

**Issues and Trends that May Affect
Missions in the Coming Years**
by Patrick Cate

Why Should We Now Study Issues and Trends Affecting Christar?

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Why Should We Now Study Issues and Trends Affecting Christar?

On September 1, 2005 I plan to step down from my responsibility as President of Christar. That does not mean that I am retiring or stepping down from serving the Lord or from serving the Lord through Christar. I am looking forward to other exciting ways of serving as a catalyst to get the good news of Jesus Christ to some of the least-reached peoples.

However that does mean that, in the coming two and one-half years, Christar will be searching for its next president. There is a process. The first step in the process is to ask “In what kind of world will the next president be leading us? His first term would be from 2005 to 2011. What will the issues be? In what type of environment would he be leading us?”

After we have solidified what we believe the world might be like, we plan to turn to the profile and qualities we need in the next president. Then we would turn to revising the job description. Next we would turn to a search of who we believe would be the best person to address this. The Board of Trustees is responsible for this process and the search. The Trustees would work through a search committee that has already been named. Once they have narrowed down the possible person of choice, then they would propose him to the mission family and we have to have a vote of two-thirds of our senior missionaries in the affirmative. Then the board votes for him to be our next president.

So now we need to study and think through our environment, the issues and trends that we may be facing. In addition to this paper we are asking all of our family to read Stan Guthrie’s “*Mission in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century*” and, if not their books, then the two Atlantic Monthly articles, by Phillip Jenkins and Samuel P. Huntington.

Issues and Trends that May Affect Missions in the Coming Years

Exegeting our future environment is not an easy task, yet we need to keep facing the question of what kind of world we may be facing. We all know that only God knows the future. However, God commended the sons of Issachar because they understood their times and, therefore, knew what to do, to go with David, not Saul (I Chronicles 12:32). We also need to specialize in understanding the times in which we live. The Bible has much to say about prophecy. Approximately 25% of it deals with prophecy. Many of us feel that many of the prophecies of the second coming of Christ are lining up. Our Savior said in Luke 12:54-56 “When you see a cloud rising in the West, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’ and so it turns out. And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way.” You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?” Our Savior rebukes hypocrites who can predict the weather through analyzing present conditions but who do not analyze their present time to know the trends for the future.

Our Savior promised the wheat and the tares would grow together (Matthew 13:24-30) and He promised that the world, morally, would not evolve but devolve. He promised that narrow would be the way that would lead to Heaven and broad would be the way that would lead to damnation (Matthew 7:13-14). Most people will not receive Christ. We are all aware that moral decay also affects many of our churches. Jesus foretold that Satan’s work and the fruit of God would grow together in the last times. I think we see that.

That is a significant place to begin in this study. In speaking of the future we always acknowledge that all of it is, “Lord willing.” We realize that there are many things that can happen that we cannot dream of today. Yet, on the other hand, there are trends and patterns which we need to be aware of, and in many cases to prepare for.

At the back of this paper is a place where we would like to obtain your response. We want to know at least three issues and trends not mentioned in the paper that you think are significant and the three most important issues or trends as you see it, whether sub-points or major points. Obviously there are many more issues and trends than we have included in this paper. Based upon your study, what three steps would you encourage your team, focus group, affinity group or board to work on or attempt? Based upon this study, what three steps would you personally like to work on? You may want to jot down some thoughts there as you think through this paper.

1. The Limited Pie Philosophy

I dogmatically believe this is a myth. We tend to say there is only so much money out there and either one will get it or another will get it. But there is not enough money for everybody to become a missionary who wants to go to the field. Or we say there are only so many people who can become missionaries and they will either go with one organization or another. But there are not enough missionaries for all boards. Those who can become missionaries are limited. This philosophy concentrates on looking at the

tares and weeds that are growing and forgetting the wheat that God has planted. We need to remember that He promised that the wheat and tares would both grow together.

Underneath the limited pie philosophy is a theology that really forgets who God is, forgets the promises of God and what He has covenanted himself to do for us. Let us deal with the money question. We have this false theory that there is not enough money to send missionaries, to send all the people who want to be or who should be a missionary. However, statistical studies show that only .5% of church spending goes to missions to reach the least-reached half of the world. If we only increase the percent by .5%, making it one percent of the total, then we would be doubling the amount of finances. Four and one-half percent goes to regular missions. Certainly we could cut back domestic projects from 95% to make it 94.5%, or merely give another .5%.

Worldwide giving, per week per church member, is \$2.75. But worldwide giving, per week per church member, to foreign missions is only \$.15. If we increased it from \$.15 to \$.30 then we would double the amount of money for missions.

Eighty-seven percent of the money given to foreign missions goes to those who are already Christians. (We are not saying this is out of the will of God. Maybe they are building Christians who are becoming missionaries and strong pastors.) Twelve percent goes for work among already evangelized non-Christians. One percent, or just \$114 million, goes to work among people groups in the unevangelized or unreached bloc. If we just raise the amount that goes to the least-reached by another one percent, then we will have doubled the finances to reach the least-reached. We need to remember that God does not just own the cattle on a thousand hills; He owns the cattle on every hill. He owns the whole world. He has created it. God is not broke. God is not limited by the market or recessions. He has no financial limitations in getting the gospel out.

