

Healer, Teacher, Evangelizer or Revolutionist? Contending Perspectives on the Church and the Third World

Ted W. Ward

Ward, Ted W. 2013. Healer, Teacher, Evangelizer or Revolutionist? Contending Perspectives on the Church and the Third World. *Common Ground Journal* v10 n2 (Spring): 43-54. ISSN: 15479129.

URL: www.commongroundjournal.org.

Abstract

This paper was presented at a conference called to deal with the ways in which Christian religious faith contributes to the understanding, valuing, and guiding of American foreign policy. The author presents historical and contemporary difficulties of the church in relation to foreign policy and offers recommendations. *Address presented at the Faith and Foreign Policy Conference October 20-21, 1988.*

This conference has been convened around the theme of the function and contribution of the Christian religious faith to the understanding, valuing, and guiding of American foreign policy. It is unlikely that any one of the papers you will consider will represent the total scope of that theme, least of all this paper. This presentation will deal with only one facet of the problem and is developed from but one perspective. The experiences represented here are largely from within the conservative and evangelical sectors; the problems within that portion of the church of Jesus Christ are at the center of the following observations and recommendations. In matters of public policy in general, and in reference to foreign policy in particular, we cannot lump all of Protestant America into one piece.

While the substance of the matters following is hardly representative of the scope of the conference at large, it is important to note that the impetus and venue for our convening are functions of Christian higher education. Perhaps this discussion was scheduled first in order of presentation because it is based in the field of education in general and specifically on the service of the church of Jesus Christ. This conference is a significant event, drawing its value not only from the urgency of its topic and primary content but also from the fact that a public policy conference is a contribution of an institution of Christian higher education. Many of us are deeply concerned about the contribution of Christian higher education to the viability and integrity of this nation. Hopefully this discussion will raise that contribution to a level of major concern.

A Christian Nation?

On the more general matter of the influence of Christian values in American foreign policy, two substantially different postures contend for attention as a platform for this conference. A transcendental view grounded in Christian theology contends that the Christian values imbedded deeply in the history and common philosophies of the republic are reflected in the truth, compassion, and the commitment to justice and peace which are reflected in the international relations and the foreign policy of the United States.

A rival posture contends that the claim to Christian-ness is no more valid for this nation than for any other responsible nation, whatever good lies therein being attributable to the general grace of God upon all people rather than to any unusual enlightenment by the Word of God. This position would hold that all good deeds, just positions, and compassionate responses are inherently evidences of the author of righteousness.

It is tempting to adopt one or the other of these positions in its extremity. If the first presupposition were adopted, the voice of the church in reference to all policies of government would be judged to be a miserable failure since foreign policy, for example, bears so little resemblance to biblical teachings on godly human relationships and gives so little evidence of concern for pleasing God through the behaviors of the nation. If the second presupposition were accepted, the result would be to describe everything that shows any shred of human decency, any nod in the direction of peace, and any hint of concern for justice and respect as if it were representative of the presence of Christian influence within the historical pattern of the nation.

Neither of these extremes seems useful for the purposes of this conference. A preferable approach lies in the direction of trying to understand what can be done to encourage Christians to find responsible avenues of interaction and communication with the national dialogues on public policy. Clearly, those who claim to be Christian must accept a more whole view of the world and, within themselves, reduce the dualism between things “sacred” and things “secular.” Standing aloof is a denial of the gospel.

The presupposition that ours is a truly Christian nation seems dubious on historical and social grounds. If the United States ever was Christian in its political philosophy, it has surely become substantially less so. Ironically, America’s increasing cultural diversity and philosophical pluralism may serve to bring the substantial reservoir of Christian values more clearly into focus and may, indeed, be making the focus of this conference more significant.

