

## Endorsements

From the caption from the Synod of Dort on the book jacket to the historical essays on Carey, Pearce, and Judson (which, as an historian of this era, I naturally loved!), this volume on the missionary enterprise (which is at the heart of the gospel) is a veritable cornucopia of wisdom about the theology and praxis of missions. The wisdom it contains and the vision that informs it is much needed, for I fear that the passion for missions that marked what is rightly called “the greatest generation” of our evangelical Calvinist forebears—the world of Carey and his friends—is being displaced by a passion for politics. Oh that God would use this fabulous book to stir afresh in our hearts a zeal to take the gospel to the lost at home and abroad. Highly recommended!

—Michael A. G. Azad Haykin

**Professor of Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**

I can hardly write a strong enough endorsement of this book. For generations, the Western evangelical missions movement has been adrift in a sea of sentimentality and pragmatism—and we’ve suffered for it. Now is the time for reform in the mission world. Those who hold fast to the sound doctrine of Scripture and the church’s great creedal and confessional Protestant heritage must once again embrace Christ’s call to sacrificially send and go into all the world, making disciples for his glory—biblically.

Authors Jerry Slate Jr., David Vinson, Steve Martin, and John Miller have produced a true magnum opus. Many passages in this volume pricked my conscience and stirred deeper prayer and zeal for the cause of Christ within me. (Perhaps my greatest regret is that I didn’t write it myself!) This important volume is worthy of your attention and the attention of the church for years to come.

—Alex Kocman

**Director of Engagement and Communications, ABWE**

With each chapter combining the heart of a pastor, the mind of a theologian, and the vision of a missionary, the contributors to this volume have successfully raised the bar for writing theologically about missions. This book should be a standard resource for any church and mission agency serious about biblical missions and the mission of the church. I am grateful for such a gift to the church.

—E.D. Burns

**Missionary in SE Asia**

**Director, MA in Cultural Apologetics & Missions, Founders Seminary**

**Executive Director, Training and Development, ABWE**

**Professor of Missiology & Spirituality, Asia Biblical Theological Seminary**

It has been joked that only a fool would venture to the North Pole wearing anything less than a nuclear submarine. Missionary candidates, *Reforming World Missions* is your theological submarine for venturing to take the gospel where it has never gone before. Don't go wearing anything less!

This book tips the scales at almost 600 pages and demands serious reading commitment from sending churches and men eager to preach Christ in a foreign land. However, the fruit of that labor will be substantial. First, every reader who absorbs this content will grasp at a basic level all of the foundational theological, biblical and practical components necessary for a successful missions endeavor. Second, working through subjects such as covenant theology, the missionary's self-watch and the complexities associated with modern missions will deepen one's sober-mindedness and prayerful attitude as they approach this majestic task. Third, reading the brief missionary biographies included in the later chapters will encourage and inspire all those who have a holy jealousy to see Christ glorified among the nations. Finally, if one has already been serving the Lord as a missionary or if one's church has previously sent men to the mission field, this book provides an opportunity for self-evaluation and the chance to address any areas that might not be as tightly biblical as perhaps they could be.

May the Lord bless the efforts and prayers of each author so that the first three petitions of our Lord's model prayer might be fulfilled in our day.

—Allen Beardmore  
Pastor, Emmanuel Reformed Baptist Church  
Perth, Western Australia

The Great Commission remains in force for the church today, applying to all true believers—no nation or denomination is exempt! The risen and ascended Christ, who is both the message of the gospel and the motivation for it, empowers His people by His Spirit to proclaim His Word to the ends of the earth. Grounding missiology in the local church, the authors provide a biblically faithful, eminently practical, and refreshingly historical survey of missions in the Reformed tradition. Above all, they ground missions in the being and perfections of God, the purchased and accomplished salvation of Christ for the elect, and the nature of Christ's bride, the church. While one need not agree with everything in this helpful manual, this multifaceted treatment of Reformed missiology is a clarion call for the church to pursue the Great Commission with zeal until Christ returns.

—Joel R. Beeke  
Chancellor, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary  
Pastor, Heritage Reformed Congregation  
Grand Rapids, MI

A quaint but rather convicting movement has emerged in the United Kingdom that focuses Christians on the significance of Easter Day 2033. It makes a claim that that particular date is a very symbolic date as it will be exactly 2000 years to the day since the Son of God was resurrected from the dead. And this group's application to the church today is this, that we have almost 8 years in which to achieve the goal of reaching every person in the world with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that takes a lot of careful consideration. The actual anniversary itself is ultimately a matter of guesswork, and the originators of this movement are aware of the symbolic nature of the date more than its chronological accuracy. However, in the next five years that double millennium 2000 anniversary of the resurrection of the Son of God will have come and gone. It soon will be more than that period since the Lord Christ stood on this earth. It is estimated that approximately 40% of the world's people group totaling over 7,400 groups, are unreached with the gospel. They represent over 42% of the world's population. Billions of people, all of whom are sinners to be judged according to their knowledge and behavior, every single one of whom being considered to have fallen short of their own standards let alone the demands of the Almighty. An awareness of the obligation of every single Christian needs a great awakening. How that has impacted the church at earlier times. The Celtic church was renowned for its evangelism and church planting. William Carey is called the 'father of modern missions' and our heroes are the men and women who spent their lives reaching out to the lost.

May this beautiful convicting book galvanize many—a new generation of Christians—to say to God, "Here am I, send me!" There is no other way that many more people who have never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ will have done so by Easter Day 2033.

**—Geoffrey Thomas**  
**Retired Pastor, Alfred Place Baptist Church**  
**Aberystwyth, Wales**

Christians have long recognized their responsibility to bring the gospel to every tribe and tongue in the world. The history of the church is full of accounts of noble believers leaving their homes and traveling to foreign places simply to proclaim the message of Christ's gospel to unbelievers and call them to a commitment to the Lord Jesus. We are thankful for their sacrifice and dedication to the commands of Scripture. In the last few decades, however, a pervasive change has come to the task of gospel missions. Loud advocates for a form of message that does not call for explicit repentance and faith, rejection of false religions, and open allegiance to Jesus Christ have overtaken much missiological writing and practice. Such ideas must be exposed and refuted. I am very thankful for this book. It is a clear exposition of obedience to the methods based in Scripture and traditionally employed

by protestants. It reveals the faults of modern approaches and clearly calls for a retrieval of the historic methods found in and defined by holy scripture. May the Lord bless it abundantly so that men, women and children around the world hear the message about the Lord Jesus and gladly bow down before Him.

—James M. Renihan  
**President, International Reformed Baptist Seminary**

The book that you have in your hands reads succinctly as a comprehensive manual to the work of missions. I can't imagine how many missionaries who are already in the field will regret not having had this book in their hands before they were sent out to their fields of labor. If you are one of them, then rejoice in the providence of God that it is never too late with Him and He does His work perfectly in his time. Reading *Reforming World Mission* presents you with a scenario similar to a farmer with a bountiful harvest of oranges that cannot all be collected in one basket. The treasures in this book truly overflow with wisdom and blessings for a man waiting to go to the mission field or who is already one.

For myself, coming from the beautiful continent that pulls many missionaries from all over the world to it—Africa, I have seen a great help in this manual that can solve many frustrations that both local and foreign missionaries share in this part of the globe. Here we have our “1689 London Confession of Faith” on mission as is summarized from the Holy Book. Missions must be done with biblical guidance, biblical teachings, true theology, and respect to the bride of Christ. This book will guide you to that end. It is a must read for churches thinking of sending out missionaries and equally for a missionary waiting to go out in the field.

—Sam Oluoch  
**Pastor, Grace Baptist Church  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Dean, Kisumu Reformed School of Theology  
Kisumu, Kenya**

A pastor once asked me, “What do you wish every congregation understood about serving as a missionary in a foreign country, language, and culture?” I didn't know where to start. I now have an answer to that question: *Reforming World Missions: Recovering A Biblical and Confessional Missiology*. Start here.

Here you will find the exposition and application of missiological first principles, biblical and confessional truths, and practices that missionaries and sending and supporting churches need to know, believe, and do to face the serious and difficult challenges of seeking to reach God's people in a nation, language, and culture not their own. Here, you will also find a thorough description of what preparing, sending, and “holding the ropes” for a missionary entails. Throughout, it demonstrates

how doing all of that well is vital for the missionary's own soul, the souls under his care, and the longevity of the mission.

Reaching both the head and the heart, in one volume, these authors have given us a missiology textbook, handbook, and devotional. It is as deep and rich as it is plain and clear. Every missionary and aspiring missionary, every church officer, and anyone interested in the theology and practice of the expansion of Christ's Church on earth should read this book.

