THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE MISSIONARY?

Robert C. Donahue

Introduction

Today missionaries are not welcome in a large percentage of the countries of the world. Many nations issue no visas for missionaries. In many places it is dangerous to be a missionary. In others missionaries are afraid to operate openly for fear of persecution, expulsion or worse. This is not a friendly time for missionaries.

Several decades ago the ecumenical movement declared a virtual moratorium on sending missionaries.[1] Today many western mission agencies are looking at their budgets and downsizing their long term missionary forces. Some seem to think the day is over for sending large numbers of missionaries especially from western nations and are shifting instead to "national workers" in rather large numbers.[2] It might be asked of the missionaries of this new century—especially the missionaries from the western nations—*Where are you going?* Do the changes of our times really necessitate a return of missionaries back to their home countries, a shrinking of long-term missionary forces, a retreat particularly of the western nations from the front lines of missionary work?

Is this a time to a cut back to a skeleton crew of primarily administrative missionaries, and leave the thrust of missionary work including evangelism and discipleship to the "nationals"? Is there no place for missionaries to engage in church planting and evangelism? Are Western missionaries almost useless in much of the work of

---

[1] Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, translated and edited by Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 334 ff. Verkuyl gives considerable background leading to the "moratorium" adopted by the World Council of Churches.

[2] A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Mission: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 285-286.

_____

missions around the world? These are just some of the questions that come to mind as we consider the situation of missionaries in today's world.

The rapid changes of our time in technology have impacted how missionary work is done. All indications are that this will continue. Will the roles of missionaries also change? Let us consider what has been happening, and what some of the implications are.

The Flat World

Meaning

The concept of a "flat world" illuminates the rapid change in our present world. In only twenty-five years the world has changed dramatically.[3] This has profound implications for missionaries. In some sense the role of missionaries probably has been "changing" from the very beginning of the Christian faith. This is not to say that the essence of what a missionary is has necessarily changed or that the essential role of a missionary has changed. It does mean that societal conditions have changed, transportation has changed, communication has changed, educational expectations have change. A particular mode of operation may have changed; and the way a missionary is perceived may have changed, but the essential role of a missionary remains constant.

Let us consider the proposition of missionary role change in a "flat world." The idea of a "flat world" in the popular vocabulary of today is quite recent (2005), having been introduced by Thomas Friedman, journalist with the *New York Times*. The "flat world" concept will guide our current consideration of the changing role of missionaries.

It is important, therefore, to explore the meaning of this "flat world." The "flat world" is one in which people are able to relate vertically and equally. "Flat" is used in the sense that there is now supposed to be more equality for people to make decisions affecting their lives and to participate in the economic and informational

_____

[3] Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

worlds because of the Internet and globalization. There are various aspects of twenty-first century life that Friedman points to support his premise that the world is flat: globalization, and the Internet being prominent.[4] The business world provides models that may help us consider the impact of the "flat world" concept for missions.

Application in Business

A Foreign Affairs officer for the government of the Netherlands recently made reference to Friedman's "flat world" concept using the phrase in an economic context and meaning referring to "reform wholesale" and "reform retail" to promote entrepreneurship. This means custom making national policies to promote entrepreneurship. This is a key to success to make the new paradigm of partnership workable. It will work hand in hand with an open dialogue between and among the parties involved at all levels. Open dialogue is fundamentally important for the entrepreneurial partnership to succeed.[5] This is just as true for the missionary enterprise of the twenty-first century.

The business world has long been interested in what will work in the emerging globalized world. Much research has gone into finding answers. The forces of globalization have brought significant change both for individuals and for institutions. "Computer and information technology have collapsed time and distance between individuals and institutions all over the world. Disparities between groups are being reduced . . . ."[6]

The Other Side of the Flat World

---

[4] Friedman, *The World is Flat.*

[5] Van Ardenne (Minister of Development Cooperation - Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs - The Netherlands), "Permanent renovation: Vietnam in a flat world", speech in Hanoi, Vietnam, September 6, 2006, http://www.minbuza.nl/en/news/ speeches_and_articles,2006/09/Permanent-renovation–Vietnam-in-a-flat-world.html.

[6] *Changing Roles, Changing Relationships: The New Challenge for Business, Nonprofit Organizations, and Government*, A Three Sector Collaborative Project of: The Conference Board, Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Academy of Public Administration, National Alliance of Business, National Governors' Association, 4; http://www.independentsector.org/programs/leadership/changeroles.pdf.

Just how flat is our world at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Benjamin J. Allen in his recent installation remarks at the University of Northern Iowa, reflected upon this idea in response to Thomas Friedman's book: *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. Allen says, "It is difficult to succinctly define what he (Friedman) means by a flat world but saying the 'playing field is now flat' for more than half of the world gets close to it."[7]

The truth is that even though technology has produced a certain leveling and equality, this is simply not true for everyone. Many will be left out of the benefits. There are many who will benefit, but almost as many who will not. In India for instance, "the Dalits and other lower castes will be left out of the 'flat world' and will be consigned to menial tasks such as sweeping roads, scavenging and traditional cultivation. In short, the flat world will not be flat for the lower castes."[8] This is true of the poor classes of people all over the world.

I see this in the squatter areas of Metro-Manila, Philippines. A small percentage of Filipinos are relatively wealthy and have access to computers, the Internet, technologies of all kinds. The schools they attend are well equipped technologically and access to information is readily available along with highly educated teachers and tutors.

