The Americanization of Christianity

by Gene Edwards
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by Gene Edwards
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There is nothing to prevent a Universal American church or the Americanization of Christianity except the re-discovery of the uniquely local and organic expression of the church.

DEDICATION: To the memory of Roland Allen, who advised us of these matters almost a century ago.

Author's Note:

In reading a book, there comes to the mind of the reader something which, in literature, is called the author's voice. Unless you have actually heard the author speak, or know him, your imagination must furnish his voice. Often the voice of the reader and the disposition of the reader are what create that voice.

May I help you find the voice of this book? The book is written with malice toward none and charity toward all, and spiced with a bit of east Texas humor and a Texas accent.

Table of Contents

Author's Note
Part I - Seeing the Problem
The Americanization of Christianity / 1
The Third Choice / 5
How To Be Passed By / 9
The Blackest Hour in the History of Missions / 13
The Scandal of Nepal / 19
The Americanization of Nepal / 25
The Irony / 31
Are There Others Who Have Done A Better Job
Than Americans / 35
9. Are Indigenous Churches Possible In Unreached Lands / 41
10. America, Will We Change? / 51

Part II - Seeking a Solution

11. The American "Revolution" of the Church / 57
12. Behind The Scenes Of A Para-Church Organization / 61
13. The American Missionary/Tourist / 71
14. Colonizers To The End / 75
15. Two Closely Guarded Secrets / 79
16. The Nicest Thing About Para-Church Organizations / 85
17. Church-Planting Organizations?? / 87
18. To Whom This Book Was Written / 89
19. Who Is At Fault? / 97
Conclusion / 101
A Challenge / 105
Addendum / 109
To The English Speaking Reader / 115 The Next Step / 117

1. The Americanization of Christianity

I have seen it happen twice in my lifetime.
The first time, I was shocked and dismayed.
But there was nothing I could do.
I was only nineteen years old.
I am watching it happen again, but this time I am sixty. And I can do something about it.
This time, so can you!
When Western Europe Was Americanized

Right after the worst war in human history Western Europe was given American Christianity. At that time the continent of Europe was a pile of rubble, its people crawling out of cellars and basements.

As Europeans dug out of the ruins, they looked up and saw American Christians coming over by the boatloads. We came to evangelize western Europe. We stayed to Americanize it.

We American Christians filled up tents and giant stadiums... and preached the gospel to millions. And thousands upon thousands were saved.

When word of all this excitement got back to America, more of us Americans came! And more American money poured in. Western Europe met American evangelism. The American Christian mindset swept western Europe.

European Christians welcomed us, back in those days. After all, we were ever-smiling, clean-cut, happy and enthusiastic. We built Bible schools for them and taught them our mindset.

We Americanized evangelical Christianity in western Europe. Since that time American-style evangelism has covered a large part of this planet. So has the American practice of "church." (To name a few: Korea, Africa, Latin America!)

Could things have turned out better than they did?

Western European Christians had three choices at that time. (Unfortunately, they were aware of only two!)

The First Choice

The first choice western Europeans had was to go back to the dead way the churches there had done things before the war. European ministers who selected this choice signed their own death certificates! Today the more traditional churches of Europe are pretty much written off!

The Second Choice

The second choice was to imitate the American version of Christianity. This was easy to do. We Americans were swarming everywhere opening Bible schools, founding retreat centers, mission boards, bringing in our denominational and non-denominational movements.

(None of us knew it at the time, but we were inventing and perfecting what later came to be called the para-church organizations.)

We Americans had money to give western European Christians! Lots of money. All you had to do to get some of that money was to join one of the dozens of American missions, denominations, evangelistic organizations, or Bible schools we boated over to you.

If you did this, you then received our graces and our money. In turn, we Americanized you.

The European churches which took the American approach to the Christian faith grew. Never forget that. Those Americanized churches flourished. They got big. They became successful

Repeat: Americanized European churches spread all over Europe and became successful. The traditional European churches shriveled up.

The best and biggest - and certainly the most lively - churches in western Europe today are an Americanized version of the church.

Dear western European, we Americans Americanized your western European churches. We did it. Never think we did not.

We Americanized you. We did the same thing in Latin America and most of Africa.

That brings up the subject of eastern Europe. The only reason we did not Americanize the eastern European churches back in those days was because of Communist guns.

Now, dear eastern European Christians, it is your turn to be Americanized!

We are coming. No! We have come!! We have arrived. This very day we are hard at work Americanizing you, eastern Europeans! We are giving you the American version of Christianity and the church.

UNIVERSALISM VS. UNIQUENESS

Such universalism has happened in Christianity before. The Roman Catholics stated this practice and with an iron fist held all of Christendom to one church expression for a thousand years! Later, as other denominations emerged they practiced a “one and only one expression”.

Every denomination in Christendom has some unique feature in the way they 'do church’. This "way" does not change regardless of the nation or culture that movements go into. No Changes. None!

Every para-church organization has a “how to do it” manual and they use that manual in every nation and culture they enter, No changes. None!

But we are now past the smaller universe of a denomination's ways. These practices are ubiquitous only in this limited circle of influence. We face a much larger sphere of influence: the American mind-set ruling all of evangelical Christendom! The American Christian culture being the only matrix known by born again believers... no matter where they live. A worldwide American church, a worldwide American Christianity.

What a dark and dreadful day that will be. Or has that day already arrived?

How do you feel about that? Which brings us to the third choice. This is the choice which you in eastern Europe need to make right now. It is the choice which western Europe missed! It would not hurt western Europeans to try again. Or all the rest of the tribes, tongues and nations of this earth who are now part of the Americanized Christian faith. Otherwise, universalism will win again on this planet. We do not need a universal American church any more than we needed a one universal Roman church. We cannot afford a second ecclesiological Dark Ages.

In the next chapter I am going to speak very frankly to eastern European Christians. (You who live in other parts of the world are invited to listen, as this affects everyone.) We come now to the third choice. It is far better than your first choice; and, yes, it is also better than your second choice.

2. The Third Choice

Listen carefully eastern Europeans. Never forget, just after the holocaust Of World War II, the churches of western Europe still had a third choice. In fact, everyone who reads this book still has a third choice! In the case of the churches of western Europe: (1) you could have walked away from your

400-year-old dead way of doing things. (2) You could have rejected the Americanization of the western European church. (3) You could have cast out into uncharted waters and come up with a whole, new — unique — local, indigenous, culture-matching expression of the ecclesia!

You did not do that, western Europe!

What will you do, eastern Europe?

Right now those of you who are native to eastern Europe are headed in exactly the same direction western Europe went after the war. But never forget, there is a third choice. You and you alone will make the choice.

I fear some of you might stay with the first choice. Angered at the Americanization of churches in eastern Europe you may reject the third choice, therefore choosing to stay the way you are!!

YOU MUST CHANGE

Dear Christian of eastern Europe, your churches are dead — face it. Your first step is to recognize and admit the utter deadness of your church service.

The way you meet on Sunday morning is boring and dreadful. Admit it! Face it. That is your first step. Your churches have absolutely no appeal to the people of your own country. Stay the way you are and the people of your nation will pass over you. Forever!

Keep on having your dreadful Sunday morning meetings and you will die a slow, uneventful, unnoticed death. And no one will care. Then where will believers go? Down the street to an Americanized church! This is a new era in the history of Christianity in eastern Europe. Change or die. Your people, those native to your country, are changing. You must change with them or get passed by.

This age does not belong to those of you who minister in - and those of you who attend — the churches of the past. The way you meet lost its appeal long ago. You do not belong to this present age. You are an anachronism. Stay with the way you meet and the way you do "church" and you will die!

Your first choice is no choice at all. You must change!

That brings you to the second choice — to be Americanized. Look around. It is happening all over eastern Europe. Has it already started in your life? Probably! Have American money and American ways already entered your life and the life of your church? And your friends? Your city? Your people!

Even if you refuse to be Americanized, you will be Americanized. When American para-church organizations are everywhere in eastern Europe, when you are surrounded by them, when all the other churches in your area are Americanized... the people in your church will simply walk off and leave you. They will go there. They will go where things are new, fresh and exciting!

Never forget, the American version of Christianity is exciting. (Although to some of us who are Americans, the American church is a worldwide embarrassment! There are millions of us over here in America who see the American church as dead. That we are exporting the American version of Christianity is shocking to us!)

For your young people, more than anything else they like being American. Being American is just about the most appealing thing on this earth to young people. Your young people will be Americanized!

Never underestimate the power of the Americanization of Christians. We have already succeeded in Americanizing the Protestant church in Latin America, Africa and Asia. You will join up or you get passed up. Or, you may find yourself being knocked over. Perhaps we Americans will even attack you if you refuse to join the Americanization of the Christian faith in your land.

The Other Alternative

You have a third choice! That choice is: (1) Drop your dead, reformation-inherited ways; end the way you do things. (2) Refuse to be Americanized. (3) Finally come up with an expression of the ecclesia better than anything the Americans and British have... better than anything Americans ever saw or dreamed of.

And just what might that be?

The ecclesia, first-century style.

Return to the excitement, glory, freedom, participation and functioning of the early ecclesia.

She, the ecclesia, is more appealing to your people than anything else on earth could ever be. Even the Americanized church.

Let me introduce you to some new terms: “organic” - "native to your soil" - "an expression of the church that is an expression of your own culture" - "the spontaneous and indigenous church" A spontaneous, indigenous, organic expression of the church! Look at those words carefully. Organic. I speak of an expression of the ecclesia that is native to your nation. A culture-matching expression of the church that is discovered. Discovered, not imported.

That is what this book is about.

And not just this book. You now have several books which you can turn to to help if you dare this third choice.

These books can help you to not be Americanized. But more, they are designed to help you discover for yourselves an indigenous experience of the ecclesia in your land.*

In the final analysis what we are going to have to do is start Over again. We are going to have to more or less ignore the present situation - or perhaps try to imagine it does not exist! We are going to have to look upon this entire planet as needing churches — almost as though this world had many believers but no ecclesia.

What must then follow is a new breed of workers. Church planters who raise up churches that are locally unique. "Culturematching” churches. Churches in which the people themselves discover for themselves how they express "church" and "church life" in their locale. We must see a new breed of church planters who plant indigenous, organic churches. Men who live and die towards that end.

Now I would like to tell you a story. It happened in Hungary.

* Those companion books are entitled, The Way the Church Ought to Be, The Man Most Needed, and Revolution.

3. How To Be Passed By

Christian leaders had gathered in Budapest from all over the world. The purpose? To plan how to evangelize eastern Europe. The gathering was called "A World Summit for World Evangelization."

Only about 150 people were present and by invitation only.

I was invited.

For one week I listened.

What I heard was the same thing I had heard forty years ago as a seminary student. Nothing had changed. Nothing!

My most vivid memory of that conference was a conversation I had with a local Hungarian pastor. Like me, he was a Baptist. Our conversation was energetic and animated. We were both bemoaning the Americanization of the Hungarian

Christians. Here were my closing words to him.

> Hungary will soon be the most advanced and modern country in eastern Europe; it will soon join western Europe. But mark my words! In ten years the Hungarian people will be prospering; and, soon thereafter, Hungary will become one of the hardest working, materialistic societies in the world, rivaling Germany and Japan in materialism. How will this affect the churches in Hungary? Hungary is the center of the Reformation in eastern Europe; and Hungarian leaders are proud of their Reformation heritage... so much so that you who minister are chained - heart and soul - to church services that were invented nearly 500 years ago! Be sure, most of your churches and most of the Hungarian ministers will not change. But in ten more years this present expression of the church will be irrelevant to a secular, materialistic Hungary. Hungarians will not be in your buildings because you are 509 years behind their needs.
>
> Hungary will still need Christ, but your approach to church will be totally outdated, and the people of Hungary will ignore you.
>
> You have two. choices: become Americanized in your approach - which is slightly better than what you now have and therefore more appealing even though doing that will also be a shame to Hungarians.
>
> Your second choice: Come up with something better.

Dear Christians of Hungary, you can do better.

I speak these same words to every non-American who reads this book. "Come up with something better. You can do better!"

Romania, Czech Republic, Republic of Slovakia, Poland, Albania, and CLS [WNP] ... come up with something new and revolutionary!

There is a far finer way than your past ways; there is a far superior way than being Americanized by the present American Christian invasion going on in your country.

But it will take daring on your part. Much daring. A much courage.

Which way will you go? I suggest you try something so radical that only the most Christian of men will follow!

A new breed of Christian workers?

Church planters totally committed to an utterly new expression of the church? Churches without church buildings? House churches? Organic churches? Churches without pastors? Churches who discover for themselves their cultural expression of the church. Churches raised up - then left alone... without any leaders....when only six months old! *

The faint-hearted need read no farther.

* See *The Church As It Ought To Be*

4. The Blackest Hour In The History of Missions

As an American I am appalled at the shallowness of my people who are serving in so many lands. This is especially painful to watch in newly opened lands. I am appalled at our disrespect for you, your Culture and your customs. (Most of us Americans do not even know you have any!) But most of all, I cannot

understand how we can do what we are doing. Did not any of us in America study missiology?

Does not anyone remember the books of Roland Allen?* That man cried out for a reform of American and British missions and our ways of evangelism. And our western ways of church planting. And our ruthless treatment of non-westem work and non-westem workers.

We did not listen to Roland Allen. We kept on Americanizing Christianity.

I am, therefore, taking a different approach than did Roland Allen. I am not addressing the Americans and the British. I am addressing you... the non-American. You are being Americanized even as I write. It is up to you to reject our utterly unscriptural approach to evangelism, to missions and - most of all - to church planting.

* At the beginning of the twentieth century, Roland Allen wrote a series of books challenging American and British missionary methods. He addressed western missions. His books did little or nothing to change us. Yes, his books caused a great deal of discussion. Even out and out errors were admitted by some. But nothing changed. Except that Roland Allen was defamed, attacked and ridiculed for what he wrote.

A New Dark Age

If you allow the Americanization of your churches, we may all very well slip into a dark age in which only the Americanized church is considered Scriptural. All other expressions of the church will be fought, damned, attacked and even accused of being heretical. There will be but one universal expression of Christianity....the American version. There will be but one mindset — the American one.

The American Mind What is happening to you in eastern Europe right now puts a sharp light on the appalling blindness of the American version of Christianity. Take a close, hard look at Christianity American style! Is this what you want? Is this what you wish Christianity to look like all over this planet?

It is a stark fact that our American-Christian entrance into eastern Europe, just after the Iron Curtain fell, reveals the poverty and nakedness of our American-evangelical mindset.

You can learn a great deal about American Christians by watching us work in eastern Europe or in any country that is newly opened and ripe for converting.

History and Roland Allen's books have clearly shown us one stark fact. Even when we Americans come face to face with our errors, and the shame of those errors, we do not change! Let me share with you a secret:

By and large, we Americans are incapable of changing our methods.

You should also know that we Americans will not let go of our control over you.