—**Samuel R. Gunnip**  
**Missionary and Pastor of Noeun Sola Reformed Baptist**  
**Church, Daejeon, South Korea**

The authors of this volume have bequeathed to local churches a manual for missions that will equip us for the task unfinished. They present a biblically faithful, confessionally robust and eminently practical book to guide us through what has become a minefield of misinformation, confusion and discouragement for local churches that want to play their part in fulfilling the Great Commission. Moving through the theology, practice and history of missions, they conclude with some remarkably helpful appendices, writing as those who have «practiced what they preach» in their own churches.

As well as being comprehensive in scope, there are countless insights that provoke thought, while providing clear direction for action. For example, how conversion as treason requires that we preach a culturally confrontational gospel message; how Reformed missionaries are the most seeker-sensitive of all church-planters, God himself being the seeker of true worshippers; how it is surely the case that there are more confessionally Reformed Baptist ministers called to labour cross-culturally than are currently in the mission field, and what we ought to do about it!

It is my hope and prayer that this book takes its place as the manual for missions that all our churches need.

—**Oliver Allmand-Smith**  
**Pastor of Trinity Grace Church, Ramsbottom ,UK**  
**Director of African Pastors Conferences**  
**Trustee of International Reformed Baptist Seminary**

This present work might seem like just one more book on World Missions that we can add to the enormous pile that has accumulated over many years. What could this book add to such a subject like World Missions that hasn't already been said?

Well, to any potential sceptic that is leaning towards such tempting thoughts let me urge you to pause and consider. The title to this book should be a real clue as to the uniqueness of this work: Reforming World Missions—with the operative word

“reforming” grabbing our attention. Yes, World Missions is in desperate need of reforming. But what authors Slate, Martin, Miller, and Vinson have achieved is more than just declaring we have a problem that needs fixing for World Missions.

These men have produced a literary masterpiece of missiology scholarship, pastoral wisdom, faithful scriptural exposition, with biographical missionary sketches from the past to sober, search, challenge, convict, awaken, and edify pastors and churches to return World Missions to God’s Word in its proper context with its proper application reaching its proper goal. I am so grateful for this work!

And I am convinced that it will be the gold standard on World Missions for many years to come. May the Triune God bless it for the spread of His fame to the nations at large!

**—Kurt M. Smith**  
**Pastor, Providence Reformed Baptist Church**  
**Remlap, AL**  
**Author of *A Pastor in Revival,***  
***Thundering the Word, and Piety, Passion, Paradox***

The life that energizes our missionary labor is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and the foundation of our mission is his sovereignty over all things (Matt. 28:18-20). This book, *Reforming World Missions*, seeks to build our worldwide evangelistic mission directly on the unshakable rock of that sovereignty--both the sovereign authority of Christ’s Word and the sovereign power of his saving grace. Its authors write out of a deep commitment to Reformed Baptist doctrine as stated in the 1689 Confession, and those who hold the same confessional stance will rejoice in what they say. However, anyone who loves the sovereign Christ and who shares in his love for lost sinners will find much help in this book, and I commend it to your reading.

**—Paul Smalley**  
**Research assistant to Dr. Joel Beeke**  
**Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary**  
**Elder, Grace Immanuel Reformed Baptist Church**  
**Grand Rapids, MI**

**REFORMING  
WORLD  
MISSIONS**



# REFORMING WORLD MISSIONS

---

RECOVERING A BIBLICAL AND  
CONFESSIONAL MISSIOLOGY

---

JERRY SLATE JR. | STEVE MARTIN  
JOHN MILLER | DAVID VINSON



**FOUNDERS  
PRESS**

## **Reforming World Missions**

Recovering a Biblical & Confessional Missiology

© 2026 Jerry Slate Jr., Steve Martin, John Miller, and David Vinson

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Published by Founders Press

Founders Press is the publishing ministry of Founders Ministries

P.O. Box 150931 • Cape Coral, FL • 33915 Phone: (888) 525-1689

Electronic Mail: [officeadmin@founders.org](mailto:officeadmin@founders.org) Website: [www.founders.org](http://www.founders.org) Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-965810-85-9 (Hardcover)

ISBN: 978-1-965810-86-6 (eBook)

ISBN: 978-1-965810-87-3 (Audiobook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025948152

Scripture citations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture citations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

Scripture citations marked KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible. Public Domain.

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
-------------------	---

## **Part 1:**

### **Reforming the Theology of World Missions**

1. Missiology and the Perfections of God—Jerry Slate Jr.....	17
2. Missiology and Redemption Appointed: The Pactum Salutis—Jerry Slate Jr.....	33
3. Missiology and Redemption Accomplished: The Historia Salutis—Jerry Slate Jr.....	47
4. Missiology and Redemption Applied: The Ordo Salutis —Jerry Slate Jr. ....	83
5. Missiology and the Great Commission—Jerry Slate Jr.....	113
6. Missiology and True Conversion—Jerry Slate Jr. ....	141
7. Missiology and True Churches—Jerry Slate Jr.....	171
8. Missiology and the Regulative Principle of the Church —Jerry Slate Jr. ....	201

## **Part 2:**

### **Reforming the Practice of World Missions**

9. Lessons From the First New Testament Missionaries —Jerry Slate Jr. ....	241
---	-----

10. The Great Omission: Personal Evangelism—Steve Martin ..... 269

11. The Calling of the Missionary—John Miller..... 281

12. The Missionary’s Self-Watch—Jerry Slate Jr. .... 295

13. Holding the Ropes for Missionaries—Jerry Slate Jr..... 321

14. Holding the Ropes Financially—David Vinson ..... 341

15. Biblical Financial Priorities for Small Churches  
and/or Church Plants—David Vinson..... 369

16. Taking Care of a Church’s Indigenous Pastor—David  
Vinson ..... 383

**Part 3:  
Remembering the History of World Missions**

17. William Carey and the Greatest Generation—Jerry Slate Jr... 403

18. Faithfully Holding the Ropes: The Life and Ministry  
of Samuel Pearce (1766–1799)—Jerry Slate Jr. .... 427

19. Lessons from the Life of Adoniram Judson (1788–1850)  
—David Vinson..... 457

Appendices:

Full Subscription Defined and Clarified..... 515

Examination Guidelines for Missionary Candidates ..... 533

Using Secular Management Tools for Launching a Holy  
Mission ..... 559

Bibliography

On Becoming “Fishers of Men” ..... 573

On World Missions ..... 575

About the Authors ..... 577

Scripture Index..... 579

# Introduction

*Jerry Slate Jr.*

The purpose of this book is to call local churches to reclaim their central role in obeying our Lord's Great Commission. While parachurch mission agencies often serve a vital place in helping to fulfill Christ's global cause, they can never replace the church. Our central thesis in this book is the following:

*The local church must serve as the sending agency for missionaries and missionary assistants. Missionaries must be elder-qualified men who are sent to preach the gospel cross-culturally and to plant indigenous churches that become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Missionary assistants are godly men and women who serve in supporting roles, enabling the church planters to devote themselves to prayer, the Word of God, and to Culture and Language Acquisition (CLA). But if the local church is to serve as the sending agency, or to effectively "hold the ropes" for missionaries sent by other churches, its officers and members must be equipped with a biblically & confessionally robust missiology.*

The volume you are holding in your hands is written out of deep love for Christ's global cause. The authors are thankful for so many wonderful things that God is doing through solid missionary labors all around the world. And it is because we love missions that we are issuing a humble plea for sending churches and missionaries to recover the old paths taught in the Bible and so clearly articulated in our protestant confessions (cf. Jer. 6:16; Jude 3–4). We believe that what is needed in today's missions is nothing short of a modern reformation, and we are encouraged by many hopeful signs that such a reformation may be just over the horizon.

In his helpful work, *Mission Affirmed: Recovering the Missionary Motivation of Paul*, veteran missionary Elliot Clark warns, “I’m deeply concerned that much of evangelical Christian missions is a straw house built on a sandy shore.”<sup>1</sup> We share Clark’s concern that much being advocated in the modern missionary enterprise is built of wood, hay, and stubble and will not survive the scrutiny of the Lord Jesus when we stand before Him on the Day of Judgment (1 Cor. 3:12–13). It has been said that “American Christianity is three thousand miles wide and only one inch deep,” and sadly it is this watered-down version of the faith that is often exported to the mission field.

