

Missions in the Third Millennium (21 Key TRENDS for the 21st Century) by Stan Guthrie, Paternoster Publishing, Waynesboro, GA, 2000 (77 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Missions Becoming Stronger In Less Prosperous Countries.

The Christian “center of gravity” is no longer the West whose Christian confidence has been steadily leavened by the subliminal agnosticism that almost always accompanies prosperity (Rev. 3:14-20).

The vitality that marks the most dynamically missionary churches is today most readily observed in the great continents of Africa, Asia, and South America. That this should be so is not surprising, since Christianity has seldom, if ever, remained healthy and vigorous within rich, dominant societies. The North American component of the global Christian missionary force is, accordingly, a steadily diminishing proportion of the whole. In 1900 there were an estimated 16,000 missionaries, most of these from Europe, Great Britain, and North America. Today, if we use David Barrett’s more expansive definition for foreign missionaries (not limited to those who earn their living as missionaries), the total number is some 420,000, with a mere 12-15 percent of these hailing from Western lands. [Page xii]

2. Growing Numbers Outside of North America and Europe.

In 1900, the total number of distinct and organizationally separate denominational bodies in the world stood at 1,880. Today the estimate stands at more than 30,000, a majority of these outside of North America and Europe. [Page xiii]

3. The Great Commission.

Mission, the outward focus of people who want to share the good news of Jesus Christ with peoples who don’t necessarily want to hear about him, has always been God’s idea first. Jesus told his fearful disciples the night he was betrayed, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last” (John 15:16a). Mission, when done right, is done not only in Christ’s authority but in his very presence. As the resurrected Lord told his disciples before departing for his heavenly coronation, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18b-20). This has rightly come to be known as the Great Commission. [Page xvii]

4. Unreached People.

While there is much excitement about reaching “unreached people groups” with the gospel, the reality is more sobering. The AD2000 and Beyond Movement’s revised Joshua Project lists 1,595 unreached people groups². Some 1,118 of them have no church of 100 people; 537 don’t even have a team of church planters yet. However, this list is just a beginning. Some 4,000 groups, not just 1,595, have no viable Christian witness, according to missions statistician David Barrett. [Page xix] ² See www.ad2000.org for more and updated information.

5. Numbers Rising.

There are an estimated 1.556 billion people in the world who have never heard the gospel. Their ranks are expected to increase to 1.687 billion by 2025⁴. The number of people born in the non-Christian world grows by 129,000 a day, or 47 million a year, according to Barrett.⁵ Clearly, if fulfilling the Great Commission depends on seeing that everyone hears, it is nowhere near completion. [Page xx]

⁴David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, “Status of global mission, AD 2000, in context of 20th and 21st centuries,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 2000, p. 25.

⁵Stan Guthrie, “Mission Possible,” *New Man*, June 1997, p. 49.

Chapter 1. New Paradigms for Churches and Agencies

6. Don’t Re-invent The Wheel.

Most churches are willing to work with their long time agency partners, who know the ropes when it comes to cross-cultural ministry, obtaining visas, and the thousand-and-one details associated with missions. Bethlehem Baptist is one that has chosen not to re-invent the wheel. Missions Pastor Tom Steller says, “I don’t feel we have the time or expertise to do what a well-run agency can do.”⁵ [Page 5]

⁵Tom Steller, interviewed by author via Internet, 11 November 1999

Chapter 2. Supporting National Workers

7. A Note of Caution.

Alex Araujo, a former executive with Partners International and a native of Brazil, also sounds a reluctant note of caution concerning his non-Western missions brethren even while he cheers them on. “Beware of glorious portrayals of the emerging non-Western missions movement,” he says. “Though highly welcome and deserving of credit and

encouragement, [it] is a mixed bag of good and bad, success and tragedy, and should not be idealized.”⁸ [Page 13]

⁸Stan Guthrie, “Looking under the hood of the non-Western missions movement,” *EMQ*, January 1995, pp. 88.

8. The Importance of Encouraging People To Serve As Missionaries.

Mission’s experts say that doing missions solely by checkbook has other perils. Money without accountability can kill initiative and create division and dependence overseas, just as misguided government spending does in the United States. Robertson McQuilkin created a stir with his 1999 article in *Christianity Today*, “Stop sending money! Breaking the cycle of missions dependency.” In it, McQuilkin, a former missionary to Japan and former president of Columbia International University, stated, “Sharing financial resources in a way that is spiritually empowering and Great Commission-completing for both donor and recipient is our greatest unsolved problem.”¹²

Even the well-intentioned giver faces subtle dangers. Roger Hedlund, a missionary with CB International in Madras, India, states, “Americans are especially vulnerable to an appeal that says, ‘Give us your dollars, but not your sons and daughters.’ If we do that, missionary vision will die within a generation, and the dollars will also (eventually) stop.”¹³ Lewis Codington agrees, saying, “I believe that one of my greatest contributions as a missionary is the privilege of challenging people back home in the US to become involved more in missions.”¹⁴ [Page 15]

¹²Robertson McQuilkin, “Stop sending money!” *Christianity Today*, 1 March 1999, p. 59

¹³Stan Guthrie, “New partners, new roles,” *Moody*, November/December 1996, p. 20.

¹⁴Lewis Codington, “National workers,” *EMQ*, January 2000, p. 11.

9. The Need for Cross-Cultural Missionaries.

Those who wish only to give and not to go need to be reminded that if all ministry were done by Christians of the same ethnic groups as their non-Christian neighbors, some 4,000 socio-linguistic people groups without any Christian witness would remain unreached forever. The fact is, cross-cultural, Western missionaries will be needed for the foreseeable future. There is more than enough work for everyone. [Page 15]

10. Putting Our Agenda First.

A couple came up to George Murray, then a missionary with TEAM, a large agency, at a missions conference to volunteer for overseas service. “God has spoken to us,” they told Murray. “We both have our Bible training. We both believe that God wants us on the mission field. There’s just one little thing that stands in our way. We just bought a home and we want to pay it off before we go.

