German Christianity. This "second" reformation is *the* Reformation that everyone talks about, of course.

But now Western Christianity, if it really wants to give away its faith, is poised to recognize (and to become sensibly involved with) something already happening under our noses—a Third Reformation. Sorry to say, as before (both in the time of Paul and in the Reformation), this rising phenomenon will probably involve astonishment and antagonisms. The Bible itself describes vividly the profound antagonisms between Jewish and Greek forms of the faith. History records vividly the same tensions between Latin and German forms of the faith. In each case the burning question has been "Just how Biblical are these various forms?" That in turn leads us to the fifth shift of perspective.

## Perspective Five: Reverse Contextualization, the Recontextualization of Our Own Tradition

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

Let's assume for a moment that our best understanding of the word *contextualization* here at home is not

that of seeking indigenous forms to make our faith, our form of Christianity, more acceptable to others, but also means trying to make sure that existing indigenous forms employed by our own people are accurate carrier vehicles for a true, balanced, Biblical faith. In that case we need to be doubly sure what Biblical faith really is.

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

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

## Perspective Six: The Reclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom

Closely aligned with this last point, or perhaps merely a specific application of it, is a more recent syncretism that has emerged in Western Christianity, especially within the Evangelical tradition. It may today even be the distinctive heresy of the Evangelical as we have become specialists in merely getting people happy and getting them into heaven. We sing a lot more about what God does for us than we are thrilled to do what He is asking

of us. The seeds of this heresy were planted even before the Reformation as the Roman church sought ways to support its ecclesiastical endeavors, build temples, etc.

The idea was that if you can sell people something (especially if it doesn't cost you anything), this will create income for the church. Thus were developed a whole array of services that were offered to people, principal among them was a ticket to gain entrance into heaven.

The Reformers, being non-Roman, were not so impressed by the financial need to build St. Peters in Rome, and they short-circuited the Roman plan of salvation, which involved payment of funds to build St. Peters. They gave a better answer to the question of how to get to heaven. But they answered the wrong question or at least not the main question. The Bible does not talk so much about how to get people into heaven as about how to get heaven into people. In the process we have made "faith" purely intellectual.

Nevertheless, latter-day Evangelicals have run with their answer and made their "Gospel of salvation" a nearly total substitute for the Gospel of the Kingdom. Why is this? Nineteenth century Evangelicals were very socially conscious compared to Evangelicals in 20th century. Sub-Saharan Africa is 80% Christian, but has been described as having a faith that is, as we have already noted, a mile wide and one inch deep. Apart from otherworldly assurances, the avowedly Christian structures contribute very little to "Thy will be done on earth" as Jesus asked us to pray. Missionaries are not normally trained nor well-equipped to take on the social, commercial, medical, engineering, and political problems of Africa. Neither are the national pastors. This vast array of problems is not part of our Gospel of *Salvation*, even though it is definitely part of the Gospel of the *Kingdom*. We leave these problems to the "secular world." In a word, we think of ourselves as *survivors*, not *soldiers*.

## Perspective Seven: Beyond Christianity

We may need to go beyond mere radical contextualization. The Biblical faith has gone beyond Judaism. The NT has shown us how that can and must be done for the sake of the Gentiles. We have also seen how our Biblical faith has been able to go beyond Roman Catholicism. To go beyond Judaism did not invalidate the faith of those believing Jews who remained Jews. To go beyond Roman Catholicism does not invalidate

the faith of those believing Catholics who have stayed behind. Is it time to allow for the possibility that some people around the world will choose to go *beyond Christianity* as we know it?

This has already begun to happen. We have already noted the existence of millions of Africans who are eagerly following Christ and the Bible but not identifying with any form of traditional Christianity. The Lutheran-Missouri Synod study already mentioned describes the situation in the one city of Chennai (Madras) alone, where millions of devout followers of Jesus and the Bible have chosen neither to call themselves Christians, nor to identify with the socio-ecclesiastical tradition of Christianity and who still consider themselves Hindu. That report indicates that there are many more of this kind of devout believers than all the devout believers in that place who do identify with the social tradition of Christianity. What about all those millions in the house churches of China? When the bamboo curtain rises, how certain can we be that they will wish to be identified with formal Christianity—in China or any place else?

The NT Judaizers had only one solution: make people of any background into Jews. The Roman Catholics have for the most part had only one solution: make everyone into a Catholic. Have Evangelicals done the same? For the most part, yes.

We have seen our Gospel work fairly well—to draw people into Evangelicalism, a Westernized Evangelical movement. But by and large this has happened only if they belonged to a minority or an oppressed group—like tribal peoples or Koreans under the Japanese, people who had more to gain by giving up much of their cultural identity. In all such cases worldwide, people have seen the value of identifying with a foreign import that would befriend them and take their side. But by now we have lapped up most of these minorities and oppressed peoples. The future is correspondingly bleak for the further extension of our faith into the vast blocs of Chinese, Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists *unless we are willing to allow our faith to leave behind the cultural clothing of the Christian movement itself*. Do we preach Christ or Christianity?

Apparently, our real challenge is no longer to extend the boundaries of Christianity, but to acknowledge that Biblical, Christian faith has already extensively flowed *beyond Christianity* as a cultural movement just

as it has historically flowed beyond Judaism and Roman Catholicism. Our task may well be to allow and encourage Muslims and Hindus and Chinese to follow Christ without identifying themselves with a foreign religion. The Third Reformation is here!

## Perspective Eight: A Different Type of Recruitment

It is not strange that most mission agencies have settled on recruiting people who are college or seminary graduates. Most businesses wait until people graduate from college to take them in. Even in that case businesses recruit in engineering schools for engineers or business majors, etc. That is, the secular world is very concerned that the people they take in have the right background.

One obvious reason for this is that it is possible to do so. We have engineering schools and business majors. For mission agencies, however, it is not quite the same. Yes, there are mission majors in Bible colleges and in some Christian colleges. But it is ominously true that in many cases those students who choose those majors face curious pressures from the bulk of the other students, attitudes not far from “distancing,” even ostracism. In very few of these schools is there an entirely wholesome and healthy attitude toward Christian service, much less missions. The bulk of the students seem to feel in this “Christian” atmosphere that they must defend themselves against pressures for full-time Christian service, and the missions students are very much a distanced minority, no matter how favorable some of the faculty and school officials may be.

By contrast, on the secular campuses—where 15 out of 17 Evangelical young people are to be found—there are student Christian fellowships which tend to be much more interested in options for Christian service. But, they still don’t have either the guidance or the right courses available to them.

Due to the simple fact that the source of the bulk of Christian service volunteers has become the secular schools, one of the major trends in the past fifty years has been, inevitably, for the mission agencies not to expect new recruits to have prior Christian training. Thus has arisen the pattern of the agencies requiring “a Year of Bible” for those without a Bible college or Christian college background. This policy has indeed pushed many into further schooling in Christian institutions—where,



unfortunately, they have met the negative undertow toward Christian service already mentioned, and often less than ideal cross-culturally oriented course options. Some missions have no pre-candidate requirements at all. I was told that at one large conservative seminary ten percent of the incoming students are interested in missions, but only two percent of the seniors are.

In the past fifty years, then, the mission movement has considerably moved from seeking candidates from Christian schools with a lackluster training in missions, to candidates from secular schools with often a lackluster preparation for Christian service. There is no mission-world parallel to a technological company going to Stanford and wooing graduates into engineering and technology.

However, things are changing. It is now possible to do something radically different. There is now available a hefty educational package which can be studied either before or after going to the field. It is credit and degree bearing. It meticulously integrates 100 textbooks and hundreds of additional articles and chapters from other books into 320 lessons requiring four hours per lesson as well as additional activities. It is designed to be a part-time activity. It does not require physical relocation to any school campus. It is already employed by several fully accredited schools for both B.A. completion studies or an M.A. degree. (And those schools have cleared approval with their regional accrediting bodies.) Under the banner of the INSIGHT program it is also available as a first or second year of college. It has been utilized by the Wycliffe field-survey department, since it can be studied during either secular employment before going to the field or during on-field ministry, or a combination of both. *It covers everything taught in seminary as well as the core of a substantial liberal arts degree plus anthropology, linguistics, and missiology.*<sup>2</sup>

The basic implication of all this is simple and arresting: missions can now be vitally in contact with dedicated high school graduates or with a vast untapped group of people who have only two years of college, whether they are still in school or have been out for ten years, and guide them and track them through high-quality, carefully-designed basic training for Christian service as either laymen, pastors, or missionaries. These pre-candidates do not have to burn their bridges behind them at any point prior to completion of this program. And missions can accept them as full members when they have this training behind them.

There is a fascinating additional factor. By waiting until students find their own way through college, mission agencies are all vying for the same reduced number of people. College graduates interested in missions are few and far between. They have not usually had the right training, as we have noted. They are much more likely to be laden with debts.

By comparison, there is an enormous number of people who have only two years of college, and they are even more likely to be excited about missions and less burdened with debts and less sought after by agencies. The report is that 40 million Americans have only two years of college. Ten million of these are Evangelicals of which one out of fifty are keen for missions but have been blocked by the lack of a degree. One out of fifty of ten million is 200,000 people! Presently unsought by missions! Able to take this new curriculum, hold down a full-time job, and emerge without debt!

By focusing on high-schoolers or these two-year people the agencies will not be lowering but raising their standards; such agencies will as a result end up knowing far more about their new candidates than ever before—if they have tracked them after or during a curriculum like this. They will be seeding their work force with people who for the first time have serious, professional, foundational academic training for cross-cultural mission. This, in turn, is the most hopeful remedy for the pervasive trend today to a tragic amateurization of missions, what with short termers staying on, local churches sending out ordinary members on tourist-mission jaunts, and even few regular candidates having the right foundation for cogent career service.

### **Perspective Nine: A Trojan Horse?**

Briefly, this is the problem we face: 15 out of 17 Evangelical young people are never in a Christian school, a Christian college, or even home schooled. In the Christian schools and colleges secular textbooks are commonly employed by “secularized” Christian teachers. Yet this means that our children from a very young age are exposed to 30 hours of secularized perspective each week, but spend only 30 minutes in Sunday School (and on a totally different subject).

However, only a small number of widely used secular textbooks dominate the public schools and colleges. Why can't supplementary booklets be written that would comment on precisely these books chapter

by chapter, referring to specific page numbers where something important has been left out or is stated with a bias. Such supplementary booklets could then be employed in 1) Christian schools, 2) 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). By working in just the latter two cases we will likely be able more comprehensively to reach the “15 out of 17” than anything else we could do.

This kind of an effort could become the most strategic attempt yet to stem the tide of secularization in our schools public and private. It is somewhat like the ancient strategy of the Trojan Horse, since such materials are designed to become an integral part of both the major time commitment of virtually all students everywhere as well as concerned Evangelical parents.

## Perspective Ten: Needed, A Revolution in Pastoral Training

This revolution deals with three drastic drawbacks pervasively embodied in pastoral training both at home and abroad. These are so serious that it is sad yet fair to say that the seminaries and Bible schools of the world are a surprisingly weak and often negative contributor to the growth of Christianity around the world. *Virtually every church movement everywhere which has adopted residential schools of any type for their exclusive source of pastoral candidates has slowed, stopped, or even declined in growth.* At the same time, virtually every church movement everywhere that is rapidly growing selects its pastoral leaders later in life and may not effectively train them, maybe not at all.

The school-supported movement may offer superior theology without growth and vitality. By contrast, those movements which do not depend on residential training of young people for their pastoral leaders are often vital in faith and growth while weak and inherently fragile due to their lack of foundational knowledge.

Is there something wrong with the pastoral training institutions? Yes, even though they may have excellent, well-prepared faculty and entirely valid intentions, usually they have most or all of three deficiencies. They are often wrongly criticized for other things that may not be the heart of the problem: for being “academic” or “out of touch” with grass-roots conditions. It is much

more likely that the roots of their inability to contribute dynamically to the growth of the church lies in most of the following three problems of inherent design:

**1. Wrong Students.** The most severe problem is the simple fact that 90% of the students in pastoral training are not the seasoned, mature believers defined by the New Testament as candidates for pastoral leadership. We have adopted the defeating assumption of the lengthy, mediocre pattern of the Roman Catholic tradition, namely that you can breed leaders by a “formation” process if carefully designed.

Both in U. S. seminaries and in some four or five thousand overseas Bible schools, Bible institutes, theological colleges, etc., the vast majority of the students will never be effective pastors, no matter what or how or where they are taught, simply because they lack pastoral gifts, and at their age and level of maturity there is no way to predict that they will ever gain the essential gifts and maturity.

On the other hand, those church movements that are growing effectively in the U.S.A. or around the world depend primarily on the sifting dynamics of the local church to discover leaders, not the protocols of school admissions offices to select them. They further depend primarily upon the inductive process of local church life to train these leaders, using whatever resources may be accessible to these home-grown leaders in the form of books, radio or quite often apprenticeship. They do not calculatingly avoid or despise the schools. Their local leaders simply do not have access to the riches the schools possess. Their leaders, in addition to church responsibilities, are usually married men with families and bi-vocational employment.

But, can the schools make their riches available to pastoral leaders on the job? Yes and no. They could theoretically, but they don't know how and tend to feel it difficult to transcend the culturally-defined niche in which they are found. The global movement called Theological Education by Extension is by now well known. In India it has taken hold effectively in the form of one program encompassing 6,000 students called, The Association For Theological Education by Extension (TAFTEE). But this program was not launched by any existing school, and its graduates are not routinely incorporated into existing denominations. The latter's polite rejection becomes understandable only when you recognize that a large proportion of those studying un-

der TAFTEE are people coming out of midlife, doctors, engineers, university graduates. Meanwhile, the existing pastors who control the ordination process are mostly the output of traditional Bible institutes or seminaries, and may actually fear the competition of this impressive non-traditional source of leadership. The typical TAFTEE graduate compared to the typical seminary or institute graduate is not only more mature but has more extensive secular education. This latter factor leads to the second aspect of this problem.

**2. Wrong Curriculum.** When Bible institutes first got started in America, judging by the pattern portrayed by Moody Bible Institute founded roughly 100 years ago, the idea was to offer Bible study to adults whose previous education, even as far back as 1900, had already been edited to a secular viewpoint. The idea of supplementing school curricula with Bible studies was a good one.

However, Moody Bible Institute opened as a night-school for adults who already had some public school and who simply wanted the Bible. Soon, however, it began to be replaced by a daytime Bible school curriculum equally devoid of any other subject, but for younger students now, who had not yet received the other things taught in public school. This constituted a reverse censorship. Younger students exposed to nothing but the Bible, whether in Sunday school or Bible Institute could never learn about the rest of history much less discover the profound impact of the Bible during the many centuries following the close of canon. And, if they later did any serious study in public schools or colleges concerning the “rise of Western civilization” or the history of the United States, those courses skillfully omitted the role of the Christian church except for negative events like the Salem Witch Trial. No contrary view was available in schools just the teaching of the Bible.

Today, the average missionary to, say, India, is very poorly prepared to answer the questioning of honest intellectuals who have heard that Christianity was a drag on scholarship, science and enlightenment, and was an intolerant and oppressive force, launching “crusades” against Jews, Muslims and even other Christians. Why unprepared? Because the missionary’s secularized education has already told him the same thing. To answer with an outline of Romans is not enough.

The answer? Christian efforts to educate their young people, whether in Christian schools or Home School

programs, must be able to reintegrate the secular perspective about everything with a Christian perspective about all those same issues, specifically. This cannot be done in 30 minutes in Sunday school after 30 hours in the previous week of secular schooling, and on a totally different subject.

A student that comes home from school with the idea that William Jennings Bryan flunked the Monkey Trial needs to know that he actually won the case, and to learn on Sunday that David slew Goliath will do him no good on that point.

The student who hears that the Salem Witch Trial “shows what happens when religious people get control of the community” (as one textbook has it) needs to know that a restudy of the Salem event was published which showed that precisely the *clergymen* in Salem, who studied both theology and science at Yale, were the ones that insisted on a strict, scientific court trial which ended the hysteria that had been promoted by the *businessmen* in town, and that approach had great effect in shutting down witch killings even in Europe. But for a student to go to church and learn how Samuel chose David will do nothing to erase that Salem slur.

*What would a balanced curriculum contain?* God has given us two “books” of revelation: the Bible, which is His Book of Scripture, and nature, which is His Book of Creation. He does not want us to slight either one. Yet the sad situation is that, in general, one major human tradition (the scientific community) is studying the second and despising the first, and another human tradition (the church community) is studying the first and ignoring or rejecting the second. Yet, both are essential to a proper understanding of God and His will. The Bible itself affirms the second, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament displays His handiwork (and) there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1; see also Romans 1).

Thus, we run counter to the Book of Scripture itself if we do not rejoice in, and discern the glory of God in, His Book of *Creation*. We cannot fully declare the glory of God if we do not embrace science as a vast domain in which we can both see God’s glory and advance His Kingdom.

Some have suggested that there is both an evangelistic mandate and a cultural mandate. I see that as an artificial dichotomy. Being human, we are likely

to conceive of the redemption of *homo sapiens* as the primary concern of God. But *homo sapiens* is specifically the most recent divine strategy to promote the reestablishment of the Kingdom of God. Man was created to be responsible for all other created beings. His fall made him part of the problem no longer merely a chief means of the solution. He became by no means a trustworthy custodian of life forms. We easily forget that even if there were no humans, or if all humans were already “saved,” in that case the Kingdom of God would not necessarily have come and all things on earth been conformed to the will of God even as it is in heaven. Man was meant to be an ally in the redemption and restoration of Creation, not merely a worker for his own redemption, even though his own redemption is essential for his restoration as a worker in the Kingdom, and as a warrior on God’s side in the destruction of the works of the devil.

Nature, prior to the appearance of *homo sapiens* and long before Adam fell, was shot through and through with terrible slaughter, bloodshed, violence, and suffering, as the result of the fall of Satan. Man was intended to work with God in destroying the source of that evil. This was once God’s good world, but it became severely distorted by the fallen adversary of God long before *homo sapiens* existed. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8).

Of course, Jesus could not have been understood if he talked about microbiology. Even John Calvin was unable to talk about it. Both he and Luther even opposed the idea that the earth circled the sun. However, after centuries of gradual advance in the understanding of nature, with God often employing “secular” scientists, we can now see that 90% of the complexity of life is too small to see with the naked eye. It would take 200,000 cells to cover the period at the end of this sentence. The responsibility of humans for restoring the reputation of God (who, according to many confused people, is the cause of suffering and sickness) is now much larger than ever before. That responsibility is also more logical and urgent than ever before. The evil working of the Adversary is right before our eyes picking off believer after believer, long before natural death.

As was mentioned in Perspective Nine, fifteen of every seventeen Evangelical students are totally untouched by any Christian grade school, high school or college. At the very moment they study materials that have

been secularized, whether American history or sociology or psychology or whatever, that is the time they need additional materials to round out and perhaps correct the picture. They cannot effectively study secular books one year and the Bible another year. This is essentially the insight of Perspective Nine.

**3. Wrong Packaging.** It is one thing to value both the Bible and the Book of Creation, and thereby to be able to present the full spectrum of the task of advancing the Kingdom of God through the schooling process. But there is something else. We live in a world which speaks specific languages and channels life in specific cultural patterns. It is a missionary principle to speak the language of the native. In this respect the entire Bible Institute movement falls desperately short. And, although it no longer exists as a strong movement in the USA, it is very much the pattern still overseas.

In Bolivia years ago a young man approached me and explained that after he had completed three years of public schooling a nearby Bible Institute had “stolen” three years of his life. After attending there three more years he did not emerge with a sixth grade diploma recognizable by the government. Now he was unable even to get a job in a car repair shop.

In a South East Asian country a Bible college faculty member shared with me the tragic fact that after graduating from that Bible college students were unable to enroll in the national university. The school in which he was a faculty member offered units and degree structure that did not conform to the pattern of society.

Once it is understood that we have to present both the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature, we still need to package that education in packages recognizable to the world. It is a desperate mistake to suppose that “a parallel but equal” system is the answer.

The most far-reaching major cultural tradition ever developed in history is the university pattern. If Christianity has won astonishingly wide expansion into the world’s cultures, the university has even more greatly succeeded. The thousands of college-graduate missionaries of the famed Student Volunteer Movement often thought that universities were part and parcel of the Kingdom of God, and did not always understand the strategy of what we call church planting. Their universities were often so successful that they attracted a mountain of non-Christians and eventually lost their faith, just as happened with hundreds of colleges about

the same time in the USA. That is something surely to be feared and guarded against.

But is the answer to set up a separate system and offer non-standard credits and nondescript degrees which are not recognized in the larger society? Studies demonstrate that, if missionaries do not establish university institutions, national believers will. When I left Guatemala in 1966, the first Evangelical university in Latin America in many a year had just been established. About three decades later it had 30,000 students. And there are now dozens of other new universities of Evangelical origin worldwide.

## Perspective Eleven: The Religion of Science

This frontier has been mentioned in passing under the needed revolution in pastor training. It eminently deserves to be considered a frontier in its own right.

This largest remaining frontier is, ironically, the result in part of the very intellectual vigor of the Christian faith. It is the science community, which is now as global as the Christian faith itself. All effective scientific endeavors are dependent totally not so much on a particular “method” but on a *faith in the existence of order in nature*. This is a uniquely Biblical insight. It is the result of the Christian tradition.

It is as though the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture have spawned two global faith-communities, and that to most of the adherents of either faith the “other” is invalid. Millions around the world have been challenged and awed by each of the two books, and have been captured by profound belief in them, and are so confident of the glory they have found that anyone from the “other” side who questions the glory which they perceive may be automatically assumed to be blind and/or faithless.

This is not to say that a large minority of each of these two faith communities does not partake of the cultural tradition of the other. There are many scientists who are church-goers without as profound a faith as they have in the truth and beauty of their scientific experience. There are many Bible-believing people who are happy with science and technology but who do not regard it as a holy experience comparable to what they experience at church.

More troublesome by far are those zealots on each side who seek to tear down faith on the other side. We

think of people like Carl Sagan<sup>3</sup> or Richard Dawkins<sup>4</sup> for whom confidence in the Bible is ridiculous, or some of the zealous believers in the Book of Scripture who actually twist scripture in their attempt to dethrone science. I refer to a perverse quoting of Psalms 19:3 as saying (speaking of the handiwork of God in creation) that “there is no speech or language where their voice is heard,” rather than “there is no speech or language where their voice is *not* heard.”

The Book of Scripture itself extensively attributes a revelation of God’s glory within what we call General Revelation. Paul in Romans 1 seems to present the ultimate summary of the power of General Revelation. He goes on to imply in chapter two that there are gentiles that “do by nature the things the law requires” without ever seeing or hearing from Scripture.

Whether or not we can readily make these statements congruent with our popular formulas for getting to heaven, they are extremely significant in missions in regard to foundations on which to build. Various religious faiths contain ambiguous mixtures of truth and nonsense. We do not do well to ignore anything which is true, no matter where we find it.

In fact, perhaps the most classic of all missionary mistakes is the perspective with which Abraham dealt with Abimelech. Why, Abimelech asked, did Abraham tell a lie and try to deceive him? Because, Abraham said, “I said to myself there is no fear of God in this place.” Instead of expecting to find that the Holy Spirit is in contact with all peoples, and building upon that foundation to the extent he might, Abraham presumed that all virtue was on his side and that Abimelech could not have possessed any spiritual foundation to build upon.

Thus, in crossing this frontier into the realm of science we must not ignore the presence of the Holy in the very world of science. If we can be people whose devotion to the living God is richly nourished by both books, we can respect the genuine beginnings of belief in the lives of many, if not most, scientists, we can rejoice in the faith they have which will give them reason to hear of another kind of faith.

But it is not as simple as that. Zealots on both sides have erected high walls to dichotomize and polarize the two Books. Simple, honest inquiry across this frontier is thus as uncommon as it is difficult.

On the other hand, this frontier would seem to be, inherently, the easiest of all frontiers to cross, as well as having the greatest potential in terms of communicating with the modern world. We need ourselves to love His Word and His Works, and we need to share the manifest glory from both of those books if we wish to cross this huge frontier.

## Perspective Twelve: The Challenge of the Evil One

This is the most difficult to address of all of the other frontiers. It is actually an application of Perspective (Frontier) Five, the Recontextualization of Our Own Tradition. One reason it is a problem is because it is often easier to critique another culture than our own.

Furthermore, an understanding of this frontier requires going against the strong current in our own culture which puts any thought of an Evil One into the category of Santa Claus. Worse still, stressing this frontier requires a reconsideration of our own religious, theological and historical tradition, dealing as it does with a defect in that tradition. Finally, and most difficult of all, if there really is an intelligent Evil One, you would think that any attempt at calling attention to him would be opposed by a skillful, deceptive intelligence not just ignorance. And that is a long story.

The Old Testament itself is characterized by a continual viewing of things from the standpoint of final purpose, the purposes of God. The simplest example of this very noble point of view is where Joseph says to his brothers, “You did not send me to Egypt, God did (Gen 45:8).” In this verse the outcome, the purpose, is highlighted without, of course, denying that the brothers in actuality also sent him into slavery.

A scarier example is the startling contrast between 2 Samuel 24:1-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:1-25. The latter passage, part of the Chronicler’s summing up of things, is a verbatim repetition of the twenty-five-word earlier passage, with the exception of the replacement of a single word. In 2 Samuel *God* is the one who “incites” David to go wrong in counting the people. In the later summary by the Chronicler, *Satan* incites David to do wrong.

What we need to note here is that in the earlier passage, as in the OT in general, things are explained entirely in terms of God’s sovereignty. Both accounts are correct, just as both Joseph’s brothers and God can be said to have done the same thing.

Once we get into the NT, we find that the followers of Christ have now gained a heightened appreciation for an Evil One whom they now actually name *Satan*, a word that all through the OT simply meant an “adversary,” God Himself being a *satan*, or adversary, when He opposes a false prophet. However, Christians of the Manichaeen sect went further and adopted the Zoroastrian dualism of two equal Gods, one good and one evil.

It so happens that our present theological tradition is more influenced by Augustine than by any other theologian. Augustine started out Manichaeen 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.

Jonathan Edwards found this to be true. He sought to protect the Indians in his charge from smallpox by wanting to test out a vaccine. Pastors in Massachusetts warned him that in doing so he would be “interfering with Divine Providence.” He first tried it on himself and died the truly horrible death of smallpox. The pastors said God killed him.

Curiously and ominously, to this day, Christians are not well-known for fighting the viruses, the bacteria, and the tiny parasites that cause illness. We are only noted for being kind to people who are already sick, helping them get well, defending them against aggressive pathogens. We mount no offense against the pathogens themselves. We are willing to fight back at visible human muggers but not invisible bug muggers! That is, our pre-germ theological tradition does not trace disease back to the work of an Evil One. Thus, to my knowledge there is not a single avowedly Christian institution on the face of the earth that is working specifically for the eradication of disease pathogens. The medical and pharmaceutical industries draw their

support from sick people who want help in getting well, and who are not paying for research at the roots of disease.

Is this a blind spot in the spectrum of God's mandate to us in mission? I think so. If we can properly recontextualize our faith at this time, we will no longer need only to trust that in God's sovereign *purposes* there are good things even when things go wrong. We can both recognize the truth of that and also work against the *causes* of evil and suffering. Indeed, we are in that case, free to understand that God is expecting us to join in that effort. Biblical perspective puts it this way: "The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8). And Jesus said, "As my Father sent me, so send I you" (John 20:21). Isn't that clear?

However, as Dr. Gordon Kirk has said, "Satan's greatest achievement is to cover his tracks." If that is true, then it is also true that we are extensively unaware of what the Evil One is doing.

For example, humans have concluded that cock fights and contrived animal-versus-animal shows are illegitimate and are now illegal. How much less likely should we suppose God to have created the nearly universal, vicious, animal-versus-animal world of nature? Indeed, were carnivorous animals originally herbivorous (as is implied in Genesis 1:28,29)? Does the Evil One and his assistants have sufficient knowledge to tinker with the DNA of God's created order and distort nature to become "red in tooth and claw"?

Obviously, the great theologians of the past, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin, could not have imagined how lions, originally content to lie down with a lamb, could or should one day be restored to that state through the combined efforts of good angels and human endeavors. But, remember, if Satan has covered his tracks well, we would not expect to find many thinking these thoughts. How then are we going to attempt to destroy his works? Is that a mission to be pursued? Does that represent a frontier to be crossed?

### **But Are These Frontiers?**

Looking back on these twelve shifts of perspective, how many of these things can readily and feasibly be called *frontiers* of missiology? Of some value might be the following definition:

*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 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, the subject of *mission frontiers* is specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas, 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.

But let's examine these ten issues.

The idea of the Great Commission in the Old Testament is not the usual kind of frontier. But for me it has been. I have often referred to it as the greatest intellectual revolution in my life. The whole Bible is completely different because of that one insight, and it has really made the Bible much more precious and significant to me. Since then I have studied the Bible far more than in all of my life before, and so it's a frontier of thinking for me even if it might not go over well to some as a "frontier." Note that it is one of the commonly mind-blowing elements of our Perspective course.

By contrast, to say that there is a huge number of peoples yet to be reached does sound like a frontier. But, of course, to recognize that all these peoples can be reached fairly readily now may have reduced that frontier to just sort of a need for further encouragement.

However, in number seven, to say that we need to make a major shift, giving up our form of Christianity—so-called in order for the Biblical faith to penetrate Hinduism, *that* is still a frontier. That's the radical decontextualization frontier, and I don't think we need to pussyfoot about it. That perspective itself is not totally new, and we can safely say that both the frontier of the *unreached* peoples as well as the new frontier of the supposedly *reached* peoples must now be re-addressed with a truly Biblical form of Christian faith that makes sense of them. Here, then, are two major frontiers.

In fact, the latter involves the fact that there are many millions more individuals within the "reached" peoples than are contained in the remaining unreached peoples, which is a relatively small number. I did some calculations on AD2000's 242 "untargeted" groups. I came up with only 15 million people. Then I looked at all the smaller unreached groups—the 4,000 or so

groups smaller than 10,000 in population. As mentioned earlier, they only constitute another 1.5 million people. So we're talking about a total of merely 16.5 million people in all of the untargeted groups in the world! Is that a big number? Not really, for it is only 1/300th of the world's population! While this is not a huge frontier, it is still a pressing challenge.

Someone might say that just because there are only a few remaining "untargeted" groups does not mean that all other groups are actually reached—that is, already have a true, McGavran type "People movement to Christ." Aren't there still some massive larger unreached groups?

That is true since they do run up to 10 or 15 million in some cases, like the Juang in South China. But even so, we have our arms around the intermediate task of the Unreached Peoples. This is a manageable task, and it's a frontier still, admittedly. It is not less important because we are now also talking about the frontier of radical decontextualization—one of two major dimensions of frontiers.

And there is, of course, the fifth perspective—can we call it a frontier if we are trying to disentangle Biblical faith from our own Christian tradition? I certainly think so. I'm not sure how many are involved in trying to do so, or at least with that terminology.

In a sense it does not matter whether we employ the word *frontier* or not. These are perspectives that throw light on our path into the future. The future is itself a frontier, after all.

The next page may be used to produce an overhead transparency.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The series runs through the issues in 1980, which are now reprinted in *The Impossible Challenge: The Founding of the US Center for World Mission. The First Four Years of the Mission Frontiers Bulletin, January 1979 to December 1982. Plus, an Introduction to Previous Events*. Pasadena, CA: WCIU Press, 2004.
- <sup>2</sup> For more information on these programs, visit the William Carey International University website at [www.wciu.edu](http://www.wciu.edu).
- <sup>3</sup> Carl Edward Sagan (November 9, 1934– December 20, 1996) was an American astronomer and astrochemist and a highly successful popularizer of astronomy, astrophysics, and other natural sciences. He is world-famous for writing popular science books and for co-writing and presenting the award-winning 1980 television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, which has been seen by more than 600 million people in over 60 countries. He also wrote the novel *Contact*, the basis for the 1997 Robert Zemeckis film of the same name. During his lifetime, Sagan published more than 600 scientific papers and popular articles and was author, co-author, or editor of more than 20 books. In his works, he frequently advocated skeptical inquiry, humanism, and the scientific method. (from Wikipedia)
- <sup>4</sup> Richard Dawkins is a British ethnologist, evolutionary biologist and a popular science book writer (author of the best-selling *The God Delusion*). Dawkins is an outspoken antireligionist, atheist, secular humanist, and sceptic. (from Wikipedia)



- (1) Unreached Peoples
- (2) The Great Commission and Abraham
- (3) From the *Unfinished* Task to the *Finishable* Task
- (4) Failure with the Large Groups and the Off-setting Trend to “Radical Contextualization”
- (5) Reverse Contextualization,  
the Recontextualization of Our Own Tradition
- (6) The Reclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom
- (7) Beyond Christianity
- (8) A Different Type of Recruitment
- (9) A Trojan Horse
- (10) Needed: a Revolution in Pastoral Training
- (11) The Religion of Science
- (12) The Challenge of the Evil One

**IJFM Definition:** 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 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 are a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas, 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.



# Churchless Christianity

Ralph D. Winter

I would like to address what I see to be the *largest new factor in 21<sup>st</sup>-century missions*. In past history there have been other “major factors” in mission strategy. Unfortunately, in most of those cases, we did not see them clearly until it was already too late to maximize our strategies in their light. I will give some examples from the past so that we can be more alert to new factors in the present.