Christianity has never worked well when impressed by its own monopoly. Whether in the ill-advised Crusades against Islam, the claims to be “Christianizing the pagans” as a corrupt alibi for exploitation and subjugation through colonization, or in the insipid self-congratulation of this or that nation’s claim to being a “Christian nation,” the essential qualities of Christianity have been obscured by a murky mask of human greed and pride. The argument is sometimes made that because of the purposes of the original settlers, the United States is a Christian nation. However there is recurrent and stubborn evidence that Christians do not sharply contrast with other citizens in many matters of moral conduct or in their commitment to democratic processes for the defense of freedom. These generalizations lead to cynical conclusions, but nevertheless they suggest a profound problem: in recent times the church in North America has grown fat and casual. Christianity of the sort that the Bible knows about is active and involved—spiritually, socially, and politically. In conditions of ease it tends to be flabby, but in the face of adversity it shows resiliency and strength. The most recent large-scale example of this tendency has been made apparent through the reopening of China after Mao’s frantic and sustained efforts to wipe every trace of Christianity from the nation. Not only did Mao not succeed but he inadvertently created the very climate within which Christianity could thrive.

The Curious Anomalies

Any serious consideration of the way American Christians relate personally and collectively to issues of need and relationship in the world—especially in reference to the emerging nations of the post-colonial world—must take into account certain curious anomalies that are evident in the conservative sectors of today’s American Christianity. These anomalous conditions represent unresolved conflicts between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the prevailing cultural images which have taken hold of the imaginations of many Christians.

Disinterest in foreign policy. Rare indeed is the conversation among Christians that deals with matters of international relations and foreign policy. This observation might not be so curious were it not for the fact that the people of God, as instructed by the scriptures, are intended to be outreach oriented,

aware of the whole of God's creation, and motivated to relate in compassion and love to all people everywhere. Despite what would seem to be proper biases of the regenerated soul, little connection seems to be made between godliness and political concerns for the world. With the exception of an occasional discussion related to some difficulty or hardship encountered by a missionary, nothing is more foreign to many a church than foreignness itself.

The more detailed and technical matters of foreign relations—or of history or geometry, for that matter—though very much a part of God's created universe, are hardly the stuff of responsible preaching. Not all of God's people should be expected to develop the necks of giraffes to nibble high on the trees of political science. But the matter of arcane erudition itself does not account for enough of the problem. Disinterest in matters of foreign policy points to a significant lack within general education and, even less excusable for the Christian, the lack of what Paulo Friere calls "critical consciousness" (1973). At the bottom of it all, many people in positions of leadership in the church care very little that this facet of Christian education is seriously neglected.

Acquiescence to the separation of Church and State. Reformed theology, just as surely as Roman Catholic theology, finds the separation of church and state hard to swallow. As a tenet of American political philosophy the doctrine has provided significant safeguards against the misuse of religious authority in civil matters. Whether it has safeguarded against the misuse of civil authority in matters of religion does not seem nearly so clear.

At a more basic level, the issue of relationship between the claims of God and the claims of the state deserves a more thorough articulation than this simplistic though revered secular doctrine has afforded. For one thing, "the separation of church and state" places the Christian who takes seriously the Lordship of Christ in a continuous quandary. Whose values are really important within a society? Whose values should be represented in national policy? Thankfully, the Christian in this democracy is free to act according to informed conscience through voice and vote; but there is always the subtle message being whispered by the doctrine of separation of church and state that some matters are more of concern to God than others. As a result, many Christians in this democracy seem rarely to develop informed political positions which thoroughly reflect their religious reflections.

Schism and ambivalence in matters of war and peace. Perhaps the highly contrasting positions that various church denominations hold on war tend to make Christians assume that this matter is a sort of free option: God can buy it either way—war or peace. The theological problems are substantial in each position, partly because of the social complexity of the issues and partly because of the contrasts in emphasis between the instructions of God to Israel and the instructions of God to the church. The latter, of course, are characterized by the example and explicit teachings of Jesus Christ, and from this sector of scripture it is far more likely that the church in our times will start with this premise: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9 NRSV).

But to start with the biblical teaching on war and peace is not to guarantee that the church today any more than in ages past will come to pacifistic conclusions. All sorts of real and hypothetical scenarios seem to justify self-defense, and from self-defense it is but one step to war. The undisciplined mixing of patriotic and religious symbols and fervor is a tradition for Americans. The nation was founded in a period when deistic philosophy provided the best alternative to the extant "divine right of kings." Somehow we have never quite outlived that part of our national origin, nor have we examined it critically in order to really make something of our Christian-ness.