But the youth of the squatter areas, if they can afford to attend school at all, find few if any computers or much of any other kinds of technology available to them. Many have never been taught to use a keyboard, and few have even spent any time on a computer let alone the Internet. Information acquisition is largely unknown. Many of these youth cannot even read or write very well, and some not at all. The separation between those who have in this flat world and those who do not have is very wide indeed. And it appears to be getting wider all the time.

---

[7] Benjamin J. Allen, "Installation Remarks" (at the University of Northern Iowa), Friday, September 29, 2006, http://www.uni.edu/installation/installation_speech.pdf.

[8] Kancha Ilaiah, "Untouchability In A Flat World," *Deccan Chronicle*, 25 October, 2005.

There are two sides to the "flat world." The two sides—the haves and the have nots—or the flat world and the not so flat world—are increasingly very different. There is a difference in the shear amount of information available, the opportunities for learning, for jobs, for improvements in life generally. These two halves of the world are very real and distinct. They must be taken into account by the modern missionary and mission organizations.

The truth is that the half of the world that is not so flat is growing at a faster rate than the flat world. The flat world is impacting the rest of the world but often not in uplifting ways. The rest of world seems to getting the left-overs or worse, being exploited to make life better for those in the flat world. This is a morally repugnant situation and is indefensible from a Christian worldview.

This provides an opportunity for Christians to step forward with compassion and the uplift of the gospel to be interventionists in the Name of Christ to help make a better world for the not so flat half of the world. The temptation may well be to concentrate smugly upon the flat world with all of its wonders and possibilities. The challenge for the missionary will be to connect with the other half, perhaps utilizing the new technologies where possible, but always attempting to be compassionate, redemptive and discipling. This is a tremendous opportunity for discipleship and education generally from a Christian worldview for spiritual and moral uplift that will in turn contribute to social and material uplift.

Changing Roles, Changing Relationships

The move toward cooperation, partnership and collaboration has become more possible and certainly easier. There is now technology spanning the entire world for virtually instantaneous communication and exchange of information. *A Three Sector Collaborative Project* suggests seven factors that have made collaboration successful: (1) a common goal; (2) a convener; (3) a structure to organize and manage the core talents of those participating; (4) awareness of the geographical dimension of others working on problems; (5) effective communication; (6) periodic evaluation for establishing accountability and generating

information; (7) trust and confidence.[9] Each of these factors echo in the missionary enterprise. We will follow each of these suggested factors in light of the missionary.

A Common Goal

General Call. Let us begin with the idea of a common goal. Is the common goal for missionaries the transformation of the nations through making the peoples of the nations disciples of Jesus Christ? This is a basic question that defines the missionary as well as the mission. Findley Edge has reminded us that the call of God is basically a call to mission; the mission is redemptive both socially and personally. Each Christian is called to this mission and fulfills it through a personal ministry.[10]

The mission is a ministry of transformation. In the Great Commission Jesus refers to it with the imperative to "make disciples" of all nations *(Matthew* 28:19). The discipleship of this passage is grounded in the obedience to everything Jesus commanded (verse 20). Whatever else a missionary may be or do, a missionary is first of all a person called to the ministry that is redemptive, a ministry that is transformational, and a ministry that is missional.

That missional ministry of transformation is certainly general to all. The apostle Paul pled with the Roman believers to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may *discover* (through experience) the . . . perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). In that "perfect will of God" is found particular and specific roles or functions within the Body of Christ. The apostle Paul teaches us that "There is one body, and one Spirit . . . but unto each of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:4-7). The apostles continues, "And he gave some to be apostles (missionaries) . . ." (Ephesians 4:11).

Particular Calling. It might be objected that the term "missionary" is not found in the New Testament. Donald Owens notes that, "Historically the Church has found justification for using the term missionary derived from the word *apostolos* (*apostle*) or those

---

[9] *Changing Roles, Changing Relationships*, 5.

[10] Findley B. Edge, *The Greening of the Church* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1971), 39.

who are *sent*. Biblical scholars seem to be in agreement, that the term *apostle* is not limited to the Twelve . . . [it means] someone who is dispatched to convey a message or do an errand."[11] Both a general call to do missions, and a particular calling of specific missionaries is found in the New Testament.

Paul describes himself as "a slave of Jesus Christ, an apostle, set apart to God's gospel" (Romans 1:1). The cultural and societal back-ground to this introduction is significant. Domestic slaves (*douloi*) were commonplace in ancient Rome; indeed many of those addressed may well have been such slaves themselves. Paul not only identifies with his audience but he uses an illustrative word with which they were well acquainted to describe his specific ministry calling: *apostolos.* This was a common scene in the households of the wealthy for both the rich and the slaves. An *apostolos* was a trusted slave called into the presence of the master of the house and personally entrusted with a message (often written) to be delivered to a designated party. This is Paul's identification of his "missionary" calling.

A Convener

Who is the convener for missionary organizations? Another name for this person could be "facilitator." This person must be able to have the confidence and trust of all who are facilitated. This means a person who is not necessarily an employee of the structure nor a manager in the structure. The person may need to be somewhat of an outsider to the organizational structure, but one who is in personal agreement with the common goal for missionaries.

The reason for the presence of the convener is to facilitate relationships which will in turn form and strengthen true partnerships or collaboration. John Drane points us to the need for Christian ministers generally in the Twenty-first Century to be relational rather than hierarchical in their ministries.[12] Strong relational ministry is

---

[11] Donald D. Owens, "Finding God's Will in Missions," unpublished paper, October 2006, 2.