## Earlier New Factors

1. *The William Carey factor*. Almost single-handedly William Carey broke down all kinds of silly theologies which seemed to oppose the thought of sending missionaries. He went and did it. Protestantism finally became aware of the Great Commission. But Protestants had been blind to missions for over two hundred years. Their coveted Reformed theology did not help them.
2. *The Hudson Taylor factor*. Taylor almost single handedly broke down the idea that we cannot penetrate inland, and with confidence seek to evangelize *whole countries*. Seventy years after Carey’s *Enquiry* was published token missions, touching only coastlands, was all Protestants could conceive. I don’t believe we need to learn that lesson again, praise God!
3. *The Archbishop William Temple factor*. He is the one who tore back the curtain so that all could see the existence and vitality of the non-Western church movements. He spoke of a global church as “the great new fact of our time.” Most mission supporters back home simply could not believe that a new force had been born in the mission lands. I don’t believe we need to learn that lesson again, praise God!
4. *The Townsend/McGavran factor*. Townsend focused our attention upon geographically distributed tribal societies. McGavran pointed out sociologically isolated people groups. These men tore back the curtain on the existence of thousands of new places to go to and new peoples to be reached, who formerly were by-passed. Together these two men took cultural identity seriously. For many years missions talked about reaching a whole country once a church movement existed within any one of the ethnic spheres of that country. Some missions prided themselves on having missionaries in every “country” being blind to the divergent *peoples* within those countries. I hope we don’t need to learn that lesson again.
5. *The non-Western mission factor*. David Yonggi Cho in Korea, perhaps more than any other person, helped to tear back the curtain on the vital existence of mission agencies being born in the former mission lands. For many people this was an entirely new phenomenon. We still have much to learn from this sturdy emerging reality. In my opinion, the general failure of Western missions, historically, to plant *mission societies*, not merely *churches*, is the largest and most serious strategic error Western missionaries ever committed.
6. *The “Churchless Christianity” factor*. This factor is the thesis of this article. This, to me, is the largest new factor in 21<sup>st</sup>-century missions. Very few understand it. It is not yet taken seriously. To some it may come as a huge, disturbing surprise. To others it may constitute the final evidence of the power of the Bible over all other strategies of mission. In any case, it radically changes our understanding of the kingdom of God and the work of God on earth in regard to the role of what we call Christianity.

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This is an edited lecture originally given as “The Largest New Factor in Mission Strategy in the 21st Century: New Global Partnerships for World Mission.” Asia Missions Association, Moscow, September, 2003

## The Big New Factor Today

*Churchless Christianity* is the title of a book compiled by a Bible-believing Missouri-Synod Lutheran missionary and theology professor. Thus, when I speak of “Churchless Christianity,” I am referring to that book. The book contains the results of a scientific survey of the largest city in Southern India, formerly called Madras, and today known as Chennai. It gives the evidence that masses of Hindus have a high regard for Jesus Christ, and about 25% of that city of millions of people have given up their idols and are daily Bible-reading followers of Christ. The surprise is that the majority of these followers of Christ study the Bible and worship at the home level, continue to associate within the Hindu social sphere, and do not routinely associate with the somewhat “Western” Christian churches. That is why the book is entitled *Churchless Christianity*.

In my perspective it would be more accurate to speak of “Christianity-less churches.” Why? Because we are talking about fervent Bible-believers who at least meet in “house churches,” even if they do not normally meet in existing “Christian churches.” This fact is itself very reminiscent of the New Testament worshipping households, such as that of Cornelius, Lydia, and Crispus.

Moreover, this is not a tiny, isolated phenomenon. We are talking about millions of believers who neither call themselves *Christians*, nor are called *Christians* by their Hindu neighbors.

This subject which I have labeled the “Churchless Christianity Factor” is, however, little recognized. I myself have long been unaware of it. It is so little understood that we may need to describe it more fully before commenting on it from a viewpoint of mission strategy—that is, what we can or cannot do about it.

### What It Is

Note well that a cautious, Bible-believing Missouri-Synod Lutheran seminary professor brought this factor into limited prominence when he made a professional survey of that great South India city of Madras (Chennai) in the 1980s. His survey revealed millions of fervent, daily Bible-reading followers of Jesus Christ who continued to identify with Hindu and Muslim families, but who lived largely in total isolation from the formal Christian movement in India. While this was surprising, disturbing, and perplexing, and he even wrote a book about it, it did not attract much attention for ten to twenty years.

You can imagine reactions such as “Then, are the traditional Christian movements in India wrong?” “Do all Hindus and Muslims have to go this route?” The published book describing this careful survey, entitled *Churchless Christianity*, has a somewhat misleading title, as I have pointed out.

### Is This an India-Only Phenomenon?

In regard to missions in other parts of the world, this one survey of one large city in India raises insistently the more general question, “Can believers in Jesus Christ in other countries continue as part of a cultural tradition which is distinctly different from the Western *Christian* tradition?” Many of us might believe this could happen in theory and yet recoil emotionally at its appearance and existence in real life.

In other words, it raises an even more significant question for mission strategy. Is this seemingly “breakaway” movement happening only in South India, or are there parallels in Africa and Asia in general? How would we find out? What book might we consult?

Here the answer is swift in coming. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* reports 52 million Bible believers in Africa and 14 to 24 million believers in India who are outside of the formal Christian movement. Furthermore, we also know that there are from 50 to 70 million Chinese followers of Christ who are clearly outside of the 15 million Chinese believers within the formal Christian church movement in China today.

These are not small numbers! How do they compare to the number of Christians in these various countries? Or, more accurately, how do these numbers compare to the number of sincere, Bible-believers who are formally Christians in the same countries? (Many within the Christian sphere are quite nominal.)

In actuality, the astounding and perhaps alarming fact is that there may now exist in the non-Western world as many (or even more) truly devout believers in the Bible and Jesus Christ outside of formal, Western-related Christianity as there are truly devout believers within it.

Curiously, mission leaders have talked about “contextualization” or “indigenization” for many years, under the assumption that we could develop, as it were, new “clothing” for the Western church to make it more acceptable to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. But, amazingly, it has not until recently dawned on us that God may have a different strategy altogether. He has

been with us as we planted identifiable Christianity, but He now seems, in addition, to be bringing forth large movements entirely from within these huge non-Western cultural traditions.

Alert mission observers have already seen some evidence of these new movements. But they may have ignored them as “breakaway heresies” rather than understood them largely as sincere responses to the Bible.

### How Important Is This New Factor?

We can compare it to the previous major factors that have been accepted and understood by mission strategists:

1. Carey’s rediscovery of the Great Commission.
2. Taylor’s push to complete the Commission geographically.
3. Temple’s discovery of a truly global church.
4. Townsend and McGavran’s emphasis on the Biblical nations not the political nations, the era of the unreached peoples.
5. The discovery of mission agencies appearing on the “mission field,” that is, Two-Third’s World Missions.

The sixth factor, however—the sudden awareness of the Gospel bursting the bonds and boundaries of Western Christianity—is *very little understood*.

Number six is a phenomenon that would seem to be parallel to the Biblical shift from Jewish to Greek clothing, and also parallel to the shift from Latin to German clothing (which is usually called the Reformation). At this late date in history it would appear that there have been at least three “reformations”: Jewish to Mediterranean, Mediterranean to European, and European to non-Western.

### What Is Our Response?

What will be, and what should be, the mission response to this major new factor? Shall we call it “unofficial Christianity” and just live with it? Shall we drop the term *Christianity* altogether and start counting not Christians but Bible believers?

We need to pause and think clearly. *Christianity* is not a Biblical term. Even the word *Christian* which is in the Bible only three times is apparently a “sneer” word employed by outsiders and not a word the New Testament believers called themselves. That is, NT believers were in some cases, called *Christians* by others, but apparently

no one in the NT ever called himself a Christian. When Agrippa asked Paul if he were trying to make him into a Christian, Paul did not make any use of the word.

My personal perspective is that we recognize again that our mission is simply the Biblical faith. We preach Christ, not Christianity. In this regard I see a parallel to the New Testament Biblical faith escaping the Jewish cultural tradition and being born from within the Greek culture. I see this phenomenon in the book of Acts not as a unique *event* but as a major example of a *process* that must happen over and over again as missionaries cross into new cultures.

We see in the NT the consternation of Jewish followers of Christ viewing the Greek followers of Christ as somehow inferior. And the Greek believers apparently also looked down on Jewish believers—or Paul would not have defended them in Romans 14.

Not only do we see the Greek believers scoffing at the Jewish wrappings. We see earnest Jewish followers of Christ, the “Judaizers,” insistently seeking to make the Greek followers more Jewish. Do we today sometimes think like the Judaizers? Do we seek to make Muslim and Hindu followers of Christ more “Christian,” by urging them to call themselves *Christian*, or by following certain Western Christian customs?

### Is This Radical Contextualization?

What we are talking about goes beyond ordinary “contextualization.” Some have called it “radical contextualization.” What we call this phenomenon is not the point. It is really not a new phenomenon. Christianity itself is the result of *radical contextualization*.

When the Gospel moved beyond the Jewish cradle in which it was born, it not only took on Greek clothing, but carried within it the same Biblical demands of heart faith. When later it was taken up by Latin-speaking people it outwardly changed again, so much that eventually the Greek church and the Latin church movements went separate ways. Still later, as Biblical faith penetrated the Teutonic forests of middle Europe, it divested itself of a good deal of the Latin tradition and now reappeared as a German, Lutheran, tradition. About the same time it broke away as an English phenomenon. These new traditions were much more than a change of language.

The Biblical faith became at an early point a Celtic phenomenon, and there was antagonism for a long time between Roman and Celtic forms of faith. A bit

later than the Celtic but before the Lutheran we see the Biblical faith emerge within the Arabic tradition in the form of Islam, which is only partially Biblical.

Many ancient observers felt that Islam was simply an Arabic form of Christianity. But the Christianity to which Muhammed was exposed was very weak and defective. It possessed only parts of the Bible, and in particular it had a defective understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Muhammed was apparently able to evaluate *the defective trinity* of the Christians he knew and rejected it just as we today reject such a misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, Christianity for many centuries was tied in with local governments which could not allow social diversity, and so Christians of one sort even tried to exterminate Christians of another sort, and certainly opposed the followers of Islam. Instead of sharing the Bible and studying it together they simply tried to remove the cultural diversity through persecution and even genocide. In general, Christians have actually been more intolerant than Muslims.

Today America faces a rapidly growing movement which has a partially Biblical faith, called Mormonism. Mormons believe the whole Bible, but like Islam, they have their own special prophet and additional book, not the Qur'an but the Book of Mormon.

Early on, American Christians killed many Mormons, tried to convert them, and drove them out of the eastern part of the country. But they have continued to grow into a large movement today. Many of them as in all streams of Christianity, are purely cultural in adherence. Many of them are very sincere and godly people. And, they have retained a concept of the Christian

family which in many ways is superior to general American family perspectives.

Now, the practical question that arises no matter what kind of a person we are dealing with—whether Presbyterian, Mormon, or Muslim—is, do they hunger and seek after righteousness? Do they in their hearts seek to know God and do His will? If they are Catholic, Muslim, Lutheran, Hindu or Baptist, do we feel they must leave their own people and join ours and call themselves by our name, whether Presbyterian, Anglican, Evangelical, or just Christian?

In other words, is it our mission to insist on a change of name and a change of clothing? Isn't the Bible, isn't Jesus, God's Son, more important to them than what they call themselves or how they worship? In this regard, are we afraid that our supporters and donors are forcing us to report on how many "Christians" or "Baptists" we have created, or how many church buildings we have brought into being that look like our own church buildings?

## What Can We Do?

We can go humbly to these groups and try to help them understand the Bible more clearly *without assuming they will accept our form of Christianity when they read the Bible.*

Furthermore, we can rejoice that there are millions outside the formal Christian tradition who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness and who have in their hands the Bible. Isn't that better than to add more millions who may call themselves Christians but who do not pay much attention to the Bible and who can hardly be described as "hungering and thirsting after righteousness?"

# The Analysis of a Movement

Ralph D. Winter

## Chapter One: By the Year 2000?

**T**he AD2000 Movement<sup>1</sup> has a profound mission statement: *A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person By the Year 2000.*

Do these three phrases give us a crystal clear mandate? Note the final phrase especially.

“By the year 2000” is the most electrifying phrase in the statement; it also causes the most hesitation. No one objects to the idea of goals for the year 2000, but here we see “every people” and “every person.” Doesn’t the presence (twice) of the word “every” make these goals for AD 2000 seem audacious and perhaps even foolish?

Suppose we could arrive at the place where we were absolutely confident that every *person* on earth has heard the Gospel and understood it, that is, everyone who is over 2 years old, say, and also not so old as to be *unable to hear*, or so sick as to be *unable to think*. In any case, suppose we could come to the place where every “hearing” person has heard. At midnight on a certain night—we have finished the job!

One day later, over a million more tiny tots have arrived at the age of two, and over a million more people have plunged beyond a condition of intelligibility.

(Note that God must know what to do with all such people. There are probably 500 million children in the world at any given time under the age of two. Who knows how many older or sick folks there are?)

But this is the point: is God really playing with statistics and watching curves on a computer graph? Is He mechanically waiting for a certain number of souls to be saved? Is He counting peoples and persons? Is that all He expects us to shoot for by AD 2000?

What *can* be done by the year 2000? What is it that we can all pray for?

Well, what did Jesus tell us to pray for? He said that we must pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

What this means is that our concept of God’s desire to reach all peoples and persons must somehow be part of His desire for His Kingdom to come on earth. Other verses say that He looks toward the time when all the nations of the world will declare His glory.

What does it really mean for His Kingdom to come? Jesus once said, “If I with the finger of God cast out devils, then has the Kingdom of God come upon you” (Luke 11:20).

Is this what it means for the Kingdom of God to come? Is it possible that we have become so tied up with our measurements of evangelism, social reform, and economic growth that we have forgotten that God is primarily in the business of conquering Satan?

We look forward toward the time when “The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). Surely He seeks to vanquish the “Rulers of the darkness of this earth” (Eph 6:12)?

But this is not simply a case of political or military conquest. Jesus made that plain when He said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” So we’re not looking for a Christianized United Nations any more than we are looking forward to every person being converted to Christ, or even all social wrongs righted. Indeed, in Revelation 21 we note that *after* He returns “He shall wipe away every tear...”

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Is it possible that the essence of the Return of Christ will inevitably be a moment when “measurable” evangelistic goals will be overwhelmed by a total newness of God’s own design?

Certainly we should take our evangelistic measurements seriously, but not as ultimate parameters of God’s plan. We must look forward to the year 2000, knowing that He may evaluate things by measures we cannot fully comprehend. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Meanwhile, with regard to His known will, we can and must go all out.

Can we be overly concerned about bookkeeping tallies in heaven and less concerned about declaring His glory on earth? Can souls get saved without His Name being glorified? I actually believe that brilliant evangelical thinkers who are wrestling with front-line science are part and parcel of the global struggle to glorify His Name.

This is why breaking through into every people has got to be a precursor to reaching every person. Satan *holds whole peoples in bondage*. We can’t wrestle a single soul out of his hand without challenging his authority in that particular people group.

In those groups where Satan’s hold has already been broken, it is well understood how to win souls. But, in groups where no real breakthrough has occurred, the contest is still a “power encounter” between the Spirit of God and the powers of darkness. This is why the front line is prayer. This is why Asian evangelists say they must first “bind the strong man” before entering a village that sits in darkness waiting for the great light.

We must remember that taking the light into dark places will meet fierce resistance. In the Bible the concept of darkness is not merely the absence of light but the presence of a malignant, destroying Person. That is why the kingdoms of this world will not easily yield.

### **Every People—Kingdoms of Darkness**

The phrase *Every People* refers to these kingdoms of darkness. This is why this phrase comes first in the slogan. Only when the gates of those kingdoms are broken down can the Gospel be available “for every person.”

What does a darkened kingdom look like? How can we tell when a kingdom has been brought under God’s sway? Isn’t this the definition of spiritual mapping?

Satan wields his control over individuals by dominating their *groups*. Most people follow the lead of their own group. Very few individuals are perfectly unrestricted thinkers for themselves. Sometimes it is baffling to

missionaries to know how to penetrate a group. Often the breakthrough comes through a miraculous healing or the unaccountable conversion of a key person, not through normal evangelism. Normal evangelism only becomes possible after that breakthrough occurs.

Back to our point: it may be, therefore, somewhat artificial to try to figure out how many individuals are, or aren’t, won to Christ. *Maybe what we face is a much more direct question: are there still kingdoms of this world where His Name is not glorified?* Every people and every person are stepping stones in that direction and are the result of the invasion of God’s glory. But the conquering of the kingdoms of this world is both more and less than every *people* and every *person*.

That this is primarily a spiritual battle certainly does not mean we can set aside careful planning for evangelism and pioneer penetration and just pray that God will go out and do His thing. What it does mean is that “We fight not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12).

And we know that it is our fight, not just His, and that He is fighting with us. We do not need to worry about losing. We know that in every place on earth the key effort is not going to be *our* wisdom or even our hard work. It will be all of that *plus* His sovereign power breaking down the very gates of hell. And we know that He is still doing miracles.

All of this cannot be brought together into a single human plan; yet it calls upon every planning effort, all creative approaches, and all the sacrifice we can muster. We do know that our measurements—our peoples and persons—are merely concrete goals. We know also that He is with us and we are acting in obedience to the Heavenly call.

*We can be embarrassed by the outcome in the year 2000. But we will be embarrassed only if when that day comes we cannot say we have done everything in our power to find and approach and reach every people and every person on earth.*

But what does “A Church for Every People” mean?

## **Chapter Two: A Church for Every People?**

In the five-word phrase, “A Church for Every People,” the word “church” means much more than an empty building or even a small congregation.



The first five words of the AD 2000 Movement slogan were launched in 1980 by a global-level meeting of mission executives coming from both the Western world and the Two-Thirds world. At that meeting the fulfillment of the phrase “A Church for Every People by the Year 2000” was certainly not for one symbolic congregation to be planted within every group by the year 2000. Behind this simple phrase “A Church for Every People” was essentially “a church movement.”

The phrase “A Church for Every People” was actually based on Donald McGavran’s concept made famous almost thirty years earlier when he spoke of “a people movement to Christ.” A small group of people met in a private home a few months before the 1980 meeting and hammered out this new “watchword.” Dr. McGavran’s conviction which had influenced so many others was that *we cannot say that we have evangelized a person unless that person has been given a chance to unite with an indigenous movement within his or her own society.* Note that if we take this seriously we cannot even speak of the Gospel for Every Person without planning to achieve an indigenous “people movement to Christ” in every people.

McGavran’s concern for converts was that they ought to be encouraged to reach their own people rather than *separate* from them, and to do that he felt that they should stay within the social sphere of their own people. McGavran’s marvelous “letter” on this subject is printed in full in the Appendix of this article.

### What is the Upshot?

The churches of the New Testament avidly sprouted up in part because of the impasse experienced by the Gentile “devout persons” attending Jewish synagogues out in Gentile territory. Many of the synagogues of the Jewish dispersion had generously invited Gentile seekers to sit in the back rows. But such invitees were not given an inch by the devout Jewish core of those synagogues when it came to the laying aside the Jewish cultural tradition. Like many Christians today, the faithful had to some extent confused their cultural tradition (diet, calendar, dress, etc.) with the faith itself. Their tradition had become traditionalism, to use Jaroslav Pelican’s language—“Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”

Paul came along and dared to call out all such (Greek) “devout persons” into what would become essentially Gentile-run synagogues. Now the fast growing traits

of early Christianity began to appear. Once the faith was indigenized (or “contextualized”) it grew rapidly. Within two centuries more than one third of the entire population in the the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire had decided to follow Christ!

But a factor more important than mere culture was involved. Paul, referring to Aquila and Priscilla, spoke of “the church that is in their house” (Rom 16:5, 1 Cor 16:19), a situation (unnoticeable to many American readers) where family ties and church worship went together, where church authority and family authority were often indistinguishable, where church discipline and family respect were one and the same thing, where the principle of “honor thy father and thy mother” was not different from spiritual accountability in the church. In such a “church” it is unlikely that the ostracism McGavran fears would occur. It is likely that the synagogues of the New Testament period as well as the Gentile-run churches of the New Testament period mainly consisted of a cluster of extended families guided by the elders of those families.

### Beware of the Americans!

What is a *church* in the phrase “A Church for Every People?” In America—especially in urban America—churches have become more and more collections of unrelated individuals huddling together—individuals who, for the most part, have already been loosened up from their natural families with the church becoming a kind of substitute family. Married couples may have children and bring them to church (where they are normally segregated off into age-graded fellowships), but they are not often asked about their own parents.

Neither are older people asked about their children. Individual decisions in the church are as important as individualism has become in secular society. Thus, although the churches of urban America to some significant extent perform the functions of a family, they often do so in the absence of—or possibly even at the expense of—the natural families. For example, although I have attended evangelical churches in many parts of the United States, I have never heard a sermon on why or how to have family devotions. Personal devotions, yes; but not *family* devotions.

But as the church of Jesus Christ grows up in soil of the traditional societies around the world (most of which are not yet so individualistic), it often becomes a movement which normally reinforces, not dismantles, natural fami-

lies, which are part of Creation. This result is not what the average American missionary always expects, however. Sometimes missionaries feel they must stress that people who come to Christ do so *in opposition* to their parents lest their decisions not be real. On the other hand, I heard the story of a North Korean young person that came to Christ. His father asked him what Christianity taught him. He said that it taught him to honor and respect his father and mother. The father's response was, "Good."

If we seriously seek "A Church for Every People" we must recover this Biblical harmony between natural families and "church" families. It will probably be much easier for missionaries from the Third World to do this than for Americans, whose instincts may often lead them (in their haste to "plant a church") to establish congregations composed mainly of "loosened up individuals," social refugees, or even social "deviants." But, in actuality, to work within the culture rather than against it may often be easier, not harder!

Nevertheless, there will still be times and situations when the American practice of putting together scattered family fragments in brotherly love will be a helpful technique, especially as urban conditions around the world may involve the tragic degree of family fragmentation which we now have in the U.S.A.

However, the global threat of American and Western hyper-individualism, so closely allied with Christianity as it now is, may more often pose one of the most serious obstacles to the realization of "A Church for Every People."

### Missiologically Defined Peoples?

In any case, only after we recognize clearly that "a people movement to Christ" should be the basic goal of missionary activity within a people is it possible to think clearly about what kind of a people we are talking about. If we see clearly that a "people movement" is highly indigenous, and that the members of the people feel a sense of belonging to each other, then it is possible to recognize the inherent barriers that result from rivalries or enmities within groups which may appear unified and barrierless to outside observers. Those of us who often count ethnolinguistic groups usually take very seriously the tangible differences in dialect or vocabulary of different groups but may not often take seriously the many different kinds of intangible "prejudice barriers" that define additional subgroups.

In other words, if there are divisions which prevent all the people in a group joining in with a "people movement" that has grown up, it is likely that (from the standpoint of missionary strategy) there are really two or more groups, not just one, and that more than one people movement must be started to fulfill the goal of "The Gospel for Every People." Is this what it will take for *every person* to have access to the Gospel?

## Chapter Three: The Gospel for Every Person?

What does it mean for us to try to take seriously the statement that *we cannot say that we have evangelized a person unless that person has been given a chance to unite with an indigenous movement within his or her own society?*

If it is imperative for there to be an indigenous church movement within every *people* in order for every *person* to have a reasonable opportunity to know Christ, then it comes with equal force that if every person in a group cannot join an existing people movement, it is apparently true that this group consists of more than one group needing the incarnation of an indigenous church movement. In a word, from the standpoint of churchplanting strategy there may be important subdivisions within the group which we have assumed is just one group.

### Groups within Groups?

This fact has caused a lot of confusion. It means we can't start out by counting how many groups there are except in a guess-work sense. Some or many of our groups may turn out to be clusters of groups. Only when a people movement gets going will it define the practical boundaries and allow us to define how many groups there actually are. It means that we can only count groups accurately *after* the Gospel has come, not *before*. We don't want to count more groups than really can be reached with a single people movement; yet we don't want to ignore silent, alienated minorities which feel left out of a majority movement. The technical wording goes like this: a group with mission significance is "the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance."

These words were framed by a large and representative group of mission experts at a Lausanne-sponsored meeting in March of 1982. Neither before nor after

has there ever been a similar meeting to define such concepts and terms. The most common objection to this definition is that this particular wording results in a people of a type defined by missiological criteria, which is meaningful primarily to mission strategists. Pragmatically, however, you can't find data of this kind in encyclopedias or world almanacs or reference materials coming from the United Nations. Secular researchers don't think in such terms. Rather, what you do find is data based on country units, which often (very often) split a single people group into two or more groups because of country borders.

### Defining Groups by Ministry Tools

Christian workers may be confused partly because they naturally tend to define the world's population in terms of the groups which are reasonable targets for the particular tools of evangelism *in which they specialize*.

For example, those missionaries who hold in their hands immensely powerful radio stations have understandably concluded that they must limit their outreach to 280 groups of people in the world—those that are over 1 million in size. Missionary radio, the enormous and expensive tool in their hands, does not allow them to cope with the smaller groups within these 280 spheres, smaller groups which have differing dialects. The thought is that the smaller groups can understand through a trade language within the 280.

Or, take Campus Crusade's amazing *Jesus* film strategy. Although *Jesus* film strategists started out targeting the same 280 groups of 1 million or more, their indefatigable efforts have taken them deep into the grass-roots reality. As a result, they have now developed less expensive ways of producing sound tracks for the film and as a result of this modification of their "tool" they are now able to focus on groups which are only 75,000 in number or larger. The new less-expensive approach allows them a goal of just over 1,000 such groups. Within these groups there are still smaller groups, which, if you were to count them all, would produce a much larger number. Again, these still-smaller groups may be able to hear via the trade language of their areas.

Understandably, one of the oldest and largest missionary forces, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, has chosen its tool to be the printed page. That choice is the least expensive medium, and thus enables them to reach every group in the world. *Note that written materials are usable by more than one dialect!* If each dialect able

to read the same text were to be pronounced out loud it very well might be unintelligible or objectionable to other groups which can nevertheless read from the same page! In any event, use of the printed page both allows and requires a total of more than 6,000 groups to be approached, only about half of which still need (printed) translation help.

By contrast, note the differing circumstances of the mission groups which employ the *ear-gate*. Take Gospel Recordings, for example. These marvelous people understand perfectly that several groups which can *read* the same printed page may *pronounce* what they see in discordant ways, and as a result the people speaking the different dialects simply will not all listen to a radio or cassette that speaks one of the other dialects—even though its message may appear the same on the printed page. Accordingly, as long as Gospel Recordings uses the ear-gate it has to take these subgroups seriously. As a result, Gospel Recordings estimates more than 10,000 groups to be reached—if you employ the ear-gate and the mother tongue. However, it is possible to put the minimal Gospel message into cassette more easily than it is to produce a substantial portion of the Bible in printed form. Thus, Gospel Recordings, with only a staff of 60, has already dealt with more than 4,500 groups!

If you ponder carefully the effect of using differing tools of evangelism, it will become clear that the goal of the Gospel for Every Person will more likely require penetration by people movements into the smaller groups—eventually, that is, into groups the size Gospel Recordings works with. Why? Because otherwise some small groups of people in many places will not feel part of Christian people movements that talk in objectionably different ways.

### Barriers of Prejudice!

Tragically, near-neighbors often hate and fear each other. Thus, in the early stages of evangelism such groups often refuse to become part of the same "people-movement church." In the early stages of evangelism such enmities will require these groups to be dealt with separately.

Fortunately, however, it is true that virtually all such smaller groups are part of larger clusters of groups. This makes it possible to include all remaining unreached groups without listing more than 2,500 or so groups, some of which are clusters. These are a tangible list of

targets for distinctively missionary strategy. Once these clusters are successfully penetrated it gives insight into how other groups within the same cluster may yield to the Gospel, even though the Gospel may not automatically flow from one group in a cluster to its near-neighbor enemies.

And history shows that eventually a large host of smaller, often warring groups, once they become Christian, start to coalesce into larger groups. For example, at the time Christianity first began to be adopted in the Scandinavian area, hundreds of mutually hostile tribes inhabited the region. The Norwegian, Swedish and Danish spheres today are the result of widespread reconciliation and consequent unification resulting from the adoption of Christian faith on the part of many smaller, formerly warring groups. Christian faith did not quite prevent the Rwanda massacres, but it is clearly the only thing that unites the two groups. Satan simply took advantage of the overall good will between the two groups whose people were living side by side and unleashed a malignant minority to do his dirty work, exploiting a settled situation of integration. Note that for the most part one group was not won to Christ by the other group but by people from far away.

It is valuable for the AD 2000 Movement to have added “and the Gospel for Every Person” to the 1980 slogan, “A Church for Every People,” because it may not be obvious that reaching every *people* is the essential means of reaching every *person*. It also may not be obvious that once that essential people movement to Christ has been created by the divine-human effort of cross-cultural evangelism (which is what missions is), that central achievement then essentially makes accessible and available “the Gospel for Every Person,” and is perhaps the best way to define it.

### Measure or Verify?

But how measurable is the presence of this “essential people movement to Christ?” It might perhaps be better to say “verifiable” than “measurable.” We don’t normally say a woman is partially pregnant, or that a person is partially infected by AIDS. Rather, in such cases we “verify” the presence or absence of a condition.

For example, measuring the percentage of the individuals in a group that seem to be active Christians may not be the best indicator of the presence or absence of a people movement to Christ. Two percent of a small group of 700 is only 14 people; 2% of the Minnan Chinese in Taiwan happens to be 400,000 believers in 2,000 congregations.

What makes it easier to verify the existence of an unreached people is the fact that we are looking for the groups with the least opportunity, the least access. While it may be difficult to say at exactly what point a people movement securely exists or not, it is certainly easy to identify those groups *where there is no doubt* one way or the other. You end up with three categories: 1) groups definitely unreached, 2) groups where there is doubt, and 3) groups definitely reached. This could be boiled down to 1) unreached, 2) doubtful, and 3) reached. Logically we expect to focus our highest priority energies on those that are definitely unreached.

But, unfortunately, it is still almost entirely theoretical to ask the simple question of whether or not a group has a people movement to Christ within it. Why? Because this is not the way the world’s statistical machinery is working. The U.N. does not ask such questions. Neither do the secular encyclopedias, nor the military or political researchers. Who does? The three major Christian research offices, those of Patrick Johnstone, David Barrett, and Barbara Grimes, have been at work for years and control masses of data on the World Christian movement, drawing on sources all over the world, but mainly upon annual publications of some kind or another, both secular and church publications, etc. These, understandably, are primarily sources for *what is being done*, not so much for *what is not being done*. Few of these sources render information on peoples with whom they do not yet work, and if they do, still fewer ask this particular, specific “unreached peoples” question. The very concept is still fairly new. Thus, there is inadequate information at the present time.

### In the Meantime...

As a result, we must be content with the best we can do with the data available. This is where the kind of “less than 2% Christian” type of “available data” comes back in as better than nothing. The AD 2000 Movement has drawn together a fine group of willing researchers and has put together a list which combines differing criteria that may all be significant. These sources have drawn upon data from mission agencies, from individual missionaries, from church publications and lists gathered for other purposes and with other criteria. Some research agencies tabulate the percentages of different religious adherents. Some tabulate degrees of ethnicity, and so on. Thus, the practical thing to do is what AD 2000 has done in this still early state of affairs—namely,

to take lists from various sources and various criteria and make up “a list of lists,” giving all of the available information about a now fairly comprehensive list of peoples.

The goal has not changed. It is still “A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the Year 2000.” But there is a practical and temporary shift of attention away from the simple, missiological question, “Is this group reached?” That is, is there a “people movement to Christ” present? Or, is there a “pioneer church planting movement” present? Rather, the question has temporarily become, “Is there published information about this group which could give us some light of some sort on the missiological question?”

### **Do We Have Enough to Work with?**

The really crazy thing is that we have all the information we need for the new outreaches for which we are prepared right now. The more we penetrate the pioneer peoples, the more we will know. We don't really need to know more than we can digest right now. We don't need to wring our hands because we don't know the middle name of every baby in every ghetto in order to reach out with mercy to those whose existence we already know. We don't need to know in advance the name of everyone in every house on every block to be able to leave brochures about the *Jesus* film. We will find out a lot more about a lot of the details when we get out there and get to work. The world is now incredibly small. There is no place on earth you cannot go in a few hours. We must keep our goals clearly in mind and not worry too much about the details. We need not suppose that everything depends on us, but we must understand that God is asking everything of us. That, in turn, is the same as saying that He wants to touch our tongues with a live coal from the altar. It means He wants our love for all the world to reflect the genuineness and compassion of His love for all the world, which has already profoundly benefitted us. Paul explained his motivation when he said, “Christ died for all that those who live might no longer live unto themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (II Cor 5:15).

## **Appendix**

*Note: The following is one of the most significant documents McGavran ever wrote. It was written at the very end of his life and distilled his misgivings at superficial attempts to barge into untouched groups with the Gospel. Much of his whole life of insights is remarkably distilled here.*

## **A Church in Every People: Plain Talk about a Difficult Task**

*Donald A. McGavran*

In the last eighteen years of the twentieth century, the goal of Christian mission should be to preach the Gospel and, by God's grace, to plant in every unchurched segment of mankind—what shall we say—“a church” or “a cluster of growing churches”? By the phrase “segment of mankind” I mean an urbanization, development, caste, tribe, valley, plain, or minority population. I shall explain that the steadily maintained long-range goal should never be the first; but should always be second. The goal is not one small sealed-off conglomerate congregation in every people. Rather, the long-range goal (to be held constantly in view in the years or decades when it is not yet achieved) should be a cluster of growing congregations in every segment.