“Well,” said Murray, a former missionary to Italy, “how long will that take?”

“Twenty years,” they replied.

That couple never made it to “the field.” Instead, Murray said, “Everybody in their evangelical church is telling them how wise they were to build equity and to buy that house.”¹ [Page 18]

¹“We asked ... , “ *World Pulse*, 4 August 1995, p. 3. Murray is now president of Columbia International University in Columbia, S.C.

11. Caring about Other Countries.

Those church people who do make an effort to talk to missionaries usually want to update them on the latest in fashion, in politics, in sports on this side of the ocean. Few ask intelligent, probing questions about issues missionaries face. Mirroring the superficiality in network news coverage of international events, few have an interest in what goes on in other parts of the world. Indeed, one church layman who is active in evangelizing his neighbors, business contacts, and coworkers is typical in his admission, “I just don’t care what happens in other countries.”

Unfortunately, some missions observers believe that attitude is common even among those studying for the ministry. Murray, president of Columbia International University in South Carolina and former general director of The Evangelical Alliance Mission, says only about 3,800 (about 5 percent) of the country’s 70,000 graduating students in evangelical seminaries, Bible colleges, and similar institutions say they plan to become cross-cultural missionaries. The other 95 percent are planning to minister in North America — which is home to 5 percent of the world’s people, and the best evangelized ones at that.¹⁴ [Page 22]

¹⁴ “We asked , ... ,” p. 3.

12. The Needs Are Growing.

There are more than enough needs and challenges to keep every Christian busy for a lifetime. About 1.5 billion of the world's more than 6 billion people have never even heard the gospel.¹⁵ By the year 2010, about 23 million children in the 15 sub-Saharan countries hardest hit by AIDS will have lost their mothers or both parents. Tens of thousands of people die annually in natural disasters. There is no lack of need — just a lack of will. [Page 23]

¹⁵David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, "Status of global mission, AD 2000, in context of 20th and 21st centuries," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 2000, p. 25.

13. Trusting God to Meet The Needs of Missionary Families.

"Perhaps as a response to recent Christian appeals for more concern for family relationships, prospective missionaries are asking more questions about provisions for their families," writes former missions professor Ted Ward in *Trinity World Forum*, the newsletter of the School of World Mission and Evangelism, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. "No candidate should be faulted for a responsible attitude on matters of family welfare and solidarity, but dangers lie in the unbalanced presumption that all decisions about the future of one's children must be planned and contracted before bringing God's providence into the discussion. Old-timers in mission shake their heads in dismay."¹⁸ [Page 24]

¹⁸Ted Ward, "The case of the disappearing missionaries: reflections on missionary recruitment and retention," *Trinity World Forum*, Fall 1995, p. 2.

14. Carey's Motto An Inspiration to Many.

Carey used many means in four decades of difficult ministry in India. In his diary he wrote, "I feel that it is good to commit my soul, my body, and my all, into the hands of God. Then the world appears little, the promises great, and God an all-sufficient portion." His motto remains an inspiration: "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."²¹ [Pages 25-26]

²¹Timothy George, "The faithful witness of William Carey," *EMQ*, October 1992, pp. 350-58.

15. Obeying God.

Perhaps the reason many of today's churches are so careless about missions is because their view of God differs so drastically from Carey's. His God was the sovereign Lord of the universe, who expected his people to fulfill his command to disciple the nations and whose purposes cannot be thwarted. [Page 26]

16. Working for The Lord. There is no reason for malaise. A day of judgment has been set and is more certain than yesterday's headlines. God is orchestrating all events and peoples to bring himself glory. He calls us to join him in the awesome task, expecting great things from him and attempting great things for him. [Page 28]

Chapter 4. Missionary Care

17. Staying in the Mission Field.

While much has been made of US missionary dropouts, the problem is worldwide. The non-Western missions movement is much better known for sending people out than for keeping them on the field. During the Brazilian National Missions Congress in October 1993, participants were stunned to hear that of the 5,400 missionaries sent out in the previous five years, the vast majority had returned within a year. Worse, about 90 percent of the returnees did not go back. A Colombian missions leader has estimated that 40 percent of all Latin American missionaries return from their assignments early and discouraged because of a lack of training, a lack of on-field pastoral support, and a lack of finances.³ [Page 31]

³Stan Guthrie, "Looking under the hood of the non-Western missions movement," *EMQ*, January 1995, p. 92.

18. Caring For Our Missionaries.

Churches and missionaries, for the most part, appreciate this new emphasis on member care. Alluding to 3 John, Steller notes, "To send in a manner worthy of God includes doing 'whatever' for the brethren going out for the sake of his name. ...The Golden Rule is a powerful force for caring for our missionaries."¹³ [Page 35]

¹³Tom Steller, interview by author via Internet, 11 November 1999.

