



Contemporary Issues in Missions



Presented by Bob Munson

Virginia Baptist Mission Board

Bukal Life Ministries



Note 2:

“Issues” suggests that there are differences in opinions in the area of Missions.

“Contemporary” suggests that these differences are very real and relevant today.

Therefore... expect to disagree with the instructor or fellow students today. Different opinions are healthy for learning.

Outline

Key Areas of Issues

- *Globalism*
- *Clericalism*
- *Apocalypticism*
- *Dualism*
- *Pluralism/Post-modernism*



Outline

Key Areas of Discussion

- *Role of Money in Missions*
- *Role of the Church in Missions*





What is Missions?

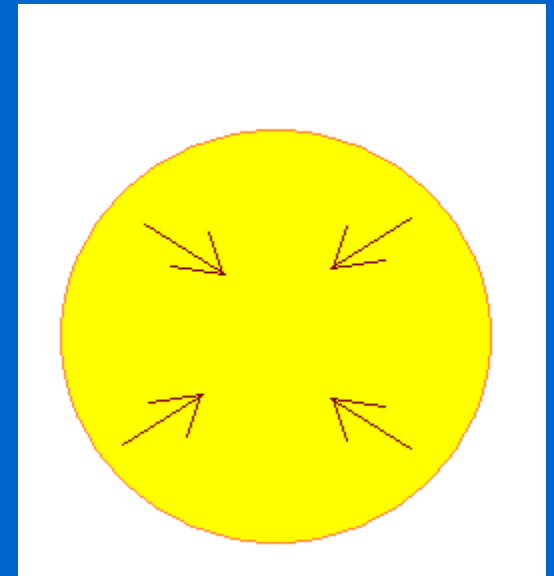
For the purpose of this discussion, “missions” will be considered with reference to a local church. A local church has three basic types of ministries:



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Local Church Ministries

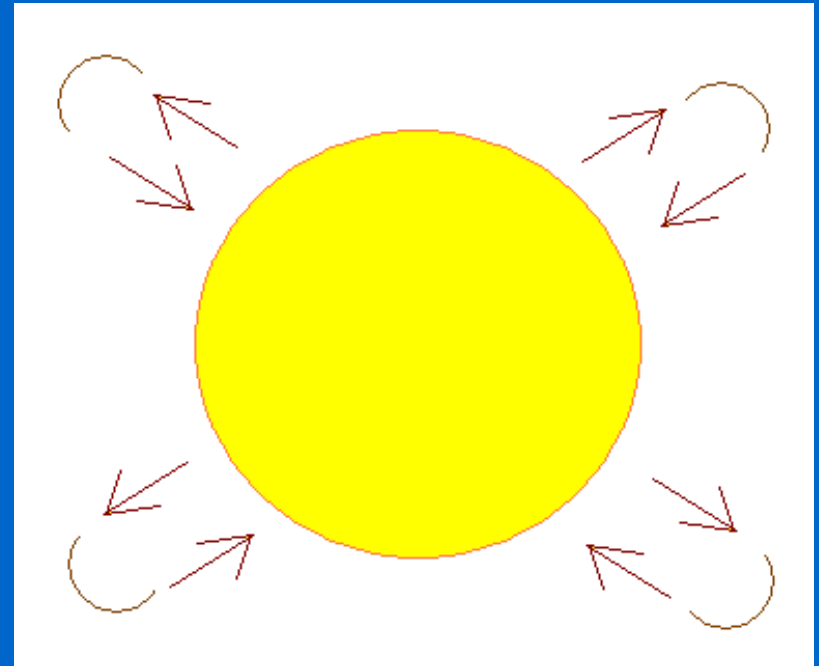
1. Member care.
Ministering to those
inside of the local
church.



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Local Church Ministries

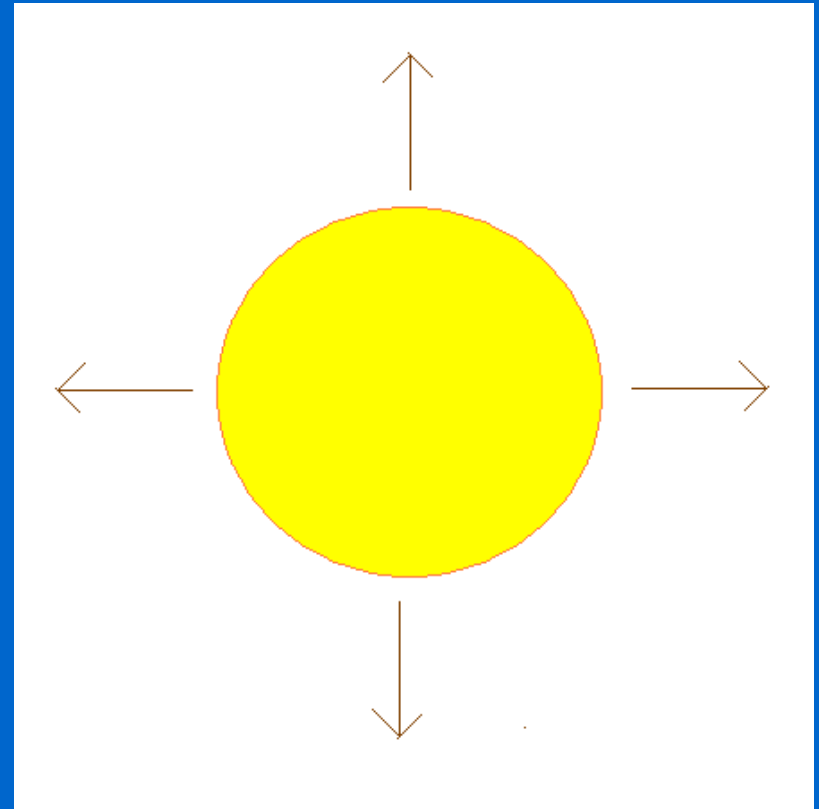
2. Church growth.
Ministering to those
outside of the local
church, seeking to
bring them into the
local church.