Dr. George Peters of Dallas used to say that from our side as humans, the issue is not securing financial support for people. The issue is getting missionaries prepared adequately to be missionaries. Once that is done, frequently the financial support comes in.

In the Limited Pie Concept we tend to say there are just not enough people to be missionaries. They will either go with one organization or another but there are not enough missionaries to go around for everybody. This, again, is very humanistic, negative thinking. In South Korea 682 evangelical Christians send one missionary. In the United States and Canada it takes 1502 evangelical Christians to send one missionary. So it is not an issue of not having enough people. There may be a spiritual issue that keeps us from having enough missionaries; but it is not that God does not have enough people to become missionaries. Most Korean Christians pray each day about 5 A.M. in a prayer meeting in their church. The first key is to really pray to the Lord of the harvest for more laborers.

When we are preaching in churches and on campuses we need to share God's passion for the least-reached. Missions is not just a career choice or an option in case somebody does not have anything better to do. It is not a cross-cultural broadening experience for adventurous Christians. We need to pass on God's passion for the least-reached peoples. If we really pray to the Lord of the harvest and if we can pass on God's passion for the least-reached, the number of missionaries could easily double.

The Moravians, under Count von Zinzendorf at Herrnhut, Saxony in 1727, began a 24-hour prayer meeting which went for over 100 years all over the world. Out of this came at least one missionary for every 60 Moravians. In their first two decades alone, Moravians sent out more missionaries than all Protestants and Anglicans had sent out in the previous two centuries. Today there are four times as many national believers where they planted their churches than in their sending countries. (The cost of sending a missionary was very slight. It was a one way passage ticket. If you were a butcher, baker or candlestick maker in Germany you became a butcher, baker or candlestick maker in Suriname or wherever you went as a missionary; you supported yourself on the mission field.) If the Moravians can pray 24 hours a day for 100 years and see one out of every 60 of their church members become missionaries, then God is not limited, and we could see many more go to the mission field. If, in the U.S. and Canada, we had the same ratio for sending missionaries, we would have more than 25 times the number of missionaries we presently have. Maybe our problem is not a need for more missionaries as much as it is a need for more prayer.

One of the basic areas of missions is remembering who God is and not having a low view of God, his abilities and His promises. There are some fantastic promises in the Word that are directed, first to missionaries. In Mark 10:29-31 our Savior says "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for my sake and for the gospel sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life (NIV)." Along with the promised blessings of a hundred fold, do not forget that little word "persecutions" that we are also promised. Most Christians claim the promise of "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" found in, Matthew 28:20. Yet it was first given to those whom He had asked to go into all nations to make disciples, baptize and teach them. The power of the Holy Spirit is promised to those He challenged to "Be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

In addition to His promises, we can look and see what God is doing all across the globe, to see if He really is at work. The next chart of statistics helps us to see that the wheat is growing rapidly, that God does not work from a limited pie. Our God is an awesome God who can raise up all of the missionaries and all of the finances needed for missionaries. Perhaps we need to give of ourselves to more fervent prayer.

Let me encourage us to study both the promises of God and what God is doing all across the world. God is moving in exciting ways in our day.

Look at What God is Doing all Across the Earth in Answer to Prayer

1. Total fully supported U.S. personnel serving overseas (short-term and long-term) from 1996-1999 increased 3.9% to 41,702. (The year 1999 is the most recent date that we have hard figures.)
2. Financial support for overseas ministries raised in the U.S. from 1996-1999 increased 21.8% to \$2,932,779,966. This is a growth of 7.2% a year.
3. Financial support for overseas ministries raised in Canada from 1996-1999 increased by 37.34% to \$336,533,193. This is a growth of 12.4% a year.
4. The U.S. and Canada have 575,000 churches, or one church for every 537 people.
5. In 1960, Evangelicals were 2.8% of the world (84.5 million). In 2000, Evangelicals were 6.9% of the world (420 million).
6. Christianity is the most global religion. Christians from Africa, Asia and Latin America, as a percentage of all Christians, have grown from 16.7% to 59.4%. The center of the church numerically and in spiritual power is moving from the North (Europe and North America) to the South (Africa Asia and Latin America).
7. From 1989-1991 communism collapsed as a global threat and atheism became bankrupt, allowing millions to turn to Christ.
8. Today about 94% of the world has access to the New Testament in their language.
9. Each week over one million copies of scripture are distributed within 175 countries by the Gideons alone.
10. About 50% of the world has viewed the JESUS film. That is three billion people out of six billion.
11. About 99% of the world can view the JESUS film in a language they know.
12. About 99% of the world has access to Christian radio in a language they know.

2. **Prayer**

Prayer, I have found, is one of the easiest areas of mission life to let slide. It is easy for me to drift in my thinking while I am praying and talking with the King of Kings. Why do you think prayer is so difficult? One reason is that it is work. It is work to concentrate on what we are praying about. Another reason is that Satan does not want us praying. He will do everything he can to keep us from praying, as Hudson Taylor said “even if it is just arranging the blinds.” There are many distractions Satan can use to keep us from prayer and the word of God. However, prayer is the sine quo non (without which nothing) of missions.