The spiritual decline of British and American Christendom has been observed by many spiritual leaders for quite some time. What Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) referred to as “Christianity on the downgrade” in England at the end of the nineteenth century is still with the broader English-speaking world in these opening decades of the twenty-first. Whenever the church sends missionaries to a foreign field, it reproduces itself in that culture, whether for good or for ill. In the year 1960, A.W. Tozer (1897–1963) published these scathing words:

The task of the church is twofold: to spread Christianity throughout the world and to make sure that the Christianity she spreads is the pure New Testament kind. . . . Christianity will always reproduce itself after its kind. A worldly-minded, unspiritual church, when she crosses the ocean to give her witness to peoples of other tongues and other cultures, is sure to bring forth on other shores a Christianity much like her own. Not the naked Word only but the character of the witness determines the quality of the convert. The church can do no more than transplant herself. What she is in one land she will be in another. A crab apple does not become a Grimes Golden by being carried from one country to another. God has written His law deep into all life; everything must bring forth after its kind. The popular notion that the first obligation of the church is to spread the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth is false. *Her first obligation is to be spiritually worthy to spread it.* . . . To spread an effete, degenerate brand of Christianity to pagan lands is not to fulfill the commandment of Christ or discharge our obligation to the heathen. These terrible words of Jesus haunt my soul: “Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child

---

1. Elliot Clark, *Mission Affirmed: Recovering the Missionary Motivation of Paul* (Crossway, 2022), 25.

of hell than yourselves.” . . . The evangelical wing of the church has in recent years become world-regarding to a remarkable degree. Within the last twenty years evangelical missionary activity on foreign fields has been stepped up tremendously. But there is in the whole thing one dangerous weakness. That weakness is the naïve assumption that we have only to reach the last tribe with our brand of Christianity and the world has been evangelized. This is an assumption that we dare not make. Evangelical Christianity is now tragically below the New Testament standard. Worldliness is an accepted part of our way of life. Our religious mood is social instead of spiritual. We have lost the art of worship. We are not producing saints. Our models are successful businessmen, celebrated athletes and theatrical personalities. We carry on our religious activities after the methods of the modern advertiser. Our homes have been turned into theaters. Our literature is shallow and our hymnody borders on sacrilege. And scarcely anyone appears to care. We must have a better kind of Christian soon or within another half century we may have no true Christianity at all. Increased numbers of demi-Christians is not enough. We must have a reformation.<sup>2</sup>

It has been argued (successfully, in our opinion) that much of the bitter fruit we are reaping in modern times was sown into the evangelical consciousness by the unorthodox ministry of Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875). As a young man, Finney had already become a popular preacher when he was examined by a Presbyterian ordination council in March of 1824. Finney was asked if he subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith as an accurate and authoritative summary of Scripture’s teaching. Finney said of this:

In the course of my examination they avoided asking any such questions as would naturally bring my views into collision with theirs. When they examined me, they voted unanimously to license me to preach. Unexpectedly to myself they asked me if I received the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church. I had not examined it—that is, the large work containing the catechism and confession. This had made no part of my study. I replied that I received it for substance of doctrine, so far as I understood it.<sup>3</sup>

---

2. A.W. Tozer, *Of God and Men* (Christian Publications, 1960), 34–37, emphasis in original.

3. Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Revivals in Religion: Published as an Autobiography*, (A.S. Barnes & Company, 1876; repr. as *Autobiography of Charles Finney* by Christian Classics Treasury [n.p., Kindle Edition, 2011]), 742.

This does not speak well of Finney's ordination council nor of him. For veteran ministers to deliberately avoid asking difficult questions of a ministerial candidate is irresponsible, and for Finney to claim he "received" a confession of faith he had never even read reveals a gross lack of integrity. His subsequent ministry would prove just how far afield his theology was from that of the seventeenth century Westminster divines.

Finney popularized novel methodologies through his evangelistic campaigns that would have been unrecognizable to our Protestant forefathers of previous generations. He focused upon rapid results and quickly documented the numbers of people who made professions of faith at his evangelistic rallies. His methodology was not accidental; it was a consistent application of his Arminian/Pelagian theology.<sup>4</sup> Finney denied the doctrine of original sin, that Adam's first act of disobedience is imputed to all his posterity, going so far as to call imputation "theological fiction."<sup>5</sup> He further denied that men are totally depraved by their very nature and therefore must be regenerated by the sovereign grace of God.<sup>6</sup> Consistent with this logic, he asserted that the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ was not a penal substitutionary atonement. He did not believe that God imputed the sins of God's people to Christ upon the cross nor that He imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to sinners the moment they believe in His name. In his *Systematic Theology*, Finney went so far as to say that "representing the atonement as the ground of the sinner's justification has been a sad occasion of stumbling to many."<sup>7</sup> He instead operated upon the belief that all that is necessary for conversion is to clench the decision of a sinner's free will by any means necessary. This led him to experiment with extrabiblical methodologies to obtain the desired results. Finney wrote that "the success of any measure designed to promote a revival of religion, demonstrates its wisdom. . . . When the blessing evidently follows the introduction of the *measure itself*, the proof is unanswerable, that the measure is wise."<sup>8</sup> In other words, according to Finney, *the ends justify the means*. If a particular method seems to obtain the desired result, it must have God's approval. It is a matter of historic irony that

---

4. Iain H. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Banner of Truth, 1994), 244–50.

5. Finney, *Autobiography*, 823.

6. John F. MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Crossway, 1993), 231–32.

7. Charles G. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1878; repr. 1994), 363.

8. Charles G. Finney, *Revivals of Religion* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 211, quoted in MacArthur, *Ashamed*, 233, emphasis in original.

Finney chose to call these pragmatic novelties his “new measures.” I say ironic because his “new measures” were very much a departure from the “old paths.”

Even in his own generation the places where Finney preached his “revivals” became known as the “burned-over districts.” Pastors reported that before Finney came and preached in their cities, they would regularly see sinners coming to Christ, being baptized, and added to the church. But after he came, the number of conversions they saw plummeted drastically; it was as if Finney’s hearers had been immunized against the gospel itself. Very few of the thousands who had supposedly been converted to Christ under Finney’s preaching ever became members of sound local churches and continued in the faith.<sup>9</sup> But because he reported big results and mass conversions from his ministry, those who critiqued him were frequently denounced as resisting the Holy Spirit,<sup>10</sup> and his new measures were eagerly adopted by pastors and local churches who desired to replicate the same results in their own ministries. What had been *novel* in Finney’s ministry quickly became *normative* in North American evangelical culture.<sup>11</sup> Dr. John MacArthur (1939–2025) helpfully summarizes the results: “Finney’s most enduring and far-reaching influence, unfortunately, is not from multitudes of souls saved or sinners reached with the gospel. Those effects, it seems, were almost wholly superficial, often vanishing as soon as Finney left town. Finney’s real legacy is the disastrous impact he had on American evangelical theology and evangelistic methodology. The church in our generation is still seething with the leaven Finney introduced, and modern evangelical pragmatism is proof of that.”<sup>12</sup>

Much that is attempted in the name of Christian missions today is deliberately atheological and the methodologies employed to reach the lost are often informed more by pragmatism than by Scripture. As North American Christians, we have often exported the “ends justify the means” mentality of Finney and the modern church growth movement to the mission field with devastating results. In their short but pungent work, *Missions by the Book*, Chad Vegas and Alex Kocman summarize the problem this way:

There is a crisis in evangelical missions. A great gulf is fixed between the realm of theology and the world of missions. On the one side of the rift, those who most love theology fall prey far too easily to

---

9. MacArthur, *Ashamed*, 233–34.

10. Murray, *Revival*, 241.

11. Murray, *Revival*, 237.

12. MacArthur, *Ashamed*, 235.

pharisaism, intellectualism, and apathy, keeping them from the front lines of missions. . . . On the other side of the rift, many of the most adventurous, risk-taking mission workers are trained to check their theology at the door of their sending organization and learn a host of man-centered ministry tactics that stem from cultural relativism. These missionaries are told that the same gospel-centered, doctrine-rich teaching that builds faithful churches in the West won't work elsewhere in the world and that some new and different insight from sociology is needed in non-Western cultures. When we fail to savor and apply our theology, a lack of zeal for missions is never far off. Simultaneously, those most zealous for missions often look on historical theological tradition with suspicion. In short, bad theology leads to bad missions, and bad missions spreads more bad theology. . . . Astute observers often recognize the dangers of pragmatism in a domestic ministry context, yet those same observers miss it entirely when it manifests on the mission field. For a variety of reasons, we seem to believe that overseas missions, particularly in difficult places, is so mysterious and extraordinary that its methods thereby fall outside our ability to critique.<sup>13</sup>

Elliot Clark agrees: "One of the strangest axioms I've heard from missionaries over the years is 'you can't argue with results.' If something works, don't question it. When a ministry or a methodology is bringing people to Jesus and bearing fruit, then it's clearly good and from God. Consequently, growth and reproduction aren't simply understood as the ultimate goal of missions; they're now the standard by which ministries are evaluated and new strategies are developed."<sup>14</sup>

The leaven introduced by Finney's new measures has spread like cancer, and the modern church is exporting it to unreached ethno-linguistic groups. There are even popular modern missiologists who are openly denying or at the very least diminishing the importance of the doctrine of Christ's penal substitution, just as Finney did, specifically in honor-shame cultures.<sup>15</sup>

---

13. Chad Vegas and Alex Kocman, *Missions by the Book: How Theology and Missions Walk Together* (Founders Press, 2021), 2, 4.