We will (1) Americanize you. And having Americanized you, we will (2) control you. If we cannot do those two things, we will have little or nothing to do with you; we may even attack you. We have done this in other countries, all over this planet.

Though we are to blame for the tyranny we are imposing on you, though we are to blame for the disrespect of — and the rape of — your culture, this does not negate your responsibility. /t is up to you to find a better way than the American way. You Cannot just sit there protecting the status quo, and you must not just sit there and let us Americanize you!

You must discover a whole new practice of the church and a radical, new revolutionary approach to evangelism. You must rediscover the indigenous and organic church in your land, for your land!!

We Americans did not stop to reflect on the past errors we made when we boarded a thousand airplanes to invade your land with our gospel! Those errors were horrendous. Well, we still make them. Who among us uttered a protest against exporting our ways? Who among us cried out for... who among us demanded... ."an indigenous expression of Christianity" in eastern Europe?

Name an American who rose up and cried out, "Let us use Paul's ways this time! Let's not make our past mistakes any more! Let's not do what we did in Africa, China, India and South America."

We Americans did not change because we cannot think in terms of our being wrong.

The very opposite has taken place, for what we are doing now is worse than anything we ever did in the past! In all the history of American/British missions, this is our worst hour!!

This is the blackest hour in mission history since the evangelization of Hawaii! Yes, Hawaii! That is the place where missionaries became millionaires at the expense of their converts!

Our American shallowness is rampant in eastern Europe. Worst of all, we Americans, who have a very sick church here in America, are forcing that same sick church off on you!

We are doing all this without making the slightest effort improve over anything we have done before. Is there an explanation for this indefensible behavior? The answer is simple That is just the way we are.

You must change. Radically change. We will not.

A Mission Conference In Germany

Shortly after eastern Europe opened, I sat in a conference that was a gathering of American and British leaders now working in eastern Europe.

During open discussion I attempted to address our callous, steamrolling American attitude. I drew attention to our wholly unethical conduct, the out-and-out lying going on about our soul winning results, about the distorted reports we are sending back home, the flagrant immorality of raising money with these overblown, untrue stories. I also referred to the attacks we Americans have leveled against native Christian ministers who are trying valiantly to stand up against this American tidal wave in eastern Europe.

I then recounted the history of American missions in Nepal, retelling the scandal of what American Christians did in Nepal . in destroying the indigenous churches in that country.

There was, of course, reaction. Several men present disclaimed any such errors on their part. "We are not doing such things in eastern Europe." One brother responded to me, "Gene, why give us this worst-case illustration?"

Well, at that moment the cavalry arrived.

Instantly, a Romanian took the floor. "What Gene has said js not worst case.... it is typical.... typical of what you Americans are doing all over eastern Europe."

For the next few minutes that brother dressed down us Americans as rarely men have ever been dressed down. He told us horror stories of what American Christians had been doing if eastern Europe. When he finished, there was total silence.

The conference moved on. Nothing changed.

Dear eastern European....your faith is being, and will continue to be, Americanized. Our American dollars, coupled with the sheer number of our people pouring into your countries, plus more money will Americanize the church in eastern Europe and in your country and in your city. The Americanization of eastern Europe is inevitable.

If that does not give you pause for reflection, consider the next chapter.

It is the story of what we Americans did to the native, indigenous churches in Nepal.

Let me warn you, dear reader, you may be too young to read this next chapter.

5. The Scandal of Nepal

What happened in Nepal? This is the story of a tiny nation, a nation so poor, so remote and so backward, it is at least as primitive as the world was in the days of Paul!

Do not imagine a land with roads that connect the towns. There are only walking paths. Outside the capital city of Katmandu the illiteracy rate is almost 100 per cent. Disease is rampant.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was outlawed when the church was born in Nepal.

One day a Nepalese man was saved in India. He took the gospel back to his own land at great cost to himself and to all who believed. Their story is unprecedented in Christian history.

Out of much persecution, Nepal came to be blessed with an expression of the church as pure, as pervading, as the church in the first century. The story of the indigenous church in Nepal has no equal in Christian history. Nothing ever done in the name of Christ was more organic to the soil than the churches that grew up in Nepal.

If ever "New Testament churches" have existed in the last 1700 years, it was in Nepal. Unfortunately for them, they did not measure up to the American mindset. (Neither would Paul, I fear!)

How did the Christian faith come to Nepal? It was not from the West because the gospel came to Nepal thirty years before the government of Nepal allowed religious freedom. The gospel came to Nepal by way of a man native to Nepal. He brought the gospel to his people when the Christian faith was mill outlawed! The church in Nepal began totally non-western, and totally illegal.

Mark this: A native brought the gospel to Nepal. The church that was born in Nepal was utterly without influence by western ways!! That simple fact later proved to be the undoing of the churches there.

Persecution by the government of Nepal did not stop an indigenous, Organic, native church with its own ways, customs, Culture and practice. But what a persecuting heathen government could not do, American missionaries did do. American missionaries and para-church organizations destroyed a large number of indigenous churches in Nepal! You cannot have a totally pure, non-western, non-American church on this planet... not without recrimination.

What happened when religious freedom came to Nepal was predictable. What happened there is also happening in Albania right now. Listen, eastern Europe, this has also happened in a hundred nations on this earth! It has happened everywhere we Americans and British take the gospel. Those of you who are native to eastern Europe need to be aware of the dark side of American missions, evangelism and para-church organizations. We have our unethical ways! (Of course, we do all these things in the name of winning souls to Christ!)

What did happen? Previous to religious freedom in Nepal there were harsh laws against the Christian faith, permitting not one single missionary to enter that country; and when those laws changed, our non-denominational (para-church) evangelistic organizations poured into Nepal by the hundreds! We came to Nepal with the same mentality and the same methods we are now using as we pour into Albania, Romania, Russia, all the W.N.P. states, and all of eastern Europe... right now.

Only in degree do you find a difference in our aggression, our disregard for non-American ways, and our attack on non American churches in the various countries. The aggression was just more visible in Nepal!

We looked at a church that did not look like anything we had ever seen before, and we were horrified. In our eyes, because the church was not western, what we saw was odd and inferior.

We Americans cannot conceive of a non-western gospel nor a non-western church nor a Christian worker who is not wholly influenced by the West.

We cannot see a church being a valid, Scriptural or true church if it does not look like our mainline churches. In our eyes, by its very nature, such a gospel would necessarily be classified as wrong and unscriptural. And if it became widely successful, we might even stoop to calling it a cult, even when we knew fair well that it was not.

Be warned! Telling you the story of Nepal is not going to change us Americans or our sometimes ruthless ways in foreign lands. We can attack and even crush native workers who are seeking to carry out an organic work in lands which we have entered.

Join us or get attacked is often our attitude toward native work that has not been influenced by the West.

Nepal is but one illustration of many such cases. It is a story of a native work and an indigenous church planter. It is the story of what happened when his work, and the churches he raised up, got in the way of American blitz evangelism, American missions, American missionaries, and American para-church organizations.

My hope is that as you read this story, it may change you. It is unlikely that it will change us Americans, even after we have read this story. We have a way of sidestepping even our worst conduct as we rush forward to evangelize.

The Organic Church in Nepal

Even as I pen these words, the church in Nepal is being systematically destroyed by American para-church organizations, missions, and missionaries. This is true primarily in the town, and cities easily accessible to Westerners.

When the western missionaries arrived in Nepal,* there were 30,000 believers in that country. The ecclesia was the purest and finest which modern history has recorded. It wag Organic to the core in its expression.

This beautiful, thirty-year-old drama began to come to an end when American Christians and their blitz evangelism came in, en masse! Literally thousands of one-month missionaries arrived. Headquarters of a half dozen para-church organizations were set up in the capital city. American evangelism hit Nepal. The news of the fantastic results was bugled around the world. Money poured in.

When we Americans saw the indigenous churches, we saw an absolute failure! The indigenous church in Nepal wasn't evangelizing in the American style.

We saw the man, his work, his people, his church and we saw failure.

What that one man did in Nepal constituted one of the greatest Christian accomplishments in all the history of Christendom. In this writer's estimation, the believers could hardly have been better off. The Word was prevailing. Nepal was hearing the gospel. Best of all, the church was being planted in village after village, and the converts whom those churches were winning were being kept. Kept in the body of Christ. The evangelization of Nepal was going forth at a steady pace. They were doing something our gaudy evangelism has never done.
Converts were accounted for. Kept in churches. Unlike the converts of our para-church organizations, the converts were kept by the ecclesia, and were functioning in the ecclesia.

* — About three years before the writing of this book.

Being blind to an organic ecclesia, and serving a god named "the evangelization of the world in One generation," and being saturated with a non-church gospel, we Americans could not see any of this. If we do not see our methods, and our mindset and our evangelism, we see only failure!

Perhaps the most precious thing those Nepalese Christians had, and that which we Americans know nothing of, was the fact the gospel was inexorably linked to church life. Theirs was not the western concept of men running through cities preaching, winning huge numbers of people and then rocketing off to the next town, city, nation or planet. In the beginning this brother had gone from village to village, preached the gospel, gathered his converts together and stayed with them until an experience of the ecclesia was born. The church had become the center of the very lives of the Christians in Nepal, as it should be!

In fact, this is also how it should be in America. But this is a concept western evangelicals do not comprehend. "Church" to us is an hour on Sunday morning. The Nepalese Christians were light years ahead of Americans in their understanding, experience and commitment to the church. The ecclesia was their very life... for them the church was a way of life!!

Perhaps their biggest mistake was doing things Paul's way. They were church centered. Local. Organic. Indigenous! And they had kept the culture of their land. A native of Nepal, coming into their meetings, did not feel as though he had just come into the West.

For the Nepalese, church was not a building and pews. Nor was it a hut! To them the church was people. And this ecclesia was not boring. It had become their lifestyle.

It goes without saying that the meetings were alive, with everyone participating.

A beautiful story. Church was a way of life, a civilization, a lifestyle... a community of Christ within the world.

We Americans looked, and we did not see and did not care. We were not interested. First of all, we were interested in our American organizations! Captivated with our own all-consuming commandment to evangelize the world, ecclesia was not even in our minds as we arrived by the jeep loads! The ecclesia did not burn in the heart of a soul who came w Nepal from America. We did not try w preserve the organic church that was there. Not one person ever spoke of this matter. We came, took one look, and stole! We bought Christians.*

We did not stop to notice that we were decimating those churches, nor that we were obliterating the Nepalese expression of the body of Christ.

Our own agenda, and our ways, were all we had on our minds. We did not even glance at those churches, as churches. We saw them only as a place to get staff. That total disrespect for an entire people's culture is a travesty.

What we should have done was to sit down at the feet of those Nepalese Christians and to humbly learn church life from them.

The opportunity of a lifetime was lost. The death knoll of the indigenous, organic church, at least in the larger towns and Cities, was sounded in yet another country! The Americanization of Christianity marched on.

Tally: one more indigenous church destroyed. The Christians of one more nation Americanized.

Those dear Americans cared not one whit for the quality of these people nor the suffering for Christ which they had experienced. Americans only knew Nepalese Christians were not doing it the para-church way. The missionary way. The American way!

Listen, eastern Europe, you have a choice. Nepal did not.

But the story continues; so does the tragedy.

* We had done this in Nepal before the doors opened there, but now when the doors opened we did it en masse.

6. The Americanization of Nepal

Today as you read these words, American interdenominational organizations in Nepal are hiring the leaders of those indigenous churches away from the ecclesia, making these men and women part of "staff."

Once organic Christian workers, now staff in American organizations.

At this very moment, American missionaries and para-church staffers are introducing our American music, our American pews-in-a-row, our American church service, our American sermon and our Sunday morning ritual, to Christians who once were part of an organic expression of the body of Christ in Nepal. Once the Nepalese Christians were meeting in homes, singing Nepalese songs, functioning and participating; now they sit, mute, in American-style buildings.

God help us, we are giving the American Sunday morning church service to Nepal! Someone up front leading the singing. Someone else preaching the sermon! Our ritual has triumphed once more! Participation in the Nepal meeting has disappeared!

God pity us!! We have Americanized the Nepalese Christians. We have destroyed the church!!* A lay church is disappearing off the face of the earth, drowning under American greenbacks. An expression of Christ that is natural to Nepal is becoming extinct!

* — In the cities and towns. At this writing most of the small, obscure Villages still have native type meetings. How long? Only as long as it takes American money to find the leaders.

We Americans have done it again!

Roland Allen made this very observation years ago when he noted that this has been our way from the beginning of missions. We have been experts at doing what we did in Nepal... for 200 years!

We Americans set out to evangelize the world back in 1899 when we launched the very first organization that took as its motto the evangelization of the world in one generation. We failed at evangelizing the world in one generation. But mark this: We are on the verge of a great success. We are about to complete the task of Americanizing all of evangelical Christianity, worldwide!! We set out to do something we believed to be good. We are on the verge of producing a disaster so titanic, so grave, it may take a thousand years to recover.

We will never evangelize the world apart from the indigenous, organic church. But we have succeeded in Americanizing the Christian faith.

Wherever we Americans have gone, we did not try to preserve or bring forth a cultural expression of the church; nor, in the case of Nepal, did it dawn on us to stop and leam from one of the finest Christian workers in all church history. We cannot conceive that a dark-skinned believer knew more about the ways of God than all of us combined. What could a Nepalese man possibly teach us? That dear Nepalese church planter, a giant in church history by any standard, was steamrolled, his churches pillaged, and ~ even now — his work is scorned and criticized.

Be clear on this point. Those American missionaries and para-church staff have ruined that dear Nepalese worker's name. They sought to ruin his name in the eyes of both Nepalese and Westerners. What a travesty. What a crucifixion.

We could not have made a bigger mess of it!

And so the misery of sitting in a Sunday morning church service is exported to yet another country. The ecclesia and the headship of Christ in the meeting are trampled underfoot. Body life and functioning disappear. Culture is overlooked. The dignity of the native is not even considered. And no one who is an American noticed or, if he did, his voice was never heard.

I consider what has happened in Nepal to be one of the greatest scandals of mission history, yet I doubt you have ever heard of it, or ever will again, except as it is recorded here. It should be a worldwide scandal. What happened there should ignite a revolt. It should cause repentance. It should utterly change our ways and methods and attitudes and mindset.

In Nepal we westerners committed the cultural equivalent of genocide....American style!

Again, Roland Allen pointed out the fact that we had been doing this to native workers for generations. And he wrote that in 1912! We will not change our harmful ways. What will you, a native, do? How about trying a radical break from all present methods. Something new.

WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

At the same moment the Americanization of Nepal continues, it helps us to see that western Christianity does not understand the ecclesia and that we Americans really are bent on nothing but evangelizing.*

Eastern Europe and Russia are no less the victims of this American mindset. The only difference is that it just does not show up quite as dramatically because the western-style church was already present in eastern Europe as a result of mission work that arrived there 100 years ago.

