

The Great Omission: A Biblical Basis for World Evangelism by
Robertson McQuilkin, (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 1984) (37 Quotes
selected by Doug Nichols)

Contents

Introduction	9
Chapter 1: Three Loves	11
Chapter 2: Seeing It God's Way	25
Chapter 3: Lost	37
Chapter 4: Power Failure	53
Chapter 5: Who's Calling?	65
Appendixes:	
1. Great Commission Commitment	81
2. Interference	83

Introduction

1. Why Few Go to Missionary Work

I believe there are five major answers [why so few are going as missionaries to the needy peoples of the world]

We don't care that much.

We don't see very well.

We think there must be some other way.

Our prayer is peripheral.

Someone isn't listening. [Page 12]

Chapter 1 Three Loaves

2. Faithful to Our Responsibilities. The apostle Paul uses a similar analogy in warning Christians that the outcome of their life's work will be judged and that it *does* make a difference whether one is faithful or unfaithful with what he does with the gospel (I Cor. 3:10-15). Some may be saved, yet through the fire of judgment will lose all hope of reward.

Not only does God warn us of certain loss if we are unfaithful to our responsibilities, He seeks to motivate by assuring us of the great reward that awaits those who are faithful to the missionary mandate:

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3). [Page 15]

3. Not Caring Enough.

Why is it so difficult to replace a sophisticated way of life with a simple lifestyle in the face of incredible human need in the world? Why is it so difficult to say farewell to warm personal relationships and the security of a loving family and church and commit one's life to penetrating the dark half of the world for the sake of people who are desperately lost? Why will so few abandon an occupation that makes full use of their vocational interests and opportunities to invest life in reaching the multitudes now out of reach of gospel witness? Is it that we don't care? At least it is that we don't care enough. We are committed to choose, act, and live on the basis of self-interest. In the conflict of loves, we choose to save our lives, not lose them. But in saving, we lose. [Page 19]

4. Filled With Self-love

But a world, no matter how lost, will not move me to action while I am mired in self-love. On the other hand, once I am freed to make choices on the basis of compassion for others, the need of lost men and women does indeed become compelling. And what more compelling need is there than billions of people who today face a Christless eternity? This hopeless lostness cannot be photographed as can the need of a starving infant or a motherless child. But the terrifying lostness that envelops most in this world, pressing them with inexorable acceleration toward the blackness of hell - if this does not move us to action, what will? [Page 20]

5. His Purposes Will Control My Life

If I accept the commission to be sent as the Father sent the Son, plans will be laid, not on the basis of how I desire to build my "kingdom," but rather on the basis of how I can best advance the kingdom of God. His purposes in the world and the satisfaction of His heart will control. No longer will personal fulfillment be the motivation for my choices.

But we do not live that way. Why? "How come?" Because we are blinded by preoccupation with self-fulfillment so that we cannot see the world as God sees it; we are deafened by the raucous demands of our personal desires so that we cannot hear His call; we are deadened by persistently choosing for self-interest so that we no longer feel His heartbeat. But Jesus is able to awaken us with those incredible words given first on the night of His mighty resurrection, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Let us respond to His outpouring of love, embracing Him with all our lives until we become even as He is (I John 4:17). [Page 24]

Chapter 2 Seeing It God's Way

6. God's Saving Power Worldwide

If God mercifully forgave us, received us, and graciously prospered us but did not smile on us, assuring us of His favor, what a bleak life we would have. So we rightly ask for God to forgive our sins, bless our affairs, and lovingly companion with us. But why? The psalmist continues: "that thy way be known upon earth, thy saving power among all nations." (RSV). How could the ancient songwriter of Israel declare more clearly his own missionary purpose in total alignment with the purpose of his missionary God?

All this revelation of God's purpose of world redemption was gathered up in the magnificent declarations of the prophet Isaiah:

"Turn to me and be saved
all you ends of the earth;
for I am God, and there is no other"

(Isa. 45:22)

"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.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth"

(Isa. 45:22) [Page 34]

7. Christ's Mandate to His Followers

Jesus Christ clearly revealed His worldwide intent before Calvary, even when His own primary mission was to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." At the beginning of His ministry we are told, "God so loved the *world* ... that *whoever*..." (John 3:16; italics mine); and at the end of his ministry He said, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the *whole world* as a testimony..." (Matt. 24:14; italics mine).

