To respond to each of these all too briefly: There was a consensus that the traditional "evangelical" focus on the biblical message of atonement, justification, and regeneration of sinners remains central—but that the Scriptures also teach of a social ethic involving justice, and that securing justice is bound up in matters economic. The extent to which justice, say in the form of resource reallocation, is to be meted out by the state versus voluntary action was not agreed upon.

There remained considerable debate about the efficacy of markets versus planning in economic development. I personally was taken by how many of the theologians had read Marx, but never waded through a good price theory text like Mansfield or Hirshleifer or Browning & Browning. Both as a matter of theory and a matter of empirical evidence, there was disagreement about the government's ability to redistribute wealth without reducing incentives to generate additional wealth.

As to a "third way," I suspect some of the participants were disappointed that economists may seem unable (or unopen?) to discern alternatives to market and centrally planned organizations. There was some interest expressed in worker-owned or worker-managed enterprises but, among the conference, there did not seem to be an awareness of the literature that does exist on that subject in the discipline's specialty of comparative systems. An Association of Christian Economists member who knows this field would have been a valuable resource at the conference.

Unresolved were such longstanding issues as the efficacy of the government in raising a nation's standard of living and eliminating abject poverty. Further clouding the discussion of this particular issue were disagreements about what Scripture teaches concerning the roles of the state versus the church in alleviating poverty. There was agreement that the Scriptures taught not only redemption but also of God's concern with justice for the oppressed. While the discussion did not focus on these subjects, it was agreed that poverty was only one dimension of the economic problem that the Christian faith should address. The light of the gospel also must illumine such economic topics as work, leisure, ecology, and stewardship of wealth.

The papers given at the Oxford Conference will be published in the July-September issue of Transformation journal. ACE members who do not subscribe can order copies for $4.00 through Ronald J. Sider, 312 W. Logan St., Philadelphia, PA 19144. I would suggest adding an additional $1.00 to cover postage and handling. The conference is part of an ongoing effort. The Executive Committee consists of Vinay K. Samuel (India), Ronald J. Sider (USA), David T. Bussau (Australia), and Chris Sugden (England). This group is scheduled to meet in April, 1987 to formulate a continuing study agenda. Details are still being developed but the taxonomy appears to be one working group focusing on Stewardship/Creation; a second on the Theology of Work and Leisure; a third on the Biblical Definition of Justice; and a fourth on Freedom, Government and Economics.

It is gratifying to note that in recent years the opportunities for study, consultation, and fellowship on the topic of Christianity and economics have increased substantially. The Association of Christian Economists has been one avenue for this. The Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics, and its continuing endeavors, is another. May these and other efforts ultimately be to God's glory.

"North American Christians in the Third World: How Best Can They Serve?"
Prepared by Roland Hoksbergen
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A number of Christian professors, particularly, may have students who express an interest in serving in Third World settings. This report speaks to this interest by a professional economist administering a study program for North American undergraduates.

I. Introduction: Sensitivity, Respect, and Humility

For the Christian, of course, whether to help one's brother or sister in need is not open to debate. It is a given. Aware of this biblical mandate, and filled with Christian love for their worldwide siblings, many Christians
wonder whether they should devote their lives to helping the hungry and poor. They often turn their eyes towards the Third World where almost a billion people go to sleep hungry every night. One of the big questions for them is "What are we to do?".

Fortunately, there is a host of possibilities for Christians to get involved in developing Kingdom relationships with folks in the Third World. There are opportunities in business, church missions, government institutions, international organizations, advocacy groups, development agencies, and more. Hundreds of such opportunities are listed in the revised and expanded edition of The Oversees List: Opportunities for Living and Working in Developing Countries, by David M. Beckmann, Timothy J. Mitchell, and Linda L. Powers (reviewed below). Those looking for a service opportunity in the Third World would do well to consult this invaluable resource.

Having said this, however, I must hasten to add that before one tries to get directly involved in a Third World career, it is absolutely essential that he or she develop a healthy respect and sensitivity for Third World cultures, and a deep sense of Christian humility. Humility is one mark of a mature Christian. Beyond prayer and a growing personal relationship with Christ there is no special recipe for its acquisition. Respect and sensitivity, on the other hand, can only be gained by relatively lengthy exposure, preferably immersion, in a Third World setting. There is no other way to learn it.

