

## Shifting to the First Person: On Being Missional

Keith E. Eitel

Recently I spoke with a graduating college student that finished an intensive humanities degree based on the great books. I knew him to be a diligent student, keenly able to analyze the history of ideas. Curiously, I asked him, "What was the most difficult thing you encountered in your degree?" I expected a challenging concept he had wrestled with, but surprisingly he simply said, "shifting to the third person."

For those of us academically reared in the modern era, we have been taught to write in the third person to indicate objectivity and verified truth, then to state it as unbiased factual evidence. The emerging generation is skeptical about the existence of factual truth. They view evidence as biased and subject to spin, hence everyone's truth claim is valid in its own right. No truth is absolute and presuppositions are all equally suspect. Propositional, or meta-truths, are virtually non-existent, or at least all such archetypal claims are doubtful to this generation.

This graduating student found it most difficult to shift his writing style to the third person because he originally resisted the forms of philosophical absolutism that it implies. As one might imagine, this impacts the emerging generation's view of truth in general. Their written expression of it is only one among many ways they experience culture clash. There is an increasing tension, an antinomy between the cultural conditioning of many that would lean toward a post-modern way of thinking and the absolutism expressed in the person and work

of Jesus Christ and the Bible. How does one reconcile the universal, propositional claims Jesus made regarding being uniquely the only way to God (Jn. 14:6) and a pluralistic cultural assumption that there are many ways to find and enjoy what one may individually perceive as being a god figure, perhaps shrouded in evolving mystery?

For those who increasingly sense this tension as unresolved, yet still desire to evaluate their direction in life, they may encounter crises of conscience regarding involvement in missionary activity but with a generational flare. They call it be-

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ing missional, not missionary, to delineate Christian living, orthopraxy if you will, in an increasingly brave new post-modern world.

This piece is aimed at grappling with the thought of a generation still coming into view. It is almost an impossible task to identify, much less define, a morphing reality that evolves at broadband speed. We will attempt to describe the bases of missional thought in the context of emerging and emergent church trends with corresponding background influences. Then I will present matters arising from such observations, and finally provide what is intended to be a closing constructive thought or two, all attempted in both the first and third person.

### Pieces of the Puzzle

**The Movers and Thinkers.** Evangelicalism is showing signs of shifting cycles, especially since World War II. Robert Webber delineates four seasons or eras of post-war Evangelicalism and attempts to show how the Emergent church varieties fit into this larger schema. Period one ran roughly from 1946-1964 and was characterized by individualism. Prior to this era, conservative Christians ran underground in the aftermath of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversies earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Engagement was the watchword for these post-war conservatives. They were "marked by a rational worldview, propositionalism, and evidential apologetics."<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, evangelicals had an awakening of sorts between 1964 and 1984.

Webber notes three distinct cross-currents in this timeframe. There was a move away from rationalism, a move toward existentialism, and a rise in political activism regarding moral reform in society. About 1984, for approximately another twenty-year period, each cross-current placed tension along the seams of the social fabric called Evangelicalism. Webber notes that pragmatism prevailed during these days and drew attention to themes like self-image, what he labels a kind of "spiritual narcissism." Programs, mega-churches, seekers, and contemporary worship styles are topics that shaped the concerns of a generation.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, sometime around 2004, the paradigm shifted again. Globalism, ter-

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ror, wars and rumors of wars each took their toll on the collective conscience of younger evangelicals to evoke a sense of crisis. Emerging spokesmen for this generation were usually children during the 1980's, born after 1982. These leaders are the movers and thinkers of the shifting shape of Evangelicalism today. They are "'out of sorts' with both traditional evangelical scientific theology and the pragmatism of mega-evangelicalism."<sup>3</sup> As these relate to the topic at hand, missions becomes missional as the days pass from modern to post-modern and beyond. Yet, others, bred in the more modernistic eras of Evangelicalism, have directly influenced emergent thinking, as may be seen by what follows.

## **Background**

Lesslie Newbigin spent a career in India as a missionary. Returning to England when that phase of his career came to a close, he noticed that the country of his youth had changed dramatically and now required a missionary style of witness to engage the new prevailing sense of lostness there. Days were gone when one could simply presume a basic familiarity with core Christian thought. This gave rise to problems within the church as Newbigin viewed it. The church was rolling merrily along as if a Christian consensus still prevailed. Changes and challenges were needed.