Chapter 5 Theological Drift

19. The Truth of the Bible.

One wonders what Bible such critics are reading. While the suggestions for further reading at the end of this chapter will provide a wealth of insight on the subject, I must say that even a cursory reading of the Bible supports an exclusive gospel. In a display of what non-Christians have called arrogance — or blasphemy — Jesus said that he was the way and the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). Right after speaking of God's love for the world being manifested in sending his only Son (John 3:16), the Lord added that anyone who does not believe in him stands condemned (3:18). The Apostle Peter said that there is no name other than

Jesus by which people must be saved (Acts 4:12). Paul said only those who believe in Jesus can be saved (Rom. 10:12-15). [Pages 41-42]

Chapter 6 Women in Missions

20. Contributions of Women in the Missions Field.

Women have always been the backbone of the missionary effort. Mary Slessor in Nigeria, Rosalind Goforth in India, Gladys Aylward in China, Helen Roseveare in the Congo, Rachel Saint in Ecuador, Betty Stain in China, Lillas Trotter with Muslims, and Joy Ridderhof with Gospel Recordings are just the better known women who have served in God's world outreach. Countless others have served just as faithfully, but less conspicuously. Women will continue providing their incalculable contributions in the third millennium, just as they did in the first two. [Page 46]

Chapter 7 The 10/40 Window

21. Who's in Charge?

Many churches have geared their world outreach efforts toward the Window, often to the exclusion of other, less fashionable ministries. A missions mobilizer says he heard of a church that was struggling with whether or not to back a missionary headed for Japan. The sticking point was not the character, calling, or gifts of the man. Nor was it his intended ministry. Instead, it was whether his work would be situated in the Window. Japan, it turns out, is only partly in the Window, and the church wanted to be sure the missionary's ministry was physically in the Window. Remember that the Window is a man-made creation nowhere found in the pages of Scripture. While no one disputes a church's right and responsibility to act as it believes God is directing, this is clearly an example of the tail (the Window) wagging the dog (setting priorities in missions) [Page 60]

22. The Need for Missions Is Everywhere.

The concept of the Window is at odds with another key missiological principle - reaching the spiritually receptive. Is it ethical to take missionaries away from regions where large numbers are entering the kingdom, such as the Philippines, in order to send them to resistant areas where the harvest is almost nonexistent? The answer should be sending more to both. Missions is not a limited pie. We need more people, more money, more resources, more thinking, and more prayer, both in the Window and around the world, until the Great Commission has been fulfilled. [Page 62]

Chapter 8 Year 2000 Evangelism Plans

23. Language Barriers.

Yet approximately 4,600 languages still have no portion of the Scriptures. Wycliffe estimates that if translation efforts continue at their current pace, it will take another 100 to 150 years to provide some Scripture in every language that needs it. A complicating factor, however, is that 2 billion of the people in the world cannot read the language they speak, and so literacy efforts must be added to many translation projects. [Page 68]

24. Only a Tool.

The *Jesus* film. The film has been seen by 2.6 billion people in 547 languages, an increase of 404 languages in a decade. However, it is no panacea. “These tools are wonderful when they are used as bridges to presenting the gospel and seeds for planting the gospel, but when they are seen as ends in themselves, they diminish severely the crucial human element in evangelism and discipleship,” notes Paul Borthwick of Development Associates International.¹² [Page 69] ¹² Paul Borthwick, interview by author via Internet, 17 August 1999.

25. Don’t Get Discouraged.

“Angle the statistics in an optimistic way and speak theoretically in percentages, and we are winning the war,” McQuilkin said. “Look at the task remaining in terms of the sheer numbers of people who will live somewhere forever, and who now have no chance to hear, and the cause seems hopeless.

“Both truths are needed: The task remaining is vastly greater than it ever was before. But the resources and momentum to do it are greater, too.”¹⁴ [Page 71] ¹⁴ Robertson McQuilkin, “Six inflammatory questions,” *EMQ*, April 1994, pp. 130-31.

26. On the Front Line. Perhaps these latest global evangelization plans should be compared to the prolonged air attacks that pounded Saddam Hussein’s military during the Gulf War: necessary, but not sufficient. The ground troops still had to go in and put their lives on the line in Iraq. The same holds true on the missions front. Radio, the *Jesus* film, prayer, Bible translation, and strategizing about the unreached are all good and needed tasks. However, they are no substitute for the man or woman willing to fight the daily spiritual battle in the trenches, risking life, limb, and honor to glorify God’s name among the nations. [Page 72]

27. Awareness and healthy perspective.

With good reason did C. S. Lewis pen his famous dictum: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”³ [Page 75]

³ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (West Chicago: Lord and King Associates, 1976), p. 17.

28. Our Sovereign God.

We need to recover our understanding of God as the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords, as Scripture consistently depicts him to be, and as the Protestant Reformation rediscovered him to be. Timothy George has suggested that William Carey’s missionary vision sprang from his bedrock Calvinist convictions,¹⁶ setting the stage for the incredible growth of today’s worldwide missionary movement. Going even further, author and pastor John Piper says biblical hope, based on God’s sovereignty, “gripped the Puritan mind and eventually gave birth to the modern missionary movement in 1793. William Carey was nourished on this tradition, as were David Brainerd and Adoniram Judson, Alexander Duff and David Livingstone, John Paton and a host of others who gave their lives to reach the unreached peoples of the world. The modern missionary movement did not arise in a theological vacuum. It grew out of a great reformation tradition that put the sovereignty of God square in the center of human life.”¹⁷ [Page 80]

¹⁶ Timothy George, “The faithful witness of William Carey,” *EMQ*, October 1992, pp 352-3

¹⁷ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 51

29. Total Depravity.

Another Reformation doctrine that might need to be dusted off is total depravity. Adherence to this doctrine will protect us from some of the woollier notions of the spiritual warfare movement, such as this contention by George Otis of the Sentinel Group: “Because all human peoples belong to God initially by right of fatherhood, Satan has no automatic control over them. Unless individuals give themselves over to the rulership of Satan willingly, they will remain under the tender influence of the Holy Spirit.”²¹ Not only does this idea contradict the notion of original sin, it flies in the face of verses which claim that Satan is the spiritual father of unbelievers (John 8:44),

whose minds he has blinded to the light of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4-6). Quick-fix spiritual warfare-type solutions to the sinful resistance of peoples are unlikely to gain much traction in darkened human hearts. [Page 81] ²¹ George Otis, Jr., *The Last of the Giants* (Tarrytown: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1991), p. 88.