### ***The One-by-One Method***

As we consider the phrase italicized above, we should remember that it is usually easy to start one single congregation in a new unchurched people group. The missionary arrives. He and his family worship on Sunday. They are the first members of the congregation. He learns the language and preaches the Gospel. He lives like a Christian. He tells people about Christ and helps them in their troubles. He sells tracts or Gospels, or gives them away. Across the years, a few individual converts are won from that. Sometimes they come for very sound and spiritual reasons; sometimes from mixed motives. But here and there a woman, a man, a boy, a girl do decide to follow Jesus. A few employees of the mission become Christian. These may be masons hired to erect the buildings, helpers in the home, rescued persons or orphans. The history of mission in Africa is replete with churches started by buying slaves, freeing them and employing such of them as could not return to their kindred. Such as chose to could accept the Lord. A hundred and fifty years ago this was a common way of starting a church. With the outlawing of slavery, of course, it ceased to be used.

One single congregation arising in the way just described is almost always a conglomerate church—made up of members of several different segments of society. Some old, some young, orphans, rescued persons, helpers and ardent seekers. All seekers are carefully screened to make sure they really intend to receive Christ. In due time a church building is erected and, lo,

“a church in that people.” It is a conglomerate church. It is sealed off from all the people groups of that region. No segment of the population says, “That group of worshipers is us.” They are quite right. It is not. It is ethnically quite a different social unit.

This very common way of beginning the process of evangelization is a slow way to disciple the peoples of the earth—note the plural, “the peoples of the earth.” Let us observe closely what really happens as this congregation is gathered. Each convert, as he becomes a Christian, is seen by kin as one who leaves “us” and joins “them.” He leaves “our gods” to worship “their gods.” Consequently, his own relations force him out. Sometimes he is severely ostracized; thrown out of house and home; his wife is threatened. Hundreds of converts have been poisoned or killed. Sometimes, the ostracism is mild and consists merely in severe disapproval. His people consider him a traitor. A church which results from this process looks to the peoples of the region like an assemblage of traitors. It is a conglomerate congregation. It is made up of individuals who, one by one, have come out of several different societies, castes or tribes.

Now if anyone, in becoming a Christian, is forced out of, or comes out of a tightly-structured segment of society, the Christian cause wins the individual but loses the family. The family, his people, his neighbors of that tribe are fiercely angry at him or her. They are the very men and women to whom he cannot talk. “You are not of us,” they say to him. “You have abandoned us, you like them more than you like us. You now worship their gods not our gods.” As a result, conglomerate congregations, made up of converts won in this fashion, grow very slowly. Indeed, one might truly affirm that, where congregations grow in this fashion, the conversion of the ethnic units (people groups) from which they come is made doubly difficult. “The Christians misled one of our people,” the rest of the group will say. “We’re going to make quite sure that they do not mislead any more of us.”

One-by-one is relatively easy to accomplish. Perhaps 90 out of 100 missionaries who intend church planting get only conglomerate congregations. I want to emphasize that. Perhaps 90 out of every 100 missionaries who intend church planting get only conglomerate congregations. Such missionaries preach the Gospel, tell of Jesus, sell tracts and Gospels and evangelize in many other ways. They welcome inquirers, but whom

do they get? They get a man here, a woman there, a boy here, a girl there, who for various reasons are willing to become Christians and patiently to endure the mild or severe disapproval of their people.

If we understand how churches grow and do not grow on new ground, in untouched and unreached peoples, we must note that the process I have just described seems unreal to most missionaries. “What,” they will exclaim, “could be a better way of entry into all the unreached peoples of that region than to win a few individuals from among them? Instead of resulting in the sealed-off church you describe, the process really gives us points of entry into every society from which a convert has come. That seems to us to be the real situation.”

Those who reason in this fashion have known church growth in a largely Christian land, where men and women who follow Christ are not ostracized, are not regarded as traitors, but rather as those who have done the right thing. In that kind of a society every convert usually can become a channel through which the Christian Faith flows to his relatives and friends. On that point there can be no debate. It was the point I emphasized when I titled my book *The Bridges of God*.

But in tightly-structured societies, where Christianity is looked on as an invading religion, and individuals are excluded for serious fault, there to win converts from several different segments of society, far from building bridges to each of these, erects barriers difficult to cross.

### *The People Movement Approach*

Now let us contrast the other way in which God is discipling the peoples of Planet Earth. My account is not theory but a sober recital of easily observable facts. As you look around the world you see that, while most missionaries succeed in planting only conglomerate churches by the “one-by-one out of the social group” method, here and there clusters of growing churches arise by the people-movement method. They arise by tribe-wise or caste-wise movements to Christ. This is in many ways a better system. In order to use it effectively, missionaries should operate on seven principles.

First, they should be clear about the goal. The goal is not one single conglomerate church in a city or a region. They may get only that, but that must never be their goal. That must be a cluster of growing, indigenous congregations every member of which remains in close contact with his kindred. This cluster grows best

if it is in one people, one caste, one tribe, one segment of society. For example, if you were evangelizing the taxi drivers of Taipei, then your goal would be to win not some taxi drivers, some university professors, some farmers and some fishermen, but to establish churches made up largely of taxi drivers, their wives and children and mechanics. As you win converts of that particular community, the congregation has a natural, built-in social cohesion. Everybody feels at home. Yes, the goal must be clear.

The second principle is that the national leader, or the missionary and his helpers, should concentrate on one people. If you are going to establish a cluster of growing congregations amongst, let us say, the Nair people of Kerala, which is the south west tip of India, then you would need to place most of your missionaries and their helpers so that they can work among the Nairs. They should proclaim the Gospel to Nairs and say quite openly to them, "We are hoping that, within your caste, there soon will be thousands of followers of Jesus Christ, who will remain solidly in the Nair community." They will, of course, not worship the old gods; but then plenty of Nairs don't worship their old gods—plenty of Nairs are Communist, and ridicule their old gods.

Nairs whom God calls, who choose to believe in Christ, are going to love their neighbors more than they did before, and walk in the light. They will be saved and beautiful people. They will remain Nairs while, at the same time, they have become Christians. To repeat, concentrate on one people group. If you have three missionaries, don't have one evangelizing this group, another that, and a third 200 miles away evangelizing still another. That is a sure way to guarantee that any church started will be small, non-growing, one-by-one churches. The social dynamics of those sections of society will work solidly against the eruption of any great growing people movement to Christ.

The third principle is to encourage converts to remain thoroughly one with their own people in most matters. They should continue to eat what their people eat. They should not say, "My people are vegetarians but, now that I have become a Christian, I'm going to eat meat." After they become Christians they should be more rigidly vegetarian than they were before. In the matter of clothing, they should continue to look precisely like their kinfolk. In the matter of marriage, most people are endogamous, they insist that

"our people marry only our people." They look with great disfavor on our marrying other people. And yet when Christians come in one-by-one, they cannot marry their own people. None of them have become Christian. Where only a few of a given people become Christians, when it comes time for them or their children to marry, they have to take husbands or wives from other segments of the population. So their own kin look at them and say, "Yes, become a Christian and mongrelize your children. You have left us and have joined them."

All converts should be encouraged to bear cheerfully the exclusion, the oppression, and the persecution that they are likely to encounter from their people. When anyone becomes a follower of a new way of life, he is likely to meet with some disfavor from his loved ones. Maybe it's mild; maybe it's severe. He should bear such disfavor patiently. He should say on all occasions,

I am a better son than I was before; I am a better father than I was before; I am a better husband than I was before; and I love you more than I used to do. You can hate me, but I will not hate you. You can exclude me, but I will include you. You can force me out of our ancestral house; but I will live on its veranda. Or I will get a house just across the street. I am still one of you, I am more one of you than I ever was before.

Encourage converts to remain thoroughly one with their people in most matters.

Please note that word "most." They cannot remain one with their people in idolatry, or drunkenness or obvious sin. If they belong to a segment of society that earns its living stealing they must "steal no more." But, in most matters (how they talk, how they dress, how they eat, where they go, what kind of houses they live in), they can look very much like their people, and ought to make every effort to do so.

The fourth principle is to try to get group decisions for Christ. If only one person decides to follow Jesus, do not baptize him immediately. Say to him, "You and I will work together to lead another five or ten or, God willing, fifty of your people to accept Jesus Christ as Savior so that when you are baptized, you are baptized with them." Ostracism is very effective against one lone person. But ostracism is weak indeed when exercised against a group of a dozen. And when exercised against two hundred it has practically no force at all.

The fifth principle is this: Aim for scores of groups of people to become Christians in an even flowing stream across the years. One of the common mistakes made by missionaries, eastern as well as western, all around the world is that when a few become Christians—perhaps 100, 200 or even 1,000—the missionaries spend all their time teaching them. They want to make them good Christians and they say to themselves, “If these people become good Christians, then the Gospel will spread.” So for years they concentrate on a few congregations. By the time, ten or twenty years later, that they begin evangelizing outside that group, the rest of the people no longer want to become Christians. That has happened again and again. This principle requires that, from the very beginning, the missionary keeps on reaching out to new groups. “But,” you say, “is not this a sure way to get poor Christians who don’t know the Bible? If we follow that principle we shall soon have a lot of ‘raw’ Christians. Soon we shall have a community of perhaps five thousand people who are very sketchily Christian.”

Yes, that is certainly a danger. At this point, we must lean heavily upon the New Testament, remembering the brief weeks or months of instruction Paul gave to his new churches. We must trust the Holy Spirit, and believe that God has called those people out of darkness into His wonderful light. As between two evils, giving them too little Christian teaching and allowing them to become a sealed-off community that cannot reach its own people, the latter is much the greater danger. We must not allow new converts to become sealed-off. We must continue to make sure that a constant stream of new converts comes into the ever-growing cluster of congregations.

Now the sixth point is this: The converts, five or five thousand, ought to say or at least feel:

We Christians are advance guard of our people, of our segment of society. We are showing our relatives and neighbors a better way of life. The way we are pioneering is good for us who have become Christians and will be very good for you thousands who have yet to believe. Please look on us not as traitors in any sense. We are better sons, brothers and wives, better tribesmen and caste fellows, better members of our labor union, than we ever were before. We are showing ways in which, while remaining thoroughly of our own segment of society, we all can have a better life. Please look on us as the pioneers of our own people entering a wonderful Promised Land.

The last principle I stress is this: Constantly emphasize brotherhood. In Christ there is no Jew, no Greek, no bond, no free, no Barbarian, no Scythian. We are all one in Christ Jesus. But, at the same time, let us remember that Paul did not attack all imperfect social institutions. For example, he did not do away with slavery. Paul said to the slave, “Be a better slave.” He said to the slave owner, “Be a kindlier master.”

Paul also said in that famous passage emphasizing unity, “There is no male or female.” Nevertheless Christians, in their boarding schools and orphanages, continue to sleep boys and girls in separate dormitories!! In Christ, there is no sex distinction. Boys and girls are equally precious in God’s sight. Men from this tribe, and men from that are equally precious in God’s sight. We are all equally sinners saved by grace. These things are true but, at the same time, there are certain social niceties which Christians at this time may observe.

As we continue to stress brotherhood, let us be sure that the most effective way to achieve brotherhood is to lead ever increasing numbers of men and women from every *ethnos*, every tribe, every segment of society into an obedient relationship to Christ. As we multiply Christians in every segment of society, the possibility of genuine brotherhood, justice, goodness and righteousness will be enormously increased. Indeed, the best way to get justice, possibly the only way to get justice, is to have very large numbers in every segment of society become committed Christians.

### **Conclusion**

As we work for Christward movements in every people, let us not make the mistake of believing that “one-by-one out of the society into the church” is a bad way. One precious soul willing to endure severe ostracism in order to become a follower of Jesus—one precious soul coming all by himself—is a way that God has blessed and is blessing to the salvation of mankind. But it is a slow way. And it is a way which frequently seals off the convert’s own people from any further hearing of the Gospel.

Sometimes one-by-one is the only possible method. When it is, let us praise God for it, and live with its limitations. Let us urge all those wonderful Christians who come bearing persecution and oppression, to pray for their own dear ones and to work constantly that more of their own people may believe and be saved.



One-by-one is one way that God is blessing to the increase of His Church. The people movement is another way. The great advances of the Church on new ground out of non-Christian religions have always come by people movements, never one-by-one. It is equally true that one-by-one-out-of-the-people is a very common beginning way. In the book, *Bridges of God*, which God used to launch the Church Growth Movement, I have used a simile. I say there that missions start proclaiming Christ on a desert-like plain. There life is hard, the number of Christians remains small. A large missionary presence is required. But, here and there, the missionaries or the converts find ways to break out of that arid plain and proceed up into the verdant mountains. There large numbers of people live; there great churches can be founded; there the Church grows strong; that is people-movement land.

I commend that simile to you. Let us accept what God gives. If it is one-by-one, let us accept that and lead those who believe in Jesus to trust in Him completely. But let us always pray that, after that beginning, we may proceed to higher ground, to more verdant pasture, to more fertile lands where great groups of men and women, all of the same segment of society, become Christians and thus open the way for Christward movements in each people on earth. Our goal should be Christward movements within each segment. There the dynamics of social cohesion will advance the Gospel and lead multitudes out of darkness into His wonderful life. Let us be sure that we do it by the most effective methods.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Now, AD2000 & Beyond Movement.



# The Role of Western Missions in the 21st Century

*Ralph D. Winter*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This continuing post-pioneer part of the picture is a blessed reality. But it is a very different process from the continuing activity of pioneer mission to the small remaining unreached groups in the world. Ironically, the very success of missions in producing vital overseas churches has meant, for one thing, that donors are becoming less and less interested in supporting mission work. Missionaries have sought to “work themselves out of a job,” and they have succeeded in many places beyond their dreams. But their dreams have turned into nightmares as their faithful supporters have lost interest in their work. Donors have by now long been complaining that the Great Commission must not be redefined to read, “Go ye into all the world and meddle in the national churches.” Many mission supporters have turned to assist the continuing growth and impact of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, since this organization is known to be working where there is not yet a church that can stand on its own two feet.

**3** *Meanwhile, as missions have often had great success among oppressed and minority groups, the Gospel of Christ and the Bible has also gone beyond the physical extension of the Western institutional church*

*structure. It has entered into the large “Resistant blocs” of non-Christians producing seemingly syncretistic forms of “semi-Christian” faith. Millions of Africans and Asians are in this second category.*

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

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

It is necessary to speak of a “global stalling” of the Westernized form of the Gospel.

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

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

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

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

For example, the Greek tradition of faith influenced the Slavs and the Celts, while the Latin influenced both Celtic and Teutonic cultures, and the Syrian tradition influenced the Arabic culture. Germanic Lutheranism, Slavic Orthodoxy and Semitic Islam resulted, employing different languages, literatures and cultures, the most significant common denominator being the Bible. All of these, to some significant extent, were “people of the book,” the Bible of the early church. All of them, in addition, were influenced by the New Testament and generated their own additional semi-scriptures as well.

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

When Islam engulfed Egypt, two different Biblical traditions were at that time at each other’s throats. All of these various cultural traditions tended to consider their own cultural derivation of the faith correct, and any lingering presence of the followers of a “foreign” faith was resented, rejected or marginalized.

Actually, none of these cultural traditions of faith were perfect, even though most of them were barely salvific.

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

We need only to reexamine our own past to see how drastically unity was shattered by the various deviations in Western history. The Quakers were considered a radical departure—and they were. Evangelicalism itself was, but so were Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Pente-

costals—all with varying degrees of similarity to the Reformation traditions and with varying degrees of relationship to the Bible. All these became—and perhaps still are for many—shocking departures from “the faith once delivered.”

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

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

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

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

We have always thought that one of the blessings of the achievement of a worldwide Church movement is

the possibility that this miraculous global fellowship would enable those of us in the West to reexamine our faith, our theology, our very study of the Bible. What neither the Western church nor its converts in the Third World are fully prepared for is the radical de-Westernization of the Gospel. But the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be the time when this will happen without our power to stop it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In summary, the difference between the activity of Western and non-Western missions is not very great. They are both highly Western compared to the new

indigenous movements which derive their faith more directly from the Bible than from Christianity. We have long gloated over the fact that Christianity is now geographically global. Our faith and our Bible, just as in the past, quickly goes beyond any particular codification of it.

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

# Making Sense to Today's Scientists

Ralph D. Winter

## Part I: Could This Have Happened?

### The Universe

Many scientists believe that about 14 billion years ago the utterly amazing and puzzling “universe” exploded into being. Such estimates also indicate that almost five billion years ago our planet Earth came into existence as a part of a relatively minor solar system which in turn was part of an exceedingly larger galaxy, which in turn was one of billions of galaxies in the whole universe.

### Planet Earth

When the planet Earth came into existence, all there was at that time, so far as we know, was what is called “the inorganic” world, that is, no life forms. Inorganic matter is itself an amazing world of complexity, consisting of an array of more than a hundred different and internally complex “atoms” and combinations thereof (molecules) plus electromagnetic radiation of many sorts (radio waves, infrared rays, visible light, cosmic rays), as well as mysterious forces such as gravitation and magnetism.

### Life

However, to this already highly complex reality something new would be added: life, that is, the “organic” world. Most paleontologists believe that the first tiny life forms began to appear on this planet about three or four billion years ago but these forms were so tiny and “boneless” that fossils of their existence are of no help in clarifying their time of origin.

Apparently, however, during the next three billion years, larger and increasingly complex forms of life did appear, although not until close to the end of that

period were they large enough (measurable in inches) and of such a character to leave fossil evidences. Meanwhile, disturbingly, during the entire period of Earth's history the planet has been pummelled massively due to weather, plate tectonics (continental drift), volcanic activity, earthquakes and collisions of asteroidal bodies from outer space. (It has been estimated that about fifty tons is added to the earth's weight each day from outer space objects and dust from such objects that burn up in our atmosphere before striking the earth.) The larger of these collisions have been very destructive of life forms.

### The Cambrian Explosion/Predators

Then, relatively suddenly, a little over 500 million years ago the so-called “Cambrian Explosion” took place when, puzzlingly, a vast profusion of new forms of life appeared. Even more strangely *and now distressingly*, paleontologists widely believe, *life-destroying* forms of life (predators) appeared for the first time. This sudden appearance of a destructive—you might say, evil—force has constituted something that, from that point on, has become an absolutely major and horrifying feature of the natural world drastically affecting all forms of life including the human being.

### Asteroids!

Scientists were shocked when the first moon landing reported back that the pock-marked surface of the moon was not due to volcanic craters but to *impact* craters. This discovery set off a gold rush on earth to find the equivalent battering from outer space. As a result, *Scientific American* in May of 2002 published a diagram pin-pointing sixty impact craters since the Cambrian Explosion, for each their date and size—all of them

larger than fifteen miles in diameter—and all of them having significant effect on life forms at the time of their impact. Today we are aware that millions of tons of the earth's surface (inevitably including life forms) have landed on Mars, and vice versa, due to asteroidal collisions that typically splash up matter which goes into orbit, eventually (potentially) landing elsewhere.

Thus, the development of life forms both before and after the Cambrian Explosion has had a checkered career. One of the most distinctive periods of post-Cambrian life was the one dominated by the thousands of different species of what are popularly called Dinosaurs. This form of life followed the largest of all the asteroidal collisions about 250 million years ago. Most scientists today believe that the Dinosaur type of life was extinguished by another major impact from outer space sixty-five million years ago—the evidence being a 100-mile-in-diameter crater in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

## Mammals

Apparently, mammals really came into their own once the dinosaurs were out of the picture. Then, very recently mammals have mainly been driven to extinction—virtually all mammals over 100 pounds have been killed off by humans in the last few moments of Earth's history.

## What Does This Mean?

If what has been said thus far actually happened, we clearly have an amazing story crying out for interpretation. Was there a supreme being behind all of this? If so, was he only temporarily involved or does he continue to be involved? If no supreme intelligence was there, how did the entire inorganic universe pop into being, and how did the organic universe pop into being? What is the rhyme or reason behind all of this?

Quite frankly, for instance, outer space does not strike one as a very intelligible work of a god of love and peace. Neither does the pockmarked physical history of this planet—with all of its violence of wind, shifting continents, volcanic explosions and deadly collisions from outer space, which could reappear at any moment.

Then, too, in regard to the organic world, there could have been no life of any sort without the inorganic world, that is, if it had not already been true that hundreds of different "atoms," all structurally ordered, had not already existed, not to mention the incredible com-

plexity within the nucleus of each atom—as well as all those rays and forces. Thus, it would appear that there is no great gain in assuming that life itself developed by a random process if the basic components of that life, awesomely complex, remain totally unexplained.

## A Supreme Intelligence?

One theory might be that a supreme intelligence had reasons known only to himself for creating the universe and our planet the way they are. Yet, from a purely human point of view the significance of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and asteroidal collisions, etc., is understandably negative. It is all very prejudicial to the survival of life forms. Thus, it is hard to understand why life would have been created on this planet in view of these flagrant dangers.

However, to try to understand the involvement of a supreme intelligence in the long story of the appearance of life forms is even more difficult. Why would an omniscient being take so long, with so many apparent false starts and dead-end streets? And most difficult of all, why would such a being have introduced the Cambrian profusion of predatory, life-destroying life forms?

Trying to understand the apparently inhospitable universe or even the formidable natural dangers of this planet is one thing. Let us focus more precisely on the meaning of the presence of life combined with life-destroying forms of life.

## Intermediate Beings, Good and Bad?

Suppose a supreme being intentionally created some intermediate beings with human-like free will, creatures that do not grow old but do learn and grow wiser, and with their free will are able to do lots of things, such as carry out the will of their creator, even rebel against the supreme being and seek to overturn his work.

If these less-than-infinite intermediate beings were the ones from the beginning employed in the development of life forms, then suddenly both the length of time involved and the occasional shortcomings of their work would be understandable. Most important, their capacity to turn against their creator would enable an understanding of the appearance of destructive forms of life in the Cambrian Explosion and a nature which since that time has been "red in tooth and claw."

Meanwhile, the sudden appearance of *homo sapiens* in the final few minutes of this story presents both a marvelous and ugly picture. Marvelous, because no



other form of life has exhibited anything near the same intelligence. Ugly, because no other form of life has been as cruel and dangerous to its own kind or as devastating to virtually all other forms of life.

If we build on this point of view it would appear that a rebellious and destructive type of intermediate beings has corrupted and transformed *homo sapiens* from its first appearance.

### The Jewish Bible

The Jewish Bible comes into the picture here. It would seem to begin with stories of the emergence of *homo sapiens* and seems to describe the various stages following a particular mass extinction in the region of what today we call the Fertile Crescent. An asteroidal collision would seem to explain that this particular region, or “known world,” became “formless and void,” the challenge to new forms of life being that of replenishing that particular “known world” with both animal and human life.

It is important to note that the Hebrew language of Genesis 1:1 allows it to read, “When God began to renovate things, the (local) earth was formless and void.”

(Is it not reasonable that an ancient document would refer specifically to the world with which its hearers were acquainted? They did not know of a planetary spheroid, a solar system, much less a universe. Do we not read anachronistically when we assume Genesis 1:1 refers to the universe?)

Curiously, what is typical in Earth’s history of smaller, regionally-significant asteroidal collisions is the throwing up of masses of dust which does become a global phenomenon. The Sun and the Moon disappear totally. Gradually, as the dust settles, there is a faintly lightened period in each 24 hours. Later, rays of light get through to the surface of the earth and with those rays rainbows become possible, etc.

### Homo Sapiens

But the greatest novelty of the series of events described in Genesis is the appearance on this planet for the first time of a form of life (*homo sapiens*) that has apparently been intelligent enough and capable enough either to rebuild the planet or destroy it.

When did *homo sapiens* appear? It may be possible to avoid a great deal of discussion about the exact time of the first appearance of *homo sapiens* if we don’t bother

too much with *fossils* but look rather at the first appearances of what can be called *cultural* sophistication. This is, in fact, a recent scholarly trend.

If we do that, two major evidences of distinctively human sophistication stand out. One is the first appearance of the selective breeding of plants, producing the wholly artificial major foods of wheat, corn, and rice. The other would be the appearance of the similar genetic alteration of animal life in the taming of wild animals, such as dogs from wolves. Both of these major events are calculated to have begun about eleven thousand years ago, just as the last great ice age receded, and both require an intelligence far beyond that of any of the so-called hominids.

In addition to these two “advances” of human achievement, of course, we have many other examples of truly amazing human tinkering with nature, such as the harnessing of electricity and radiation in a thousand ways, or the discovery of germs and the attempt to eradicate or suppress the most dangerous types thereof, etc.

### Setbacks

Nevertheless, “war and pestilence” more than anything else have greatly postponed the replenishment of the earth by humans. World War II was the first war in history, it is thought, in which more people died of war activity than by disease. A gradual understanding and considerable conquest of disease has by now allowed the precipitous skyrocketing of population. How can we explain the meaning of this partial human success against war and disease creating a problem?

We have already supposed that a supreme being may have created intermediate beings which have been constantly at work over billions of years in the development of life (similar perhaps to thousands of intelligent engineers being constantly at work during the 100-year evolution of the American automobile). Also, we have supposed that there came a time (the Cambrian Explosion, 500 million years ago) when some of these intermediate beings broke loose and began to sabotage the very work to which they had so long contributed. This destructive conflict could have gone on at the DNA level, since these intermediate beings had already gained the intelligence necessary to tinker with genetic formulae, producing not only vicious and destructive new versions of animal life but also pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, and parasites with their deadly toll. The overarching “war” has been that

between these evil intelligent beings and humans, not between humans and humans.

### **Adapting to the Onslaught**

Under such wartime circumstances, with 80 to 90 percent of all babies dying in infancy during much of human history, it would not be illogical to suppose that the intermediate beings still loyal to the supreme being would have defensively altered the animal and human DNA so as to become artificially prolific. Our recent dilemma of exploding population has thus become one of artificially coping (e.g. birth control, abortion, infanticide) with an equally artificial highly prolific species of human.

### **Missions?**

Furthermore, such wartime circumstances give quite a different twist to the conventional outlook on Christian mission activity. Missions usually focus on rescuing humans from this world rather than restoring creation, or, to employ a biblical phrase, “destroying the works of the devil.”

We may quite often speak glibly of glorifying God in all the earth, and wishing to see all peoples worship Him when, in fact, to do that is an uphill climb, all of nature being distorted, life forms becoming vicious and deadly. If no evil intelligence is involved or recognized and the supreme being is supposed to be the one mysteriously authoring even the most tragic evils, how are we to rescue that supreme being from gaining a reputation of mysterious indifference to human suffering? Thus, it would seem reasonable to believe that he has never been indifferent but has, for example, from the creation of homo sapiens been encouraging and expecting his human followers (as well as his still-loyal intermediate beings) to ally themselves with him in the conquest of all sources of suffering, distortion, destruction and evil, in a biblical phrase, destroying the works of the devil.

If, however, all that is what it takes to glorify God, is that what missions are doing?

## **Part II: Restating These Ideas As a Very Brief Scenario**

God created intelligent angels with free will who, following his guidance over a long period of time (since they are finite), put together an immense variety of life forms with successively greater free will and less instinctive guidance.

One day about 500 million years ago, by which time angels in general had acquired a very advanced understanding of life, of DNA, RNA, protein structures, etc., a leading angel turned against God and led many angels to rebel with him. As a result, in the Cambrian Period, life forms began to display for the first time genetically altered life-destroying characteristics at every size-level from viruses to larger animal life.

The good angels, with God's guidance, simultaneously fought back with all their acquired insight into the nature of life forms, designing and altering genetically as many as possible with never-before-seen defensive features such as speed, horns, quills, shells and scales to enable defense against animals of similar size. Then, in order to defend the larger life forms from smaller life forms such as viruses, bacteria and parasites, the good angels had to develop internal defenses, such as what we call “the immune system.” This defensive system alone in the case of the human species can detect and demobilize three thousand billion different attacking pathogens. The awesome extent of these defenses readily confers an idea of the scope of evil in nature, that is, the ingenuity of Satan and his forces in distorting and destroying God's good creation and in the process tearing down His glory.

Good angels continued to develop new forms of life but they have often been distorted into destructiveness by the evil angels.

God again and again stamped out many or even nearly all forms of life through sixty major asteroidal collisions in the last 500 million years (since the fall of Satan), the most recent large collision 65 million years ago ending the reign of terror of the truly atrocious violence of the thousands of different predatory “dinosaurs.”

The “Edenic Plan” was launched, perhaps eleven thousand years ago, in precisely the area where a much smaller asteroid impacted the Middle East, reducing that region of the earth into a “formlessness and void” condition (Gen 1:2) and at the same time engulfing the entire globe with an impenetrable canopy of dust in the atmosphere. Outside that area diseased and predatory animals continued to exist. As this dust settled, night and day became vaguely visible, then eventually rays of light and thus rainbows. In that area, good angels under God painstakingly recreated life forms in their original non-carnivorous state (as explicitly stated in Gen 1: 29 and 30), and went on to create a radically different form

of life, the human being “in His image” which is variously called *homo sapiens* and *homo sapiens sapiens*.

This new form of life was intended to be an ally of the good angels fighting against Satan and his works, but the entire Edenic project fell prey to Satan, animal life and human life became carnivorous (Gen 9:3), man himself being seduced by Satan to become more a survivor than a soldier, preoccupied with his own salvation far more than the defeat of Satan.

As part of this onslaught humans have been deceived into believing that the distressing violence and suffering in nature is God’s initiative not Satan’s. Thus, we do not even see disease germs as the work of Satan. As a result, we are not fighting against the whole range of deadly pathogens in the Name of Christ even though the New Testament clearly states that “the Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of Satan” (1 Jn 3:8).

Our earthly mission begins to appear more clearly as we recognize as best we can the full extent of the “works of Satan” (shifting the blame to Satan and thus glorifying God), and as we ally ourselves with the good angels in destroying the works of Satan. “Without God we can’t and without us He won’t.” Our mission is

clarified as we learn more and more about the DNA-level mechanisms of distortion which account for most of the suffering in this world.

This approach, note well, removes for millions of thinking intellectuals the largest single intellectual barrier to belief—the question of “Why does a good, all-powerful God do evil?”

The story of man has quite apparently been that of groping back into mission, very gradually and progressively subduing both war and pestilence, the evidence being the recently staggering population explosion and, temporarily, the problem of overpopulation. This explosion has weakened resistance to disease and even the war against disease. The secular world in so far as it is seeded with basic Christian cosmology and world view is very slowly but steadily groping its way in a war against disease germs, but is neither encouraged nor heavily backed by Bible believers, either theologically or literally.

This is where we are. Billions of dollars are spent on dealing with the results of disease but mere pennies go to the eradication of disease pathogens. Ominously, Evangelical mission forces are almost totally blind to this major dimension of mission.



# Where Darwin Scores Higher than Intelligent Design

*Ralph D. Winter*

According to Deborah Cadbury's book entitled *The Terrible Lizard*, which tells us about early dinosaur hunters, the tumble of new bones being dug up right in England soon became a significant factor in a vast and widespread shift away from what came to be called a "bondage to Moses," that is, bondage to the Bible.

Cornelius Hunter's book, *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*, demonstrates conclusively that even Darwin, only a little later, was still concerned about the Christian faith in that he was pained until the day he died by the intellectual task of explaining how a good and all-powerful God could have authored the cruelty which he saw so pervasively in nature, and which many of the discoveries of dinosaur bones dramatically highlighted.

Both Hunter and Cadbury show that in the 1820s Biblical perspectives were major factors filtering interpretations of the bones being discovered of earlier life forms. This was true at Oxford University, for example, which was in that era a citadel of defense of the literal text of the Bible, somewhat of a Moody Bible Institute.

Today we have the wonderful and effective work of the Evangelical pioneers in the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, a perspective portrayed magnificently in the Illustra Media video, *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*. But neither the writings of these pioneer ID people nor this magnificent video reflect any stated concern whatsoever for the perplexing presence of pervasive evil, suffering and cruelty throughout all of nature. Strange, because the lurid presence of evil ("Nature red in tooth and claw") was a major factor in Darwin's thinking and the thinking of quite a few other key

people who in his day were confused about how the existence of violent forms of life could be congruent with the concept of a benevolent Creator.

Thus, it would appear that some of our present-day creationists are so eager to give God all the credit for all of creation that the virtually unavoidable presence of evil to be seen there has become strangely less important than it was in Darwin's day and even to Darwin himself. Would it not be very ironic if the man we usually accuse of destroying faith in a Creator God were to turn out to be more interested in preserving the good reputation of that God than we are?

In saying that some of our creationists are glossing over the surprisingly prominent reality of intelligent evil in nature, I don't mean that any of these ID people really deep down are unwilling to confront the enigmatic reality of evil. I just mean that, from the current discussion as seen in their written materials that would appear to be the case.

As a matter of fact, I myself have all my life believed in what C. S. Lewis called "that hideous strength." Yet only recently have I begun to reflect on the possibility that this hideous and intelligent evil must not reasonably be dealt with among us any longer merely by superficial references to the philosophical concept of *sin* and to a *fall of man*. Why? Because the mere *idea of sin* is not personifyable. Sin as an abstraction is defined by some as the departure from what is right. In that case the concept itself does not necessarily imply the potent and powerful existence of a diabolical personality any more than would a wrong score on a third-grade arithmetic test. The key question is, "Does it make any practical difference if we conceive of ourselves, on the one hand,

as tempted by the freedom to sin or, on the other hand, fighting against an evil one who tempts us intelligently?”