The centrality of the attitudes of North American Christians in relation to the Third World really came home to me recently in a series of eight interviews I conducted with leaders of Christian development agencies in Costa Rica. When asked such questions as "What positive elements have North Americans brought to Third World development efforts?" or "What mistakes do North Americans commonly make in the Third World?" or "What should North American Christians do who want to help the Third World?", these leaders overwhelmingly emphasized issues of attitudes and relationships. Drawing heavily on the combined wisdom of those interviewed, I will share a few thoughts on: (1) attitudes North American Christians must avoid in Third World service; (2) how North American Christians can build fruitful relationships in the Third World; (3) how Christians can get started on Third World careers.

II. Attitudes North Americans Must Avoid in Third World Service

Back in the fifties, when the Developed West first recognized the problem of world poverty, the following notions prevailed about Third World development: (1) that the destiny of Third World countries was to traverse the same road to development Europe and North America had; (2) that the engine of broad social development would be economic growth; (3) that the road would be paved with international trade, finance, and aid. At both government and private levels, agencies in the fifties started pumping money into poor economies, assuming that almost any assistance would have a positive impact. It wasn't long before this type of assistance program crashed head-on into Third World reality. Looking back, one is hardly surprised by this failure, for the powers behind these efforts never stopped to take into account either the people of the Third World or their cultures. A lot has been learned about development since then, and much progress has been made toward improving assistance programs. Still, errors resulting from the same kind of naiveté remain depressingly common.

One of the most common errors still made by North Americans is coming to the Third World with answers in hand. The attitude of superiority accompanying such North Americans does not win many friends, and it does not promote development either. In a 1984 issue of Development the following question and answer are cited from a dialogue with villagers from India:

Q. In what sense do you think outside help is useful?
A. We need outside help for analysis and understanding of our situation and experience, but not for telling us what to do. An outsider who comes with ready-made solutions is worse than useless. He must first understand from us what our questions are, and help us articulate the questions better, and then help us find solutions. [Development: Seeds of Change, vol. 2, 1984, p. 47, highlighting mine]

This statement sums up well the reflections of the Christian development agency leaders interviewed in Costa
Rica. Several mentioned the North American predilection for the give-away, a sure recipe for long-term dependency. Three noted the example of one U.S. church mission that worked with nationals but held veto power over whatever the nationals would propose. The national organization finally broke with the U.S. agency over this issue. They felt they were being treated not as equal brothers and sisters in Christ, but as not-too-bright children.

Too often North Americans come into a situation, figure out what is wrong, take charge, and fix the problem with a typically "gringo" solution. North Americans generally want to see quick success. One typically North American solution to Third World hardships is the short term brigade, sometimes referred to as Work and Witness Teams. A group of, say, 20 North Americans swoops down out of the sky on some unsuspecting village, builds them a quick church, inoculates or deworms all their children, and then, after lots of smiles and countless photographs, reenters an awaiting airplane and vanishes. Such brigades cost an incredible amount of money and are often more damaging than helpful. They are thought by Latin Americans with development experience to be either conscience soothers or just plain adventures rather than real efforts to help.

A second major attitudinal problem is that of simple cultural insensitivity. This shows up in a variety of ways. Of the eight people I interviewed four were Latin Americans and all expressed resentment or perplexity at the North Americans who come down, but do not want to give up any part of their North American culture. Their houses are set apart and equipped in North American style. They stick close to their North American friends, and generally fail to relate and identify with the local culture. On the other hand, Latin Americans are just as miffed by those who go overboard on relating and identifying. These are the people who intentionally dress poorly, live in dirt-floor huts, and wear ragged sandals. Such "over-identifiers" are regarded with light-hearted humor, and garner very little respect for their efforts.