14. Clark, *Mission Affirmed*, 126.

15. I am indebted to Pastor Aubrey Sequeira for this insight. See his sermon, "Emptying the Cross of Its Power: Honor/Shame and the Gospel of Christ" preached July 26, 2023, which can be viewed at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-L\\_Vr2CQ1U&t=995s&ab\\_channel=RadiusInternational](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-L_Vr2CQ1U&t=995s&ab_channel=RadiusInternational).

Some examples cited by Pastor Sequeira of those who minimize or deny penal substitutionary atonement include Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New*

The Bible is clear that God’s work must be done in God’s way if we desire to have God’s blessing upon our efforts. Our methodology must be firmly tethered to sound theology; orthodoxy must always inform orthopraxy. God is not pleased with every effort to reach the lost and plant local churches, even in a cross-cultural context. To again quote Elliot Clark, “Not all sacrifices receive God’s acceptance. Divine commendation is not the birthright of every missionary.”<sup>16</sup> The world’s greatest missionary, the Apostle Paul, agrees:

Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:8–15).<sup>17</sup>

There seems to be a mindset prevalent in today’s missions that we must hastily “win people for Jesus,” leaving a Bible with them and moving on quickly to the next unreached people group, hoping against hope that the new converts we have left behind us will discern what they are supposed to do next in their Christian pilgrimage. Systematic theology and doctrinal concerns are frequently considered irrelevant and unnecessarily divisive, not to mention that they just slow things down. Why not focus exclusively upon evangelism and get as many unreached people groups as possible to “make decisions for Jesus” and trust that the Holy Spirit will teach novices in the faith how to establish solid local churches on their own?<sup>18</sup> Among the many problems with this type of meth-

---

*Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (IVP Academic, 2011); Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (Tim & 275, 2014); Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016); Brad Vaughn, *The Cross in Context: Reconsidering Biblical Metaphors for Atonement* (IVP Academic, 2022).

16. Clark, *Mission Affirmed*, 57.

17. Unless otherwise noted in this introduction, Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright ©1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

18. I am referring specifically to “Church Planting Movements (CPM)” and “Disciple Making Movements (DMM).” For two excellent critiques of these modern trends the reader is referred to Chad Vegas, *A Brief Guide to DMM: Defining and Evaluating the Ideas Impacting Missions Today*

odology is that both “conversion” and what constitutes a “church” must be defined by the lowest possible common denominator. These approaches have gained traction by the fact that many missiological courses used to equip future missionaries for cross-cultural labors are grounded in little, if any, solid theology. Conversely, solid seminaries that teach good theology too often relegate missiology to the level of a few optional elective courses that only those who are interested in missions take, rather than teaching missiology as an integrated whole alongside the other theological disciplines.

The problems with such mindsets are numerous, and the consequences are devastating for never-dying souls. First, the evangelization of the unconverted is anything but atheological. Biblical evangelism is filled with divisive, confrontational, and controversy-inducing doctrine. Evangelistic labor requires us to tell sinners about who God is (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and what He is like (Acts 17:22–31). We must speak to men about who they are—fallen sinners who have violated God’s law more times than they can remember or count and who are by nature objects of His wrath (Eph. 2:1–3). This means we must know how to use the Ten Commandments to show sinners their need for the Savior (Matt. 5:17–48; Mark 10:17–22). We must tell them of the person and work of Jesus Christ, that He is both God and man, that He voluntarily laid down His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners, and that God raised Him from the dead three days later (Isa. 53; 2 Cor. 5:17). Men must be confronted with the truth that Jesus is not merely one way to God nor the best of several other inferior ways. He is the *only* way to God (John 10:7–8; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). There is only one true religion, and all man-made religions, without exception, are acts of treason against the God who created them (Rom. 1:20–23). Indeed, it is not even possible to labor in evangelism without getting into eschatology (the doctrine of last things), for to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, one must articulate the much-hated doctrines of the future return of Jesus Christ, the judgment of all men from all nations before His throne, and the future eternal state of all men in either heaven or hell (Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 20:11–15). In the gospel, rebels are called to repent of their sins and to place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, rejecting all confidence in their own works to save them (Eph. 2:8–10). The light of the gospel therefore exposes men’s love of sin as well as their misplaced confidence in their own self-righteousness (Rom. 10:1–4). It humbles men to the dust and, frequently, sinners resent this

---

(Radius International, 2018) and Matt Rhodes, *No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions* (Crossway, 2022).

message and respond by persecuting and rejecting the messengers. It is sometimes claimed that “doctrine divides, but the gospel unites.” Obviously, those who make such naive statements do not recognize that the gospel message is filled with rich theological content that is offensive to this fallen world, for it divides the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31–46). But praise God that as we proclaim these hard truths, we also have the joy of preaching a living Christ who is able and willing to save anyone and everyone who comes to God through Him (Matt. 11:25–30; John 3:16; 6:37; Heb. 7:25). For the sinful man or woman who has become convinced of their own guiltiness by the Holy Spirit, this is indeed the very best of good news!

Second, while obedience to the Great Commission begins with evangelism, it does not end there. The Lord commands us to make disciples, baptize disciples, and teach disciples (Matt. 28:18–20). As will be demonstrated in a later chapter, this implicitly requires us to plant local churches in other cultures that are sound in both doctrine and practice—churches that are self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.<sup>19</sup> This being the case, church-planting missionaries must be men who are endowed with the God-given desire, graces, and gifts necessary to serve as church planters in a pastoral role (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–11). Missionaries are not only to be concerned with the conversion of the lost but also with the sanctification of the saved. They must be men who are able to equip indigenous, faithful men to serve in the gospel ministry so that the local churches they plant can be self-governed by a plurality of biblically qualified elders (2 Tim. 2:2). But how can a church-planting missionary equip other men to serve as pastors in another culture if he is not qualified to serve as a pastor himself nor has any pastoral tenure in his own homeland?

A third major problem with an atheological mindset in the work of world missions is that it leaves precious souls open to the leaven of false doctrine, the deceptions of false teachers and false prophets, and the snares of the pseudo-Christian cults. Growth in Christian maturity requires every Christian to become anchored in sound theology “that we should no longer be children, tossed to-and-fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,

---

19. There is some debate as to who originally articulated the “Three-Self Principle of Church Planting.” Some claim it was Anglican missiologist Henry Venn (1796–1873). Others cite his contemporary, Rufus Anderson (1796–1880), who served on the Congregationalists’ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Regardless of who first articulated it, the concept was further popularized by Presbyterian missionary John Nevius (1829–1893) and Anglican missionary Roland Allen (1868–1947).

by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 4:14).

A case in point is the People’s Republic of China. China boasts the fastest growing church in the world, and while the Lord is certainly doing some marvelous things in this nation,<sup>20</sup> all that glitters is not gold. It is estimated that 10,000 local Chinese churches are lost each year to the pseudo-Christian cults, and that 80 percent of the Chinese house churches are pastored, in disobedience to God’s word, by women (1 Tim. 2:12–15).<sup>21</sup> Many Chinese Christians have imbibed a heresy known as “Eastern Lightning,” the belief that Jesus has physically returned to the earth in the form of a woman.<sup>22</sup> Why is this happening? It is because far too many Chinese Christians do not have biblically qualified shepherds of souls to teach them the faith that has been “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). It is imperative, therefore, that our missiology should be informed by robust biblical and systematic theology and that the missionaries we are sending believe and teach sound doctrine and live it out experientially.

