



The Missionary's Developmental Tasks with Emphasis on the Missionary's First Term¹

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A. Basic Assumptions

1. The spiritual calling of the missionary involves all the aspects of his/her person. (Not separable into "spiritual" and "other.")
2. The *missionary* is a person in process of becoming. (Not having arrived.)
3. *Imagery of anticipation* and *imagery of experience* are always different. (Life's surprises.)
4. People join an organization expecting it to fulfill their aspirations; but since an organization is both a set of tasks and a set of relationships, some parts of what the individual discovers is in conflict with what he/she expected.
5. Preparation is an element in a longer dialogue between the missionary and those around him/her. ("Completing preparation" is as absurd as "completing education.")

B. Developmental Tasks of the Missionary

1. Creatively coping with discrepancies between personal motives and goals and the motives and goals of the mission.
2. Seeking reintegration of the fragmentations that occur in a spiritual ministry.
3. Accommodating change.
4. Maintaining a positive self-image and sense of worth in regard to one's missionary tasks.

C. Tasks of the First Term

1. What the first term means.
 - Anxiety* (Normal unless hidden)
 - Fulfillment* (Gratifications of expected and unexpected sorts.)
 - Discovery* (Life is not confined to a "management agenda.")
 - The Anxiety, Fulfillment, Discovery process is likely a cycle to be repeated over and over, as each significant discovery carries in it the seeds of new anxiety.
2. What the first term demands.
 - Adjustment to realities of lifestyle, organizational identity, survival skills (including language), resources, role, and self.
 - Clarity of self-awareness, of goals, of self-and-other expectations, and of spiritual gifts.
 - Integrity of commitment, of personal responsibility, and of word- and-deed.
3. What the missionary can do.
 - Preparation*: Clarification of motives and goals; development of skills of acceptance,

¹ Ted Ward. The Missionary's Developmental Tasks with Emphasis on the Missionary's First Term. Unpublished paper presented at the EFMA/IFMA Personnel Workshop, Farmington, Michigan, December 1-3, 1977

self-assessment and inter-personal communication; integration of spiritual and other aspects of whole person.

Transaction: Establish and put into practice the interpersonal support systems that will be needed to sustain continuing development.

4. What the mission organization can do.

Preparation: Provide time, situation, and resources to encourage and facilitate the candidate's dealing with matters of adjustment, clarity, and integrity.

Transaction: Provide follow-through resources, especially based in the field for active participation in the missionary's anxiety, fulfillment, and discovery.

Facilitation of Fulfillment: Give special attention to the need for an awareness of worth through accomplishment; keep the formalities of regimen and learning (e.g., language learning) in balance with opportunities for fulfillment of reasonable expectations within the role of missionary.

Given a particular problem of peculiarities and demands and adjustments that we think of in a missionary's first term of service; and, given what we know about the human being, particularly viewing the human being as a developmental creature, made in the image of God, what can we say developmentally about the first term of missionary service. The foundations of this paper are a blend of two sources. One, my own experiences both in terms of direct experience and consultation and service and in terms of learning from available literature. Second, my academic area of concern in human development is the other. From these foundations come four basic assumptions that relate fundamentally to my view of this problem.

1. Creatively coping with discrepancies between personal motives and goals and the motives and goals of the organization.

Many of the difficulties occur in the life of a missionary because he or she has inadequate data to understand this particular developmental task. The mission's goals are given in too vague a form. Then, the missionary may come from a background where it is not okay to examine oneself. Consequently, they really don't know what their own goals are in life. So, not only do they lack information and understanding with reference to the mission (because the mission isn't in the habit of getting that precise about it), but we also have a problem with the person because he or she is not in the habit of looking at himself that closely. Theologically we are quite worthy of the attention of God. We are the object of God's concern and God's motive in redemption. We are indeed something *in Christ*.

Everybody has goals and aspirations. The only issue is whether or not you know what they are. The mission can help these people find and become more aware of what their personal goals and objectives, before they get into a crisis. Many of the foreign field problems that ultimately result in emotional breakdowns are self-discovered too late and the person has no way of helping himself or herself.

2. The developmental task of seeking reintegration of the fragmentations that occur in a spiritual ministry. The spiritual calling of the missionary involves *all* the aspects of his or her person. Thus, the missionary calling is not separable into spiritual aspects and other aspects. If a missionary says, "My spiritual condition is not the issue and all the other things are the issue" it is typically the very thing that hinders him or her in seeing the *spiritual dimension* of all the things that are really the problem.

A person in a spiritual ministry (and specifically a missionary!) is to be in the continuous process of

reintegrating the various parts of his or her life under the same control. It is not a once-and-for-all task. The seeking of reintegration is one of the reasons why we have a lot of these troubleshooters going out to help put the pieces back together again, because many times what is needed is outside help with that reintegration. Troubleshooters may be needed, but it is symptomatic of something that ought to be happening on a systematic, continuous basis within the operation so that every cluster of missionaries is doing that kind of renewal work. It is well to remember that a *missionary going onto the first term is not a finished missionary*. There is no such thing then as the preparing of a missionary except in life-act sense, such as preparation for a given event or a given stage.

3. *Preparation for the field.* “Completing preparation” is about as absurd as the notion of “completing education.” “Completing preparation” is not really the way to look at preparation, whether it is pre-field, internship, orientation, training, or whatever. Rather, conceptualize your problem solving in terms of *ongoing processes* in which events are chained to events. Pre-field orientation is carefully chained to the kind of collegiate background that the person has had. On-field orientation is carefully chained to pre-field orientation, and so on.