Tendency toward premature closure of history. Possibly as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the modern person's assumption that one should know how things work, Christianity in the past century has suffered from fits of technological curiosity. Far out of proportion to their importance, the questions of origins and endings have become an obsession for many Christians. Clearly, the Bible teaches that God created the universe; further it teaches that God will bring about a just conclusion of the natural universe as we know it, all in His own good time. Human curiosity has picked away at these matters since Eden. During the years of Christ on this earth, His disciples asked about when and how the end would come. Jesus responded that "But about that day and hour, no one knows . . . nor the Son but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36 NRSV)

This curiosity has increased until reaching a fever pitch in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The interest in creation as a technology (How did God do it and how long did it take?) and the end times as a similar matter of technique and timetable (How will it all end and when?) seems to be based on the assumption that anything real can be completely understood—a key fallacy of humanistic reasoning. That such a fallacy can permeate theological orthodoxy defies explanation.

As a result, pushing one's own moment in history forward to the threshold of the return of Christ is taken in some sectors to be a demonstration of "sound doctrine." If one thus assumes that there isn't much time left to live out as a "future," it is easy enough to become disinterested in the long-range value of anything. Matters of world condition and national policy are thus seen as purely "secular" and even lacking in faith, judged in comparison to the belief in the imminent return of Christ. Although Jesus anticipated this debilitating error of theology and warned against it in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) his warning has been ignored, ironically, in some of the most conservative sectors of the church.

Penchant for single-issue political activism. American Christians, broadly across the spectrum, have developed a curious tendency toward single-issue activism and single-issue politics. Perhaps it derives from the necessity of sorting out the overwhelming and intimidating array of issues that mass media bring to the attention of the American onlooker; or, less charitably, it may be simply a preference for being "successful" by throwing one's weight against one vulnerable target at a time. Whatever the root cause, the consequences are evident: strident barking at the heels of this or that movement or political leader, label-throwing as a substitute for reasoned argument, undue emphasis on bits and pieces of larger issues, and in general ignoring the warnings of Jesus Christ about straining out the gnats while swallowing the camel (Matthew 23:24).

The Missions Filter

Throughout the twentieth century many in the American churches, especially in the more conservative sector, have understood the outside world largely in terms of wars and world missions. That wars have shaped the images of specific nations within the minds of Americans in general and have provided the mental models for reasoning about good and bad policy is, of course, only too apparent. War's horrors remain in the public consciousness for quite some time, even within a nation only indirectly affected. For Christians who have been nurtured in a worldview that presumes that God is on one side and Satan is on the other in all human conflicts, wars provide important judgmental categories and evidence, assuming it cannot be made clear who is the aggressor and who is innocent, and assuming that the positions of nations do not shift.

Distrust of the pundits of foreign policy can be attributed in part to the confusion arising from shifts within these simple categories of friend and foe. For example, the Soviet Union has moved back and forth in the American valuing process since the Bolshevik Revolution (bad guys), World War II (good guys), and

the Cold War (bad guys). Now that our president has toned down the “Evil Empire” rhetoric in response to *glasnost*, we wonder if “the Russians” are destined to become good guys again. Keeping all the details clear is not easy for a largely undereducated nation. Even major church denominations have a hard time keeping their members in line with the official church postures on this or that nation and their products and in sympathy with interventions and exploratory excursions in support of revolution or of counter-revolution. Stereotypes are hard to break, especially in matters of culture, but an occasional war can do the trick, assuming that the war can be won.

Reasoning about America’s place in the world is even easier when the Christian starts with world missions. What is good for the cause of world missions is good foreign policy; what is not facilitative of world missions is not good foreign policy. While this generalization is too simplistic to account for anything more than the bare outline, it holds enough truth to be useful as a point of entry. Unlike the judgments that emerge from wars, the concern for world missions is peculiar to Christians. Thus the missions filter accounts for much that has been unique in the prevailing Christian attitudes toward American foreign policy.