The term "missional," in its best use, simply describes the church turning outward to respond responsibly to the type of needs Newbigin noted and documented. In sum, "The church is not the same as the predominant culture. It is an alternative culture that points to the kingdom of God and the reality of the new heavens and the new earth."<sup>4</sup> Faith must thus be lived out, not only or primarily argued and reasoned. Christendom, "the synthesis between the Gospel and the culture of...Western Europe," needed to be dismantled so that the church would free itself to define itself over and against the status quo of culture.<sup>5</sup> Webber concludes that, "The influence of Newbigin and his colleague and successor David Bosch has set into motion a very old understanding of doing church in a post-modern world."<sup>6</sup> A biblical church must indeed retain a prophetic voice and ex-

hibit redeemed realities in an otherwise fallen and lost world. At this juncture emergent thinkers are pointing out a guilty complacency within Western Christianity.

This line of thinking also has ramifications for mission boards and sending agencies of either denominational or non-denominational types. If local churches need to shed trappings of "Christendom" and cease a symbiotic relationship with fallen "Christendom" related cultures, then the organizational structures designed to facilitate mission sending activities are also affected. "The inherent logic of a denomination is that it is organized to do something....The corporate church represents a significant shift away from the identity of the established church that understood itself as the primary location of God's presence and activity in the world."<sup>7</sup> Van Gelder criticizes the "corporate church" as being representative of the "Christendom" problem while the "established church" is the one formed in the early Christian centuries and was untainted by the sociological establishment issues inherent in "Christendom." Organization, structure, and social interplay that has design and purpose seem suspect in the post-modern mindset. Without a clear indication of an alternative (only a probing into the historic meaning of the New Testament church for the time being) the by-product seems to lead to chaos or disorganization by implication. How does one organize for effective work without appearing organized? While it is true that some organizations reflect more the core moral, leadership, and integrity values and principles of the New Testament than others may, it does not undermine the fact that there was organization and structure in the early church. As the emergent phenomenon continues to take on shape, this is an obvious area of needed analysis.

Understanding the New Testament specifically, and the nature of truth in general, then comes into view as a worthy topic in assessing emergent missional themes. Antiestablishment tendency regarding social organization is parallel with the "democratization of knowledge" inherent in postmodern thought that is influencing those within the

emergent church movements to varying degrees. They jettison "naive realism" in favor of, "A more discerning and dialogical approach...both to foster confidence in God's Word and to address legitimate questions and concerns...."<sup>8</sup> In general, there is skepticism, or a form of evangelical agnosticism, in relation to True truth among some emerging thinkers. While they wish to remain distinct from postmodernity's accretions, they sometimes succumb to its more alluring aspects. One of these is the idea of openness and the evolutionary nature of truth itself, not just the idea of changing perceptions of truth. In relation to ecclesiology, Van Gelder notes that in the emerging era the church must "be aware of the limits of trying to formulate a universal understanding from within a particular context." Hence, "all ecclesiologies must be seen as functioning relative to their context...the specifics of any ecclesiology are a translation of biblical perspective for a particular context. New contexts require new expressions for understanding the church."<sup>9</sup> While ecclesiological concern is the illustration here, it would apply as a characteristic within and among most of the young emergent church leaders as their approach to theological reasoning in general. It is reactive against what they perceive as the rationalism of the modern period. The translated effects of this alternative approach to theology and to ecclesiology specifically is an aversion to "(1) individuality, (2) program orientation, (3) preoccupation with numbers, (4) passivity and (5) resistance to change."<sup>10</sup>

### **Missional Agendas and Constructive Critique**

New ideas shape actions and eventually they stream into new agendas. Over time they morph into a new status quo. Being "transformational" emerges as the rediscovered focus of missionary activity and fills in the functional meaning of the term "missional." It is supposed to be more comprehensive than the historic use of the term mission or missions. It is "holistic," "incarnational," "environmental," and "global."<sup>11</sup>

Generally missional values are being defined by the emerging church leaders' agendas in reaction to at least four core

values which are currently defined by the status quo church, and are deemed as holdovers from the modernist, rational era. The first is a reaction to the idea that truth is static and comprehensive. The postmodern fixed value of fluid truth permeates much missional thinking. Secondly, there is a desire to rework the aim of mission work to be likewise fluid, open to "messy" relationships, less concerned with right beliefs and more concerned with right actions. Thirdly, right actions are associated with holistic concerns for social justice and engagement as a prophetic agent of change. Fourth, what it means to be "church" in such a context is to feel more communal and relational, less bureaucratic and institutionalized. Denominational structures are deemed passé and in need of dismantling.