It is easy for us to think that if we have just the right method or just the right business model, we can make missions into a manageable enterprise. As businesses have problems and work on solutions, we can also organize and manage our way to world evangelism. We can become so concerned about our present challenges and physical wars on this planet that we forget the spiritual warfare in heavenly places recorded in Ephesians 6:12. You may want to study Ephesians 6:18, 19 and 20 where Paul asks for all prayer at all times, with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. Then he has two requests for himself. I would not have guessed that these would have been Paul’s two personal prayer requests. Two times in verses 19 and 20 he asks for boldness that he would fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel even in chains. If Paul needed to pray for boldness, how much more do you and I?

I would encourage us in our meetings in which we are going to pray, to make the sharing of prayer requests and praying the first issue of the meeting, not the last. Over the years I have noticed that if we do some sort of business, strategizing or announcement-type things, that these will soak up most of the time of a meeting and we just let prayer become a lip service item. We need to continually give ourselves to thorough prayer. It is very easy to think, “Well, I have 100 people praying for me daily, therefore I don’t have to pray.” This is buying a lie from Satan himself.

Recently Mary Ann and I had the privilege of seeing a Muslim and his fiancée come to faith in Christ. It is a Muslim who we have worked with and prayed for over 12 years. God answered prayer. Sometimes it takes persistent prayer plus time.

We are firmly in favor of doing things decently and in order with the best type of management that we can use. We should ask, “What can we learn from experts outside of our circles, on how to do a better job in doing what God has called us?” But far more important is the closeness of our walk with God. May we not yield to the naturalistic spirit of our age that converts world evangelism into a manageable enterprise.

3. **Theology**

The most important theological question facing us today and in the near future, I believe, is the question “Is Christ the only way of salvation?”

We live in a post-modern age and just as people feared the change of the Reformation and Industrial Revolution, so many people fear post-modernism without understanding it. J. I. Packer says that “The negation of Modernism is the only agreed-upon element within post-modernism.” Some have speculated that God may even use post-modernity to undercut the syncretism that the western church has with modern culture.

Paula Harris in *“Post Mission: World Mission by a Post Modern Generation”* points out that “Post-Modernity is not about de-constructing the Gospel. It is about de-constructing Modernity. Far from being frightened of post-modernity, we should welcome its questions - they will help us seek ways to enculturate the gospel for a new generation. Post-modernity does not confront Jesus; it confronts the idols of modern culture that we in the West have failed to renounce. With the words of wisdom from the elders in Acts 15, we now know that no culture can retain its tribal deities when we become Christian. Theologian and cross-cultural scholar, Miroslaf Volf, says the shift from modern to post-modern culture is helping us to identify our tribal idols in the West. He identifies our idols as belief in human progress, reason, technology, quantification and the attempt to build a heaven out of a worldly hell. (page 68)

So let us not think of post-modernity as the anti-Christ. It can bring many wonderful advantages to getting out the gospel. The newest generation of missionaries bring a transparency, people-centeredness, thirst for spirituality, a desire for mentoring, concerns for survival and holism and a desire for community and intimate relationships. For many a meaningful, fulfilling life that counts is more important than status or salary.

The basic area of concern that we have with some post-modernism is the concept of spirituality without truth. We are in a culture which is becoming increasingly pluralistic, accepting new age theology and living without absolutes. Two of the most important values of our day in the West are tolerance and diversity. Most missionaries appreciate these values. Multi-culturalism, diversity and tolerance are wonderful values, but as they increase so does the public rejection of our values. When these values produce a doctrine that there can be no absolutes, we come into significant problems. This theological drift of relativism without absolutes has infiltrated the media. It teaches that Evangelicals are racists, intolerant, un-American, deceitful, and are imposing our intolerance of diversity on others. The Mother Jones magazine of May-June, 2002 wrote a blistering, deceitful article on Columbia International University’s Islamics program entitled “False Prophets: Inside the Evangelical Christian Movement that Aims to Eliminate Islam.” Time magazine, at this moment, is researching to write an article against Christians who are missionaries to Muslims. Franklin Graham has been torn apart in the media saying that he, along with his relief, is also bringing the gospel and this is deceptive and wrong. The television program 60 Minutes and many other media sources are trying to publically tear apart our basic calling of bringing light to the least-reached. On April 22 Christar was mentioned in an AP article read around the world as one of the top missions to Muslims.

The common theology today is that all roads lead up the mountain. It does not matter which one you take, as long as you take one you enjoy and know. All religions lead to God. Another viewpoint is that all religions teach the same thing. What about those who have never heard? Would a loving and just God really create somebody, put them in a world where He knew they could not hear the gospel and then send them to hell because they had not heard and believed in the gospel?

Hunter, in his 1987 study entitled “*Evangelism: The Coming Generation*,” said that one-third of the American evangelical college and seminary students polled held some form of the possibility of salvation for those who have never heard. Sixteen years later these people are present leaders in our churches. A major Bible college over many years has found that at least one-fourth of the students coming into their school from solid churches do not believe that Christ is the only answer. Ron Nash, in his book “*Is Jesus the Only Savior*,” says that more than half of evangelical leaders believe people can be saved by Christ without turning to Him personally for forgiveness. Therefore, somewhere from 25% to a majority of those in our pews do not believe Christ is the only answer. Gallop says that 52% of American adults believe that all good people will go to heaven and that 45% of Americans who claim to be born again say that by good works a person can earn a place in heaven.