[12] John Drane, *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith: The Future of the Church. Biblical and Missiological Essays for the New Century* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000), 122.

demanded by the post-modern culture of the West as well as the expectations of many of the cultures of the world. Without strong relational ministry it will be almost impossible to build strong international and multicultural partnerships. Junias Venugopal suggests further need to study this whole area. "Partnership between Christians from different parts of the world is built upon a mutual foundation of respect and ability to contribute to the missionary enterprise . . . Studies in Christian partnership between different ethnic and national groups will need to address this issue in greater depth."[13]

A Structure to Organize and Manage

Is there a structure that facilitates the organization and management of the core talents of the participating missionaries? The nature of this structure is important. If the structure becomes complex and bureaucratized, then the tendency will most likely to channel energy, personnel and finances into preserving, maintaining and protecting the existing structure. Control and manipulation of personnel and finances will be the order of the day. This may include an empire building mind-set. If, however, the structure is simple and flexible then the tendency will probably be toward dynamic creativity. Personnel need flexibility and freedom to become entrepreneurial, to experiment, to take risks, to emphasize relationships and mutual networking.

Awareness of the Geographical Dimension

Awareness of the geographical dimension of problems should be a given understanding in missionary organizations. Sometimes, however, the organization may give consistent priority to "the headquarter's needs" rather than seriously considering all areas of concern and responsibility. Awareness must extend to regional and local cultural issues rather than assuming only a "global culture." Cross-cultural and intercultural issues are foremost for the emerging mission organizations of the twenty-first century. Missionaries and mission organizations will need to concentrate more than ever in identifying and understanding these kinds of issues. It will be

---

[13] Junias V. Venugopal, "Prolegomena to a Historical Perspective: The Use of Education as a Mission Strategy in Asia," *Journal of Asian Mission*, 5:1 (2003), 27.

imperative for the smooth operation or mission work—this is not an option.

Effective Communication

This is possibly the most important aspect to be considered. Communication that is effective is a must for any successful missionary organization in the twenty-first century, just as it is important in business. According to David J. Hesselgrave, communication is the basic term which describes the basic missionary task "because the missionary's concern is not for the gospel alone but for the whole counsel of God . . . early missionaries understood their commission to make disciples of all nations involved the ultimate in communication"—persuading people to be faithful and reproducing followers of Christ.[14] There are several things to consider about communication and the modern missionary and missionary organization.

Persuasion. The point that Hesselgrave makes is crucial for understanding what the role of the missionary is. He indicates that a persuasive type of communication is essential in understanding what the early church missionaries were all about. That they tried to convince people to turn from their ways and turn to Jesus Christ to become a faithful follower and learner of his seems apparent. King Agrippa's words to Paul, "Almost you persuade me to be a Christian" are indicative of the communication style of the apostles of the early church (see Acts 26:28). In another place (2 Corinthians 5:11), the apostle Paul says that "we try to persuade men."

Will Durant, in his book, *Caesar and Christ*, makes the point that the early Christians were powerhouses of persuasion: "Nearly every convert, with the ardor of a revolutionary, made himself an office of propaganda."[15] This should be understood as an essential part for every missionary. This is part of the role of the missionary that does not change—persuasive communication that urges people

---

[14] David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 81.

[15] Will Durant, *Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, *Caesar and Christ* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1944), 602.

to turn from their own ways to Jesus Christ and to follow him faithfully in his way of truth and life (John 14:6).

Two Ways. There is always the sender and the receiver in communication. Both are essential. Communication is not simply the sending of an e-mail or a memo. Communication is two-way; it is interactive. There is sending and receiving, coding and decoding. In the hierarchical mode, communication can be perceived by those at the top as having taken place when a message is sent. This is not the case, of course, because the recipient must receive the message and be able decode and understand it in order to respond, otherwise, the "communication" will not take place. Open communication will only take place if the two parties to the communication perceive a freedom to express and are unhindered in responding to each other. This means that it is important to engender free association, trust and collegiality in order to enhance open communication.

Cognitive and Intuitive. There are various aspects of communication that are just as important as those already mentioned. Another one of these is the difference between cognitive communication and intuitive communication. The first is grounded in logic and objective thinking. The second is founded upon experience and subjective thinking. Both may be correctly employed, but those involved in communication must understand the difference to appreciate it. It must be understood that some cultures are more experienced based than others and vice versa. Understanding the difference will help to decipher the message.

It should be noted that women in some parts of the world at least tend to rely more on intuition rather than cognitive analytical.

How They Think. Robert T. Oliver urges that "communication be more closely allied with cultural anthropology, social psychology, and general linguists . . . that we study . . . not just in terms of what people think but in terms of how they think and formulate their ideas."[16] We must appreciate that there is no one way to communicate—there is no one rhetoric, but many rhetorics. Understanding and focusing on the audience with whom we are communicating is essential. But there is more. It is important to

---

[16] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally,* 98.

realize that the peoples of various cultures present much diversity in this area of communication.

Reeducation Needed. It is true that "audiences of different cultures may be so different as to necessitate, not just more education, but reeducation."[17] Communication by the missionaries is not the only communication of importance to be considered. Communication among missionaries and between missionaries and mission "the headquarter's staff" is also important to consider. The missionary may employ cross-cultural considerations in communication, but the staff may or may not be so attuned. It is essential that the thinking underlying communication be thought through by everyone involved. This may indeed involved education and reeducation for all participants.