30. Stick to the truth.

A major problem is the spiritual warfare movement's loose connection with Scripture. Claiming the truthfulness of a teaching based on recent experience or a new revelation is the *modus operandi* of a cult, not of biblical Christianity. False religions always have something normative in addition to the Bible. As Mike Wakely, Operation Mobilization area director for South Asia, has said, "Once the basic criterion of scriptural truth has been replaced by the extra-biblical basis of personal experience, imagination, and feeling, the sky is the limit as to where this teaching could take excitable people."²² [Pages 81-82] ²² Wakely, p. 158.

31. Warfare Emphasis.

If this "warfare" emphasis was not known or needed in the church's first two millennia, why would it be for the third millennium? And if it is a true way of becoming "equipped for every good work," why did God take so long to reveal it? And how do proponents defend themselves against the charge that they are promoting just the latest Gnostic teaching in the church? Gnosticism, long a bane of the church, is an approach to faith that says that some special, hidden knowledge available only to the few is necessary to properly live the Christian life or to do God's will. The warfare emphasis certainly seems to imply this. [Page 82]

Chapter 10. The Short-Term Missions Explosion

32. A Help or Hindrance?

A veteran Christian teacher in Beijing has had enough of short-term visitors from her home country. "I used to think I could give them a briefing and orientation that could be helpful," she told a mission agency leader. "Very few ever listened. They all have their own agenda. All they want is instant results." The woman now refuses to meet with such people and does not consider them to really be ministering to China.¹ [Page 85] ¹ David Wang, "Now, who is not ministering to China?" *Asian Report*, September/October 1999. p. 1.

33. The Cost of Discipleship.

Leslie Pelt, a missionary to Nigeria, has concerns about the justification for short-term missions on the basis of generational differences. She comments tartly, "We seem to be

saying that because baby boomers are different, missions should be different. However, the cost of discipleship has not changed.”¹⁵

“Short-term missionaries do not really get to know us,” an African believer told missionary Jim Lo. “We may love them as brothers and sisters, but they are still strangers to us. It is hard to be influenced by strangers. We need more long-term missionaries than short-term missionaries.” [Page 88]

¹⁵Leslie Pelt, “What’s behind the wave of short-termers?” *EMQ*, October 1992. p. 385.

34. The Plus Side.

Tom Steller, missions pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, doesn’t subscribe to the limited-pie theory of short-term missions. He is all for the boom. “This is thrilling to me,” he said. “I think it is a stimulation to missions. I don’t think it is robbing missions dollars from long-term missionaries but rather widening the pool of informed missions supporters, both the returning short-termers as well as the support networks they have tapped into.”¹⁸ [Page 89]

¹⁸Tom Steller, interview by author via Internet, 11 November 1999.

35. All Missions Work Is Pleasing To God.

Short-term work, whether two weeks or two years, can indeed be effective and pleasing to God. Yes, it can cost a lot of money, disrupt nationals and missionaries, encourage short-term thinking, and inoculate some against career missions involvement. But done well, it can open participants’ eyes to the sometimes gritty realities of the world, make them aware of their own ethno-centrism and the gifts and courage of non-Western believers, and spark a lifelong commitment to missions. In the best cases, some real kingdom work gets done, too. [Page 89]

Chapter 11 Partnerships

36. International Organizations.

While partnership most often refers to Western missionaries and non-Western nationals working one-on-one as equals, it can have a more structural meaning for missionary organizations. Agencies that cross ethnic or national lines to work together are said to be internationalized.

Four types of internationalized organizations are generally identified: (1) cooperative organizations, which share information informally, such as the Mission Advanced Research and Communication Center (MARC), publisher of many evangelization

resources, including the *Mission Handbook*; (2) task-oriented organizations, spearheaded by groups such as Gospel for Asia and Interdev that bring several organizations together for a common goal; (3) international agencies such as WEC International and SIM, which operate in many nations or have multinational leaders; and (4) international movements in pursuit of a common goal or strategy, such as the Viva Network, World by Radio, and the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.⁴ [Page 96]

⁴See David Hicks, *Globalizing Missions* (Miami: Editorial Unilit, 1994), pp. 13-15.

37. Serving through Our Own Gifts And Talents.

One American teacher at a theological institution in Africa, fed up with the trend, has announced to his students that he will no longer provide recommendations for students wishing to study in America. He says “it is time for committed Christians to stop this tragic hemorrhage.”¹¹

Daniel Rickett of Partners International says ministries must help their ministry partners serve God through their own gifts and callings. The goal is not merely to do ministry together, but to develop one another in brotherhood: “In today’s global village we have to learn how to deal with each other as true brothers and sisters, while learning to obey God and advance the gospel. This ultimately brings us to very practical questions about sharing power, resources, and responsibilities.”¹² [Page 99]

¹¹ Walter Lawrence Brown, “A Call for a Moratorium on Sending African Theology Students to America,” unpublished paper, November 1999.