True truth, if left to flow with such

up in the one is sacrificed in the other. To build relationships without first determining that there is definitely True truth to convey that has an eternal impact on the hearer will likely end in a meaningful friendship that is too valuable to jeopardize by introducing absolute truth and presenting the challenge to the new found friend that "You must be born again!"

Busying ourselves with relationships rightly means formation of Christian compassion for the plight of those around us that we engage with godly values as a means of witness or proclamation. Social injustices, poverty, environmental development, and the like affect the totality of the human condition. Hence transformational, missional believers can and should engage these issues armed with God's valuing regarding righteousness and justice. Yet, without a

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**Does the New Testament indicate that reliable knowledge is imbedded in the text?** Are we able to retrieve it, comprehend it, and apply it to our modern contexts? If so, then how do we do so?

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fluidity will run aground in a sea of relativity, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Does the New Testament indicate that reliable knowledge is embedded in the text? Are we able to retrieve it, comprehend it, and apply it in our modern contexts? If so, then how do we do so? Dan Kimball's model for defining what it means to be "missional" illustrates the dichotomy between knowing God's True truth and extending its applications to others. He is willing to assert that there are required premises in biblical thought, yet, reacts against bundling it all into neat tidy packages distributable on a global scale.<sup>12</sup>

A more fluid view of truth softens the nature of biblical values, especially across cultures. Traditional models for evangelism fall victim to this softening effect in that gospel information is considered less significant than gospel transformation. Relational outreach is more sensitive and transformational in nature, hence it is elevated in value within a missional model. Yet, what one gives

core commitment to transformational change that goes to the deepest level of one's intimate relationship with God, we may perform social actions that alleviate social and inhumane conditions here on earth while we watch our new found friends die and go to a real hell. Temporal compassion is no final substitute for eternity with Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the nature of the church in the midst of such changing realities must be determined. Yet, the very act of defining will undermine the primary need to leave truth open and relative. Theologizing in general runs the risk of developing forms of "Designer Christianity."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps there is a need to delve back into the concerns that emergent leaders wish to jettison, namely theological methods in order to avoid this danger and be relevant without compromising God's word in the process. If we are not careful, we will otherwise be relevant to a fallen world's concerns with little to say that would challenge the state of lostness.



# Assessing the “Fourth Era”

Dr. Christopher Little

David Hesselgrave has masterfully outlined the main components of the Fourth Era Kingdom Mission initiative. There is space to comment on only a few of the areas he addresses.

First of all, it is difficult to go along with the way the discussion is being framed. The “Fourth Era” is supposedly the next stage in mission after the “Three Eras.” Our brother Ralph Winter apparently first postulated these three periods of mission in his article, “The Long Look: Eras of Missions History” (*Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 1981:167ff). Yet to organize mission activity over the past several centuries in this manner amounts to a highly selec-

who respond to the message in repentance and faith, and thereby come into the sphere of God’s salvation and life” (*New Testament Theology*, 2004:80). Thus, the entrance to the kingdom is through the door of the church whereby God’s people experience righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3; Rom. 14:17).

This perspective is in contrast to the growing number of evangelicals who are connecting the kingdom to the socio-economic projects of secular philanthropists. This is an unfortunate historical repeat as it parallels what happened in the ecumenical movement last century. What is new with the Fourth Era, however, is the suggestion that the kingdom advances by embracing science as

*tus Victor* theory of the atonement which has been severely criticized for exhibiting a dualistic worldview at odds with a biblical one where the universe is under the control of a single Sovereign (Dan. 4:34–35; Eph. 1:11). Ultimately, then, the problem with the Fourth Era is the failure to recognize that God is the One who has subjected creation to a curse (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:20) and it is only He who will remove it (Eph. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:24–28). In the meantime, Satan serves as His unwitting servant (Job 1–2:8).

