



The Church in the Third World: *A Morality Play for the End of the Century*¹

Ted Ward

The Cast

The Lead: The growing church in the third world

Mysterious Landlord: The emerging forces of self-direction in third-world development.

The Three Suitors (making claims on the time and resources of the growing church):

- Unreached people,
- Indigenous modernization,
- Leadership opportunities in development

Rich Uncle: Traditional forms of western missions

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Swift: Innovating young missionaries with new ideas.

The Plot

(A sketch of factors—the play isn't written yet—except in the libraries of heaven)

1. No longer is the development of the third world dependent on leadership from the West (if it ever was).
2. The sense of self-worth that accompanies nationalism has made development a matter of decision inside each country.
3. Indigenous forces are supporting westernization processes, in the name of “modernization.”
4. The growing church in the third world finds its leadership resources strained.
5. Three major movements vie for the church's resources: a) furthering the cause of world evangelism through third world missions, b) participating in the modernization process by renewed tapping of western missions for support in institution-building, and c) providing substantial leadership and human resources for the process of national development.
6. The emerging forces of self-direction in third world development are unsure what posture to assume toward the growing church.
7. Traditional forms of western missions seem only too ready to help the growing church further westernize its institutional structures.
8. New forms of intercultural cooperation are needed lest the resources of the wealthy sectors of Christianity default on their solidarity with the third world churches.

Notes for the Seminar

Where are we in history? Ending of the great period of westernization.

- 1) Myths that have fallen:

¹ Ted Ward. The Church in Third World Development: A Morality Play for the End of the Century. Notes for the seminar, “Christian Mission in Transition”, Overseas Ministries Study Center, January 5, 1982

- The evolutionary model of social development. That Western nations represent an advanced evolutionary stage toward which all nations are developing.
 - That institution building is the Christian contribution of Western nations. (Spreading the gospel is.)
 - That the way to be loved is to lead.
 - That the best way to lead is to control.
- 2) Playing by new rules.
- Developing nations want the “stuff” of the western world, but not the values. (Seems unlikely, even contradictory, but too early to tell.) Consider that American Christians make the same claim and then claim that it can be done.
 - Developing nations want the self-esteem that comes from autonomy.
 - Cooperation as reciprocity is the basis of respect.
 - Wealth is presumed to carry obligations, not just the obligation to consider sharing. Volunteerism isn’t all that positive.
- 3) Unresolved problems.
- Coming to grips with political reality; no neutrality is possible.
 - Relief is counter-developmental.
 - Top-down planning of development rarely works.
 - Development is barely understood—development assistance is crude.

Role of the Church in Development

- 1) Three views of the role of the church in development:
 - The church as a sector of citizens . . . “Part of the whole.”
 - The church as a national leadership group . . . “Pointing the way.”
 - The church as a source and encouragement . . . “Pushing not leading.”
- 2) Potential points of contact between the church and secular society
 - Prophetic voices in national policy.
 - Christ-like examples of leadership through service.
 - Mobilized communities as development base.
- 3) The Motives of Development: Creation, Redemption