Note, for example, the huge difference, back in the days of the Second World War, between, on the one hand, the often nearly invisible icebergs that sent many ships to the bottom of the ocean and, on the other hand, the stealthy, intelligent submarines which caused far greater damage. What if the sinking of thousands of ships had been conceived of as merely the result of inanimate forces? What if scientists had not figured out a way to bounce underwater sound off steel-hulled submarines in such a way as to distinguish the difference between an iceberg and a submarine? This technique, to be called *sonar*, came late in the war, and implementing it took even longer. By that time not a thousand ships had been sunk, not two thousand, but six thousand ships crossing the Atlantic, loaded with food and war materiel, had gone to the bottom. It may be hard to believe, but the outcome of that enormous war turned on the subsequent success in fighting these *intelligent* submarines.

It could be alleged that I am missing a main point. A conversation I had with Philip Johnson several years ago brought this forcibly to my attention. I began by congratulating him (and Michael Behe) on the potent logic of the ID movement, but I said, “When you look at your computer screen and if it says suddenly, ‘Ha, I just wiped out your hard disk,’ you have not the slightest difficulty in concluding that you have suffered the onslaught of a computer virus concocted by an intelligent, real person. Curiously, then, when we contemplate a real biological virus which, though only a tiny assemblage, assails the health of an enormously larger human being, why do we have trouble concluding that we are dealing with an intelligent *evil* design?”

His answer, essentially, was, “Ralph, in my writings and public appearances I can’t even mention God much less Satan. I have a very specific battle to fight, namely, to take apart the logic of unaided evolution. That is all I am trying to do.” Okay, I have respected that response. I have not pestered him further. In fact, I am not even now endeavoring to fault the ID movement and its objectives.

Rather, I would ask a larger question. There are very many people, even Bible-believing Christians (not just non-Christians), who are to this day profoundly puzzled, perplexed, and certainly confused by the extensive

presence in the created world of outrageous evil, created apparently by what we believe to be a God who is both all-powerful and benevolent. 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.

- When my wife died in 2001 more than one person tried to console me by observing that, and I quote, “God knows what He is doing.”
- When Chuck Colson’s daughter concluded that her brain-damaged son was, and I quote, “exactly the way God wanted him to be,” the impressively intelligent and influential Colson actually applauded her conclusion.
- When Jonathan Edwards fatally contracted smallpox in his effort to try out a vaccine that might protect the Indians in Western Massachusetts, the vast majority of the hyper-calvinistically trained pastors of Massachusetts concluded that God killed him because, to quote them, “he was interfering with Divine Providence.” These pastors went on to organize an anti-vaccination society.
- Going further back in time, a Mother Superior in Spain woke up one morning and detected a small lump in her forehead. She concluded that it must be God who was doing something to her presumably to deepen her devotion and nourish her character. When it finally turned out that a worm was burrowing there, and had broken the surface so you could see exactly what it was, she concluded that it was God’s worm. When she would stoop over to pick something up, and it would occasionally fall out, she would replace it so as not to obstruct the will of God.

These are, however, only a few examples compared to the thousands of times a day among even modern Evangelicals that some blatant evil goes unattacked because it is resignedly if not fatalistically assumed to be the initiative of God. I am not so much interested in the philosophical or theological aspects of this situation as I am in the resulting passivity before eradicable evil, the practical fatalism.

I will go one step further. If we are dealing with an intelligent evil, even our thinking about that fact may likely be opposed and confused by that same evil force, that evil power, that evil personality. Is there any

evidence of this additional complexity? In what form would it appear? How could we identify it?

The human period of history is paper thin when compared to the vast expanse of the previous story of the development of life on earth. But even in the few thousands of years of the existence of *homo sapiens*, it would seem clear that the growth of human population is directly related to the degree of acquired human knowledge of, and intentional resistance to, *microbiological pathogens*. A whole flood of books have appeared in recent years commenting on the plagues of history and on the general conquest of disease through medicine. Both war and pestilence have long been noted to be an impediment to population growth. But pestilence appears to be the greater problem.

World War II, we understand, was the first war in history during which more people died from military action than from war-introduced disease. Progress has been slow and even today, as antibiotics seem to be running their course, it has been a story of reverses and plateaus, not just triumphs. But the calibration of our conquest simply and crassly by population growth (or non-growth) is roughly workable. The phenomenon of population growth, however, is not widely understood or easily measured.

If the estimated 27 million world population in Abraham's day 4,000 years ago had grown at the present rate of the world population, there would have been six billion people only 321 years later. Had it grown at the rate of Egypt's current rate the six billion would have been reached in only 123 years. What actually happened was a growth so slow that 2,000 years later, at the time of Christ, world population was not six billion but only one thirtieth of that. Again after three centuries of literacy during Roman occupation of southern England, the Roman legions were withdrawn to protect the city of Rome itself. Soon Britain lapsed back into illiteracy and into horrendous war and pestilence to the extent that its population did not increase in the slightest for the next 600 years (from 440 AD to 1066 AD).

At that point the tribal backwater that was Europe began gradually to crawl into conquest of both war and disease. The rest of the story of cascading increase in Western populations, as well as colonially affected global populations, is common knowledge. This increase, as already noted, is a rough and ready measure

of the conquest of disease, a story which, as I say, is documented very clearly in a recent flood of books on plagues and the history of medicine.

Curiously, what is perhaps the most enduring characteristic in this conquest is the removal of false ideas about the nature of disease. The very discovery of unbelievably small pathogens was long in coming. Our major Western theologians, whether Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin, knew absolutely nothing about the vast world of microbiology. They, in turn had been influenced by Augustine, who is credited with giving God the credit for much of what Satan does.

Thus, even 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?”

The recurrent pattern of attempts at discovery is disturbingly often a matter of looking for the wrong solution. A parallel would be looking for icebergs not intelligent submarines. Again and again medical authorities have confidently defined the causes of certain diseases as passive conditions rather than intelligently devised (and constantly revised) pathogens. For example, again and again it was “discovered” that stomach ulcers were caused by an infection, not stress. This happened in the 1880s, again in 1945, again in 1981 (in Australia) but the wrong solutions held sway unquestioned in this country for ten more years until the New York tabloid, the *National Enquirer*, ran a cover story on ulcers and infection describing the Australian breakthrough. Even so, after ten more years a survey of medical doctors in the state of Colorado revealed that less than 50% had yielded to the right solution.

A similar history is displayed in the case of tuberculosis, a major global killer. It was long thought that chilly and damp conditions were the cause. Eventually it became clear that the cause is a very clever pathogen that has recently been modified to become even more difficult to defeat.

But this pervasive and curious confusion about causes is not just a matter of past history. In February of 1999, *Atlantic Monthly* published a lengthy cover story confidently presenting the theory that heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimers, and even schizophrenia are the result of infections, not the usual “passive”

factors such as diets high in fat or salt or whatever. Evidently in Europe such perspectives have been more widely pursued.

Now, you would think that so prominent an exposure of an idea so enormously significant would have reverberated back in 1999 in newspapers and other periodicals. But there was nothing in the *LA Times* for another month, and then only about three inches that did not recognize even remotely the import of the theory. Three months later a fairly long article on the subject appeared in the *LA Times*, although it did not mention the *Atlantic Monthly* article nor any of the researchers to which it referred.

Then there was mainly silence—for three years. Finally, in May of 2002 *Scientific American* sported a cover story that calmly and boldly declared that the passive factors in heart disease and the normal explanation of the progressive build up of plaque in arteries is little related to our nation's biggest killer. There is a totally different mechanism, which, it says, has been known for 20 years. It points out that gradual reduction of arterial channels would presumably produce gradual weakening in the person afflicted, and that heart attacks are characteristically most often sudden, and 50% of the time occur in people whose bodies do not display the usual symptoms. For the record, heart disease is not only the biggest killer but the most costly. At \$1 billion per day the cost of dealing with people afflicted with heart disease could rebuild the New York towers every three days.

Note that this new perspective is a total upset of long-standing assumptions (similar to the idea that stress causes ulcers), namely that *passive conditions of life, diet, exercise, salt intake, etc., produce heart attacks*. Now we hear that the actual explanation is not within the arteries

but from within the walls of the arteries, namely, inflammations producing sudden and unpredictable eruptions that instantly block an artery totally. These inflammations are, furthermore, now feared to be the result not of inanimate, passive conditions, but of intelligent pathogens. Not icebergs but intelligent submarines.

The same general story, but far more complicated, could be described for the sphere of cancer. Very gradually, with uphill opposition again, the recognition of viral causes has gained steam.

We can ask why is it so hard for intelligent evil to be recognized. We can also ask why it is that almost all attention to cancer is focused on treatments of the results of cancer and less than one tenth of one percent of the billions ploughed into cancer goes toward understanding the nature of cancer, and even there the theory of intelligent pathogens is slighted and even resisted.

Everything I have said sums up as the problem of the failure to recognize intelligent evil. It is by no means simply a philosophical or theological issue. By far the largest human effort in America today relates directly or indirectly to the presence of disease and of the distortion of Creative Intent in the area of human life. It is a major error to look in the wrong direction for the cause of a disease. It would seem to me to be an even more serious error not to notice the existence of intelligent evil at all, which the published materials of the Intelligent Design group uniformly ignore. Darwin did not do that. 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 sense he scored higher than what we see in the written materials of Intelligent Design.



# Join the World Christian Movement

*Ralph D. Winter*

*The Perspectives Study Program is a ministry of the U.S. Center for World Mission—a non-denominational parachurch ministry that works with churches, mission agencies, and campus ministries around the world. Perspectives has a long and singular track record in the business of opening students' eyes to the Bible, world history, international culture, and God's purpose for it all in a way that no other course can offer. The content of the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course is undergirded by an integrated set of core ideas. To see a detailed description of the core ideas of the Perspectives program and to see if a course might be offered near you, visit the Perspectives Study Program website at: [www.perspectives.org](http://www.perspectives.org).*

When you decided to sign up for the Perspectives class you may not have realized what you were getting into—that it is not so much a class as it an introduction to a *movement*. Perhaps you just didn't catch the full significance of the word *movement* in the title of the course—Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. Now you know. Now you understand you are being seriously invited to join that movement—the World Christian *Movement*!

But what are the next steps beyond spectator status? It may not be clear to you yet just what God has in mind for you. You don't want to make a false start. What can you do for sure? What do you need to learn next? How is the calling to mobilization different from, but as important as, that of being a front-line missionary?

Most people think of the cause of missions as a bunch of missionaries out there in a tropical forest working with their bare hands. Well, for that matter, some people think wars consist of boys out there on the

front lines popping away with guns. But wars are usually a “war effort” encompassing many more people than those right at the front. So, missions is a “mission effort” involving, necessarily, far more people in the support structure than those right at the front.

To be more specific, suppose you grew up with a great interest in the drilling of oil wells. You saw a video as a young person of the “wildcatters” who sometimes strike oil in unexpected places. You decided you would like to become a well-driller.

But, as you studied the subject you discovered the “oil industry.” You learned all about oil refineries, oil diplomats who dicker with foreign governments, geophysicists who make precise measurements of feedback from deep under the earth, etc. So you decided you would rather be a geophysicist! But you wouldn't have known such a possibility existed if all you knew about were organizations apparently recruiting only well-drillers.

In the same way, the World Christian Movement has become a highly developed international enterprise. At the core of this historic global movement are professionals and hundreds of dedicated, seasoned organizations. It's proper to look upon this core of the World Christian Movement as the “mission industry.” In the USA alone it's a two-to-three-billion-dollar-per-year activity—and its influence is far beyond what that money would do in any commercial venture.

To find your way into this incredibly influential enterprise, it is helpful to distinguish the roles of front-line teams who labor cross-culturally, let's call them *missionaries*, and those who marshal support for them, let's call them *mobilizers*. Whatever your role may be, as a

missionary or as a mobilizer, you need a working relationship with others in the mission industry. William Carey wasn't a loner.

Next to doing nothing, the most certain way to squander your life's work would be to maintain an ignorant detachment from this astounding movement of dedicated mission professionals. Most of the important mistakes have been made. Most of the crucial matters of missiological wisdom have been explored. If we ignore this seasoned wisdom, the tempered courage, the proven ideas, and the heartfelt prayers of the generations before us, we are simply consigning ourselves to beating the air for quite a while. This may apply even if all you do is join an organization that has not been around for some time.

Never concede to doing something so small that it could be accomplished entirely in your lifetime. Be a part of something that began before you were born, and will continue onward toward the fulfillment of all that God has purposed to accomplish. God has uniquely formed you to be part of this significant movement. You cannot participate in what you do not know. Becoming a student of the mission industry is the best way to become a valuable part of the World Christian Movement.

## Mission Agencies

As soon as possible begin to get acquainted with the astounding array of different mission agencies.

"Service missions" serve other agencies. Some are purely technical, like Mission Aviation Fellowship, with work ranging from jungle air strips to a marvelous internet service open to all agencies. Others are literature missions, tape-recording experts, or Bible translators, or radio experts. Missionary radio today outranks all secular radio systems for blanketing the earth with the greatest sophistication and highest-powered transmitters in use anywhere.

"Standard missions" concern themselves with every aspect of human need, ranging from medical, educational, church planting, etc.

Place great value on these incredible organizations. No one need start from scratch. Since agencies are designed for teamwork, they are not only able to sustain efforts over many generations, veteran workers are able to pass on to newcomers the cumulative know-how and field knowledge of generations of earlier workers.

## Training Institutions

Springing from, but feeding the mission agencies, are mission training institutions, seminaries and Bible colleges which have long offered programs in many disciplines (such as theology, linguistics, anthropology, history, and many more) which together undergird the grand discipline of missiology. Those offering formal degrees in a residential setting are most visible, but it is getting more common for training to take place away from campuses. "Distance education" brings the instruction not only to where the trainees live and work, it often brings to learners the material that they most need and the optimal moment for them to take it in.

Pressing the extension idea further are fully accredited BA and MA degree-granting programs offering training by way of mentoring. Internet connections are fascinating and helpful, but the most effective training resource will continue to be local, face-to-face mentoring.<sup>1</sup>

## Associations and Societies

All of the people in these various missions and schools are intentionally networked by organizational associations and professional societies. Be a student of the mission industry. No missionary or mobilizer can be fully effective without an awareness of the IFMA (Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association; now CrossGlobal Link) and the EFMA (Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies; now The Mission Exchange). Avail yourself of their meetings and publications, which are the cutting edge of missiology. Jointly they publish the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*.<sup>2</sup> You may never become a professor of missions at a graduate institution, but you will likely mentor many others in your lifetime in crucial matters of missiology. What you will do as a missionary or a mobilizer is so important that it is foolhardy not to gain professional skills in your pursuit of this high calling. Why not become an eager participant in the mission industry by joining a professional mission society? The ISFM (International Society for Frontier Missiology) might be the place to start.<sup>3</sup>

*Mission Frontiers* talks about the cutting edge of missions in the form of a 60-page newsprint bulletin that goes to 100,000 people all over the world. Produced by the U.S. Center for World Mission on a donation basis, it comes out every two months.<sup>4</sup>

## Local Churches

Churches obviously play a crucial role in the missionary enterprise. Many churches offer components of training beyond normal catechism. Some ambitious churches have attempted to send their own mission teams. To succeed, of necessity they form new mission structures. Such overachieving vision is commendable, but is usually best expressed in alignment with existing mission structures. The entire complex tapestry of the mission industry is affected by the vision and knowledge of the sending churches.

The good news is that, more than any other force, the cause of missions unites an enormous variety of otherwise separate church traditions. It is truly amazing what unity and understanding has *flowed back from the field* to the disparate church traditions at home. It turns out that all our home church traditions shine best on the mission field. Seemingly dead traditions often have marvelously devout and competent missionaries on the field. Surprising to many people is the fact that missionaries on the field from many traditions cooperate very readily in all kinds of joint projects. Over 225 mission agencies are involved in 36 regional partnerships with another 25 in the process of formation. Phil Butler of Interdev (a specialized mission that coordinates all this!) calls these “Strategic Partnerships.”

Church people back home don’t know all this. You don’t very often find congregations holding joint picnics—like Presbyterians with Nazarenes. Yet their missionaries cooperate on the field with no trouble at all.

The bad news is that congregations usually need to be extensively educated and mobilized to remain effective in the World Christian Movement. The cultural momentum of church traditions, when imposed elsewhere—on the mission field—is where the World Christian Movement has often been impeded. It is illusory for any group anywhere to come up with some new emphasis and make it seem so important that all the other traditions are considered wrong or inadequate. Read the story of the last two thousand years in the most balanced account ever written—Kenneth Scott Latourette’s *A History of Christianity*. You will see that every age has been marked by all kinds of spurting out in many different directions as godly people have struggled and groped for better light. We can look back and “improve” on practically everything that we see, but meanwhile our own form of Christianity may be bogged down by all kinds of cultural baggage!

For example, missions itself is a “new” emphasis in the Protestant tradition. Why didn’t the Reformation leaders, who so highly prized the Bible, find the Great Commission in the Bible? It took William Carey, a kid in a poverty-stricken backward gulch in rural England, to come up with clear-eyed questions as to what the Bible plainly said about God’s concern for all of the peoples of the earth. Sure, his elders had all the “right theology” but failed Bible 101 in regard to the main theme of the Bible.

Why do the widely-respected Westminster Confession of Faith, the Lutheran’s Non-altered Augsburg Confession, and even the Nicene Creed (to which we all pledge allegiance) say nothing whatsoever about the Great Commission? It is a wonder that missions ever came up at all. In few Christian traditions around the world is the call of missions anything like a major or even minor concern for the vast majority of their adherents. How strange!

## Why Mission Mobilizers?

This strange situation brings us to the very reason mission mobilizers are so crucial for the advance of the World Christian Movement. It is evident that the World Christian Movement has moved forward by a dedicated few calling the church to its central mission. Over the centuries the Church has occasionally exhibited powerful passion for Christ’s global cause, and then, within a few years, sunk into a self-absorbed morass of disobedience.

Congregations which have set their heart on other things need a heart transplant! How would you like to have a heart transplant done by an untrained person? Unthinkable! Transplanting a heart is too important to leave to an untrained person. But, *the task of reaching the nations is the most important task which God has assigned to His Church*. And this requires transplanting a heart of vision and understanding in order to do it right. A mission mobilizer owes it to the church and the nations to acquire the skill and knowledge necessary to help do an effective heart transplant of vision and understanding.

This is equally true of the role of a field missionary. The mobilizer who stays home may need to learn about more parts of the world, but the missionary needs different tools. Missionary skills are different. Mobilizers and missionaries have two very different

kinds of jobs, both of them essential—equally essential—to the World Christian Movement. Many people unthinkingly equate “missions” with missionaries. But there would be few missionaries unless there were also intensely committed and skilled mobilizers.

The famous “Cambridge Seven” stayed home long enough—a whole year—to visit the universities of England before they went out to China. Who knows, perhaps 500 missionaries went out because of their pre-field work as mobilizers! C. T. Studd’s older brother never did go as a missionary. But he went from campus to campus in the United States and, among other things, persuaded John R. Mott to go to the Mt. Hermon meeting. What if that had not happened? Or, *what if Mott had decided to be a missionary rather than a mobilizer?* Probably no two people in history are traceably responsible for more missionaries going to the field than Mott and another SVM student, Robert E. Speer, who also stayed home to be a full-time mobilizer.

But were they qualified to do that without field experience? Oh, they eventually traveled all over the world. In fact, they gained a more comprehensive view of global needs than was possible for any one missionary. Mott could plan and lead the 1910 meeting at Edinburgh in a way no missionary was qualified to do.

But they had signed the pledge to go. That meant that they were qualified to stay—if only because they were willing to go! Note, however, if they had not been willing to go they would not have been spiritually qualified to stay. Why? Because those who are not willing to stay, if that is God’s will, are not—and cannot—be qualified to go!

Yes, being a mobilizer is just as much a spiritual calling as being a missionary. After all, missions is a cause, not just a career. In the end, as we shall see, a mobilizer needs to know a whole lot of things a missionary does not usually know. And vice versa.

But, beware! Just as missionaries face special problems in their cross-cultural work, so do mobilizers. In some ways it is much more difficult to be a mobilizer. Most churches will not readily support mobilizers. Or, worse still, they can “survive” missionary letters but it is too much to have to cope with resident, local mobilizers, constantly reminding them of their global obligations!

Look again at these two different types of work within the World Christian Movement: *the mobilizer and the missionary*.

## Mobilizer and Missionary

Which one is for you? God obviously does not want everyone overseas. In the days of the massive Student Volunteer Movement four out of five who volunteered to go to the ends of the earth ended up staying home. That’s right: 20,000 out of 100,000 volunteers were able to make it to the field *only because four out of five were willing to continue to believe and work for the cause of missions back home*. Stirring up the church and keeping it envisioned is a much larger task than the front-line work itself.

I can’t believe that God is content with mobilizers that are not the Bible students and prayer warriors missionaries have to be. I can’t believe that a person doesn’t need to be as committed to the Lord if he stays home to mobilize. Mobilization, either as a full or part-time task, requires intense prayer, vision and commitment. By contrast the missionary task is a relatively well-accepted “calling,” while mobilization is not! All pastors are mobilizers of many good things and can be superb mission mobilizers. They are certainly worthy of support. We think ministers of music and youth workers are worthy of support. Why not mission mobilizers?

## Mobilizing Yourself

More basic than anything else: you cannot be a mobilizer if you are not yourself mobilized! But how do you become mobilized?

*Feed yourself.* Get to conferences, subscribe to periodicals, buy the key books, study the issues for yourself or you will never be all God wants you to be as a mobilizer.<sup>5</sup> You yourself must be caught up in the drama of the global countdown of the kingdom of God. It is not enough to be caught up in local church goals for next year.

*Support missions yourself.* “Where your treasure is there will your heart be also” (Matt 6:21).

*Use the Global Prayer Digest daily* in a family setting. Pray for specific missionaries. *Nothing that does not occur daily will ever dominate your life*. Being a World Christian is of little value, really, unless you are a daily World Christian! The *Global Prayer Digest* can change your life more in one month than many “drive by” experiences that gradually fade away.<sup>4</sup> Everything grows slowly. How can you keep growing without daily renewal of vision?

*Write to missionaries.* Be aware of their problems and needs. They may want you to buy something for them

and bundle it up and send it to them. Take them in overnight as they pass through your area. Go on picnics with them and their children. Debrief them. Share with them from your studies. Compare notes from one field to another.

Of course, don't wait to begin mobilizing in your local congregation. Also, be ready to visit other local congregations. Become active in denominational policies and mission strategies as well as interdenominational mission events.

## How about You?

And, are *you* thinking clearly about yourself? *You* need to ask God on your knees where *you* fit in. Maybe the place God has for *you* is teaching a Sunday School class with a relentlessly international perspective. Maybe God wants *you* to be one more globally-minded pastor—that kind of pastor is worth more than quite a few missionaries. God will likely ask you to do the hardest thing you are capable of!

The key thing is to realize that the development of your own *career* must not be your main concern, but rather the development of the mission *cause*. *The question of career vs. cause will be an issue in your heart of hearts again and again.* Jesus, today, might have put it, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and your career will take care of itself.” We have already said a lot about preparations, especially those which can be pursued right on the job. But if you are willing to prepare and work, simultaneously, for the rest of your life, God may indeed reward you with a startling career—but *you will probably not know the details in advance.*

Someone has said, “God reserves the best for those who leave the choice with Him.” Another (the founder of the Navigators, Dawson Trotman) said, “Don't ever do something that others can do or will do if there are things to be done that others can't do or won't do.” See, getting what we want—by going after it—is not in the cards for Christians. Jesus turned it completely around the other way: “He that seeks to save himself will lose his life; he that will lose his life for my sake will find it” (Luke 9:24). God's will for us is not mere *advice*. We can't “take it or leave it;” we must “accept it or reject it.” His will is His command.

Make no mistake. God honors those who seek His work above their worries. One of our staff members once said, “Now I think I understand what faith is; it

is not the confidence that God will do what we want Him to do *for us*, but the conviction that we can do what He wants done *for Him* and let Him take care of the consequences.”

Is your problem that you can't see very far into the future? As Trotman said, “If you can't see very far ahead, go ahead as far as you can see.”

Lots of people would be glad to follow God if He would only tell them in advance exactly all the wonderful things He would do for them and what high-sounding job titles they might one day hold. But, remember Genesis 12:1? *It is characteristic of the Christian life that God asks us to go without telling us where!* This is not to be considered unfair or capricious on His part. The fact is that when we walk in the little light we have, and keep going on and on taking steps in faith, the ways in which He leads us are almost always, as we look back, something we could have never been told in advance!

Untold marvels lie *beyond* each step of faith. You don't really have to know what is beyond the next step, and you can't find out without taking the next step. Again, it is characteristic of the Christian life that we do not know very far in advance. In fact, if you think you've got the next few years lined up you may well be mistaken, or you may still be trying to make your plans for God to bless.

Wouldn't His will inevitably focus on your doing “your utmost for His highest?” It is not a question of how much of our own desires we can get away with. Some young people make the final, dramatic decision “to be a missionary” and immediately begin thinking where the climate would be nicest. You can't be any kind of a solid Christian if you are unwilling to do anything He asks. What does he ask? Nothing more than all we are and possess. That's all. He doesn't ask us to do the easiest job we can think of but the hardest we are able to handle. He does not ask us to do what we cannot do, although He often enables us to do what we could not do without His special grace. He is not a tyrant who doesn't care about our welfare in the task. It is amazingly true that when we are willing to do the most difficult thing, we find that we are better off because of it. Oh, sure, missionaries have their share of disease and pain, but some of the most diseased and pained are people who stayed home in order to avoid all that!

Jesus said, “Are you burdened and weary? Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; you will find me gentle

and kindly, and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke fits perfectly and my burden is light.” Jesus Himself “endured the cross and ignored the shame for the joy that was set before Him.”

But we sometimes seem more geared to do our “utmost” than we are to seek out patiently, deliberately, and painstakingly that role which will make the maximum contribution to “His highest”—the coming of His kingdom and power and glory to all the peoples of the earth. Again, beware of how easy it is to make that difficult choice to live for Him rather than for ourselves, throwing away our secular aspirations, and then turning aggressively to try to find out the most pleasing assignment within the new arena of life. It is not to please ourselves that we give our lives to Christ. Yet, we may find that His will involves greater pleasure and fulfillment than anything we ourselves could have chosen!

A famous missionary wrote back to fellow students and pled with them: “Give up your small ambitions and come East to proclaim the glorious gospel of Christ.” For me to give “My utmost for His highest” is no guarantee of health, wealth, or happiness—which, incidentally, is true of any choice one can make—but that kind of crucial choice is, in the experience of thousands who have tried it, the most exhilarating and demanding path of all callings. You don’t lose if you go with God. But you have to be willing to lose or you can’t stick close to God.

## Endnotes

1. The *World Christian Foundations* program allows you to achieve a fully accredited M.A. or B.A. degree while you continue in work or ministry anywhere in the world. Instruction is centered on weekly mentoring sessions which allow both work and study. For more information visit [worldchristianfoundations.org](http://worldchristianfoundations.org).
2. The IFMA (now CrossGlobal Link) and the EFMA (now The Mission Exchange) are each comprised of about 100 mission agencies. The IFMA has Canadian members as contrasted to the EFMA, which represents only the National Association of Evangelicals of the USA. The largest mission agency not affiliated with either the IFMA or the EFMA is the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Another large mission not in either the IFMA or the EFMA is Baptist Mid-Missions, which is the main group within a smaller association—the Fellowship of Missions (FOM). More recently AIMS (Association of International Missions/Services) has arisen within the general sphere of the charismatic tradition. The Association of Professors of Mission (APM) consists of seminary and college professors. The American Society of Missiology was founded from its beginning to intentionally include anyone seriously interested in missiology without regard to his/her denominational orientation. The ASM publishes the journal *Missiology, An International Review*. When you join the society you are automatically a subscriber to the journal. The Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS) evolved from the Association of Evangelical Professors of Missions in order to welcome into its membership mission executives as well as professors from fields other than missions. It has a newsletter but no journal; instead it gives members a free book (or two) per year from its new EMS monograph series.
3. The International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM) has chosen to focus upon the remaining task in the world today still requiring the earlier type of “pioneer” work—for example, the initial-breakthrough type of mission activity. Its annual dues include a subscription to the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*. For more information about the journal, visit [ifm.org](http://ifm.org).
4. For subscription information, visit [www.global-prayer-digest.org](http://www.global-prayer-digest.org).
5. For resources and encouragement in mobilizing, visit [www.perspectives.org](http://www.perspectives.org) and watch for future updates.

# A Blindspot in Western Christianity?

Ralph D. Winter

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

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

## A Staggering Thought

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

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

We see...[someone with] polio...and piously shake our heads...saying "It is the will of God...hard to understand...we have to wait to get to heaven [to understand

it]"...[By contrast] Jesus looked at [sickness] and in crystal clear terms called it the work of the devil, and not the will of God—[something to be fought, not something to which we should simply resign ourselves.] (Boyd 1997:183)

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

How has this syncretistic element in our theological tradition surfaced on a practical level? In accord with our by-now instinctive Augustinian neo-Platonism, we cannot be totally surprised that when a godly young preacher in Puritan Massachusetts sought to fight smallpox, the other pastors with one voice opposed him and formed an "anti-vaccination society." In the perspective of their Augustinian/Calvinist theology this saintly young pastor was, and I quote, "interfering with Divine Providence." No wonder that when that young man died in the process of trying out a smallpox vaccine on himself, it was assumed that *God killed him*. Strangely,

that comparatively young man attempting to spare the suffering of the Indians at his mission outpost is known today for his *philosophy*, not for fighting evil in the form of a virus. I speak of Jonathan Edwards.

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

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

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

## Are We Really Passive before Evil?

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

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

The more significant point is that there is absolutely no evidence I know of in all the world of any *theologically driven* interest in combatting disease at its origins. Not only have I not found any work of theology, any chapter, any paragraph, nor to my knowledge any sermon urging us—whether in the pew or in professional missions—to go to battle against the many diseases we now know to be eradicable. Jimmy Carter, our former president, is the only Christian leader I know of who has set out (in his phrase) “to wipe Guinea worm from the face of the earth.” Note that his insight did not come from a seminary experience, but, perhaps, from being a Sunday school teacher. The Carter Center set out to eradicate two horrible diseases with which missionaries in Africa have had to live for 100 years. They have now done it, and have chosen three more. Apparently, Carter cannot expect to fund this operation from Christian sources. He gets money from secular corporations.

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

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

Defensive measures are good, but notice our strange theological (and pagan) reluctance to set out to *destroy the disease germs themselves*. To do that would be to go on the offense. We don't do that. Yet isn't it Biblical to *destroy the works of the devil*? In 1 John 3:8 we read very



simply “The Son of God came into the world that He might destroy the works of the devil.” We don’t hear much of that verse, partly because *we yield in our every day consciousness to a secular mindset that implicitly denies the very possibility of an intelligent evil destroyer of God’s good creation.*

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

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

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

Is this what Satan set out to do from the time he rebelled against the Creator—that is, he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into the arena of tooth and claw that reigns today? Recent lab results indicate that retroviruses are smart enough to carry with them short pieces of pre-coded DNA which they insert into the chromosome of a cell so as to distort the very nature of an organism.

Can a lion that would lie down with a lamb become vicious by such DNA tinkering? We do know that many diseases reflect defective genes. Very recent literature indicates that in the case of the major chronic diseases *infections* are now seriously thought to underlie everything from heart disease to cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s and even schizophrenia.

## A Double Enigma

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

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

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

## The Proposed Institute<sup>1</sup>

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

declare war on all *sources* of disease instead of merely being kind to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

Our actions (which often speak louder than our words) will no longer proclaim loudly and embarrassingly that our God can get you a hospital bed to lie on plus a ticket to heaven, but that He is either ignorant, uncaring, or impotent to do anything effective about the origins of your disease. We cannot blame Augustine or Calvin or Luther for not knowing anything about germs or the enormous complexities of microbiology. But can we repentantly accept blame for the continuing fact that three-fourths of all Americans die prematurely from major chronic diseases which are now suddenly more defeatable than ever?

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

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

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

Christians champion singers, basketball players, pole vaulters. Do we find theological reason to champion those rare few who are at the front line in the fight against disease? And, I don't refer to those who *treat illness* but those who scout the very *origins of disease*.

The answer is a thunderous NO which can only be explained as a blind spot in our theological tradition, a fact which is itself one of the diabolic delusions classifying as a work of the devil.

### **Demonic delusions:**

1. When we get sick all we need to do is to pray and inquire of God what his reason is for allowing this kind of thing.
2. In case we did something unwise that caused or invited the sickness we don't need to feel responsible to roll up our sleeves and fight the source of the disease. God is content to use disease to teach us.

## **References Cited**

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## **Endnote**

- <sup>1</sup> The article was written before the founding of the Roberta Winter Institute which seeks to address the issue of the war against evil. For more information, go to [www.uscwm.org/rwi/index.html](http://www.uscwm.org/rwi/index.html).

# Theologizing Prehistory: Implications for Mission

*Ralph D. Winter*

**W**e 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 number-

ing 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 Warfare Missiology of Ralph D. Winter

*Beth Snodderly*

## Abstract

Intelligent evil is at work in this world, distorting God's original purposes. All of life needs to be oriented to the war against evil that is the theme of human history, fighting a battle that began with the Cambrian period. Business and mission must go together in rescuing peoples from the kingdom of darkness, including social and physical results of intelligent evil, and in bringing transformation that represents the advance of God's kingdom.