¹² Daniel Rickett, “Preventing dependency: developmental partnering,” *EMQ*, October 1998, p. 439

Chapter 12 Contextualization

38. Finding a Common Ground.

Contextualization may be a new term, but it is not a new concept. It has been around for as long as the Bible. Paul practiced it faithfully while preaching the gospel in Athens, and while living out the gospel before Jews and Gentiles, as the above passages demonstrate. Contextualization simply means finding points of contact within other people’s contexts and removing things from one’s own context that might block communication in order to gain a hearing for the gospel. It can be done verbally and nonverbally. [Page 102]

39. A Vital Approach.

Contextualization has been a hallmark of the modern missionary movement, too, from William Carey's translations of Hindu classics in India, to Hudson Taylor's decision to "go native in China, to Bruce Olson's determination to become a member of the Motilone Indian tribe. It will continue to be a vital cross-cultural missionary approach in the 21st century, because continuing cultural differences in language, belief systems, and worldview will demand it. [Page 103]

40. Crossing Cultural Boundaries.

At the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, Ralph Winter argued that 2.7 billion people cannot be won to Christ by near-neighbor evangelism since they have no Christian neighbors. Winter called on evangelists to cross cultural, language, and geographical barriers, learn the languages and cultures of these unreached peoples, present the gospel to them, and plant culturally relevant churches among them. Winter's emphasis on crossing cultural boundaries to reach other cultural groups laid the foundation for the unreached peoples movement and the AD2000 and Beyond Movement. It also gave powerful boost to contextualization as a missionary method.¹ [Page 104]

¹Ralph D. Winter, "The new Macedonia: a revolutionary new era in mission begins," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), pp. 293-311.

40. The Groundwork.

Steffen argues that before the *Jesus* film is shown, the audience's worldview must be known, the presenters must earn the right to be heard, the film must be seen first by the community's information gatekeepers, the presenters must grasp how the community makes decisions and must know how to incorporate converts into healthy churches, and the audience must have a significant foundation for the gospel. Not to have these cultural prerequisites in place, he and others argue, is to invite nominalism or syncretism.⁷ [Page 105]

⁷Tom Steffen, "Don't show the *Jesus* film...," *EMQ*, July 1993, pp. 272-276.

41. Biblical Contextualization.

Yes, contextualization in general is good. Effective, culturally sensitive communication occurs in many cases, as Paul and others have demonstrated down through the centuries. Growing, healthy churches are able to reach their same-culture neighbors when they are not saddled with Western theological formulations and worship styles. A

better expression of the richness of the church comes from biblical contextualization, which highlights the good and true in any culture while linking it to biblical truth. But, like anything else, when taken too far, contextualization can be toxic. Christians in the 21st century will need to carefully reflect on the Bible to know where to draw the line. [Pages 109-110]

Chapter 13. Missions as Process vs. Missions as Project

42. Patience.

Almost everything in missions history proves the adage, “Good things come to him who waits.” Marvelous breakthroughs that seem so sudden have often been preceded by months and years of prayer, planning, and painstaking ministry. [Pages 112-113]

43. Two Approaches.

The increased emphasis on the challenge unreached peoples has highlighted two major streams of action: (1) *Missions as process*. This is the ongoing activity of traditional agencies, churches, and training institutions. They focus on fulfilling the Great Commission in every nation and among every people group. (2) *Missions as project*. This is the new outreach of mobilization organizations, churches, and individuals. They focus primarily on the unreached, or the least reached, people groups.”² [Pages 113-114]

²David Dougherty, “What’s happening to missions mobilization?” *EMQ*, July 1998, pp. 276-7. I am indebted to Dougherty for identifying and naming the trends discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 14. Tentmaking

44. Using Gifts of God for the Works of God.

Intent (formerly the US Association of Tentmakers) is a network of about 50 agencies and 100 to 120 individuals. Gary Ginter, a member of Intent’s board, prefers the term “kingdom professional” to “tentmaker.”

“We feel that tentmaking has come to be thought of primarily as a financial strategy, and we don’t think that it is,” Ginter said. “The issue is much more one of the people of God using the gifts of God...for the works of God. Tentmaking, properly understood, in our mind, is the marketplace ministry of effective Christians in cross-cultural contexts. And to the extent you move away from that, you begin to tread on thin ice.”⁶ [Page 119]

⁶ Gary Ginter, interview by author, plus “Tentmaking Putting Down Stakes,” p. 80.

45. Careful Evaluation.

WEC International's Jim Raymo is one mission executive who raises questions. Raymo, who wrote the 1997 book *Marching to a Different Drummer*, shared some of his concerns in an article in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. "Many unreached areas of the world cannot accommodate tentmakers, and tentmakers often have little time and energy to do evangelism and church planting anyway," he said. ⁸ [Page 120]

⁸Jim Raymo, "Reflections on missionary malaise," *EMQ*, October 1997, p. 445.

Chapter 15. Holism

46. In the Name of Jesus.

While good works are almost always welcomed by everyone from secularists to Islamists, doing them in the name of Jesus is another matter, and proclaiming the message of the cross is another matter still. Peter and John were not hauled before the Sanhedrin because they healed a disabled beggar, but because they were preaching about Jesus. Peter boldly told the religious leaders, "If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed" (Acts 4:9-10). [Pages 123-124]

47. Don't Lose the Message.

By the middle of the century, the World Council of Churches (WCC), under the influence of theological liberalism, had basically capitulated on the issue. Mission was defined not as preaching about the substitutionary death of Christ as payment for sins and the necessity of personal faith in him, but as doing a host of other good and worthwhile activities. [Page 124]

48. Keep the Message Strong.

However, this emphasis on holism, as good as it is, carries a danger, which has been seen before in the ecumenical movement: the danger that traditional notions of evangelism and church planting will be neglected. One problem is the ever-present temptation to soft-pedal the preaching of the gospel in order to keep development programs and community relationships going. [Page 128]

49. Building Relationships of Trust.

One development professional says that transformation in a community depends on building relationships of trust. “These relationships, essential to many aspects of the development process, however, may depend upon incomplete transformation,” stated World Relief’s Meredith Long. “When a group of untouchables declare themselves as Christians or several Muslims declare themselves as followers of Christ, trust within the community often begins to dissipate, especially where conversion is a highly charged political issue. Christ recognized that the gospel would sometimes turn friends and family members against one another even when its presentation is done humbly and, with sensitivity.¹⁰ [Page 128]

¹⁰Meredith Long, “Walking with the poor,” “Working with the poor,” *EMQ*, April 2000, pp. 258-262.