* I sincerely believe if the people in para-church organizations could be transported back to the first century, they would rebuke the churches in Galatia and Asia Minor for not evangelizing enough! They would Americanize the first-century church on the spot! Rows of benches and pulpit included! And perhaps they would whisper about the failure of other Christians. Perhaps, methinks, they would even criticize Paul for not evangelizing as productively as they.

Albania was never reached by western missions. It is the one exception. Only since 1991 has Albania been open the gospel. So we can all watch Albania. Watch and you will see us Americans do it again!

Albania, you are next. We will Americanize you. What we do to Albania will exceed what we did in Nepal because Albania is more easily accessible.

Roland Allen's words were repudiated by virtually every mission board and evangelistic society in the world. Nearly 100 years later, what he said, what he wrote, what he pleaded for, has not been heeded. The books of Allen, himself a British missionary, are out of print, his words forgotten. That voice raised against imperial missions vanished, unheeded.

YOUR VOICE

It is almost exactly 100 years later. That voice must rise again. But this time may it come not from the pen of a British missionary; this time it must come from the hearts and lives of thousands of believers all over the earth. It must come from Europe. From Nepal, from Southeast Asia, from Latin America and from Africa. It must come from you, the victim.

That voice raised in protest will never come from us! It must come from you!!

In the meantime, be sure, we Americans are still colonizing and Americanizing you.

And Albania is next!

To put it succinctly: We Americans peer into the Scriptures and see saving men from hell. Yet, we can read an entire New Testament and not see the centrality of the church of Jesus Christ anywhere. In our Bible it is not there! Nor, when we read the New Testament, will we ever see a church that is natively and culturally expressed. What we Americans do see when we read the New Testament is American Christianity.

American Christianity is all we see in the New Testament. Therefore, we are exporting our style of Christianity with a zeal only Americans have!

Just what do we do with those few converts of ours who survive our shallow evangelism? We westernize them!

Are you content with our ways?

In my judgment, the last thing on this planet we need to do is send English-speaking folks to introduce our practice of the ecclesia to anyone. Nonetheless, we are doing that very thing as we sweep across Russia and eastern Europe.

And Albania is next!

The Lord is not expressed in all His glory by these ways of ours.

A few eastern Europeans, in the meantime, (watching us Americans, who look something like a combination of a tourist and a shooting star) wonder if there are any brain cells in our American heads!

Now I am going to let you in on one of the most amazing secrets you have ever heard. And if you cannot believe what you are about to read, ask an American missionary if it is true!

7. The Irony

I was nineteen years old when I found this out. I was a student in a seminary in Europe.* A missionary confided this secret to me. I have since heard it hundreds of times.

While missionaries and para-church staffers are pouring into eastern Europe, enlisting pastors and workers into our para-church organizations with our over abundance of American dollars, indoctrinating them into our missions and our para-church methods and our American style, and bringing in the American mentality — down deep in our hearts, we Americans are not proud of the Christian faith in America! Nor are we proud of our churches. Many missionaries in your country are ashamed of American churches. Yes, we are the American Christian faith! And the American Christianity we left back in America is nothing to brag about. Why, then, are we exporting it to you!?

* At age nineteen I was a theology student in a seminary in Europe with young men from Germany, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France, Poland, Switzerland, Russia, Romania, Hungary, Egypt and Lebanon.

Many American missionaries go to the mission field because they believe American Christianity has utterly failed in America. The missionaries and para-church staffers have

given up on America. In their eyes, the church in America is a failure. Therefore, they come to you - the mission field - in hopes they can do a better job in your country. A vast host of the missionaries and para-church staff are overseas because they see the American church as a failure, and they want to try again in your country to see if they can get it right.

Ask them.

Here is the irony. We are giving you a failed Christianity, We are giving you, in your land, the exact same Christianity that has failed in America.

If you should inquire as to why we do this, you might receive this answer from American Christian workers serving in your land:

“American Christianity does not work in America because of Americans. We are too rich. But American Christianity will work in Romania and Albania where people are poor."

Well, America's version of Christianity and the church is pathetic. Its ways and rituals, its shallow gospel, shallow vision, its shallow church, its shallow evangelism will not work any better in a poor country than it does in a rich country.

Dear fellow Americans, if this is all you can come up with as a motive for going overseas, and if American Christianity, along with a few pet innovations of your own... if that is all you have to offer, then please come home. While you are overseas you are a menace.

Pause for a moment and look at what you are doing. You find a local Christian worker and, using American money, you bring him into your organization. You make him a cookie-cutter copy of your work, your ministry, your organization, yourself and America. Be it east or west, savage or university student, jungle or city, you use the same manual, written in America, full of American methods and the American way of thinking. You use that manual in every nation, every tribe, every culture, every tongue, no matter where you go. Do you not see that your work is American? And no matter how unlike American culture the people may be, you still go by the methods found in the manual you were taught from. (Step one may be to throw away that manual. Step two might be to come home and try a radical new approach to church life and evangelism here in America... here in your own homeland.)

You are bent on making the popularity of the American culture your main method of evangelism... even if it means destroying a culture - and worse, even if it means pulling your converts into an American style church, a style of church you consider dead.

Regardless of a country's mores or culture, you deviate not one whit from your staff manual. The formula is precise. You know exactly what you will create. And you are writing home with awesome letters of what great things you are doing.

In a similar way to what para-church organizations do, American missionaries also create carbon copies of American churches. Yet, you both know that this American style church is dying, boring or dead. And irrelevant to life. Sir, you were not called of God to spread America’s culture!! But that is what you are doing. Twenty-four hours a day.

On a worldwide scale you are raping the cultures of this planet and destroying any hope of an organically experienced ecclesia.

You are stomping out the last vestige of hope for a true, pure expression of church life on this earth!

Everything that is Christian will soon look the same all over this planet. That is what the Catholics did during the Dark Ages.....one universal expression of the church, regardless of tongue, race, Culture, tribe or location. Any deviation from that one expression was heresy. The penalty for being different: persecution! Well, sir, you are creating a new dark age!

The ecclesia is quickly becoming one flavor, one color, one note, one dimension. Christians all over this planet are looking like cardboard cutouts of each other, doing exactly what every other Christian is doing. So predictable. So confining. Sooo... boring. So American.

The possibility of Christ's expression, with all its differences and variety, has almost faded from the earth.

The Bride of Christ is passed by, forgotten and unknown. The indigenous worker, the indigenous church and the organic expression of church life never cross your mind. You will sat leave a square foot of this planet where indigenous church life arrived before American Christianity arrived. In your presexce, chance of the organic expression of the church survival is nil!!

You are about to create an updated version of the Roman Catholic Church Five hundred years ago, it was the worldwide expression of Christianity. Only this time a will be a worldwide, universal, Americanized Christianity. It will be as ubiquitous, as unforgiving as the Catholic church was in its most intolerant history.

A thousand years from now, will historians write about the universal American church, a worldwide protestant church totally American in its expression; and will they record that this American catholic church persecuted all those who tried to have an organic expression of the church? Just as the Roman Catholic Church once persecuted all those who tried to have a church life that was not Roman Catholic? What has happened in Nepal, and what is happening in eastern Europe, and what you are now doing in Albania are living proof of the coming of such am era.

An unspoiled setting for organic church life is becoming extinct on this planet.

I beg you, in Christ, to stop. Change. Change radically. Or, please, go home.

If you believe American Christianity is in bad shape, sop exporting it, come home and establish an organic American (!) expression of the church.

And to you who are being invaded, westernized, colonized, imperialized, and Americanized... you know what you have do! And if you do not believe you can do better than the Americans, you are now invited to meet some men who raised up works far superior to what Americans have done.

Non-Americans, if you please.

8. Are There Others Who Have Done A Better Job Than Americans?

The greatest events of Christian history in the last 100 years did not take place in the West. America had nothing to do with the greater expressions of the Christian faith which have emerged in this age.

The three most effective works of God in the last 100 years came from the hands of men not white in the lands of men not white! Three men have left to you, the non-American, a testimony that it can be done better. All three workers came from the Far East: the work of Bakht Singh in India, Prem Pradham in Nepal, and Watchman Nee in China. All raised up churches and those churches had a "keep ratio" that no western mission, church or para-church could ever come close to.

In all three cases the work was far more centered on Christ and on the church than anything we Westemers can even comprehend. All three of these works were unique and prevailing. All recorded not only an incredible "keep rate" among converts, but Prem Pradham's keep rate was phenomenal. (Bakht Singh's work in India was close behind.) All three were works that preserved their fruit.

The work in India was indigenous. The work in Nepal was both indigenous and organic. Indigenous in expression, and unique to its Culture, it fit the Nepalese people.

But here is the shame for those of us who are Americans. Had the work of these two men, Pradham and Singh, taken place in America, and if they had been Anglo, their influence would have been mammoth. Had they been American, their works would have had a worldwide influence. Thousands, even tens of thousands Of men would have sat at the feet of these workers. But these two men were not American, They were not white, And their work was not even remotely western. Therefore, no Americans took the opportunity to learn from them.

That is not all.

Many of the western missionaries (American and British) hated these men, hated the native co-workers who worked beside them, and also their churches. Most of the rest held them in disdain or looked upon them as a nonentity. These men were often attacked and depicted as villains. Some did everything in their power to destroy them and their work.

Why?

Because their work was indigenous and native.

Such works terrify us! Why?

I do not know! Perhaps it is because these men and their works committed the worst sin of all: They did not depend on American money. Not even for one minute. That did not just terrify western missionaries, it terrorized them. Not being dependent on western money means that Westemers cannot control you. Nor can we control your converts. Worse, if your work is organic, then that native expression of the church will appeal to and draw native Christians away from the Americanized churches and draw them into organic churches that "fit" the local people. That scares us! That threatens us. Why? Because it strikes at our power base, our

money base, our numerical base. When you follow a native worker no one in America gets any credit. When that happens we lose money.

Secondly: The natives notice when a church is raised up that matches them! They walk out of Americanized churches and go "home." This happened in China and India. Many of the native people left those Americanized churches. The missionaries were very angry when this happened. The opposite should be true. As missionaries, it should be our goal to see Christians leaving the inorganic for the organic. Their doing so should not be as gasoline to fuel our rage.

Everyone could see the obvious differences in these diametrically opposite expressions of the Christian faith. The natives rejoiced; the missionaries attacked!!

Yes, a local experience of the body of Christ scares the living daylights out of the imperialistic mindset of British and American missionaries. And para-church organizations. We are threatened by a native work totally outside our influence. We are even more mortified if it is successful! We go berserk if it is beautiful!

These two works, poor in money, with gatherings filled with poor people, were able to outshine anything the West ever did in those nations! Or in America!

These works were totally outside the western pews-and-pulpit, Bible schools, and pastor mentality.

But I return to this matter of shame. We were not interested in learning from these men. Herein lies a profound insight into our American Christian mindset:

Nobody came to learn from these two men!!

Keep in mind that tens of thousands of young men here in America are presently in seminaries and Bible schools all across our land and all over the pan-anglo world. Every week Christians flock to seminaries, conferences, retreats and workshops seeking more of Christ. They come from all over the English speaking world to sit at the feet of a few successful pastors. Yet the best works done on this planet in the last 100 years went totally unnoticed.

You doubt this? Try to find the works of these men in any book on the history of missions! Try to find their stories in any book written about missions. Nee will get two sentences. Pradham, perhaps a sentence, maybe not. Singh does not even exist in western knowledge!

That is not all.

While hundreds of thousands of Westerners sit at the feet of western ministers, not one Westerner ever went to India and sa at the feet of Bakht Singh. (Some visited for a few days! Certainly no one stayed three years!)

Not one single Westerner has ever sat at the feet of Prem Pradham. Not one. Yet he may be the most outstanding figure in church history in a thousand years.

Why this oversight? Because those men were not westem, their skin not white, their ways were different, their culture Strange, their churches organic... therefore totally non-western in

expression. Besides, who would want to get near men whom the missionaries had so defamed!

We are Americans! They were Indian, we are American. They were Nepalese, we are American.

Dear native! Hear me:

We Americans are not interested in indigenous Christianity.

We Americans are not interested in an indigenous, autonomous, self-supporting, unique, different kind of church in your country. We only understand one thing. We bring an American Christianity and an American church to you. There are no options for you!! We will fight you with all our power, influence and money if you try to raise up an organic, native Christianity.

Not one teacher of missiology on this planet ever suggested that young men in America, training for the ministry, go visit those works in India and Nepal. Not one mission board or para church organization ever went to study these men's ways or (0 Jearn of their lives!

Many of us chose to attack these men, tooth and nail. Why?

Because we are blind. And western! Most of all we are blind to the ecclesia, to church life, to the community of the believer! We cannot even conceive of indigenous. We never heard of organic; we don't even know what the word means. We Americans know nothing of church life; we only know "church" as it was given to us by the Reformation... a one-hour-a week event that takes place on Sunday morning. That is all.

Worse, we cannot see our superiority complex. Our attitude is as natural as the air in our lungs. We don't even realize we have it. We will never change.

We also know very little of the cross.

But worst of all, we Americans have never sat in a meeting of an organic body of believers. Not in your country. Not in ours. In all our history, we Americans have never seen an organic, indigenous, culture-matching, American expression of the church. We would probably wonder what it was if we saw it.

Do you understand what I am saying? Americans have never seen an organic American expression of church life, not in all our lives!!

There may be less native expression of an organic, indigenous church in America than in any nation on the earth where Christians gather!

We need exactly the same thing you need. What you do not have is exactly what we do not have.

I doubt that most of the American Christians in America would travel 100 miles to visit an organic expression of ecclesia. If we did get that interested, we would probably go to just one meeting. Chances are we would pooh-pooh what we saw! At least we would not see it as

important to our lives, to evangelism, to missions, or to our Own desperate need to see real Church life.

You now have a glimpse into the mindset of western British-American-imperialistic colonialization of the Christian faith. Here is a stark look at our total disregard and unwitting contempt for another's culture, for the indigenous, and for the "foreigner" work in your land.

We do not have an organic church; neither do you. We need one; so do you. That puts us on equal ground. Can an indigenous, Organic, native church exist in your land? Who will dare begin? How is it done?

9. Are Indigenous Churches Possible In Unreached Lands?

Imagine a land that has no Christians. That means a land with no native workers, and no churches. This is the hardest possible place to see something organic blossom. Here is the problem: A foreigner must begin the work in that country!

Is it absolutely necessary for this foreigner to give them a foreign version of the church....as we Americans always do? Is it possible for this foreigner to not introduce his experience of the church into that land? Is there some way for that people to discover an indigenous, organic church, even if the only Christian they know is from the other side of the planet and comes from a culture totally different from theirs?

These are critical questions. Is it conceivable that the converts — still babies — can discover for themselves an expression of the ecclesia that is uniquely their own? If the answer is yes for them, then it is also yes for the people in your country!

But how does a Christian worker keep out his own foreign Culture? Can a church still be raised up that is native? Organic! Not foreign! Not American!!

Let us talk about Albania. It is the ultimate laboratory. Albania is the perfect test case.

I have referred to Albania in The Way the Church Ought to Be and The Man Most Needed. And in this book.