Perhaps the clearest example of how this filter works is to note the long-standing habit of judging a nation and its government in terms of whether or not Protestant missionaries from America are free to enter. If missionaries are allowed to enter, the country is “open” and deemed to be friendly; if missionaries are denied entry or are required to submit to some sort of awkward conditions in terms of work permits or visas, then the nation or its government is seen as unfriendly, and God will surely “get them for that.” Anything that is perceived by Americans as being a hindrance to seeking converts and proselytes, to religious communication, and to free movement of Christian missionaries is interpreted as evidence of a godless system and a closed society. Because of this evaluative process some of the most devious dictators and despotic systems in the modern world have escaped careful scrutiny by godly Americans. The proof text seems to be, “As they accept missionaries, so shall ye know them.”

As the American awareness of the nations of the world is processed through this filter, the perceptions are colored more by narrow interests of the Christian mission than by any up-to-date realities of national and international situations or contemporary realities of human life. Whatever may be grasped of the basic needs of people tends to be defined in terms of the contributions that missionaries are intended to make.

Thus the dominant assumptions about what missionaries are intended to do shapes the perception of the foreign policy positions which deserve the support of Christians.

Healers for the world. Early in the twentieth century, virtually parallel with the reforms in medical education and medical practice in the United States, much of the activity of overseas missionaries was centered in medical services and little by little in the establishment of medical institutions. During this period it became common to think of America’s contributions to the less technical nations in terms of the blessings of medicine and surgery. The consciousness arose in reference to missionary efforts of American Christians and ultimately came to dominate the perceptions of many other Americans. “To Bring Healing to the Nations” was written large in the image that many Americans held. Teddy Roosevelt’s “Speak softly but carry a big stick” was supplemented, not replaced, by the notion that America has been given a responsibility to control and to heal. The nation’s foreign policy had to be made to fit this image.

Teaching people to help themselves. Much of the world holds a teacher in high respect. Adding the task of teaching to the task of healing resulted in a more comprehensive function and image. In the nineteenth century, American Christianity had become identified with schools and colleges. As the

missionary societies of the early twentieth century began to expand the activities of Americans abroad, all sorts of educational institutions were established. Indeed, so pervasive was education among the activities of missions that when nationhood came to various African nations, the missionary-founded schools became the backbone of the new national schemes of public education. Although World War II slowed down the educational efforts, the period of missionary resurgence after the war was extensively marked by further expansions of the overseas schooling efforts. It was during this period when American missionaries became convinced of their competencies as institution builders; but at about the same time the rise of nationalism brought to light some new and troubling questions about the degree of cultural and economic adaptability of these made-in-America institutions of education and health care. Nonetheless the image of relationship of Americans with the third world had become well established: we heal them, we teach them. Paternalism was rampant and, in some sectors of the church, paternalism was recognized as a danger and the first significant steps toward indigenization and nationalization were taken.

Bringers of Good News. The major concern of the missionary as evangelist has never been very far off the center of motive and attention. Whatever may be the institutional and service roles played by missionaries, the major role is the spiritual ministry of bringing people to Christ. The image of the world that this motive engenders is quite simplistic: we have Christ, they do not have Christ, and thus we have what they need and we will provide it. Within the last several decades this dominant view of ourselves has been shaken. Nation after nation has showed its ingratitude in various ways. Even our expectation that our converts in other nations would adopt our ways of evangelizing, healing, and teaching has been partially frustrated. Our faith in our own old ways has been challenged, but we cannot quite find new patterns that we can control. It seems that in many nations people now want to do things their own ways.

Missionaries in support of revolution. The human tendency to bounce from one extreme to another seems partially to explain the emergence of "liberation theology." After centuries of convenient marriage between hierarchical Christianity and totalitarian governments, substantial sectors of Christendom have "seen the light," converted from their indulgences in wealth and power, and now seem to want to bring everyone along in their excursions of atonement. Even Protestants have been swept up in the fever. In many ways the liberation themes are much closer to the Gospel than were the former domination themes, but the danger once again is the substitution of one form of human strategy for another with very little new inquiry into what the disciplines of godliness and the tests of scripture would demand.

