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Dave's Notes© -- David Mays, APMC

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THE CHURCH IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

Patrick Johnstone

The Unfinished Work of World Evangelisation

Great Britain, Christian Focus Publications/WEC, 1998, 292 pp.

JohChur

If you can only read one book on missions, read this one. You will find much to be encouraged about as well as a realistic appraisal of major challenges. It's an overview of the world missionary movement based on massive research - a whole missions education in less than 300 pages. Interestingly, Johnstone finds the lack of appropriate structures to be one of the key factors in the delay of world evangelization.

The book is divided into sections historically:

Eternity – Vision Given

The Past – Marginalization of Missions

The Present – Harvest Gathered,

The Future – Vision Channelled,

The Consumation – Vision Realized

Definitions: 12

Mission – The loving work of God to bring humankind to himself as the Church. As a secondary outworking of this, mission is the overall mission of the Church for world evangelization.

missions – Any activity in which Christians are involved for world evangelization.

The whole purpose of creation, the existence of the universe and of history is that those who believe in him should become an Eternal Companion to his Son as his Bride and to share his throne and authority. That Bride is to come from every part of the human race.
13, 14

Jesus could not speak openly about evangelizing the world until after his resurrection because the disciples could not have understood. 17

The Comprehensive Great Commission 18-21

Mark 16 – the Evangelistic Commission – to communicate the gospel to every individual

Matthew 28 – the Church Planting Commission – to make of disciples

Luke 24 – the Teaching Commission – to teach the whole of Scripture

John 20 – the Sending Commission

Acts 1 – the Global Commission

“Living for the fulfilment of this vision of the Father is the most noble, most enriching, most meaningful purpose one can have in life.” 23

1792 – 7/1000 Protestants were African or Asian

“We are poised on the brink of the realization of Carey’s dream – the completion of world evangelization.” 30

“...our understanding of Scripture is often viewed through the spectacles that filter out mission. So deep have these philosophical presuppositions gone that we often miss plain statements about missions in the Bible.” 39

What is a ‘missionary?’ The word isn’t in the Bible, but it comes originally from ‘apostle,’ one sent away with a message (63). “The ministry of apostleship was to be the growing edge of the Church, so a missionary should be one on that growing edge – planting or strengthening churches.” 50

“The Roman Catholics spent the 300 post-reformation years in an extensive expansion through missionary enterprises. For 200 of those years, Protestants did virtually nothing to the scorn of Roman Catholic writers.” 58

“Unless our theological institutions recover a biblical centrality of mission and insist on it as the core and inspiration of their instruction, we will perpetuate the error of nearly two millennia.” 60

“In 650 AD one quarter of the world’s population professed Christianity; a figure not to be attained again until the middle of the nineteenth century.” 61

“For the first 800 years of the Church, non-Caucasians were in the majority; by 1500 this was reduced to less than 8%. Christianity had largely become a localized religion limited to parts of Europe.” 62

“Through the whole New Testament is the pervading thought of the imminence of the return of the Lord Jesus. Did delayed obedience mean the non-fulfilment of the words of Jesus to those disciples? Is that why so many generations have passed without that awaited return? Can our obedience hasten his return or our disobedience delay it?” 66

“It is possible that in the space of those first 45-50 years nearly 30% of the world’s population at that time had been exposed to the Good News. By the end of the 5th century this had risen to about 40%.” 68

“The dynamic ministry of the Holy Spirit has kept up the momentum towards world evangelization in spite of the failures and disobedience of the Church as a whole.” 69

Re: Moravians. Between 1732 and 1930 more than 3000 missionaries were sent out, representing almost one out of every 12 members. The Moravians started more missions in 10 years than the whole of Protestantism over the previous 200. 79

From 1850 onwards the proportion of non-Caucasian Christians grew rapidly, showing that many of those being evangelized were now becoming Christians while in traditionally

Christian lands the actual percentage of Christians as a whole were either stagnating or even in decline. After many centuries of relative barrenness and retreat, the Church was becoming the church militantly triumphant – at least, in parts! 83

“I believe we are now in the time of the final ingathering before the end. During the last 10 years, more were added to the Evangelical community, through new-birth conversions and birth into evangelical families, than the population on earth in that Pentecost year.”
“We are far closer to achieving the basic goals set out for us by the Lord Jesus in his resurrection ministry than many have given credit.” 86

The Muslim percentage is about the same today as it was 200 years ago. 95

There are virtually no countries and very few major peoples without some effort being made to plant churches. 102

Definition – Unreached People (IMB) “An ethnolinguistic people within which there is no viable indigenous church movement with sufficient strength, resources and commitment to sustain and ensure the continuous multiplication of churches.” 104

There are nearly 13,000 distinct ethno-linguistic peoples in the countries of the world. 105

“Although many peoples are unreached, the number is only a fraction of that of 100 years ago. The goal is attainable in our generation – if we mobilize prayer and effort and work together....” 105