4. *Maintaining a positive self-image and sense of worth in regard to one's missionary task.* People join an organization expecting it to fulfill their aspirations, otherwise they would not join it. But since their organization is both a set of tasks and a set of relationships, some parts of what the individual discovers is in conflict of what he or she expected. It is necessary for missionaries to maintain a positive self-image, a healthy awareness of one's own resources, because they will find their expectations are so far from the reality of what the mission expects of first termers, that their self image takes a terrible nose-dive.

This next set of propositions relates to what the first term means, what the first term demands, what the missionary can do, and what the missionary organization can do.

1. *The first term has a meaning.* See the notion of cycles above. There is a cyclic involvement with these three terms (anxiety, fulfillment and discovery), and value fulfillment in discovery. Anxiety about culture is part of the meaning of the first term. If you stop and think about it look at what you do in orientation: you *heighten* their anxiety. That is not necessarily bad. It is not bad until you say, “Cast all your burdens upon him for he cares for you. Be anxious not for tomorrow . . .” etc, and make people feel guilty for a very normal inner reaction of wondering what is coming around the corner. Anxiety is *normal*. Anxiety can be productive. But you want to turn that into a sense of fulfillment.

That is what we mean by goal seeking. The technology of management today tends to treat people as machines. Machines never discover, human beings do. Human beings move beyond fulfillment and make new discoveries that are unique. And, it is in those new discoveries that the person demonstrates that his or her goal is something other than accommodating a misfit anxious past. And what do those discoveries lead to? More anxieties. Anxieties are what dynamics are all about. Anxieties are what keep the dynamic process moving so long as they are acknowledged and shared and brought into disciplines that will lead to fulfillment.

2. *The demands of the first term.* To say it as tightly as I can: *adjustment, clarity, and integrity*. Adjustment to the realities of life style, of organizational identity, of survival skills. Adjustments to the realities of resources, to the realities of role. Clarity in terms of self-understanding, self-awareness, clarity of goals, clarity of self and other expectations. And integrity—a basic honesty and openness, the capacity of being transparent and authentic and committed to personal responsibility. If the first term demands

adjustment, demands clarity, and demands integrity, whatever it is, then we ought to be concerned with making those things stand out with high value.

3. *What the missionary can do or can be helped to do.* One of the things that is dealt with well here in the Missionary Internship pre-field orientation program is the importance of interpersonal acceptance; pulling down some of the bars of separation so we can actually reach through and touch people for Christ. We can ask people to get involved in self-assessment. We can ask people to get involved in interpersonal communication skills. Particularly, we can put forward as a major concern, this integration of the spiritual and other aspects of the whole person. We are dealing with people who can't just leave any piece of themselves at the doorstep and come in. They have all kinds of problems that are interwoven.

Let us talk a little more about what a missionary can do in terms of missionary transaction. Transaction has a kind of continuing, ongoing dynamic. To me the word "preparation" has a temporal quality; transaction has an eternal quality. It is the ongoing-ness of relationship. Transaction in terms of what a missionary can do is just as simple as the following sentence: *Establish and put into practice the interpersonal support system that will be needed to sustain continuing development.*

4. *What can the mission organization do?* First, provide resources to encourage and facilitate the candidate in dealing with matters of adjustment, planning, and integrity. On a longer term basis, the missionary organization can provide follow-through resources, especially based on the field for active participation. You need pre-field and on-field in good tight articulation. They are all part of the same development process. Think back to some of the practical suggestions that have been made today. Practical suggestions about periodic self review, getting together with people to talk over strengths and weaknesses. Getting together to work together on the meaning and the goals of the field.

In countless experiences that I see with first term missionaries and experiences with them in their situation overseas, they are so profoundly frustrated that they are angry. Why? Because the image of themselves is so badly frustrated and they are hurting so deeply that they can't even find the words to express it. What it all boiled down to was they felt like they were liars. They felt they were untrue to their supporters. They had gone over to that country to be a missionary and what do they do? Month after month of orientation, being told things, language school, being told things, and all important things. "When am I going to be a missionary?" What I want to suggest to you is that *the way you get a facilitation of fulfillment is to get the missionary early into a transactional involvement with nationals.*

Get into some exposure with nationals and find out what is important with them. Let *them* tell you what sorts of things to be warned about. Let them tell you what sort of things they value. Until we can do that, I think we are still trying to solve the problems of the world in North America and export things of profit. That is not going to work because increasingly our missionaries are going to have to confront situations that really they don't understand.

In the world we work in everything has a political meaning. There is no such thing as neutrality. Now all of you that are still putting in your orientation manuals, "Be neutral," are kidding yourselves, and what is worse you are trapping your missionaries. Everything has a political movement. I am not asking for political activism. But I am asking you to consider the possibility that we need to get our missionaries early into real contact with real situations and real communities, real homes, and real involvements with national persons, so they can become aware of the political meaning of this highly political world we live in. Without that, the minor kinds of cultural orientation about eating with one's

fingers, or not eating with one's fingers are just so much trivia.

Consider the possibility that a plan with new missionaries for finding early fulfillment in the mission may provide much more of that dynamic incentive and follow through willingness to do all the rest, including the language school. Many missionaries, I believe, are over-schooled. And then we persist in schooling them further. Isn't that a strange thing for an educator to say! This educator is not committed to school; this educator is committed to the *development of human beings*. And, this educator happens to believe that much of that happens better in dynamic action situations.