Communication and Technology. The impact of the new technologies may well have a lasting and increasingly important impact upon missions. The role of the missionary in this increasingly connected world will no doubt include a need for significant understanding of communication theory, and practice and skills to utilize these technologies effectively for communication of the gospel. This will demand continual re-training. Continuing education will become more and more a necessity for missionaries. This will need to be planned for in the busy schedules of missionaries. Mission organizations must plan for continual upgrading of the education and skills of their personnel. Missionaries serving educational and training needs will need to have mission support to keep abreast of their fields and specializations. These educational missionaries will be called upon to fulfill the growing need for training and education of missionary personnel as well as other church leaders.

One key area that the new technologies will need is programming or content. Just as radio and later television found the need for specialists to create programming to make successful use of the those technologies, so missionaries today will be called upon to create content for the new technologies. Much of this will need to be visual since world societies are increasingly demanding visual and

---

[17] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 99.

graphical content. This will range across various fields such as video production to film making to variations on texting, webcasting, *PowerPoint*, and *podcasting*. *Podcasting* may well be an effective means to target a particular audience. Short video clips used as *virtual videos* may already be used in the millions and may provide a rich approach to gospel communication. The rapid rise and adoption of digital technology and the Web in Asia may actually replace television as the primary methodology for CBN ministries in the next few years.[18]

Communication and Missionary Education. We will need mis-sionaries who can communicate well by utilizing the new technologies. More importantly we will need missionaries who can create content to make effective use of these new technologies. Schools of missions must include education and training for prospective missionaries to make effective use of technology. Skill training and technological education must be integrated with a broad curriculum of missiology and Christian education. This will help missionaries to be able to create and produce the stories and ideas that will convey the gospel particularly in visual forms.

Blessed will be the schools that can provide both for the older technologies such as radio, television and print media, and the new technologies of video production, podcasting, PowerPoint, and virtual video (among other things). This emphasis upon technology will need to be integrated with a first-class understanding of cultural anthropology and ethnographical studies, and biblical theology and biblical hermeneutics. The lessons of history, linguistics, and good mission practice will need to be combined with evangelism and discipleship and church planting into a sharp integrated approach to missions.

Evaluation for Accountability and Information

Evaluation and assessment on a periodic basis will generate information and accountability. This will benefit everyone if the evaluation is done across the board. Evaluation must be done horizontally rather than vertically—among colleagues and

---

[18] Sterling Huston, IEC Chair, "Digital Technology to Replace Television in Asia," *IEC Newsletter*, October 2006 (sighting an address by Gordon Robertson, President of CBN Asia); http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix:pageID=20243.

collaborators or partners rather than between employers and employees or between managers and the managed if good solid and reliable information to be gained. The first is an example of the kind of "flat" relationships that have been possible through the technological revolution of the twenty-first century. The second is an example of the top-down, largely outdated authoritarian approach going back to the start of the industrial age.

Further, accountability will be established through periodic evaluation. If this is done in the horizontal version, the accountability will be mutual which will be more useful because everyone is accountable. In a hierarchical arrangement those at the top are generally not held accountable which makes for a weaker system, and sometimes a more dangerous arrangement (note the ENRON company in which top management was only held accountable belatedly and then only through the courts).

In this time of rapid change, however, it may be that the choice is not necessarily exclusively either the one or the other. Scott Sunquist argues strongly for blended models as the wave of the future. "Those who are tempted to resist the flattening and hold fast to hierarchical control, as well as those who relish the idea of the democratic and flat world need to rethink things. The future is with those who can develop a blended model."[19] Sunquist seems to negate the powerful implications of the "flat world" revolution. His point of caution is well taken. It is always wise to be careful and cautious in the midst of rapid change. To create that "blended model" may be the great challenge facing current mission organizations.

No matter how a new model is shaped, however, the new model cannot be simply a new version of the hierarchical model. It must include a strong element of the egalitarian, which is compatible with the implications of the "flat world" reality the new technologies have made possible. Otherwise great frustration will undoubtedly result. And for missionaries, the standard of holiness—social holiness—must pre-dominate not only with its concerns for

---

[19] Scott W. Sunquist, "Presbyterian Mission in a Flat World" (An address delivered at the Wilmington Missionary Conference, 25 July, 2006).

transformation and righteousness, but for reconciliation and justice. Together these elements are key standards for evaluation.

Trust and Confidence

Trust and confidence are essential to the well being of any organization. Trust and confidence takes time to build. Time, shared experiences, and a history of interactions are needed to build the relationships and experiences with one another that lead to trust and confidence. Trust and confidence is not a given just because we may share a common goal, belong to the same mission organization or hold the same doctrine. Trust is at a deeper level of human experience than these things. Mutual respect is involved and a shared openness. If the "us" and "you" continue to prevail as a mode of thinking, then trust and confidence will be slow indeed to build.