Nearly half the world’s peoples today have a majority of their population that would claim to be Christian (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, indigenous and fringe sectarian groups). These are cultures that have been permeated with the gospel and Christian values – even if later generations only retain a notional concept of being a Christian. 106

3,500 or so peoples in the countries of the world are still pioneer fields. 107

About 1700 unreached peoples of over 10,000 population and less than 5% Christian or 2% Evangelical are listed in the AD2000 Movement Joshua Project List. 106-7

“We dare not under-estimate the tough challenges we face in order to accomplish this task, but at last we can see that the achievement of the task is within our grasp.” 107

“The Joshua Project of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement is the largest strategic mobilization of Christians in history to disciple the peoples of the world. The vision is for a church for every people by the year 2000.” 107

Growth of Evangelicals in the World since 1960 p. 110

Slow steady growth in the West while Christianity as a whole has declined significantly. In the non-West evangelicals have grown from half to four times the number in the West.

“The higher visibility of Muslims in Western countries is largely through increased immigration and retention of the open symbols of their religion together with vocal and well-organized publicity, which is often in opposition to other religious communities.” 111

Protestants are growing about twice as fast as world population, almost entirely evangelical growth. “Evangelicals are growing at more than three times population growth rate and are the world’s only body of religious adherents growing rapidly by means of conversion.” 112

“The growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations since 1960 has been even more striking.” 112

In the 1960s the growth in Africa was most marked. The 1970s were marked by the rise to prominence of Evangelicals in Latin America. In the 1980s it was East Asia’s turn. In the 1990s the spotlight moved to Eurasia. This now leaves us with the challenge of the 10/40 Window area. 114-5

“I am more than ever convinced that history is just a backcloth for His-story. Historians have usually missed the ONE important theme that gives meaning and excitement to history – it is God’s redemptive plan for humankind.” 119

El Salvador - Evangelicals – 2.5% in 1965. Almost 20% in 1990. 119

Argentina – Evangelicals – 2% in 1980 (before the war). Almost 7% in 1990. 120

Sudan – (Probably 2,000,000 have perished through war of famine. The genocide, slavery and severe persecution of Christians has been little publicized.)

Christians in the south- maybe 2-3% in 1964. Great majority now. 121

“One of the characteristics of the world of today is the massive mushrooming of globe-encircling prayer movements with thousands and even millions of Christians involved.” 130

“However the savagery and bigotry of extremists in promoting their cause in such countries as Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran and Indonesia and the glorification of holy war, or jihad, has dismayed many sincere Muslims, bringing many to doubt the credibility of Islam and increasing the number who are willing to consider the claims of Christ.” 134

“To many Christians it has been long thought that to be a missionary you need a long white nose!” 135

The Ibero-American Missions Handbook listed 397 agencies and 3,498 missionaries. 138 Using the broadest definition of missionary, about 31% of the 138,000 missionaries were non-Western as reported by the 1993 edition of Operation World. 139

In the last 45 years, more languages have received some Scripture than in all the previous centuries put together. 143

“My absolute conviction from all the research and gathering of information is that we are in the finishing straight of the marathon for world evangelization.” 145

“...an estimated 15% to 20% of the world population has never yet had a fair chance to hear the gospel.” 145

“There are over 3000 peoples in the world where pioneer church planting is still the key ministry and about 1000 or more have no known resident witness.” 146

One of the fundamental reasons for the failure to complete the Great Commission is structural. 149 “Revivals which do not impact existing structures and form new ones soon lose their momentum and fruit.” 149 “The harvest will not be reaped in our generation if we get our nurturing, mobilizing and channelling structures out of balance.” 150

William Carey developed his concept of the mission agency from the religious and commercial organizations of his day. We still have an aura of commercialism, colonialism, and exporting paternalistic civilization and it all shows up in the term “para-church,” which is “para-biblical,” not a true part of the Body. 153-4

“It is astonishing how quickly the concept of mobile apostles who planted churches in hitherto unevangelized regions was changed into settled elders and later territorial bishops.” The Church began to be equated with geographical systems and the mission of the Church became less and less that of Jesus Christ. 166

The monastic orders that had so contributed to the expansion of the church in the previous 1200 years were eliminated in the lands dominated by the Reformers. 169 The post-Reformation universities became increasingly independent of the Church. That part of the Church most concerned with discipling and training was effectually lost to the Body and secularized.

It is this poor foundation (the loss of the tripartite structure of monastic outreach, theological university, and denomination/churches) that has contributed to lack of vision for mission and fragmentation of the Protestant Church. “The one overarching and unifying goal of prayer for and action towards world evangelization would have drawn Christians together as nothing else could have done. This, to me, is one off the great tragedies of the half millennium that has passed since the Reformation began.” 169-70

“The Evangelical Awakening of the 18th century and the development of missionary societies proved to be the major contributory cause to the massive growth of Evangelicals in this world today.” 171

Over these two centuries the 3 biblical structures have been recovered but without the needed inter-relatedness. What has emerged are 3 autonomous types of structures. 173

“Another revealing investigation would be to find out how many pastors received any teaching on missiology before going into church ministry.” 177

