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Facing A Culture In Trouble

Is evangelism the best route to a just society, or does a just society hold the best prospect for personal evangelism?

Carl F. H. Henry

A secular elite today reduces distinctions of right from wrong to matters of cultural choice or simply personal preference. What is immoral in Missouri need not be immoral on Capitol Hill.

The very concept of universally shared truth and good is now even viewed by ethical relativists as oppressive. Human freedom is said to require autonomous moral decision. Anyone who insists that what was true in December must also be true in January is regarded as victimized by a mental block. Humans manufacture their own moral codes; every human self reigns as sovereign in the stipulation of right and wrong.

The desire for ethico-cultural renewal understandably fades away when moral and social distinctions are considered merely optional and are deprived of objective significance. There may indeed be changes of mores or of behavioral fashions, but no universally valid norm is admitted whereby the self or society can be evaluated as morally superior or inferior. Third-world dictatorships are considered "as good as" first-world democracies; if the category of "better" or "worse" retains any principled relevance, first-world nations are considered worse while the others are lauded for their distinctiveness.

One can readily understand how in a time like ours the partisans of enduring truth and morality long fervently for ethical and cultural recovery. For the consequences of per-



sonal and civic deterioration are costly: human life sooner or later loses any distinctive worth and meaning, in the absence of shared truth and morality civilization becomes impossible, and the history of humanity is exposed to dreadful divine judgment.

Yet not every proposal for coping with the high tide of immorality and violence, and for replacing it by a well-ordered view of life and culture, is as promising as it may at first appear.

The problems run deeper than the debate over whether it is humanity that needs first to be changed in the effort to transform culture, or whether the renewal of culture will in turn regenerate man. That question, to be sure, is an important one. It is today often stated in terms of the respective roles of social justice and evangelism. Is evangelism the best route to a just society? Or does a just society hold the best prospect for personal evangelism? Does Christian evangelism and theology legitimately expect the universal regeneration and sanctification of all humanity? Does the New Testament itself hold out the prospect of universal conversion?

An even deeper concern confronts us, that is, the rival ways in which human nature itself and its perfection are to be understood. The classical Greek and the Hebrew-Christian outlooks differ strikingly in this matter. The Greek philosophers spoke routinely of *areté* or human virtue. The Hebrews had no term corresponding to *areté* and the New Testament virtually ignores it, so that it has no really significant role in Scripture. It does occur in Phil 4:8 ("if there be any virtue") and in 2 Pt 1:5 ("add to your faith excellence").

If the early Church was aware that unconverted humans at times display qualities of goodness in view of conscience and reflections of the *imago Dei* that (albeit sullied) survived in fallen mankind, this is in undeniable ways distinguished nonetheless from speculative ethics. For Christian morality excluded the secular notion of autonomous virtue and it subsumed all such manifestations under the canopy of love and faith.

The New Testament catalogue of ethical excellencies does not embrace the Platonic cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, prudence and jus-

tice, which track rather through Aristotle and the Stoics. Subsequently these so-called virtues were adopted by Catholic theologians, who superimposed upon these the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

But the attempt to unite these two streams of ethical exposition -- speculative and revelatory -- was unsuccessful. Not only is autonomous virtue a conception unknown to the New Testament, but what the New Testament means by human goodness reflects a regenerate spirit and not an achievement of the sinful natural man. In the Graeco-Roman speculative tradition the moral life is thought to be realized by the gradual improvement and the achievement of mankind's unregenerate nature. In the Christian view, the moral life is attained by the crucifixion of the old or unregenerate nature and the birth of a new nature or character through the Holy Spirit.

Greek philosophers taught, moreover, that if one knows the truth or the good, he or she will pursue it. The human predicament was essentially a lack of information. Christianity, on the other hand, holds that man's predicament lies not simply in a lack of knowledge. Indeed, the Old Testament holds that humans are responsible for not performing what they know to be right, and not alone for areas of ignorance. Greek philosophy skirts around the fact of human sinfulness and the need of divine redemption; it ignores the reality of divine revelation and the absolute necessity of the new birth. Nothing in Plato or in the Stoics parallels the Pauline emphasis on the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22).

The aggressive involvement of American conservative Christians in the present culture war has stimulated talk of a new society and virtuous community that challenges the ongoing deterioration of contemporary culture. Enthusiasm for political engagement may be long overdue, yet there is a danger that evangelicals may duplicate the fallacy of the modernists a generation ago who sought what they considered an ideal society mainly through legislative imposition.