How should we respond to this theological decline? First, we as missionaries, need to remember that our Western church members are raised in a pluralistic world and, therefore, more and more are desiring missions to change from being redemptive to just humanitarian relief. As a result of this when we are ministering in our churches, we should assume that not everybody believes that the people we are reaching need the gospel. We need to deal with the basic theological and philosophical reasons why everyone needs Christ. All of us as missionaries, when we are speaking in our churches and on campuses, need to address the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. We also need missionary statesmen and missionary theologians who will study the word, study our world, speak to these issues, write powerfully and clearly communicate to the larger body of Christ the lostness of those outside of Christ.

Let’s deal with a few of their concerns and some potential initial responses.

- A. Post-modernism says that absolute truth can be linked to oppression such as seen in the crusades and the inquisition. In answer to this we need to point out that to say that “the crusades and inquisitions were wrong” is an absolute truth statement. So the question should not be “Does absolute truth exist, but where can we find it?” Christ’s claims to absolute truth are the unbroken bones and ligaments holding Christianity together.

When a person says absolutes do not exist, they forget that the sentence they have just spoken is an absolute sentence and therefore an oxymoron. Or if a person says truth cannot be known, then the sentence they just gave cannot be true. We all need to specialize in helping Christians as well as non-Christians realize that truth can be known and truth is known in the person of Jesus Christ.

When post-modernists claim that all roads lead up the mountain to God, that all religions teach the same thing, they are not connected with reality. Islam teaches that Christ is not God, not the son of God, not the Savior of the world. He did not die on a cross. He did not rise from the grave. There is no assurance of forgiveness of sins. There is no assurance of eternal life, and there is no Trinity. The Bible teaches the exact opposite. Both cannot be right.

Hinduism, Buddhism and Animism teach that there are many gods. The Bible teaches there is one God. They both cannot be true. Hinduism and Buddhism say that we can be born again and again and again. The Bible says that it is appointed unto men, once to die and after this, the judgment. They cannot both be true.

The Bible teaches salvation is by grace through faith, not by our works. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Animism, Ancestor Worship and Roman Catholicism teach salvation is through our works. Both cannot be true.

Opposites can both be false, but they cannot both be true such as “two and two make five” and “two and two make fifty-five.” “Two and two make four and two and two do not make four” are opposite answers and cannot both be true. In other words, absolutes do exist. We function with absolutes throughout life.

If we say that it does not matter what we believe as long as we are sincere, we are saying Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Osama and Saddam have an equal place of fellowship in heaven with Paul, Luther, Edwards, Mother Theresa and Billy Graham. All of these were sincere.

We need to capitalize on some of the wonderful values of post-modernism. We need to specialize in being tolerant of people who are different than we are, first within our own mission family and then within our adopted cultures. But that is different from being tolerant of sin and false concepts.

- B. Some say if a person had not heard of Christ, he or she would not be separated from God for eternity. There are at least two sides of the response. First, we do not go to hell because we have not heard of Christ. We go to hell because of our sin and we have all sinned. It is only by grace, by unmerited favor, that we have heard of Christ and put our faith in Him. Frequently we have too shallow an appreciation of God’s holiness, our sin and God’s grace.

Secondly it is, therefore, logical to say that if we got rid of all pastors, close all churches, close all Christian broadcasting, television and radio stations, close all Christian literature distributors and Christian book printing, silence all evangelists and missionaries, then in one generation nobody would have heard the gospel and therefore everybody would go to heaven.

There are many more facets to the questions and the answers. We all should specialize in this area of theology. There are many more facets to communicating the uniqueness of our Savior. These concepts just serve as starters.

Another theological issue is the charismatic question. Our board is on record not to change our charismatic policy but to improve how we communicate it. How we communicate our policy sometimes comes across in a negative non-winsome way.

However, I believe that we need to ask what we can learn from the charismatics. What are they doing right? They have a belief that God can do anything, a strong belief in the supernatural. Whereas sometimes we can lapse into belief in just a naturalistic view of missions and life. We need to thank God for all who have come to faith in Christ through the growing charismatic part of the body of Christ.

On the other hand we need to be careful to maintain our own standards in these areas. There are those who say or think that we would get a lot more missionaries if we broadened our doctrinal stand. However, New Tribes has 1700 missionaries and much more restricted doctrinal statement and policies. ABWE has over 1000, TEAM, UFM and others have more workers and are equally, or more, restrictive.

4. **Passion for the Least-reached.**

The Word of God is saturated in the Old and New Testament with God's passion for all peoples on earth to bring glory to Him. It is saturated with God's passion of reaching out, usually through humans, to lost souls who need to know Christ. You are welcome to work your way through our revised *Through God's Eyes* to study on your own, in more depth, God's passion for all peoples to know Him.