Finally, Hesselgrave is justified in dissenting from the Fourth Era agenda as it amounts to creating mission in one’s own image. According to Samuel Escobar, the “Spirit-inspired missionary acts of Jesus, Paul and the apostles, as well as their Spirit-inspired reflection on their practice, are authoritative for us, in a way in which no other post-apostolic

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## What is new with the Fourth Era, is the suggestion that the kingdom advances by embracing science as a missionary method to defeat Satan at the microbial level.

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tive reading of history as there are numerous exceptions to each of his categories. Now, with the presumed dawning of the Fourth Era centered upon the kingdom, the evangelical missions community is being asked to step up to the plate on its behalf. But the theoretical framework for the entire argument rests on an untenable methodological foundation, that of eisegeting the historical record to promote a particular agenda.

Second, as Hesselgrave notes, the biblical rationale for this new missional emphasis is rooted in two verses: Matthew 6:10 and 1 John 3:8. In relation to the first, no devout Jew in the first century could have possibly conceived of the kingdom coming apart from the arrival of the Messiah. This is the background for the apostles’ question, “Lord, “is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Ac. 1:6). In addition, the Apostle Paul linked the kingdom to Christ’s appearance (2 Tim. 4:1). Until that time, I. Howard Marshall points out that the “kingdom consists of those

a missionary method to defeat Satan at the microbial level. Yet John Bright, widely acknowledged as an expert on the subject, states that the early church never imagined it “could by its labors bring in the Kingdom! That is a modern delusion of grandeur which the early church simply would not have understood” (*The Kingdom of God*, 1989:233). Indeed, as Roger Hedlund observes, the kingdom of God “being from above should never be equated with human achievements” (*The Mission of the Church in the World*, 1991:174).

With regard to the second verse, the Apostle John clearly states the purpose for Christ’s incarnation: “He appeared in order to take away sins” (1 Jn. 3:5). As such, Thomas Schreiner rightly deduces: “Jesus destroyed the works of the devil by suffering in our place as the propitiation of our sins, so that we now stand forgiven before God” (*The Nature of the Atonement*, 2006:53). Furthermore, the theological impetus for Winter’s proposal comes from Gregory Boyd’s *Chris-*

missionary practice or reflection is” (*The New Global Mission*, 2003:22). At a time when the evangelical missions movement is allocating approximately the same amount of resources to redeeming souls and restoring society, there is a crucial need to recover biblical models of mission. Jesus, Paul, and the apostles, rather than directing their energies toward repairing society, made the proclamation of the gospel their priority because they recognized that humanity’s greatest need was reconciliation to God (Mk. 1:38; Rom. 15:19–20; Ac. 6:4, 7). Therefore, those who desire to follow in their footsteps must resist any attempt to detract from their example.

**Christopher R. Little** (Ph.D.) is a Professor of Intercultural Studies at Columbia International University. He is the author of *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized: An Evangelical Appraisal and Missiological Contribution to the Debate* (William Carey Library, 2000) and *Mission in the Way of Paul: Biblical Mission for the Church in the Twenty-First Century* (Peter Lang, 2005), as well as numerous articles in various journals. ■

# Two Responses

**Response To Dr. Hesselgrave's "4th Era Kingdom Mission" in the last issue. Response to Christopher Little's "Assessing the 'Fourth Era'" in this issue.**  
[Changes to the former are primarily to note what are the "points" to which I referred.]

**Ralph D. Winter, Ph.D.**

I am truly pleased and amazed as well as very grateful for the expert way David Hesselgrave has organized some of my thinking. I am sure I could not have done as well. I also have no major problems with what he has done. I do have a few comments that may make clearer certain points. I will go by his same section titles and his enumeration of points under those titles.

## Biblical moorings

**Point 3 (Concerning the mission of Christ. Christ's mission was both redemptive and restorative.)** David has me saying that Christ's mission "yielded both the gospel of salvation and the gospel of the kingdom."