Trust and confidence are built upon attitudes. At my faculty induction address given at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in the Philippines some years ago, I made the following points:

> I believe the practice of missions is crucially influenced by our attitudes. Godly attitudes of the heart are vitally important for effective missions. Christians must confront their racism, prejudices, and paternalistic attitudes if the peoples of the world are to hear and receive effectively the gospel. Billy Graham has said: "Racism and ethnic hostility is the foremost social problem facing our world today . . . our world seems caught up in a tidal wave of racial and ethnic tension" (Billy Graham, "Racism and the Evangelical Church," Christianity Today 37 (11): 27). It also threatens the integrity of the world missionary enterprise . . . A change of heart is essential to eliminating our sinful attitudes. To say that a change of heart is the answer alone is not complete. The heart change must produce a change in the outer social structures if it is to be of real value . . . Often prejudiced behaviors have resulted due to neglect or indifference, but with unresolved fear, hostility, or pride

in the background . . . This deficient model can often be seen in the practice of missions.[20]

Racism has been one of the great sins of the Christian church, and even in the missionary enterprise. It has happened often because some of the most essential features of the gospel itself have been suspended or abandoned in the name of doing good. Gordon Aeschliman reminds us:

> Third World leaders often suffer under the legacy of missionaries who considered elements of our calling optional. The gospel witness lacks integrity in many suffering parts of the world where the missionary has sided with the oppressor in the name of "neutrality" or "evangelism-only." South Africa is an example. Black leaders regularly refer to missionaries as people who gave them the Bible and stole their land.[21]

Trust and confidence are built upon the bedrock of positive open attitudes and authentic relationships. Secrecy, authoritarianism, prejudice, paternalism, racism—and a host of kindred attitudes will destroy the basis for trust and confidence. Open hearts, and open minds toward one another, mutual respect and encouragement will foster the kind of climate in which trust and confidence will spring forth in abundance. This is vital for individual missionaries and for missionary organizations.

The Place of Theology for Twenty-first Century Missionaries

Reconciliation

Twentieth Century missions seems to have been driven largely by Western perspectives and ideologies. The Twenty-first Century hopefully will see a commitment to a solid Biblical theology to drive missions into the future. This new century can witness mission driven by the whole church—the whole church participating

---

[20] Robert C. Donahue, "The Journey of One Missiologist," *The Mediator*, 2:1 (October 2000), 50-51.

[21] Gordon Aeschliman, *Global-Trends: Ten Changes Affecting Christians Everywhere* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 107.

in the Great Commission of giving the whole gospel to the whole world.

In practical terms this will mean not only new faces but new perspectives. For this to happen successfully, the church as a whole must take seriously the call of Christ to do reconciliation—especially reconciliation among the members of the Body of Christ. We have too often in the past ignored this or been ambivalent about it. But the reconciliation must be so thorough that not only is equality achieved, but actual servanthood and humility. It must come to the point that we are all engaged in building up one another in the Lord, encouraging, and preferring one another. We must intentionally engage in the work of empowering God's people to "do the work of ministry" (see Ephesians 4:12).

Holiness

Holiness as Transformation. An issue of rising importance to believers across the theological spectrum is holiness. This is no longer (if it ever was) the private domain of the holiness churches. Holiness speaks of the quality of God himself; it is about purity (Acts 15:8). It is certainly about wholeness (1Thessalonians 5:23). It is also about transformation (*metamorphoō*, Romans 12:2; Galatians 4:19). These are all biblical words and concepts referring essentially to the same thing. I Peter 1:15-16 reminds us that we are to be holy as the LORD is holy. Paul seems to teach in Romans 12:1-2 that this holiness is accomplished by *metamorphosis*, an utter changing through a process from one thing into another. This is the picture of the caterpillar that transforms into the butterfly.

One of the key reasons for this rise in concern for holiness is the failure of spiritual transformation in many churches—the lack of visibly changed lives outside and inside. John Ortberg notes that believers have been settling for at least two major counterfeits: (1) confusion of the Christian life with a bare minimum entrance requirement for heaven, (2) outward appearances substituting for real spiritual maturity.[22] Real transformation of personal life as well as

---

[22] John Ortberg, "True (and False) Transformation," *Leadership Journal* (July 1, 2002), 1-4.

society, beginning with the essential relationships toward God, then toward others, is at the heart of Wesleyan-Holiness missiology.

Social Holiness. Our missiology in the new century must be driven by a biblically and theologically sound holiness dynamic. John Wesley's view that "there is no holiness except social holiness" must be taken seriously and applied in the world of the twenty-first century. This is the charter of the Church of the Nazarene—it is a call to holiness as we identify with the despised Nazarene who touches the lives of the poor toiling masses of the world. It is indeed a "social holiness." Holiness does have a person application, but the application to social context and relationships is crucial. Holiness must penetrate the very fabric of the social order in which we minister.

Scripture

The Bible will continue to be the authority and resource for missions into the new century. The Bible will continue to show itself as an alive book which speaks especially to the developing nations of the world. The concerns of the Two-Thirds world will not necessarily be the same as those in the developed world, and certainly not the same as those found in a modernist-oriented Western world. Missionaries will need to appreciate the Bible as a book of power and authority. John Wesley certainly pointed the way in this regard with his emphasis upon the Bible. He was known as a man of the "one book"—the Bible. It would be well for missionaries of our own time to concentrate upon the Bible as the God-breathed book that exudes both authority for service and power for salvation and transformation.

The tendency of the modern Western church towards an emphasis upon biblical criticism should probably be minimized by missionaries as largely irrelevant. This is not to depreciate reason, but to give a strong emphasis to experience. Missionaries should emphasize the Bible as in touch with much of emerging world Christianity. It should be understood as addressing the concerns of worldviews predominate in the Two-thirds world and a post-modern worldview generally. The power and authority of the Bible for much

of the world in the twenty-first century is apparent.[23] Missionaries need to understand this and be ready to confidently assert the Bible's authority for faith and practice, and trust its power to accomplish salvation and transformation.

Missiology

Missiology will be seen as the necessary applied theology of the whole church. Therefore, participation from the local level will increase significantly. Even theological and missions training will become more and more in concert with the local church and grass-roots of the worldwide church.

