

THE PROBLEM SOLVER

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Editor's note: The following is excerpted from Dr. Ralph D. Winter's (RDW's) "Problem-Solving" database. Included here are his comments on 15 problems (out of 28 in the database), which he sought to address over the past forty years. They offer a glimpse into the thinking of a "Kingdom engineer" who was constantly pursuing better ways to move the Church forward in its mission to reach and impact all peoples with the gospel.

A Mission Media Publishing Capacity

Date Conceived: 1968

The Problem: The need for a specifically mission-oriented publishing company.

RDW's notes: Many publishers simply select books they think they can sell 5,000 copies of or more. That means smaller groups of people, no matter how important, are not well served by the traditional publishing process. In 1969 the WCL was founded to support the research of people at Fuller Theological Seminary. They

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were producing at least 40 books a year which weren't getting published and thus weren't able to be shared around the world with others facing similar problems. So Roberta

and I established the William Carey Library—not just to publish books but as our first letterhead had it, "media software." WCL was established first of all as a short-run publishing company that would publish books others couldn't figure out how to publish, serving both the builders and promoters of mission as well as missionaries around the field.

Whole-Bible Mission

Date Conceived: 1972

The Problem: The need for insight into the missional nature of the entire sweep of God's work on earth, from Abraham to the present.

RDW's notes: This need has substantially been approached in the *Perspectives* materials. That idea just barely made it in to the 1981 text. There was a strong feeling that we shouldn't go out on that limb but it

got in there due to Dr. Walter Kaiser's backing, and it has been a key emphasis in the *Perspectives* course. I am sure that there are other ways we could get this idea out and around, but at least *Perspectives* is one of the ways we have done it. It would be very helpful to produce a Mission study Bible.

A Missiological Society and a Scholarly Journal of Missiology

Date Conceived: 1972

The Problem: The need to establish missiology as a recognized scholarly discipline.

RDW's notes: It would appear that graduate degrees in the field of missiology were impossible until the appearance of the *Missiology* journal and the linked American Society of Missiology. This is in part a matter of establishing an academic discipline thus allowing a more precise focus on mission problems for people who are doing graduate degrees. It is also a case of hoisting the flag of the mission movement and gaining visibility within the scholarly world. Having these meetings allows the sharing of perspectives and insight. This is a very significant contribution to the cause of missions.

A World Consultation on Mission Frontiers

Date Conceived: 1972

The Problem: The need for a global-level meeting on the subject of mission frontiers, and the establishment of an ongoing global coordinating office.

RDW's notes: This need began to be met when in 1972 a proposal was made at the American Society of Missiology to celebrate the 70th anniversary of a famous 1910 Edinburgh world-level meeting

of missionaries and mission leaders. At that 1972 meeting the idea of frontiers was brought up in a proposal which we didn't make. We simply got behind it and actually sent 50 of our staff to the 1980 meeting in Edinburgh. It had the largest number of mission agencies represented ever on the world level and the largest number of third world agencies ever meeting on a world level. A major novelty of that consultation was the youth parallel meeting which represented an awareness of the intergenerational nature of the cause of missions. It was here at Edinburgh where our slogan, "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000" gained world-level attention.

The Case of the Bypassed Peoples

Date Conceived: 1974

The Problem: The need for an awareness of bypassed subgroups on the mission field.

RDW's notes: This is the classic unreached peoples need and is probably one of the most communicable problems to face. Almost every mission agency now is attuned to different people groups, not just countries or languages. So much has been made of the identification of the problem that the problem itself has almost completely disappeared. It is also true that headway has been made in reaching out to these groups and we now know that the residual unengaged groups, are almost all smaller peoples. The breakthrough to these groups is still difficult, whether large or small, and still needs to be done.

A Major Mission Center

Date Conceived: 1974

The Problem: The need for a major cooperative mission research center.

RDW's notes: This point was a need that arose during the time I was at Fuller, and as the limitations of a school as a contribution to the cause of missions became more evident. We were churning up ideas that needed to be implemented. To establish an implementing annex to the Fuller School of World Mission seemed to be reasonable. This project to some extent has been fulfilled, although the original idea of opening an opportunity for the secondment of people from a number of mission agencies has not worked out as well recently as it did earlier. We desperately need more people with field experience seconded to work with us in this Center.

Global Strategic Collaboration

Date Conceived: 1975

The Problem: The need for a global-level association of mission agencies, and the organizing of a 2010 meeting at the 100th anniversary of 1910.

RDW's notes: Today, more than ever, although clear back in 1980, an ongoing global-level association of mission agencies was proposed, but it was not effectively led. The leader dropped out without telling anyone as a result of his agency requiring him to do so.