I would respectfully decline the wording "Christ's mission was both redemptive and restorative," or that it "yielded both the gospel of salvation and the gospel of the kingdom." Why? This wording (which is not mine) would appear to present *redemptive* and *restorative* as two distinct things. I would prefer to think of the "*redemptive* and *restorative*" here as *very nearly synonymous*. To "redeem" and to "restore" are highly overlapping concepts, and the Gospel of the Kingdom IS the Gospel. The phrase "Gospel of Salvation" (as Evangelicals understand this phrase) is only a basic aspect of it. The phrase, "Gospel of Salvation" does not occur in the NT, and even its concept is less frequent than that of Gospel of the Kingdom. Furthermore, the Biblical meaning of "salvation" includes far more than most Evangelicals usually think. In its Biblical sense it clearly means more than soul redemption and is very nearly the same as "restoration." Meanwhile "The Gospel of the Kingdom" clearly implies the presence and power of Christ in one's life in the fullest sense.

**In Point 5 (Concerning the Great Commission)** the issue is whether or not the Great Commission passage in

Matthew includes the Great Commandment (love your neighbor as yourself), (Winter's) "implication being that Christian Mission includes ... the Great Commandment."

Personally I think it would be better to say that the Matthew 28 passage would seem to include the Great Commandment, rather than to say that (our) phrase "Christian mission" does. Why? Because we (I, not everyone) instinctively reserve the phrase "Christian mission" for cross-cultural pioneer mission. For years I have tried hard to distinguish between various kinds of mission (E-0, E-1, E-2, E-3). "Mission" is a word so widely and variously used in the English language that we cannot easily force it to mean something highly specific, or that our use of it is the only legitimate meaning.

## Extra-biblical Components

**Point 1 (Cosmological components)** says "Winter believes that God created and endowed Satan with the extraordinary capacity ... to initiate sin and suffering."

I can't see how I would have ever said or implied that Satan was given "extraordinary capacity." As far as I am concerned, Satan has no more "capacity... to initiate sin" than any other creature of God, endowed with free will. And, I surely don't believe that God gave either men or angels free will for the purpose of sin. By the way, people keep saying that my own experience with disease (three major simultaneously) affects my thinking. Therefore what? That I can be excused for thinking Satan had anything to do with this dimension? Do you, dear reader, need to experience suffering and terminal disease to take it seriously?

**Point 2 (Paleontological components)** says I am "building on Merrill Unger ..."

I am very happy to have that known. He says things I would be shot down for saying! I have to quote him. Merrill Un-

ger was the Chairman of the Old Testament Department at Dallas Theological Seminary for many years. My description of his concept of things happening before Genesis 1:1 comes from the first page or two of his very famous and unquestioned *Unger's Bible Handbook*, published by Moody Bible Institute for many years in 24 editions and 500,000 copies. I don't think it is heresy. After his death in 1980, the *New Unger's Bible Handbook*, revised by a speech professor at Wheaton, timidly ascribes his views to that of "some scholars," not specifically to Unger. I have no problem taking his views seriously. It would be nice if he is right, for one thing you can then believe in both the "Young Earth" and the "Old Earth."

## Some Basic Questions

**Point 1 (Theological questions):** "(in regard to suffering) Winter commends the work of Gregory Boyd."

Commending, as I have done, just a part of what Boyd says. One might quote people such as Chrysostom, Augustine, Calvin, Spurgeon, Moody. But that surely does not approve of everything else those people think or say or write. InterVarsity Press's two stout and impressive volumes of Boyd's, *God at War*, and *Satan and the Problem of Evil* are my sources. I have utterly no faith, not even any interest, in "open theism." I have not the slightest problem believing that God knows everything about the future and that He does not often revoke the true free will he has given to angels and men.

**In Point 2 (Exegetical questions)** I probably was not wise to speak of "radically different interpretations" of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission unless I had made clear that my present understanding is quite different from the way I understood it as a teenager. I am not enthusiastic about much of what passes as holistic missiology. David's question is whether the prayer Jesus modeled for us and the last part of the Great commission's "obey everything I have commanded you" are "prescriptive" or merely "what discipleship entails." To me this almost seems like splitting hairs.

**Point 3 (Semantic questions):** David

is uneasy when I say that words without deeds are meaningless—in my mind a technical truth. Note that I certainly include the “deeds” described in the Bible. Thus, if the Bible were not full of deeds, its words would have little meaning. That’s all. If our lives and ministries are not also full of good deeds, our words begin to lose impact and intelligibility. Furthermore, I have nowhere questioned the “factualness” of Biblical words.