The road to recovering a biblically informed missiology must begin with a settled commitment to the plenary verbal inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of the sixty-six books of the Bible as given in the original autographs. But we must also be committed to the *sufficiency* of Holy Scripture. The Bible is sufficient for the evangelization of sinners, for it is “able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). But the Bible is also sufficient to equip “the man of God” (a technical term for gospel ministers, whether in a domestic or cross-cultural context) to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work,” including the good work of world missions (2 Tim. 3:16–17). We agree with the central thesis of Chad Vegas and Alex Kocman’s work, *Missions by the Book*:

Methods are not a matter of liberty but fall under the express prescriptions of Scripture. At root, this thesis is simply an application of what theologians have named the *regulative principle of worship* to the church’s missionary task. . . . We hold, as a rule, that Scripture is to regulate (not merely norm) the practice of the church and that this rule applies to missions as much as it does to worship. . . . The

---

20. For more information on the Lord’s work in China, see Bob Davey, *The Power to Save: A History of the Gospel in China* (EP Books, 2011) and Bruce P. Baugus, ed., *China’s Reforming Churches: Mission, Polity, and Ministry in the Next Christendom* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

21. M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Moody, 2010), 44, 60.

22. Davey, *The Power to Save*, 291–92.

Word of God, alone and in its entirety, is sufficient to equip goers and senders for the entire missionary endeavor. We must simply let our faith and practice walk together.<sup>23</sup>

Supplemental to our commitment to the authority of God's Word, there is a great need to recover the wisdom of robust creedal and confessional subscription on the mission field. In our modern atheological milieu, it comes as no surprise that many modern cross-cultural ministers are anti-creedal and anti-confessional in their orientation. The historic creeds and confessions are often viewed as extrabiblical Western impositions upon other people groups that will prevent them from developing a truly indigenous expression of the Christian faith within their own cultural context. Dr. David Garrison, for instance, says in his book *Church Planting Movements* that "those who have successfully navigated a Church Planting Movement are unanimous in their conviction that 'it must be God's word that is authoritative for the new believers and the emerging church not the wisdom of the missionary nor some foreign creed nor even the local church authorities.'"<sup>24</sup> In their popular work, *Contagious Disciple Making*, David Watson and Paul Watson go even further. Consider several quotes taken directly from their book:

God taught me [David], through many failures, that I had to focus on making disciples of Christ, not followers of my church or denomination. He also taught me that I needed to teach these disciples to obey the commands of Jesus, not my church/denominational doctrines or traditions. This is what led to the break-through that resulted in more than eighty thousand churches among a people considered unreachable. . . . We do our best NOT to transfer our own Christian culture, denominational terms, or doctrine into the new work. . . . The DMM [i.e., Disciple Making Movements] is about doing what was done in the first century—giving the Gospel to a people and teaching them to obey it; seeing them become faithful disciples of Christ; leaving them to struggle in obeying the Word of God in their own context and history; and allowing them to develop their own unique practices for worship, leadership, and governance within the confines of biblical obedience. When institutions that promote a particular brand of Christianity forget their differences and get back to planting the

---

23. Vegas and Kocman, *Missions*, 5, 7, emphasis in original.

24. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (WIGTake Resources, 2004), 183, underline in original.

Gospel instead of their doctrines, we may have a chance to complete the Great Commission.<sup>25</sup>

Our creeds and confessions admittedly were not given by inspiration of God, nor do they have infallibility and inerrancy on their side. They do not share equal authority with the written Word of God. But neither do they, contrary to modern claims, undermine the sufficiency of the Bible. On the contrary, it is typically those who are most devoted to robust confessional subscription that champion the sufficiency of Scripture with the greatest consistency. What the creeds and confessions do reflect is *the illumination of the Holy Spirit*. As He promised, Jesus Christ has been with His church every moment of every day for the past two millennia through the Person of His Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:20; John 14:16–18). For two thousand years the ascended Christ has been giving gifts to His church in the form of pastors, teachers, and theologians (Eph. 4:7–16). As heretics and false teachers have arisen to trouble the church in every age, godly men have tested their novel doctrines by the light of Holy Scripture in the spirit of the Bereans and have found them wanting (Acts 17:11–12). They then committed their findings to paper in the form of affirmations of biblical truth and denials of heretical departures from it. Thus, the great ecumenical creeds such as those produced in Nicaea and Chalcedon were forged in the fires of controversy as the Holy Spirit illuminated His people to combat heresies that threatened the church in various ages. The Protestant confessions of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries are consensus documents that build upon what had gone before. The seventeenth century Westminster and Second London Baptist Confessions of Faith (hereafter referred to as WCF and 2LCF respectively), for instance, neither reject nor revise the robust Trinitarianism and Christology so clearly articulated in the Nicene Creed (NC), the Chalcedon Definition (CD), and the Athanasian Creed (AC). Instead, they *retrieve* and *reassert* the substance of them in their own doctrinal affirmations. Dr. Carl Trueman, who as a Presbyterian minister fully subscribes to the Westminster Confession of Faith, helpfully explains, “I believe the statements in the Westminster Standards are a summary of Scripture’s teaching, not that I believe the Westminster Standards to represent teaching supplemental to Scripture, or independent of it. Rather, they summarize what is already there in Scripture itself.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, confessions of faith serve as doctrinal standards subordinate to the Bible that

---

25. David L. Watson and Paul D. Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* (Thomas Nelson, 2014), 4, 20, 26.

26. Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Crossway, 2012), 14.

nevertheless represent authoritative statements of one's interpretation of the Bible's teaching.

The modern church can only disregard the wisdom of our forefathers to the peril of our own souls and of those we teach. To do so is to dishonor the illuminating work of the Spirit throughout the ages in favor of our own novel, private interpretations of the Scriptures. E.D. Burns summarizes the issues well:

One of the best ways to safeguard against excessive contextualization or parochial contemporary eisegesis is to consider the sound patterns of gospel doctrine over the centuries. Consider the biblically faithful systems of gospel teaching that the Holy Spirit has illumined to the church for the last two thousand years. ***Essentially, this is the practice of reading the Bible alongside the witness of the historic, universal church for the sake of the global church.*** . . . Creeds and confessions serve as banks of a river to guide orthodoxy and prevent a swollen delta of heterodoxy. They also safeguard against the novelties of contextual theology and self-theologizing in a historical vacuum and a contemporary myopia. They ensure a timelessness and durability of the apostolic faith once for all passed down to the saints. Such creedal and confessional statements doctrinally prioritize Scripture's interpretations for all peoples and epochs. They create a sense of transcendent legacy and familial belonging for the global church.<sup>27</sup>

John Paton (1824–1907), the famous Presbyterian missionary to the New Hebrides, subscribed to the Westminster Standards. One of his biographers makes the astute observation that “Paton lived through the period when modernism was gaining its crippling hold upon the church, but he made no concessions to it. He had been grounded in the doctrine of the Westminster Shorter Catechism; this was what he taught his people in Glasgow and Aniwa, and this was what he believed to the end. . . . There is no trace of a developing theology in Paton's life. He was born into a home and church environment of godly and living orthodoxy, and his early faith, though deepened and matured, never altered.”<sup>28</sup> Paton's robust commitment to confessional orthodoxy was a strength, not a weakness, as he evangelized and planted local churches amidst a cannibalistic society!

---

27. E.D. Burns, *Ancient Gospel, Brave New World: Jesus Still Saves Sinners in Cultures of Shame, Fear, Bondage, and Weakness* (Founders Press, 2021) 166, 172, emphasis added.

28. John D. Legg, “John G. Paton: Missionary of the Cross (New Hebrides),” *Five Pioneer Missionaries* (Banner of Truth, 1965), 343–44.

The four authors of this volume each affirm their belief in the inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. All four also fully/strictly subscribe to the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1677/89) as an authoritative summary of their interpretation of the Bible's teaching. Three of the authors (Steve Martin, John Miller, and Jerry Slate) have served or are currently serving as pastors of local churches and have more than seventy years of combined pastoral experience. All three have been actively involved in the work and promotion of world missions in the confessional Reformed Baptist world. The fourth author, David Vinson, has been a faithful Christian and churchman for almost four decades, first under the ministry of Pastor Martin and in more recent years under Pastor Slate. As the reader will see in the chapters he has contributed, David brings the wisdom of a seasoned veteran Christian to the subjects he addresses.

This book is laid out in three sections. In part 1, we survey some of the rich biblical and confessional theology upon which sound missional practice is built. In part 2, we explore how this theology ought to be experientially fleshed out as we strive to obey our Lord's Great Commission. The third and final section consists of biographical vignettes of three Baptists in church history who made significant contributions to the cause of world missions: William Carey, Samuel Pearce, and Adoniram Judson.

It is our prayer that God will be pleased to use our humble book as something of a roadmap for recovering sound missiological doctrine and practice for this and future generations. We long for the Lord of the harvest to send out more biblically qualified laborers into His harvest field from sound local churches (Matt. 9:37–38) who will preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26–27), that sinners might be soundly converted and organized into healthy, Spirit-filled churches until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters fill the sea (Hab. 2:14). May it be so.

