



## Transcriptions

### Worldwide Citizenship

Ted Ward

**Annotation:** Excerpted from *Staley Lecture Series, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA, February 15, 1984*. Speaking to students, Ted Ward suggests that the value of their education is directly proportional to the extent to which they allow it to serve a global rather than a parochial consciousness. He then describes three orientations that Christians can take to the world: manipulative, anxious, or escapist.



I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to deal with this theme of The World Christian and to consider with you what our world is like and how you fit into it. I think we run a rather serious risk in this lectureship and I should be rather honest with you about one of the heavy misgivings that I have. Because as I work with Americans, American students particularly, I'm aware that to use international issues, international concerns, and world citizenship as a thematic interest, especially among Christians, runs the serious risk of adding to an already perverse problem. Unfortunately as Americans we are, in this generation, the most over-informed and under-committed people perhaps in the history of mankind. Thanks largely to the extensive print and electronic media, we are able to know at the level of a kind of tickling consciousness day by day virtually everything significant that is happening around the world, at least if we define significance in terms of things that might be of some concern sooner or later to Americans.

As creatures of this TV age, we should be very sensitive to the fact that what we have at best is a series of disconnected snippets that had happened to tickle the fancy of some news bureau

editor and some TV analyst to be among the fifteen words (no more) for today about that particular life-changing event. These snippets of information all added together quite often add up to nothing. We hear names. We shift our vocabulary. We become aware at a very superficial level of consciousness and even the new name like Cherenkov will stick with us as a kind of a new sound for two or three days and then be absorbed into a kind of a general massive mass of disinformation not really used, simply there to reassure us (falsely) that we really know what's going on. I hope not to add to that problem. Consequently, I am going to discipline myself in these ways.

First of all, though our theme this week very much does concern the Christian in a world of great need, I promise not to indulge in horror stories. I think as thinking, feeling human beings we can grasp things without having somebody come along and smack us over and over and over again with the hurts that are very much a part of the human condition.

Further, I intend to discipline myself away from that tendency we all have in this field to recruit people to specific kinds of roles. I will not even attempt this week to recruit you as a missionary. In fact, in one of my more memorable speeches at a certain Midwestern college some years after it had gotten over the terrorizing that Lester and I gave it, I gave a speech during Missions Emphasis week in which I said try if you can to resist the missionary call. Most of the eyebrows went up and most of the contact lenses went on the floor about that moment. But my point was simply this: we have no business rushing into things because we have been emotionally turned on. God's business is too important. I believe in God the Holy Spirit in his capability of working in your heart. I do not attempt to do that work for him. Now I would ask you to be sober and thoughtful, but I will not recruit you. God may.

Instead, I would like to contribute to your education. It's as simple as that. You are attending a Christian university. You can thank God for that. But I submit that the value of attending a Christian university depends very largely on the extent to which you allow your education—yes, allow, even beyond allow—you make your education serve a global consciousness in your life rather than a parochial one. We have no business, as God's children, being limited in our perspective. And if I can do anything for you this week to broaden your perspective, I will feel good about it. And on my way back to Michigan on Friday night I will be thankful to our Father who is able to use the least of us to help each other. In that spirit, I hope to help you.

There is in education today a great deal of emphasis on global education. Public schools are talking about it all the time. Universities have quite a bit of investment today, secular and Christian, quite a bit of investment in the expanding of the global awareness dimensions of curriculum. There's a great deal of concern that Americans should be ready for the place that they will be taking in a much shrunken world. Americans who are not isolated from reality, but informed; not ignorant, but consciously aware. We live in a tragic time when we realize, through the Congressional hearings of people even so highly placed in our government as Assistant Secretary of State, to discover that many such folk have very limited awareness. Some have even been proved incapable of naming the countries in South America. We have fancied ourselves advanced simply because of technological awareness. We can out-engineer the world (until the Japanese began to beat us at our own game,) but we're a long way from out-understanding the whole world. And there are places in the world where leadership people have far greater knowledge in the sense of facts and in the sense of composite understandings about the relationships under which lies are lived in this world.