More recently, the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS) has been formed and is now trying to do that job. The job is that of tracing migratory peoples around the world so that when you talk about Turkmen, for example, you will find only about half of them in Turkmenistan and the rest in 13 other countries. We need to know where these people are. There has been no one agency, national or regional, that can track peoples on the move on a global level—call them "Global Peoples."

This is one of the primary reasons for the GNMS. Another reason is to be able to compare notes with each other and to know and learn from what others are doing.

The GNMS would include meetings of all the leaders of regional and national groups, as well as mission agencies on the global level. This will be a very strategic organization. Finally, there is an urgent need to organize a 2010 global meeting commemorating the 1910 meeting, and the 1980 meeting, focusing on the frontiers and gathering agency leaders from around the world, especially from non-Western countries.

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Ethnic Data Gathering

Date Conceived: 1975

The Problem: The need for strategic study of the ethnic realities of the entire globe in order to understand more objectively and statistically where the most crucial needs are.

RDW's notes: This is what we would call a strategy concern, not mobilization. We can be very proud of the fact that Joshua Project is very extensively into that sphere, but Joshua Project is not the only answer to that problem. It seems necessary for mission agencies especially to know that, and the hope is that churches would not decide on a group to go to without working through a mission agency. Thus, one of the problems in solving the problem is that we could easily give people the wrong idea.

A Mission-run University

Date Conceived: 1975

The Problem: The need for a secular university adapted to missions.

RDW's notes: When I taught at Fuller for 10 years I

could see again and again how limiting and difficult it was to be tied to a larger institution that was not primarily interested in missions. For 10 years Fuller postponed the idea of anyone getting a Ph.D., contrary to the promises made to the founders of the School of World Mission. Furthermore, it seemed that a seminary would not be the proper source of a degree for a person working in a country that is antagonistic to Christianity. So the need for a secular university that is nevertheless owned and operated by missionaries seemed to be a very crucial thing.

A Popular Mission Periodical

Date Conceived: 1979

The Problem: The need for a pew-level mission periodical.

RDW's notes: This is something that would not just be a promotional bulletin from a mission agency, but would talk about the cause of missions more than just about one agency or one person. This is being met partially by *Mission Frontiers*.

Another Missiological Society and Journal on Frontiers

Date Conceived: 1982

The Problem: The need for a more specific focus on frontiers in mission.

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RDW's notes: The *International Journal of Frontier Missiology (IJFM)* and the associated International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM) are both the initiative of people at the

USCWM. The intentional intergenerational nature of these two entities sets them off from all others, as well as their intentional focus on barriers, problems or frontiers in the Christian mission.

Accessible, Revised Foundational Education

Date Conceived: 1990

The Problem: The need to integrate and condense the liberal arts/seminary curriculum into a single year off-campus.

RDW's notes: A large percentage of key leaders both in the USA and overseas can only be reached outside of the usual classroom situation. Thus, both liberal arts and seminary content need to be integrated and condensed into a program designed for independent, off-campus study.

Restore Liberal Arts Curriculum

Date Conceived: 1990

The Problem: The need to combat the extensive secularization of the liberal arts curriculum as described in Stark's *For the Glory of God*.

RDW's notes: It is apparent that when mission agencies recruit people who already have a college education, no matter whether they come from a Christian college or not, their understanding of God's hand in history is very limited and biased. Thus, we see the need to rewrite the entire college and seminary curricula correcting the secularization perspective. There are various ways that this can be attacked, but World Christian Foundations (WCF) and INSIGHT are the main ways we have done it. We also have conceived the need for supplementary booklets for specific secular texts as another way of dealing with this problem.

Ph.D. Foundation Curriculum

Date Conceived: 1990

The Problem: The need for a solid liberal arts/seminary curriculum as a basis for all Ph.D. degrees.

RDW's notes: This is the double value of the WCF curriculum: not only to rewrite from a different perspective the entire college/seminary experience, but to provide it as the basis of all our Ph.D. degrees since 1990. In this way doctoral associates build on a solid, wide foundation.

Associate Members of the Frontier Mission Fellowship (FMF)

Date Conceived: 2006

The Problem: The need for a disciplined part-time lay and clergy membership of the Frontier Mission Fellowship.

RDW's notes: This would be similar in some ways to the monthly meetings of the China Inland Mission (OMF) and the Church Mission Society (CMS) of the Anglicans. It would not focus simply on the work of the FMF but on the entire range of activities envisioned in the Lord's Prayer. A new push in this area of Regional Offices is necessary to our future. There is a huge amount of human energy to be harvested once we reach out into the realm of part-time lay and clerical people—probably ten or twenty times what our full-time people can handle. 🌐