That is not to say that the political arena is unimportant, or that a theocracy is the ideal form of government, or that the role of democracy in



The New Tool of Internet For Mission



Forum attendants

The first Internet Mission Forum in the summer of 2009 was held in Menlo Park, California. Various organizations came to share their ideas, their definition of IMF, and how they may fit in the new tool of the World Wide Web for mission. This generated a lot of enthusiasm among the attendants and they agreed to meet again in 2010.

With many months' of intense preparation from the four sponsoring organizations (Oversea Campus Ministries, JesusCentral.com, Jidutu-wiki.org, and Great Commission Center International) and the generous support of the Chinese Bible Church of San Diego, IMF II took place at the beautiful CBCSD Sanctuary on August 28, 2010. The official attendance of over 110 people far surpassed the first IMF.

The daylong program began with Rev. Edwin Su delivering an inspiring opening keynote on Challenges Facing Internet Mission and its New Trends. This was followed by four interest-



Forum Chairman Rev Edwin Su



Lunch meeting of speaker, representatives of sponsoring organizations and pastors

ing workshops of diversified subjects:

- **How church organizations should participate in Internet Mission**
- **How to use the Internet Platform efficiently**
- **Website planning and Management**
- **How to become Internet Missionaries**

Rev. Thomas Wang concluded the Forum with words of encouragement. He asked the audiences to hold fast to the biblical truth, do not

deviate from the gospel, and encouraged everyone to utilize the Internet as an important tool for mission. Furthermore, he cautioned everyone to not let technological dominance causing the downgrade of mission principle, but focus on Mission for all people, all geographies and all generations. And finally he emphasized the importance of praying to our Lord for guidance.

It was good that we heard pioneers of IMF sharing their stories, their experience and their challenges. And hopefully more awareness has been raised and more church leaders and organization are stepping up to the Internet Mission challenges.

Cooperation will no doubt be a great open door for gospel truth incorporating the strength of various organizations (content, technical skills and facilities). The user's end device could be a

handheld pc/personal gadget that could reach the mass public. The success of such undertaking depends a great deal on all of us to develop, to envision, to give and to cooperate.

Before we left, Rev. Edwin Su announced that IMF III would be held in New York City in the summer of 2011. The format will be expanded to two days with the first day a day of technical discussions and interchanges, and the second day open to general audience. We are once again hopeful that with our Lord's blessing, IMF III will truly become the turning point of cooperation and collaboration for Internet Mission among Chinese churches of the world.

► the preservation of freedom should be ignored. But in the long run, democracy detached from Christian principles unwittingly deteriorates into chaos. The political arena deals with the enactment of laws, and these are indispensable to the preservation of society. But laws lose their power apart from the reality and revelation of God and man's moral character and good will. It is not fear of the magistrate's sword alone but especially faith, hope and love that will write God's law upon the heart of humanity.

There is a notable revival of interest in the classic Greek virtues as indispensable for cultural cohesion. The reshaping of a degenerate culture is thereby conditioned on the restoration of virtue. Catholic theology supplements the philosophical virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice – which the classical ancient philosophers considered a human potential – by the New Testament moral excellencies of love, faith and hope.

The Bible does not deny the unregenerate self's possession of some knowledge of God. The general or universal revelation of God is given externally in nature and history and internally in and through the mind (Rom 1) and conscience (Rom 2) of humanity. But the unconverted

person distorts and perverts that knowledge. A rebellious volition warps God's revelation. Fallen humanity is responsible and inexcusable, enslaved to sin and culpable. All of us lack the inherent capacity for spiritual and moral renewal. Only on the ground of the Redeemer's substitutionary life and death are we by faith mercifully forgiven and renewed.

The evangelical political objective is not the development of a new society, much as the great commission and the cultural mandate must be grasped together. The new society is already here, and more than in embryo; it is here in the regenerate church. Its task is to call itself and the rebellious world to the standards for which human life was created and by which the returning King will judge humanity and the nations, and to apply the creation ethic – reinforced by Scripture – by way of example. It is to remind our planet that what is really true in Washington and Moscow and Bosnia is true because it is true in heaven and hell.

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Mission internship: A mission agency has introduced new internship opportunities for people 19 years old or older. Internship varies in length and location, available on almost every continent and in areas including agriculture, art, childcare, hospitality, teaching computer skills and English as a secondary language. Most do not require fluency in a foreign language, but each intern need to raise support and be instructed in how to do this by the agency.