**Point 4 (Eschatological questions):** David wonders what my eschatology is. He assumes I am amillennial. All my life I have been pre-trib and pre-mill. I grew up on the *Scofield Bible*. I am unaware of any “anti-dispensational references” in my writings or conversations. I quote Matthew 24:14 enthusiastically. I know of no influence that I have gained from George Eldon Ladd. But to do good works to demonstrate the character of God does not mean for a split second that our efforts are going to bring in the Kingdom in some final, future sense. They are already bringing in the Kingdom in the present sense.

**Point 5 (Motivational questions):** David fears, I think, that a concern for people’s bodies automatically means that people’s souls will no longer be the primary motivation for mission. That could be, just as some healing evangelists might have greater concern for crowds and money than souls. I sense, however, that Jesus’ healing ministry actually *demonstrated* His concern for people’s souls rather than *replacing* that. Furthermore, mission historians are pretty well agreed that 19<sup>th</sup> century missionaries talked more about glorifying God while some late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century missionaries talked more about winning souls. But, with William Carey, for example, glorifying God was the very basis for his winning souls, not a replacement. Focusing on souls, in contrast, has often produced the familiar “mile wide inch deep” type of Christianity, which stops at Eph. 2:9 and does not endure due to attracting people to salvation rather than to a holy God in whose presence repentance precedes belief and engenders love for God not merely satisfaction in safety and security.

**Point 6 (Missiological questions),** David says “It is now common to make

Jesus’ mission out to be one of divine compassion and social transformation ... (Winter) follows suit.”

He is quite right (so is Little) about the trend upon us. But I don’t wish to be described as on the bandwagon of either holistic or social transformation, which in my mind are easily humanistic and self-serving. The Bible speaks in larger terms. Humanity is not the sum total of God’s redemptive and restorative concern. God is not glorified by the degradation of His creation. Satan has messed more than humanity. Satan turned against God long before Eden. In Jesus’ healing ministry I don’t believe He was teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century believers *how* to heal but *that* we should heal.

Furthermore, I have been more drawn to seeing sturdy continuities from Genesis to Revelation pursuing the differences. Paul obviously was dealing with a different situation than Jesus. I have realized in recent years that Paul was dealing mainly with highly obedient and believing people—“devout persons.” He went from synagogue to synagogue ministering to some responding Jews but perhaps mainly to Gentiles, called *God-fearers* or *devout persons*, who in many cases had been sitting in synagogues listening to the Old Testament for years. They had already yielded their lives to God. Faith in Jesus’ blood rather than circumcision or the blood of bulls and goats was what the *God-fearers* needed, not so much repentance from sin or miracles. Interestingly, the Greek word often in the NT translated “forgiveness” more often than not in the OT is translated “release” as in “released from Egyptian captivity.”

### The Third Era Mission Alternative

David says his “own perspective is more nearly Dr. Winter’s Third Era mission.” I now have a greatly expanded understanding of the Third Era. See below

**Point 2 (McGavran’s perspective on mission and missiology).** Both Henry and McGavran were professors of mine and highly respected mentors. I certainly don’t have any problems with their points of view. Indeed, I consider them early leaders in the kind of thinking that is a massive trend today.

**His Final Paragraph:** David para-

phrases what I said in 1998, “that the Third Era need not to be superseded by a Fourth or any other Era.” That is still fine by me.

I can take some credit for the phrase “A church for every people by the year 2000.” But, I had no involvement, nor great sympathy, with the further (redundant) elaboration of that phrase by the “A.D. 2000 and Beyond” movement.” Furthermore, for some time now I have given up the “Fourth Era” label in favor of including the massive new trend as part of the Third Era.

Splendid! Many thanks, David.

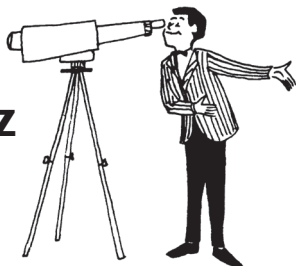
### Now Christopher Little...