Why is Albania the perfect test case?

Because Albania is unique to human history. Nothing like Albania ever happened before or will ever happen again.

To walk into Albania, there to preach the gospel, is just like walking into a city in the first century where the name of Christ had never been heard. But more! Even the lands Paul entered had some kind of religious background. Not so in Albania.

Albania presents the first time in all human history that there has been a nation without any religion!

Mankind has never known such an event. Albania is unique.

Yet, American missionaries have had the gall to go to Albania giving those people America's awful church meetings. We are zealously bent on taking Albanians the very death that today chokes the churches here in America.

We are in Albania to make sure you Albanians sit in pews, face toward a pulpit, give us your tithe, be led in singing, and stay silent during the sermons which we preach. We are bent on seeing everyone on earth in a miserable, boring American church meeting!

We Americans lack any understanding of how to preach the gospel in a way that allows the church in other lands to be experienced indigenously. And we bring a way of meeting as bad as a Catholic mass.

Can the organic be found?

We Americans know nothing about how to raise up churches the way churches were originally raised up back in Century One. If we do not know how, does that mean it cannot be done? If we are not interested, does that mean it is not important? If Americans cannot do this, does that mean it is impossible to do?

So, can it be done... in Albania? In Turkey? In villages in the interior of China? Or must we always give converts in these Closed lands a foreign type church?

In the sixty years I have been on this earth I have traveled a large part of this planet. I have yet to see a western Christian worker who showed any great sign of interest in exploring a new way to meet.... or a way to raise up a church that respects another's culture, or an ecclesia that matches the natives! At least I have never seen an American or British give his whole life and being to this end.

All our thoughts are on soul winning. Or something else. Not on church life Never on native, local, church life.

Is there a missionary who has ever given serious thought to the fact he is imposing the Protestant Reformation's way of meeting on other cultures. Or cursing them with the American Sunday ritual. If so, I never saw anyone do anything significant to stop it!!

This terrible rape of other people's social mores, this ultimate insult to other people's culture, I have never seen come up for serious discussion.

Is an organic church possible in a land just opening?

Shall I mention that we do not trust native converts? It never occurs to us to go home once the gospel is preached and the ecclesia experienced. Most of our American money should be going to native workers, not Americans. There are two ways to begin.

(Virtually all of the money given in America goes to American missionaries. And all those American missionaries are bent on an American colonization of the faith in the lands they go to. Only a fraction of our money goes to natives, and that money is tightly controlled.)

How can Albania have an indigenous church? An Albanian church to the core? There are no local workers in Albania. Does it necessarily follow that Albania must be Americanized simply because there are no Albanian workers?

No! There is a way. Here's how.

There is a way for the church to be organic even if the workers are all foreign. All we have to do is throw out everything we are doing and then do it Paul's way.

Paul was a Jew. He came from a very elitist culture.

(Hebrews were blessed with the same sort of arrogance the Americans and British display toward other lands and people.)

How did Paul happen to keep out his cultural influence in founding those gentile churches?

Fortunately he was born and raised in a heathen land, so he knew a little about a heathen society. Perhaps Paul could have - unconsciously - Judaized the gentile churches. But he did not Paul - the foreigner - had a way of raising up churches that deliberately kept this from happening. Paul fought for the organic.

Paul raised up the church; then, while it was still in its infancy and still in a fluid state.... Paul got out of town. A gentile expression of the church emerged. An organic, native expression of the church was born!!

Yes, it is possible.

Paul did it!!

So, yes it can happen in your land!

But more! Paul went farther. He concentrated all his efforts on raising up native workers. Non-Jewish workers, if you please.

We concentrate almost totally on raising up Americans to go to foreign lands. This is insane. But insane or not, it is never questioned. And it never changes. It never will.

You, the native, must raise up workers who are native. And you must do so in a way totally untouched by our ways, our methods, our mind-set.

Do you realize that over ninety-nine cents out of every dollar spent on training workers is to train fellow American workers? American workers to go to your land....pretty well guaranteeing we - not you - will be the main leaders! Our become the norm in your country.

If Paul had been using that money he would have spent every cent on training native - gentile - workers.

Your goal must always be the same as Paul's. Organic, native, indigenous churches... founded by native workers. And us foreigners? We must give up our western ways. We must do as Paul did. Out, just as soon as humanly possible!

Note that Paul did not train fellow Jews to work in gentile churches. He trained — as it were — Albanians, Nepalese, Romanians, etc. But never - not once - did he raise up 8 Judean or Galilean or Jewish church planter.

All the workers he raised up were ex-heathen. Aristarchus, Secundus, Tychicus, Trophemus, Gaius, Titus and Epaphrus were all ex-heathen. Timothy, half gentile, was raised in a heathen land and all his Christian experience was in a gentile church. Those were the men Paul trained to raise up churches.

May his tribe increase. May their tribe increase.

If Americans cannot follow that pattern, (1) leaving churches to discover an organic church life, (2) leaving them as soon as possible, (3) later raising up only local workers (no Bible schools for Bible schools are the very epitome of the American mind)... if we Americans cannot do this, we should go home!

I am an American. I am utterly opposed to American missions in just about any shape, form, mode or manner. I believe in a native church, natively expressed, led by natives and nourished by native church planters. I stand in holy horror a what American and British missionaries and para-church organizations do overseas. And what they have consistently done ever since William Carey back in 1790!

What is that? We Britishize the Christian faith, worldwide, Only, today, it is not the British so much as it is the Americans, But it is still Britishization, because the British Britishized ug Americans some 300 years ago! (I repeat. We Americans have never seen On our Own soil, an organic, indigenous, native church that matched our American culture. We are as without a native expression of the church as is Albania....or as you are!)

Despite all the above, I would not hesitate to raise up an ecclesia in any land. Why? First of all, because I will, from day one, tell those dear, local believers how I feel about the world. wide Americanization of the Christian faith.

Secondly, I will, from day one, explain to those local believers that I will walk out and leave them... soon. Very soon!

Thirdly, while I am with them, I will pull their native experience, Culture, mores, customs and uniqueness out of them. I will do all in my power to make sure they are proud of their own ways and customs, and their own unique expressions and eccentricities, and encourage them to express their native ways.

Fourth, I will present Christ. Nothing but Christ.

Fifth, I will give them a lot of practical help toward the organic.

Then I will leave! And that body of believers will discover "church life" for themselves!

They will meet in homes. (They will have no elders. Not in the beginning.) They will have no pastor. Not now, not ever!! They will hold on to one another for dear life, and they will discover their way of meeting. Where will I be? Gone!

Lastly, I will do everything in my power to raise up native workers, specifically native church planters! And if I catch these believers being American or "cross-culture," I will stand them in the comer and make them listen to Elvis Presley records until they repent!

This is not difficult to do. This is Paul's way. I beg you, dear fellow westerner, do it Paul's way or don't do it at all!!

A few days ago I sat with an American missionary in Albania. He remarked to me that he believed in ten years Albania would be the most Christian nation on earth. He had a vision that Albania would have more saved people in it than any other place on this planet.

I would not have dared tell him what I was thinking. I dare to tell you.

I hope he is wrong. Why? Well, if every man and woman in Albania about the age of seventeen became a Christian... in ten years the church buildings would be empty. Listen to me. Americans, listen. Every Christian on this planet, listen.

Christians will not go to Sunday morning church very long. They will stop going to church. Or, because you will fill them with guilt, they may suffer going to your miserable, Americanized church service... out of guilt. But even so, they will have had enough of it one of these days.

Those meetings you are introducing in Albania will be as awful as ours are in ten years. They are so horrible they would kill an elephant. We will continue to lose our converts just as long as we export the present Protestant church with its pews, pulpits, everyone facing the pulpit, church buildings, pastors. And its services with a silent laity....no opportunity for sharing by everyone in the meetings. Just keep up that proven pattern, and it will not matter if we see every human on this planet is saved; they will not sit in your American type church services!!

Now let us go to India. Bakht Singh is a man you probably never heard of. Well, he and his co-workers have won tens of thousands of people to Christ. Can you find those converts? Yes! In 600 thriving, delightful, exciting assemblies all over eastern India. Those churches kept their converts. Why? Because those assemblies match the people. That is one reason. Here is another. If all the missionaries and para-church organizations got together to come up with the most exciting things they ever did, and stuffed all of it - lights, cameras, dramas, action and smoke - and put it all in one church, and then put that church in India, it would never be as wonderful, exciting, delightful and joyful as when the assemblies raised up by Bakht Singh came together for a meeting.

You Americans, now winning so many people in Albania, you will not long keep your converts! Evangelize this planet, and you will still not keep your converts because your meetings are boring. Besides that, you do not even know what "church" means!! You never have. And your lack of interest may indicate you never will.

Certainly what you have exported for 150 years will never keep converts, no matter how worldwide the evangelism, no matter how vast the numbers of converts, or how great the revival, or how thick the guilt. The church you export, inorganic, dead and non-indigenous will never hold your converts. Not long.

Why are Bakht Singh's converts still there? Because he led with Christ. Because he led with the church. Because the church was indigenous. Because he was a church planter, first-century style.

But the work in Nepal was superior to the Bakht Singh movement in that it was pure Nepalese. Unlike India, no influence from western Christians had ever been known in Nepal at that time.

I would like to ask you all to go to Nepal and see those churches. I would like to invite you to see one of the best "keep rates" of converts in the last thousand years. I would like for you to go there and discover what organic means and what indigenous really means. I would like to invite every western staffer and Christian leader to go there and sit at the feet of those people. I would like to, but I cannot.

Because you Americans have virtually destroyed that work!! As you read these words, the organic church in Nepal is under attack and Nepal's Christians and Nepal's indigenous churches are being Americanized. Dear American, how do you feel about this? Dear non-American, dear eastern European, how do you feel about this?

Our best opportunity to see and learn and attend the organic, in 1000 years, vanishing! We crushed i! That was Nepal. Now the other best chance to change our ways, in 1000 years is Albania. But what are we doing there? We are raping a nation's dignity and its culture. That is Albania.

We are throwing away our best chance in church history.

Will we ever change?

In the next chapter we will take a glimpse at the real and present situation in American churches.

10. America, Will We Change?

Recently, I am told, a Chinese Christian slipped out of China and visited the churches in America. When he returned to his home in inland China, he was asked about his strongest impression. His reply was, "I am amazed at how much American Christians can accomplish without God!"

There is an organization in the United States that does nothing but keep statistics on Christianity in America. The head of this organization was interviewed on camera by a friend of mine. Here is a statistic he quoted from out of his organization's records.

In the last seven years the church in America has
spent $250,000,000,000 (that's 250 billion dollars).
That is one quarter of a trillion dollars. But in those

same years, there has been no church growth!! That
much money spent, and it advanced nothing!

We are marching, but our feet stay in the same place. One-fourth of a trillion dollars just to keep from shrinking. Things are not moving forward in America. Our premise is wrong, and this American Christianity we export kills the human soul and the human spirit.

Gentlemen, your premise is wrong. Your ideas and practices... no matter how Biblical, they are not Biblical. They are traditions. They do not work. They were not meant to be used; and they will never work. Will we change? Probably not. We will innovate. That is all.

Until you come around to an understanding of the community of the believers, you are like the man in the Chinese parable who sits all day in an empty room blowing up balloons and then letting the air out of them.

Indigenous, organic church life awaits in the wings.

Be sure, the organic-indigenous church will one day reemerge. We will see ourselves passed over by a new breed of Christians and a new breed of workers. A new day in the history of ecclesiology will emerge. With it will come the death of present-day mission methods and the end of "para" in the word para-church.

Right now, even as I pen these lines, thousands of American Christians are leaving the churches here in America. Where are they going? They are returning to the living rooms, to the houses. The house church movement in America is an indication of where the future is.

We can never train enough ministers, we can never raise enough money to build enough buildings which we call "churches" to evangelize this world.

The living room, the lay church, the organic church will one day win. In America. Around the world. Present traditions will help! They will drive us out!!

God speed the day.

We have now come to the end of Part I and the beginning of Part II.

The second half of this book is to help you, the non American, understand us! We Americans are swarming all over this planet. And it looks as though we are about to plunge every inch of Christendom into a thousand years of the American version of the kingdom of God.

Get to know the way we think. Understand us in our naivete, our shallowness, and the way we use our money, our power and our influence. We Americans have emerged as a dangerous force against church life. And dangerous to the future experience of Christianity. Dangerous to you, and to your culture.

Soon there simply will not be anything on this planet, among the redeemed, except an Americanized faith. Or, so it strongly appears. But you - the non-American - can stop this vast, worldwide march to Americanization. It is up to you to stop it!

The following are glimpses of us Americans. And when you have finished, remember: (1) Our own churches are dead. (2) An American answer to your country's needs is not going to help you. (3) There is a better way. Drop the first. Don't touch the second.

Find a better way. YOU

CAN DO BETTER THAN WHAT WE ARE OFFERING YOU.

Part II
Seeking a Solution

11. The American "Revelation" of the Church

The pastor slips out of his car and steps out onto the church parking lot. He looks up at all the huge church buildings. He sees a bowling alley, a basketball team, a summer camp, a building for Sunday School classes, a five-day-a-week kindergarten, administrative offices with a staff of ten people, etc.

It is a geographical spot for people to come to... once per week. Yet, the pastor has really staked out only a small plot of land and two hours a week for this thing called church.*

* A megachurch — or super church -could have a shopping center, Swimming pool, health club, etc. But all this, and a housing development thrown in, will never be church life. And unlike the para-churches, it is sunk in concrete, in one small location. The pastor has still staked out only an hour or two a week for the kingdom of God on twenty acres of land! What he does on that parcel of land pales in the light of what a para-church organization does!!

Yes, there are a few people who get in their cars and come to this building on Wednesday evening. An even smaller number serve on a dozen committees. But for most of the people in America, "church" is simply Sunday c at 11 a.m.

Generally speaking, the American concept of the church goes no further than that. "Church" is a geographical location. You get in your car and drive to it, you stay for one hour, and you leave. Church can only be buildings — buildings that do not move. Church has a building address, a parking lot for cars and a telephone number that is answered by a church secretary. Church, in this concept, is so unimportant it takes only one hour of a Christian's life. No wonder someone invented para-church Organizations! In the first century the church, the Christian life, the 365-day-a-year calendar, and the twenty-four-hour-a-day clock were all the same.

All that church is (to us Americans) is from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Sunday. That which could rip down the gates of hell is holding down a small plot of land, a parking lot for cars, and one or two hours per week where all of us except one, sit silently! That hour, dear non-Westerner, is perhaps the most boring hour known to mankind.

Today's church is literally anchored in one small spot, held down by cement and brick, and you go to it. It does not come to you.

Church is so unimportant that something came along and just about took the other six days. And no one even noticed. And no one cared.

Enter one of America's greatest inventions, the para-church organization.

These organizations are open six days a week and twenty-four hours a day. They are exciting. And everyone gets to participate. Even though it has buildings, it can come to you.