I have found that it is very common to join a mission such as Christar, with wonderful biblically sound motivations and then to get involved in service for the Lord, learning a language, penetrating a culture, planting a church and yet gradually lose our first love for lost souls who need to know Christ. It is easy to see our passion for the least-reached and lost people become converted into a career, a job, an "I can't wait till retirement" attitude. We need to begin with solid biblical motivations and not lose them. We also need to continue to study what scripture says about God's passion for the least-reached and to let it pervade our thinking, actions, strategizing, prayer letter, speaking, preaching and recruiting for our ministries.

What unreached people groups are you now praying about being a catalyst to reach who are not being reached? Which ones have you begun working to reach who need further prayer, personnel and effort to finish the job?

I would encourage each of us to never let Satan tempt us to look down on our high calling. Other than martyrdom I believe that the highest calling a person can have is God's call to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the least-reached. Some call this the gift of apostleship. This does not mean that other callings are second rate. It is that if God calls you to be a missionary, do not stoop to be a king.

God exists to be worshiped. All people and people groups exist to worship God. God is calling you and me to bring some of the least-reached people groups of this world into the white hot worship of God.

5. **The Clash of Civilizations**

A few years ago many of us read Samuel P. Huntington's classic "*The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*." If you have not read that book I would strongly encourage you to do so. It describes the religious and cultural fault lines that divide our world. Gulf War II is a clear clash of civilizations. We also see the clash in Palestine, 9/11, Afghanistan, India, China and the south Philippines. Much of the world views the West, or at least the U.S., as Christian crusaders who are imperialist colonizers, invading a sovereign, independent country unprovoked, a country that has not hurt others for 12 years. This is uniting Muslims, pushing some of them to be anti-West, anti-American and anti-Christian. Some places in Europe, Canada and other parts of the world have also become anti-American. Our world and our mission may never be the same as a result of Gulf War II. It is a clear clash of civilization when you see Muslim clerics declaring Jihad against Americans as Osama, spokesmen from al-Azhar in Cairo (the leading theological university in Cairo), and Palestinian leaders have frequently done. In some people's viewpoints, this world has gone from two super powers to one super power versus the rest of the world.

How should we respond? Personally I think we all need to practice looking at things through our opponents eyes, such as watching al-Jazeera, TV or reading Osama's fatwahs to try to understand what makes them tick, to better learn their motivations.

Some people have become more closed to the gospel through these clashes of civilizations, especially the gospel from the West and from the United States. Therefore, it is even more important for third-world missionaries to go to the least-reached. Today we have an Asian working in a very hostile country. But the country is not hostile towards her sending country in Asia. It is hostile to the West. She is much safer than someone from the U.S. or the West would be in her city.

The opposite is also true. In turmoil, some may become more open and responsive to the gospel, and we should prayerfully hunt for these people. In 1979, when the Iranian revolution took place, there were 300 Persian-speaking MBBs (Muslim background believers) and today there are 30,000. There were 1,000 missionaries to Muslims worldwide and today there are 7,000.

The total number of short-term workers is down this year for many missions due to the turmoil in the Gulf, the Middle East and also due to SARS. Some schools have stopped providing school sponsored short-term teams such as Moody and PBU. One of their reasons for not sponsoring them is a legal reason. We accept that responsibility within Christar. Schools still send short-termers, but they send them through mission-sponsored teams not school-sponsored teams.

We need to ask how should we be responding, preparing and helping nationals and future missionaries in the midst of these clashes of civilizations. We need to pray for and train a new generation of missionaries and nationals who are not afraid to take risks. It is very easy with the clash of civilizations going on for anybody to say "I'd rather not take that risk or take that step of faith." We need to sincerely teach about God's faithfulness to His promises to those who serve Him, both in times of stability and in times of turmoil. We are more secure in the center of God's will than anywhere else outside of it.

Christ could be coming soon for the rapture. You see this with Europe uniting, with the increased anti-Israel viewpoint in the world, with the Middle East turmoil and with the clash of civilizations. This is exciting. II Peter 3 tells us that the reason Christ has not returned is He is not willing for any to perish, but we can help speed His second coming. May God use us to bring some of the last people and people groups to believe in Christ.

6. **Suffering, Persecution, Terrorism and Martyrdom**

Partly as a result of the anti-West, anti-U.S. and anti-Christian viewpoints that exist in the least-reached parts of this world, we have seen terrorism, suffering, martyrdom and persecution increase. You see it in China, India and throughout the Muslim world.

Henry Ford said most problems are solvable if we break them down into small enough parts. I think we need to break this whole area of persecution down into small enough parts. For each part we need to ask how this affects our national believers, missionaries, leaders and constituency.

A. Preparation

The first step, I think, is to prayerfully study the Word of God concerning persecution. It is interesting that, though I have been reading the Bible all of my life, when something like this comes up that I had not been thinking about, I find it on virtually every page of scripture where I had not observed it before. Throughout scripture the Old and New Testaments are saturated with teaching

concerning persecution, suffering and martyrdom. So first for our own heart preparation we all need to really, thoroughly, study the Word of God and come to the place where we would say “Lord, if you want me to leave this world and enter your presence through persecution or martyrdom, I am willing to do that just as our Savior died through the persecution of crucifixion.” There is no substitute for all of us to study the Word of God in preparation for persecution. We need to be teaching this subject in New Personnel Orientation and Connection as people begin to go out for the first time and return on furlough. Those of us who work with nationals need to help them study the Word of God concerning suffering and martyrdom. Many of them have much to teach us about suffering.