## Premises

1. Mission represents more than mission agencies at work. It includes all of life for all of God's people who have been given the mission to destroy the works of the evil one (1 John 3:8) and restore God's glory.
2. Business, for followers of Christ, is a major mechanism through which individual members of the Body of Christ participate both in the provision of the essentials of society and in the conquest of evil.
3. Four Theological/Missional Foundational Premises:
  - 1) God is the Lord of history, but we are locked in a cosmic struggle.
  - 2) God reveals himself, but an intelligent evil power distorts both general and special revelation and all of God's handiwork. God did not create or intend evil, but He created spirit and human beings with free will who chose to use their free will to rebel against Him.
  - 3) God desires humans to work with Him as agents in history for His purposes in defeating evil.
  - 4) On the basis of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God defeats evil and redeems and restores humanity and creation.

4. A spirit (Hiebert: "middle") world of free, intelligent beings exists, in addition to humans, contrary to the worldview of Western culture which arose out of the Enlightenment's rejection of all non-material reality.

5. The widely acknowledged evidence regarding the age of the earth and development of life, from paleontology, geology and other sciences, can be taken seriously for the purposes of this paper.

## Distortions of God's Good Purposes

Something is wrong in this world. "Nature, red in tooth and claw," is a pattern acted out at all levels of life, from micropredators (disease caused by microbes) to macropredators (social diseases caused by humans such as war and slavery). Intelligent evil is at work in this world, distorting God's original good purposes.

Distortions of human social relations, distortions of nature ("natural disasters"), distortions by disease—these are the categories represented by three of the horses of the apocalypse (war, famine, and plague), all leading to death (Rev. 6: 3-8).<sup>1</sup> In addition, the description of the last ("pale") horse includes death by wild animals, which was not in God's original plan (Genesis 1:30).<sup>2</sup> It is also excluded from His final plan when wolves will lie down with the lambs, lions will eat straw like an ox, and children will play near snakes without being harmed (Isaiah 11:6-9).<sup>3</sup>

If God is all-powerful and all-loving, and has such wonderful plans for the planet's future, why does He permit the obvious evil we see now in nature and in "man's inhumanity to man"?

Why has God allowed sadistic people throughout history to torture others in unimaginably horrible ways?

Is God pleased when a tsunami wipes out hundreds of thousands of people without warning?

Is God glorified by what greatly troubled Darwin, that a particular kind of wasp lays its eggs inside a caterpillar so that when the eggs hatch, the larvae eat their way out of the caterpillar while it is still living?

Do diseases such as cancer, AIDS, malaria, and small pox, that literally eat people alive, originate from organisms designed by a perfect and good Creator?

What went wrong?

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. . . . We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Romans 8:20-22).<sup>4</sup>

## Origins of Evil

Ralph Winter has proposed a story about the origins of evil on this planet, developed and documented briefly here. (See the End Notes for more detail.) This story firmly attributes the source of this evil to spirit beings (Satan in particular and his many demonic followers), who chose to use their God-given gift of free will to rebel against God.<sup>5</sup>

The story places responsibility for overcoming that evil on the shoulders of humans—specifically those who are followers of Christ—who were created in the expectation that they would choose to use their gift of free will to say, “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done” and to participate with God in defeating the evil one and restoring creation to its intended state of displaying the glory of God.

Under a burden of evil that God did not intend for it, creation groans as it waits for the Body of Christ to fulfill its purpose to work with God to defeat evil and its resulting distortions. David Neff commented recently in *Christianity Today*, “as Christians we cannot be honest about reality without seeing the world as a struggle between good and evil” (2005: 76). The free will of humankind aligning itself with God’s will is apparently God’s plan for overcoming the evil results of choices made by free spirit beings.<sup>6</sup>

## The Story Begins

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

The biblical account of creation needs to be considered within its original setting. In the Near Eastern world at the time Genesis was written, creation stories were full of titanic struggles between good and evil spiritual forces that preceded the creation of the world and of humans. We can assume that the people God chose to work through already knew of these myths and of the existence of good and evil spirits.<sup>7</sup> The difference in the biblical account from these surrealistic myths is the perspective that at the beginning of time a good God intelligently created a good world.

Recent scientific thinking has led to the “Big Bang” theory of the origin of the universe. According to this modern scientific creation myth, as historian David Christian calls it,

thirteen billion years ago there was nothing. There wasn’t even emptiness. Time did not exist, nor did space. In this nothing, there occurred an explosion, and within a split second, something did exist (2004: 497).

Well-known physicist Stephen Hawking states, “almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the big bang” (Hawking and Penrose, 1995: 20). Through forces of extreme heat and gravity, gradually the simplest atoms of helium and hydrogen fused in a variety of combinations and other elements and objects came into existence.

## Development of Life

From this scientific perspective, life began relatively late in the timeline and evolved gradually. In this slow development, the first life forms were anaerobic and lived in the ocean. Scientist Andrew Parker speculates that the earth may have been going through a galactic dust cloud that blocked sunlight from the earth, making life requiring oxygen impossible for millions of years (2003: 292-294). Comets and meteorites from outer space would have brought some of the organic and trace elements needed for life to begin and develop on this planet (Fortey 1998: 49).

Ralph Winter speculates that life forms were being created by spirit beings whom God was instructing and who were learning to think God’s thoughts after Him. In this he echoes J. R. R. Tolkien’s account of the creation of earth in *The Silmarillion* in which the music of the “Ainur” reflects what they are learning of the thoughts of “Iluvatar” and eventually they bring these thoughts into reality (1977: 3-12).

Might these speculations have their roots in primordial reality? Is it possible that God's servants worked with Him in Creation, learning how to sculpt the raw materials of the universe into living creatures? Strange, weird life forms and the slow development of life (according to the "record of the rocks") all lend credibility to the speculation that perhaps God deliberately chose not to use His omniscience and omnipotence to create all life forms instantly, but instead shared creation with beings who were learning as they went along.

## Free Will

From a theological point of view, God created spiritual beings with free will with the object of receiving their freely chosen love. But this entailed a risk. With the power to choose, there could be no guarantee that the free beings would make choices that would also be God's choices.<sup>8</sup>

G.K. Chesterton suggests God was writing a play:

God had written, not so much a poem, but rather a play; a play he had planned as perfect, but which had necessarily been left to human actors and stage-managers, [and other beings with free will], who had since made a great mess of it (Chesterton 1908).

Within the parameters of the guidelines for this "play," it seems that God has placed some limitations on himself according to what free agents freely choose. Boyd states, "Unless we affirm that God takes genuine risks, we will not be able to acknowledge that the world is a war zone while also holding that this war is not God's will" (2001: 86).

## Cambrian Explosion: The Fall of Satan?

Continuing with the scientific creation "myth," at a particular point in time, according to the evidence from the fossil record, there was a sudden proliferation of life on this planet: complete with predators and defense mechanisms (Fortey 1998: 92, 93; Parker 2003: 259).

Parker states that an external force has to be taken into account to explain the Cambrian explosion, in which there was the sudden development (in the "blink of an eye" in geological terms) of hard body parts in all biological categories of life (2003: 36). Parker's research led him to the conclusion that it was the sudden

appearance of vision in one evolving creature at the beginning of the Cambrian period that led to selective pressures for all the various phyla to also develop eyes, then hard parts to stab with, "limbs to perform their acts of murder" (because they saw potential food and wanted it!), and hard body parts for defense mechanisms (Parker 2003: 276).

But what caused the sudden development of eyes and the simultaneous onset of violence in 35 phyla, all within a relatively short period of time? The scientific creation myth claims it was evolutionary chance along with selective evolutionary pressures.

Ralph Winter asks, regarding the sudden appearance of violent forms of life, could this be when the fall of Satan occurred?

Going still further, we could speculate that Lucifer, whose name means "morning star, light-bearing" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary), may have been responsible for the development of eyesight, that he became proud of his accomplishment, rebelled against God (in Luke 10:18 Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"), and began turning his creative knowledge into distortions of God's creation.

The early Church Fathers believed a story very similar to the one described by Ralph Winter: the participation of angels in creation, Satan's original place of authority, territorial responsibilities of angels and evil spirits, and the entrance of evil into creation with the choices made by Satan/Lucifer and his followers (Boyd 2001: 294, 295).

Alvin Plantinga, considered the "dean" of Christian philosophers (Beverly 2005: 83), writes in a chapter in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*,

Satan is a mighty non-human free creature who rebelled against the Lord long before human beings were on the scene; and much of the natural evil the world displays is due to the actions of Satan and his cohorts (Van Inwagen 2004: 15).<sup>9</sup>

## The Reality of the Spirit World

This perspective on the reality of the world of spirits sounds foreign to Western thinkers and believers because of the philosophical influence of the Enlightenment that insists that all reality must follow observable laws. But this relatively brief 300-year materialist

worldview is in the minority within the context of past and non-Western worldviews. In a key article in the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Reader*, Paul Hiebert points out the “flaw of the excluded middle” (referring to the spirit realm) in Western thinking (1999: 414).<sup>10</sup>

## Harmonizing Science and Scripture

Given the reality of an active spirit world, Ralph Winter’s speculative story harmonizes scientific evidence and biblical teaching. To summarize the argument constructed up to this point, we can look at Winter’s paper in *IJFM* 21:4 that lists his personal “Precarious Perspectives” (2005a: 53), the first three of which state:

#1. Evidence is mounting that life has been developing on this planet over a very long time.

#2. Suddenly in the Cambrian Period we find in the world of animals the first appearance of predatory life forms.

#3. Nature has been pervasively distorted into violence by Satan.

The third “Perspective” goes on to state that “these violent forms of life are again and again blotted out by devastations” (2005a: 53).

Expanding a chart from *Scientific American*, March 2002, Winter has shown a 600-million-year timeline that includes 45 major asteroidal impacts that would have destroyed much of life on this planet at many different times in history. (See chart included with this paper.) One of the two largest of these, causing a 100-mile-wide crater in Yucatan, Mexico, is believed to have caused the extinction of the dinosaurs 60 million years ago. After that a new beginning featured large mammals and hominids (pre-human creatures) as dominant life forms on the planet (Winter 2005a: 51).

Winter’s expanded chart postulates a local asteroidal devastation in the Near East prior to 6000 BC. The literary, realistic description in Genesis 1:2-19 fits very well with Winter’s hypothesis that the biblical writer was describing the “re-creation” of a local area from the perspective of an observer on Earth watching the gradual settling of dust, making light visible once again, making plant life possible, then eventually making it possible for the individual heavenly bodies that are the source of the light to become visible, as night and day are clearly distinguished.<sup>11</sup>

Winter and others such as Bruce K. Waltke (2001) believe it may be a disservice to the Bible to interpret the Genesis Creation account as the beginning of everything, but rather see it as the record of a new beginning following the devastation referred to in Genesis 1:2 as *tohu wabohu* (“formless and void”).

Winter’s “Precarious Perspectives” #7 and #8 summarize this thinking:

#7. The idea that the “old earth” preceded the “young earth” and preceded Genesis 1:1.

#8. The events of Genesis, the asteroidal devastation described in 1:1, and the flood mentioned later, are devastations and new beginnings, re-creation, replenishment (Winter 2005a: 53).

In his presumption that the Genesis creation account describes a re-creation of the world, Winter agrees with Eric Sauer, quoted by Boyd:

Genesis 1 is not so much an account of creation as it is an account of God’s restoration of a world that had through a previous conflict become formless, futile, empty and engulfed by chaos—the world of Gen 1:2 (1997:104).

Boyd explains that the Hebrew words for “formless” and “empty” (“tohu wabohu”),

are usually pejorative terms in Scripture, denoting something done wrong, laid waste or judged. This theory postulates a prehumanoid world of indefinite duration about which we know nothing more than that it somehow became a battlefield between good and evil and was consequently made into a total wasteland (1997:104).<sup>12</sup>

## War against an Intelligent Enemy

This battlefield is the warfare context in which humans were created. We are in a war against an intelligent enemy. “Humans are made in the image of God and placed on earth so that they might gradually vanquish this chaos” (Boyd 1997: 107).

This view eliminates the dichotomy between the cultural and evangelistic mandates by seeing them both as part of a wartime mandate, although Ralph Winter,<sup>13</sup> Arthur Glasser and Nancy Pearcey speak of these as separate mandates (Winter 2005a: 46, 2005c; Glasser 2003: 38 and Pearcey 2004: 47). Instead it would be

appropriate to view the “cultural mandate” as being from the start, part of an inclusive wartime mandate since evil had already been at work in the universe and on this planet before humans were created and told to “subdue it” (Genesis 1:28—not just to “take care of it” as Glasser describes it [2003: 38]). Humans were created to join a war that was already taking place. Winter suggests that the cultural and evangelistic mandates need to be merged into a single “Military Mandate, which in this life is all we should be concerned about” (2005a: 46). Boyd summarizes this perspective: “We are co-rulers with God over the earth and co-warriors with God against the forces of chaos” (1997: 106).

This interpretation of Genesis 1 implies that God’s plan to strike back at the enemy was to overcome the free choices of evil agents with the free choices of good agents. Perhaps in God’s free will universe He needed more creatures to choose His way, to ask Him to act and to take action to annihilate Evil. If Evil is of finite amount, if it can be “overcome” (annihilated) by freely chosen acts of love and self-sacrifice, then eventually some specific act of love or sacrifice could be expected to annihilate the bit of evil that represents the tipping point, putting the majority of free choices in this world on the side of God’s will, thus clearing the way for Him to usher in His Kingdom. Was Jesus’ sacrificial death that “tipping point”? Is God waiting for the time when He has enough of the free choices of humans and spirit beings on His side to win the battle at the end of the age, as described in the last book of the Bible?

But at the beginning of human history, humans chose to join the fallen spirit beings in rebellion against God and eventually things got so bad that demons were polluting the human gene pool (Genesis 6; see Boyd 2001:166). The Flood that followed was one of several fresh starts in God’s war with evil (Winter 2005a: 51).

Ralph Winter’s speculation that evil spirits have tampered with DNA to distort God’s intentions for animals or to create organisms whose sole purpose is to cause disease, has biblical support in this Genesis 6 account of the “sons of God” having children with the daughters of men. Could this be a mythological or pre-scientific recognition of the spirit world tampering with the DNA of humans? Is similar tampering the cause of violence in the animal world? Ralph Winter speculates on these questions:

Humans have concluded that cock fights and contrived animal-versus-animal shows are illegal. ... How much

less likely should we suppose God to have created the nearly universal, vicious, animal-versus-animal world of nature? Indeed, carnivorous animals originally were herbivorous (as is implied in Genesis 1:28, 29). Does the Evil One and his assistants have sufficient knowledge to tinker with the DNA of God’s created order and distort nature to become “red in tooth and claw”? (2005a: 38).

## Obstacles to Opposing Evil

Such evidences of evil are the result of God’s decision to give free choice to His servants, both spirit beings and humans. But the evidences of evil are not God’s will, although they are often mistakenly attributed to Him. Winter has stated: “If believers have all kinds of misunderstandings that prevent them from ‘destroying the works of the Devil’ I want desperately to help remove those misunderstandings” (2004).

Several obstacles keep Western believers from recognizing the need to oppose evil in its many forms. One of these obstacles is the failure to recognize the reality of the spirit world and the evil intentions of some of those spirits to distort the physical world. Boyd, Hiebert and others have explained that Western thought about the non-existence of the spirit world, the legacy of the Enlightenment, is in the minority and stands in contrast to the rest of the world and throughout history.<sup>14</sup>

Another obstacle to opposing evil is the confusion caused by Augustinian thinking which assumed God’s omnipotence meant God was in direct control of everything and had His purposes in permitting evil. In *City of God*, Augustine argued that God permits evil so we will desire the future “blessed life.”

Even baptized infants, who are certainly unsurpassed in innocence, are sometimes so tormented, that God, who permits it, teaches us hereby to bewail the calamities of this life, and to desire the felicity of the life to come (*City of God* 22.22; in Geisler 1982: 192).

The concept of fighting back against atrocities, such as the torment experienced by innocent babies, is missing in Augustine’s theology. A logical consequence of his “blueprint” worldview, as Boyd calls it (2001:2), is passivity. If God has pre-ordained all evil for some mysterious purpose, why pray, why act? Why not sadly wait it out until one is able to enter the happier life to come?<sup>15</sup>

In contrast, the authors of the New Testament and the Early Church fathers prior to Augustine expected evil and were

prepared to fight it. They had no problem with the concept that a good God had allowed freedom of choice and was bound by His own decision to fight a real war against evil that Christ's followers must join (Boyd 2001: 24, 49).

## God's Foreknowledge and Free Will: a Paradox?

Since God is omniscient, doesn't He already know everything that is going to happen in this war against evil? If so, where is true freedom of choice and why do the actions of believers matter? Apparently not knowing how else to reconcile true freedom of choice and the reality of suffering with God's attributes of being all-loving and all-powerful, Boyd and other Open View theologians have suggested that God doesn't really know everything that will happen in this free-choice universe He has created—a view Winter does not accept. They claim God only knows the possibilities. They solve the problem of showing that we are in a real war with real casualties, in which the free choices of participants have real consequences, but they leave the door open for a dishonoring view of God's omniscience. (Boyd admits that his view of God's foreknowledge is not essential to understanding the warfare worldview that postulates that God's self-limitations leave free choice to creatures to potentially use their freedom for evil purposes [Boyd 2001: 86, 87]).

But God's omniscience (foreknowledge) and freedom of choice do not have to be considered mutually exclusive, as C. S. Lewis pointed out when he elaborated on implications of the space-time theory of relativity: "God stands outside time and views past, present, future all in one eternal moment" (1952: 145, 146). Modern physics backs Lewis' explanation. God is outside and above the Timeline because time is part of creation (Beckman 1999: 26). The Open View actually becomes nonsense in light of the space-time theory of relativity. It cannot be said that God doesn't know the future, when in fact, from God's all-encompassing, relative point of view, the "future" is already happening.<sup>16</sup> From God's perspective, all times are "now." As C.S. Lewis said, "in a sense, [God] does not know your action till you have done it: but then the moment at which you have done it is already 'Now' for Him (1952: 145, 146).

## Two Biblical Perspectives on the Source of Negative Events

The intellectual obstacle of understanding how a good God permits evil to happen is complicated by the

way the Bible describes some negative events that are sometimes referred to as being sent by God. Winter points out that the Bible has two ways of explaining things and these two perspectives are made clear in the "Rosetta Stone" of Scripture in which the same event is described in opposite ways (2005c):

1. Second Samuel 24:1: The perspective of the sovereignty of God (allowing evil to take place)
2. First Chronicles 21:1: The perspective of Satan's initiative

Both perspectives are true. Eastern logic is needed here that doesn't see an either-or dichotomy, but is comfortable with both-and.

## Consequences of Attributing Evil to God

When believers fail to overcome intellectual obstacles and instead attribute evil to God, assuring others that "God has His mysterious purposes," dishonor and humiliation are brought to God. This happened recently in an *LA Times*' editorial which called creation, "Unintelligent Design." More recently, letters to the editor in *Time* magazine have ridiculed belief in a benevolent intelligence being behind the distortions and cruelty that are evident in nature. Not all of nature as we know it is as God intended it to be and we don't represent God well among non-believers if we claim that all "Intelligent Design" is from God. There would also appear to be deliberate evil intelligent design. This is something believers need to communicate to unbelievers to prevent God's reputation and glory from being distorted.

Another consequence of attributing evil to God is passivity in the face of evil, as with the pastors in Jonathan Edwards' day who believed it was interfering with divine providence to use small pox vaccines (Clark 1995: 16, 17).

## The Kingdom Strikes Back

If believers think something is God's will they won't fight against it. If they fail to recognize evil as opposition to God's will, they won't use or encourage business to be part of striking back at it. If there is no Satan in the picture, God's people don't realize they need to fight back against the evils they see displayed in the world. The biblical record sets the direction for believers to follow in the fight against evil. Winter's article in

the *Perspectives* Reader, “The Kingdom Strikes Back,” describes the history of the battle against the evil intelligence that is distorting our world.

The Bible shows the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming His fallen creation; giving His own Son at the center of the 4000-year period beginning with 2000 BC: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8) (Winter 1999: 196).

## Jesus’ Acts of War against Evil

From the very first, Jesus’ acts of ministry made it clear that He had come to wage war against evil. His encounters with demons always resulted in glory for God. Even the evil influences on nature had to obey Him when He rebuked the storm (Mark 4: 39) with the same authority He used in casting out evil spirits (Mark 5:8). “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons,” Jesus said, “then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Luke 11:20).

If the earth is to become the domain in which God is king (the kingdom of God), then it must cease being the domain in which Satan is king. This is what Jesus came to accomplish. He came to ‘destroy the works of the devil’ (1 John 3:8) (Boyd 2001:36).

Jesus’ death is seen as the climax of a cosmic battle in an exposition of John 12: 20-36 (Kovac 1995: 233). “Now shall the ruler of this world be driven out,” (vs. 31) Jesus said, in the context of discussing His death.

Jesus passed His mission on to His followers, teaching them to pray that God’s will would be done “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10) and telling them the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. (This implies aggression by the Church toward the gates, not the gates pursuing a passive/protected Church!) Biblical teaching indicates God intends the Kingdom to continue advancing in Jesus’ absence on earth. Jesus did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19) and He told His followers they would do even greater things than He had been doing (John 14:12).

## Believers’ Acts of War against Evil

In His decision to work through the Body of Christ to expand Jesus’ ministry of pushing back the powers of darkness, God has chosen to use the foolish and weak things of the world to overthrow the wise and strong in

the world who resist Him (1 Corinthians 1:18-30). Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 give brief theologies of the Body of Christ.<sup>17</sup> When Christ’s Body, the Church, is functioning as it should, it demonstrates the nature of God: what works He wants to see accomplished, what He is concerned about, His righteousness, justice, mercy, and power over evil. Since the Son of God appeared to destroy the devil’s work (1 John 3:8), this is also the mission of His Body. In the article, “The Kingdom Strikes Back,” Ralph Winter describes five epochs of church history in which, almost in spite of the behavior of many representatives of the Church, the Kingdom has gradually advanced around the world (1999: 195). This advance is occurring even in the context of the weeds and the good seed growing side by side. The two conflicting kingdoms will each continue to grow until Christ returns. (This perspective is a distinctive of Eastern Orthodox theology [Campolo 1992: 45]).

Winter’s “Precarious Perspective #4” describes what it means for the Kingdom to advance.

Evangelicals rightly stress a reconciliation-of-man aspect and a promise of heaven. . . . But, in addition, they have not emphasized, as clearly as the Bible does, God’s glorification (that is, the re-establishment, the restoration of that glory) (2005a: 49).

What is the believer’s responsibility in restoring God’s glory and advancing the Kingdom?

## Prayer and Action

Prayer and action need to go together in defeating evil and restoring God’s glory. Winter likes to point out that we don’t ask God to paint the back fence; we get out there and do it ourselves. Another Winter illustration: If you saw a mountain lion attacking a child, you wouldn’t stop to pray, you’d do something about it (just as Donald McGavran used to shoot tigers to protect villagers in India). But if “invisible lions” (ie., germs) were attacking a child, you would appropriately ask for God’s intervention (2005d).

A general principle might be: evils you can see, take action; with evils you can’t see, ask God to take action. Until recently in history, people couldn’t see the micro-organisms (“invisible lions”) attacking people, animals and crops. Now that science has made it possible to see and do something about these micro-predators, what is the responsibility of the Body of Christ?

Newbigin quotes Schweitzer as saying, “Every action for the Kingdom is a prayer for the coming of the Kingdom” (Newbigin 2003: 38). Boyd points out that Water Wink and others have shown that combating evil powers is not just a matter of prayer but also a matter of social activism (Boyd 1997:60). Winter would add, “and of scientific activism.”

In fact, prayer itself may be activism. Jesus said what is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). Could it be that God’s self-limited ability to act on earth will be loosed to some extent when a free agent chooses to ask Him and chooses to work with Him to accomplish His purposes?

## Overthrowing the Kingdom of Disease and Death

“To follow Jesus is to do battle with the ever-present prince of darkness” (Boyd 1997: 280). Knowing that wars and diseases of social, “natural” and physical varieties, and the resulting suffering, are not God’s will, and that God will some day bring an end to these things (Rev. 20:4) gives the Body of Christ some strong hints about the work they should be engaged in.

Medical missionary Robert Hughes, in Shillong, India from 1939-69, wrote in his journal, “this kingdom of disease, death, ignorance, prejudice, fear, malnutrition and abject poverty was most surely a kingdom which ought to be overthrown by the kingdom of our God” (Rees 2003).

Overthrowing the kingdom of disease, death, et al, means engaging in Kingdom warfare. Fighting disease is an integral part of that warfare. The similarities between war and disease are brought out in two books written about disease. The author of *At War Within* uses war imagery to describe diseases of the immune system. For instance, in the preliminary phase of AIDS, “the virus is doing everything it can to break loose from the lymph node environment where it is trapped and to destroy the host, but it is kept in check by the immune system” (Clark 1995: 151). In *Plagues and Peoples*, William McNeill coins the term, “macro-parasitism,” using disease imagery to describe warlike raiding and other social predatory behavior.<sup>18</sup>

Disease and war are keeping whole groups of people in bondage to suffering and evil. Maps from MARC publications (Myers 1996) and from internet sources

show the non-coincidental overlap of areas of the world that have the least influence from the Bible with those areas where there is the most suffering, disease, war and poverty. Barrett and Johnson have shown in a chart in *World Christian Trends* that the “absolute poor” comprise 18% of the world’s population while “The Rich” make up 54% of the world (2001: 34). The MARC maps show that main consumers of the earth’s natural resources live in those areas of the world with the most exposure to the Bible.

What responsibility does the kingdom believer have for using those resources, in the light of the distribution of evil and God’s plan to defeat it? In his address to a large gathering of Korean young people at a missions conference, Winter challenged them on this very issue.

Every believer has a missionary call. Second Corinthians 5:15 says, “He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” Let Jesus take over your life and be concerned about His concerns. What is it He’s wanting to do? Disease is pulling people down all the time, distorting human and animal life. Disease is a work of Satan, which the Son of God came to destroy (Winter 2005b).

## Business in Wartime: Rebellious against the “Natural Order”

What is the responsibility of the Body of Christ? This could be answered by another question: within the believer’s sphere of influence, what is offensive to God? Jesus taught His followers to bind that and loose God’s power in God’s name. Believers can “un-humiliate” God and give Him a channel to work through. They can overcome the enemy’s evil choices with good choices that echo God’s will. Ronald Sider stated in an interview with *Christianity Today*, “There’s now a new kingdom community of Jesus’ disciples, and ... embracing Jesus means ... beginning to live as a part of his new community where everything is being transformed” (2005: 72).

In the end, the Body of Christ must conduct life’s business in the light of the missionary wartime mandate. Martin Luther (and later the Puritans) saw work (or “vocation”) as a holy calling (Veith 1999: 4) but omitted the aspect of war against evil. The emphasis on using God-given gifts and talents in everyday life



reflects the assumption of a cultural mandate given in a peaceful world that just needed to be taken care of, in which only what God wanted to happen would happen. But obviously things happen in this world that are not God's will. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, yet we clearly see people rebelling and dying without repentance all around us. His will isn't ruling this world yet. Followers of Christ are living under a wartime, not a peacetime mandate (Winter 2005c). Barnhouse points out that there is now more than one will in the universe (1965: 37). So what does God expect of the Body of Christ in this context of conflict?

Ordinary Christians working in business, industry, politics, factory work, and so on, are "the Church's front-line troops in her engagement with the world," wrote Lesslie Newbigin. Imagine how our churches would be transformed if we truly regarded laypeople as frontline troops in the spiritual battle. "Are we taking seriously our duty to support them in their warfare?" Newbigin asked. (Quoted from <http://www.deepsight.org/articles/goheenb.htm>) (Pearcey 2004: 67).

How can action be taken through business and work that will contribute toward the defeat of evil?

Which vocations are needed for the functioning of a Kingdom society that is at war?

Which are not needed and should be avoided?

What limitations does business have in combating evils that the marketplace either isn't aware of or isn't willing to fund?

What criteria can help a person engage in business in a way that contributes to the *missio dei*?

### Examples:

- Manner of life: how believers conduct themselves at work (in a legitimate business, not a non-essential luxury) can be their means of engaging in missional warfare. Yamamori has stated, "there is an appalling lack of business ethics in China" (2001: 99). The opening of this country for Western business "is an unprecedented opportunity for Christians to influence China profoundly by exercising kingdom values" (2001: 101).
- Types of businesses that sustain life so others can be on the front lines contribute to the war effort. Believers involved in jobs such as food production and distribution, transportation, or production of necessary technology can consider their work to be a meaningful contribution to the Kingdom. (This is not meant to be a complete list, by any means, of valuable businesses that sustain life and advance the Kingdom.)
- Politics: believers can participate in overcoming the disease of war and other social ills. David Bornstein has researched social entrepreneurs around the world who have had a profound effect on their societies. "Social entrepreneurs advance systemic change: they shift behavior patterns and perceptions" (2004: 2). An example of entrepreneurship helping to overcome political disease is found in a Kingdom business operating a noodle factory in North Korea. The noodles are sold in other countries, generating income to provide basic sustenance for starving workers in a country devastated by sinful political structures.
- Agriculture: Kingdom social entrepreneurs are needed to lead efforts in overcoming diseases of nature such as famine and malnutrition. Joshua Fugimoto, an 80+ year old agricultural missionary, spent years in Bangladesh experimenting with ways to grow vegetables in a climate with long droughts followed by monsoon rains. Groups of believers following his agricultural principles are now producing nutritious crops several times a year, instead of only one poor crop per year, giving families the strength needed to combat the evils of disease and poverty.
- Community Development: godly people can lead the way in combating social diseases such as poor education or pollution, including contaminated water. Yamamori and Eldred describe a number of entrepreneurs who deliberately set out to engage in business with Kingdom purposes in mind. Unfortunately, in the authors' review of these case studies, their list of Scriptural principles<sup>19</sup> for Kingdom business does not include the aspect of the war against evil that all believers are engaged in whether they realize it or not (2003: 253).
- Scientific investigation: kingdom workers are needed to uncover the origins of disease for the purpose eradicating it for the glory of God. Ralph Winter is pessimistic about the role of business in this area, however. He writes, "Unfortunately, I don't see business of any great help in this. ... I don't see any significant effort ... aimed specifically at the defeat of the works of Satan" (2005e: 7).

## Business and Mission Partnering in Wartime

To bring about transformation and the “reglorification” of God, the Body of Christ needs to rebel against the “natural order” that still lies in the power of the evil one and join God in defeating the works of the devil through legitimate vocations and businesses. War, famine and disease are the areas of influence of three of the four horsemen of the apocalypse—all leading to death. Combating these in Jesus’ name combats the forces of darkness that seek to kill and destroy.

But Winter points out that business is powerless to accomplish things for which people do not feel a need. So often missions (with an “s”), with the financial backing of believers, must do what business alone cannot deal with because the necessary action is an “unfelt” and unfunded need (2005d).

“Mission” is something all God’s people participate in—not just cross-cultural workers. Our mission is to defeat evil and restore God’s glory. The business of life is to participate meaningfully in this mission and to pray by our actions, “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

## Endnotes

1. Revelation 6:3-8: When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!”

When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

2. Genesis 1:30: And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.

3. Isaiah 11:6-9: The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

4. Romans 8:20-22: For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

5. A number of scholars (and literary giants), as well as the post-apostolic fathers, agree that God’s good creation has been deliberately distorted by evil intelligent beings. Boyd says: In apocalyptic tradition, under the leadership of Satan, [his] angels work to afflict the world with earthquakes, famines, hailstorms, diseases, temptations and many other things that are not part of God’s design for His creation (1997: 206).

Boyd 2001:24:

I argue that ultimately there is no such thing as “natural” evil. All evil ultimately derives from the wills of free agents. What cannot be attributed to the volition of human agents should be attributed, directly or indirectly, to the volition of fallen angels.

McLaughlin 2004, 237, quoted in Winter 2005: 48:

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

Campolo 1992: 38:

Since Satan’s fall, he and his followers have been at work perverting and polluting all that God created. Before Adam and Eve were ever created, Satan worked to create havoc throughout creation. One of the consequences of Satan’s work is that the evolutionary process has gone haywire. That

is why we have mosquitoes, germs, viruses, etc. God did not create these evils. They evolved because Satan perverted the developmental forces at work in nature.

Tolkein 1977: 12:

The Valar [good spirit beings] endeavoured ever, despite of Melkor, to rule the Earth and to prepare it for the coming of the Firstborn; and they built lands and Melkor destroyed them; valleys they delved and Melkor raised them up; mountains they carved and Melkor threw them down; seas they hollowed and Melkor spilled them; and naught might have peace or come to lasting growth, for as surely as the Valar began a labour so would Melkor undo it or corrupt it. And yet their labour was not all in vain; and though nowhere and in no work was their will and purpose wholly fulfilled, and all things were in hue and shape other than the Valar had at first intended, slowly nonetheless the Earth was fashioned and made firm.

6. Boyd 1997:19:

The church as the body of Christ has been called to be a decisive means by which this final overthrow is to be carried out.

7. In the Babylonian creation myth, Tiamat wages war against the assembly of the gods who call in Marduk as their champion. After defeating Tiamat and her ally Kingu, Marduk creates the world from the body of Tiamat and uses the blood of Kingu mixed with earth to create man (Smart & Hecht 1993: 6). The Greeks envisioned bloody and passionate wars among the gods, leading to monstrous supernatural offspring who hated and plotted against each other (Smart & Hecht 1993: 9).