Part 1:  
Reforming the Theology  
of World Missions



# Chapter 1

## Missiology and the Perfections of God

*Jerry Slate Jr.*

In the year 1961, A.W. Tozer published what would prove to be his final book, a reverent study on the perfections of God titled *The Knowledge of the Holy*. In his preface Tozer laments that the church of his day had forgotten who its God is. “The message of this book does not grow out of these times,” he wrote, “but it is appropriate to them. It is called forth by a condition which has existed in the Church for some years and is steadily growing worse. I refer to the loss of the concept of majesty from the popular religious mind. The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men. This she has done not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge; and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic.” He then makes the astute observation that “this loss of the concept of majesty has come just when the forces of religion are making dramatic gains and the churches are more prosperous than at any time within the past several hundred years. But the alarming thing is that our gains are mostly external and our losses wholly internal; and since is the *quality* of our religion that is affected by internal conditions, ***it may be that our supposed gains are but losses spread over a wider field.***” (emphasis added)<sup>1</sup>

A sound understanding of who God has revealed Himself to be, as opposed to how idolatrous sinners imagine Him to be, is essential to our theology, our worship, and our morality. To again quote Tozer, “A right conception of God

---

1. A.W. Tozer, preface to *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Harper & Row, 1961), vii.

is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse.”<sup>2</sup> It is therefore most appropriate that we begin our survey of the theology of world missions by considering theology proper, the doctrine of God, for God Himself is *the source, the content, and the goal* of world missions.

### Motivation: God is the Source of Missions

In the opening of his classic book, *A Vision for Missions*, Tom Wells (1933–2019) describes a conversation he once had with a veteran missionary to Thailand:

I asked her why she had stayed all these years. Without hesitation she said, “God’s command. If it wasn’t for God’s command I wouldn’t be there.” Some may think that that answer sounds cold and hard. The stars were gone from this woman’s eyes. She had not lost her ideals, only her idealism. Neither response to human need nor the “spirit of adventure” could have kept her at her post. Yet she had an answer. She fell back on God’s direction. She was under orders, so she stayed. God had commanded her. And she is not alone in this answer. Countless others would say the same thing. “Why am I a missionary? I am not my own. I belong to Another. I am under orders. I have God’s command!”<sup>3</sup>

Wells speaks of another missionary who said in a similar vein, “A need will not keep you on the mission field. People will rebuke and repel you.”<sup>4</sup> Certainly love for lost sinners should compel us to labor in personal evangelism and to be actively involved in the cause of world missions. The apostle Paul said of himself, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:1–3).<sup>5</sup> Paul knew that he could never be accursed from Christ, for in the previous verses he makes it clear that nothing can sever God’s people from His love (Rom. 8:38–39). But it seems that Paul is saying *if* it were possible for him to be severed from Christ and *if*

2. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 2.

3. Tom Wells, *A Vision for Missions* (Banner of Truth, 1985), 7–8.

4. Wells, *A Vision for Missions*, 7.

5. Unless otherwise noted, in this chapter all Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright ©1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

being severed from Christ would mean that God would graft some of his fellow countrymen into Christ in his place, he would wish it upon himself. Paul's love for his fellow Hebrews was so intense that he desired their eternal salvation even above his own. How convicting his example is to our own often apathetic hearts!

Yet, as powerful a motivation as love for our fellow man should be, there is a divine priority given to us in the first and second greatest commandments that must never be forgotten (Matt. 22:34–40). Our love for God Himself, which exists only because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), must far exceed even our compassion for lost sinners. We must be prepared to make the glories of His wonderful name known, even if men do not receive our message.

Serving in the gospel ministry, whether in a domestic or international context, requires a man to become a student of fallen human nature. Any pastor who has shepherded souls for any significant length of time can testify that he and his family have had deep and painful wounds inflicted upon their hearts not only by the world but, far too often, by professing Christians. Once-loyal friends will abandon you. At times you will be criticized mercilessly and betrayed. Well-intentioned sheep will place unbiblical and unrealistic expectations upon you and your use of time. Your reputation will suffer much abuse from slanderous tongues. Obedience to Christ's commandments will require you to do hard things that will put both your reputation and your livelihood at risk. And yet the faithful minister must continually die to his own sense of self-preservation,<sup>6</sup> all the while guarding his heart against malice and bitterness, returning good for evil (Luke 6:27–36). But in our weaker moments, the temptation to quit is all too real. We cry out, "It just isn't worth it!" If we are being honest, we may even sometimes feel that God's people are not worth it, even though we know better (cf. 2 Tim. 2:10).

How much more intensely are these pressures felt on the mission field! Missionaries must make great sacrifices to leave behind everything they have ever known. The man, his wife, and their children are functionally severed from their extended families and lifelong friends as well as from the sweet fellowship of their sending church. They have left their own familiar culture to live in one that is completely alien to them, one to which they do not belong. The trauma of culture shock must be endured, as Michael Griffiths (1928–2022) summarizes: "All missionaries are subjected to initial culture shock: unfamiliar food and customs, a strange language, and no friends generate a sense of alienation and

---

6. I am indebted to a sermon preached by Paul Washer for this observation.

isolation. People may crack under pressure unless they have emotional resilience and adaptability. Fear of being alone, fear of strangers, fear of illness, and other fears, namable and nameless, may become magnified out of all proportion overseas.<sup>77</sup> Countless man-hours must be spent over the course of many years enduring the boring tedium of Culture and Language Acquisition (CLA) until the missionary has gained worldview-level fluency. These sacrifices, and so many more, are made to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to a people who have never heard of Him before. And yet most of the indigenous people the missionaries have suffered so much to reach couldn't care less! They are quite content to go on living in their sins and have no desire to be reconciled to this God whom they naturally hate and whose law they have habitually despised from birth. They are offended by the exclusive truth claims of the Christian faith and prefer the empty cisterns of their own man-made religions. Despite all the sacrifices the missionaries have made, they are frequently received with indifference at best or, at worst, with open hostility. It is in these very moments that we must remember that God's unchangeable, immutable love for us and our corresponding love for the Lord in return are the principal motivations of laboring for kingdom advancement.

Helen Roseveare (1925–2016) was a medical missionary to the African Republic of Congo. During her tenure she experienced firsthand the sufferings of what became known as the Simba Rebellion. On a Saturday evening in August of 1964, military soldiers invaded the African village where she lived. Two soldiers burst into her home, threw her onto the floor, and Roseveare lost some of her back teeth when one of the soldiers kicked her in the jaw. She was then brutally raped by the two men. After they had violated her, the men further humiliated Roseveare by tying her bruised and swollen body to a tree. They found a handwritten manuscript among her belongings that she had been working on for eleven long years, a journal detailing God's work among the Congolese people. The soldiers threw the irreplaceable pages upon the ground in front of her and lit them on fire. In that moment intense anger coursed through Helen's soul. Ever since she was a little girl, she had been careful to count the cost of any given course of action. Whenever she wrestled with a major decision, she would ask herself the question, "Is it worth it?" Now she was bound to a tree, humiliated beyond measure, watching as the flames turned her precious journal into ash. She angrily asked herself again, "Is it worth it? Is it really worth it? Eleven years of my life poured out in selfless service for the African people, and

---

7. Michael C. Griffiths, *You and God's Work Overseas* (InterVarsity Press, 1967), 12.

now this!” But she would later testify it was at this moment that she realized that for all her life she had been asking the wrong question. The question was not, “Is *it* worth it?” but “Is *He* worth it?”<sup>8</sup> And to ask the question, “Is the Lord Jesus worth it?” is to answer it. All the many sacrifices and hardships we must endure in this present age as we seek to know Christ and to make Him known are not worthy to be compared with the sufferings He endured on the cross to redeem our souls. The author of Hebrews had this in view when he wrote, “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12:3).

In March 2007 at the Shepherd’s Conference, Dr. John MacArthur told the story of a teenage girl who was at that time a sophomore at The Master’s University. She had been converted to Christ out of an Islamic background and though her father was a devout Muslim, he loved his daughter. She returned to her homeland during Christmas break. When she walked into her parents’ home, her father was not there, but her Islamic uncle was waiting for her inside. He asked her if it was true that she had converted to Christianity, and when she responded in the affirmative, he began to beat her, first with his fists and then with the leg of a chair. Thankfully, as she was beginning to lose consciousness, her father arrived and rescued her. He saw to it that she received medical attention and then put her on a plane back to California, warning her to never return home again because his extended family would kill her. When she arrived back in the States, Dr. MacArthur met with her, and he asked her, “What were you thinking while your uncle was doing this to you?” She responded without hesitation, “I was thinking, ‘My uncle has a religion he will kill for, and I have a Savior that I will die for.’”<sup>9</sup> This young woman, like Helen Roseveare before her, recognized that Jesus Christ is a treasure of immeasurable worth, even more valuable than life itself.