50. Spiritual Bread.

While ideally Christians should do both physical and spiritual ministry, sometimes priorities must be made. The priority of Jesus was not giving people physical bread but spiritual bread. When the crowds came to him clamoring for food, the Lord gave them a sermon instead (John 6). [Page 129]

Chapter 16. The Globalization of Christianity

51. The Result of Missions.

The globalization of the gospel has been remarkable in the 20th century, particularly in the latter half. In 1960, an estimated 58 percent of the world’s Christians were Westerners; in 1990, just 38 percent were.² Latin America’s evangelical presence has exploded from a mere 200,000 or 300,000 in 1900 to tens of millions.³ Today, about one-third of the earth’s approximately 6 billion people are Christians at least in name. They are present in nearly every nation state. Most of the growth is coming in the former mission fields of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. From 1960 to 1990, the number of evangelicals in the West grew from 57.7 million to 95.9 million, while evangelicals outside the West multiplied from 29 million to 208 million.⁴ [Pages 133-134]

² Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), p. 25.

³ Johnstone, p. 65.

⁴ Johnstone, p. 26.

52. God's Command.

In the Bible God anticipates and commands the globalization, or worldwide spread, of biblical faith. In the Old Testament, God blesses Abraham and promises that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3). The people of God are told to “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples” (Ps. 96:3). The covenant community is open not just to Jews but to all who will follow Yahweh, such as Ruth of Moab. God's grace and compassion reach even the wicked people of Nineveh through Jonah and Naaman the Syrian through Elisha (2 Kgs. 5). The Servant of the Lord, fully realized in Christ, is to be “a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ tells the disciples, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). After the Resurrection, he commissions them to reach beyond the Jews and “go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). Just before his Ascension the Lord told them, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Acts Chronicles the beginning of this expansion. The Bible assures us that at the end of history there will be “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before and in front of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). [Pages 134-135]

Chapter 17. The Charismatic Boom

53. Through the Back Doors.

Some reports hint that as many people are exiting Protestant churches through the back doors as are entering through the front doors. In Brazil, a recent survey by the Latin American Evangelism Service found that the number of “evangelical believers” is just 19.5 million, or half of what the most optimistic projections assert.²⁰ [Page 144]

²⁰“Investigation reveals ‘evang-elastics,’” *Latin American Ecumenical News*, July-September 1999, p. 6.

54. Making a Greater Difference.

Some observers believe that for Pentecostals and Charismatics to make a greater difference, not only in eternity but also in time, they must recover and develop some theological themes latent in their movement. Frank Macchia, associate professor of theology at Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God, Lakeland, Florida, says that the apocalypticism of the early Pentecostals allowed them to stand outside of their culture and prophetically critique it. Now he wants them to take the next step and begin to transform it. [Pages 144-145]

55. Growth without Depth.

Addressing 400 Christian leaders from 90 organizations and 54 countries, British evangelical churchman John R. W. Stott said at the September 1999 International Consultation on Discipleship that many parts of the global church are characterized by superficiality. “In some places the church is growing strongly, but even there the problem is that of growth without depth,” he said. “In short, the church lacks proper discipleship.”²

If discipleship means being able to live for Christ in the world but not of it, Stott has a point. Pedro Moreno offers the example of Latin America. “In Latin America there is a great religious revival, but it’s not having a social, economic, or political impact,” Moreno said. “It’s mostly a religious phenomenon at this point. It’s not changing the laws or the structures or the mentality.”³ Moreno says that Christians must learn to “externalize” their revivals into the larger societies around them if they are to allay suspicion and paranoia about evangelicalism. [Page 147]

² Ronda Oosterhoff, “Discipleship conference addresses ‘superficiality’ in worldwide church,” *World Pulse*, 5 November 1999, p. 1.

³ Stan Guthrie, “Evangelicals respond to unabated persecution,” *EMQ*, October 1996, pp. 463-4.

56. The Need for Help.

Africa, perhaps the most “Christian” of any continent, is too often mired in poverty, tribal hatreds, AIDS, and corrupt governments. “Where are the millions of Christians?” asked David Zac Niringiye, a Ugandan leader of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, to which Intervarsity Christian Fellowship belongs. “They are in business, politics, medicine, but how come there is no impact?”⁴ [Page 147] ⁴.Aggrey Mugisha, “Penetrating a paradox,” *World Pulse*, 2 July 1999, p.4.

57. Discipleship.

Paul Borthwick, who works with a leader training agency, says discipleship is key to completing the Great Commission. “Make disciples, not converts,” he advises. “We have emphasized the making of evangelical-experience converts, which has at times resulted in an anemic church and nominal disciples. We need to take Jesus’ command seriously — making holistic disciples rather than presenting a cheap gospel which implies that ‘praying a prayer’ is all it takes to be a follower of Christ.”⁸ [Pages 148-149]

⁸Paul Borthwick, interview by author via Internet, 17 August 1999.

58. The Need to Challenge Different Approaches.

At the consultation on evangelical missiology held in Iguassu, Brazil, during October 1999, Peruvian theologian Samuel Escobar fired a shot across the bow of certain segments of the Western missions corps. Escobar, who teaches at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that some church-growth groups have yielded to the spirit of the age by presenting missions as a “manageable enterprise,” heavily dependent on statistics. Escobar called this approach “anti-theological,” pointing out that it “has no theological or pastoral resources to cope with the suffering and persecution ... because it is geared to provide ... guaranteed success.”¹⁰ [Page 150]

¹⁰David Neff, “Stepping on toes,” *World Pulse*, 17 December 1999, pp. 1-2.