Missiology should be viewed as the integration of the disciplines of theological and biblical studies. In particular theology of mission should be understood as the foundation and fountain of theology. It is the doing of theology.

True theology is not a contemplative pursuit but a real life exercise in discipleship. Missiology understands that believers are directed by the Great Commission to make disciples. Missions is not just the domain of missionaries, but missionaries share with all believers in the work of making disciples.

Bishop B. F. Westcott once observed, the great danger of today is that we will allow the ministerial offices to supersede the general power bestowed upon the whole church. That power can, and has been, awesome. It is the power from the Holy Spirit particularly designed for the fulfilling of the command of Christ to make disciples. This new century is the time for a renewal of this grand general power to be restored in the church practice. The fulfilling of the Great Commission is not for a select few but is the commission of the entire church! God in Christ has given his Holy Spirit to his church to fulfill his commission.[24] This is a return to emphasis upon the priesthood of all believers concept stated by Peter: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises

---

[23] Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 18ff.

[24] Robert C. Donahue, "The Great Commission," *The Mediator*, 3:1 (2001), 111-112.

of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). This passage implies no special order of persons for declaring the message of God. Here is a call for all believers to be equally employed in such declaration—so-called clergy and laity alike.

Other Foundational Theological Understandings

There are several other key theological ideas that will predominate. Most of these have counter-parts in the past. Christi-An Bennett has pointed out some of the foundational doctrines that propelled the early Wesleyan world missionary efforts. These included: a universally available redemption; the entire sanctification of believers in perfect love; the doctrine of divine providence; the power and authority of the Bible; and the evangelical understanding of the exclusive claims of Christianity.[25]

Other emphases could be mentioned including prayer, suffering, and martyrdom. Martyrdom may seem a bit extreme unless one considers that the past century may well have produced the largest number of Christian martyrs in the history of the church. Wilbert Shenk notes:

> Some scholars have argued that a touchstone in the formation of the New Testament canon was whether a document helped prepare the disciple community for suffering, even unto death. A corollary for a missionary church in the twenty-first century may well be that only that theology which prepares the church to bear witness to Jesus Christ, even at the price of death, will be accredited.[26]

Theology as Praxis

The new century seems to herald some new ways of understanding theology. Certainly there will be an increased concern for experience, and a desire for people to make sense of their world and particular life experiences and lifestyles. Integration and synthesis will be the order of the day in theology. Praxis will be of ultimate

---

[25] Christi-An C. Bennett, "Theological Foundations of Wesleyan Missiology in Historical Perspective," *The Mediator*, 3:2 (2002), 68-72.

[26] Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, No. 28 (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 190.

importance and relevance. Affective or experiential learning will become equal with the cognitive learning of the recent past. More importantly, theology will be understood as a life long process in the light of praxis and will take place more and more in the context of the work place rather than in the theological schools.[27]

Missionaries of the Twenty-first Century

In Essentials the Same

In essentials, the missionaries of the Twenty-first Century should be no different than those of the First Century. Whether we use *apostolos* or *missionary* should make little difference. Whether we refer to mission or missions may not be all that important. David J. Hesselgrave says:

> . . . let us not allow terminological confusion to undermine the primary task of sending missionaries into all the world to do precisely what the first missionaries did - evangelize and gather believers into local congregations where they can be taught the ways and words of Christ. *That is their specialized task. Whatever else they do by way of doing good to all people (Gal. 6:10), they do, not because they are missionaries, but because they are Christians and belong to the larger church of Christ!*[28]

Essential Nature of the Missionary

There is some debate over just who are the missionaries. In Protestant organizations, until recently the term has applied primarily to those who were involved in the preaching-teaching-evangelism ministry and particularly in church planting. There is ample evidence for this usage in the New Testament. Now there is a tendency to apply the term to a broad spectrum of persons who may not be involved in any way in preaching-teaching-evangelism or church planting. These persons may be administrators, academics,

---

[27] Drane, *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*, 128.

[28] David J. Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Missions: An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 90.

maintenance engineers, secretaries or accountants. There may be a broader understanding of missionary possible. But it should be understood that evangelism and discipleship are always at the essential core of who a missionary is. The sharing of the gospel is primary. All believers are to be engaged in carrying out the ministry of reconciliation which is the bedrock of the mission of God (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Those who proclaim the message of Christ for salvation certainly participate in the mission of God (Romans 10:9-15). Jesus commanded the disciples to pray specifically for "laborers" to be sent into the harvest. These laborers surely are believers who participate in the great mission of God to reconcile the world unto himself.

All believers are called to participate in the mission, though each believer will have a specific function with the scope of spiritual gifts. "Missionary" might be understood by some as referring to every believer, but that does not seem to be the case in the New Testament (see Ephesians 4:11). Biblically, the term should probably be reserved for those who are engaged specifically in the preaching-teaching-evangelism and church planting type of ministries, but even some of the key missionaries of scripture were tent-makers such as Paul. All believers, however, participate in the mission of Christ generally, although they may have other specific designations.

Missions is the work of vast numbers in the church worldwide. "The Great Commission cannot be reduced to a voluntary activity engaged in by a few enthusiasts."[29] If in the past the idea of missionaries has been rather narrowly defined, in this new century it is being vastly expanded.