Many North Americans are seen by Latins as impatient, demanding, and confrontational, as well as paternalistic and condescending. Sometimes those from the U.S. come, as one leader put it, "with the spirit of the eagle"--as always puffing out their chests and telling "how we do it in the States." All of these attitudes result from a lack of sensitivity to the other culture. They characterize people who cannot adjust enough actually to live in and appreciate another culture. In most cases, it would be better if such North Americans stayed home.

Working as the Lord's servants in His Kingdom is an arduous, painstaking task, especially when one has to contend with all the interposing barriers of cross-cultural understanding. It is not surprising, therefore, that North American Christians make mistakes in trying to help their Third World brothers and sisters. But if we fail to take notice of our errors it is a sign we are not really interested in helping, but rather in feeling better ourselves. What we must do is try and learn from our mistakes, correct them, and continue working to build Kingdom relationships that are nurtured in the love of Christ our Lord.

III. Developing Constructive Relationships with Third World People

Although it is certainly true that any well-developed human relationship brings benefits to all parties, I will focus here on the benefits received in Latin America from a well-developed North American/Latin American relationship.

The most important benefit received by Latin Americans in this relationship is not the money from the North. Neither is it American know-how or modern technology. Instead, it is the assurance that they are not alone in the world, that there are others who care about them, and that there are those who are willing to work together with them in solving some very serious human problems. Again, it is mostly a question of attitude. When asked what positive elements North Americans could offer Latin America, Alberto Reyes, with long experience in various Baptist missions in Costa Rica, mentioned only the North Americans who come with an attitude of brotherhood and friendship, and with a real interest in helping people. German Zarate, of Alfarit International, noted that the most positive elements in North American workers here are the desire to learn about Latin America and the possibility of creating relational bridges between Christians of different cultures. Others too mentioned attitude and relationships long before they mentioned any other concrete and practical types of assistance.

This is not to minimize the necessity of technical or administrative assistance, or of funding itself. It is only
to say that all of this is secondary to the development of mutually supportive Christian relationships. One cannot overemphasize too much the importance of good attitude. It is like 1 Corinthians 13; if there is no love, all the other things are not worth much.

Beyond the all-important attitudinal prerequisites, however, there is a lot more that North Americans can do to help. They can share their technical skills to great advantage. Development agencies often need short-term (and sometimes long-term) people with special skills to help them with certain projects. North Americans in business, in addition to the jobs their businesses provide directly, can bring with them and share technical skills and important technology. Administrative and organizational skills are often in need, and North Americans can help here at a number of different levels: church missions, community development projects, education, business, and more. Once familiar with Third World problems, North American Christians can play very important roles in their home government offices, for government policy toward the Third World is also central to Third World development.

Noting that it is a very delicate area, and that some Latin American values should also be learned by North Americans, four of those interviewed said that some North American values are important for the people in Latin America to see and pick up. Specifically mentioned were the values of participatory decision making and the values of inventiveness and productivity. Hernan Fernandez, director of the local affiliate of the Institute for International Development, Inc., mentioned that "underdevelopment is in the mind, and until we get it out of our minds, we'll continue to be underdeveloped." A change in values, he believes, is crucial to a change of mind, and North Americans can help impart some of the important values.

There are any number of specific things one can do to help in Latin America, providing the help is wrapped in the right sort of package. What often occurs is that North Americans look for this specific opportunity before they have taken the time and energy to understand what Third World development is all about. Interestingly, if one takes this time and expends the energy to get to know the Third World, many specific and practical opportunities leap into view. If one begins with the idea of working to build a relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ, one in which each is seen as an image-bearer of God and worthy of the dignity and respect which God intended for all His creatures, then the specific area in which one can serve often falls into place.

IV. How Christians Can Get Started on Third World Careers

As Jim Boldenow of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee said, the best way for Christians to get started is to "study, study, study . . . listen, listen, listen." Not that we are all to become the perennial graduate student, never getting out into the real world. But even if one manages to land a Third World assignment before ever having the chance to really get down and study, one should still expect to spend the first year or two in a learning mode rather than a teaching mode. One cannot offer much before developing that all-important respect and sensitivity toward the particular culture he expects to work in, and this cannot be achieved without time.