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Local Church Ministries

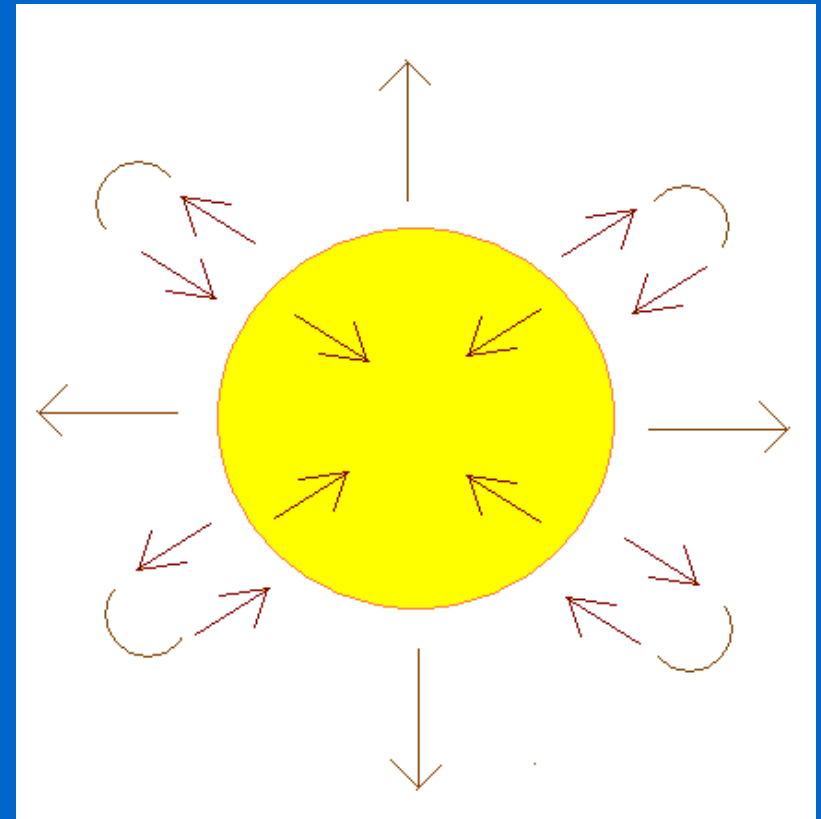
3. Missions. Ministering to those outside of the local church, with no expectation that they will become part of the local church.



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A Healthy Church Should be in All 3

1. Member care.
2. Church growth.
3. Missions.





Globalism

- Southern Shift of the Church
- Young Church Missions
- Ecumenical Movement
- Networking and Collaboration



Southern Shift of the Church

From around 1000AD until the 1800s, the Christian church was mostly in Europe and the Americas. (The West versus the Rest)

The fruit of trends that started in the 1800s (decline of the church in the West and the success of missions in the 2/3 world) caused great changes.

The Trend

	Western Churches	2/3 World Churches
Christian Ratio	1960 - 58% 1990 - 38% 2000 - 30%	1960 - 42% 1990 - 62% 2000 - 70%
Missionaries	64,378 (out of 138,492)	74,114 (out of 138,972)
Missionary Support	Per year \$50,000 ~75,000 (US Dollars)	Per year \$720~1440 (US Dollars)

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Implications

- Shift of Power (Ex. Anglican Church)
- Reverse Missions
- New Theologizing
- 2/3 World Missions
- New Roles for Western Missions

“Young Church” Missions

South Korea, Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria, and Philippines are become major players in International Missions. Other countries such as Costa Rica, Singapore, and India are also gaining prominence in Missions.

The Good

Young Church Missions can reach out without colonial or geopolitical problems (ex. Brazil and Philippines)

Young Church Missions can reach out to common language groups (such as Costa Rican missions to Spanish-speaking)

Young church Missions can reach out to people of similar ethnicity (such as Ghanaian and Nigerian missions).

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The Bad

- Young Church Missions often lack cultural sensitivity... assuming “our way is the only way.” (Much like Western missions have historically done.)
- Young Church Missions often fail to learn from the lessons of missionaries from the West (repeating the “rice Christian” phenomenon, or “Field of Dreams” mindset)

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“Young Church” Missions

Is Western Missions necessary?

- Maybe just go home...
- Maybe change role... less in pioneering... more in partnering.
- Can Western Missions be of educational value to 2/3 World missions?
- Will lessons from the West be useful... or create new problems?

Ecumenicism

Easily the most important movement in Missions in the 20th century is the ecumenical movement.

Although, ecumenicism goes back further (to Hudson Taylor, and even the writings of William Carey), the 1910 Edinburgh Conference really set in motion ecumenical missions.

Ecumenicism

Mission groups such as Wycliffe, SEND, YWAM, SIM, and others dominate cross-cultural missions. These are all non-denominational.

Even denominational mission groups (such as IMB and AofG tend to find it useful, even necessary to work with other groups.



Ecumenicism

The Ecumenical Movement has forced us to evaluate what is important.

- How much doctrinal difference is too much?
- What role should denomination have in the mission work of a missionary in a non-denominational mission agency?
- How denominational should church-plants be in the mission field? How contextualized?

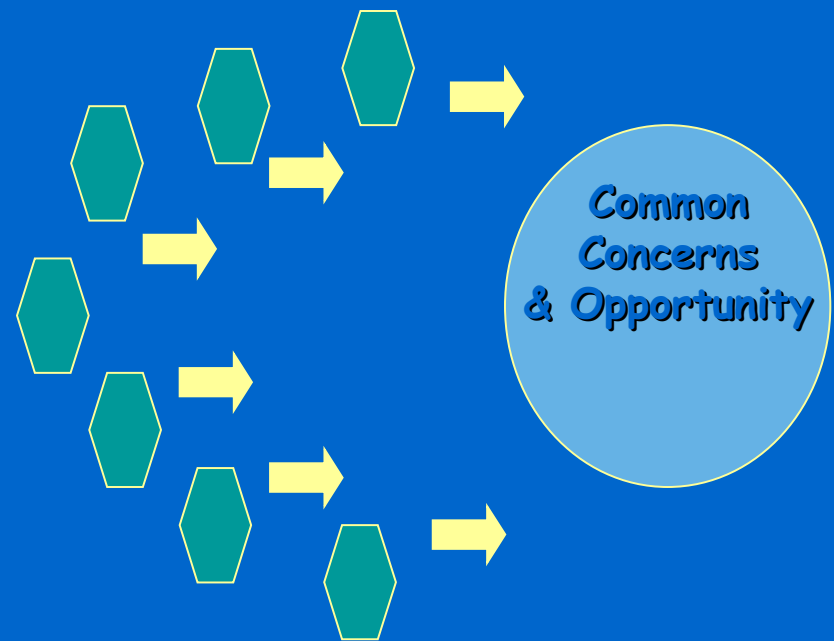


Networking and Collaboration

Traditionally, Mission Agencies must do everything.