At the time of this writing, fourteen journalists have given their life in the one month Gulf War II for the purpose of getting a story for their media. Isn't the story of our Savior's love more valuable and worth dying for!

We have a legal factor in which we all are to sign a waiver. This is for at least two reasons: one is for legal accountability, but it is also for our mental preparation so that when we go to the mission field we know there could be challenges to our life and our family. We need to mentally prepare for this.

A long time ago each of us was asked to have Plan B in writing. If we get the boot from one country, what country do we want to go; where do we believe God wants us to serve Him? Plan B is not just about our people group because countries give visas, not people groups. This also has the advantage of preparing us mentally, so that if we have to leave our country we do not have to endure an emotional downhill ride. We know exactly where we believe God wants us to serve Him.

B. Prevention

We need to keep examining all of our crises management plans and improving them. Probably the best practical source for this is the “*World Vision Security Manual: Safety Awareness for Aid Workers.*”

When one of our missionaries and national partner were in the Islamabad church on March 17, 2002, nine hand grenades came in and six went off. Our missionary could see three of them in the air at one time. He instantly remembered a movie where he learned that hand grenades blow upward, not outward. He hit the ground and the grenades went off about three feet from their bodies. Though hearing and eyes of our worker and the national have been hurt, their lives were spared. There are a lot of practical things that we can all learn for prevention of some areas of suffering, persecution and terrorism.

Sometimes we need to be willing to leave a country temporarily even though at that time it does not appear to be that unsafe to us.

- C. As a mission we need to be helping our people in the middle of their crises through a variety of ways. This probably will include the Crisis Management Team within each focus group and the home office.
- D. Those who have gone through a crises need us to listen to them and let them tell their stories and share what is on their heart. Many times people in churches will not fully ask our missionaries about the trauma that they have gone through. We need to provide counseling, physical rest and other practical helps.
- E. For long range help we need to provide for possible post-traumatic shock syndrome and other lingering effects that may take place as a result of crises and persecution.
- F. This a reason we need to recruit, even more, non-Westerners for the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim worlds. We need to continue to emphasize other sending countries.

I would encourage us all to read Josef Ton's "*Suffering, Martyrdom and Rewards in Heaven.*" Dr. Ton is president of the Rumanian Missionary Society and has ministered close to martyrdom in Rumania for nearly 10 years. It is an excellent biblical and historical study on this subject, maybe the best that is written.

May we meditate on the fourth stanza of the hymn, "*How Firm a Foundation*" when we sing "When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, my grace all sufficient shall be thy supply; the flame shall not hurt thee, I only design, thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine."

7. **The Move South**

Phillip Jenkins, in his book "*The Next Christendom,*" along with David Barrett and Todd Johnson in "*The World Christian Encyclopedia*" point out that the growth of the Church is moving from the North (Europe, North America and the Pacific) to the South (Latin America, Africa and Asia). And where the church is moving, it is stronger than where it has come from.

Some have analyzed what the different sides bring to the table. The North tends to bring resources, theological training, networking and administration. The South tends to bring a spiritual commitment, prayer, acceptance of suffering and a knowledge of several languages. We need both sides, but everything being equal, I think what the South brings to the table is more important than what the North brings. This is an exciting time to live,

to raise up sending centers from the two-thirds world that would be sending missionaries to the least-reached.

We need to be reminded that it is a very high calling to found a mission board. Benjamin Davidson, who founded the India Mission in 1930, Miss Florence Drew, who founded the South China Boat Mission in 1909 and Mr. Francis Stead, who founded the Faraman Orphanage and Industrial School in Iran about 1922, had no idea of the 25 countries and scores of people groups their descendants in Christar would be reaching today with the gospel. May God use those of us in different affinity groups, focus groups and teams to help plant mission boards for our people. I do not believe that a church is fully planted until it has something the equivalent of a missions committee and something the equivalent of a mission board through whom it can send its missionaries.

We have a need for missionaries from Europe where missions began, from North America where it has continued and now, from the church of the South. It is like, today, we use three blades on a razor, or as scripture says “A three-fold cord is not easily broken.” It is not an issue of one or the other but all three. We are not downplaying any factor for raising up missionaries from Europe, North America or the South. We need them all. It

is exciting to see this going on all over the world. Christians in mainland China are retracing the gospel on the Silk Road going backwards where it came from originally.

There undoubtedly will be significant social changes in the coming years which can affect the spread of the gospel. In the year 2050 the U.S. is expected to be 50% Hispanic.

8. **Poverty**

Phillip Jenkins, in *“The Next Christendom,”* Jonathan Bonk, in *“Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem”* and others point out the economic contrasts in our world. One and a half billion people, or one out of every four persons, makes less than \$100.00 (U.S.) a year in income. How does this affect us?