Jesus Christ came back to this theme repeatedly on virtually every appearance following His resurrection. He gave this mandate to His church certainly on three occasions, probably on four, and possibly on five occasions recorded in the New Testament. [Page 35]

8. The World God Loves Is Lost

This, then, is the biblical basis for missions: World evangelization is the *expressed will of God*. Spiritual redemption is the *demonstrated activity of God*.

Evangelism and redemptive activity are expressed as will of God and the demonstrated activity of God because it is the nature of God so to will and so to act. Love is the *revealed nature of God*. The salvation of lost men is that human event which *brings greatest glory to God*.

Because God is such a God and has given the church such a command, our mandate for action is to make known the good news of life in Christ to every person and to abolish a congregation of believers in every place. Until every person has heard with understanding and every community has a witnessing congregation of God's people we may not say to the Father, "It is finished ... the task which you have given, we have accomplished."

Why is it that we are so far from fulfilling God's design the world? One reason is that we have not opened ourselves to the full force of the missionary message of scripture.

"How come?" Because we don't see well. God gives clear a revelation of His character, His purpose, His act and His will for us, but it seems that we deliberately wear glasses with blinders, focusing in Scripture our own small oriented world. Meanwhile the world God loves is lost. God open our eyes to see the world in focus as He sees it. [Pages 37-38]

Chapter 3 Lost

9. 11 Out of 12 People Are Lost Without a Savior Worldwide

We are told there are 500 million Christ followers in the world, people who trust Jesus for salvation and are active in His church. The estimate is optimistic, perhaps, no more than an educated guess made by some of those who devote themselves to analyzing this sort of data. Still, it's a reasonable and widely used figure. If true from God's perspective, that leaves more than five billion -- 11 out of 12 - who do not know Christ savingly. And get this, it's 17 times the number of lost people alive when Christ was broken hearted over the large number of the lost (Mat. 9:35-38).

In the 20th century there was an unprecedented expansion of Christianity so that the percentage of both genuine and nominal Christians increased dramatically. Some people focus on this fact almost exclusively in painting a very optimistic picture of the task remaining. But the tragedy of the 20th century is that the population explosion was so great the incredible expansion of Christianity could not keep pace with the growth in numbers of lost people. At the beginning of that century total world population was 1.6 billion people; by the end of the century, more than 6 billion. So for a moment I invite you to contemplate, not the exciting percentages of growth, but the number of actual lost people. More than half the people of the world have yet to hear with understanding the way to life in Christ, at

least 3 times the number in that condition in 1900. And even more tragic, at least a third of humankind **cannot** hear because there is no one near enough to tell them. They live in a tribe or culture or language group that has no evangelizing church. If someone doesn't go in from the outside they have no way of knowing about Jesus. [Pages 40-41]

10. All Will Not be Saved

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

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

Another problem the Universalists faced is that Scripture consistently teaches a division after death between those who are acceptable to God and those who are not. This teaching and that concerning the atonement are so strong in the Bible that Universalists did not accept the authority of Scripture. [Page 41]

11. Christ Is the Only Agency of Salvation

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

The passage does not deny other agencies, however. The Japanese proverb assures us that many roads lead up famed Mount Fuji but they all reach the top. This is the Japanese way of expressing the viewpoint that all religions will have a good outcome. But Jesus Christ Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). In other words, Jesus Christ is the *only* agency of salvation. [Pages 44-45]

12. Paul Also Speaks of Christ, the Only Way

John, Jesus, and Peter are not the only ones with this emphasis. Paul also speaks to the issue:

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

The ones who call on the name are the ones who will be saved. But what of those who have not heard so they cannot call? Paul does not assure us that those who have not heard may simply believe on whatever they have heard. Rather, "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). [Pages 45-46]