Para-church organizations, unencumbered by such a boring thing as "Sunday morning church service," are mobile, have theatres, plays, concerts, orchestras, videos, records, recording studios, dynamic training classes, singing that will steal your heart away, banquets with speakers that will turn your tears to waterfalls, ships, planes, bands, magicians, mimes, rock concerts, music companies, publishing houses, and worldwide radio and television programs. And an army of young people who save up money all year so that they can spread out across the world in vast numbers every summer. These organizations have staked out the other 167 hours in the week which the church has not claimed for 1700 years.

Right now para-church organizations dominate the Christian landscape. They have visions that capture the imagination of everyone. They challenge the best in the heart of man: prayer meetings that rival the one in the upper room; space satellites which encompass the world; voyages out to places as beautiful and remote as Micronesia and the wastelands and icebergs of Greenland. They have magazines, prayer letters, and a mailing room to solicit money that is as big as an airplane hangar.

Today there are multitudes of these organizations, reaching Out to just about every imaginable group of people the mind can conceive of, from the military to fashion models.

These very flexible organizations are always the first into any newly-opened land. They enter with flare and dynamic. They are elastic, adaptable and extremely mobile. Their entrance is heralded worldwide - but especially to donors - with a pizazz that would turn Madison Avenue and P.T. Barnum a dark shade of envy.

They are many things; they are everything! Everywhere! Reaching everyone! There is only one thing they are not. They are not the church! These organizations have something to show us. They give us a shadow of understanding into what the church - the ecclesia - could be and should be, in dynamic, mobility and adaptability and in the matter of broad-spectrum appeal. These organizations are a distorted image of what the ecclesia might have been if the reformers had reformed just a bit more than they did.

The downside of these organizations? A staff attrition rate that is mind-boggling. A burnout rate that is just as awesome. A long-time "keep" record that is somewhere between miniscule and zero. And an overhead cost that would make Washington D.C. politics look like the soul of a conservative Scot.

Add to that: The para-church has virtually no light on the church.

But all in all, the Christian faith would be very boring without them. They are exciting. Wholly unscriptural, and a poor Substitute for true church life, but still the best thing going.

Another downside: Never cross those people. The traditional church is placid in comparison to the fury a para-church Organization can unleash on anything Christian that gets in its way. They can out-and-out persecute.

These two things, the dead or dying traditional church and the supercharged para-church organizations, these are what we Americans have to offer you. Our missions bring you one or two very boring meetings called "church." The para-churches bring you excitement. All are American in style.

Today the church and para-church work together covering the entire 168 hours in a week. If the traditional church and para-church organizations combined, would they be as wonderful as the organic church? Can they, together, replace the biological body of Christ?

12. Behind The Scenes Of A Para-Church Organization

You, dear, non-American, are going to be asked to join a para-church organization! Well, as anon-American, you have a right to know a little bit more about the para-church concept. That is what this chapter is about.

May I invite you into the inner workings of a para-church organization? You really do have a right to understand this American invention. And never forget, the para-church movement is 100 per cent American. We invented it!

Better than just learning about para-church organizations, let us imagine that you just started a para-church organization! This will help you understand the American Christian invasion of your country, and what we are doing.

If you are shocked when you read this chapter, here is another surprise for you: Every well-informed minister in America already knows everything in this chapter.

This chapter takes you behind the scenes of a para-church organization. Remember, we are pretending you are about to be the founder of an American para-church organization!

To launch this organization, you, the founder, must first begin with a vision. A simple, yet powerful vision! The best vision we Americans have come up with is "the evangelization of the world in this generation." This motto has been with us for over 100 years. The very first para-church organization used this motto way back in 1890! (That was three generations ago.)

Never mind that this vision of yours is not Scripturally based. Never mind that it is a vision (and a movement) that presents salvation without church.

This made-in-America vision will continue giving us a world full of saved people ... saved but with nothing but a fire insurance policy from hell. Millions saved, but with i real relationship to Christ and/or the church.

Never mind, as you launch this organization, that you know full well your converts will show little or no interest in traditional churches. Neither will your converts become long term, active members of these dead churches.

Never mind that these facts will cause your converts to be ruined for any beautiful relationship to the ecclesia.

Your organization knows the traditional churches will not appeal to your converts; yet, at the same time, your organization will need the support of the traditional churches. Therefore, your organization will forever walk a thin line. On the one hand you know the present church is archaic, cold, dead, lifeless, sterile, and its meetings are a funeral dirge. On the other hand, those very churches are one of your major sources of money. And you will need a lot of money for your organization.

This means you must ignore the fact that most of your converts will never become part of these churches — while, at the same time, you cultivate the support of these churches.

How do you live with yourself, knowing all of the above? Just ignore reality!!

Focus on your smaller task of saving souls. Turn your back on the rest of the picture, never facing the fact that the newly saved have no body life to go to after your organization leads them to Christ.

Your para-church organization will win massive numbers of converts; however, you must never look deeply into the figures which tell you about your "keep ratio."

Ten years from now no one on earth will know where your converts are. (Except for perhaps a few who join your organization. Realize that you must emphasize, promote, publicize, and advertise these few. Make these successes look like they are a very large number. This is how you side-step the fact that the masses you led to Christ have vanished. Ignore the fact that only about one out of every 5,000 converts joins your organization... and that no one knows where the rest are.)

Where are all those converts who have vanished by the millions? No one knows. Never try to find out!

Again, ignore reality.

Your newly-formed para-church organization now needs many Christian men and women to serve on your staff. Young men and women between twenty and twenty-eight are best. But up to thirty is great. |

You also need a lot of young people to attend your conferences and to go out on evangelistic tours. Always young people, idealistic, impressionistic, and enthusiastic. Ages seventeen through twenty-four are best. Never forget, these enthusiastic young people are the engine of all para-church organizations. Without them you have nothing. Ignore the fact that you are building a mighty, powerful engine on little more than transient, youthful enthusiasm. Young people without a clear direction, looking for meaning to their Christian lives; young people, very easily led. They are in the most adventurous period of their , lives, so offer them adventure.

This is where the vision comes in. The vision will bring in both (1) staff and (2) young people. A vision plus staff plus young people. (Never make the mistake of trying to build such an organization with people who are all over thirty!!)

After the vision, the staff, and the young people, you must add the ingredient of empowerment., Show the staff and the young recruits how to receive the power of God. They will then go out to "evangelize the world in one generation," with this empowerment. Tell them that this empowerment will be with them all their lives.

(Never check on these young people when they are forty. Chances are, they will not even be practicing Christians! Inquire, and they probably will tell you they forgot all they heard about empowerment and that they have only a vague recollection of being "a summer missionary.")

Next comes training for staff and for young people. Staff first. Later the staff will train the young people. The training must not last too long.

Here is where the evangelical mindset will help.

The evangelical mind finds our present-day Christianity all over the New Testament (even though it is not there). You will have no trouble showing these young people a churchless New Testament and a churchless vision. You will be able to show them the evangelization of the world in one generation, and you will even be able to show them your organization....in the New Testament!!

But young people, as dear as they are, are often incorrigible, or at least not too disciplined. So while they are in training you must give them three other things.

One is a concept of authority and obedience; another is a strong organizational structure, with a clear chain of command. Finally, it helps to throw in a little guilt and fear, sprinkled throughout all the rules you have laid down.

After the training is over, you move on to something we will Call the great adventure.

Here are some possibilities.

Evangelizing a college campus (in Indonesia!). That challenges young people. How about a whole nation, one that just recently opened to the gospel? That is the best of all adventures. Or taking Bibles to some remote place somewhere.

And when those are not available?

A World's Fair! A world's soccer match. Mardi Gras. Or planning a giant stadium rally with a goal of 100,000 young people in it. Hold this rally in Las Vegas or Washington D.C.

There is always something somewhere which can become “The Great Adventure,"

As I write this book, Russia and eastern Europe are fantastic adventures with a challenge to thrill the heart of any young soul. How about Siberia? How about the World's Fair in Budapest next year?

Next, to pull off this great adventure, you need money. Such adventures always need money. Lots of money.

In fact, the unstated purpose of The Great Adventure is to raise money, in order to keep your organization going.

Here are your money sources.

The young people who come to the training conferences and who are going out on this great venture. Churches. If at all possible, get your staff to attend Sunday morning church services in those churches that give money to your organization. Also, encourage your converts, led to Christ by your staff, to attend those same Sunday morning church services. What do you do if your converts like to go to some other church in the community, one that does not give money to your organization? See to it that your staff persuades your converts to not attend that church. Anything that draws your converts and staff away from the organization is the enemy!

Your third great source of income is the wealthy laymen.

How do you draw wealthy laymen into supporting your Organization? One staple way is to have banquets where your staff and your converts testify. The training manual which you taught to your staff has a detailed chapter on how to produce these banquets. (See the staff manual - "Banquets.")

But there is much more you can do to enlist wealthy laymen.

Train every person on staff to curry relationships with the above-mentioned laymen. Keep on encouraging staffers to meet and build friendships with well-to-do laymen. Teach them how to do this. Of course, what you will end up with is an entire staff that is always friendly, always beautiful, almost always happy. When they are with laymen they are always burning with "the vision," speaking in glowing terms of that next "great adventure."

They will live every moment of their artificial lives with this manufactured facade. But that is all right because you will have a staff always on the lookout for money sources, and always recruiting more of those successful laymen to be "staff advisors."

Your staff must always be tooting the organization; they must be telling stories of great past - but recent - successes and also of great events to come! Teach them to do this and you will consistently see laymen enlisted into the organization as "support."

Laymen must be given the same message as the young people. They, too, can find meaning and purpose to their lives by backing these young people. Make life exciting for them. Help them find their sense of worth before God in supporting your organization.

Never mind the damage this will later cause in the lives of these Christians. Never mind that this way of doing things eventually creates a staff who are being both dishonest with themselves and artificial with others. Deny the fact that a huge number of your staff will not only quit your organization soon, specifically because they can no longer live with themselves.

And don't give a second thought to the fact that most non Christians can see through this sham.

Yes, all this destroys staffers. It undermines character. It is, basically, living a dishonest life before God and men.

Never take note of the cycle that constantly repeats itself with both staff and laymen. The cycle usually runs five to seven years. In that period of time your present staff has mostly vanished and so have most of the laymen who were once supporting you. You will constantly need new staff and new laymen. The pattern in consistent. Never stop and consider that fact, or what causes it. (The salesmanship innate to the needs of a para-church organization and the artificiality of constantly selling the organization are what cause it!) Once more, ignore reality. And next year, start all over again, with scores of new young people and new staff, and newly-enlisted laymen.

This pattern is fixed. It never changes. Never analyze that. Never ask why. Most of all, never ask where those folks went, nor what damage their souls experienced from being with you during those five years.

If you doubt these things are true, ask anyone in a para-church organization the average age of their full-time staff members. It is around twenty-eight. Five years from now it will be twenty-eight. Ten years from now it will be about twenty-eight. And so on forever. Ask how many lay advisors there are. Then find out the average time they have been with the organization. You will find the same answer. In both cases, burnout is horrendous.

Now, on to the great adventure.

Money flows in because of The Great Adventure. The oncein-a-lifetime, we-must-seize-this-opportunity adventure!

Let us say the adventure is the Olympics. Or an Expo. You must show everyone the fantastic opportunity of this event. And the urgency. Enlist an army of young people who will train and then go to this great gathering. Most of the money these young volunteers bring with them goes for air travel, their food, and their other expenses. But some of this money must be used for overhead. After all, “Headquarters” has spent a great deal of money to promote "the great adventure." In fact, this event has cost a fortune.

So, while the young people are in training, ask them to give more money. Be sure there are crises. These crises will cause these very excited young people to explore every source avail. able to them in order to give more money. Young people in training are always a major source of revenue.

Of course, solicit money from those laymen you have cultivated.

The Olympics will last two weeks, but an entire year of preparation precedes it. Excitement is high. The vision is being seen. There is one whole year of money coming in... for a twoweek project! In those two weeks you will witness millions of dollars spent by your organization. As a result, your organization will make a small profit which will help defer the expenses incurred back at Headquarters. Administrative costs have been astronomical.

After the great adventure is over, broadcast the results everywhere. (ignore the "keep rate” of converts.)

While all this is going on, be looking around for another challenge and the next great adventure. Great undertakings like this are the fuel that keep your organization going. Without them your para-church organization will die in its tracks.

Never inquire as to what evidence you have to show that five years after the Expo is over, you and thousands of young people were ever in that city!

Yes, you do have five addresses left of converts still going on with the Lord and there are a dozen staff workers still on staff who were there at that great event of five years ago.

That is all you have to show as the results of those millions of dollars spent? Is it justifiable by any measurement?

One such organization, similar to yours, did a one-year follow-up on 20,000 of their converts. Only 200 still professed a relationship to Jesus Christ!! Thank God for the 200, but there are better ways to spend millions of dollars in order to save - and keep - converts.

So what do you do? Continue ignoring reality.

Now, let us shift the scenery.

What if Paul had gone into that same city at the same time you did? He would have raised up an ecclesia with... oh, maybe forty converts. A community of believers would have been born. Two years later that community Paul had formed would probably number around forty people or maybe sixty. In five years, perhaps it would number 100. In ten... maybe 200! (But maybe only seventy-five.)

Regardless of the number, it would have cost less and it would not be a church where people checked into a building once a week. It would be a virile ecclesia... elastic, adapting, mobile, loving, caring, beautiful, energetic, fascinating, attracting... a chip of the kingdom of God! Maybe even exciting! Most of all, it would be permanent. And it would be God’s purpose - the very community of the believers.

Would that ecclesia have strong Scriptural grounds for existence?

How strong? Every page in the New Testament!!

That is a bit more than your para-church organization can muster to justify its existence.

Point: Shall we focus on the community of the believers, as did Paul, or shall we focus on a churchless evangelism with a keep ratio that is near zero, as do Americans? *

Why this chapter? So that you - the Christian who is native to your country - can see the inner workings of the para-church organizations, and then ask yourself... "Is this what I want to join?! Is this what I want to see become the way of thinking of my people?"

* This summer one para-church organization sent out 2,000 young people for six weeks - at a cost of $3,000,000 - to do blitz evangelism. What could one church planter, first-century style, have done with onetenth of that amount of money? He could have raised up several permanent ecclesiae that could account for their converts even fifty years later.

Chances are, you will be asked to join a para-church organization or to help with its program. You also need to know that you are the exciting news we Americans write home about. Telling about you is the one way the American para-church organization raises money. And remember, it is American to the core, uninterested in an organic expression of the church in your land. And if a para-church does have any interest in church, it will be an American version of the church transplanted into your land. That church will have lined-up pews. You will all face toward a preacher - possibly an American preacher - and you will sit in silence while he preaches to you for the rest of your lives.

You can do better!

The commendable aspect of para-churches? Those organizations are exciting! They make the traditional church look like an ice statue. Para-church organizations have variety - exciting variety. In other words, they offer (at a terrible price and only for a short time) some of the flavor of what should be the church.