So again the image has changed. The missionary filter is telling some Christians, at least, that the role of Americans should be to foment revolution and to encourage people to stand up for their rights. This image has value, of course, but it is prone to an old tendency; it is again assumed that North Americans should decide just when things are to happen and toward what ends.

When world missions is the filter through which the peoples and nations of the world are understood, it leads to good news, bad news, and potentially worse news. The good news is that Christians with awareness and concern for world evangelization are more apt than other Americans to give attention to other nations and to America's dealings with them. The bad news is that the mission's filter tends to render the world scene in flat tones, mainly in a simplistic black and white. The worse news is that when a church, especially a whole denomination, wanes in its concern for world evangelization, the members tend to lose interest in their responsibilities to the world, or else their concerns are transformed into sectarian political biases, not the least dangerous of which is enthusiasm for violent overthrow of governments in the quest for freedom and liberty apart from God.

The Demanding Rudiments

Christianity makes no sense apart from the disciplines of the Gospel. In Luke 4:18,19, Jesus describes himself in terms of Isaiah's prophecies of "good news to the poor." For the more narrowly oriented Christian, Luke 4 demands a larger-than-preaching view of evangelization. For the more broadly oriented Christian, indeed for all Christians, Luke 4 demands a basis in God's just processes of liberation through redemption. Willy-nilly appetite for revolution for its own sake does not satisfy the conditions of the Gospel. Simplistic verbal affirmations of doctrinal propositions falls short. The Gospel is to be lived, not merely claimed or affirmed.

For a godly person or a godly nation, no matter how exalted and noble may be an objective or goal, the means to that end must be honorable, true, and just. God must be honored in the means a nation employs just as surely as in the ends the nation seeks. If this be classified as soft-headed idealism, so be it; it is none the less demanded by the Lord of the universe.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ demands rudiments in policy which are not easily fulfilled. Jesus warned that "it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23 NRSV). As a "rich person" among nations, the United States has an especially difficult task in facing up to its errors of the past, its presumptions of rights, power, and authority. But the Gospel teaches that humility and simple honesty, even among nations, honors God and makes the nation an object of God's blessing. Wealth and materialism coupled as they are with pride and insecurity constitute a debilitating mixture.

No one enjoys facing up to the errors of the past, least of all people who thought they were doing good. This difficulty permeates the issue of Christian influence on national policy. Some things are so offensive that we cannot believe that they are true. It is easier to explain away the dissonances between values and behavior than to confront them and make changes. Christians tend to think well of their nation and of its place in the world.

Before 1949 in [the Chinese] view, the church in China was not a Chinese church, but rather a foreign religion on Chinese soil. It was resented by the vast majority of Chinese people because of its association with Western imperialism in the nineteenth century. One has only to think of the activities of Karl Gutzlaff, an American missionary of Prussian birth, to understand their point of view. It is said that Gutzlaff, in his zeal to penetrate the Chinese interior for Christ in the 1830's, would travel on a European gunboat, handing out tracts from one side while opium was being unloaded on the other, and that he had a hand in writing the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, the first of the unequal treaties that did so much to disrupt Chinese sovereignty. (Spickard 1987, 70)

We do not want to think thus of any incident in Christian missions. Similarly, we do not want to consider evidences of self-centeredness in contemporary foreign policy, as represented in such testimony as the following.

When the Reagan administration took office, it developed its own particular rationale for U.S. relations with South Africa. Among the factors it cited were South Africa's strategic position on the oil routes around the Cape of Good Hope, the South African market for U.S. goods, U.S. investments in the South African economy, South Africa's standing as an 'anticommunist' state in the region, and, perhaps most important, South Africa's supply of strategic minerals. Last July, in a White House speech, Reagan reiterated his administration's view that these considerations determined U.S. interests in the southern African regions. (Walters 1986, 99)

But in matters of missions and in matters of foreign policy, Americans have been shaped by an individualism that tends to demean others.