This provides good control... but is massively inefficient.

The trend has been away from this.



Old Way

Ministries not communicating but hoping to successfully reach the same goal

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Networking and Collaboration

Rather, there has been a tendency to specialize in areas of strength.

Those capacities that are not in an area of specialty can be spun off (VVM) or killed (FERDS).

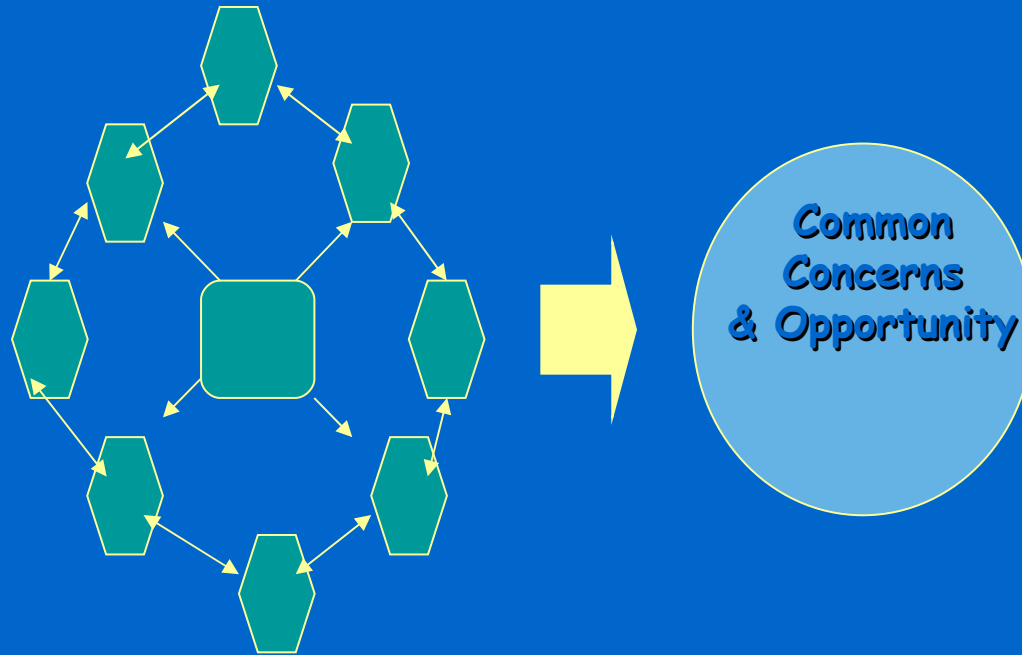
Networking and Collaboration

But when different groups specialize in different things, two things naturally happen.

A. One becomes the resident expert in one's specialty.

B. One becomes dependent on outside groups in other areas.

Collaboration Means Partnership



Partnership Way

Ministries retaining their individual identity but linked in a common vision and empowered by a facilitator or facilitation team

Networking and Collaboration

Think of three business models: Competition, Communism, and Cooperation.

- We know about Competition. Each works for his own goals and may the strong survive.
- We know about Communism. Everyone work stogether, losing individual identity.
- We are only beginning to understand Cooperation. Working together for common good, while maintaining one's unique identity.
Missions is slowly learning this last one.



Clericalism

- “The Call”?
- Short-term Missions
- Tentmaking
- Lay-Leadership





Clericalism

Policies or principles that favor the power or political influence of the clergy... generally a derogatory term.

(paraphrased from Webster's New World Dictionary, 2d edition)



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“The Call”

What is “The Call”?

(full-time? professional? “miraculous”?)

Is it Biblical?

(Required? Normative?)

Does it suggest a “Negative Call”?

(Does it mean that there are Christians who are called to “not serve”?)

“The Call”

Many mission agencies no longer require a “call” to missions. Several reasons:

- Less people willing to take on the role of ‘Missionary for Life’.
- Visa issues for life-long missionaries.
- New models/definitions of what is a missionary
- Increase in short-termers.

“The Call” Issues:

- Should the call be viewed as a static thing?
Or is it more of a path.
- Should the call be looked at as a prerequisite for:
 - Full-time missions ministry?
 - Short-term missions ministry?
 - Bivocational missions ministry?

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Short-term Missions

Prior to the 1960s, short-term missions was almost unknown because of transportation issues. But with affordable transoceanic airflights, many decide they can be involved in short-term missions.

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Missionaries have mixed feelings about STMers

- Some missionaries don't want to think of STMers as missionaries.
- Some missionaries don't think STMers can do effective mission work (religious tourism).
- Some missionaries have been hurt by STMers who drain resources or are unwilling to learn.

Facts

- STM is here and likely here to stay for the foreseeable future.
- STM work has been effective in many fields throughout the world.
- STMs have often been challenged to think more internationally, and intentionally, about God's work.

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Therefore,

Rather than seeking to decide if short-term missions is a good thing or a bad thing, it may be more useful to study the differences between good short-term missions and bad short-term missions.

Such research can be used to improve this form of missions.

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Tentmaking Missions

This is another term for “Bivocational Missions”. The term comes from Paul’s working in making tents while on missions. Bivocational missions has been an especially popular method in the Philippines where churches have often assumed that their responsibility in missions is to commission and “bless” OFWs in doing “mission work.”

Concerns

- Is bivocational missions just a way for churches to appear to be supporting missions, while actually avoiding support?
- Are bivocational missionaries simply OFWs trying to sound like they are in ministry?
- Are bivocational missionaries trained to be a sound witness?
- Do bivocational missionaries have time to minister?