“Mission agencies are not a temporary expedient to be tolerated for the moment, but a vital component of the Church to enable the Church to be what God intended.” 179

“The local church is the launch pad for missions...but how rarely is this true in practice.” 181

Missionaries per congregation in the U.S. - 0.15 Few churches actually send out one. “I would estimate that in the West 90% of all Protestant churches, as a congregation, have no direct commitment to, or involvement with, a real live missionary.” 181

“Mission has become a vague concept that is so broad as to include almost any activity the church does, or if that activity is overseas, it is little more than giving to humanitarian projects or an annual donation to the denominational mission body.” 182

“The majority of Protestant churches are not involved in the primary task of the church – either through ignorance or lack of vision.” 182

Difficulties and warning questions related to sending missionaries directly from the local church – pp 186, 196-198

“The local church is the fundamental structural component for mission.” “Mission is a close partnering of the whole Body of Christ, not just one of its parts.” 190

Key components of a local church missions ministry – p. 193-6

“Probably the root cause of the marginalization of missions over the last few centuries has been our system of theological education.” “The key to the mobilization of local churches for mission lies in our theological training, and the pastors trained.” 199, 200 “The time for the independence of seminaries is gone for ever. It must be recognized that they are no para-church bodies, but part of the Body of Christ, and therefore accountable to it.” 203

A check-list to measure the mission commitment of theological institution – p. 204

Basic principles for mission agencies and for relationships between churches and agencies– pp. 205-209

The Major Challenges (chaps 20-25) –

- Geographical, - People, - Urban, - Social, - Ideological, - Spiritual

Est. 1.2-14. Billion have never had the chance to hear the Gospel and over 90% of these reside in the 10/40 Window area. 215

237 countries and territories in the world in 1998. Same as in 1993. 217

150 countries have a majority professing Christianity in some form – but 70 of these are island territories with a total population of less than 10 million people. 218

The other 87 countries are almost all within or near the 10/40 Window. 219

The 35 countries in the 1-10% Christian category contain some of the world's largest such as China, India and Pakistan. These 3 countries have 2.25 billion people or >1/3 of world. 219

Only 29 countries have less than 1% "Christian. Some of the most challenging: Algeria, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, North Korea, Sahara, Somalia.... 219 "The amazing fact of our time is that not one of the 29 countries in the final category is without a group of believers already seeking to live for Jesus." "We have run out of countries which are totally pioneer lands. This was not so 20 years ago, but it is today." 220

"It means that all mission activity must be planned in fellowship with or, at least, with sensitivity to the believers already in the country." 220

"The foolish insensitivity of foreigners can lead to severe persecution and even martyrdom for national believers (in Muslim countries.)" 220

Libya – probably less than 10 indigenous believers with not yet a single church for Libyans. 221

Sahara – Almost the entire indigenous population lives in refugee camps in Algeria.

Saudi Arabia – Could be the biggest challenge of all. 222

Russia – Russians are probably no more than 0.5% evangelical. Majority are Russian Orthodox but church attendance is about 2%. 223

Out of about 1500 least reached peoples (of >10,000 population) there were only about 500 without known outreach activity before GCOWE in mid-1997. 226 And about 172 left without any commitment after GCOWE. 229 However, there may be around 1000 peoples smaller than 10,000 population who are just as worthy of attention. 229

In 1997, about 80% of all homes in Saudi Arabia had satellite dishes. In Tehran more than 100,000 were being set up every month. 239

Urbanization - 200 years ago – 4%, (1 mega-city – Beijing). By 2000 – 51%. By 2100 maybe 90%. 242

21st century will be characterized by the need for pioneer missions in the great cities of the world – a multi-layered kaleidoscope of needs. 242

"The urban poor are the most receptive, but also the most under-evangelized." It is strategic to reach them, for the gospel has an uplifting effect when the gospel takes hold of individuals and communities. The great people movements into the kingdom have started among the poor." 244

“the cutting edge and spirituality of the Church is often blunted when the rich and powerful become Christians!” 244

“Of the 2 billion people living in the Third World cities in 2000, it is reckoned that 40% will be the very poor.” 246

“The 200-year infatuation with revolutionary ideology as the driving force in the affairs of humankind is basically over.” 260

“We must not ignore the continued presence of militant atheism in those lands where Communism, even modified Communism, continues to dominate. About a quarter of all humankind is still living under such governments that hate the very existence of the true Church – a hate that appears so irrational and counter-productive were we not to know the satanic origin of that ideology.” 261

“Christendom itself as an ideology is flawed and failing fast too.” 262 “Christendom is doomed, but the future of biblical Christianity is bright.” 263

“Our prayers can and do change the world. We do not have to understand everything about the forces arrayed against us, but we do need to understand the nature of the power and authority that is ours in Christ.” 273

“God is more interested in us as individual people than for the work he can squeeze out of us. He did not redeem us for service but for fellowship with himself for ever. He is less concerned about our structures and strategies than he is about our relationship with him.” 281

(Note: I have quoted the British spelling in the book. dlm)