In the course of the history of the United States a heritage of self-sufficiency within our own boundaries has developed. The people are proud of the nation. They tend to think of the United States as a unique experiment not to be influenced or even contaminated by the experiences of others. This view limits one's expectation of any potential contributions from the rest of the world. (Peterson 1987, 47)

The demanding rudiments of the Gospel of Jesus Christ require that we give attention to many international policy issues that are deliberately shut out of many of today's churches. How can a church justify committing itself to world missions and yet deny its responsibilities for political activism on behalf of that world?

Why do Americans in general, and Christian Americans in particular, suppress or ignore the profound danger that lies across any but the most astutely chosen path of foreign policy?

The church and individual Christians have been strangely silent about [nuclear holocaust]. What will it take before Christians will speak up? If one city is pulverized by a nuclear warhead, will we speak up then? . . . How can we speak about the morality of issues like abortion, cheating, and child abuse and quietly look the other way in the face of nuclear war? All of us must make clear that even the preparation for nuclear war is an abomination against God, who loves the whole world....

Doesn't it make more sense to learn to live with our enemies than to kill ourselves defending ourselves? Christians in every land must insist that madness in the name of peace is really death in disguise. We must understand that a peace that holds millions of people hostage to fear is not peace. A peace built on military threats, bluffing, and bullying is not peace. Preserving freedom by threatening to use nuclear weapons is slavery to death. War is the antithesis of God's shalom. (Kraybill 1978, 220-221)

Our moment of history requires critical review of the past and moral accountability for the future:

The next administration will have both an opportunity and a responsibility to restore democracy and accountability to the foreign-policy process. Historically this issue has transcended party lines; it has never been one of Democrat versus Republican but rather one of the President versus Congress. Although all postwar presidents have shown extreme reluctance to allow Congress a role in formulating military policy, that need not be the case. The time has come to begin a new relationship between the two branches over national security and military policy. (Halperin 1988, 173)

Even at the pragmatic level, there are certain things this nation has done that simply do not work. We need revision of foreign policy in the directions of integrity and morality; the by-product will be a higher level of effectiveness.

As long as our thoughts and actions are governed by the stale definition of security that equates international stability with American power, we will remain trapped in a perpetual contest over some dubious advantage, be it in the military, economic, or political realm. (Sanders 1984, 678)

Covert paramilitary activity has not been successful. Such operations fail to adhere to the procedures established in the Constitution that guarantee an open and accountable system of government. They avoid precisely the democratic process in the United States that most of them are ostensibly designed to promote in other countries.

Secret wars also make for bad foreign policy. The results of even ‘successful’ secret wars have been the empowerment of dictators wholly inimical to American political values.

The greatest ‘successes’—Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, and Chile in 1973—spawned some of the worst oppression of the postwar era. (Halperin 1988, 179)

This nation has leaned on its own wisdom and resources so long that it has developed a pernicious habit of resurrecting faulty machinery from the past in order to try to deal with new problems.

In March 1979, *Business Week* was moved to devote a special issue to ‘the decline of U.S. power.’ While the report shed little light on the causes for this phenomenon, it revealed a great deal about conventional thinking on the subject. In a nutshell, *Business Week* suggested that the weakening of America’s position in the world could be traced to a growing reluctance by U.S. leadership to flex the financial, military, and political muscle required of an ‘imperial power.’ The essay harkened back with unvarnished pride to the days when the United States played the role of ‘both banker and cop’ in a benign system of empire that extended to the far reaches of the globe. (Sanders 1984, 679)

Americans must learn to reject the simplistic notion that the availability of military force, political advantage, and economic leverage are the basic ingredients of worthy power. It may be a long time in coming, but a moral and spiritual reawakening is possible, based on the rudiments of the Gospel.

Part of the cost may very well be the rethinking among American Christians of some of their socio-political beliefs and self-images. The contrasts posed by David Campbell serve to stimulate such reflections:

Utilitarian individualism, with its emphasis on rights, liberties, and protections, stands in uneasy coexistence with the communitarian strain (common to biblical and classical political thought) and its emphasis on loyalty, duty, and responsibility. It is useful to consider these as alternative political cultural ideals, each with its own assumptions about the meaning of freedom, the basis of political community, and the proper distinction between the public and private spheres.