Suggestions

- Like STM, bivocational missions is a reality. It is best to find out what works and what doesn't and train people for effective missions.
- Churches should be trained to not use bivocational missions as a way to avoid supporting missions. (“Love gift” missions is a way to kill missions, not support it.)

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Lay-Leadership

Short-term missions and Bivocational missions have moved missions more into the hands of the laity. Missions is no longer strictly in the hands of the professional, life-long, “called”, missional clergy.

Is this good or bad?

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Additionally

Church-planting movements produce churches exponentially (or at least quite fast), so that Bible schools cannot keep up.

Is it okay to have churches led by layleaders with minimal training?

Responses

- **Fight.** Limit the role of the laity. Limit mission roles and churchplants to what can be handled by the ordained.
- **Frame.** Set up cell systems or denominational hierarchies to give limited role of laity under the watchful eye of the clergy.
- **Flow.** Recognize laity and clergy as equal partners in God's work... members of one body.

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Apocalypticism

- The “Unfinished Task”
- UPGs... 10/40 Window... B2J Movement
- Mission Priorities



The Unfinished Task

A key concept in recent decades among evangelical missionaries has been focusing on the “unfinished task”. Every few years there have been calls to “finish the task” of missions... often by coming up with unrealistic dates for meeting high goals of mission outreach.



Unfinished Task

The theology of the unfinished task centers on
Matthew 24:14

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be
preached in the whole world as a testimony
to all nations, and then the end will come.”

(NIV)

All Nations

“To All Nations” (“pasin tois ethnesin”) as been interpreted as “people groups” in recent times.

Some interpret as follows: “Immediately, or very soon, after the gospel has been given to every people group, Christ will return.”

<There seems no good justification for this interpretation.>

Unfinished Task

Regardless, this interpretation has led to several attempts to come up with ways of “speeding up” Christ’s return.

- Unreached People Groups (UPGs)
- Spiritual Mapping and Warfare
- 10/40 Window
- Back-to-Jerusalem Movement (B2J)
- AD2000, DAWN
- And many more

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Not saying these are bad...

But there are some questions to think about:

-Should Matthew 24:14 be our strategy guide for missions or Matthew 24:45-47?

-Do we emphasize the “hardest soil” or the “softest soil”?

-Do we focus on evangelism only? What about discipleship, training, social ministry, atbp?

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ARE WE TO ASSUME THAT THE
CHOICES WE MAKE ARE EITHER/
OR?

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THEY CAN BE
BOTH/AND?



Dualism

- Spiritual versus Social Ministry
- Development versus Relief
- Spiritual versus Mechanistic Strategy



Dualism

Classic Dualism in Christianity tends to see the world as:

- The sacred and the secular
- The natural and the supernatural
- The miraculous and the mundane

(These have more grounding in Greek philosophy and Modernism than in the Bible.)

Spiritual versus Social Ministry

Historically, Evangelicals have been greatly concerned with social issues. They were instrumental in fighting slavery, child labor, poverty, and other social ills.

But with the growth of liberalism in the later 1800s with its emphasis on the “social gospel,” there was a reaction against this by setting up strong definitions between “spiritual ministries” and “social ministries.”

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The Problem

In many parts of the world, such as Latin America and Africa, Evangelical churches have been growing rapidly.

Yet they have had little to no impact on the countries they live in as a whole.

Commonly this has been because these churches teach that this world does not matter. Only heaven matters.

Evangelical churches are sometimes charged with hampering social justice, becoming an “opiate for the masses.”

Spiritual versus Social Ministry

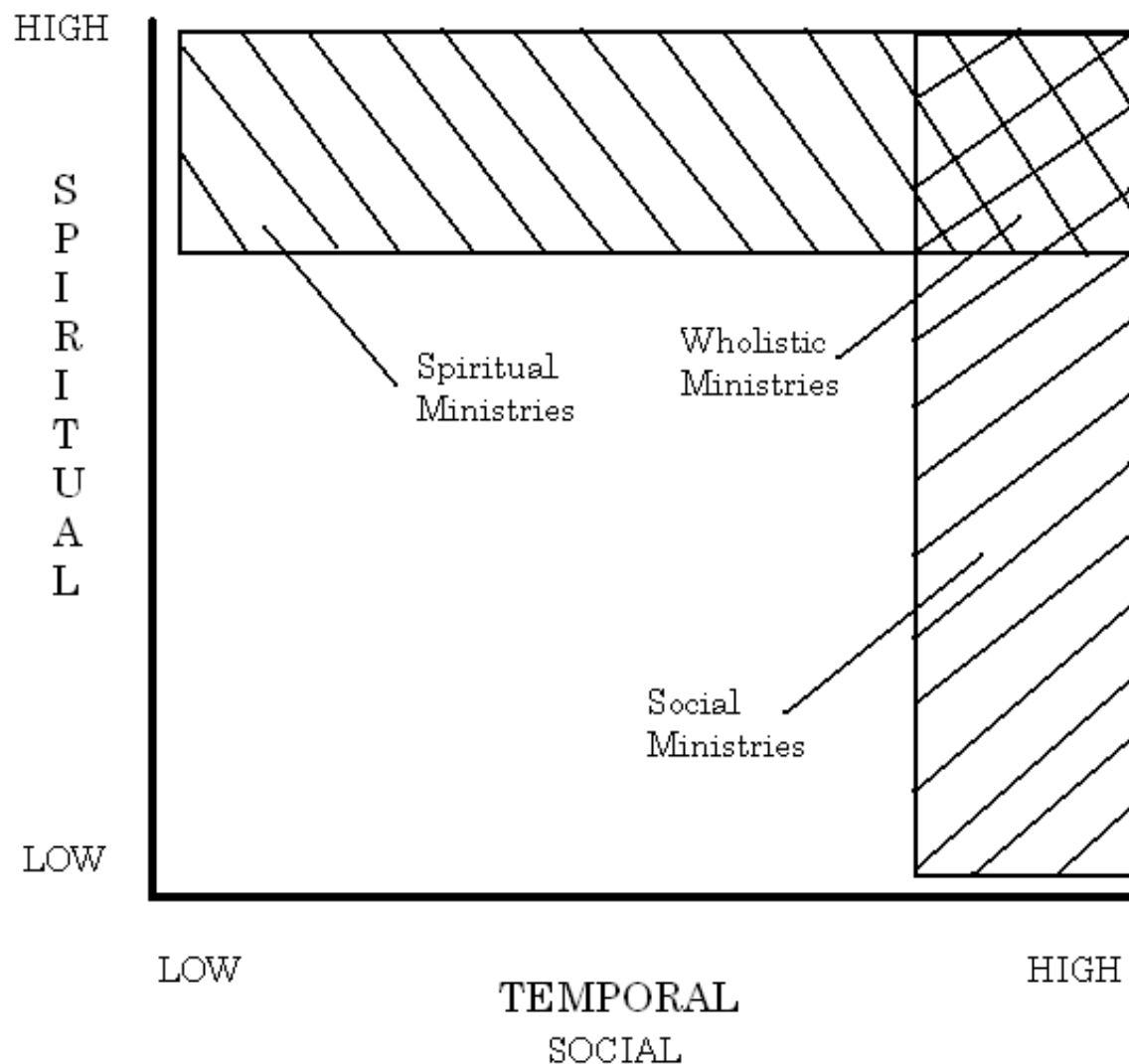
Whether we are Dualists or not, we do tend to separate between ministries we like to think of as “spiritual” (preaching, evangelizing, prayer, etc.) and those we think of as “social” (feeding, livelihood training, social justice, medical care, etc.). If such a division is real, what should we in missions emphasize?