There are a number of orientations one can take to the world and whether Christian or not, I find three of these orientations very common and very unfortunate. The first I'll call the manipulative orientation: that capacity to see the world only in terms of markets, spheres of influence, and objects of control. To a great extent, this is the political orientation popular today in the world, even in our own nation. And we see the world largely in terms of how we can get other people to do things differently so that our situation will be better. Christians have no business with a manipulative orientation toward the world. This is our Father's world. This is my Father's world. It is not mine; it is not yours. It is not the business of any nation to spell out what others should and should not do.

There's a second orientation that is perhaps even more common among Christians. It's what we might call the anxious orientation: The more you know about the world, the more anxious you become. It's the paranoid orientation and I think of it as being the curse of the rich because we know, even from stories told by our Lord, that one of the handicaps in having wealth is that one persists in a kind of anxiety about that wealth. And I strongly believe if America were not a materialistic and rich materialistic nation, we would probably have less of this paranoid anxious orientation. But somehow every event in the world is taken as a potential threat to our things.

The third orientation we also find among Christians—and for young people it's quite often assumed that this is the older person's orientation and the older generation is more victimized by this—but I tell you, I see a lot of young people victimized by the third orientation. The escapist orientation also might be called ostrich behavior. Somehow when the storms come up, if you stick your head far enough under the sand you'll just be able to pretend they're not there. There is an escapist orientation that plays itself out through the use of ignorance. I don't want to know because the more I know the more threatened I feel. Therefore, it's better not to know. Do you ever find yourself feeling that way? It's a dangerous orientation. And I submit that it is a sub-Christian orientation, not fitting for a child of God.

You see, with these three orientations, the manipulative, the anxious, and the escapist are very much at the target focal point of issues of global education. Global education or a concern in curriculum—in a college, university, even a high school—such a curriculum or such an emphasis in an institution is intended somehow to replace those orientations with something else. So we find that global education tends to emphasize the themes Interdependency, Responsibility, and Common Destiny. Not bad themes for Christians to contemplate.

Interdependency. We're none of us here on this earth alone. As groups, as individuals, as nations we depend on others. How many of you made the clothes that you're now sitting in? May I see your hands? I see a few knitters in our group. Aside from the knitting, how many of you made your clothes? Now I see a few sewers in the group. How many of you made your own shoes? And I see no one. You're dependent on other people. A complex economy allows you to make things, if you choose, or not. And then some things ultimately become *not for everybody* because they become that which you specialize in getting from somewhere else. How many of you are wearing foreign clothing this morning, not made in the United States? May I see your hands? And the rest of you are simply misinformed. The odds are—and there could be exceptions, especially those in sackcloth and ashes—the odds are that everyone sitting here is wearing at least one foreign-made item of apparel or foreign fabrics. The odds are better than 50-50 if you're wearing anything made out of cotton that it was made in the Orient, even if it was sold as an American product. Is there anything wrong with

that? No. It's an interdependent world. How many of you ate anything from overseas for breakfast this morning? And the rest of you didn't eat breakfast. Because, as a matter of fact, virtually every time we sit down to a table, every time we open our closet, we're involved somehow with the whole world. Every time you turn on a radio or a television; every time you experience virtually anything on the street, you're involved in the whole world. It is an interdependent world in terms of goods and services, raw materials. It's also called a shrunken world. It's a small world in which this interdependency plays itself out in intellectual matters.

I have seminars on Monday and Tuesday. After my seminar next Tuesday I will get on an airplane and I will engage in a series of lectures and consultations in Ireland. As a matter of fact, in Derry in the war zone where we're trying very hard to discover some ways to put some new know-how to work on the unemployment problem that festers in that tragic part of the world. And I will be back to my classes and they will probably never be aware that I was gone, on the following Monday. It's a small world, it's an interdependent world, and it's a world in which responsibility must be widely shared. Most of us are aware because of the fact that we are in the atomic era that nothing is done politically that does not impinge upon everything that is done politically. Buckminster Fuller called our times "the times of Spaceship Earth." We're all on the same craft and no one dare treat that craft in any way that will harm it lest all be harmed in the process. We are people of a common destiny. We live on this globe.