



The ACID TEST of missions is not merely how many followers missionaries have produced. It is the quality of the vision of those followers. Never before has as massive a global INQUIRY been launched probing exactly that!

Ralph D. Winter



Dear friend,

I get disturbed and dismayed sometimes when I visit a highly “missionary minded” church. Why? The people may be very faithfully sending missionaries and yet be almost totally in the dark about the overall “score” in missions. They may know a little about the progress of the work of their own missionaries. But that is like a “keyhole view” of the whole scene. It seems like a great leap forward of exuberant concern for missions would result if sending churches could only discover the truly amazing impact modern missions has had on the entire face of the globe.

Yes, it’s as if (and this is a silly analogy) churches were praying for years for their missionaries to have enough “rivets,” not realizing that the missionaries were using rivets in the construction of a huge 747. That’s when people back home don’t grasp clearly what it is that their missionaries are trying to do. Sounds like John the Baptist who was looking for the wrong thing, “Are you the one to come, or do we look for another?” For example, do we merely measure the advance of the glory of God, the kingdom of God, and the destruction of the works of Satan by how many people say

they believe in Jesus?” In huge congregations in Africa if you ask how many “believe in Jesus” everyone enthusiastically raises their hands. But their daily lives may not have changed the slightest. What about the African head of state who loves Bible studies but murders his opponents?

When John the Baptist wondered what Jesus was up to, Jesus sent word back, “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear,” etc. But this was apparently not what John was looking for. Yet this powerfully demonstrated a God, a Father in heaven, who was truly concerned about human suffering.

To glorify God in all the earth is a task not easily reducible to measurement of evangelism. A much more important ACID TEST of missions is more likely the quality of the vision of those followers. This is where the current “World Inquiry” comes in. Never before has as massive a global INQUIRY been launched asking exactly that! It is being led by that indefatigable, masterful diplomat in global collaboration, Luis Bush. Rick Wood’s two pages (6-7) describe what has already gone on (involving over 5,000 leaders!).

Why is this so cogent, so necessary? One reason is that local churches only have a “keyhole”

view of things. Another is that everyone benefits when the results of what we are doing are better known. There may be (as for John the Baptist) some things we have not expected! It is a sad thing when what we expect to see isn’t what God wants to happen.

I am reminded of the huge hot air balloons employed during the Civil War, allowing a better view of what the other army was doing, beyond ordinary vision. I am also reminded that the single most influential book in the history of missions has been William Carey’s *Enquiry*. That 96-page book even though to some extent “guess work,” sketched out the state of affairs of the Gospel for every square inch of the Earth’s surface.

Further, I am reminded of the little-known “Society for Missionary Inquiry,” which began in the days of the Haystack Prayer Meeting and hung on at U. S. colleges for the next hundred years,

undergirding the much later Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. All of

this kind of “inquiry” has enabled the missionary movement to refine its vision, and move forward with knowledge and confidence. Really, we MUST know what is happening “out there.”

Today thousands of young people are going “out there” in “short terms” who really don’t have the faintest idea of what truly needs to be done. Many mission candidates are leaving for the field without a clear idea of what they should do or what is really happening.

The Inquiry is a step in the right direction. Read on! 🌐

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