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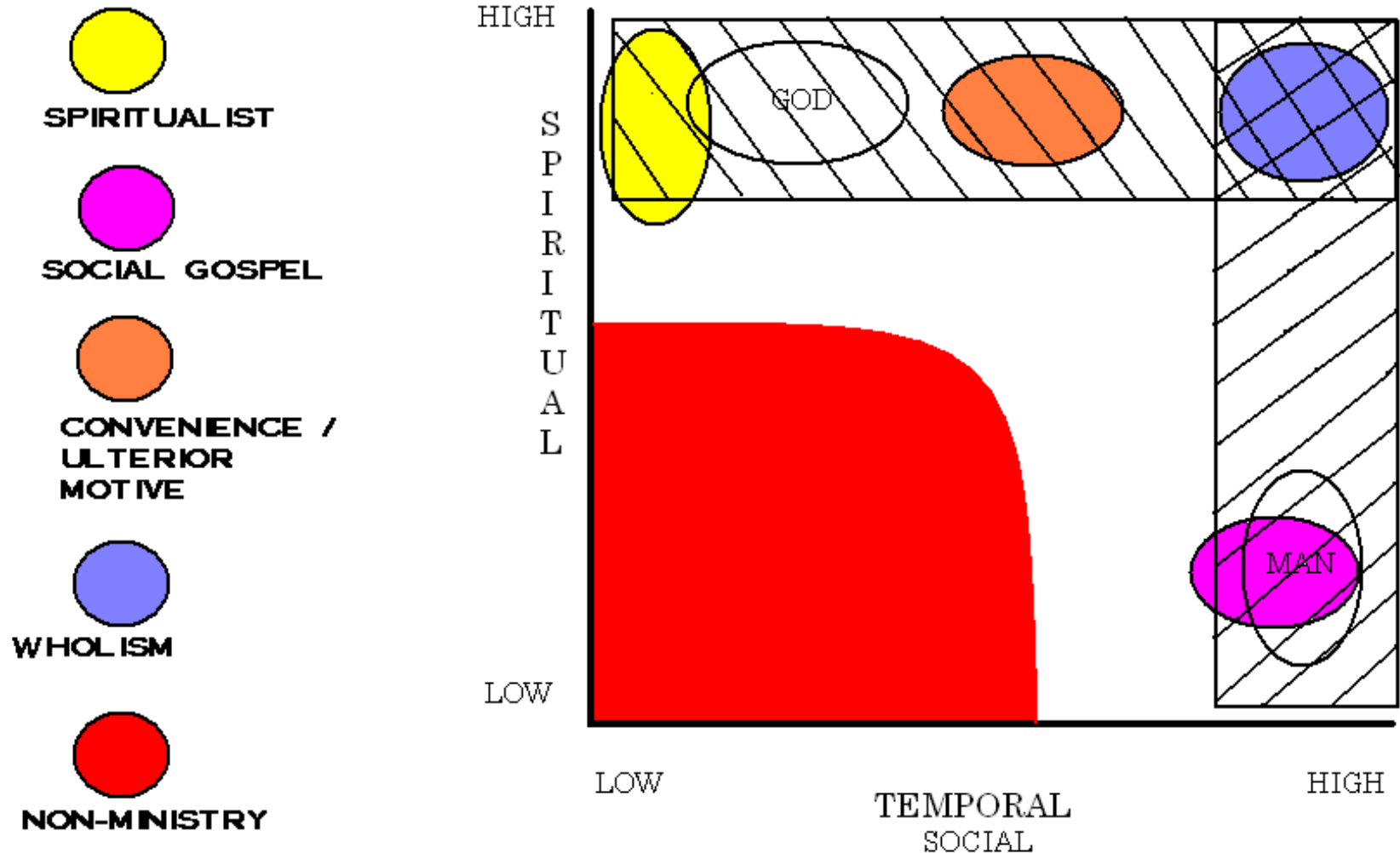
Dualism

Spiritual Dualism is often tied very closely to Apocalypticism. If Christ is returning any moment, then (it is argued by some) the material, social, intellectual, and political worlds around us have no real value. Only “spiritual” ministry has value. Ministry in other areas is wasted labor.

Consider a Spectrum Idea



Attitudes Affect our Ministry



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Development versus Relief

Development involves the gradual transformation of individuals and communities into what they were intended by God to be.

Relief is the immediate meeting of felt and real needs by individuals and communities.