13. The Word of God Speaks Only of Christ as the Means of Salvation

We may not be able to prove from Scripture with absolute certainty that no soul since Pentecost has ever been saved by extraordinary means without the knowledge of Christ. But neither can we prove from Scripture that a single soul has been so saved. If there is an alternative, God has not told us of it. If God in His revelation felt it mandatory not to proffer such a hope, how much more should we refrain from such theorizing. It may or may not be morally right for me to think there may be another way and to hope there is some other escape. But for me to propose it to other believers, to discuss it as a possibility, is certainly dangerous, if not immoral. It is almost as wrong as writing out such a hope so that those who are under the judgment of God may read it, take hope, and die. So long as the truth revealed to us identifies only one way of escape, this is what we must live by and proclaim. [Pages 50-51]

Chapter 5 Who's Calling

14. World Evangelism Central to God's Purpose

Not only does God's character put world evangelism central in His purpose, man's lost condition demands it. The population explosion is so great that more people will be born in the last quarter of 20th century than in the whole history of humankind prior to 1975. This is the scope of the lostness of humanity. [Page 67]

15. Short of Task Force Needed Worldwide

The evangelical churches of the United States send about fifty thousand career foreign missionaries. Perhaps a fourth of these are engaged in full-time evangelism, some of those in church-starting evangelism. Of course, we're not the

only ones. Though the church in America is still the largest sending base of Protestant missionaries in history, many of the younger churches, like Korea, are catching fire and sending out thousands of missionaries. All of these combined however, do not constitute a fraction of the numbers touted by certain leaders who wildly exaggerate in an effort to advance their cause. But they are still a mighty evangelizing force emerging in the 21st century. Put them all together, however, and we are still woefully short of the task force needed to complete the assignment Christ gave. How many more would be needed? Probably five to ten times the number now deployed. Is God no longer calling? Or is someone not listening? [Page 68]

16. Lots of Inertia in Today's Church

[]our pews are filled with non-combatants, our pulpits with slot-fillers, waiting for a jolt from heaven. George Murray, President of Columbia International University, tells us that for years he was "willing to go, but planning to stay." Not until he became "willing to stay, but planning to go" did God move him to Italy. Perhaps this inertia of a passive "obedience" is the reason for the outcome of past Urbana conventions where thousands of young people stood to acknowledge Christ as Lord and to pledge to do God's will. Says missionary researcher Ed Dayton, "If history repeats itself ten thousand young people will state their willingness to be used by God in the most magnificent calling in the world. If history repeats itself perhaps less than five hundred will ever make it" ("New World Missions" World Vision, 1979). [Page 71]

17. Not Everyone a Missionary

[]not everyone is a missionary and not all roles are of equal value in fulfilling God's purpose of world evangelization. [Page 74]

18. Recapture the New Testament Vision

We must recapture the New Testament vision and thrust for world evangelization through those who are called and commissioned for the task of extending God's kingdom. [Page 75]

19. The Call Show Ability and Endorsement from the Church

[]there was in both the Old Testament and the New Testament a kind of work that was set apart from ordinary vocations, a holy office, role, or vocation. In the New Testament church a person was identified by the specific ability or enabling that God gave him, but he was also set aside through the concurrence of God's people. There was an inner conviction and compulsion, and there was also the external validation by the church. Thus through evidence of ability, an inner conviction, and the endorsement of the church, the call is supernatural and special, different from ordinary guidance. [Pages 75-76]

20. Many Times a Process

Although Paul had been "called" and set apart for the apostolic evangelistic vocation years before, it was through a process of step-by-step guidance that God led him into actual missionary activity and along the path of evangelistic advance. [Page 76]

21. Sometimes a Special Intervention, Sometimes an Impulse from the Spirit

How do these two concepts of "call" and "guidance" come together? Some may begin, like Paul, with a special -intervention in life that settles the question of vocational call once for all. Such a person will then embark on a lifetime of seeking to follow God's guiding directions to accomplish that great vision or goal which God has given. On the other hand, others may find themselves following the principles of Scripture and obeying the impulses of the Spirit and the counsel of the elders, taking into account the circumstances of life, until there comes a time when the conviction is settled that God has designated them for some particular ministry. That conviction is just as certainly a call to holy vocation or a life set apart for a special ministry, as though the person had begun with a heavenly vision. [Pages 76-77]