“The truth to which all these mythologies point, and indeed the truth to which the mythological warfare dimensions of the Old Testament point is the truth that God’s good creation has in fact been seized by hostile, evil, cosmic forces that are seeking to destroy God’s beneficent plan for the cosmos. God wages war against these forces, however, and through the person of Jesus Christ has now secured the overthrow of this evil cosmic army” (Boyd 1997:19).

8. Six theses form the core of Boyd’s position regarding the risk God took when He chose to create a universe in which beings would have the potential to choose to respond to Him with love.

- 1) Beings possess the capacity to love only if they have self-determining freedom (angels and humans possess self-determining freedom)
- 2) Love entails risk. God’s free creatures might not choose as He wants them to choose.
- 3) Love, and thus freedom, entails that we are to some extent morally responsible for one another. We could not

have the capacity to love unless we also possessed the power to influence one another for better or for worse.

- 4) The power to influence for the worse must be roughly proportionate to our power to influence for the better.
- 5) Freedom must be, within limits, irrevocable. This thesis, if accepted, explains why God cannot always prevent evil deeds He would otherwise prevent. To some extent God places an irrevocable limitation on himself with His decision to create beings who have the capacity to love and who are therefore free.
- 6) This limitation is not infinite, for our capacity to freely choose love is not endless. Angels and humans are finite beings who thus possess only a finite capacity to embrace or thwart God’s purposes for our lives (Boyd 2001: 23).

9. Others have written along these lines as well.

Dom Bruno Well, quoted by Plantinga (Van Inwagen 2004: 15): So the fallen angels which have power over the universe and over this planet in particular, being motivated by an intense angelic hatred of God and of all creatures, have acted upon the forces of matter, actuating them in false proportions so far as lay in their power, and from the very outset of evolution, thus producing a deep-set disorder in the very heart of the universe which manifests itself today in the various physical evils which we find in nature, and among them the violence, the savagery, and the suffering of animal life.

Also see Note 5.

10. On the real existence of spirits, Boyd writes (1997: 12):

From a cross-cultural perspective, the insight that the cosmos is teeming with spiritual beings whose behavior can and does benefit or harm us is simply common sense. It is we modern Westerners who are the oddballs for thinking that the only free agents who influence other people and things are humans.

11. The literary structure of the Genesis Creation account is seen in the parallelism between the first and second sets of three creation “days.”

Day 1: Light

Day 2: Air and water separated

Day 3: Dry land separated from water; vegetation appears

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Day 4: Specific lights in the sky become visible

Day 5: Creatures begin to live in the air and water

Day 6: Creatures begin to live on dry land: animals, humans created and given green plants to eat.

12. Donald G. Barnhouse also argues for a “Great Interval,” between the first two verses of Genesis, listing translations of the Hebrew word, *tohu*, that include: without form, void, waste, desolate, empty, wreck, ruin. In fact, Barnhouse calls attention to a French expression, “*tohu-bohu*,” equivalent to the English, “*topsy-turvy*,” which is a direct transliteration from the Hebrew of Genesis 1:2. In Barnhouse’s opinion, “one of the commonest errors in Biblical interpretation is the thought that the first verse of Genesis and the second verse are closely connected in time. This error leads many readers to believe that God had originally created the earth in chaotic form. Yet there is no doubt that between the two there is a great gulf fixed” (1965: 9). To conclude his argument, Barnhouse quotes from Isaiah 45:18 in which it is stated explicitly that God did not create the world in “*tohu*”—chaos, the same Hebrew word as in Genesis 1:2. “This categorical statement is sufficient to prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the first and second verses [of Genesis] are separated by an interval” (1965: 16). Winter does not subscribe to this theory, due to grammatical and linguistic difficulties with seeing a great gap in the middle of a single sentence. Instead, his view is that prior to Genesis 1:1 there was a creation we know nothing about except that it ended in the “*tohu-wabohu*” out of which God brought order in the Genesis 1 account. The first verse summarizes the particulars in the rest of the chapter.

Boyd considers that Genesis 1 “is not so much an account of creation as it is an account of God’s restoration of a world that had through a previous conflict become formless, futile, empty and engulfed by chaos—the world of Gen 1:2 (the gap theory) or restoration theory (1997: 104). Later Boyd says, “created beings rebelled against God before the creation of Genesis 1 took place, and this creation was affected by their rebellion. In my view, Gen 1:2 onward most probably concerns the re-creation of this present cosmos, not the creation *ex nihilo* of all things (1997: 326). Except for the placement of the rebellion and destruction before instead of after Genesis 1:1, Winter would basically agree with Boyd.

13. “Business as a cultural mandate is out of date. We are under a military mandate because of the Fall” (Winter 2005c).
14. See End Note 10 and Hiebert 1999: 414.
15. Boyd reflects, “in contrast with any view that would suggest that disease and demonization somehow serve a divine purpose, Jesus never treated such phenomenon as anything other than the work of the enemy. He consistently treated diseased and demonized people as casualties of war. Furthermore, rather than accepting their circumstances as mysteriously fitting into God’s sovereign plan, Jesus revolted against them as something that God did not will and something that ought to be vanquished by God’s power. ...

“It is curious that the evil one to whom the Bible directly or indirectly attributes all evil has played a rather insignificant

role in the theodicy of the church after Augustine. This, I contend, is directly connected to the fact that the church generally accepted the blueprint worldview that Augustine espoused. If we assume that there is a specific divine reason for every particular event that transpires, including the activity of Satan, then the ultimate explanation for evil cannot be found in Satan. It must rather be found in the reason that God had for ordaining or allowing him to carry out his specific activity. The New Testament, I submit, does not share this assumption” (2001: 36,37).

16. A detailed scientific explanation of how the space-time theory of relativity affects the Open View of God was given in a term paper by a WCIU student with a Ph.D. in Engineering (Beckman 1999).
17. Romans 12:3-8: For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. if it is serving, let him serve, if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-20-31: The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ... But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ ... But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help

others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

18. "Early in civilized history, successful raiders became conquerors, i.e., learned how to rob agriculturalists in such a way as to take from them some but not all of the harvest. By trial and error a balance could and did arise, whereby cultivators could survive such predation by producing more grain and other crops than were needed for their own maintenance. Such surpluses may be viewed as the antibodies appropriate to human macroparasitism. A successful government immunizes those who pay rent and taxes against catastrophic raids and foreign invasion in the same way that a low-grade infection can immunize its host against lethally disastrous disease invasion." (McNeill 1976: 54).
19. A number of central teachings in Scripture underpin kingdom business. I call these the "Five Pillars": (1) the nature of vocation and calling; (2) the biblical theology of work; (3) the lordship and sovereignty of Jesus Christ; (4) the priesthood of all believers; and (5) incarnational ministry (Yamamori and Eldred 2003: 253).

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# *Shalom:* The Goal of the Kingdom and of International Development

*Beth Snodderly*

*The Kingdom of God is ... righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17).*

## Introduction

“**T**hey made my brother hold a flashlight and watch while they took turns raping me. They were like animals. When he refused their order to rape me, they stabbed him to death in front of my eyes, just as they had done with my parents a year ago.”

For eight months this Congolese woman was a slave to the Congolese rebel army, raped multiple times every day, until she finally managed to escape. Reunited with her children, whom she had thought dead, she is now raising her new baby, Hope, the child of one of her rapists, while she participates in a job training program designed for women like herself. This woman’s plight is common in the Congo, where in some rural villages 90% of the women have been raped, ages 3 to 73. The only doctor in the only hospital on the “front lines” of this civil war, who does his best to repair torn and broken bodies, is the only man the women who come to him have been able to trust. Their husbands often leave them, this doctor recognizes, because they have been humiliated by being powerless to defend their women.

In a resource-rich country, this systematic destabilization of the society through violent acts against the women enables certain interest groups to rape the natural resources of the land for their own benefit.

*(Summary of “War against Women: The Use of Rape as a Weapon in Congo’s Civil War,” a “60 Minutes” segment, televised January 13, 2008, CBS News)*

Compare the condition of this society to that described by the prophet Isaiah in 59:4-11:

No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. ... They conceive trouble and give birth to evil. ... Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace. So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead. ... We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.

## Questions

1. What is wrong with these two societies? How do societies get to the place where such unrestrained violence and corruption break out?
2. What does God want human life to look like?
3. What are the essential conditions for a society to experience wholeness, peace and safety?
4. What is the role of God’s people in promoting *shalom* to the peoples of the world? What is the responsibility of the body of Christ to those in harm’s way? What should be the role of Kingdom-minded International Development workers in addressing the roots of human problems around the world?

## Shalom Word Study

One way to approach answers to the questions above is to survey the connotations of the Hebrew word, “*shalom*,” commonly translated “peace,” but which implies much more: wholeness and wellness in the context of right relationships with God, people, and nature. This article intends to engage in an ongoing dialog about the relationship between advancing God’s Kingdom and doing “International Development,” by investigating the context of the occurrences of the word, “*shalom*,” in the Old Testament. The usage and context of several Greek words for “*shalom*” that were used by the translators of the Septuagint will be the basis for this study. (See a comprehensive list at the end of this article, “*Shalom: Right Relationships with God, People, and Nature.*”)

## Absence of *Shalom*

Question 1. What is wrong with these two societies?  
How do societies get to the place where such unrestrained violence and corruption break out?

Many of the occurrences of the term, “*shalom*,” in the Old Testament are in the context of conditions in which peace, safety and well-being are absent. These passages describe the opposite of God’s will. Taken from the descriptions and sample passages just below, the following generalizations provide some guidelines for understanding what has gone wrong in societies experiencing violence and danger.

- God judges evil societies.

God turns his back on those who do evil. He allows evil societies to be overthrown and destroyed, whether by the violence of other evil societies or natural disasters, or both. (See Jeremiah 33:4–6 and 4:22–26.) Ralph Winter has commented that it shows God’s commitment to free will that innocent people and even believers suffer while God is allowing evil cultures and societies to burn themselves out and destroy one another.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah pointed out to the people of Jerusalem regarding the disasters and lack of *shalom* he prophesied were coming to them, “Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you. This is your punishment” (4:18).

- God deals with societies according to their own standards.

In a land full of violence, God said he would deal with the people according to their conduct and judge them by their own standards. (See Ezekiel 7:23–27.) In seeking to understand the judgment of God against a society, questions such as these might be helpful:

What signs can be found in the history of the society of God’s activity or redemptive analogies?

In what ways have the people, particularly the leaders, disobeyed and rebelled against what was right according to their own culture’s traditional values?

What are the society’s own expectations of justice and judgment?

- Nature is cursed when a society turns away from God.

A person or group that presumes to think they are “safe and blameless” (*shalom/hosia*) when in reality they are persisting in going their own way, contrary to God’s way, will bring disaster on the land. “All the curses written in this book,” listed in Deuteronomy 28:15ff, will come against that person or society, Moses warned. (See Deut. 29:18, 19.) Among the curses for those not following God’s commands are “wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish” (Deut. 28:22).

## Descriptions of the Absence of *Shalom*

(Representative references are given. See the list at the end of this article for all the uses of the term, *shalom*, in its various Greek translations.)

Deceit (Is. 59:14; Jer. 9:8)

Quarrelling, war, fighting, violence (Is. 59:6; Jer. 6:14; 23:17; Eze. 7:23)

The land is defiled by the impurities/ abominations of the local residents (Ezra 9:12)

Evildoers (Job 28:3)

Disaster (Jer. 4:4)

Detestable idols (Jer. 4:1)

Iniquities have separated the people from God (Is. 59:2)

They are skilled in doing evil: they know not how to do good. (Jer. 4:22)

God has withdrawn his blessing, his love and his pity from this people. (Is. 59:2; Jer. 16:5)

War, starvation, and disease (Jer. 32:33)

Injustice (Is. 59:8–14)

God will deal with them according to their conduct, and judge them by their own standards (Jer. 4:16; Eze. 7:27)



They plot evil against neighbors and love to swear falsely (Zech. 8:17)

## Sample Passages Describing the Absence of *Shalom*:

Deut. 29:18-19

Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. The Lord will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him...

Is. 59:2-14, selected verses:

2 Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

4 No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity.

6b Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands.

7 Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways.

8 The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace.

9 So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness.

11b We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.

12 For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us.

14 So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter.

Jer. 32:23:

They did not obey you or live as you had instructed them. They did not do anything that you commanded them

to do. So you brought all this disaster on them. ... War, starvation, and disease are sure to make the city fall into the hands of the Babylonians who are attacking it.

Zech. 7:9-14:

This is what the Lord Almighty says: Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other. ... But they refused to pay attention;... So the Lord Almighty was very angry... [and] scattered them; the land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.

## Presence of *Shalom*

Question 2. What does God want human life to look like?

In contrast to the passages quoted above, descriptions of *shalom* are descriptions of God's will for people and the land. (See the list and sample passages directly below.) In a presentation to the staff of the U.S. Center for World Mission on February 14, 2008, Paul Pierson asked the question, "What does God want human life to look like?" and answered with a good description of *shalom*, which is also a good description of International Development goals: grace, health, education, safety, well-being for all people.

These qualities flow from being in right relationship with God. Jeremiah tied the concept of "prosperity" (*shalom/eirene*) to God's forgiveness of sins of rebellion.

I will ... forgive all their sins of rebellion against me.

Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it (33:8, 9).

From this passage, it is clear that *shalom* is a quality that is observable. An evidence of *shalom* in the realm of nature was understood by one of Job's comforters as including the wild animals being at peace (*shalom/eirene*) with humans (Job 5:24). Isaiah elaborated on this concept in describing the reign of the Messiah: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ... They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (11:6, 9).

In the absence of a knowledge of micro-organisms, and the harm they cause through disease in humans, animals, and plants, Isaiah did not include bacteria and viruses in his list of “animal” life that will no longer harm or destroy when the Lord’s *shalom* is being experienced. But knowing now that disease is caused by bacteria and viruses, and knowing that disease is one of the curses that is evidence of a lack of *shalom* (see Deut. 28:22 and Jer. 32:23), it seems reasonable to include the “taming” (or eradication) of these types of “animal” life in an application of *shalom* for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Another observable sign of *shalom* is health and healing for a formerly wicked city and the people in it: “I will bring health and healing to [the city]; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace/*eirene* and security” (*pistin*—the root word for faithfulness) (Jer. 33:6). This passage demonstrates that there is no dichotomy between social and spiritual healing or between physical and spiritual healing. *Shalom* is wholistic.

### **Descriptions of the Presence of *Shalom***

(Representative references are given. See the list at the end of this article for all the uses of the term, *shalom* in its various Greek translations.)

Wellness, good health (Gen. 29:6)

Safety, security (Gen. 26:31; Josh. 10:21; Ezra 9:12)

God will deal mercifully with you, fear not (Gen. 43:23)

Let good happen to me (Deut. 29:19)

God has given me rest round about (no one plotting against me) (1 Kings 4:24)

Their houses are safe (good condition; no rod of punishment from God is upon them) (Job 21:9)

They will go out with joy, and be led forth with peace/gladness (Is. 55:12)

Kindly speech (Gen. 37:4)

Absence of quarrelling, war, fighting, violence or danger (1 Sam 7:14; 16:4, 5)

God’s favor/covenant (Ps. 85:11; Is. 26:3; 26:12; 32:17; 53:5; 54:10)

Prosperity (Ps. 35:27)

No evil intentions (Zech. 8:17; 1 Sam 25:35)

The wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee (Job 5:24)

The people turn away from evil and do what is right. (Ps. 34:14)

The meek shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:11)

Justice, righteousness (Ps. 35:27; 72:3; 85:10)

He will rule from sea to sea; his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth (Micah 5:5; Zech. 9:10)

Salvation (Is. 45:8; 60:17; Zech. 8:13)

The land will yield its harvest (Ps. 85:13)

Wild animals will be at peace with humans (Job 5:24)

Detestable idols are put out of God’s sight and the people no longer go astray (Jer. 4:1)

Acknowledgement of wickedness and sinning against God (Jer. 14:20)

Healing (Jer. 33:6)

God will cleanse them from all the sin (Jer. 33:9)

The people will fear the Lord. (Haggai 2:12)

I will save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong. (Zech. 8:13)

True and sound [NIV: peaceable] judgment in the courts (Zech. 8:16)

### **Sample Passages Describing the Presence of *Shalom*:**

**Is. 60:17-21:**

I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.... Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever.

**Jer. 29:11:**

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you [of peace] and not to harm you,

plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

**Jer. 33:6, 9:**

I will bring health and healing [*peace*] to [the city]; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. . . . I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant *prosperity and peace* I provide for it.

**Malachi 2:5, 6:**

My covenant of life and *peace* was with him, . . . the law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked before me directing his way in *peace* and he turned many from unrighteousness.

## Conditions for Experiencing *Shalom*

Question 3. What are the essential conditions for a society to experience the wholeness, peace and safety described immediately above?

As has already been referred to several times, when a society repents and turns to God, He is willing to restore and bless the people with *shalom/eirene*. (See Ps. 30:11; Jere. 33: 6, 9.) There seem to be two conditions for a society or person to experience *shalom*. One is the intention to follow God's laws and principles. The other is acceptance of God's provision of a substitute punishment for *not* following God's laws and principles.

The principle of keeping God's requirements as a condition for blessing was specifically stated to Isaac shortly before he encountered Abimelech, king of the Philistines. (See Genesis 26:1-5.) It is through following God's guidelines that a society can function well. In fact, all nations on earth willing to function according to the will of God as revealed through His chosen people, will end up being blessed materially and spiritually (*shalom*). This is seen in Genesis 26:4, 5 where God repeated the promise to Isaac that was originally given to Abraham: "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me

and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." Immediately following this promise is an illustration of one of the nations, the Philistines, being blessed by the presence of Isaac's family, in spite of various problems, and sending him away in peace/*shalom/eirene* (Gen. 26:29, 30), without further quarreling or fighting.

When God's principles are followed, peace results. This is also seen in the encounter between Moses and his father-in-law. Jethro showed Moses how to satisfy the peoples' need for justice, without wearing himself out by delegating some of the work to others. Jethro specifically stated that if "God so commands" that the principles of delegation be followed, and if Moses did follow them, then Moses would be able to stand the strain of leadership and the people would go home satisfied (*shalom*/"in peace"). (See Exodus 18:7-23.)

But *shalom* does not come easily. Broken relationships among people and with God characterize the activities of people and nations throughout the Old Testament. A pattern seen throughout the Major and Minor Prophets is the repeated description of God allowing one nation to punish another for their evil ways, with the focus on the people of Israel and Judah who had the most opportunity to know God's expectations, yet failed to follow Him. Then those who were God's instrument of punishment in turn experienced punishment for their own evil ways, in a seemingly never-ending cycle.

But a climactic statement by the prophet Isaiah points toward the possibility of a break in this vicious cycle. Speaking of the coming Messiah, Isaiah prophesied: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us *peace* (*shalom/eirene*) was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Is. 53:5). Jesus brought an end to the necessity of one society punishing another for the evils it commits in its rebellion against God. Jesus took the final punishment on behalf of any person or society that will accept his peace offering. By accepting this substitute punishment, people and societies can break out of the vicious cycle and experience healing of broken relationships with God, people, and nature.

## Promoting *Shalom*

Question 4. What is the role of God's people in promoting *shalom* to the peoples of the world? What is the

responsibility of the body of Christ to those in harm's way? What should be the role of Kingdom-minded International Development workers in addressing the roots of human problems around the world?

Jeremiah seemed to be saying, in his plea to Israel, that if God's people will obey him, the rest of the world will be blessed: "If you put your detestable idols out of my sight and no longer go astray, and if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, 'As surely as the Lord lives,' then the nations will be blessed by him and in him they will glory" (4:1,2). The challenge to be God's obedient people, who are experiencing some of that blessing becomes very personal if we dare to ask ourselves the question from the Lord through the prophet Haggai: What are we doing building our paneled houses and elaborate landscapes when God's "Temple," the intended Body of Christ, is in shambles around the world? (see Haggai 1:3); when there are people from many nations in harm's way whom God wants to redeem for his glory (Is. 11:9)?

Quoting again from Paul Pierson's presentation on February 14, 2008, "we are called to call people to become followers of Jesus as authentic disciples of Jesus in their culture and to show something to the world of what the Kingdom of God means, and what are its values." Pierson added, "What passion has God given you? If he gives you a passion He'll give you the gifts to go with it."

The Body of Christ contains people with the gifts to "do" *shalom* in many different areas: justice, peace-keeping, skill-building for economic independence, health, fighting and eradicating disease, etc. All of these peace-making activities can potentially demonstrate the values of the Kingdom and bring *shalom* into the lives of troubled people and societies. Jesus concluded his farewell speech to his disciples by promising *shalom* in the midst of trouble: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace/*eirene*. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In 1 John we see that believers in Jesus also overcome the world and the evil one who rules it (1 John 2:13, 14; 5:4). As a result they are able to enjoy and pass on to others the *shalom* of God, as seen in the greetings of 2 John and 3 John. Compare the Greek words in these greetings with the list of words found at the end of this article showing how the Septuagint translated *shalom*:

Grace/*charis*, mercy/*eleos* and peace/*eirene* from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love" (2 John 3).

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health/*bugiainei* and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" (3 John 2).

## Concluding Challenge

What will it take for a society that is not enjoying "good health," that is engulfed in evil and experiencing the absence of God's presence, to get to the place where it experiences *shalom*? What would *shalom* look like in the Congo, in Sudan, in Iraq, in Myanmar? Contrast the unjust and violent conditions in such societies with Zechariah's prophesy, as he sings and prophesies to his baby son, John the Baptist, in Luke 1:68-79:

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High: for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of *peace/eirene*.

Zechariah sang about salvation from human enemies, about serving God without fear in holiness and righteousness, forgiveness, mercy, peace—the same *shalom* spoken of throughout the Old Testament. In the context of similar justice, righteousness and faithfulness, Isaiah described "salvation" from feared enemies in the realm of nature (which can also represent disease micro-organisms that were unknown at that time): "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, . . . and a little child

will lead them. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Is. 11:6, 9).

In the wholistic nature of *shalom*, there is no dichotomy between physical and spiritual health and well-being. *Shalom* is the description of God’s will for the earth and everything living in it. *Shalom* is the goal of International Development because this is the goal of the Kingdom: “Our Father in heaven ... your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9).

## Occurrences and Meanings of *Shalom* in the Septuagint:

### Wholeness and Right Relationships with God, People, and Nature

*bugiainei* 10x

Wellness, physical health

Gen. 29:6; 37:14; 43:27,28; 2 Sam. 20:9; Esther 9:30; Is. 9:6

Greeting (I wish you well, peace to you, good health to you, prosperity to you)

Ex. 4:18; 1 Sam. 25:6

Farewell (go in peace/health)

2 Sam. 15:9

*sotarias* 3x

Safety (“salvation”)

Gen. 26:31; 41:16; 44:17

*hileos* 1x

God deal mercifully with you, fear not

Gen. 43:23

*hosia* 1x

Let good happen to me

Deut. 29:19

*anepause* 1x

God has given me rest round about (no one is plotting against me)

1 Kings 4:24

*euthenousi* 1x

Their houses are safe (good condition; no rod of punishment from God is upon them)

Job 21:9

*chairain* 3x

No joy to the wicked

Is. 48:22; 57:21

Go out with joy, and be led forth with peace/gladness

Is. 55:12

*teleian* 1x

Wholly carried away (Hebrew: peacefully exiled)

Jer. 13:19

*eirenes* 169x

Die peacefully

Gen. 15:15; 2 Kings 22:20; 2 Chron. 34:28; Jer. 34:5

Speak peaceably, kindly, absence of deceit

Gen. 37:4; Deut. 20:10; Ps. 28:3; 35:20; 120:7; Prov. 12:20; Is. 52:7; Jer. 9:8; Nah 1:15; Zech. 9:10

Satisfied that justice has been done

Ex. 18:23

Absence of quarrelling, war, fighting, or danger

Gen 26:29; Lev. 26:6; Deut. 2:26; 20:11; 23:61; Josh. 9:15; Jud 4:17; 8:9; 11:13; 21:13; 1 Sam 7:14; 16:4, 5; 2 Sam. 15:27; 19:24, 30; 1 Kings 2:5,13; 5:12; 22:27,28; 2 Kings 9:17,18,19,22,31;

1 Chron. 12:17; 2 Chron. 15:5; Ps. 120:6; 122:6,7,8; 147:14; Eccl 3:8; Is. 27:5; 33:7; 57:2; Jer. 4:10; 6:14; 8:11,15; 12:5; 23:17; 28:9; Eze. 7:25; Mic. 3:5; Zech. 6:13; 8:10

God’s favor/covenant; associated with truth, doing good, righteousness, obedience, healing

Num 6:26; 25:12; 1 Kings 2:33; 2 Kings 20:19; 1 Chron. 22:9; Ps. 30:11; 34:14; 37:11,37; 72:3,7; 85:8,10; 119:165; 125:5; 128:6; Prov. 3:2; Song of Sol 8:10; Is. 26:3; 26:12; 32:17; 39:8; 45:7; 48:18; 53:5; 54:13; 57:19; 59:8; 60:17; Jer. 12:12; 14:13,19; 16:5; 29:11; 33:6; Lam 3:17; Eze. 34:25; 37:26; Mic. 5:5; Hag 2:9; Zech. 8:16,19; Mal. 2:5

Safe, secure

Josh. 10:21; 1 Sam. 20:7,13,21; 2 Sam. 3:21,22, 23; 17:3; 18:29,32

1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:16; 2 Chron. 18:27; Ezra 9:12; Job 5:24; Ps. 4:8 Prov. 3:17; Is. 32:18; 41:3; Jer. 25:37; 30:5; 43:12; Eze. 13:10,16

Greeting (peace be to thee; how are you)

Jud. 6:23; 18:15; 19:20; 1 Sam 10:4; 25:5; 30:21; 2 Sam. 8:10; 11:7; 2 Kings 10:13; 1 Chron. 12:18; Dan. 10:19

Farewell [go in peace]

Jud 18:6; 1 Sam. 1:17; 20:42; 29:7; 2 Sam. 11:7; 2 Kings 5:19

All is well/ is it well?

2 Sam. 18:28; 2 Kings 4:23,26; 5:21; 9:11; Jer. 15:5

Prosperity

Job 15:21; Ps. 35:27; 73:3; Is. 66:12; Jer. 29:7; 33:9; 38:4

Friend [man of peace]

Ps. 41:9; Jer. 38:22; Obadiah 7

## Endnote

- 1 Comment in a private conversation with the author on February 14, 2008.

# The Story of Our Planet

*Ralph D. Winter*

This “story” is not so much to be believed as it is presented as a matter for hypothesis and speculation. Human beings will never know everything, and in trying to achieve an overall picture an extra amount of conjecture seems helpful.

It begins with a brief survey of secular perspectives about seven very basic events. This is what the world is thinking. Then, what might be a Biblical interpretation of those events, as contrasted to the secular understanding? An attempt is made to paint an overall picture of the record of life on this planet—from God’s viewpoint—and thereby to clarify, to the extent possible, the nature of God’s mandate to man. This will explain my belief that God has sought not merely to list us in a Book of Life, but to enlist us in a struggle, a war, against the works of an intelligent, evil person—an all-out activity which is distinctly more than to await the blessing of eternal life. This story, in effect, presents a rationale for the extensive battle into which we are recruited.

## The Story: Introduction

The chart on the next page is a brief summary of what some of current scientific and academic opinions would suggest. All aspects are not necessarily true but they are widely believed. At the bottom of the page, the last ten thousand years, we see what some call “The Young Earth.” The conjectures expressed here are that the “old” earth preceded Genesis 1:1, the Bible picking up the story at the point of a very recent “new beginning” as described in Mystery Six below.

## The Seven Mysteries in the Background

These are curious and perplexing events for the origin of which there is little or no complete secular consensus:

1. Matter, 14 billion BC
2. Life, 3.5 billion BC
3. Predatory life, 500 million BC
4. Human life, 10,000 BC
5. Archaic civilizations, 8,000 BC
6. A new beginning, 5,000 BC
7. A third new beginning, 2,000 BC

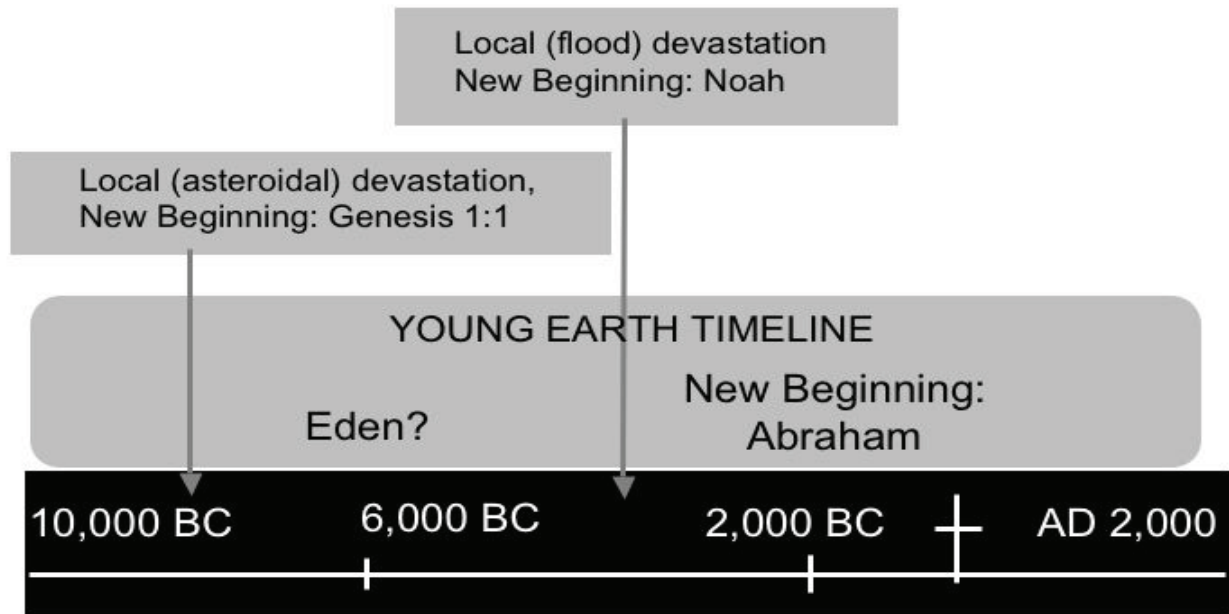
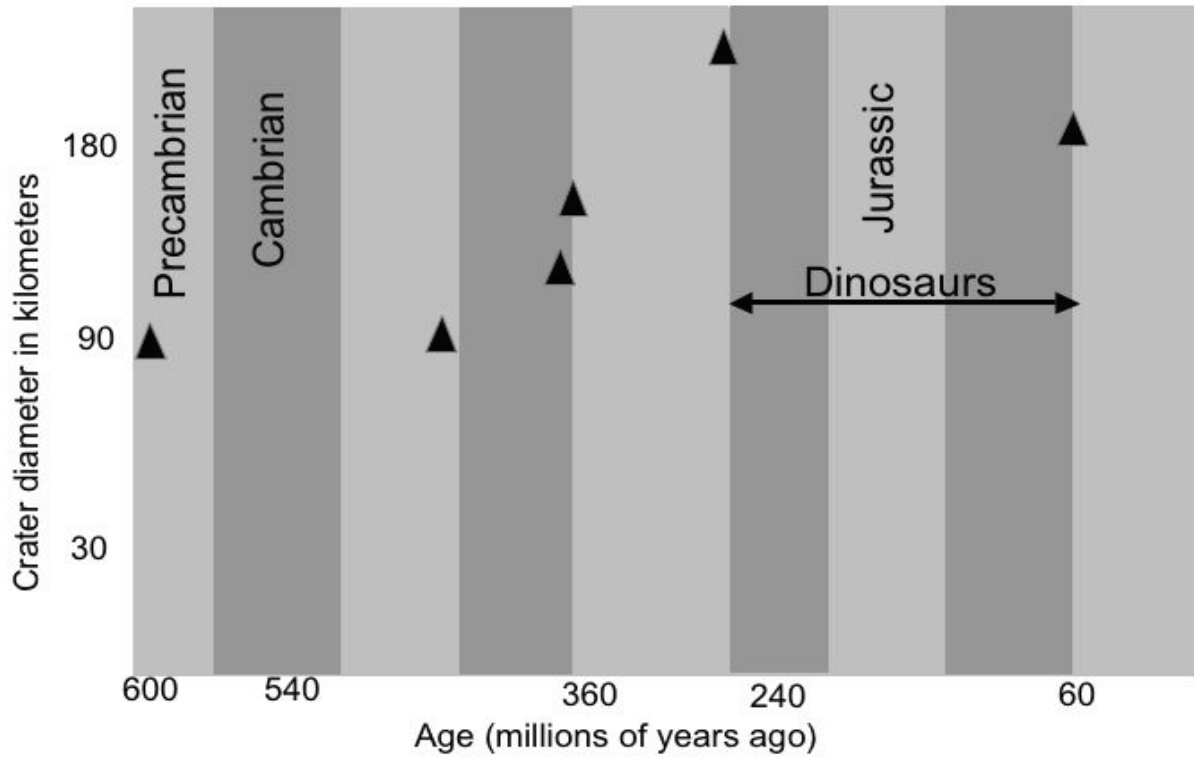
## Mystery One: Matter, 14 Billion BC

### The Origin of Inorganic Matter

Early humans quite possibly thought they lived on a flat earth. They were entertained at night by tiny lights in the sky moving in puzzling ways. Later humans learned that they existed on the surface of a huge spheroid hanging in space. Still later they discovered that the large hot, light-giving object daily crossing the sky was something their planet itself circled. Still 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 (called “the Milky Way”), an object so large that traveling across it at 186,000 miles per second would take 100,000 years. This was hard-won knowledge. Relatively few individuals alive today comprehend all of this.