The Wesleyan-holiness movement is a case in point. From its early beginnings with John Wesley there was a broad participation by the laity in the work of ministry. Vijeya Chandrakumar Abraham makes this observation in his recent dissertation about laity and in particular the school-going youth: "These are two key groups that the Church should target for training [training people to do evangelism]. The history of the Salvation Army and the Wesleyan movement show

---

[29] Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 60.

that these provided the majority of evangelists."[30] This evangelistic spirit brought a broad spectrum of participation and drove the work of missions at home and abroad.

Proliferation of Missionaries

The number of missionaries will rise. In this new century there will be more missionaries, not fewer.[31] There could well be an army of laity who step forward to fill the ranks of missionaries in this new century. There are many in the West who can take early retirement or can even serve effectively after retirement who are willing to serve Christ as missionaries. Many are ready to serve short-term including school-aged youth. We should encourage this as a wonderful opportunity for service and positive worldview adjustment rather than discourage the youth. Youth have tremendous energy, idealism and enthusiasm to offer, and many can be highly committed if they are challenged. There are youth all over the world who want to make a difference in their world and are eager to be challenged to do so. As Herbert Kane pointed out, this lay apostolate is not a new thing in the church:

> In the first century there were no missionary societies such as we have today and there were few professional missionaries outside the apostolic group. The gospel was spread far and wide throughout the Roman Empire by laymen—soldiers, slaves, merchants, and even displaced persons. Luke informs us that those that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen went everywhere preaching the gospel (Ac 8:4).[32]

The persons who will be the missionaries are already shifting dramatically. The large numbers will no doubt arise from the so-called laity, and the church at large may well become much more personally engaged in the direct work of missions worldwide.

---

[30] Vijeya Chandrakumar Abraham, *Rediscovering the Spiritual Gift of the Evangelist and Its Implications for the Church Today*, a dissertation presented to the Asia Graduate School of Theology Philippines, Doctor of Missiology, March 2006, 199.

[31] Aeschliman, *Global-Trends*, 105.

[32] J. Herbert Kane, *Winds of Change in the Christian Mission* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 117-118.

Destinations of Twenty-first Century Missionaries

There has been great focus upon the 10/40 Window area of the world in recent years led by Brazilian mission leader Luis Bush. Although at present there is only a small fraction of missionaries and mission resources going into this least evangelized part of the world, the momentum seems to be gaining to bring personnel and resources to bear on this gospel needy part of the world. The Back to Jerusalem movement out of China has been focusing on this area for sometime and challenging Chinese missionaries to go to these difficult "closed" nations.

China itself is receiving much attention as a destination for missionaries. Obviously the missionaries do not go in the historic style, but none-the-less missionaries are finding their way to this great diverse nation to share the gospel and make disciples. India is also a nation both sending and receiving missionaries. Many of the missionaries are Indians going to hard to reach parts of India itself. This is also true in places like Indonesia and Nigeria.

Some very interesting destinations of the twenty-first century missionaries are the United States and the European Union. It is interesting because for the past 200 years missionaries have tended to be sent from these places. Now they represent vast fields for missionary work. Even the late Pope John Paul II noted the great need to re-evangelize vast regions in the twenty-first century where the Christian church had previously been very strong. Today nominalism prevails, and these areas have millions of non-Christians as well.

Much of this involves nationals following their own people in the mass migrations taking place. This has been done in the past history of missions and will continue in the present. It should not be thought strange for Indians to go to the USA to minister among Indians who have immigrated there. And I should add that Indians could serve as missionaries among the postmodern Americans, perhaps very well. Mission agencies should be strategizing how to most effectively field missionaries in the USA and European Union.

Missionaries of this new century will be from everywhere to everywhere—and this should be encouraged and strategized for effective results.

Senders of Twenty-first Century Missionaries

The vast numbers of missionaries for the past two hundred years have come from the western nations of Europe and North America. This is changing dramatically already and will most likely continue to change for the foreseeable future. The number one sending nation may soon be Korea. Korea could conceivably be replaced by others such as China, India, even Nigeria, Indonesia and the Philippines could be in contention for first, second or third places as sending nations. The ambition and vision of evangelical leaders in the Philippines is have 200,000 Filipino missionaries (Outstanding Filipino Witnesses) by 2010.[33] The numbers of missionaries coming from the Two-Thirds World will continue to increase dramatically, but Western missionaries should also continue to be sent in large numbers.

Conclusions

Change is the one thing that can be counted on in the next few decades of the twenty-first century. Changes will be driven by many things: new technologies, populations shifts, economic dislocations, information explosion, rising educational expectations, social unrest. The Internet by itself may solidify the universal use of English for cross-cultural communication and at the same time spur the prominence of Mandarin.[34] As the twentieth century can be referred to as the American Century, it is possible that the twenty-first century will be known as the Chinese Century.

---

[33] Luis Pantoja, Jr., Sadiri Joy B. Tira, Enoch Wan, editors, *Scattered: The Filipino Global Presence* (Manila: LifeChange Publishing, Inc., 2004), 201.

[34] Janna Quitney Anderson (Elon University), Lee Rainie, Director, *The Future of the Internet II*, September 24, 2006, Pew Internet & American Life Project, 1615 L Street, NW - Suite 700 Washington, D.C. 20036, 3.