It is worth noting that in the pages of Holy Scripture, God frequently gave an exalted vision of Himself to His servants before calling them into the gospel ministry. Think of Moses (Ex. 3:1–4:17), Isaiah (Isa. 6:1–10), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1–3:27), Peter (Luke 5:1–11), and the greatest missionary of them all, Paul (Acts 9:1–19). In Paul’s case, the appearance of the risen, glorified Christ was a prelude to further revelations of the many things he would have to suffer for

---

8. Anita Mathias, “Helen Roseveare’s Great Questions—Is it worth it? Is Jesus Christ worth it?” *Anita Mathias, Dreaming Beneath the Spires* (blog), May 17, 2010, <https://anitamathias.com/2010/05/17/helen-roseveare-is-it-worth-it/>.

9. Ligon Duncan, “The Greatness of God in the Exaltation of Christ in Our Worship,” May 1, 2007, First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, <https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-greatness-of-god-in-the-exaltation-of-christ-in-our-worship/>.

His sake (Acts 9:15–16). The Holy Spirit seared these visions of the majesty of God deep into the souls of His messengers to equip them to endure hardship, *for He is a God worth suffering for, and if necessary, to die for*. This is why Paul could write many years later,

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:7–11)

We discover the same mindset in the original apostles. Before the betrayal and death of Jesus, they pledged to a man that they would sooner die than ever abandon Him, and yet when the moment of testing came, each one of them forsook Him and fled like cowards (Matt. 26:31–35, 56). Peter came to the very edge of apostasy by vehemently denying that he even knew the Lord (Matt. 26:69–75). But what a blessed change we observe in them after Jesus was raised from the dead and the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost! After being beaten by the Jewish religious leaders for preaching in the name of Jesus, we find them “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

The Lord no longer reveals Himself in dreams and visions as He did to the prophets and apostles (2LCF 1.1). With the completion of the canon of Holy Scripture, God has said all He intends to say until His Son returns to this earth. But through the Spirit’s illumination of His Holy written Word, you and I can, by faith, apprehend this same lofty view of God high and lifted up.

Before I leave the subject of motivation, I want to touch upon a specific perfection of God and its relationship to missions. The attribute I am referring to is *the self-sufficiency of God*. God is the self-existent One who does not depend upon anyone in heaven or on earth for anything. Paul expounded this truth on the top of Mars Hill when he said, “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, *as though He*

*needed anything*, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.” (Acts 17:24–25, emphasis added). The Lord does not need us for anything, but we need Him for everything! And while He is pleased to use His people to advance His kingdom, He does not *need* any of us. This fallen world needs us and our gospel, but God does not. Jesus was building His church long before we were born, and He will continue building it long after we are gone.

This truth is often overlooked by zealous ministers as they call for volunteers to engage in fervent missionary activity. Too frequently these passionate charges seem motivated not only by the legitimate spiritual needs of unreached people groups but also by the needs of a frustrated and apparently impotent god. A.W. Tozer expresses the problem this way:

We commonly represent [God] as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seeking help to carry out His benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world. . . . Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of Almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his hearers, not only for the heathen but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support. I fear that thousands of younger persons enter Christian service from no higher motive than to deliver God from the embarrassing situation His love has gotten Him into and His limited abilities seem unable to get Him out of. Add to this a certain degree of commendable idealism and a fair amount of compassion for the underprivileged and you have the true drive behind much Christian activity today.<sup>10</sup>

To speak of God as needing anything is to grossly misrepresent Him. The Almighty God of Holy Scripture is omnipotent; nothing is too difficult for Him (Gen. 18:14; Matt. 19:25–26). He does all that pleases Him, and no one can restrain His hand nor thwart His sovereign purposes (Ps. 115:3; Rom. 9:6–24). Rather than stifle our diligent labors for kingdom advancement, faith in God’s self-sufficiency should fuel it. To again quote Tozer:

Let us not imagine that the truth of the divine self-sufficiency will paralyze Christian activity. Rather it will stimulate all holy endeavor. This truth, while a needed rebuke to human self-confidence, will when viewed in its Biblical perspective lift from our minds the exhausting

---

10. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Harper & Row, 1961), 34.

load of mortality and encourage us to take the easy yoke of Christ and spend ourselves in Spirit-inspired toil for the honor of God and the good of mankind. For the blessed news is that the God who needs no one has in sovereign condescension [stooped] to work by and in and through His obedient children.<sup>11</sup>

But thinking rightly about God is not only the motivation and source of missions. He is also the *content* of missions.

### Proclamation: God is the Content of Missions

In his first epistle, the Apostle John makes an astonishing claim: “This is *the message* which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5, emphasis added). John is summarizing the entire message of Jesus’s earthly ministry with this one succinct statement. He is saying, as it were, that if he could distill all the parables and all the sermons he ever heard Jesus preach into one sentence, it would be, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” In other words, at the heart of Jesus’s earthly ministry was a burden to tell the world what God the Father is like. This echoes a parallel statement found in the first chapter of John’s gospel account: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). It is only in the light of who God is that men can know who they are. And this is precisely the application John makes of Jesus’s message in 1 John 1:6–7, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” By examining yourself according to the truth that God is light, you can discern whether you are a truly regenerate disciple of Jesus Christ or not. The light of God’s perfections enables us to distinguish between true and false conversion. John goes on to say that the central message preached by Jesus is also the central message preached by the apostles, for he writes, “This is the message we have heard from Him *and declare to you*” (emphasis added).

The central message preached by Jesus and His apostles must form the substance of our preaching as well. The task of world missions is to preach the nature of God to the world—to tell them what He is like. As God is proclaimed in all His glory, men are convicted of their sins and recognize their need for the

---

11. Tozer, *Knowledge*, 36.

only Savior God has provided. As God then converts sinners, they are enabled to worship Him not as they imagine Him to be but as He has revealed Himself to be.

This is exactly what we find Paul doing as he labored cross-culturally in Athens, Greece. The Scriptures say that his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was entirely given over to the worship of idols (Acts 17:16). Therefore, when he stood on the Areopagus, he opened his address by saying, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:22–23).

He then gives them a crash course in “Theology 101” by expounding the immutable perfections of God to them. Unlike the gods they had crafted with their own hands, God is the eternally uncreated One who created all things (v. 24). He is self-sufficient and so does not need anything (v. 25). He is sovereign and has ordained the exact number of days each person will live and where (v. 26). He is an omnipresent God whose presence fills every cubic inch of the material universe in which we live and move (vv. 27–28). He is a just God who has appointed a day when all men will be judged and the Man by whom they will be judged. But He is also a merciful God who has sent His Son, Jesus, whom He has raised from the dead (v. 31). Paul then exhorts these men, who for so long had lived in ignorance of the true and living God, to repent of their idolatry and turn to Him that they might escape the wrath that is to come (v. 30). Paul evangelized a biblically illiterate people by first explaining the perfections of God to them and contrasted the nature of the uncreated God with the false gods they had created with their own hands. From there he took them by the hand and led them straight to Jesus Christ. What is the task of modern missionaries but to do the same among the unreached?

The incomprehensible and immutable nature of the Triune God is neither a secondary nor a tertiary matter. It is of primary importance for all our doctrines and worship. It is the foundation upon which all sound theology is built, and errors concerning the perfections of God will ultimately contaminate the purity of the gospel we preach. That which was the central message of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles must be our central message as well.

It is imperative that this lofty vision of God be preached clearly and without compromise to the lost. Paul L. Davis helps us understand why in an online article titled “Global Missions and the Treason of Conversion”:

Is following Jesus inherently dangerous? Luke 14:27 says, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” Verses like this, though often quoted, raise challenging questions for missionaries. When Jesus urged his followers to count the cost of discipleship, what did he mean? Did he simply mean that following him involves significant commitment? Or was he implying something else? If Jesus meant the former, the warning almost seems a bit overblown. After all, we make difficult or expensive choices often. Buying a house, for instance, is costly. Choosing a spouse can be hard. Deciding on a college major is another big choice. To lump ones’ commitment to Christ in with these “hard” or “costly” choices seems trivial. But what if Jesus meant that conversion itself is dangerous by design? Throughout Scripture, when individuals convert, their communities often feel betrayed. To embrace the Triune God as Lord is to repudiate all other lords, identities, and systems. This decision, in the eyes of the world, amounts to treason. *Treason*. If true conversion is indeed a form of communal “treason,” this has inestimable implications for the missionary task.<sup>12</sup>

If Davis is right, and I believe that he is, then theology proper is essential to the missionary enterprise. If it is necessary for the church-planting missionary to have apprehended an exalted view of God’s majesty to endure hardship, it is also true that this same vision of God must be imparted to the lost if they are to be persuaded to forsake all and endure persecution to be reconciled to God through His only begotten Son. It is only the sinner who has glimpsed something of the inestimable worth of Jesus Christ who will sell all he or she has because they see Him as the “pearl of great price” (Matt. 13:45–46).