But none of this is even similar to the organic/indigenous church. What is lacking here? Just about everything. A depth of understanding of Christ. Our total lack of understanding of the ecclesia.

And then there is...

13. The American Missionary/Tourist

We Americans live in an isolated nation. Ice above us, desert below us and a great big ocean on each side of us. We get in an airplane, fly to western Europe and are amazed to discover Europeans have indoor toilets.

We also do not understand geography. We don't need to because to most of us, there simply are no other countries near us. Many of us do not know what Canada is or where Canada is, or Mexico. Or Maine!

Ask any of us where Uruguay is! We live in nice houses, with air conditioning, two TV sets, a big yard (and maybe a swimming pool) and drive two cars. Why do we need to know where Uganda is?

But we Americans are religious. And yes, even now, we still may be the most Christian nation on earth, per capita.

We have these huge mission conferences each year attended by tens of thousands of young people. At these conferences we sit and hear stirring messages about how poor and how needy you are. Then the speaker asks how many of the American young people will go as Christian workers to your country to lead you. We fill the aisles of the auditorium as we go forward to volunteer to become missionaries. And the Lord God knows we mean it! We are sincere, God bless us. We are Americans. And many of us truly love the Lord.

And we give our money. We give more than any other people (of course, we have more) in Christian history. Never underestimate our love for Christ nor our sincerity, nor our devotion,

But every one of us, as we stepped forward to become a missionary, saw ourselves as being your leader. And we go to your country to lead you.

Now watch us as we arrive on the mission field (the mission field - that means you). We are a sight to behold.

I share with you a few observations about us. But as you read these stories, keep in mind that there is a very important point to be made.

My first experience of "being on the mission field" came when I was nineteen years old. It was Israel! The first American couple I became friends with had been “on the field" for six weeks. The wife was a basket case. She would have gladly killed for a Coca-Cola. I remember her begging me, "When you get back to America, please send me a gallon of Coke syrup.” I watched as she implored her husband to go to Haifa or Joppa so she could go out to the dock where ships came in, in order to perhaps find a ship, any ship, which might have a Coke on board.

No one on earth can come down with culture shock the way we Americans Can.

I do not know if you consider Spain a backward, hardship country for missionaries. (I do not.) Well, out of every 100 American missionaries who go to Spain, ninety-five do not return for a second term.

Why? Culture shock! Most American missionaries do not return to the mission field after five years. Adapting to your country just about destroys us. Interestingly, we also experience reverse culture shock when we return home. That is, we go through profound physical and psychological problems when we return home to America.

A missionary friend of mine told me that upon arriving back home in America, the doctor kept him sedated on morphine for two weeks. He was that uptight. Some mission boards report nervous breakdowns as high as twenty-five percent among missionaries during their first term overseas.

Please know that we are very excited about your country when we first arrive. We are all eyes, taking pictures, making movies, agog with this new world we have entered. It's an adventure! And, at night when we get back to our apartment (when none of you foreigners are around), we sit around talking excitedly about how "quaint" you look, and how "neat" your culture is. You might hear us say, "We love this place and all these neat people. We want to work here forever and forever and forever,"

That is how we talk during our first two weeks! ;

But look at us six months later. We hate your telephone system, despise your driving habits, loathe your diet and would gladly murder for an American hamburger. We would commit treason for a banana split. We would rob your grandmother's grave if it meant getting a milkshake. We would sell our soul to see a good football game on Saturday afternoon.

As you get to know us, can you detect our sense of superiority? We cannot. Please know that we Americans do not realize that we feel superior to you. We do not know this.

Observe when we get sick, we do not go to a doctor who is native to your land. Nor do we go to your hospital. We go home! To an American doctor! And an American hospital! To us your doctor looks like a mad scientist running around in dirty clothes with unwashed hands. We quite literally "would not get caught dead" in your hospital!

Also, observe who we run around with, who we take our vacations with, and who our closest friends are. What do we do when we are not doing Christian service? We run around with fellow Americans. We are virtually never close friends - outside of Christian service — with you or any other native Christians. (You will not be invited on our vacations; we spend our vacations with Americans.)

In a word, we are the consummate missionary-tourist!

After a few months on the missionary field, most of us would gladly transfer to a mission field like Switzerland, Hawaii or Paris. Or better, "Somebody please offer me a desk job back home!"

Ironically, when we come home, never to return to you and your country, we spend two years going around to American Churches telling American Christians all sorts of very moving, tearful stories about you and your wonderful country. Shucks, we even talk our young people into becoming missionaries to your country. (You know, the country we just left because we had a nervous breakdown while living there.)

What is the point of this chapter? This: It never occurs to us to stay home.

It never occurs to us that you, the native, would make a far better missionary to your own people than we ever could. After all, you do not need to go to a language class to learn your own language. You do not have to adapt to a strange culture. You have never had culture shock from living in your own country. And it costs a lot less money to keep you "on the mission field" than it does to keep an American on the mission field. About ten times less.

We quite literally do not understand - and never think in terms of - organic churches, culturally compatible gatherings, nor indigenous missions. We send Americans! Our thinking stops there.

Why?

Because...

14. Colonizers to the End

Americans lead the work we start in your land. Furthermore, we will never let you lead.

Now those are strong words. Is it possible they are really accurate? If so, what is there in us that causes us to so totally control everything we do in your country?

It is a malady that affects all mankind. We are only more upfront about how we deal with it. We cannot bear to accept our finiteness. It is too difficult for us to admit that very little of our lives is under our direct control. So we grab for any control we can get in order to feel secure

in ourselves apart from God. Directing how you will worship the Lord is just one way in which we tell ourselves we are in control of our world and our lives.

We will never stop seating you in a church building....which has chairs in a row....facing forward, looking up at a speaker stand.

All directions that are given will be "from the top to the bottom." That is, we direct. Nothing will come from the bottom... up!! We are determined, come hell or high water, that you are going to attend an American-style church service.

After all, that is what is "best" for you. Anything that is Christian, by way of the U.S.A., is what is best for you. Trust us. Since we Americans are superior to you, it stands to reason our Christianity is superior to anything you might have or that you might come up with.

Will we ever turn the Lord's work in your country over tg you? Or the church - will we tum it over to you? No!

There is an exception.

We may turn a church over to you, and you will be in Charge... but this will never happen until we are absolutely convinced that we have truly Americanized you. Until we cannot tell the difference between you and us... until you promote our denominational doctrine (or our para-church vision and manual), Until then you will never find yourself in a position of true leadership.

If you are not Americanized, then you will never be promoted to leadership. And - Americanized or not - you will never find yourself in the top echelon of decision making. The power itself will never be yours. Live a thousand years but you will never be the one who has control over the money. Not yesterday, not today, not ever!! Control of money will forever be in the hands of an American.

The Non-Indigenous Mind

As Americans view a lost world, we see it as needing us. This world needs Americans as much as it needs Christianity; therefore, we think almost exclusively in terms of training Americans, not indigenous workers. Oh, we might think in terms of a Bible school in Bosnia. Yes, a Bible school to train Natives. But it will be us teaching the classes and directing the school. Every year we spend billions of dollars training American Christians... to come to your land. We spend pennies training natives.

Never mind that you have never had culture shock from living in your own country. Never mind that you can speak your language like a native (with almost no accent)! Never mind that you and you alone will ever really understand your culture and your people. Never mind that you can do the same Christian work we do, and do it better, and do it for ninety per cent less expenditure of money. Never mind you do not have to leave your country for a year every three years to keep from having a nervous breakdown.

We train Americans. We send Americans.

It takes $60,000* a year to keep an American couple "on the mission field." Never mind that you could accomplish as much with $2,000. Or $1,000. We cannot even think in those terms. Such ideas never cross our mind. It takes Americans to do this job! The world will be evangelized by Americans. Only Americans maybe a few British).

Why not let you do it? Because you are not an American!

We Americans are warm, friendly people. We will give you the shirt off our backs. In Christ's name we will gladly lay down our lives for you. We will go home and raise money to help you. But we are shallow, spiritually immature, blind... blind to your culture, blind to your ways, blind to what the ecclesia is, blind to the cross working in our lives, and blind to a revelation of - and the revealing of - Jesus Christ.

We are in your land to give you Christ, yes! But we give you our specialized doctrines along with Him. If we did not do that, no one in America would give us the money needed to be missionaries. Our doctrines are what get us to your country. Our specialized doctrines are our only source of money. We will give you Christ, but we will always throw in, along with the gospel, our denominational teachings!

We are superior to you, and we will be in control of business. Yesterday, today and forever.

* If you read this book fifty years after it is printed, you may wonder how much $60,000 was, way back when I wrote this book. (Inflation causes money Statistics to be worthless in a few years.) There are two ways to know how to figure what $60,000 in our day will be in your day. One: Figure out what the average salary for one year is in your day. Double that! Two: Since gold never changes in price (currency does change; gold does not), figure how much it costs in your currency to purchase about 200 ounces of gold. That is how much it costs to keep the average American missionary on the mission field for one year! (At the time I am writing, gold sells for about S400 an ounce.)

Worst of all, we American missionaries, by using the American approach, can never father an organic, indigenous church in your land. We are incapable of this because we never heard of it!! And we surely have never seen it. Therefore, the only thing left for us to do is Americanize you.

In this way we stay Americans. You change. We do not make the effort to change. We stay American, one hundred per cent.

Besides, doesn't everyone want to be American?

We are like the legendary Englishman lost in the jungles of South America, who was saved by a tribe of undiscovered natives. They had no idea how to tell him where he was or how to get home. He realized he was stuck there. So, instead of learning their language, he taught the entire tribe English! That is the kind of people we are. And we are not going to change.

You can do the Lord's work in your country better than we can do it. Go do it! In the process will you please burn those pews we made you sit in? And be done with that building we - in our blindness — call "church." Then start all over!

But this time, do it Paul's way. * The local Christians must discover for themselves an expression of church life that is organic to their soil. We Americans and British are not organic to your native soil. Why do you wish to follow us?

Basically this is what we Americans are: We are tourists with a superiority complex and a commission from God (given to all American Christians) "to go into all the earth and save the lost," and Americanize them in the process. Repeat: This planet will be evangelized by Americans and given American churches! We will always give you a church building, pastor and pews. Worse, we Americans will never go home. If we will not go home, dear native, walk out of our meetings and our church buildings....and you go home! Start meeting in your own living room.

* See *How to Meet*

5. Two Closely Guarded Secrets

Let me tell you two secrets.

Secret Number One

Most leaders of para-church organizations hate to go to church!

Repeat: Most of the men and women "on staff" are committed to world evangelism, yet find it painful, if not impossible, to attend a Sunday morning church service here in America. They have to go to church, but the older and more mature they get, the more they dislike going to church.

These men live a paradox: winning people to Christ by the millions, using innovative, exciting methods, yet ignoring the fact they do not like church. They are equally aware that their

converts will find Sunday church service as boring and dead as they themselves find it.

Your friends in the para-church organizations and your missionary friends find church as boring as you do if they have to be the ones sitting!! They only like church if they are the ones doing the ministering. Their need of functioning is met by being your leader. Therefore, you must remain eternally immature, not being able to ever share, much less minister. On Sunday, you sit!

Long ago Paul knew something that simply never crossed the minds of these para-church ministries. The first-century ecclesia was, in itself, the most magnetic, powerful tool of evangelism ever known.

When she is gathering together under the direct headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, with no discernable human leaders present in the gathering, she is the most beautiful, compelling girl in the world. She is evangelism.

Paul of Tarsus did not raise up the church to evangelize the lost. Paul did not raise up the church to win souls. Paul preached the gospel, evangelized, and won souls in order to raise up the church!

This is the only way it is supposed to be!

But this thought is not in the minds of Americans. We evangelize!

The para-church organizations do not raise up church life, and most of the converts do not stay in church. Most of their converts who stay with the Christian faith are the ones who join the staff of their organizations.

If para-churches keep their converts, if there is a genuine enlargement of the kingdom of God, it is only in that their converts expand their staff. They do not plant churches. They evangelize. That is where it all stops. Paul built churches out of converts, He was there not to save from hell and that be the end of it. Paul was there, first and foremost, to see a girl named ecclesia brought to birth.

There is a world of difference between these two concepts! One concept is personified by today's evangelists, missionaries and para-church movements. The other was Paul's way. In the final analysis, are we on this earth simply to go about the planet saving people from hell, or are we here to see the birth of an organic expression of Jesus Christ among all tribes and tongues. The two concepts are diametrically opposite. One of them is modem, the other is ancient. One does not work very well. The Other, when it exists, is not only beautiful, but it is the fulfillment of God's purpose for creating this universe!

The para-church organization is a man-invented concept that is only about 100 years old. The local gathering of God's people was in the heart of God before creation. And, surely, before the fall. Before men needed salvation.

Secret Number Two

Most Christians who come from America come to your land because they see so little hope for the American church. They want to come to your country and raise up a better church than America has. The irony is this: We still only give you our American ways. (You can only give to another what you already possess yourself. Since we have nothing better, we cannot give you anything better.)

We see the church in America as hopelessly dead; so we say, "I will go to a virgin land and pour out my life there, and raise up a better, superior Christianity than what we have in America! Then we come to your land and plant our American church in your country.

The missionary who comes to you ultimately gives you the same thing we have in America. He gives you a miserable Sunday church service that forces you into being a silent spectator. A mute. A non-sharing, non-functioning, irresponsible zombie who gets only to sing and raise his hands over his head!

There is higher ground. There is a better way. There is a third secret.

We have overlooked the obvious. The secret to the first century ecclesia was the ecclesia itself. A very beautiful girl was their secret.

What did draw heathen?

The heathen of that first century were drawn to Christ by just one thing. They were awed by the ecclesia herself and by her love of Him.

The world had never seen anything like her. The world was as curious as it could be as it watched the community of the believers. Many came to her gatherings and were dumfounded by those meetings. *And those meetings fit the cultural expression of those who came to see.*

The unbelievers were warmed by those gatherings. They had never seen anything of like manner. They were dazzled. They also felt completely at home. They were comfortable. Even though they were heathen in a Christian meeting, there was something about those meetings that made them know this was out of the soil, the customs, the matrix of their own culture.

This is not true when someone goes to a church service on Sunday. Not here. Not in your country. Nowhere. Those meetings are inorganic to everyone. That thing is foreign no matter where it is seen, anywhere on this planet! In our day, the unconverted are bored in a meeting; and if they are not bored in the first meeting, they become bored soon. A non-participating audience will eventually become bored, no matter what is going on up front.

In that day, they were awed in a meeting! And some remained to pray. This - alone - is the great secret of the first century church. The greatest method of evangelism that has ever been, or ever will be, was the beauty of those meetings of believers! She was one very beautiful lady!

We, on the other hand, are trying to peddle a funeral service! Well, funeral services are not easy to sell to the living. (And even the dead don't particularly care for them!)

The damage the missionary and the staffer does in introducing the American church is incalculable, yet we are doing it on a worldwide scale. The influence of inculcating the American version of Christianity into other cultures (with absolute, total, utter disregard for those peoples' way of life, their matrix and their culture) is a damage that will take centuries to undo. That is a tragedy of immeasurable proportions!