But that discovery, compared to what came later, was nothing. Less than a century ago—in my lifetime—humans further discovered that our entire, enormous galaxy was only one of at least 50 billion others, that most of the “stars” you can see at night aren’t actually stars but galaxies. Not only that, but it became clear that the entire universe seems to be expanding.

**A Few of the Impacts and Mass Extinctions**  
 from Ralph Winter's Interpretation of *Scientific American*, March 2002



(Other New Beginnings: Moses, Post-Exilic Return, Christ)



Furthermore, this huge reality—no matter how far away from us are its scattered, distant parts—is apparently made up of a subset of tiny, mysteriously structured “atoms” which run from the simple to the very complex, all of them with far smaller centers comprised of some of the strangest realities of all. These atoms and their clusters (molecules)—joined by an entirely different kind of reality, referred to as radiation, forces and fields, electrical, magnetic and gravitational—combine in thousands of ways to constitute basic, inert, non-living matter, that is, air, water, fire, sand, snowflakes, crystal structures, mountains, clouds, thunderstorms, etc.

However, the most mysterious thing of all is the fact that the majority of our most respected astronomers now believe that all of this enormous universe popped out of a very tiny object about 14.5 billion years ago, blowing up big so suddenly that in the first fraction of a second it was already as big as our galaxy (which at the speed of light takes so long to cross)! Thus, this unaccountable expansion was enormously more rapid than the speed of light itself. This strange phenomenon is called the “Big Bang.”

Obviously, nothing could be more difficult for common sense to accept. But most astronomers actually do believe it. This is all hugely mysterious, a veritable bundle of mysteries. We will simply call it Mystery One, The Origin of Inorganic Matter.

## **Mystery Two: Life, 3.5 Billion BC**

### **The Origin of Organic Matter**

Distinctly additional to the appearance of matter is the appearance of life—the living entity, the life form, that has been peering up at those tiny lights. Human beings who have been puzzling about the stars and other things represent a wholly different, but equally mysterious reality, called the *organic*, that is, life forms ranging from pheromones and viruses to hippopotamuses—objects that, while composed out of inorganic matter, constitute a radically different, second, reality. While the *inorganic* is like a lumber yard, the *organic* is as different from it as the intricately designed homes produced from those materials. Life forms are utterly dependent on inorganic atoms, but inorganic atoms are not dependent on life.

And, (if you can believe it) all the objects in this additional organic world also derive in great mystery from something very small—each one in a development which could be called a “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*, the merger of an ovum with a sperm. Create the *zygote*, and you have created the human. But this is still a very tiny speck.

Furthermore, the first appearance on this particular planet of life—of this phenomenon which I have called the “Little Bang”—is an added dimension beyond the first mystery, since even the very smallest and “simplest” forms of life are incredibly complex, and so far as is presently known, to be found on no other planet. The universe is enormously larger but mainly so far away as to be very difficult to study. Microscopic reality is much closer but so tiny as to be equally 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 astronomic and microscopic reality can be watched in ongoing development, tracked and predicted to some extent, but *absolute origins of either matter or life are still utterly mysterious*.

We might note that while scientists have no significant consensus about absolute origins, they have to some extent agreed not to think about them. Furthermore, “Evolution,” one of the most widely held theories, that is, the concept of unaided, unguided, random evolution of life, is by no means universally accepted. Many thinkers have urged the recognition of “intelligent design” in nature. Even one of the most outspoken defenders of the theory of unaided evolution, Richard Dawkins, actually admits that design at least *appears* to have been involved, saying,

Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.

## **Mystery Three: Predatory Life, 500 Million BC**

### **The Cambrian Explosion**

Something only recently reported is evidence that, long before the appearance of human beings, the lengthy record of the development of life suddenly burst into new complexity and for the first time displayed *predatory* forms of life—at every level from bacteria to visible animals. Richard Fortey, Director of the British Museum, in his recent book *Life*, expresses this view, which was also reported in *National Geographic*.

The sudden diversity of the Cambrian Explosion, so-called, is mystery enough—it is the last thing which orthodox Darwinism would want to discover. Nothing could be more perplexing for those who assumed a gradual evolution of life. Less often mentioned, but equally, if not even more mysterious, is the simultaneous appearance of all kinds of creatures displaying (either or both) anatomical defense mechanisms or tools of aggression and destruction. Why this all of a sudden?

### **Mystery Four: Human Life, 10,000 BC**

#### **Homo Sapiens**

A fourth mystery looms into view as soon as we go beyond the genetic 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*.

How did this new, very recent, very intelligent, reflective animal suddenly 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 selectively breed plants and animals. That intelligence did not appear, and, of course, nothing like computer chips ever appeared in those lineages. Recently, DNA studies have definitively ruled out the Neanderthals, who were around for maybe 100,000 years, as precursors to humans.

The actual record of *homo sapiens* is very mixed. *Homo sapiens* has destroyed more living species than any other form of life. Furthermore, no other form of animal life has been as dangerous to itself. Humans are their own worst enemy. The most ancient fossil remains give evidence of both homicide and cannibalism. The historic record of merciless genocide is very nearly incredible. This cannot easily be accounted for.

### **Mystery Five: The Archaic Civilizations, 8,000 BC**

Intelligent enough to develop plants and animals genetically, man was also able to build cities and civilizations, typically incorporating harshness, human sacrifice, and bizarre religious activity. Furthermore, the so-called archaic civilizations do not seem to have evolved slowly but spring into being suddenly.

Thus, constituting a fifth mystery is the sudden and unprecedented rise of human culture, or civilization. Neither computer chips nor automobiles could have

emerged from the work of intelligent but solitary individuals. Many things have happened today 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 impossible things.

The so-called “archaic” civilizations (using Toynbee's term) 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 Teohuacans who preceded the Inca empire created more refined pottery. The sudden appearance of these early advanced civilizations is, in fact, in itself so mysterious a phenomenon that some secular scholars have suggested even higher civilizations preceded them. Others guess that they must have appeared already highly developed *from outer space*. The apparent suddenness and sophistication of their origin therefore remains a mystery.

### **Mystery Six: A New Beginning, 5,000 BC**

In view of all this evil, it is possible that Genesis 1:1 and following, may refer to a massive asteroidal devastation of a huge section of the earth—gutting the entirety of what we call the “Fertile Crescent” of the Middle East—followed by a new beginning in that area. In that case, the “days” of Genesis might be describing the general sequence of things following such a major collision. A chart in *Scientific American* (March 2002) shows 60 major catastrophes in the last 500 million years. The results each time could easily be described as “formless and void” (the Biblical phrase for the desolation following a war). The dust hurled into the air produces at first total darkness, gradually thinning out to allow a glow of light each day, finally you can actually see the sun and the moon, etc. Surviving humans in other parts of the planet would be eyewitnesses.

In this new beginning we note that Genesis 1 describes the re-creation of both animals and man without the carnivorous violence endemic in all other parts of the earth—that is, plants, animals, and man are herbivorous. This new beginning did not last many generations, and with intermarriage with other humans outside that area, carnivorous behavior took over again.

The book of Genesis also records a second new beginning with a man named Noah. This did not last long either.

## Mystery Seven: A Third New Beginning, 2,000 BC

### The Abrahamic Period

Another new beginning, the seventh 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 involves a radically different way of looking at things. This new perspective was courteously or euphemistically called by the Apostle Paul a *mystery* instead of a *blind spot*. In Luke 24 we note that Jesus went further when He bluntly stated that His hearers ought to have understood what they apparently did not—that a *chosen people* was called both to be blessed and also to be a *blessing*, called to special service, not just to survival, and to extend that blessing to all the world.

The Jewish people, flawed and imperfect though that people may be, despite unusual persecution and misunderstanding, has clearly set a world record in the advancement of human life. Jewish people have excelled in almost every field. Their contributions in proportion to their actual population has no comparable example in any other human tradition.

Meanwhile, something about the intrinsic Jewish element in Christianity and Christianity itself has been the prime mover in the enormous, difficult-to-explain aspects of superiority of Western culture. Many scholars, representing a wide variety of theories, have sought to explain what has been the secret of the “Rise of the West” (Example: *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond), even the Chinese government. After checking out many strands within the Western cultural colossus to discover “the secret,” some high-up Chinese officials have decided the unique element is in the realm of the dominant religion of the West. (See the first page of the opening chapter of *Jesus in Beijing* by David Aikman.)

However, from a strictly secular point of view the matter of the very nature of this new element in human history is not yet resolved. It can still be classified as a mystery. In any case, the “West and the Rest” is for better or worse the inevitable context of any immediate future for human civilization.

## Part 1: Before Jesus: The First Half of the Story

At this point we can only see that these seven mysteries remain mysteries from a purely secular standpoint.

What other basic world views might illuminate and help to explain or understand these mysteries?

Surely, one of the most likely candidates as an alternative hermeneutic is a perspective incorporating a divine being and intelligent intermediate beings. The remainder of this story will ask how the seven-mystery scenario would look from that point of view. What will be presented is, of course, not the only possible interpretation from that standpoint.

Unfortunately, this story at first glance seems so complex for most people, that attempts to tell it are often considered mythical, meaningless or whimsical. Even professional historians shy away from interpretations and value judgments in favor of simply dredging up what seem to be facts.

What is attempted here is very brief, hardly more than an outline. It is intended merely to test out the interpretive potential of the basic perspective employed. It is not so much to prove anything as to gesture to a certain perspective and certain very concrete implications.

### The First Mystery: Matter, 14 Billion BC

The Bible says a lot about the glory of (what we now know a lot more about) outer space. This is mystery one. If anything cries out for a Creator, especially in view of the Big Bang theory, the universe does. It is not just a heap of trash. Consider the swirling disk-like shape of our galaxy, the incredible speed of light, the far faster early expansion of the universe as is now suggested, the planetary realities maintained by gravitation, the delicate balance we are told of, which if gravitation were slightly more or less would reduce all stars to red dwarfs or blue giants.

Yet it is totally strange and totally mysterious. No theological rationale seems to explain it.

### The Second Mystery: Life, 3.5 Billion BC

The mystery of life is confined so far as we know to our one medium-sized planet circling a medium-sized star located half way out in the disk of a medium-sized galaxy which, it is said, is only one of 50 billion other galaxies. But with this second mystery is an entirely new perplexity, the virtually unfathomable intricacy of life.

The diligence of the secular world in the realm of paleontology has been quite amazing in the last few years, far exceeding all previous efforts.

A near consensus now exists among the world’s scientists as to both the age of the universe and the age

of our planet—13.7 and 4.5 billion years, respectively. Since fossils of tiny early forms of life are hard to find, it is not at all clear just when that first appearance of life took place.

A major change is seen in the transition from prokaryotes to eukaryotes, and billions of years later on, larger forms of life appeared, some radially symmetric, some with bipolar symmetry, having a front and a back. This is seen in the Ediacaran Era, just preceding the Cambrian.

### **The Third Mystery: Predatory Life, 500 Million BC**

What is apparently uncontested is the idea that at a “Cambrian” boundary (525 million or so years ago), both a vast new and sudden profusion of life forms appeared, half of them, for the first time perhaps, being vicious and life-destroying!

According to many paleontologists today, for over three billion years the story of increasing size and complexity of life forms displayed neither predatory life forms nor defensive life forms (hard shells, spikes, flesh-tearing teeth). But then suddenly all this gave way to a state of violent conflict that was totally unique and utterly pervasive, continuing to this day.

From the standpoint of God doing the creating, one aspect of mystery is why God would have taken so long to develop more advanced forms of life. Furthermore, if we conclude that the new predatory factor is the result of God suddenly deciding to create pervasive violence and suffering, that merely poses the additional puzzle of why He would do it.

It seems more reasonable to conjecture a lengthy, three-billion-year period of tranquility in nature in which “good” intermediate beings were busy at work diligently learning from God and developing non-vicious life forms under God’s guidance. It would take a long time because angels are finite, and even life forms too small for humans to see are incredibly complex.

Then, if God had been employing thousands of intelligent, angelic beings in the process of elaborating and developing life, and if one of the chief 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?

By *corruption of creation* we must recognize genetic damage (not just “defects”) both before and after

conception. We must pay greater theological attention to malevolent genetic alteration as well as the existence of terribly hostile pathogens, viruses, bacteria, parasites, vicious animals, and the cruel, hateful, warlike genocide of whole peoples by humans.

This corruption might then be said to have happened when Satan and one third of the angels turned against God. The sudden appearance of violence and predation in the Cambrian Period would seem to be a logical point at which this happened. Jesus’ death on the cross, then, while often seen as (merely) a tragedy essential to the rescue of humans, could, thus, be the key to the restoration of all creation.

For most Evangelicals there is a massive “disconnect” here. Only when we stop and think about it can we imagine a monstrous, pervasive, intelligent distortion of creation. We don’t stop to realize how illogical it is to blame all that on God, as some do, instead of considering the involvement of an intelligent Evil One.

Thus, a better explanation for the massive suffering and premature death in nature might be what was mentioned already, namely, the possibility 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” may blind us to the theological significance of the corruption of all creation. We tend significantly to reduce our theological concerns to the “spiritual,”—the purely immaterial, the emotional and mental problems of human life forms. We let Jewish and secular doctors attend to the problems arising from microscopic evil and disease control. Those workers at this point, unconsciously or consciously, may be operating intuitively from a more Biblical theology that was not damaged, as ours was, by Augustine’s neoplatonism (see later).

The curious result would seem to be a common tendency not only to allow God to be blamed for all appearances of evil, but to resign ourselves to “not understanding God” when evil appears (Dobson’s book, *When God Doesn’t Make Sense*), thus excluding from our thinking any perception of the instrumentality of intelligent, evil powers. As a result our evangelism may be drastically and unnecessarily enfeebled in so far as it does not portray our God as opposing such things,

*as well as enlisting redeemed human beings specifically to fight against them.*

In actual fact, the lengthy development of life forms on this planet may thus be parallel to the 20th century development of the automobile, which was an evolution of a sort involving (and requiring) thousands of intelligent engineers inputting at every point for more than 100 years. We can, thus, imagine teams of intermediate beings working semi-independently in different continents. Just as automobile manufacturers working independently on different continents began making SUVs at the same time, so life forms in certain categories, like tigers, elephants, crocodiles were developed with their slight differences—which SUVs also have from one company to another. Further, many animals have four legs, many motor vehicles have four wheels. Some companies make smaller ones with two wheels, and so have other companies done similar things.

However, at every point intelligent beings have been involved in a distinctly evolutionary process. It has been by no means an unguided (Darwinian) random process. In the case of automobiles, a year 2000 Lincoln Continental is incredibly more advanced than an early Model T Ford, so later forms of life are phenomenally more complicated than earlier single-cell life, and single-cell life is unimaginably more complex than earlier bacteria, etc.

This new period of an extensively violent nature, if we were not so accustomed to it, would certainly appear as a frightful distortion of a good creation in which the lion formerly could lie down with a lamb. This period of violence has apparently continued unabated interrupted by relatively frequent asteroidal “extinction events” between the Cambrian period and the present. Midway (250 million BC) occurred the greatest extinction of all, which is said to have killed 95% of all life. Following that after a while is the 100-million-year period of the dinosaurs, notorious for their viciousness. It is thought that they in turn were destroyed by a major asteroid only 65 million years ago, ushering in the age of the mammals, allowing them to go from mouse size to enormous 1,500-lb marsupials and even larger hairy mammoths (before they were driven extinct by humans).

Thus, at the Cambrian boundary something totally new up to that time occurred, something so devastating as to require perhaps the label of a “principle of disorder.” It is as though at that point, in other words, a major leader

of the angelic workers decided to work against God and to distort and destroy the very creation this same leader and his workers had for so long labored faithfully and intelligently to produce. God’s intended good creation was distorted extensively so to blur the nature of God and to promote the idea that God bungled or, worse, that God was the author of evil—something, to be sure, many people today claim must be true but for reasons we don’t understand. For the latter, God does evil that good may come of it, of course.

The point at which that rebellion happened could be called the fall of Satan. His fall would then explain the outrageous evil that pervaded all of nature from that point on for the next 500 million years. It would also explain constant warfare, from that point on, between good and evil angelic beings, each side attempting to defend or destroy creation—the one developing destructive traits in formerly benign animal life, and the other developing defensive measures against beasts of prey.

As already mentioned, secular scholars have painstakingly discovered and recorded 60 different major asteroidal impacts (major that is, producing craters larger than 14 miles in diameter) that have occurred since the Cambrian period. All of these asteroidal impacts massively killed life, one of them killing more than half of all life on earth, both plant and animal life. (This is where, respectively, coal and oil deposits come from, it is supposed.) Were these collisions timed by God to cut off violent developments such as the dinosaurs that seemed to have spiraled into hopeless violence? Who knows?

Specialists in prehistoric fossils have talked for years about pre-human “hominids” reaching back to a million or more years. Until recently the Neanderthal “man” was considered a precursor to modern man. Fairly recently, however, other scholars have pointed to the greater importance of the appearance of cultural features as being even more helpful than estimating progress by studying bones. This may peg the appearance of humans into very recent times, the Genesis events even more recently.

### **The Fourth Mystery: Human Life, 10,000 BC**

The form of life which we earlier described as seeking to interpret the tiny lights out in the sky is the same one which has been capable of patient, skillful, selective breeding of both plant life and animal life, an involved process requiring high intelligence.

But note that both plant cultivation and breeding has been estimated (by different groups of scholars) to have first appeared about 11,000 years ago. The intelligent and intentional breeding of wolves into tame and friendly dogs is said to have begun 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 selective breeding and resultant genetic alteration. Earlier forms of life called hominids—or human-like animals—distinctively lack such capabilities, as intelligent as some hominids have been.

Human life at this stage is still a distorted, violent form of life. Humans in the image of God await the Edenic experiment.

### **The Fifth Mystery: Archaic Civilizations, 8,000 BC**

The book of Genesis also refers to cities very early on. It is possible that many of the marvelous achievements of the archaic civilizations, along with their astounding cruelties, may have led to a very specific destruction of a large portion of the earth, and a new beginning.

Thus, it could readily appear that the first chapter of Genesis gives a very graphic description of the destruction and replenishment of a large portion of the earth, such as the Fertile Crescent—the “known world”—following an asteroidal impact, which would normally have rendered it “formless and void,” *tohu* and *bohu* (“absolutely devastated” is the meaning of this phrase throughout the OT).

*Thus, as understood by the author of Genesis and his hearers, 1:1 might refer not to the creation of the universe but the recreation of that portion of the earth, that is the known world.* Genesis 1 would then be an eyewitness account deriving from humans outside that area.

To be faithful to the Bible (and without questioning that God created the entire universe) it is crucial to reflect that Bible believers may have for many decades been jumping to conclusions if they have assumed Genesis 1:1 to refer to the origin of the entire universe or even the origin of our planet. Grammatically and exegetically it could just as well mean “When God began to rehabilitate the huge section of the earth (the known world) damaged by the most recent asteroidal collision, things were “formless and void, and darkness would have blanketed the whole planet,” the phrase

“formless and void” in the Hebrew always referring to a destroyed situation. In the case of an asteroidal collision the dust would gradually settle and an increasing glow would be seen half of each day until finally the sun and moon would become visible. This, incidentally, would allow actual direct rays of light, producing rainbows, which, puzzlingly, Genesis mentions later connected with another judgment—a flood. Larger forms of life would have been killed by the flood, but were preserved by Noah, and would then gradually replenish that entire (local) section of the globe.

Thus, Genesis 1:1 may be speaking understandably to an understanding audience, not talking about the creation of the entire universe but much more likely the recreation of the devastation and destruction caused, say, in the “Fertile Crescent” of the Middle East. The first chapter of Genesis then does not report “magically” or “mythically” events of which humans did not know, but rather the actual sequence of things following a major but local event. This brings us to the next mystery.

### **The Sixth Mystery: A New Beginning, 5000 BC**

Most significant of all would be the new creation for the first time of a special area called Eden, and there a form of life not only with the unprecedented intelligence of *homo sapiens*, but with features undistorted by Satan. The purpose of this new creature the Bible describes as *replenishing*, being fruitful and multiplying as well as caring for other living creatures.

Grisly evidence of the existence of an Evil one consists in the sorry fact that even this new creature “falls,” that is, is seduced and then seriously distorted by that same Evil One. In what ways did the Evil One distort this latest creation of God? Here are three possible clues: 1) The human birth process may have been in several ways cursed. 2) Humans who were intended to be herbivorous were genetically altered to a carnivorous state. 3) The good angels, due to the emergence of war and pestilence, and working genetically, urgently rewired the Edenic humans defensively from having small families to be immensely prolific, with as many as 25 pregnancies per mother. (John Wesley was number 15 and Charles Wesley was number 17 even though there were never more than five children alive at any point in their family.)

This radically different way of looking at things allows us to understand the appearance of a new, unfallen human being (both before the fall of Adam and once

redeemed) as an additional creation *for the specific purpose of aiding in the restoration of what had already been created and distorted*, this to be done by advancing God's Kingdom, His will on earth, an occupied planet.

Alas, however, through sin, human history has continued to be 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 worked together to restore God's originally "good" creation. Thus, they have given little attention to fighting the principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this earth.

### **The Seventh Mystery: A Third New Beginning, 2000 BC**

Understanding this allows us to recognize in the early pages of the Bible (apparently as "The Subject" of the Bible) the full spectrum of the ingredients of the Great Commission in the call of Abraham and the foretold involvement of his spiritual lineage in the redemption of all the peoples of the world. This is parallel to the earlier mandate to Adam to "replenish" the earth, not continue to destroy all other forms of life.

Yet, the followers of Christ have more often 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 their truncated idea continues to be that the advance of the Kingdom consists primarily (and perhaps merely) in *the rescue of humans not the restoration of a corrupted creation as part of glorifying God*—and the defeat of the Evil One who has done and is doing that corrupting.

The corruption of the Edenic new beginning, not the earlier Fall of Satan, is what most people talk about if they speak of "The Fall." It is not easy to imagine all of the particular aspects of distortion of the human resulting from this additional invasion of evil. The Bible says that man "was only doing evil continually."

Even so, while we may not be able to predict human success in quelling all evil, at minimum, for those in fellowship with God, there continues to be the need for a clear and public alignment of human effort with God's purposes to defeat all evil. The important point is that this kind of *alignment* will more fully portray to

an unbelieving world the true attributes of our God, and thus tend to 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.

Thus, first Satan "fell" (long before Genesis 1:1) and had proceeded ever since the Cambrian era to tamper with and distort the DNA of benign animals and even to devise virulent pathogens. Next, very recently, the events of the Genesis account click in, and, as a result of Adam's fall, the new human creature dies spiritually. Hence, the unfolding story of the expansion of human beings into the entire planet turns out to be an account of unmitigated gross and violent evil. Satan and his workers now do what they did to earlier life forms, distorting the DNA of humans introducing vicious and warlike traits—a possible fourth aspect of the curse.

Not only does cursed and depraved humanity proceed to kill off a large proportion of the earth's animal life—virtually all large animals, the life they were intended to replenish—humans themselves also succumb to pervasive cannibalism and human sacrifice as is revealed in the earliest remains of skulls and societies. (See *Scientific American*, August 2003, p.33)

The Divine response to a humanity that is "only doing evil continually (Gen 6:3)" now appears to be a plan whereby all of the peoples of the earth—in fact all of fallen creation—must be reclaimed, reconciled, and restored with the assistance of a chosen nation, and on the basis of "the lamb slain before the foundations of the world."

First Noah and then Abraham are chosen and the power and grace of God are displayed not only in these key people but in all who call upon Him: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him (2 Chr 16:9)." Special revelation to and through Abraham is God's gift to all peoples, and what is later termed *the kingdom of God*. A recovered and restored creation begins to expand across all the earth.

But while we remember the fall of man we usually forget the fallen creation. Once humans are restored in repentance and faith, in the blessing of God, redeemed man is now expected to resume his original purpose, to work with God for the restoration of all creation, and in the process make crystal clear that Satan and not God is

the initiator of evil and all forms of depravity, as well as all life-destroying forms of life, whether large animals or tiny bacteria you cannot see with the naked eye. However, apparently neither the full restoration of nature nor even the full restoration of humans will take place until the end of time. However, humans must continue to resist Satan and cope with physical distortions and fight back at every level, joining with the Son of God in the destruction of all Satan's works (I Jn 3:8).

In Jesus' day, after 2,000 years of incredible expansion, the domain of God's new influence had grown to such an extent that Peter in Acts can say that Moses is preached in every city of the Roman empire. Secular scholars today agree that in Jesus' day Jews were one-tenth of the population of the empire, that is, about ten million!

The Old Testament tells this story. This portion of our Bibles, earlier in a pre-Christian Greek version called the "Septuagint," portrays the experience of a chosen nation reflecting marvelous and authentic godliness and yet tragic, human shortcomings.

The children of Israel were pushed into Egypt and eventual slavery there, but they apparently left a witness behind. The northern group virtually disappeared in dispersion possibly planting some of the synagogues throughout the Roman empire. The southern group later found themselves in exile in territory where people believed in two supreme gods, one good, one evil, following Zoroaster. This experience enabled them to understand more completely the existence of an Evil One without accepting that evil person's equality with God—that is, the Zoroastrian view. However, that was not true of later Christians of the Manichaean persuasion who retained much of the Zoroastrian dualism of two equal gods.

In any case, the word *Satanas* in the NT (from *Satan* in the OT) now became the name of a powerful, Evil angelic personality, an intermediate being. Now, it is not just the ordinary word for adversary as with the Hebrew equivalent in most of the Old Testament occurrences of the word—where even God when opposing a false prophet is called an adversary (a *satan*). In the NT Peter is similarly called an adversary (a *satan*) when he opposes Jesus, although *satan* in the NT usually means the recently understood Evil One.

When in Babylon, although their heart cry was to return to their land, God's word to His people through Isaiah (49:6) was that such a restoration to their land

was in His purposes for them outranked by His intention for them to be His salvation to their captors, to the "ends of the earth" (which meant where they now were across the entire fertile crescent to the mountain slopes of East Iran).

Just what was this "salvation" to which Isaiah referred?

The word means deliverance from evil, reconciliation with God, wholeness, restoration, a fellowship with Him—"in all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." It reminds us of the concept in Micah 6:8: "What does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." Or Peter's straightforward comment, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation *who fear Him and do what is right*" (Acts 10:34). In the latter case Peter is referring to the million or so Gentiles who did not become full proselytes but attended the synagogues as "devout persons" or "Godfearers," people like Cornelius who had been exposed to only what we call the "Old Testament." But, at that point in history their true fellowship with God could not yet have included an *intellectual* knowledge of Jesus' divinity and His death on the cross. While Peter goes on to indicate that "Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name," he apparently did not speak of the blood of Christ being a sacrifice for sin.

Nevertheless the Old Testament kind of *basic salvation* is not different from the meaning of the same word in the New Testament, even though the Evangelical use of the word *salvation* may be considerably different today from what it means in both the OT and the NT. For us today—where such knowledge is readily available—we may only expect salvation to include an intellectual knowledge of Christ, His divinity and His atoning sacrifice, as well as an assurance of getting to heaven on the basis of a *pardon* for our sins. Some people reserve for "a second work of grace" a deliverance from the *power* of sin.

The basic concept of salvation in the Old Testament is thus not superseded in the New. It is rather that the New presents us with an even more accessible knowledge of God in the person of Jesus Christ, because in His face we see the glory of God more clearly than ever.

Moreover, we must recognize that the Old Testament period was not a time when people really did not know God. If that were true it would be hard to explain the Psalms—either their creation or their preservation and use.



In repentance and humility we Christians must acknowledge that Jewish families were often godly families. Their influence on the Babylonian and Persian kingdoms and vice versa will probably not in this life be fully known. By the time of Christ only one third of those carried off in exile were back in Palestine. And, just think, a million Jews were now in Egypt, another nine million in the rest of the Roman empire.

By Jesus' day there were Jews in Korea, South India, and China, and throughout the Roman empire. The Jews were sending out missionaries, in all directions, even though, as with many present-day missionaries, their normal strategy made merely cultural converts, that is (in their case) a cultural shift toward Jewishness, a result which would often be, as Jesus described it, hypocrisy.

Yet, in general, Jewish families were well respected, even highly respected. We know this because the Roman government accorded them local political autonomy beyond any other ethnic group in the empire. We notice one Roman emperor with a Jewish wife. We note the frequent presence in synagogues of "God fearers" and "devout persons," perhaps a million of them, who constituted the tinder box into which Paul's nationality-less Gospel caught flame providing—changing the metaphor—the backbone of the early Christian movement.

In Egypt many decades before Christ, during the extensive linkage of Egypt to Greek language and culture, God employed some wise and godly Greek-speaking Jews to draw an inspired selection of Hebrew documents into a collection they then translated into Greek calling it the *Septuagint*. This was in the second century BC. The resulting hefty document became the most influential "selection/translation" in history, the Bible of the early church, later to be called the Old Testament.

Though it would be centuries before the Christ would appear or the New Testament would be completed, this book functioned very effectively as the bedrock basis for the "salvation" of many living in groups reflecting many different languages and cultures. The *Septuagint* is one of the things which attracted Greeks to the Jewish synagogues.

It is apparent that those of us who look back to Christ may find it hard to recognize adequately the existence for at least 2,000 years of powerful and salvific revelation prior to Christ. Yet the Bible reveals God talking to Abimelech and the latter's significant morality. We

see one of the Egyptian pharaohs recognizing the work of God in Joseph's life. We see God reaching out to Naaman the Syrian through the witness of a young Jewess. We see the whole city of Nineveh spared due to Jonah's lukewarm preaching. Dozens of times in the Old Testament we see the active presence of God in the lives of people to whom Jesus probably made reference when he said "Many will come from East and West and sit down with Abraham ... in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 8:11)."

What difference then did the appearance of Jesus make? At least two incredible things. First, it now unveiled the astonishing basis for the very possibility of the grace, goodness, and forgiveness of God being extended prior to His birth, namely, the willing death of God's own Son. We now know that all who come to the Father, are enabled to come solely because of the blood of Christ. Secondly, in the very person of Christ we see the glory of God. The character, will and purpose of God are now brilliantly clearer than ever before.

This obviously makes it easier, not harder, for mission work to take place, even though in the centuries before Christ was born the glory of God had been manifest in many ways. Certainly anyone rejecting earlier revelation or later revelation would lose out.

But, it would be very difficult to suppose that at a certain date people all over the world, who might once have been acceptable to God would now be turned away by Him unless they acquired some additional knowledge about the details of the plan of salvation, or, shall we say, "the basis of the Gospel." It is understandable that if they do hear those details they will be judged more strictly, but not that they would be judged more strictly if they did not possess that additional information.

Is it fair to the Bible to believe that at a certain date, say, once Jesus was born, or died, or was resurrected, or had ascended, or was preached by the early church for 30 years, that precisely at that date and beyond that date *it was then no longer possible to find God without additional head-knowledge* of the basic details of the life and death of Jesus? Jesus has always been, even in Old Testament times, the only name under heaven whereby anyone is saved. He was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

Knowing Christ is now the far superior way of knowing God. But we need to remind ourselves that there was a true gospel in force throughout the Bible from

Genesis to Revelation, from the gospel preached to Abraham in Gal. 3:8 to the “eternal gospel” of Revelation 14:6,7—“fear God ... give Him glory ... worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea.” In Romans 1, Paul declares, “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

This is the simple form of the Gospel, call it “the *message* of the Gospel,”—namely that God seeks the salvation of all of the peoples of the earth without them becoming Jews. By contrast, the basis of that electrifying truth becomes clear only when the Christ finally appears among men.

Paul, after referring to the Book of Creation, uses this fact to go on to show how people in the Old Testament who refuse this light can be lost. In the next chapter he refers, however, to people outside of the Abrahamic covenant being saved without that knowledge when he says, “God will give eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality.” He adds, “When Gentiles, who do not have the (Bible) do by nature things required by the (Bible) ... they show that the requirements of the (Bible) are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing them, now even defending them.” We must recognize that what he is saying is not purely hypothetical.

Indeed, chapters one and two are mainly intended to show that while Gentiles have enough light both to condemn them and to allow them eternal life, the Jews have far more reason to be condemned, precisely because they have had greater knowledge. The upshot is that it is unreasonable for the Jews not to believe that Gentiles can be saved *for they will not even be judged as severely*.

Thus, can we believe that this general statement of the simple message of the gospel is not now *superseded* but is now marvelously *supercharged*, empowered as we preach of the newly understood *basis* of the Gospel, that is, Jesus as Lord and Christ, the son of the Living God?

Remembering that most of what I have said is purely conjectural, for the sake of discussion let’s see how such a view might affect missions.

1. It would, first of all, remove an enormous barrier to our evangelism which many thinking people cannot let go of, namely, the idea of people being sent to hell simply because other people have failed to take them the word—that is, other people being penalized, for

example, for our failure. Remember the Chinese man who asked Hudson Taylor why his people had waited so long to send the word to China?