22. God Choses His Laborers

How [] does one determine whether or not God has in mind some form of missionary vocation? The inner response of a person's spirit to the revelation of God's program in the world and its present state should catapult every true disciple into total involvement in that enterprise. As he becomes involved and presses forward, filling those roles which are open to him and seeking to invest his time and energy in that which will count most for God's kingdom, it is quite appropriate for him to "desire earnestly" the high calling of missionary or even of pioneer missionary evangelist. When multitudes of those who profess faith in Christ become this kind of actively obedient disciple, God will thrust out into the harvest field those laborers whom He has chosen. [Page 77]

Appendix 2 Interference

23. Marriage

Unless a far larger number of single people make themselves available for that special relationship to the Lord and special service for Him, the difficult frontiers may never be penetrated.

On the other hand, if married people evangelize these dark corners, the commitment to spouse and children and the commitment to love God more than wife or children must be held in dynamic -- if painful -- tension.

Many men and women with apparently great missionary potential have been deflected through marriage to one who did not have the same burning heart. So the decision to marry and the choice of marriage partner are life-determining decisions. [Page 86]

24. Short-term Service

[] while the number of short-termers sent by affluent American churches explodes, the number of career missionaries continues to decline. Why?

Unrealistic expectations. For example, if the church gets the idea that it's fulfilling the missionary mandate by sending short term "missionaries," the great commission task will never be completed. And yet that's exactly what is happening. One denomination of a million members and many mega-churches sends out tens of thousands of short termers, but only 200 career missionaries. [Pages 86-87]

25. Short-term Trips Can be Major in World Evangelism

So how do we convert short-term service from interference to propulsion? It might help to change our focus from ministry to learning. If I go, expecting to learn about another culture, about the glory of God's work in the world, about myself and my prejudices and misconceptions, and if I catch fire so it spreads when I come home, that can powerfully advance the cause of world evangelism. The churches have a responsibility to make sure that's what happens. Church leaders must provide (1) thorough preparation, (2) experienced on-site supervision, and (3) a careful re-entry program to transform short-term service from an expensive religious tourism or disappointing ministry excursion into a life-transforming experience that will propel many into career missionary service. Then the short-term phenomenon will become a major player in world evangelism, not just a well-intended diversion. [Pages 87-88]

26. Tent Making

The fact that 10 percent of the world's nation-states are closed to the entrance of outside missionary activity should not be inflated into the myth of "so many closed lands." There are more open doors today than ever before in church history. Furthermore, doors open as well as shut. That 10 percent includes a large proportion of the unreached peoples of the world. Thus the possibility of entrance in some role other than church-related vocation may be not only the *best* way, but the only way to reach these millions of lost people. To the courageous and creative, few doors are truly shut. [Page 89]

27. Paul Did Not Consider Tent Making "Cool"

One caution concerning the "tent making" phenomenon in the thinking of some young adults is that motivation must be carefully examined. Paul did not consider

making tents a "cool" occupation, more socially acceptable and ego-stroking than missionary work. The offense of the Cross and the fanatical opposition he faced as a missionary were actually his glory. He exulted in this identification with Christ and did not seek to escape the opprobrium by assuming a more socially acceptable vocational label. [Page 89]

28. Children

The children of missionaries have been successful spiritually, emotionally, socially, and vocationally in far higher proportions than the children of parents in other vocations, according to some studies.

I do not deny there are peculiar problems of adjustment for anyone who moves from one culture to another. However, the transcultural person also has many advantages because of that breadth of experience. [Page 90]

29. Raising Children in a Life of Faith

To raise children in the place of God's appointment is safer by far than to seek the ideal environment outside the will of God. The life of faith is the only answer for the raising of children wherever we may live. [Page 91]

30. Health, Climate

Good health care is not restricted to North America. Some parts of the world are a greater risk than others, but many of the most strategic mission fields have physical environment and health care equal to, if not superior to, that which we have in the United States.

