

Hatch or Go Bad: On Being a World Christian

By David Bryant

C.S. Lewis said it, not I:

"It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird; it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you can not go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. You must hatch or go bad."

– *Mere Christianity*, p. 169.

Stay 100% Biblical

Does it strike you that most of Scripture's teachings can be vitally related to Christ's global cause and our place in it? New Testament believers thought so. They applied all of Scripture to their wider mission in Christ. Raised, ascended and present by His Spirit with power, Christ opened their eyes to the world in a way Abraham or Samuel or Amos never quite saw it. For them, the ancient Biblical text assumed new global dynamics.

I have two books by W.O. Carver: *Missions and the Plan of the Ages* and *All the World in All the Word*. The titles say it all! The Bible was written with a "World Christian" bent. To grow as one, then, we must let the Bible be to us (as George Peters suggests) "missionary theology – theology in motion."

The father of modern missions, William Carey, linked Scripture to the "hatching" of World Christians in late 18th century England, and it broke the log-jam in Protestant outreach. He wrote in *An Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians*:

"If the prophecies concerning the increase of Christ's Kingdom be true, and if what has been advanced concerning the commission given by Him to His disciples being obligatory on us be just, it must be inferred that all Christians ought to heartily concur with God in promoting His glorious designs, for He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him ... Christians are a body whose truest interest lies in the exaltation of the Messiah's kingdom ... let then everyone in his station consider himself as bound to act with all his might and in every way possible for God."

Get Clear on Christ's Lordship

What do you think: Is Christ Lord of heaven and earth? Is He Lord of history and its sure, redemptive climax? Is He Lord of the nations? Will they come to his feet confessing "Jesus is Lord"? Is He Lord of the challenge before our generation, able to break through any barriers that stand against the impact of His gospel? Is He Lord of the Church at this hour, employing her to fulfill his world-wide purpose? And, is He lord of your life, able to make all that you are and have count significantly for the reaching of unreached peoples? To say "Yes!" to these fuller implications of Christ's lordship is to begin to hatch into world Christians.

Our commitment, of course, is first of all to the task master, not just the task. It's impossible, however, to belong to one and not the other; to love Christ and not obey His

commission. Actually, His mission to the world is the prelude and prototype of our own. Simply put, our union with Christ makes us fit for His Kingdom, and His union with us makes us fit into his mission. All of this spells "Lordship." When we embrace all that His Lordship means – Christ as central by His word and His cause – the shells around us have to crack!

Turn On To Missions

People in shells can hold deadening prejudices toward the idea of "missions." (I know: I did it for a long time.) Consequently, missions is an aspect of God's total work among the nations that's most often avoided or misunderstood. And yet, the phenomenon of missions is so pivotal to the future of God's work. Of course, every world Christian must be concerned with issues like world hunger, economic exploitation, political repressions, nuclear proliferation, and more. That's why I place Christ's global cause, and not just missionary concerns, as the unifying factor for our life in Christ. But, our missions involvement remains key.

You see, God isn't taking a world-wide opinion poll on who wants to become a Christian. He's at work creating communities of sons and daughters within every cultural womb of earth to populate His Kingdom and love Him forever. The world missions enterprise helps create possibilities for God's Kingdom to break through in places where it has not yet come. Through the Gospel, missionaries raise up new congregations of believers who, in turn, become redemptive forces within their own situations. Most other needs of the world can be more effectively met once responsible communities of disciples develop within cultural and geographical reach of everyone on the face of the earth.

Now, here's the pay-off. Seeing this drama realized is a driving dream for every budding World Christian. And, it's a dream that is necessarily "pro-missions." So, the more we turn on to missions, the more we'll be able to soar with clearer direction in our involvement in all aspects of Christ's global cause. It's easier to leave an egg when we know where we're headed, and something about how to get there.

Discipleship without Limits

The hatching we're looking at is as much for senders as it is for penetrators (such as missionaries). The issue is: what kind of senders and penetrators will they be? And, that is a discipleship issue.

Every missionary extension needs behind it a missionary movement of similar vision, commitment and sacrifice. Apostolic bands in the early church usually appeared wherever there were missions-minded congregations to launch them. Spiritual growth was linked to serving an expanded mission for their generation. (Paul's epistles bear this out.) Ultimately, theirs was discipleship that put no limits on how far God would go with them or whom He would touch through them. They prepared accordingly.

The tragedy is that few trained Christians today have been disciplined with vision and strategy for reaching to the ends of the earth. How many of us are able to come to the end of each day and say: "I know this day my life has counted strategically for Christ's global cause, especially for those currently beyond the reach of the Gospel?" Not many. But, for someone, somewhere, discipleship must lead into primary concern and ministry toward those totally cut off from God's good news. If not you and me, who?

Mission Issues

Our days demand a new dimension for Jesus' followers. I've met so many evangelicals who are over-trained but underemployed and bored. In light of the tremendous needs, and since God is calling us out of our shells for our own good as well, we must move into growth patterns without limits, patterns that free us for the ends of the earth.

So are any of us hatching yet? Most who describe their experience as a "second conversion." First, there's conversion out of this world to Christ. Then follows conversion with Christ back into the world. That's how it's happening with me. I'm neither a missionary nor the son of one. I'm just a day-to-day disciple, like you, called into God's plan for the nations, to establish Christ's preeminence among all peoples. Gradually my motivation for this is becoming what God wants it to be: the Lordship of Christ; the reality of God's yearning grace for a lost humanity; the right of everyone to know of Christ and have an opportunity to come to Him; and a vision of Christ's redemptive glory covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. Let's continue together in the process of hatching. Why? Because there's an already "bad" world waiting out there for us to hatch (Romans 8:17-19). Equally important, because we must hatch ... or go bad.

David Bryant is founder of Concerts of Prayer International. This article was reprinted with permission from the January/February 1982 issue of World Christian Magazine.

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