59. A Careful Review.

D’Souza has yet another criticism of Westerners. He says the Western practice of sending young, unmarried missionaries, either Western or non-Western, to certain parts of Asia is fundamentally flawed. He argues that more mature and seasoned family heads will be far more likely to get a hearing — if they can be recruited and retained. Younger workers, however, may play a role in making formerly open groups hostile to the gospel, particularly among Hindus and Muslims.

“We need to review how we recruit and send national workers,” D’Souza says. “Young, single missionaries are good for presenting, proclaiming and informing people about the good news. They can also help where indigenous church planting and church-growth movements are already taking place. But they are ill equipped to break new ground. They are ill-suited to bring long-term change in any social group.”¹² [Page 150-151]

¹²Joseph D’Souza, “A flaw in our recruiting strategy?” *EMQ*, April 2000, pp. 156-7.

60. Training Pastors.

Effective training of pastors in poorer parts of the world was a major theme at the Trainers of Pastors International Consultation (TOPIC) in Manila in 1999. Convened by RREACH International, following a preliminary conference at Wheaton College’s Billy Graham Center in 1997, TOPIC’s goal was to get agencies to work together to achieve the goal of having “every church with a trained pastor” and to launch a church health movement (not a church growth movement). TOPIC drew together the leaders of 96 organizations from 49 countries. All were involved in training pastors nonformally, that is, through study that does not lead to an academic degree.

“The task is bigger than any one group can possibly handle,” stated RREACH’s Ramesh Richard, chairman of the movement’s steering committee. “Further, formal education simply cannot keep up with the explosive growth of the church worldwide ... it is our hope to minimize effort duplication, eliminate waste of resources, and thereby enhance missions impact. Indeed, an entirely new architecture for global missions is needed for the new millennium, beyond the traditional and indigenous missionary paradigms.”¹⁷ [Page 152] ¹⁷ J. Paul Landrey, “Trainers of Pastors International Consultation (TOPIC), Manila, 22-25 March 1999” press release, Christ for the City International, P.O. Box 241827, Omaha, NE. 68124-5827.

Chapter 19. Global Culture

61. Globalization.

Despite occasional hiccups, like the Asian and Russian financial crises, globalization seems here to stay. According to a recent United Nations survey, some 60,000 transnational business firms produce a fourth of the world’s economic output. Capital flows by global investors have reached impressive, and sometimes destabilizing, levels. Far more private investment money goes into the poor world than does humanitarian assistance, a fact development professionals have come to recognize. Governments are being forced to revamp their economies not out of altruism toward their downtrodden citizens, but because outsiders demand it. Generally, the system rewards openness and transparency, both economic and political. “Globalization,” Friedman writes, “is the overarching international system shaping the domestic politics and foreign relations of virtually every country.”³ [Page 158] ³ Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1999), p. 7.

62. Technology Used Carefully.

Yet while technology enables Christians to transmit their message to wider audiences, it does not necessarily guarantee that the message will be understood, or that the messengers will remain the same. Saying that “evangelicals have been seduced by the spirit of the age,” Bill Taylor, who heads the World Evangelical Fellowship’s Missions Commission, charges that the American church has dichotomized life, made Christianity easy, wasted energy fighting itself, and accepted a low theology of culture: “Modernity and the postmodern value systems have sapped the very core and marrow of biblical Christianity.”¹⁰ [Page 161]

¹⁰ Stan Guthrie, “Does global culture mark the end of missions history?” *EMQ*, July 1996, p. 330

63. Limits to Every Approach.

Critics like Samuel Escobar, an evangelical theologian and missiologist from Peru, and Jim Engel, an evangelical marketing specialist, fault the US missions movement for succumbing to “managerial missiology,” the belief that missions can be approached like a business problem. With the right inputs, the thinking goes, the right outcomes can be assured. Any number of approaches have been hailed as the “key” to world evangelization or to reaching particular groups — everything from contextualization to saturation evangelization. Most, while successful up to a point, also have been shown to have limits. [Page 162]

64. One Absolute Truth.

While it is true that there have been some sorry episodes in church history associated with claims to enforce absolute truth — most notably, perhaps, the Crusades and the Inquisition — any claim that these events were wrong is based itself on absolute truth. Christianity without truth is mere wishful thinking. Without it, we must part ways not only with the things we don’t like about religion, but also those we do. The question for the evangelical in this postmodern age should not be whether there is absolute truth, but where it can be found. Jesus’ claims to absolute truth are the bones and ligaments holding Christianity together. “I am the way and the truth and the life,” Jesus said. “No one comes to the Father except through me.” [Page 163]

Chapter 20. Radical Reactions

65. Filling the Void.

Indian thinker Vishal Mangalwadi, author of *India: The Grand Experiment*, writes, “The collapse of secular ideologies — communism, socialism, liberalism — has created an ideological vacuum in Asia that is being filled rapidly by Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist worldviews.”⁴ [Page 168]

⁴Vishal Mangalwadi, “Pope, militants and India win, liberals lose round one for the soul of Asia” (unpublished draft), December 1999.

66. The Need in India.

The world’s estimated 719 million Hindus have long been objects of missionary concern. William Carey, the so-called “father of modern missions,” began his ministry among the Hindus of India two centuries ago. Today, the Christian presence in India could be characterized as a mile wide and an inch deep. While every one of the country’s 600 districts has a Christian presence, only about a fourth of its 28,000 postal regions have a Protestant pastor, church, or missionary. Only a third of India’s

219 languages possess any portion of Christian Scripture.⁸ Only 1 percent of the country, despite nearly 2 millennia of Christian presence, would call itself evangelical. Much evangelistic work in India focuses on the relatively responsive tribal peoples and on the poor (who are often one and the same). This activity is now sparking a backlash in places like Orissa. [Page 170]

⁸Stan Guthrie, “Ministries now aim to reach Hindu heads as well as hearts,” *EMQ*, October 1997, pp. 468-9.

