

Radical Mission Thinking¹

The other day a missionary showed his slides about a people who were living under great oppression and injustice. He emphasized these conditions. However, his slides did not show how that situation affected his message. When asked what effect these conditions had on his witness, he gave an admirably honest answer: *None!* He was visibly embarrassed.

Perhaps you think that allowing “external factors” like oppression and injustice to “interfere” with your message belongs to the domain of ecumenicals and liberals. Well, recently the Association for Public Justice, a Reformed political witness group in Washington, DC, published a translation of a thunderous speech delivered by Abraham Kuyper at a Christian Social Congress back in the 1880s. Under the title *The Problem of Poverty*, Kuyper lambasted the structures of oppression, including capitalism, so as to leave absolutely nothing to the imagination. He demanded that Christians do all they can to heal distorted social structures if they are going to be worth their salt at all. Here’s a strong *Reformed* push. Nothing ecumenical leftism. Nothing liberal. Just strong medicine read straight from the Bible applied to the prevailing conditions. He said it as it was – and still is.

Perhaps you’re like some missionaries. You are not particularly knowledgeable or interested in a Reformed wholistic approach to life. You are more a middle-of-the-road kind of Evangelical. Well, then you should know that even the Evangelicals are changing their tune. Below follow some samples from two joint publications representing current Evangelical voices, MARC and World Vision.

In *Empowering the Poor* we are told that “If the church does not deal with the systems and structures of evil in the city, then it will not effectively transform the lives of that city’s individuals.” Here’s another nugget: “It is because we approach the Bible with a highly individualistic perception of Christian faith that we miss the Biblical writers’ corporate and systemic analysis of human society.”

¹ *Missionews*, Nov/1991 (2pp.). *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, p. 299.

In *Health, Healing and Transformation* you will meet up with language and warnings against the dualisms in our lives that could have come straight from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. We are asked, “What is the use of preaching by itself when there are so many in our congregations and surrounding communities whose sufferings, hurts and sicknesses are being neglected?” Chew on this one: “Poverty and lack of education due to injustice are the greatest causes of disease in today’s world.”

How do you like that for radical mission thinking? Nothing new, of course. The World Council of Churches has been saying such things for years. Better late than never! Thank you, MARC and World Vision. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding us into Your truth.

Read this stuff! Ask your mission director to get you copies.