In the past decade or so, the Reformed and Calvinistic world has been embroiled in several heated theological controversies over the nature of God, ranging from such subjects as the eternal generation of God the Son (as opposed to the so-called *eternal functional subordination* [EFS] of the Son) and the doctrine of divine impassibility. These debates have been deeply painful and have caused significant divisions within denominations and associations of churches. Some have dismissed the issues at stake as trivial and unworthy of our attention and have asserted that we should stop debating and “just do evangelism and

---

12. Paul L. Davis, “Global Missions and the Treason of Conversion,” *For the Church*, December 30, 2021, <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/global-missions-and-the-treason-of-conversion/>, emphasis in original.

world missions.” But for the reasons stated above, the recovery of theology proper is not incidental to either evangelism or world missions. And while these controversies are admittedly unpleasant, I for one am thankful that the classical doctrine of God as confessed by the church for almost two millennia is being recovered by a new generation of theologians, pastors, and missionaries.<sup>13</sup> Iain Murray says, “Church history shows that all the great turning points in history have been times of controversy and there is good reason why that is the case. It is because every great advance of the kingdom of God takes place in conjunction with the recovery of biblical truth, and when the truth is known in its power opposition will not be absent. Thus, when the book of Acts tells us, ‘The word of God grew and multiplied,’ we go on to read that the Christians were seen as a ‘sect’ and ‘everywhere spoken against’” (Acts 28:22).<sup>14</sup>

Instead of placing an impediment in the pathway of evangelism and world missions, my prayer is that the Lord will use these controversies as a crucible to purify the gospel message as it is proclaimed among the unreached, resulting in purer worship as new converts utter the praises of our incomprehensible God. Indeed, it is our departure from the old paths that has impoverished our worship and ministries today.

So, the Triune God is not only the *source* of missions; He is also the *content* of missions. And this leads us to a third truth: God is the *goal* of missions.

### **Exaltation: God is the Goal of Missions**

John Piper wrote, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.”<sup>15</sup>

As I have already asserted, a central goal of all evangelistic and missionary activity is to see men, women, boys, and girls come to know Jesus Christ as

---

13. As helpful examples, the reader is referred to Stephen Charnock, *The Existence & Attributes of God: Updated and Unabridged*, 2 vols., ed. Mark Jones (Crossway, 2022); Mark Jones, *God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God* (Crossway, 2017); Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Baker Books, 2019); Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit* (Baker Books, 2021); James E. Dolezal, *All That Is In God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2017).

14. Iain H. Murray, *Evangelical Holiness and Other Addresses* (Banner of Truth, 2013), 112.

15. John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Baker Academic, 2010), 15.

their Lord and Savior, for “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). Yet as lofty and as desirable as this goal is, there is an even loftier one: *the glory of God*. The aim of all missionary activity is ultimately that:

the earth will be filled  
 With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD  
 As the waters cover the sea. (Hab. 2:14)

The chief end of missions is the same as the chief end of man: “To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”<sup>16</sup> As David cries out,

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!  
 Sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
 Sing to the LORD, bless His name;  
 Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.  
*Declare His glory among the nations,*  
 His wonders *among all peoples.* (Ps. 96:1–3, emphasis added)

When our Lord met the Samaritan woman in Sychar, He gently confronted her about her sexual immorality, telling her all the things she had ever done (John 4:16–18, 29, 39). She responded to this by quickly changing the subject: “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship” (John 4:19–20). Jesus graciously permitted her to change the focus of the conversation from her sinfulness to the subject of true religion. He said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21–24).

Under the old covenant, the worship of God had a geographic center: the temple in Jerusalem. King Solomon made this abundantly clear in his prayer of dedication for the first temple (1 Kings 8:22–53), which is why godly men like Daniel regularly prayed toward Jerusalem throughout the duration of the Babylonian captivity (Dan. 6:10–11). In many ways the message of Old Testament Israel to the surrounding Gentile nations was “Come and see! Come

---

16. “The Shorter Catechism,” in *Trinity Hymnal* (Great Commission, 2004), 869.

and see!” But with the coming of the promised Messiah and His inauguration of the new covenant, the kosher wall that separated Jew from Gentile would be abolished (Eph. 2:14–18), as would the geographic center of God’s worship. As the Baptist Confession of Faith says, “Neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the Gospel, tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed; but God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself; so more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly nor wilfully to be neglected or forsaken, when God by His word or providence calls thereunto” (2LCF 22.6).

Under the new covenant, the gospel crashes through ethnic, linguistic, and geographic boundaries so that God is worshiped in the power of the Holy Spirit in accordance with His Holy Word in every place by inhabitants of every people and language group. If the message of the Old Testament to the surrounding nations was “Come and see!” then the charge to the New Testament church is “Go and tell!” And notice again our Lord’s words to the woman by the well: “For the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23). We oppose the pragmatic compromises of so-called “seeker-sensitive worship” that consults with the world to discover how they want to worship God rather than ask the all-important question, “How does God want to be worshiped?” But there is a sense in which confessionally Reformed brothers ought to be the most “seeker-sensitive” worshipers on earth, for we recognize that the true Seeker is none other than God Himself! Whenever the gospel penetrates a sinner’s heart, God’s Spirit delivers him or her from their idolatry and transforms them into worshipers of the one true and living God. This is the goal of all gospel proclamation and therefore the ultimate goal of the missionary enterprise. Isaac Watts (1674–1748) summarizes this truth beautifully in his hymn “From All That Dwell below the Skies,” which is based upon Psalm 117:

From all that dwell below the skies  
 Let the Creator’s praise arise;  
 Let the Redeemer’s name be sung  
 Through every land, by every tongue.  
 In every land begin the song;  
 To every land the strains belong.  
 In cheerful sound all voices raise  
 And fill the world with joyful praise.<sup>17</sup>

---

17. Isaac Watts, “From All That Dwell Below the Skies” (1719), in *Trinity Hymnal*, rev. ed., (Great Commission, 2004), 7.

Earlier I quoted Michael Griffiths. Griffiths served as a missionary to Japan and later as the general director of Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF). He ends his helpful book *Give Up Your Small Ambitions* with a moving personal anecdote of how the glory of Christ sustained him through the many disappointments and setbacks he encountered on the mission field. I will close this chapter with his tribute to his Lord and Savior, in whose presence Griffiths now lives:

I have tried to point out some of the possible difficulties to be faced [on the mission field]. . . . Such reality is good if it means that we avoid having new missionaries arriving all starry-eyed, feeling gallant and glamorous—and then before long becoming extremely disillusioned. Somehow these missionaries today do not seem as saintly and as easy to live with as those in the nineteenth-century biographies! The pleasure of working with national churches is spoiled by their apparent lack of gratitude and appreciation. Those beautiful color slides never managed to convey the smells of the city, and were never taken when it was raining. There is a great deal that is tedious and humdrum in the life of a missionary; there is a great deal of heartbreak and disappointment, not least with one's self. The wonderful things never seem to happen where we are. One spends so much time just "plodding." One is always having to discover that "long-suffering" is just as much a fruit of the Spirit as "joy."

But there is one thing that I must say and which I want you to remember. There is no more wonderful way of spending your life if this is what the Lord wants you to do. I suppose the missionary's first term is the worst; one is still stumbling along in the language, and feels so utterly incompetent. I shall never forget toward the end of my first term of service in Japan returning one winter night from a small rice-growing village. I had preached in my stumbling Japanese to perhaps half a dozen peasants in padded garments huddled around a small charcoal fire trying to keep warm. But I had sensed God's help in my preaching and they had listened; some eyes were shining with a dawning understanding. I headed back through the ice-bound paddy fields with the frozen snow crunching beneath my feet while the river meandered sluggishly through the ice, and the moon shone brightly on the glimmering snow of the great volcano. And as I hurried home with a knapsack full of Bibles and hymnbooks on my back, my heart was filled with a great joy at the privilege of being a servant of such a

Lord. I was so delighted with the privilege of it that I positively skipped through the snow!

It has been worth it. Some of them have understood. It has been worth all the study and slog of these unproductive years just to have been able to preach Christ to these people even once. I have preached Christ in a place where He was not known, and what could be more wonderful than that?<sup>18</sup>

---

18. Michael C. Griffiths, *Give Up Your Small Ambitions: What You've Always Wanted to Know About Becoming a Missionary* (InterVarsity Press, 1970; 4th printing, 1976), 158–60.