2. Secondly, in terms of this interpretation, people resisting the Holy Spirit are doomed whether they know about Jesus or not. Note that those most certainly doomed are those who have been exposed to the Bible or who have heard of Jesus and rejected God. Is this “universalism”? Not exactly, since it means many if not most people who consider themselves to be Christians will not make it. In fact, it is almost the opposite of universalism.

3. Finally, this perspective underscores the profoundly important strategy whereby missionaries can look for and expect to find “a man of peace” who will welcome knowledge of Christ. Thus, they can more likely be building on people who truly seek God rather than on those who are rebelling against even the particular way of righteousness within their culture.

In our next section we will look more closely at the events surrounding and following the Incarnation. For now, consider one possible query:

Why do we bring the Gospel to non-Christians? Wouldn’t it be easier for them to stay in the knowledge they have? It’s still basically a choice whether to believe or not believe... why add the difficulty of the cross? And does this mean that many Muslims are saved, because they are seeking after God as best they know him?

We don’t merely go (in missions) to get people into heaven. That is so simple as to be almost a cop out. If that is all we are doing, it means we don’t have to get our hands dirty, fight evil, etc. Actually, however, missionaries are empowered by the love of Christ which constrains them to go (representing God’s nature more fully than that) to deliver people from the actual power of sin, disease and fear. We should be going to enlist them in the mission to which God has called us all, that His Kingdom might come and His will be done on earth. We can now do all this on an inestimably superior basis—the life, person, witness, and blood of Jesus Christ.

Do we ever wonder if the sanctified intuition of the people in the pew might sometimes be superior to the brittle, purely logical fruits of our formal theology? I refer to the common message that if we don’t go and tell people certain things they will go to hell, but if they see the *Jesus* film and “pray to receive Jesus” they will go to heaven (and our main job is then over).

No wonder Bob Pierce and his World Vision was so attractive to so many for whom a purely save-from-hell gospel may have fallen on uneasy ears.

Our traditional approach tends to assume that the Holy Spirit has had no previous work among the people we are sent to reach, that the magnificence of what we call “General Revelation” has not allowed them to make any steps of faith that God would note or honor. We assume that there is no “prevenient grace” of which John Wesley spoke, that we are starting from scratch among a people “among whom there is no fear of God”—which was Abraham’s false assumption when he visited Abimelech.

Into this admittedly ambiguous situation our missionaries go, sometimes unwilling to pay any attention whatsoever to indigenous righteousness—what in Bangladesh the followers of Jesus maintained, namely, the “adat” or inherent “law” of the people. Can’t we bring ourselves to recognize that we are not really privy to God’s appraisal of people, and that our man-made theological formulations don’t even make a perfect match with the Bible which we extol as the ultimate authority? If we are not in a position to decide who will and who will not make into heaven, why do feel we must do so?

## Part 2: Jesus

### The New Basis for the Second Half of the Story

There were many foreshadowings of “one who was to come” (Jn. 11:3). Yet, while in a certain sense He was expected during earlier centuries, nevertheless, what His exact role was to be was scarcely clear in advance and, in fact, is still being pondered to this day. Today, thousands of books filled with awe and wonder have been written about Him. Global history has seen no greater impact from any other person. Virtually everything that is happening today in the entire world is either different because of Him or is best understood through His eyes.

The Bible of the early church, the Septuagint, which had brought millions closer to God, would now, because of Him, be accompanied by an additional book written not so much by Jews in the diaspora as by the direct impact of the life of Jesus. Half of it would consist of careful accounts of His ministry. The largest number of pages would be written by the Gentile,

Luke, the physician. *All of it would owe its survival as a collection to the widespread embracing of Him by people outside of the ethnic Jewish lineage.*

In just a few decades the followers of this one person, born in a tiny village near Jerusalem would be given the huge Lateran Palace in Rome for their headquarters, which was the former “White House” of the Roman emperors. In a few more centuries human beings in most of the world would follow a calendar calibrated to His birth date. In another few centuries populations enlivened by the Christian movement would conquer almost every square foot of the earth’s surface, and later give back most of it to the original inhabitants, not without permanent change.

What was the overall picture? The first 2,000 years of the Abrahamic Mandate, that is, from Abraham to Christ, would, incredibly, see genuine Biblical faith expand in a Jewish ethnic vehicle into the whole of the Roman empire and also in the form of tiny Jewish enclaves to the very ends of the earth.

Then, in a few short years, following the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in the new “AD” period, totally different ethnic vehicles would accept and carry that same Biblical faith further into all the earth in a much larger and more influential movement, a movement that would no longer be just Jewish. Still later, in the 20th century, it would expand even beyond what people call Christianity.

The four Gospels lay out the story of the disturbing discrepancy between the meaning of the Bible and the various human religious traditions of Jesus’ day. The rest of the New Testament describes in some detail just how that unencumbered faith broke out beyond Jewish ethnic boundaries.

We note the existence of genuine believers who believed in the Septuagint and in Jesus as Lord. We see such people in both the Jewish and Greek cultural traditions.

We also note “Judaizers” who determinedly denounced any abandoning of the Jewish “garments” of the Gospel, wanting Greeks to undergo an extensive “proselytization” process in order to be acceptable to God.

At the other extreme we find followers of Marcion who are so monoculturally Greek that they could not acknowledge the authentic spiritual stream within the Hebrew tradition. They end up throwing out the entire OT and much of the New Testament as being too Jewish.

Not quite so exclusively Hellenistic, other Greek followers of the faith nevertheless sneered at those Jewish believers who maintained their cultural inhibitions about meat offered to idols. Romans 14 deals with that situation.

We note a major spiritual tension arising as both Jesus and the leaders who followed Him underscored a theme basic to the Old Testament, which all along had demanded heart faith, not just outward compliance with religious forms. However, as a result, this emphasis on faith then appeared to some as a reason for ignoring all outward obedience. James deals with that misunderstanding.

This same tension between faith and obedience would arise again and again down through history whenever the faith would flow from the forms of one cultural tradition to the forms of another. True faith always is evidenced in true *heart* obedience, but the outward form of that obedience is always *cultural*—just as is the outward form of godliness—but the diversity of cultural forms leads to a breakdown of formal unity and opens the way to polarization between different streams of faith.

This was the basis for the hostility aroused against Paul by Jews who claimed that his stress on faith undermined obedience—for them obedience meant adhering to Jewish forms. The New Testament thus anticipates the opposition that may arise every time the Gospel takes on new cultural clothing.

This kind of a confusion is seen in Luther's superficial comparison of the Old Testament and the New Testament, respectively, as domains of "law and grace." In actuality, both faith and obedience are expected in both testaments. The NT phrase, "the obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5 and 16:26 (improperly translated in the NIV) and many other passages display these two words as two sides of the same coin. Ironically, in the Reformation for the Protestants to have chosen to emphasize *faith* and the Catholics to have chosen to emphasize *obedience* rendered both sides heretically one-sided.

Thus, it is important to realize that the movement of the Gospel from Jewish to Greek cultural clothing is not portrayed in the New Testament as a mere *description* of what happened, but as an example of what would later happen over and over again. Almost always the two sides do not understand the other, and they may pull away from each other in what anthropologists call not *assimilation* but *dissimilation*.

Probably the least recognized example of this kind of dissimilation is the 7th Century AD event in which an Arab leader forged new clothing for Biblical faith out of Arabic garments. Christianity by that time was specifically and officially identified with the political and military power of Rome. As Rome's power weakened, so did the allegiance of many of the former empire's minorities and neighbors. It is no surprise that those who for any reason did not want to be identified with Rome were eager to accept a non-Roman form of Christianity-like faith which, of course, was not called *Christian* but *Muslim*. In our times, Black Americans, also, who have been Christians for years quite commonly switch to embrace something that is not the religion of an oppressive society. Thus, we have Black Muslims, many of whom don't really understand what they are choosing. It is, to them, simply preferable not to be following the religion of the white man.

The early Islamic movement thus included the Roman-oppressed peoples of the Middle East, North Africa, and even Spain (for seven hundred years). Islam became a major inheritor of the Mediterranean civilization while Christianity was now more a phenomenon of the tribal societies of what we now call Europe. This major difference handed Islam a huge advantage. Art, literature, science, technology, medicine and politics were far more advanced in Islam than in the tribal societies of Europe, as valiantly as Charlemagne tried to drag them up into civilization.

The dark forests north of the Mediterranean eventually drew crucially upon the industrial processes and the literature, especially the Bible, which were carried into their midst by literally hundreds of monastic missionary Bible-treasuring outposts. By comparison, Islam inherited full-blown cities, highly developed political and monetary systems, scholarship, medical knowledge, civil and military engineering, Greek classics and extensive libraries almost totally unknown north of the Alps for over 500 years. This advantage held and was hardly challenged until, in the 11th century, awed crusaders brought back tales of Islamic superiorities. There is much more to tell in the next chapter.

However, we are getting ahead of ourselves. Our purpose in this chapter is to perceive clearly in the Bible itself not merely a record of many unique events but also a handbook for missionary cross-cultural strategy that both portrays and predicts how the authentic Biblical knowledge of God can transcend national and cultural boundaries.

Thus, when we see the stunned Peter returning to the Jerusalem elders with his experience at the household of Cornelius, and witnesses their consternation, we are enabled to recognize that same perplexity again and again down through history whenever the power of the Gospel breaks over cultural boundaries that seem to the participants on both sides to be barriers far too huge to cross.

To this day it is often confusing as well as inconvenient to find so many culturally different streams to have become enlightened from this one ancient source. But things are clearer once we realize that in the Bible itself our Biblical faith was authentically manifested in at least two major cultural traditions, the Semitic of the OT and the Greek of the NT. Furthermore, we must realize that the coming of Christ clearly sanctioned outreach to the Greeks and in so doing jump-started a fresh new understanding of the mandate to Abraham.

Today, of course, we look back on those two cultures from a still different culture. We may be drawn to “go back to the Old Testament.” In so doing we might say we prefer the Semitic vehicle and denounce the Greek formulation, as did the Judaizers (and as some Messianic Jews tend to do today). Or, we might prefer the Hellenistic version and denounce the Jewish tradition as *defunct*—as did Marcion—or merely *outmoded* and *superseded* as have many others.

Or, we can take the Bible for what it is, a divinely inspired showcase of true heart faith and trust in a supreme creator God, a faith that transcends, even while infusing, multiple cultural traditions. The major new factor is the incarnation of the very Son of God, which both *confirms* and greatly *enhances* the very real power of General Revelation, making it much easier to extend the glory of God to all nations.

Something else is very nearly unique in the New Testament: the pervasive presence in Jewish and Christian thinking of evil embodied in a major adversarial personage, Satan, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The Zoroastrians had a very exaggerated concept of a second, equal and evil God. Some of the Jews and some of the Greek believers adopted this extreme. As we shall see, some reacted against that extreme so completely that they adopted a neo-platonic understanding of a God who is the author of evil and suffering but who has mysterious (perhaps good) purposes in mind.

Western Christianity to this day is confused about this point—the role of evil throughout all nature as

well as the human record. The tendency we thus have is to ignore the existence of an evil angelic personality and generally, and heroically, to be resigned to evil as something we must allow God to work out for good without any deliberate effort on our part to understand and destroy the source of that evil.

For example, the magnificent Lausanne Covenant speaks of Spiritual Warfare but refers to only two weapons against evil—truth and prayer. This ignores the urgent necessity of involvement on the physical level of not only combatting disease but the many perversions of our genetic inheritance as seen in the violence of nature. In regard to this unawareness of the nature of evil we are like the child soldiers of West Africa who have an amulet hung around their necks which they are assured will not allow any bullet to hit them. They are to be protected purely by “truth and prayer,” so to speak.

But the New Testament predominantly speaks in military terms. We fight not against flesh and blood but against powers of darkness who are in some ways still rulers of this world. In the NT Satan is now out of the closet. The kingdom of God manifested in the church will contest the kingdom of darkness and its gates will not hold out against the advance of God’s power. Our weapons are both spiritual and concrete. We are called as soldiers to fight—not just to gloat over our own salvation. We are to be soldiers maximizing our influence against the god of this world, not survivors maximizing our comforts while waiting for the millennium.

The Bible makes indelibly clear that our mission is to glorify God among all peoples, and that this is essentially a battle against darkness and evil, a battle in which there will be many casualties. If we are not identified with every effort to demonstrate the will of God against evil we are to that extent failing to declare God’s full glory.

This, then, allows intelligent people to wonder what kind of a God we have who does not ask His followers to fight evil on His behalf. Or worse, fair-minded people will wonder what kind of a God we have who appears unconcerned to restore His creation from a fallen state, who apparently is in full retreat before the forces of darkness and therefore favors merely a worldwide effort to bail people out of this world into a sane and sanitary heaven.

With the additional foundation of the New Testament finally behind them, followers of Jesus Christ moved

out into the world. We now can look back over 2,000 years of their efforts. It is a truly amazing story that rushes right up to our door and engulfs us. We will now look at those twenty centuries.

## Part 3: After Jesus

### The Second Half of the Story

“Unto whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required,” says the King James Bible. Even before the appearance of the Son of God, human societies in all parts of the earth had received “much.” All human societies derived from Eden and thus may still possess a residual knowledge of God—the “one high God” of which Don Richardson talks about in his book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*. In addition, they had the Book of Creation. We quote again what Paul stated in Romans 1: “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” The Psalmist had said it earlier—that the heavens declare the glory of God and there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard (Ps 19).

Once Jesus appeared, and for the first time since Eden, a totally new element entered into human affairs. Both the seriousness of rejection and the seriousness of belief and obedience with this new knowledge now escalate distinctively as far and as wide as reliable word of the person of Jesus Christ becomes known.

Of course, His blood was already the (unknown) *basis* upon which men and women of faith and obedience for many centuries had drawn close to God. It had already been true that those people of faith without knowledge of the New Testament prior to the Incarnation could only trust and obey the grace of God without knowing the details, that is, knowing only the “message” of the Gospel without knowing the “basis” of the Gospel. Would it not be reasonable for this to remain true for those after the Incarnation who know only the simple message of the Gospel and not yet the basis of that Gospel?

In any event, those who *did* know details about the person of Jesus immediately began to grow into a new transnational movement greatly hastening the extension of the Kingdom of God. This movement built significantly on the foundation of decades and centuries of Jewish witness—by Paul’s day perhaps a million “God

fearers” who attended synagogues and, like Cornelius, had been grounded in the Word (the Septuagint).

This movement extensively changed the world in the next 2,000 years. A very intelligible way to tell that story is to speak of 400-year epochs, each beginning in chaos or extreme difficulties and yet ending in a flourishing of the Gospel in a new cultural basin, the flourishing each time being labeled “Renaissances,” all but the first being a label recognized by secular scholars.

### 0 AD to 400 AD—the Romans

While the Word went in all directions it prominently changed lives within the superbly interconnected Roman Empire, no doubt with its greatest concentration at the East end of the Mediterranean.

By 300 AD, it had grown so strong that the greatest and most severe persecution of all (under Diocletian) failed to conquer it, and state recognition of it became inevitable. In addition, the son of a major Roman general, Constantine, whose mother and wife were Christian, seized the emperor’s throne. He immediately made peace with the Christian movement and diverted state funds from pagan priests to Christian leaders.

This had both positive and negative results, the latter often emphasized in phrases like “the fall of the church.” However, it allowed the preservation of documentary records. We think right away of Eusebius and his massive compilation of earlier writers—the major quarry from which we mine information about the earlier church leaders and the Roman empire itself. Indeed, this political twist made possible the firming up of the contents of the New Testament. It also began the translation of the entire Bible into Latin. It stopped the persecution of Christians, and, began the persecution of Christians outside of the empire, laying the groundwork for Islam.

It also suddenly created a semi-official movement (made official over a half century later) of state-supported functionaries who often knew little of the truth of the Gospel, yet manned former pagan temples. Worst of all, it identified the faith with a major military power and caused immediate, massive slaughter of Christians in lands outside of the Empire, such as Persia. It was loss of life far worse than the combined Roman government’s persecution of believers within the empire during the first three centuries.

This visible, “public” version of the faith has been called “The Church of Power” by Rodney Stark in contrast to

“The Church of Piety” which continued on mainly in the form of much more Biblically knowledgeable and accountable fellowships at the household level and in the growing monastic communities. What happened was altogether more positive than negative.

What might be called the “Classical Renaissance” thus characterized the Christian flowering of the fourth century, constituting the invasion by the faith into a major cultural basin—the primarily Greek and Latin elements in the Roman empire. In addition, Celtic populations in England and Ireland, Gothic tribes in middle Europe, as well as areas to the East, such as Persia, had been significantly affected—more by exiled heretics than by sent missionaries.

For various reasons, however, the Roman empire was sagging. The tribal societies outside of the empire in the north had long been sources of recruits for the Roman army. After service they added significant military skill to tribal military prowess. Thus, when they themselves were invaded and pressured from the steppes of Asia, they spilled over into the Empire and finally in 410 actually occupied the city of Rome itself. Their limited grasp of the faith at least made that occupation relatively mild and uncharacteristically non-destructive.

Meanwhile Constantine had moved the seat of empire to Constantinople (Istanbul), and the new Rome, called the Byzantine empire, was unable to prop up the West which became flooded with tribal peoples—who were Christians of a sort eventually adopting Catholic doctrine.

#### **400 AD to 800 AD—the Barbarians**

Soon after 400 AD the Romans pulled their legions out of southern England, and after 300 years of relatively stable, literate civilization, chaos and uncertainty ensued, primarily due to the immediate savage invasion of Angles and Saxons.

While the first period, 0–400 AD, ended in what I have already called “The Classical Renaissance,” from 400 to 800 the chief and most durable reality in Western Europe was the monastic movement which planted hundreds of Bible study centers beyond today’s Italy—in today’s Spain, France and England. In these centers the members not only sang their way through the Psalms weekly, and patiently made high quality copies of Biblical manuscripts, they gathered libraries of Roman classical literature and mediated much of the empire’s technological progress. Most of the major cities of

Europe had their beginning in these monastic centers. Latourette comments:

To the monasteries ... was obviously due much clearing of land and improvement in methods of agriculture. In the midst of barbarism, the monasteries were centres of orderly and settled life and monks were assigned the duty of road-building and road repair. Until the rise of the towns in the eleventh century, they were pioneers in industry and commerce. The shops of the monasteries preserved the industries of Roman times.

In the very middle of this 400 to 800 period the Christians outside of the empire to the south and east became absorbed in the Semitic alternative to the Roman form of the faith, Islam, eventually winning much of the anti-Roman Middle East and all of North Africa and Spain, only to be stopped at the Battle of Tours in southern France in 710.

From earlier Celtic Christianity came the most advanced scholarship, which is amazing. Not only did their missionaries do the major work of converting the invading Anglo-Saxons, their missionaries fanned out across Europe. From their learning centers in England and Ireland Charlemagne founded schools and invited thousands of Celtic teachers to bring literacy and learning to the continent.

By 800 AD there was a significant flourishing of the faith under Charlemagne, which scholars refer to as the “Carolingian Renaissance.” Charlemagne was a serious believer and a more prominent leader in the entire world than any human being for centuries before and after. At this point, however, Central Europe was facing what Churchill called “two smashing external assaults”—not only the Muslims from the south but now the Vikings from the north.

#### **800 AD to 1200 AD**

Thus the 800 to 1200 period began with impending chaos and uncertainty that lasted 250 years until the Vikings were superficially converted and had occupied much of Ireland, England and Central Europe. Their raids into Central Europe are legendary. In the Anglican prayer book you still find “From the fury of the northmen, O Lord, deliver us.” Unlike the semi-Christian Gothic tribes which had earlier invaded Rome, these Scandinavians, although brilliant seamen and navigators, were ruthless and barbaric. We see human sacrifice, even the selling of their own people into slav-

ery in the North African slave markets. Their turning to Christianity was in great part due to the witness of captured young women who kept the faith (parallel to the girl in Naaman the Syrian's household) having been captured on raids. They also were attracted to the peoples and societies, and yes, the church finery, which they savaged.

Their conversion prepared the way for a new exercise of military action and the employment of their raiding skills, inasmuch as all of the Crusades were led by men of Viking descent. As sterling as were the durable gains of the monastic movement, the larger populace which was caught up in a superficial Christianity was still deeply anchored in ignorance and tribal superstitions.

But by 1200 things had settled down significantly such that we see again a renaissance of sorts, often called the Twelfth Century Renaissance. By then not only had the Viking raids become a horror of the past, the Cluny reform and the Cistercians had greened Europe. The universities were born, Cathedrals were being built, and, most important, the Friars were invented—a type of monastic discipline that was no longer tied to monastic settlements but carried the faith to a now less turbulent outside world. Both the Franciscans and the Dominicans were in view by 1200, the latter talking specifically about evangelizing the entire globe.

### 1200 AD to 1600 AD

The pattern of the earlier three supercenturies is one in which we see, each time, the invasion of Biblical faith into a new cultural basin—the Greek and Latin, the Gothic, and the Scandinavian worlds respectively. Also, in each case, early chaos is followed by a flourishing of faith toward the end of the period, that period of “renaissance” each time getting longer and more profound.

The 1200 to 1600 period, however, does not precisely show-case a new cultural basin. In one sense the expansion of the faith at this point in history had run into a “dead-end street.” Western Europe was a geographical cul-de-sac bordered on the north by ice, the west by ocean, and the south by the Islamic Mediterranean. You could say that the Crusades represented an effort to evangelize toward the one open direction to the East, but the Crusades were in fact a tragically ill-informed venture, doomed to failure primarily because the Crusaders themselves were not far beyond tribalism while the societies they sought to conquer had inherited all of the commerce, scholarship and political acumen of the Roman Empire.

The 1200 to 1600 period does, however, have its period of chaos, in the form of the Black Plague, which killed one third of the population of Europe. This period also had, toward the end, its renaissance, what is usually called “The” Renaissance. Europe was rising and growing beyond tribalism.

The universities were a major influence in this process. But the biggest boost came from the Bible through the invention of moveable type. At that time—in Luther's day—there were as many Muslims as Christians, and the former were more highly educated, sophisticated, and civilized. But their language could not be printed with separate letters, and in any event, their Book, the Qur'an, which they added to the Bible, had virtually replaced the Bible. Within 50 years of Gutenberg, by Luther's day, a quarter of a million printed materials, seventy-five percent religious, entered the bloodstream of Europe. They stimulated a totally unprecedented science, statesmanship, industry, and technology. Within a couple of centuries this deluge of Biblically-oriented documents had produced history's greatest and most unique marvel, namely the undefinable, even mysterious, phenomenon ambiguously called Western Civilization. This development within a short time produced twice as many Christians as Muslims, even more important, it brought many changes in society which decisively moved beyond Islam.

Concealed in this period is a major transition parallel to the transition from Jewish culture to Greek culture as detailed in the New Testament. It is, in part, the shift from Latin to German, a long-delayed mighty shrugging off of a Mediterranean formulation of the faith for various indigenous, northern formulations.

All this was thought by Mediterranean believers to be a departure of faith but was much more a departure of culture. Thus, for most observers it has been interpreted to be a contest of doctrine between the Reformers and the Pope and his followers, when actually it was much more a massive shifting of cultural gears, a release of northern peoples from foreign customs, traditions and perspectives in which the faith had been packaged.

Just as Greek formulations had earlier “replaced” the Jewish carrier vehicle, the Jewish way of life, but not the (Jewish) Biblical faith, so now, in the Reformation, Germanic formulations replaced a Latin way of life but not the Biblical faith within the Latin carrier vehicle.

Another parallel would be the emergence of an Islamic tradition (which could almost have been predicted)



which provided a different, Semitic, cultural vehicle from the Roman and the specifically Jewish cultural vehicles, but held on to the basic monotheism of the Bible and much more, even the virgin birth of Christ.

Today similar transitions are taking place. Many years transpired during which Germanic peoples became involved in a Latin ecclesiastical tradition. Fourteen complete Bibles had been translated into German before Luther produced a much more widely used translation which then laid the basis for the unity of the modern German language and state. Finally, the Latin tradition was replaced with various indigenous traditions, such as Anglican and “Reformed” (Calvinist), mainly in territories never fully Romanized.

### 1600 AD to 2000 AD

This period is split in half by the ravages of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s wars. In the first half, between 1600 and 1800, Catholic missionaries encompassed the world with a massive head start over Protestants who had still not found the Great Commission in the Bible. As early as 1210 the Dominican friars were talking about going to the ends of the earth but the mechanisms of such trips were missing. Global circumnavigation finally was achieved and Roman Catholic missionaries were present on all colonial ships. The Dutch Protestants were out there early, too, but did nothing of a missionary nature. The Japanese were so repelled by Catholic mission pressures that they closed their ports to all but Dutch ships.

Then, by 1800, massive Catholic mission efforts all over the world were almost fatally damaged when their financial roots in Europe were cut by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

At that same moment of history the British empire began to rise and Protestant missions began with the William Carey trickle, eventually to grope their way into flood tide often surpassing the earlier Catholic influence. They went out to the coastlands of the earth, later going inland, and finally focusing on specific by-passed or overlooked people groups—“unreached peoples.”

In this final period, 1600 to 2000, after many years within a basically Western “Christian” tradition we note the Evangelical Renaissance (more often called *the Evangelical Awakening*) in which the West is signif-

icantly greened. At the same time massive “secularization” took place, revealing the superficiality which had for a long time been the shallow faith of the majority.

Toward the end of the period millions of Africans, Indians, and Chinese were forging new cultural vehicles for the faith which are so different as often to be mistaken for sheer heresy, as happened in the birth of earlier traditions, the only common denominator now being a new zeal for the study of the Bible in place of foreign ecclesiastical and theological traditions.

The very word *Christianity* became treated more and more as inescapably and culturally Western rather than purely Biblical. Americans had already resigned themselves with a certain equanimity in the face of disparate “Baptists,” “Presbyterians,” “Anglicans,” and perhaps even “Catholics,” but they were not now well prepared to recognize as authentically Biblical various major new movements which often courteously decline to use the very word *Christianity*. Yet, these new movements of devout believers in Christ in Africa, India, and China may outnumber all devout “recognizable” Christians in those areas.

We now face the pressure (the necessity?) of giving up as treasured touch stones the supposed centrality of our own favorite theological traditions, whether they come from Augustine, Aquinas, Luther or Calvin, in favor of a new direct reliance on the Bible itself.

Meanwhile we are surprised and concerned, along with the Roman Pope, at the proposed constitution of the European Union which makes no reference to Christianity in giving credit to Europe’s past. Our school textbooks and our university departments have now for so long warred against any recognition of the impact of the Biblical faith in the mysterious phenomenon of the “Rise of Western civilization,” that we are delighted to see Rodney Stark’s book, *For the Glory of God*, the thesis of which, according to the book jacket, is “Whether we like it or not, people acting for the glory of God have formed our modern culture.”

Such a statement is daringly contrary to the massive secular bias of our time, which actually blames religion rather than credits the impact of the Bible with most of the beneficial things that make Western civilization unique.

The story we tell is not finished. But the unique situation in the final 50 years of the 2000 year period and a prognosis of the future we approach in our next chapter.

## The Story: Part 4

### The Final Moments—Beyond World War II

We began our previous chapter with the quotation from the King James Version, “Unto whosoever much is given of him shall much be required.” The final few moments of history contain an explosion of totally unprecedented complexity. Before World War II Americans were struggling out of the greatest depression of their history. Most Americans were poor. Yet, by the year 2002 the most common problem for most Americans was where to store all of one’s excess possessions.

At the same time the globe in general was still weighed down with serious and virtually unsolvable problems. Greatly increased population underlay many of these problems. Every month thousands of young women were being lured out of central Europe into global prostitution. *National Geographic* reported that 27 million people are enslaved in the world today, more than at any other time (even if a smaller percentage), many actually in the USA.

*Harpers Magazine* reported that in the year 2002 four times as many people died in traffic accidents as in wars. This fact reflects the overlay of technology that is now at least lightly global.

What escapes notice is that today the biggest killer of all is not war or traffic accidents but disease. Everyone knows that the global south teems with millions pulled down to their graves prematurely by disease, AIDS now added to malaria, and a host of other gruesome diseases. But even in the United States nine out of ten deaths are premature due to disease. Cancer and heart disease accounts for half of this, and if weighed against the Black Plague would exceed the latter’s ravages.

Meanwhile the global energies of Evangelicals virtually ignore the sources of disease. We take care of the sick. But, our inherited theologies—hammered out before germs were known—blind us to the need to war against the disease pathogens themselves, which constitute an enormous onslaught against Creation. Would Satan be pleased because we spent 99% of our available medical/pharmaceutical funds on cures rather than causes?

We must remember that vision is “foresight with insight based on hindsight.” Does all this make sense in terms of the Story we are attempting to follow? What does our hindsight tell us?

## Conclusion

Hindsight tells us, for one thing, that perhaps the most significant event of the second millennium occurred just after World War II. Prior to that war, after 500 years of Western conquest of virtually the entire planet, the whole non-Western world was by 1945 under the direct or closely indirect control of Western political states. All but Thailand, and that area was left intentionally autonomous as a buffer state between British Burma and French Indochina. Even in Thailand the dominant external influence was the West.

But in the 25 years *following* World War II something happened on the world level that had never happened before and could never happen again. Over thirty years ago I wrote about this period of “The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years” in a small book by that title.

While, at the beginning of 1945, 99.5% of the non-Western world was controlled by the West, 25 years later at the end of 1969 only .5% was still under Western control. Empires that had lasted centuries collapsed. Europeans withdrew into their turtle shells feeling bruised and angry, although in some cases proud of what they had done. But their anger was exceeded by the antagonistic feelings on the part of those many nationalities which had during this period wrestled free from Western domination.

Now these dozens of new countries crowded into the United Nations and went on their way sprinting or staggering into the future.

After another 25 years it became clear that many of the original regimes of these new nation states would not make it. Robert Kaplan’s famous essay on “The Coming Anarchy” predicted a breakdown of at least West Africa into pervasive chaos. Meanwhile totalitarian regimes were gradually replaced as embryonic “democracy” was chosen over either Communism or Fascism, a shift so profound as often to usher in more staggering.

Today it seems as though nuclear weapons are available to every nation, and the West’s technology is rapidly adopted in much of the world. India, one of the world’s most needy nations is also ahead of the West in many areas of technology. Even in the USA one out of eight people, a group the size of California’s population, still lives below the poverty level. South China was able to modernize overnight, it seems. The toys, trinkets and trappings of the West no longer belong to just

the West. In Pakistan where hundreds of thousands of children are worked to death—50% of them by the time they are twelve—the coming trend is to take better care of them because their labor is so salable to the West, making much of Western’s labor-saving machines uneconomical by comparison.

This is a development somewhat parallel to the betterment of European serfs when the Black Plague made them more scarce. Ironically, for the West to depend on low-priced labor around the world tends in the long run to raise the price of that labor and the income of those involved.

But, now, what valid generalizations can we make about the near and far future? And how does all this fit into our story of God’s kingdom expanding without retreat, beginning just “yesterday” with the appearance of *homo sapiens*?

There are gigantic, unprecedented changes. The number one evidence is skyrocketing global population due principally to the conquest of many diseases and the relative reduction of wars.

If nations of the world all consumed natural resources at the rate of the West there are already enough people on this planet to exhaust all of this in months. In any case, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that something so basic and essential to the Western way of life as energy will not for much longer come from fossil fuels. Indeed, oil and gas deposits will soon no longer be considered fuel since burning them is not as strategic as their uses for other purposes. That crisis of declining sources of oil and gas will hit the world very hard by 2010, according to some researchers.

Despite the amazing progress which medicine has made in understanding and fighting many diseases it is not at all clear that we are making any permanent gains. And, in regard to war—that other major menace of mankind—as Kaplan says, thinking of West Africa especially, the worst rash of wars may be just ahead.

So where is the kingdom of God in all this? Philip Jenkins in his *Next Christendom* paints a very rosy picture of global Christianity without, perhaps, taking seriously the increasing phenomenon of other

movements to Christ bursting entirely outside of the cultural stream of Christianity.

On the other hand, Jonathan Rice, a serious missionary thinker, has revisited the widely acclaimed Evangelical Awakening which rocked England in the 18th century. He points out that the aftermath of the Evangelical Awakening in England, largely emotional, was later largely negative, ushering millions of the next generation for the first time into serious agnosticism.

One generalization is safe: things are getting both worse and better at the same time. It is not a completely uneven contest favoring evil. Many believers see only the negatives and grasp at teachings about a rapture that will rescue the faithful before things get too bad. Others see only the good but are unprepared to seriously attack the evils. Some of them have the opinion that this is “The best of all possible worlds” and that evils themselves originate with the mysterious purposes of God.

But is it merely an expanding Kingdom we should keep in sight? Or can it better be stated as the restoration of the true glory of God and the progressive, essential defeat of a major celestial counter being? If this uncommon perspective is at all valid, if restoring God’s glory through struggle is central, notice how relatively superficial is much of our evangelism that does not so much seek to extol and reestablish the true attributes of God as it has been developed as a marvelous marketing tool—employing both a desirable carrot and a fearsome club.

In this light I personally have come to the conclusion that the most serious frontier in missions is the high wall between our faith community and a world truly awed by the explorations of science—the Religion of Science. The two books of Divine revelation, *nature* and *scripture*, have been given to us to enable us to get closer to God. The former speaks in a voice heard in every language and tongue, the latter must be painstakingly translated into thousands of those tongues. Yet, Evangelicals tend to derelict the one book in favor of the other, while scientists who want nothing to do with the book of scripture do the opposite, especially if the Christians, for their part, read their book of scripture to mean that nature does not speak of the glory of God.