All these changes will impact the role of missionaries. The essential nature of the missionary as a primary agent of spiritual and social change through evangelism, discipleship and church planting will not change. The tools that are used, the situations, indeed the missionaries themselves may change. It will be increasingly difficult for Western missionaries to function well in many countries, but there will continue to be a need for them around the world. The temptation for Westerners will be to substitute the giving of donations in place of personal involvement. The emerging churches of the Two-Thirds World are already rushing personnel into the harvest fields of the world. It may be the partnership and collaboration both in funding these personnel and sending their own personnel may continue to be a great work for the Western churches and mission organizations. Whether funding of personnel is a focus or not, collaboration and partnership should be the key to missionary operation of the future.

Some basic foci on role changes include missionaries equipped for and involved more in communication of the gospel utilizing many of the new technologies. Even this communication will need to be re-thought in terms of cross-cultural and multicultural dimensions. This means that the missionary role will call for more sensitivity to cultural perspectives and considerations rather than mission policy or denomina-tional mores. This will not be an easy role assignment to fulfill.

There will be an increasing need for a few highly educated mis-sionaries to provide high level research and missiological understanding for missionary strategy. They will be instrumental in the preparation of a new core of reproducing missionary leaders. But it is essential that these persons become collaborators and partners with all the other participants in the great missionary thrust of our time. They should not be viewed or treated as "elite" or exclusive.

For an increasing majority the roles of the missionary may well be short-term and mobile. The missionary role of tent-maker probably will become a major role filled by the missionaries of this new century. This may mean partial support from local and district churches and individuals as well as income from professions and

businesses. This will no doubt be a major role for missionaries from the Two-thirds world, and increasingly from the western nations as well.

Missionaries will fill roles that are less directive and administrative and become coaches, collaborators and partners in mission projects, leader preparation, and pioneer work. The missionary role will be one who works along side of local people much more than in the past. For many mission organizations this will demand considerable change in structures, assumptions, policies and practices. More importantly it will call for a set of visionary leaders willing to learn to operate with a high degree of equity and collaboration in an emerging flat world paradigm.

Works Cited

Abraham, Vijeya Chandrakumar. *Rediscovering the Spiritual Gift of the Evangelist and Its Implications for the Church Today*, a dissertation presented to the Asia Graduate School of Theology Philippines, Doctor of Missiology, March 2006.

Aeschliman, Gordon. *Global-Trends: Ten Changes Affecting Christians Everywhere.* Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Allen, Benjamin J. "Installation Remarks" (at the University of Northern Iowa), Friday, September 29, 2006, http://www.uni.edu/ installation/installation_speech.pdf.

Anderson, Janna Quitney, (Elon University), Lee Rainie, Director. *The Future of the Internet II*, September 24, 2006, Pew Internet & American Life Project, 1615 L Street, NW - Suite 700 Washington, D.C. 20036, 3.

Bennett, Christi-An C. "Theological Foundations of Wesleyan Missiology in Historical Perspective." *The Mediator*, 3:2 (2002), 67-78.

Changing Roles, Changing Relationships: The New Challenge for Business, Nonprofit Organizations, and Government, A Three Sector Collaborative Project of: The Conference Board, Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Academy of Public Administration, National Alliance of Business, National

Governors'   Assocation,   4. http://www.independentsector.org/programs/leadership/chan geroles.pdf.

Donahue, Robert C. "The Great Commission." *The Mediator*, 3:1 (2001), 107-114.

_____, "The Journey of One Missiologist." *The Mediator*, 2:1 (October 2000), 50-68.

Drane, John. *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith: The Future of the Church. Biblical and Missiological Essays for the New Century*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000.

Durant, Will. *Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, *Caesar and Christ*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1944.

Edge, Findley B. *The Greening of the Church*. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1971.

Friedman, Thomas. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

Gibbs, Eddie, and Ian Coffey. *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001.

Hesselgrave, David J. *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, Second Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.

_____. *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Missions: An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Missions*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1988.

Huston, Sterling, IEC Chair. "Digital Technology to Replace Television in Asia," *IE Newsletter*. October 2006 (sighting an address by Gordon Robertson, President of CBN Asia). http://community. gospelcom.net/Brix:pageID=20243.

Ilaiah, Kancha. "Untouchability In A Flat World," *Deccan Chronicle*. 25 October, 2005.

Jenkins, Philip. *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Kane, J. Herbert. *Winds of Change in the Christian Mission*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976.

Moreau, A. Scott, Gary R. Corwin, Gary B. McGee. *Introducing World Mission: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Ortberg, John. "True (and False) Transformation," *Leadership Journal.* July 1, 2002, 1-4.

Owens, Donald D. "Finding God's Will in Missions," unpublished paper, October 2006, 2.

Pantoja, Luis, Jr., Sadiri Joy B. Tira, Enoch Wan, editors. *Scattered: The Filipino Global Presence.* Manila: LifeChange Publishing, Inc., 2004.

Shenk, Wilbert R. *Changing Frontiers of Mission.* American Society of Missiology Series, No. 28. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999.

Sunquist, Scott W. "Presbyterian Mission in a Flat World," An address delivered at the Wilmington Missionary Conference, 25 July, 2006.

Van Ardenne, Agnes, Minister of Development Cooperation - Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs - The Netherlands. "Permanent renovation: Vietnam in a flat world," speech in Hanoi, Vietnam, September 6, 2006, http://www.minbuza.nl/en/news/speeches_ and_articles,2006/09/Permanent-renovation--Vietnam-in-a-flat-world.html

Venugopal, Junias V. "Prolegomena to a Historical Perspective: The Use of Education as a Mission Strategy in Asia," *Journal of Asian Mission*, 5:1 (2003), 9-32.

Verkuyl, Johannes. *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction.* Translated and edited by Dale Cooper. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978.