People with disabilities and handicaps are going to the mission field in numbers which would have been unthinkable fifty years ago. If one mission board does not have opportunities for such people, others may. [Page 91]

31. Place or Serving Christ?

If one's hesitancy concerning foreign service does not hinge on an actual health condition, but on the unpleasantness of a particular climate or the risk in a particular environment, he is thrown back to the basic question of discipleship. How much do I love my Lord, and what sacrifice am I prepared to make for Him? [Pages 91-92]

32. Training

Increasingly, Christian young adults are treating the scores on vocational aptitude tests as a revelation of God's will. College students and recent graduates often ask how their particular academic specialization can be used on the mission field. It is true that an astounding variety of skills may be used in some aspect of the missionary enterprise. The approach, however, is backwards. Should not the

disciple inquire first of all, what is the need and what is God's call and commission to me? For this I will secure the appropriate training. The other way - to force God's program to fit the mold of various occupations that were not designed with His program of world evangelization in mind - will certainly "jam the signals."
[Page 94]

33. Talent Not the Ultimate Indication

The point is that talent is not the *ultimate* indication of what the Lord wants us to do. Nothing in Scripture tells us we must exploit some particular mental or physical capacity throughout our lifetime because we have been assigned an extraordinary measure of it (David Kucharsky "Careers with Christian Impact," *Christianity Today* [September 24, 1971], pp. 12-13). [Page 95]

34. The Money Issue

There is another aspect of finance that seems to deflect increasing numbers of young adults from missionary service. The fear of doing deputation, of "begging for money," is a great barrier for many. This problem does not exist in most denominational missions, but for those who are contemplating service in a mission in which each missionary is responsible for their own support, this may be a matter of apprehension. There are several answers to this problem.

When a missionary candidate spends several years in ministry here in the United States, they develop a network of relationships that will provide a strong foundation for their future missionary work. They will not only find the financial support through this network, they will find the all-important prayer base for the more intense spiritual warfare that lies ahead.

Some missions consider deputation a crucial test for a person's ability to relate to people, to communicate effectively, to be creative, and, above all, to trust God for their needs. They consider this the final test of one's calling. If such a mind-set is adopted, a person can move out with confidence and expect the Lord to provide through His people. They will not be asking people to give to them so much as they will be providing people the opportunity to invest part of their lives in God's cause.
[Pages 96-97]

35. Feelings and Honesty

Sometimes the most honest thing a person does is to act contrary to their feelings. They prove this integrity in their whole being - intelligence, commitments, future, and relationships. Out of love for the Lord or love for others disciples learn to sacrifice their own desires and even their own rights. Sometimes there is the agony of Gethsemane in which one cries out for deliverance, but in the end says, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." [Pages 97-98]

36. Opposition of Family and Friends

God intends us to consider the advice of others, particularly those who are spiritually mature Christians, and He certainly expects children to honor their parents and to care for them when this is needed. However, multitudes have been deflected from missionary service by unspiritual or undiscerning, if well-meaning, family or friends. There comes a time when one must "leave the dead to bury their own dead" and move out in obedience to God's commission, trusting Him for those loved ones. When we were ready to leave for Japan no one except my semi-invalid widowed mother was in favor of the move. Every other person in our circle of friends counseled us to remain in the place of God's blessing where we were serving.

In the final analysis, I am the one who must give account for the choices I make and the investment of my life. Sometimes it is necessary to conclude, "We must obey God rather than men." Note that though Christ spoke of leaving, for His sake, brother, sister, parents, and children, He did not speak of leaving wife or husband (Matt. 19:29). [Page 99]

37. The Need At Home

For a person to seriously hold that we must totally "Christianize" one place before moving on to another is to condemn three-fourths of the world to hopeless ignorance of God's life-giving salvation. It is also to flatly disobey the Commander-in-Chief.

Furthermore, such a position does not make much sense in a world where there is one full-time evangelical Christian worker for every two hundred people in the United States and one for every two million in Algeria, for example. In fact, half the world is out of reach of present gospel witness. In such a world every local congregation is called to reach out beyond its own "Jerusalem" to surrounding "Judea," neighboring "Samaria," and, indeed, to the utmost reaches of the world. [Page 100]