<The Mission Society, www.themissionsociety.org, 8/4/10>

USA: In 3 weeks time, a team of 50 native American teen leaders traveled 4,500 miles across the nation to nine different reservations. They shared testimonies of the way the Lord reached them and brought them out of violence, anger and suffering of despair, sexual abuse suicide attempts, brokenness, etc. It resonated with the experience of many Native American youths, and over 600 were led to Christ in front of their community on basketball courts. The sponsoring agency arranged for the local churches to follow up on the new Christians. 27 of the 50 leaders feel a call to further their education through Bible school and return to minister to their people.

<Ron Hutchcraft Ministries, hutchcraft.com, 8/5/10>

Nepal: The national religion is under renewed debate as the nation of 29 million strives to pass a new constitution cementing its transition from monarchy to republic. The Maoist party and the nation's 700,000 Christians are calling the government to honor promises of a secular state, while the Hindu factions increasingly demonstrate support of reestablishing a Hindu nation. Since 2006 the nation has a secular government technically, but Christians claim they are still persecuted and conversions remains illegal.

<Christianity Today, July 10>

Iran: In some house churches, believers close their service by praying over New Testaments. Then they each take 7 copies and hand at least one each day to a non-believer, knowing full well that if they get caught, they face death.

<Vision Beyond Borders, www.VBBonline.org, 7/22/10>

Mozambique: In June 2009, a believer obtained an audio Bible and shared with others under a tree. Today there are 43 enthusiastic believers trying to build a place of worship.

<Audio Scripture Ministries of Holland, www.asmtoday.com, 7/22/10>

Ecuador: After 10 years working among the Quichua people and 80 new churches, a missionary couple felt drawn to the slum dwellers in a South Asian city of 14 million. 18 Quichua Christians committed to follow the couple to be the first overseas missionaries of their tribe.

<International Mission Board, imb.org, 7/9/10>

Missions vs Evangelism: The concept of missions (international) vs evangelism (domestic) is outdated in a world of immigration, refugees and diasporas. The Southern Baptist Convention is considering to remove restriction on the work of their International Mission Board (IMB) in US and Canada, the area for their North American Mission Board. Study shows 3,800 mission workers work among first-generation immigrants in this area. Yet 25% of these 202 immigrant groups remain unreached. It would be ideal for the IMB missionaries on furlough to lead and be involved in ministry to the very people they have been trained to evangelize.

<Christianity Today, July 10>

USA: Statistics shows Christian teens are less enthusiastic to share their faith, dropping from 63% in 1997 to 45% in 2009. Yet an agency working among Christian college students reports historical record number of conversions in the last 5 years. They reason that the teens accept cultural view of tolerance and not offending anyone, while the college students emphasize prayer life, Bible study, and more understanding and conviction that Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

<InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, www.intervarsity.org, 7/20/10>

Africa: Taking advantage of the soccer fever of the World Cup, an agency has partnered with a local group to start a soccer ministry. They train coaches to go out to gather kids to coach and mentor them. In Africa, all you need to do is bounce a ball and walk around. Youths and kids flock to you. Each coach develops 2 to 3 teams of 12-20 kids. Kids learn to play ball as well as character building and the gospel message. The program has thousands of kids now all over the continent.

<Biblica (International Bible Society), www.biblica.com, 7/5/10>

Haiti: 6 months after earthquake, there is much rebuilding, yet destruction is still there. As people seeing the love of Christ in action, churches have exploded with growth. Last Easter, a church of 1,000 before the quake baptized some 1,300 people. They now have 8-9,000 each week.

<Global Aid Network, www.gain.org, 7/8/10>

Indonesia: Since 2003 a radio broadcasting agency with local partners have planted 40 radio stations. Some 3-5 listeners come to Christ daily and 1176 churches are planted across the nation. Their goal is to have one station in each of the 100 provinces. They also reach out to orphans and have mobile medical teams hoping to build a clinic in each station. This window of opportunity may be narrow as the Islamists seek to bring back Muslim law hindering their ministry.

<HCJB Global, www.hcjb.org, 7/29/10>

Prayer Rally Prays for America's Repentance



The 2010 America Return To God prayer rally was held on September 19 at the Hilton hotel near the San Francisco international Airport. This year, the theme is about Pray and Revive. Over 300 people came to the half-day event. The afternoon session was in Chinese attended by believers all over the Bay area.