Men have cried out for 100 years for Americans to stop this imperialization of American Christianity. But the only people who can Stop us are the natives of other countries.

Three secrets: (1) American Christians hate to go to church unless they are up on the platform. (2) We came to your country because we gave up on the American church; we came to your land to do better, but we only repeat our past mess. (3) The first century church had a secret that we have never learned: She herself is the greatest instrument of evangelism this earth can ever know!

16. The Nicest Thing About Para-Church Organizations

May I tell you, the para-church organization, something wonderful which your organization does have. And, please, dear non-American, listen in, for there is something important to be found here.

You, the para-church movement, have something wonderful, but you do not know you have it! In fact, it may be the most wonderful, powerful thing you have going for you! It may well be one of the major engines that give dynamics and magnetism to your organization.

Would you like to guess what that almighty force might be? Let me warn you, though....you cannot call it forth at will, you cannot control it, you cannot manufacture it and you cannot bottle it. It comes and goes as does the wind, totally outside your influence.

You are keenly aware that churches are dull, and your para-church organizations are exciting. So exciting, in fact, you have a major problem with "excitement burnout." But you also have gold in your midst. The very magic of God. Here it is.

From time to time the young people in your organizations accidentally touch church life. Those brief touches are the most electric, memorable experiences of their lives. Your organization gets the credit for these wondrous moments. You attribute it to "the empowerment" or to your training schools, or to your evangelism or to the fact that "everyone is in the Word!" It is not any of those. It always happens informally, and it comes and goes of its own accord. It is really a divine thing.

What is this phenomenon? It is church life taking place out side of its natural habitat. Taking place in the dorm or by the sea, but virtually always outside your structure and your manual.

If you try to capture it, or bottle it.... perhaps you may succeed. But if you do, tomorrow you will kill it. Your organizationalism, your vision, your pell-mell drive to evangelize, will squash church life dead even as it sprouts in your midst!! You will kill it with rules, chain-of-command programs, and just about everything else you do.

Those kids, a generation from now, if they can even remember being a "six-month missionary," may not recall the name of your organization. They will, however, remember that golden moment when they touched church life.

17. Church-Planting Organizations??

Here is something new to me. Very recently I heard that some Americans have founded non-profit, tax-exempt, para-church organizations whose stated purpose is starting churches!

The very idea blows the brain's circuitry.

Can a glacier give birth to fire? A rock produce a child? A statue become a beautiful woman? An organization that plants a church is a contradiction in terms. It is less likely to happen than Death fathering a live baby.

If an organization could produce the church, it would have to be an act of the suicide of one before the birth of the other!

Yes, an organization can produce an organization. And that is exactly what organizations do when they set out to "plant churches." An organization simply creates another organization. You can stick the word "church" on it, but that does not make it a church. It is a para-church organization creating a Sunday Church service! Now that is not only possible, it is easy!

In order for there to be life, there must be an organism. An organization cannot birth an Organism - no more than a machine can bear children.

These "church planting" organizations produce a church with pews in a row, a speaker standing up front, and the ever-present sermon and the ever-mute people. That may be America's definition of a church, but that does not make it an indigenous body of believers.

As you look at the church-planting para-church organizations, what you see is but another Anglicization of foreign believers.

I can hardly wait to see a thousand ex-Moslems who have turned Christian being introduced to John Calvin's invention which Christians call the Sunday church service. They will be saying, "We thought praying toward Mecca five times a day was bad, but get a look at this! Give me back my Moslem ritual and my prayer rug!" Dear brothers, Calvin's church service will never sell in Islam!

Thank God that men have come to the point of seeing that we need church planters. But, sirs, please don't plant any more of this brand of churches. And why just on the mission field? We do not have an organic church over here in America either! God be merciful to you brave men, and may you one day see that beautiful girl whose name is ecclesia.

18. To Whom This Book Was Written

If this book had been written to missionaries and para-church staff workers, it would probably suggest you come back home! Come home, and start all over again, beginning by being in the practice and experience of an organic American expression of church life.*

* Just what is church life? Can one define love, life, serendipity, quintessence, or sinum bonum? Church life is something you experience - even drown in. Definition is impossible. The worst possible thing I could do is define church life, thereby establishing borders and concepts. She defines man's theologies.)

But to experience the community of the believers....to discover an organic and indigenous expression of the church is difficult and it is very exposing. It would take many years out of the lives of men and women who lead such organizations. Such things seem unnecessarily burdensome to most of us Americans. We simply cannot think in terms of quitting the ministry and sitting down for four or five years... in a living room... until our present mindset drains out of us. So most Americans exposed to this book may do what we Americans do best....innovate!

Sirs, innovation is not enough.

Some other direction, some other way (quicker way) will likely be substituted in favor of such an odd suggestion as "Go back home and learn church life." Yet, deep in our subconscious, we know you cannot give what you do not have!

Therefore, for most men who read this book who are on the mission field, my guess is this book will cause you to pause and reflect. And then?

Perhaps some will pause and innovate.

And change, a little.

But most who read this book, I presume, will miss the point: The change must be a titanic change - all-encompassing and all. consuming. The mission field may not be the best place to change that radically. Actually there is no place that is a good place to change that radically. You will almost certainly be thrown out of whatever organization you are in if you try that much change!! Some 1700 years of church history witness to that observation.

How drastic a change is needed? One which is at least as extreme as the changes that occurred during the Reformation when men went through the agonies of changing from being a devout Catholic to being a Protestant.

At least that radical.

Perhaps more radical. Such as going from being a Catholic to being an Anabaptist!!

If you, the missionaries of the earth, and you, the parachurch workers, wish to grasp how things really were in Century One, may I suggest you read the story....as unfolded in Revolution.*

I would also urge you to find and read the (now out of print) books by Roland Allen... especially Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours and The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church.

* Publisher's note. The other books on missions, church planting, evangelism and Americanization by this author are The Way The Church Ought To Be (In English: How To Meet) then Revolution, the Story of the First Century Church and The Man Most Needed, presenting a retum to the first-century concept of church planting. The Americanization of Christianity (this volume), a book on missions, church planting, evangelism and church life. Revolution is the first in this series to read.

I would suggest that you need, perhaps desperately need, to allow these books to impact your life and influence your future.

May God speak to you fully.

Personally, I hope you do return home to America and learn organic church life. Learn an American version of what church life is. If you go back overseas, I hope you will move against the prevailing floodtides. I also hope you follow Paul's example and let the Lord's people discover for themselves their own expression of church life... as it reflects their own people.

If you do these two simple things, chances are you will lose almost every Christian friend you ever had. You really will end up being a modern-day version of an Anabaptist... somebody whom nobody wants.

But, alas, I must confess, I wrote this book primarily for non-Westerners. That is, to Christians not anglo and not from western Europe. I also wrote this book to Christians in nations where western missions cannot go. And to native, indigenous Christian workers. And to all Christians in eastern Europe! (Right now you are the center of Americanization.) China,

you are probably next. (We've already finished Americanizing Latin America, India, and most of Asia and Africa.) You folks in these nations need to launch a revolution.

To all of you, but especially to Christians in eastern Europe, I am tempted to say, "Break off all relationships with all western missionaries and with all para-church organizations... at least until they drop their pell-mell march toward Americanizing everything and everybody!"

Of course, I will not say that. I only want to say that. There are just enough exceptions out there, as rare as they are, to prohibit such a statement.

This I will say: You do not need our money. Bakht Singh, Prem Pradham, Watchman Nee and others have proven this. You do not need our methods. God knows you do not need any of our ways, our mentality, culture, social mores, customs or mindset None of hem. You do not need our practices. And "cross-culture" missions? Cross-culture evangelism? Beautiful words, but they only mean "let us Americanizone you."

I say this emphatically: Do not join any of our missions or para-church organizations. We will ruin you. We will westernize you. We will corrupt you. We will buy your soul and steal your integrity. I will go further. You need to examine yow heart, your motives, your consecration to Christ... if ever you do join!

Watch what happens to you as you attempt to parrot the publicity, advertising, propaganda and "vision" of our western methods and organization. Ask yourself, "What is this doing to my heart?" And when you take our American money....your heart knows you are giving up something sacred of your own being m order to just get money... money that comes from working for us. For us!

That which we are as Americans, that which is our colonizing mentality, and that which is the method we use in all of our British and American organizations... it is not worth following or imitating. It is worn out. Sterile. K is of no real benefit o you and your people.

You can do better. Bakht Singh knew that. Prem Pradham knows that. You can discover it! Take off our suit. Throw away that tie. Put on some ordinary street clothes of your own people.

Return to who you were culturally before you met anything western!

Return to your culture, Take a bath and wash away our religiousness and our professionalism and our studied piety! Become your own person again. Return to your own normality. Discover what the Lord would give that is uniquely yours.

It seems to be a drive of all people to spread their way of "church" to other lands and people. But Paul made it so that every individual church had the wonderful privilege of launching out on its own voyage to discover its own expression of church life,

Follow Paul!

The fact that we feel superior to you should of itself raise red flags within you. We don't mean to feel superior. We don't want to. We don't know we feel this way. We just are this way.

Please, brother, we may act superior to you, but we are not. You can do better. Talk it over with your people. Dare to make the voyage of discovering the daily life of the ecclesia... your style. The style that is organic to your people.

If you leave our organizations? If you call into question our approach? We will probably respond by telling you most anything and promising everything just to keep you in the organization. If you leave... you might prepare yourself to find virtually every western Christian you know to turn against you! Do not listen to our words as we tell you to stay. Watch our actions. For instance:

Who is up front speaking?

Who is in charge of the money?

Who owns the property?

Who is paying you?

But most of all, ask why it is you who sit in neat rows, all facing forward, a speaker standing up front, and you see only the back of a neck! And why are you hearing a boring sermon every week!?

Finally, look around. Look at those who are Christians who are native to your country. Look at your friends who have joined the American/British missions. Or the para-church organizations. How have they changed? In dress? In mannerisms? In speech? In vocabulary? In subtle ways, almost undetectable. Most of all, in mindset!! Are you seeing a precious soul selling himself to westernization? Worse. Has a friend of yours sold out just for plain money?

Is parroting our "vision" worth the dignity of the believers soul!! Your soul! Join us, and you will forever lose something.

Join us, do it our way, and your whole nation will eventually suffer. We are affecting the entire future of your nation's soul. We are, after all, inseminating a foreign culture into your society.

The American missionary nearest to you, does he seek out our culture? Has he ever shown deep, deep concern in understanding your customs? How interested is he in even one area (i.e. that of your native music)? Does he understand words like indigenous and organic? But most of all, how much control does he exert in your life and/or among your fellow workers?

AND FOR HOW LONG DOES HE EXERT THIS CONTROL?*

If the American missionary/para-churcher cannot come to your land and (1) evangelize, (2) lay a foundation of a gathering of local believers and then (3) depart, in no more than one or two years, he does not have the message, he does not have the know-how, he does not have the understanding, the revelation of Christ, nor the ecclesia, nor the spiritual depth....nor the centrality of Christ in life and message....he does not have enough of any of these to justify his being in your country! In fact, lacking such ability, he has no business being a missionary in your land! Or anywhere else!!

He either bums for Christ and the church, he burns to see an indigenous, organic ecclesia, he is passionately driven to depart from the local ecclesia and turn it over to God's local people... leaving absolutely no western oversight.....or HE SHOULD COME BACK HOME to America (or Britain, or wherever he is indigenous).

It is to you, the Christian born and raised and presently living in your own country...,to you this book is written.

* See How To Meet. Paul's way was to stay no longer than six months in a city where he first founded a church.

Throughout this book, and the book The Way the Church Ought to Be (In English: How To Meet) and the book entitled The Man Most Needed....1 have used the little country of Albania as the perfect example (a laboratory) of the blindness of our western missions! And our blind - but unintentional - rape of your culture, your sociology, your matrix, your customs! I use Albania as proof of our callous disregard, disrespect and immaturity.

I also use Albania to point out our control. I use Albania as proof of our lack of understanding of, or commitment to, church planting first-century style, and church first-century style.

Paul's way is unthinkable to us Americans.

For us who are pan-anglo, it is absolutely impossible to conceive of such a way. We will not even attempt the Scriptural way to plant churches!! We just say, "It can't be done!" And maybe we are right. The type of men required to plant the church first-century style are men who need a Spiritual depth and brokenness before God that is rarely seen in this age, or in any age!

But this does not justify what we are doing!

There can be but one conclusion. Out there, in lands all over this planet, brave men must begin again.

19. Who Is At Fault?

The problem is not America. The problem is not Americans.

The problem is that each of us is addicted to the superiority of our own culture. We are all addicted to the spreading of our culture and propagating our country's religious ideas.

If North America had never been discovered, and if the most Christian nation on earth today happened to be China, and if China had great wealth and was taking the gospel to the rest of the world...,,the problem would be exactly as it is. The Chinese would be giving the rest of the world its version of Christianity etc. We would be facing the Chineseization of Christianity! The situation would be the same if it were Japan, or any large, powerful nation with a strong culture....and a bit of a sense of superiority.

You see, we have also been victims of being culturized by another nation. We also have no native, no indigenous, no organic expression of the church. Our brand of Christianity is a

transplant from a foreign nation and a foreign culture. The English, who have a powerful culture and a superiority complex, Englishized the Christianity of Americans. (The Scots gave it to the English. John Calvin, a Frenchman, gave it to the Scots. Ah ha! Now we know who to blame! Let's all blame the French!)

We are all faced with the reality that someone from the outside imposed on us an artificial, inorganic and boring practice of

Christianity!! And the reality that we don't know what "church" is, and have probably never experienced true church life.

Let us say you are from Hungary. Herein lies your challenge: Your country, Hungary, is one of the great centers of the Calvin version of the Reformation. You are proud of that fact. You can read this book and say, "Let us not be influenced by the Americans." Fine, but be careful!

Please remember this: Your churches in Hungary are as dead as a 500-year-old cat! Yet, I fear you would rather say with your version of the church and your version of Christianity than to change radically. You would be better to imitate the American version than to keep what you have. I say these words to all who read this book, regardless of what country you live in. You still have three choices. (1) Stay as you are, and let time and change pass you by. (2) Be Americanized. (3) Become radical.

I will say this even to Americans: (1) Stay as you are with a Britishized Christianity, or (2) Change radically; discover an indigenous American expression of the ecclesia. I add one more: American Christians, please stop your habit of giving other nations the American brand of Christianity.

The worst possible thing any of us can do is to leave things as they are.

The root problem is our ecclesiology. Our entire conceptualization of the church — as it pertains to practice - is wrong.

At no time in the last 1700 years of church history has anyone's ecclesiology proposed an organic church...,.unique in expression in every locale, different in every culture, organic in its nature. Every theology of every denomination of the last 1700 years has always pushed for one universal practice of the church.

The same ritual and practice identical in their universe. This has been going on for 1700 years too long!