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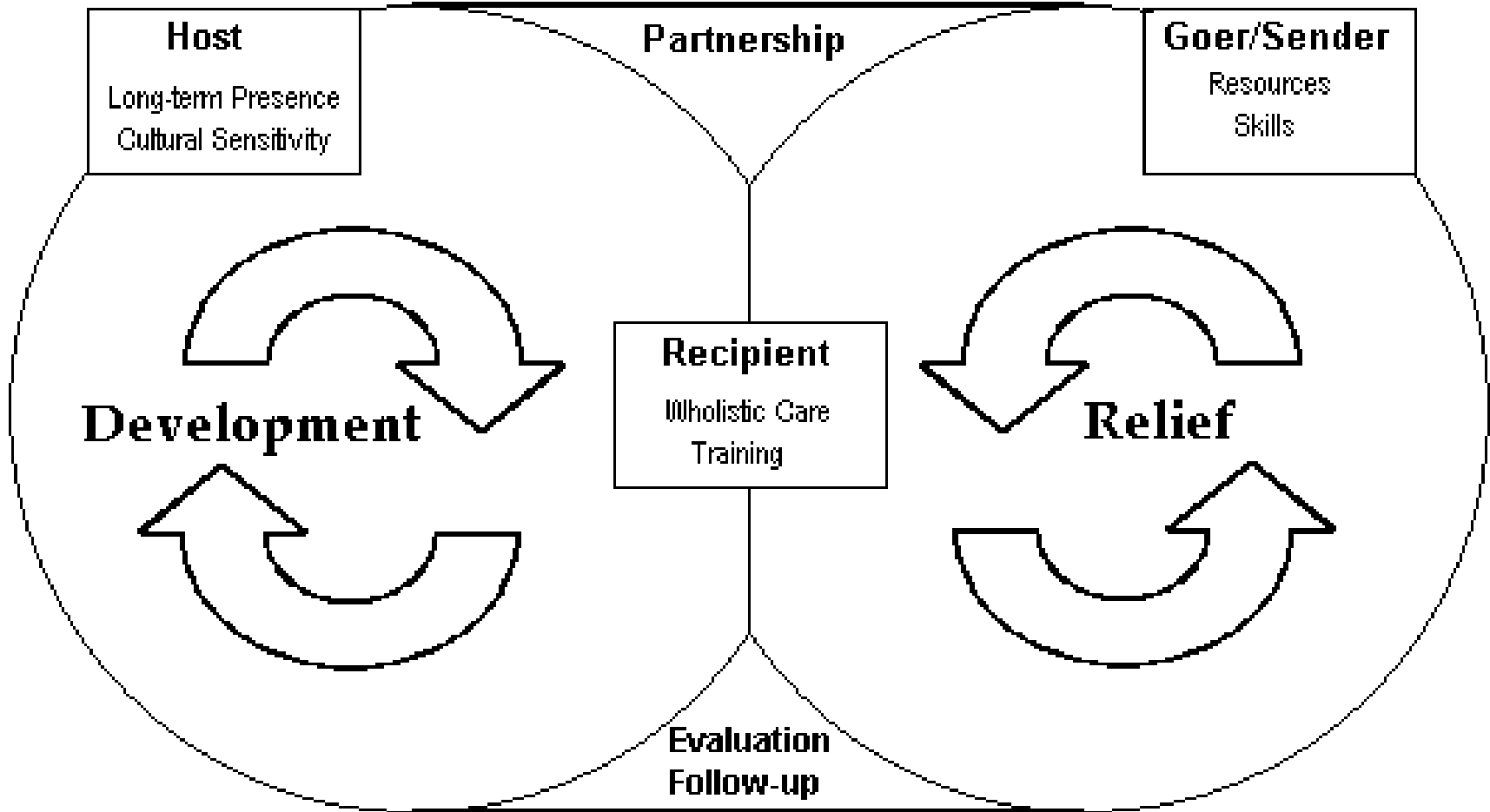
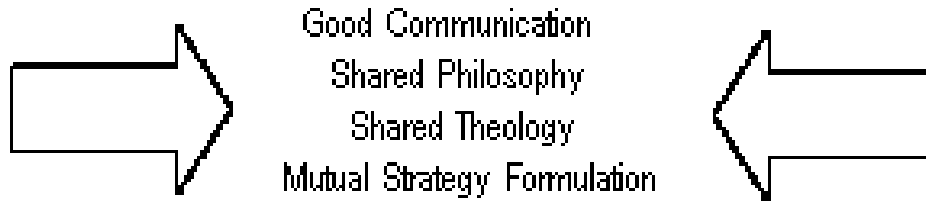
Which should be emphasized?

If only heaven matters, we should focus on relief because problems here on earth don't really matter.

If both heaven and earth matter, we should focus more on development since we want "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

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But why should it be one against the
other?

Perhaps it is possible to do both.
Not only might it be possible, but
perhaps the very act of doing the
one can make the other more
effective?