- A. I think we need to work on helping our believers in acquiring habits, attitudes, skills and training to be able to support themselves and to be able to make more money than they are making so they can sustain themselves and can give more generously to their local church. It is difficult for people who make \$100.00 a year in income to support a pastor and send missionaries.
- B. We need to recruit workers in Christar who have life supporting skills they can teach in order to meet consciously felt needs. Some of us may want to learn skills we can pass on to our national family.
- C. Let us all remember that our Savior personally owned only the change of clothes on his back. It took no work for Him to write His will. It basically consisted of

“Woman behold your son, and son behold your mother.” May we never, ever, look down on people with less means than we have. Otherwise we would be looking down on Christ-like people, the majority of the world and the majority of the body of Christ.

9. **Leadership is of Secondary Importance.**

We can easily think “I have joined Christar to do evangelism, discipleship and church planting. I am trained in this, I enjoy it and now Pat, or my peers, or someone ahead of me has asked me to give a hefty chunk of my time for leadership and administration. I would rather let somebody else do the leadership and administration and give myself to my calling. I feel I could be burying my passion, abilities and training. My home churches would not think I am a real missionary.”

Leadership is a ministry of multiplication. What is more important for God’s glory, that we “do our thing” or that the gospel be multiplied, that one church be planted or that ten churches be planted? Paul took about 13 disciples with him on parts of his third missionary journey, multiplying the gospel through his leadership of building into others. Our Lord ministered to the unsaved, but He invested much of His time with 3, 12, 70 and 120 disciples. His ministry of multiplication and of leadership with His disciples 2000 years ago has produced today two billion out of six billion people in the world who claim to be His followers.

Moses had 40 years of leadership training, possibly to become the ruler of the only super-power of the world. Then God had him wander in the desert for 40 years. I am very confident he said “I am burying my education, my culture, my languages, because an illiterate peasant girl can take care of sheep.” Then when God called him to go back to take the children of Israel out, he said in Exodus 4:13 the equivalent of: “Here am I, send my sister or somebody else other than me.” But God knew what He was doing. God was preparing Moses (who preferred to just stay with the sheep) to lead two million complaining Jews through the same desert. God used Moses’ leadership training and desert experience in a world changing leadership role. May we also not flinch if God and Christar nudge us towards a ministry of multiplication, not simply addition.

10. **Project vs. Process**

We live in a day in which many people in our western churches consider missions a project. They raise up money, send out a team of their members to go and work in a country for two weeks and then return. They have done missions for the year. In Christar we have a whole division of short-term ministry and we have had for years. We believe there is much value in short-term work. It is not a question of either/or, but both. For us our prayer is that short-term work projects and short-termers will lead to the process of long-term commitment.

However, without those who endure for the process, the least-reached half of the world will

not be reached. It is going to take a process, not merely a project. For those who are really least-reached to be reached, it is going to take someone who will leave their country, learn a language, put down their roots, raise a family, love their neighbors and share Jesus Christ. Our singles also need to put down roots for the long haul. In a small Muslim village 646 Muslims have decided for Christ through the ministry of one of our single missionaries who put in 37 years in her country. Most of these believers came in the latter half of her ministry.

Short-term ministries begin with screening and finding people who have an openness to long-term ministry. And when short-termers come to our countries we need to get to know them, ask questions, solicit their dreams, vision, calling and then brainstorming with them of options of how God could use them long-term among the least-reached. With all of us helping on our fields we can see short-termers called by God, go through a conversion and become long-termers. This can happen and has happened. There is a longing on behalf of many in the next generation of Christians to do something of significance, to have their lives count. What are you doing to help them connect?

Obviously we each need to practice and teach sticktuitiveness. Each year at our June banquet welcoming our new members, I share something about leaving our bones in our adopted country. On more than one occasion I have mentioned Bruce Nichols. He was the patriarch of missionaries in India and he told us, about 30 years ago, that it takes about 20 years for missionaries to hit their prime, but at 20 years most people are gone for one reason or another, good reasons are not so good. So when we are able to really make a significant in depth contribution, many of us are off the scene.

The average age of our missionaries is 43 with 10 years of service. As we have said on many occasions we have a significant bloc of our mission family in their 40s and 50s. They are facing challenges such as their kids being away in college, health problems, parental health issues and visa renewals. We need to be of help to them in a variety of ways. Sometimes routine produces boredom. We need to creatively think of other ministries within the Christar family to get the gospel out through our veteran workers.

That is one reason why, in June, we are installing a large granite monument in which we are engraving everyone's names who have served 25 or more years with Christar. This includes those who are already in heaven, those who are retired and those who are still serving the Lord. We want to honor those who have given and are giving of their time to bring the good news to the least-reached. We want to encourage all of us to ask God what will it take for us to enjoy the exponential curve breaking, to eventually see much fruit through patience and persistence. We want to encourage God's servants who will "leave their bones" and plant churches where they do not exist. Planting churches among the least-reached is a long-term, usually lifetime process, not just a project.

Longevity is not the only factor in process. Within Christar we need to emphasize

standards and accountability. It is easy to be so democratic that everyone does that which is right in their own eyes. We are working in the direction to lift our standards, accountability and rewards.