Key Features	Individualist	Communitarian
Overriding Concern	Individual achievement	Collective moral purpose
Basis of Political Community	Social Contract	Covenant Community
Freedom	Absence of constraint	Obedience to the authoritative
Realm of Freedom	Private sphere	Public world
Threat to Freedom	State tyranny; loss of liberty	Decadence; loss of virtue

(Campbell 1987, 27-28)

In light of the demanding rudiments of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we need as members of the church and as members of the nation to reflect anew: Who are we? Who are the others in this world? What does God expect of us in terms of our own characteristics and resources? What does God expect of us in terms of the others in this world? How should the church relate to this nation? How should this nation relate to the world?

The Christian Hope

Carl Henry may be right. It is just possible that America may have already turned the corner, irrevocably committing itself to self-degradation. Rounding off a long series of attempts to prove itself able to survive with nothing more substantial than the judgments of learned persons as its moral compass, the final step is to deny God more formally.

Our generation is lost to the truth of God, to the reality of divine revelation, to the content of God's will, to the power of His redemption, and to the authority of His Word. For this loss it is paying dearly in a swift relapse to paganism. The savages are stirring again; you can hear them rumbling and rustling in the tempo of our times. (Henry 1988, 15)

If Americans as individuals and as a nation persist in their narrow quests toward fulfillment of their self-interest, investing less and less in the welfare of others, the road is downhill. But the Christian value of hope will not leave it at this. There must be a way to bring this nation to its senses and to rekindle the collective conscience.

The biblical teaching on revival is basic to recovery.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. (2 Chronicles 7:14-15 NRSV)

First we must confess that not all evil is done against religion. Ungodliness comes in many guises:

Throughout history regimes devoted to religious ends have been among the most repressive. In the United States, survey researchers link the strength of religious commitment with intolerance, and observers of the religious right note the frequent lapse into dogmatism and the tendency to portray political opponents as the embodiment of evil. Similar tendencies are not unknown among the religious left. (Campbell 1987, 31)

Indeed, the ways and means that Christians use, unless they reflect the values of the Gospel, can work against the effectiveness of the witness of the Gospel.

We should then recognize that the distortions and the misunderstandings of truth and goodness which lead to war have their origins within the Christian camp. The roots of the crusading mentality are not 'secular' in the modern sense, nor are they rooted in the mores of pagan religions. They constitute a deformation of biblical faith. (Yoder 1972, 247)

Arthur Simon, president of Bread for the World, has pointed the way for Christians to avail themselves of the channels of gentle influence, especially through letter-writing and organizing for collective study and influencing national policy. Unlike many another leader's attempts to mobilize people toward godly influences upon government policy, Simon has avoided the pitfalls of demagoguery and the espousing of quasi-religious ideologies. His warnings against the political pursuit of narrow interests while claiming to support a biblical form of Christian witness have not been heard as widely within the conservative churches as one might hope.

Protestants in twentieth century America share a heritage of hope, marred though it is by dissension and fraternal conflict. We seem finally ready to accept the fact that we can live with one another even if we have different answers to important questions. Certain common concerns can unite us. The

Gospel calls the church and nation to respond to particular problems of the world community. On these matters, especially, we must learn to think and to deal with issues in light of scriptural values.

The struggles of majority world nations for true identity as nations, for respect, for the opportunities to participate in equitable trade, and for national development must be our concern. The worsening of social and economic conditions for those in poorest nations, threats to religious freedom and worship posed by absolutist systems and closed societies, and the continuing saga of mankind's inhumanity—these must be our concern. A godly nation cannot stand passively as an observer.

The hope for substantial Christian influence in American foreign policy must start with godly values. It must then move toward godly relationships. One place to begin is in the local church. Donald Kraybill suggests four practical steps through which people in a Christian fellowship can exercise the freedom to develop a whole-world perspective. He relates his steps to people in a limited context—the “boxes” we live in. Metaphorically, at least, his pattern could be seen as a model for a whole nation.