All of us must launch out on a grand, new adventure to discover a church experience unique to our locale and soil.

We must all stop thinking in universal terms when we practice meetings of the ecclesia. We must begin fighting for the local, the cultural, the sociological, biological, organic expression of the body of Christ.

Of all people, Americans must find their own, unique church practices on American soil. Americans must honor the fact that the Japanese will find an expression of the ecclesia unique

to their soil, indigenous to their people, "fitting" their culture and sociology..... and wholly unlike anything Americans practice.

So also all nations and all cultures...,., and all believers... everywhere.

In a word: All of us must begin standing for the right of every locale, every culture, every tribe and every tongue to discover their own unique expression of church life. A fight for the local, the indigenous, the organic, an end to the universality of experience of any peoples, tribes, Culture or movement. (America need to lead the way in this revolution!)

In the final analysis this is going to require a new generation of Christians. Young men and women who are a chosen generation. A generation who refuses to “go to church." A generation who turns away from buildings, pews, pulpits, clergy and pastors, and who will ~ with a love for Christ and a passion for the church ~ pioneer a grand, new odyssey! A great search for the church.....expressed differently and uniquely in every city and nation on earth. And a generation who will fight for other lands and people to also have their own unique odyssey in discovering for themselves the Ecclesia. All of us covenanting that all other believers of all other races and colors and tribes and tongues and Cultures have a right to a unique church life that is their very own.

May you now lay down this book and take up that odyssey!!

There is a companion book to *The Americanization of Christianity*. It is called *How The Church Ought To Be* *.

These two books are to be read together. One states the problem. The second gives you very clear help on how to find, have and keep an organic, indigenous expression of church life,

* The title of the English version is *How To Meet Under the Headship of Jesus Christ*.

Conclusion

Please be advised that American churches and para-church organizations have entered the export business. We export. You are the importers. (2) These two American institutions are going to Americanize you. (3) As we come to you, we do not know one thing about true church life. (4) We are going to run over your Culture. (5) If you ever expect to see an indigenous, organic church in your land....do not ever look to American organizations for that! We will not bring that. We cannot. We never saw one!

The product being exported by the institutional church and the para-church is but the present-day American expression of Christianity. Those two forces, when combined, make a gigantic machine.

The denominational mission boards
and their missionaries
The independent mission boards
and their missionaries
The traveling evangelist
and his staff
The traditional church
and its awful church service and
The para-church organizations
with tens of thousands of staffers.

All of them working feverishly toward *Americanizing the Christian faith.... worldwide.... including you!*

Unless something drastic happens to change this worldwide Onslaught, the Americanization of Christianity, on five continents, on the islands of the seven seas and the two ice caps, is a foregone conclusion.

This world is on the verge of seeing one of the most pitiful experiences of Christianity ever to emerge on the pages of history - American Christianity - become the worldwide expression of Christianity!

This could produce the catastrophe of the ages!

My fear? That this brand of Christianity will be so accepted and so unquestioned as being the Christian expression... that any other expression of the faith, and any other expression of the ecclesia, will be subject to outright persecution. I mean by that, any experience of the church that does not bear the mark of American Christianity will be considered heretical and cultish. We will eventually see the same harassments, the same oppositions, the same defaming and, the same belittling... and (almost) the same persecution as was experienced by believers living back during the darkest days of the Dark Ages. They were dark because there was only one accepted expression of the Christian faith and of the church. Man lived in the tyranny of a one version church. All else that claimed the word Christian was despised, distrusted and damned.

May something, somewhere change. And soon.

If not, may God raise up men who have the vision of both the church and the experience of church life, and the experience of the centrality of Christ, to raise an alternative to this vast all consuming machine.

Such men must have the courage and ability to stand in the face of overwhelming opposition. Opposition from those whose definition of the church is pews in neat rows, a pulpit, the unending sermon, a mute, non-functioning laity....plus firestorm evangelism that is unimpeded by such things as a true experience of church life.

May these men give their lives to see the expression of the ecclesia originating from the bottom — the church originating out of lay discovery. Men committed to the indigenous and the organic. Sirs, if such men arise, expect to catch a hailstorm of opposition from western Christians. You will be the greatest possible threat to western/American/British Christianity. We will fight you.

It comes down to a matter of life versus death for you. Will you pursue a living, breathing, indigenous expression of Christ that is all your own? Or will you let yourselves be bowled over by our dead, prefabricated practices that you can simply copy with a minimum of effort or responsibility? The future of your Christian life hangs in the balance.

Christians in every nation - including America - need to stand against the tidal wave of an Americanized faith.

But the worst result of an Americanized Christianity runs even deeper! Once the Christian faith is Americanized, there will emerge a worldwide mindset so entrenched that when that mind comes to the New Testament Scripture, that mind is so stiltified, so pitifully American, it will see in the Bible only today's brand of Christianity.

Truly, we will then be back in the Dark Ages.

Be they Americans or be they men of other nations, the testing of the Christian faith now rests in the hands of those who rise up to be the radicals of a new, higher practice of the Christian faith.

A Challenge

Here is my challenge. This is 1994, Right now there are approximately eight evangelical churches in the land of Albania. In ten years (2004) I will publish the following information on these pages: In the year 2004, you will read here:

I

How many Christian workers are there in Albania in 2004 who are Albanians. That is, Albanian workers who were saved after Albania opened to the rest of the world in 1991.

II

How many of these Albanian Christian workers do not belong to any British, American, or western European organizations!

III

How many native Christian workers in Albania are doing a native, indigenous work in Albania! Non-western, non American.

IV

How many churches in Albania do not meet in a pews-andpulpit, pastor/laity fashion! How many have no pastor!

V

How many churches in Albania in 2004 have absolutely no westerner in charge!

VI

How many churches in Albania meet in homes! (Not church buildings and homes. Just homes!)

VII

Most of all, how many churches in Albania walk in that wonderful, mysterious, glorious experience sometimes called a community of believers! (In other words... how much church life is there in Albania!)

VIII

How many churches are receiving no western financial help!

IX

Finally, perhaps we will also give a small summary of western missions' reaction to this book! In Albania!

X

And around the world! After all, this revolution is also needed in Latin America, Africa and Asia. And western Europe.

What do you think the report made in 2004 will look like?

In the meantime, to all Christians all over this world who read this book... have nothing to do with the process of the Americanization of Christianity. Americanizing your faith does not need your contribution to the process. Find your own expression of the Christian faith and the church - in your own native style!

A.D. 2004 HERE WE COME!

Addendum

An Eye Disease We Americans Can Give You

When we Americans arrive in your land, one of the first things we say to you is, "We have come here to show you how to be Bible centered. Always follow the New Testament, and obey what it says. Read your Bible. Be obedient to the Word."

That implies that we American are also being New Testament and our methods are New Testament. Right!?

The methods we use as we Serve in your land are not Scriptural! Our methods evolved out of our traditions. They came into existence out of the happenstances and accidents of church history.

Over the last 1700 years we have picked up a lot of traditions. Most came to us Protestants either during or after the Reformation. We are now trying to make the New Testament justify those traditions by forcing the New Testament to contain them when, of course, those traditions are not in the New Testament at all. We do this by isolating and manipulating verses and verse fragments. How we manage to find today's American organization in the New Testament, I do not know. But if you attend a para-church training school, you will find yourself discovering a para-church organization on every page of the New Testament. Amazing!

A linear, panoramic timeline of the first-century ecclesia allows no such manipulation. The sweeping story of the early Christians, seen from end to end, present us with a totally different picture than that of anything which exists today. It is a beautiful picture of the ecclesia, so different from what we "attend" and "go to" in our day. In that vast, dramatic, sweeping story, you will never find a para-church anything!

We Americans push Bible study. But that does not mean we are New Testament in our ways.

That brings us to the eye disease we Can give you. This disease, once contracted, is virtually incurable. Most American Christian ministers - including foreign missionaries - have a severe case of this disease.

(Beware, it is the worst thing you can contract from an American. Catching this "disease" from us might even prove fatal to the growth of your Christian life.)

What is this dreadful curse?

The Disease

We Americans will teach you to read the New Testament in such a way that you will find American Christianity on every page of your New Testament! Oh, it is true that modern-day Christianity is not in the New Testament. But we Americans find it there anyway! That is our eye disease. This disease has become so severe that we not only see American Christianity on every page of the New Testament, we can no longer see what the New Testament is saying. Especially about evangelism, the church, and church life.

Can you grasp this paradox? We Americans find in the New Testament what is not in the New Testament. Yet, we cannot find in the New Testament what really is in the New Testament.

Worse still. We can pass this odd ability on to you.

Here are three shocks for you to deal with. One: America's evangelistic methods are neither sacred nor Scriptural nor lastingly effective. Two: Our churches are steeped in ritualistic boredom. Three: We Americans find all the things we do today in the New Testament. We find first-century Christians doing what we Americans are doing!

We open the New Testament and there find American-type people doing what we Americans are doing in your country!

And you want to imitate American Christianity?

We Americans invented the Bible school. The Bible schools are very Bible centered. Yet, most of those schools are blind to the central place of the ecclesia. Instead, they either push a Christianity that is churchless, or they push the Protestant church service which was invented 450 years ago! Bible schools find in the New Testament a churchless Christian faith or a church service invented by the leaders of the Reformation.

We Americans find it very hard to be Christ-centered. Being consummate entrepreneurs, we get excited about doing great Christian works on a grand scale. This makes it hard for us to be centered on Christ and on spiritual depth. We like to do. We do not like to be. That takes too much time.

Unwittingly we Americans have reinvented the New Testament! Our New Testament is full of all sorts of American ways.

Oh, have you noticed the Bible school is not in the New Testament?! But after we reinvented the New Testament - and invented the Bible school - we then found the Bible school all over the New Testament!!

Remember, too, we Americans invented the para-church organization, back in 1886. The first para-church organization invented by us Americans was so American, it was funny. That organization was a young people's movement. Its motto was "the evangelization of the world in one generation." This movement captured the minds of young men all over America. It was called The Student Volunteer Movement. This organization gave birth to the entire para-church idea which exploded in size after World War II. This movement mentality became large and successful. Anytime we come up with something that is large and successful, we soon find it in the New Testament! That is us; that is what we do.

The para-church organization had virtually no church interest. Only evangelism: fire storm evangelism; blitz evangelism.

Saving souls was the only purpose of that organization. The International Student Volunteer Movement had to re-interpret the New Testament so as not to see the church in the New Testament. It reinvented the New Testament in such a way that the only thing they could find in it was evangelism and missions and the para-church organization. This reinvented "New

Testament mindset" is now in the very bloodstream and DNA of the American way of thinking.

This not-a-church movement had one problem, though. They had no source for money. Originally only churches and denomninations sent out missionaries. The money came from churches.

A solution to this problem was invented. The invention was called "headquarters." Headquarters is a place where prayer letters, mailing lists, solicitation letters, non-profit tax-exempt status, administration, advertising, public relations all come together under one roof, to raise money.

Para-church organizations send out "staff," not missionaries, Their money comes (mostly) from sources outside of churches - that is, from individuals.

The American evangelical mind was now working where the American mind works best: in an atmosphere of individualism, in the spirit of free enterprise. What did those para-church organizations do? They advertised! They promoted for money!! About that time the New Testament began to look very American. Very individualistic. And very much into entrepreneurship.

These American-invented para-church organizations then invented a new New Testament without changing a single word!

That is a very serious eye disease, is it not? Remember, para-church organizations push hard for being

Bible centered, yet they have a gospel that has no church in it, and a mind that has nothing indigenous nor organic in it.

A gospel which is that narrow is blind to what is the content of most of the New Testament. An organization that sees only these topics in the New Testament is also blind to the context and the story that is in the New Testament.

We arrive at your airport with a New Testament that speaks American, with a mind operating on American ingenuity. Leaving the airport we rush into your cities to give you an American/British Christianity.

Our rituals. Our traditions. Our culture. Our practices. Our personality. Our matrix. Our mores. Our social customs. Our music. That is what we bring you. And we find all of these in the New Testament. For instance, we open our New Testament and do an end run around the whole concept of church and a great deal more that is in the New Testament - that is, in the one that has not been reinvented.

We mean no harm. We do not do this deliberately. But it is all we know. This is how we think. This is the eye disease we have, so this is how we do things. And we have done this over and over again, all over the world! Your culture is not even considered!

Need it be pointed out that finding today's American Christianity in the New Testament is not being very "New Testament." Is it?

Is this what you want?

If not, if you want more, you have a gigantic task ahead of you. To come up with something your very own. Something that is the church, fist-century style! You have two choices: us and our eye disease; or Paul's way.

The unconverted living in Paul's day were not drawn to Christ by our blitz evangelism. They sure weren't drawn by an American style Christianity. They were not drawn to Christ by all the other things we have invented since then. Even if we swear up and down that “what we are doing is what the first-century Christians did," it still is not true. The men of the New Testament did but one thing. They raised up the community of believers... the ecclesia!

The Next Step

If you are an American, living in America.....where do you go from here?

If you are an American - or anyone else - serving in a foreign land... where do you go from here?

If you are native to your Own country, and wish to begin all over again.... radically... breaking away from all past traditions and practices.... where do you go from here?

We urge you to read: How the Church Ought to Be.* Next, read The Man Most Needed.

And then read Revolution, The Story of the First Century Church.

By then you will probably be a radical. And you will know what to do.

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* The English version is entitled How To Meet Under the Headship of Jesus Christ.

To The English Speaking Reader

We plan to issue only one printing of this book in English. The greater audience for this book is not intended for the English-speaking world at all. Rather, it is our hope this book will make its greatest mark by being translated into other languages. If you are interested in helping make possible the translation of this book into any of the following languages , please contact us.

Albania, Russian, Spanish, Italia, Romanian, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Swahili, Hungarian, Chinese, German, Dutch, Czech, Japanese, Swedish, Hebrew, Slovak, Hindustani, French, Ukrainian,

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I did not wish to write this book. But a thought kept coming back to me. “During the days of Constantine the Great when Constantine led Christendom completely off the path upon which it had originally begun, there is not a single record that anyone raised a voice in protestation to what he was doing.”

A thousand years from now will men wonder why no one raised a voice—in protest of the Americanization of Christianity?

Is there someone out there who will take upon himself the stewardship of bringing to attention to Christian leaders what we Americans are doing to Christianity? Is there someone out there who will speak to our missionaries and mission boards and para-church organizations of this path we are on toward a worldwide American universal church? Is there someone out there who will raise a voice against the universal concept of church gatherings as over against unique indigenous and organic expression of the church in every locale? Will someone please speak up for the discovery of church life by the Christians who gather, rather than the imposing of the present-day universal ritual?

A very, very limited number of copies of this book were printed. I wish that its publication, no matter how few the number printed, had not been needed. If other men will take up the burden and message of the indigenous and the organic, no one would be more pleased than me to see this book withdrawn from publication.

Surely there is someone who will take up a call for ways that are far more Paulinian than those presently in use.

This book waits to be taken out of print.