What must one study? There are five areas that deserve attention: Christian views of development, the history and current events of the geographic area in which one is interested, the language of the area where one expects eventually to work, cross-cultural awareness and living, and the special skill area that one expects to develop.

Without some careful attention to what Christians are saying about development, it is easy to get caught up in the subtly attractive secular development trends of the day, be they modernization, Marxism, self-actualization, or some other form of humanism. Christians do not have all the answers, but they do boast the right foundations for understanding the causes and cures of suffering in a sinful world.

If one is heading, say, to Latin America it is important to have some background knowledge in what the people in Latin America are like and what history they have lived. It is a lot easier to get into the culture and to understand the local currents if one does a little homework and has some basic background in the character of the country before he or she arrives.

Absolutely essential to really making a significant contribution in the Third World is the learning of the local language. If one cannot communicate in the language of the people, they can never really get to know the culture,
show the proper respect for it, and understand how to work positively in it.

The most basic element of helping in the Third World is that ability to live productively in a cross-cultural environment. For this it is necessary to speak the language and get Third World experience before looking for a position. No amount of books, interviews, and missionary slide shows can adequately prepare one for understanding a culture as can actual immersion in the culture. Culture is lived and it is not learned apart from life itself.

Finally, the day when generalists are used in development work, or in any position in Third World countries is ending. Therefore it is important to have some specific skill: construction, accounting, computing, teaching, business management, counseling, and so forth. Some may already have such skills. Others, with an eye on the future, can work to obtain the ones in greatest need.

There are, quite naturally, a number of different ways to acquire such skills, knowledge, and experience. One of the ways suggested by almost all of those interviewed is to link-up with a reputable Christian development agency. Such an agency can orient one with respect to many of the suggestions made here, providing information about what one can do to really help in the Third World. Another way is to begin simply by travelling to the Third World as a tourist and trying to learn as much as possible while there. Church related Bible and issue study groups can also help one learn about how the First World and the Third World relate and about what God asks of us in this relationship.

For those still in college there is an especially attractive opportunity. Many colleges provide semester or year abroad programs in the Third World. These programs allow the student to focus on studying and listening and also remove the immediate burden on the student of doing a job, or of actually helping right now. The Latin American Studies Program of the Christian College Coalition, of which I am currently director, is one such program. Students on this program live, work, study, and travel in Central America for at least a semester; and some stay for additional time. Such programs provide learning experiences without equal, give the students a semester's worth of college credit, and get them started on the journey toward building Kingdom relationships across cultures. After such an experience, students are a lot better prepared to understand and follow the Lord's will for their lives, and they are in a much better position to answer that all important question--What are we to do?

One cultural trait of North Americans is that we want to get our hands dirty right away. We are go-getters and we want to see success. We often rush in before we check things out. Such is also our tendency in working to help our brothers and sisters in the Third World. This trait is in many ways admirable, and has been the source of great things. But when the environment into which we propose to rush is so foreign to us, and when human relationships are at stake, it is imperative that we control ourselves and stop, look, and listen before we proceed. Only this way will we truly be able effectively to serve our Lord in His multicultural, multinational world.

*Counting the Cost: The Economics of Christian Stewardship* by Robin Kendrick Klay


Reviewed by Earl L. Grinols (University of Illinois)

The interface between economics and Christianity is a difficult one. This is as true for economists who struggle to reconcile their secular training as professionals with their Christian beliefs as integrated spiritual, mental, and physical beings; as it is for Christians of other disciplines who accept God's injunctions to them to do justly and to love mercy. That this interface needs strengthening is evident merely from reading the discussions of economic policy issues which are treated in the newspapers, magazines, and airwaves of our country. Rarely, if ever, in the secular media does an application of spiritual or peculiarly Christian understanding play a role. Moreover, in neither the secular media nor in sermons or Christian publications is there displayed an appreciation for how economics function, and the inevitable and difficult economic choices required to meet the material needs of mankind.

Given this state of affairs economists can become better informed about the meaning of spiritual economic principles, and Christians can become better informed about economics. Robin Kendrick Klay has chosen to do the latter. Her book's title, *Counting the Cost: The Economics of Christian Stewardship*---taken from the passage in