Model by Bob Munson, 2009

Spiritual Versus Secular Strategies

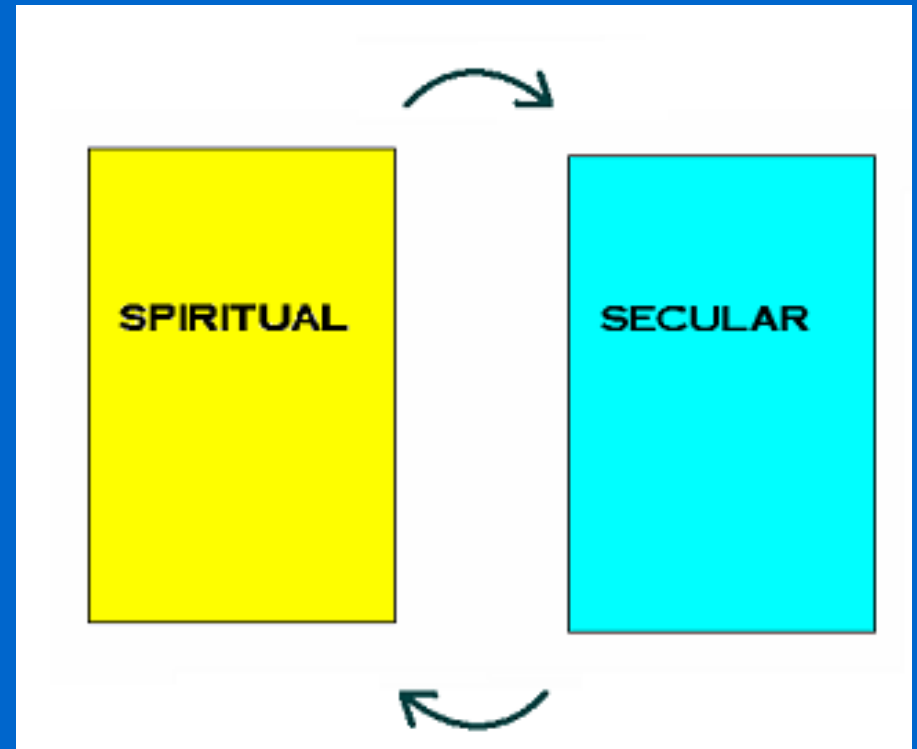
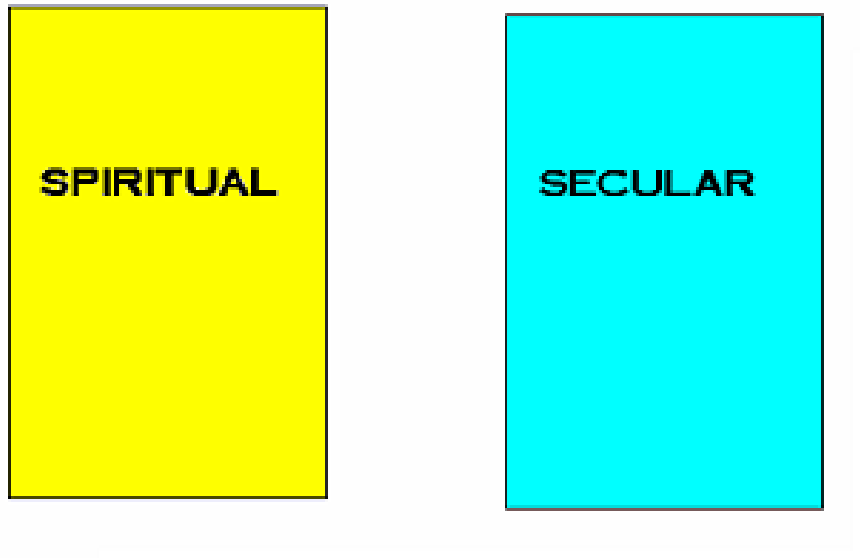
Some charge modern missions to be too focused on strategies, models, and structures. They are not focusing on being led by the Holy Spirit.

Some counter charge the other group with defining spiritual with disorganized and irrational.

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Both seem to have their point, but...

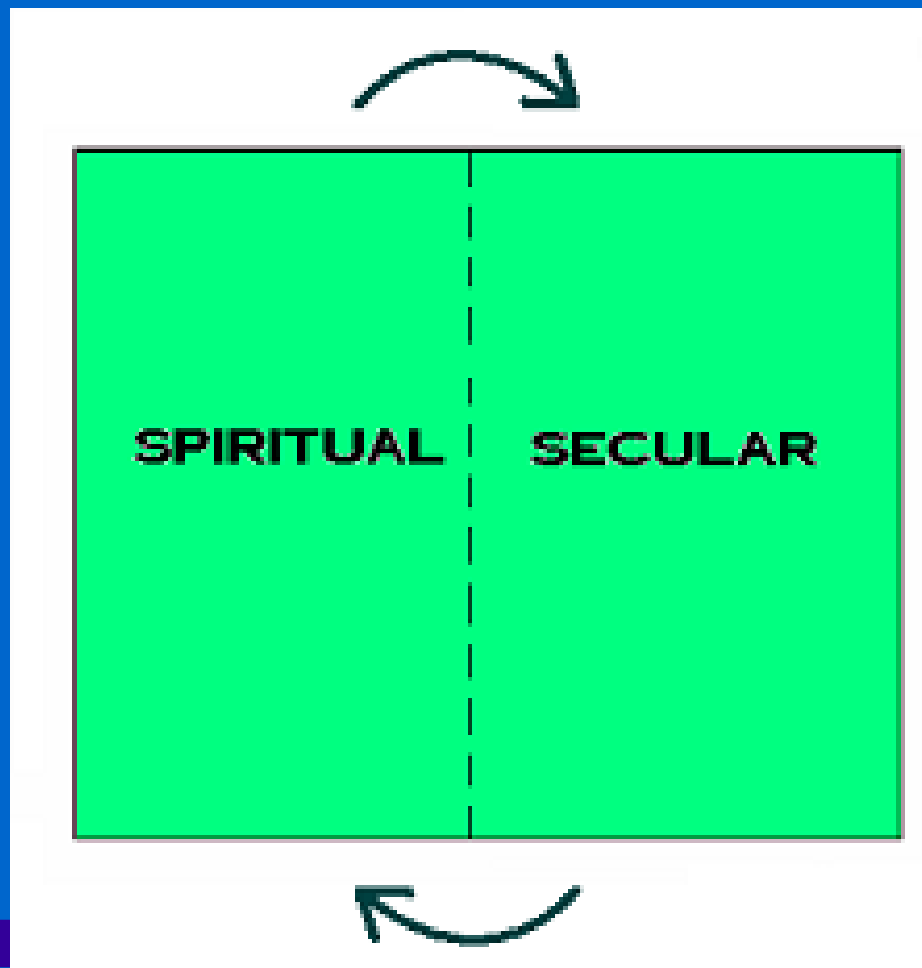
Is there a clear line between the spiritual and the secular?



Consider Luke 10:1-12

- Is looking for a “man of peace” a spiritualistic method or a secular one?
- Staying in one home?
- Doing follow-up if a good response?
- Not bringing food?
- What about preaching and healing?
- Should we separate the two?

- Maybe we should not seek a strong separation between spiritual and secular...



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Pluralism/Postmodernism

- Proclamation versus Dialogue
- Truth versus Perspective
- Revelation versus Relevance

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Proclamation Versus Dialogue

Consider four types of communication:

- Preaching/Proclamation
- Teaching/Education
- Argument/Apologetics
- Dialogue/Discussion

What is emphasized in Seminaries? But what is the need in the post-modern age?