The worship team from Crosspoint Chinese church started the event with beautiful praise songs. This was followed by a series of brief messages. Rev. Abraham Chiu reminded the audience to participate in the schools so as to protect our children from harmful curriculums. Rev. Tong Liu talked about church revival and Christian participation in public affairs. Mr. Larry Pegram encouraged every citizen to register to vote. Rev. Thomas Wang described how missionaries have risked their lives to evangelize China. Chinese immigrants should reverse the favor by helping America to return to God. Everyone was energized

A combined church choir followed the speeches and sang the theme song Return to God in response. Then a parade of pastors came

on stage and led the audience in a sequence of prayers. Rev. Jack Hu began with thanksgiving, then confessed our sins and prayed for personal revival. Rev. Walter Lau called for family revival, improving marital and intergenerational relationships. Rev. Peter Wong cried out to God for the deliverance from the sins of the church and pleaded the church to make an impact on the society and to the world. Lastly Rev. Daniel Tan inspired the congregation to pray for America's revival in her culture, economy and the government. Most of the congregation was on the knees crying out to the Lord for repentance and revival. Most everyone felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and was invigorated and uplifted. Some pastors expressed willingness to join the prayer movement after the session.

Mr. Pegram and Rev. Wang also spoke on the same topics respectively in the companion English session in the evening with attendance exceeding 100. Although with different worship team, music presentation, and prayer leaders, the atmosphere of the session, the impact on the audience and their response were quite similar to

that of the afternoon session.

Five years ago, God used Rev. Thomas Wang to initiate the America Return To God Prayer Movement. Now a good number of churches and pastors see the importance of this movement and respond with support and participation. It is our prayer that this prayer movement will spread to other parts of the United States. The following statement was issued by America Return To God Prayer Movement.

Our confession and conviction

1. We confess that America is heading in the wrong direction and drifting away from God.
2. We confess that the decline of our country, be it economical, moral, educational and political, is mainly the result of deviation from biblical principles.
3. We confess our corporate and individual sins and ask God for forgiveness. We seek God's transforming power to deliver us from our bondage of sin.
4. We believe that the destruction of traditional values will produce domino effects in social, educational, and political spheres, and will cause much suffering to the people.
5. We believe that the institution of marriage between one man and one woman originated from God at the beginning of the human race is the only legitimate marital system that provides a healthy environment for parents and children.
6. We believe that REAL HOPE does not come from human or government endeavor, but from God, the Creator and Sustainer of all.
7. We believe that if we humble ourselves before God and turn from our sinful ways, He will hear our prayers and grant REAL CHANGE to America.

America must return to God for REAL hope and REAL change.

(by Dr. Bill Tam, Director of Traditional Family Coalition)

Rev. Abraham Chiu



Mr. Larry Pegram



Rev. Jenny Quey



Rev. Tong Liu



Rev. Thomas Wang



Combine Choir



End Time and Mission Rally

Official Representatives from different nations



*Rev. Thomas Wang,
Speaker*



Mission Revival Meeting



The General Assembly Meeting of the Ling Liang World-Wide Evangelistic Mission Association (LLWWMA) is held once every third year. This year it was held on September 10 – 13 at the Ling Liang Church in Los Angeles.

More than 30 leaders of Ling Liang churches from all around the world including those from Canada, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Indonesia attended. Together with the leaders from the two Ling Liang churches in Los Angeles, the 50+ spiritual shepherds gathered in fellowship, prayer, consultation, personal interaction, and receiving spiritual messages.

The three evening spiritual enrichment meetings from Friday through Sunday were open to congregations of the Ling Liang churches as well as Christians in the Greater Los Angeles and neighboring South Bay areas. Some one thousand people came to these meetings. Invited speaker, Rev. Dr. Thomas Wang, spoke on “The End Time Evangelization Mission of The Church.” From the messages, the audience

gained a much better understanding of the situation of the end time before the return of the Lord as recorded in the Bible, the church’s responsibility to influence the society positively, and the urgent mission of worldwide evangelization.

Rev. Wang also conducted two seminars on Monday for the co-workers. He helped us realize deeper the biblical principle of concurrent same-culture, near-culture, and trans-culture mission endeavors, as well as the double mission of the church on gospel and cultural mandates.

We thank God for the blessing that all of us received during this event. We shall return to our churches with this blessing and continue in our ministry diligently to expand the Kingdom and wait for the return of the Lord.

(by Wilson Lee, LLWWEMA President 2007-2010)