67. Types of Muslims.

Just as there is no typical Christian, Muslims come in many varieties. Missionary Joshua Massey notes three main types: those (such as some Iranians) who are disillusioned with Islam; others (perhaps Central Asians or those in the Balkans) who are ambivalent about their religion; and a large bloc (from the Arab world, Indonesia, and South Asia) who are content with their beliefs. Each group has myriad gradations.¹⁶ [Page 173]

¹⁶ Joshua Massey, “His ways are not our ways,” *EMQ*, April 1999 pp. 194-5.

Chapter 21. Persecution and Religious Liberty

68. Martyrs.

In fact, Christians are being persecuted from Burma to Maldives. But there are nowhere near the numbers of martyrs sometimes claimed. Such overhyped figures cheapen the sacrifice the real martyrs are called to make and bring their cause into disrepute. [Page 183]

69. Church Growth in Muslim Populations.

Across North Africa, in fact, the church, basically stamped out for over a millennium, is being resurrected. Arab World Ministries reports stunning growth in the church among Muslim populations. Two decades ago in Mauritania, there were no known believers or church groups. In 1999 there were around 100 Christians in 4 or 5 groups. Morocco has gone from 300 believers in 8 to 10 groups two decades ago to 900 in 20 to 25. Algeria, site of a civil war that has killed tens of thousands of people, has seen the church grow from 1,200 believers in 12 to 18 church groups to 12,000 Christians in 60 to 80 groups. Tunisia has grown from 30 believers in two or three groups to 150 in five or six. Even Libya, with no believers or groups 20 years ago, now has 8 to 10 evangelical believers.²⁰ [Page 186]

²⁰ “Christians now praying for thousands,” *Vision: A View of AWM Media*, Vol. IV/99, p. 2

70. Hazards of the Call.

Some missions leaders stress that hazardous duty has always been, and should continue to be, accepted as part of the cost of doing the Lord’s business around the world. The path to glory runs past the cross. Concerning his own death, the Lord said that “unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). The Apostle Paul reminds us that since Christ lowered himself to an ignominious death on a Roman cross, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place” (Phil. 2:9a). What glory may we rob from overseas Christians if we, Out of compassion and righteous anger, always keep them safe with government power? [Page 187]

Chapter 22. What’s Next?

71. Running the Race.

The danger is that many who have been sprinting toward what they see as the finish line may give up with the realization that they are in a grueling marathon. Such disobedience, however, would not only belittle Christ, who bought our salvation on the cross, but also mock the bravery of all who have gone before us in centuries past to share the gospel.

As the writer of Hebrews said, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb.12: 1-2). [Page 193]

72. Technology.

Paul Borthwick points out that while technology makes completing the Great Commission possible, it has also brought about “a corresponding information overload resulting in complacency in the North American church.” ⁶ [Page 194]

⁶ Paul Borthwick, interview by author via Internet, 17 August 1999.

73. The Need Continues.

Borthwick applauds the expanding global force, but he also notes some of its drawbacks. “Some non-Western missionaries have launched out with great zeal, but they are repeating the same mistakes as Western missionaries of 100 years ago, creating, in effect, a new generation of cultural imperialists,” he says. “In addition, the romanticization of the non-Western missionary in the minds of the Western church has resulted in two dangerous trends — first, . . . that our Great Commission responsibility is over with the exception of sending money, and, second, unhealthy dependency in the non-Western church.”⁸ [Pages 195-196]

⁸ Borthwick, *op. cit.*

74. Amateurization.

Hesselgrave says there is profound ambiguity concerning the new mission board and church involvement. “On the one hand, one can only applaud the rising tide of missionary vision and involvement on the part of local churches,” he stated. “On the other hand, more and more missionaries are short term and ‘nonprofessional’ — leading to what Ralph Winter has called the ‘amateurization’ of Christian mission. The growth in mission boards and church involvement has not been matched by a commensurate growth in the understanding of either the mission or the church.”¹¹ [Page 196]

¹¹ Stan Guthrie, “Past midnight,” *EMQ*, January 2000, p. 103.

75. Scripture Is Transcultural.

Perhaps that’s because the Bible has also been neglected. Recent trends in biblical theology, study of the Old Testament, and “storying” the gospel however, hint that the Bible is poised to make a comeback in missions and perhaps curb some of the worst excesses of managerial missiology. William Dyrness, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, states, “I will argue ...that it is Scripture, and not its ‘message,’ that is finally transcultural.... Although it will surely relate in some way to Christ and his work, what is transcultural is not some core truth, but Scripture — the full biblical context of Christ’s work. It is this that must be allowed to strike its own spark in the light of the needs of particular cultures.”¹² [Pages 196-197]

¹² William A. Dyrness, *Learning About Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), p. 28.

76. Making Disciples Not Converts.

If the Scriptures say anything about what constitutes obedience to the Great Commission, they say Christ's followers are at a minimum, to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). For missionaries and overseas Christians to make a lasting impact in the 21st century, they will have to give up splashy but ineffective campaigns and refocus their efforts on the essentials of the faith.

"Make disciples, not converts," Borthwick advised. "We have emphasized the making of evangelical-experience converts, which has at times resulted in an anemic church and in nominal Christians."¹⁴ [Page 197]

¹⁴ Guthrie, p. 104.

77. Awaiting the Day of the Lord.

While the hope of a Year 2000 finish may be gone, the church will always need an eschatological perspective, a vision of the end, so that it will know how to live in the present. The Apostle Peter had a truly biblical view of life as he awaited the Day of the Lord, when the present heavens and earth will be consumed by fire: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed it's coming. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:11-13). [Page198]