In the first place subgroups need to be recognized and talked about. To look the other way and pretend they are not there is foolish. Subgroup formation is as natural as breathing and it will occur in every social and religious setting. The quicker we recognize this reality the sooner we can experience redemption.

Second, the teaching and preaching ministry must continually call people to a common faith in Jesus Christ which transcends social ties . . . utterly diverse people from all sorts of boxes are reconciled together in a common faith in Jesus Christ. This doesn't mean that people jump out of their boxes. But now the boxes synchronize together in a complementary way [and] build up the whole so that the entire body matures in Jesus Christ. Paul's analogy of the body applies just as much to subgroups as to individuals.

Third, individuals need to take the initiative to disrupt boxing patterns. We need to be conscious of when we are in our own group's box and deliberately move out of it at times. Invite people from other boxes to your home. Participate in activities even when your own group doesn't. Intentionally go to people in other boxes, slip by their label, and love them. (Kraybill 1978, 252-253)

Kraybill adds a fourth step, reminding that time, place, and function need to be provided so that people will become able to climb out of their old boxes and develop transcendent relationships and more relational visions of themselves. “Time for social interaction is absolutely necessary to get behind the tags and labels” (253).

The capacity to empathize, to bring ourselves to feel with others, no matter how “foreign” they may be, is essential to the reconciliations afforded by the Gospel. Nehemiah, the rebuilder of Jerusalem, represented this truth in his choice of words as he assessed the problems in that devastated city: “You see the trouble we are in . . .” (Nehemiah 2:17 NRSV). Acknowledging that others are capable of seeing and judging, yet being willing to bring one's own interests into the collective acknowledgment that we have a problem—this is God's way.

[The church is called] to be the conscience and the servant within human society. The church must be sufficiently experienced to be able to discern when and where and how God is using the powers, whether this be thanks to the faithful testimony of the church or in spite of her infidelity. Either way, she is called to contribute to the creation of structures more worthy of man (sic). (Yoder 1972, 158)

The function of Christian higher education in the development of public policy of any sort remains unclear. The possibilities for substantial contributions to foreign policy are even less well defined. Public policy decisions which directly affect the viability of the institutions of Christian higher education always get response from the administrative voices of the establishments; but aside from selected single-issue biases of the moment, little has been clearly enunciated within the arena of Christian higher education that results in systematic, constructive, and value-based impacts on public policy at the state or national level. Such expressions of the academic communities that represent evangelical Christianity, except in direct self-interest, seem strangely lacking. Therefore, whether attributable to limited vision, limited resources, or even more likely, an unexamined posture of isolation, the voice of Christian higher education in matters of American foreign policy has indeed been small.

Reference List

Campbell, David. 1987. Church-State Separation and Competing Political Ideals: The Promise of Value-Based Community Organizing. *Christian Scholar's Review*. 17 (1): 25-35.

Freire, Paulo. 1973. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum.

Greenberg, Stanley B. 1987. The Politics of American Identity. *World Policy Journal* 4 (40): 695-722.

Halperin, Morton H. 1988. Lawful Wars. *Foreign Policy*. 72 (Fall): 173-195.

Henry, Carl F.H. 1988. *Twilight of a Great Civilization*. Westchester, IL: Crossway.

Kraybill, Donald B. 1978. *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

Peterson, Donna. 1987. Global Education In Christian Colleges: A Descriptive Study of Students' Global Understanding in Relation to the Global Education Goals of the College and its Faculty. Ed.D. dissertation proposal, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Sanders, Jerry W. 1984. Security and Choice. *World Policy Journal*. 1 (4): 677-722.

Simon, Arthur. 1987. *Christian Faith and Public Policy: No Grounds for Divorce*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Spickard, Paul. 1987. The Church in China: Sorting Out Our Images. *Christian Scholar's Review* 17 (1): 67-78.

Walters, Ronald. 1986. A Comprehensive U.S. Policy for Southern Africa. *World Policy Journal* 4 (1): 91-112.

Yoder, John H. 1972. *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.