11. **Globalization.**

With every passing year we live in a world which is increasingly becoming inter-related. You may want to read "*The Lexus and the Olive Tree*" by Freeman to understand this in more depth.

Increased globalization raises the importance of the need for training multi-cultural teams, the need for encouraging our sending centers and the importance of partnering with other parts of the body of Christ to get out the gospel. Christianity is not just a Western phenomena. There are Christians in every country of the world. It is the most universal faith, existing in more of the world than any other faith. Therefore, we need to understand how globalization may affect us and how to work with people of other backgrounds to get the gospel out. We need to ask how we should respond to the growing influence of a globalized planet, a globalized church and a globalized sending force. We have some challenging questions to face. Are we to ask people to leave their country to come to the U.S. for our New Personnel Orientation, or are we to ask people to learn to speak our language to get the gospel out? Since it is usually easier to work within a mono-cultural team, should we just settle for that?

12. **Contextualization**

Probably most of us under-contextualize. We unconsciously export some of our own sending country's values, style of worship, dress and attitudes. How in depth is our passion to appreciate our hosts' culture, values and language? We also need to be careful of over-contextualizing which can lead to syncretism, incorporating the national religion into the worship of Christ.

There are many who believe that the main reason why Muslims have not come to Christ is that we have not contextualized far enough. They say if only we would contextualize a little further, then Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Animists would come to Christ by droves. I reject the thinking of some missiologists that contextualization is a silver bullet and the lack of it is the basic reason why we have not seen more fruit.

On the other hand we need to be very careful to appreciate and learn the cultures in which we are going and to see how the gospel can be communicated, not only in the language but also in the culture of the receiving country. Again, probably most of us under-contextualize unconsciously.

13. **Information Technology**

Technology as a whole, and information technology in particular, are some of the areas of

fastest change. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to project what life might be like 8-15 years from now in relationship to technology. It is much easier to look back and remember what did not exist 8-15 years ago. The internet was used only by the U.S. government and major educational institutions, not in our homes or offices. There was no e-mail, no PDAs (Palm Pilots), DVDs, cell phones, satellite phones, on-line shopping, scanners, scanners in stores, search engines, digital presentations (Power Point) and most of us did not have wireless phones in our homes. Eight to 15 years ago it would have been difficult to predict all of these advances and how they have affected our lives. It is obviously difficult to predict what new technology will affect our lives eight years from now.

Some of the principles that might apply though, will be that communication in the world will be much easier. There will be even fewer places in the world out of touch.

We live in a changing world. It would not surprise me if within five years a number of countries would not permit me to go into their country. I have heard of the first missionary who arrived at a visa checkpoint and they typed in "google.com" and then the missionary's name and the information from the search engine said that this person was a missionary. The country did not issue him or her a visa. Within our mission we check the name of everyone in creative-access countries twice a year on a search engine. Frequently, if we speak at a church, or a church says they are sending us as a missionary, or we teach or speak at a school, this information is put on their web site and from the web site it goes to a search engine for anyone in the world to read. Each of us should type our own name into a search engine and if we are listed in ways that are not advantageous to the gospel, we should write those churches, organizations or individuals who have listed us and ask that it be removed. As computers become more powerful and cheaper, even developing countries will increase their use of them.

Personal privacy issues will rise in importance and it will become much easier for all countries to secure their borders. Computers with face recognition abilities may be at borders. On the other hand satellite TV such as Sat.7 can penetrate into countries which, in the past, have tried to restrict the free flow of information and prohibit their people from hearing the gospel.

In the future in Christar we may be going to tele-commuters where we would all have a camera on our screen and we could literally talk with each other over computers while looking at the picture of the person we are talking with. Then we could have tele-commuter conference calls where we could have pictures of everyone in the conference call on our screen where all could be talking and we all could hear the entire conversation. Though this at first would be expensive, it may become less expensive than the cost of bringing people from all over the world for a conference. Obviously technology can change how we function as a community. So it is not just a matter of bigger, better and faster, it also may be new technology that can affect our lives and ministries.

Information technology makes us more efficient. The Holy Spirit makes us more effective. Computers can save time, but as we all know, they can add time. Computers can help us to get more done, but they can cause us to withdraw from people from whom Christ died.

On the one hand none of us should have techno-phobia. We should be willing to learn new technology and technical skills. On the other hand we should be careful that we do not permit technology to draw us away from people for whom Christ died, but to use it as a servant, not a master, to help us reach more with the good news of Christ. Christ did not leave heaven and become a computer. Christ left heaven and became a human being. He identified with us and we need to continue to identify with human beings for whom He died. Becoming high tech may allow us to become low touch. We need to be both high tech and high touch.

14. **Conclusion**

There are many issues, trends, opportunities and threats that face us. The most stable unchanging factor in our future is our wonderful God who has commissioned each of us to bring His light to the least-reached and Who has promised His presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in the process.

Let me encourage you to ask God what legacy he would have you leave among the people He has called you to reach. What will outlive you despite the potential changes in your environment? When we think of God's vision for all people groups of the world to worship Him, and when we ask God for His vision for Christar, this may produce some BIHAGS, or Big Hairy Audacious Goals. God may have significant steps of faith for us to take with Him until Christ comes or calls us to be with Him.