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Proclamation Versus Dialogue

Modernism focuses on the expert who tells others what is “the truth.”
(Proclamation/Teaching)

Post-modernism focuses on searchers who talk and learn from each other to discover “truths.”



Dialogue

Why should we talk?

- To bring people to our viewpoint?
- To understand each other better?
- **To gain insights from each other?**

<The third is probably the most controversial.>



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Dialogue

Dialogue is discussion with those of different beliefs, built on mutual respect with the immediate goal to better understanding each other (without proselytizing).

But good dialogue can break down hindrances to conversion.

Dialogue can also allow for healthy gain of insight from others (ex. Cornelius and Peter)



Truth versus Perspective

- Modernism focuses on the Objective.
- Post-Modernism focuses on the Subjective.

But if we are constrained by our perspective, which is subjective, how can we know with certainty what is objective truth?



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Truth versus Perspective

To a Modernist, truth is objective, so the focus is on reason and proposition.

To a Post-Modernist, (knowable) truth is subjective, so the focus is on experience and perspective.

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Truth versus Perspective

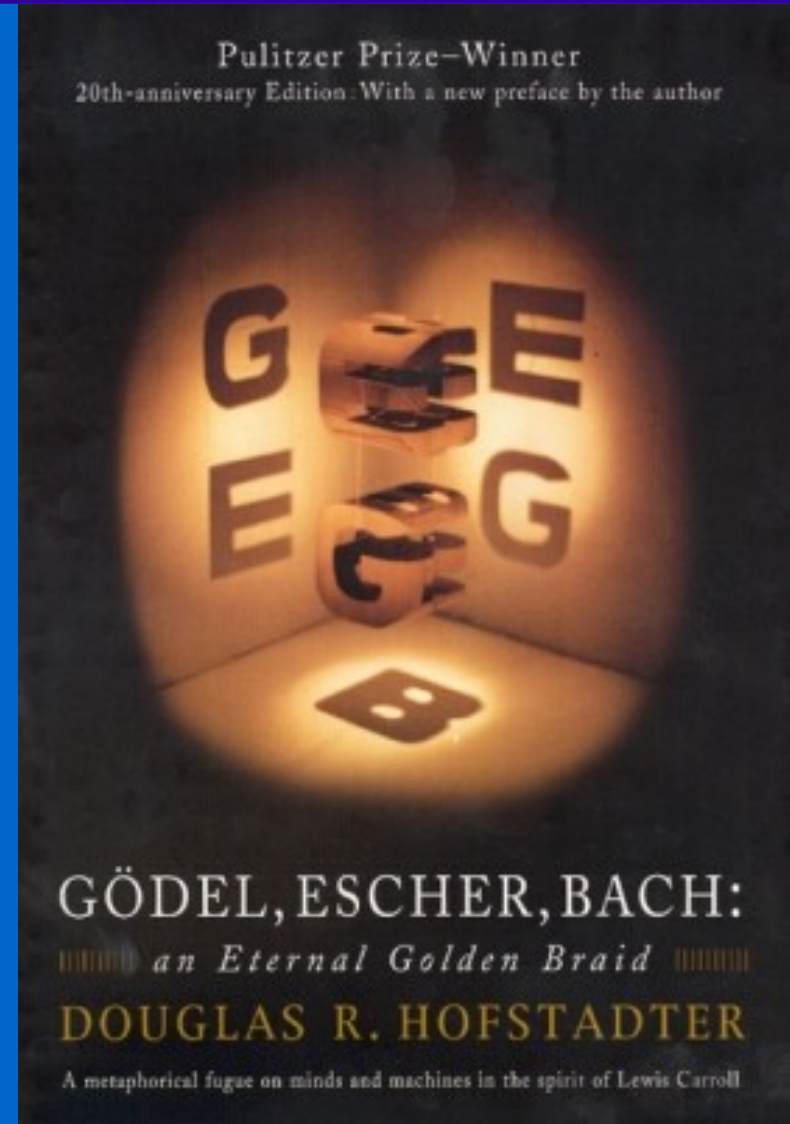
The Modernist focuses on Epistles.

Propositional truth expressed in a somewhat formal, depersonalized manner.

The Post-Modernist focuses on the Gospels and Acts. Experiential (subjective) truth expressed by witnesses (perspective) telling what God has done in their lives.

Truth versus Perspective

While Modernists find comfort in objective, or non-perspectival, truth, many today suspect that combining different perspectives may help us have a fuller understanding of the truth. (like the story of the blind man and the elephant)



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Revelation versus Relevance

Much of our methods to evangelize the world presumes that people already accept much of the Christian Faith in the first place. The Romans Road, Bridge Illustration, Wide and Narrow Way, Dunamis, Wordless Book, and so forth, all are effective if a person already has a Christian Worldview.

Revelation versus Relevance

But what happens when we talk to people that do not share with us concepts such as:

- The reliability of the Bible
- The reality of sin
- The trustworthiness of Jesus
- The role of God as righteous judge.

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Revelation versus Relevance

The post-modern world is pluralistic with too many groups claiming to have “revelation.”

Post-modern thought tends to focus less on what WAS.

There is a greater tendency to focus on what WORKS.



Revelation versus Relevance

As such... they care less about what some “god” did thousands of years ago. They care more about what God is doing in your life now.

If they can't see God making a difference in your life... God may be real, but not relevant.



Revelation versus Relevance

The ability to “contextualize” or make the revelation of the Bible relevant to the post-modern society is hugely important in missions.

One necessary component of this is consistency between the revelation of the past and revelation of your life. Otherwise God/god/He/She/It can't be very relevant, can it?

Topic 1: Money

- Churches should not send people. Just send money? (Christian Aid Mission)
- Churches should fund missionaries, but not send extra resources? It just creates dependencies.
- Churches should send missionaries, but not fund them. (bivocational)
- Churches should fund missionaries, and send additional resources. (But how much?)



Topic 1: Church

- Churches should do all missions? “The church is the only institution ordained by God to carry out His work on earth.”
- Churches should stay out of missions, except to provide bodies and money? Leave it to the experts.
- Churches should partner with mission organizations.
- Churches should.....?





Contemporary Issues in Missions



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