Chris begins by poking holes in the logic of there being Three Eras in Protestant mission history, a coastlands era, an inland era, and a by-passed peoples era. This breakdown may have been first published in the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Reader* in 1981. Actually, it came into use as an admittedly simplistic pedagogical device in my classroom teaching of mission history at Fuller (from 1966 to 1976). I now have highly revised and amplified that 1981 version in the now-available Fourth Edition, (I will be happy to send that chapter to anyone who emails me for it—rdw112233@aol.com). This expanded chapter abandons Fourth Era terminology altogether and adds a great deal to the Third Era of what Little here rightly refers to as the other factors in these three eras. In fact I now see those three eras as being more significantly the emergence, loss, and recovery of Kingdom Mission.

Then, for some reason, in his second point, Little points out that many devout Jews in the first century as well as the disciples in Acts 1:6 conceived of the Kingdom as being an earthly regime we should also. Should we agree with them? The New Testament shows them to be wrong. Why follow them? Jesus clearly said, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God then the Kingdom of God has come you (Luke 11:20).” Because the disciples failed to understand that is no reason for us to. In general, Biblical perspective is that the Kingdom of God’s rule on earth had been coming through-

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## As seen through the LENZ



The Emergent church is a phenomenon that has captured the imagination of many churches today. Some may think of it as a fad. Serious questions have arisen as to the theology of the Emergent Church. I have asked Dr. Keith Eitel if he would respond to this theology, as I believe it also affects our missiological approach to this topic in the local church. Keith has done a scholarly piece of research in grappling with this issue. Certainly our seminary

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out the OT, and was pushed forward decisively in the New.

Chris, in his quote from John Bright's description of the early church's conceptions of God's will in the first century, again seems to assume that if the early church did not clearly understand all of the "greater things" He spoke of, we shouldn't either. Jesus predicted that we would do much more: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these (Jn. 14:12)." Would Paul have encouraged antibiotic research had he known what we know? I feel sure he would have. Also, where did we get the idea

professors must deal with this in their classes as they prepare students for world missions and face emergent church thinking from graduating seminarians in many institutions.

We are also running two responses to Dr. Dave Hesselgrave's article "4th Era Kingdom Mission" which was presented in the last issue of OB. Dr. Ralph Winter and Dr. Chris Little share their views and critiques to the issues that Dave points out. Ideally, these reviews would have been better presented with Dr. Hesselgrave's article if they were printed together in the same edition, but space limited that possibility. We ask the reader to pull out the last edition of OB and compare these viewpoints.

—Bob Lenz, editor

that if someone (like Jimmy Carter) is casting out Guinea Worm from 3.5 million people that this is not God's will coming to pass? Sounds like the disciples wanting to stop a man from casting out demons "who is not one of us." Jesus' definitive answer in Luke 9:50, "Do not stop him" should be good enough for us.

As for Little's statement "Winter's proposal comes from Gregory Boyd's Christus Victor theory of the atonement." I have never until now heard of his theory. All I know is that to say "Jesus (already) destroyed the works of the devil" is only partly true. Otherwise 1 Jn. 3:8's amplification of the 5<sup>th</sup> verse would be irrelevant and Peter's (1 Pet.

5:8) reference to Satan's being "a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" would make little sense.

As for God being the only one Who can lift the curse, again that is only true in one sense. Otherwise it would make Jesus' followers spectators rather than disciples, and makes nonsense of His statement "As the Father hath sent me so send I you (Jn. 20:21).

I am enthusiastic about Chris' final paragraph. He is aware of exactly the same massive trend that underlies much of what I am saying. He says "the evangelical missions movement is allocating approximately the same amount of resources to redeeming souls and restoring society." The facts go further. The last two *Mission Handbooks* (about five years apart) indicate that church planting missions have grown 2.7% but that relief and development missions have grown 75%. This is 27 times as fast a growth, when the latter were already bigger! If this is not a trend worth analyzing and critiquing I don't know what is. And that is what I am trying to do. Let's not close our eyes. It is not entirely a good trend and could become far worse. We know the past here.

My parting admonition is that just because we can all agree that good works can be done without the *proclamation* of the gospel is no reason to assume that the proclamation of the gospel can be done effectively without the *demonstration* of God's character in good works. ■



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