

# **From McGavran's Church Growth to Taber's Kingdom of God**

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**Tracing Distinct Missiological Trajectories  
in Undergraduate and Graduate Mission and  
Intercultural Studies Programs in Christian  
Churches/ Churches of Christ Institutions**

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## **About the Author**

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## **Abstract:**

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Two of the most influential and well-known missiologists with connections to the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Donald A. McGavran (1897-1990) and Charles R. Taber (1928-2007), had distinctly different approaches toward missiology and its application in the academic setting. While McGavran's approach led to very formalized missiological programs, eventually at Fuller Theological Seminary, Taber suggested that missiology should not be a separate subject in the seminary curriculum, but should instead be an integral part of every course of study. This paper compares current missiological and intercultural studies undergraduate and graduate programs in 20 Christian Churches/Churches of Christ institutions, and views them through these two missiological models. This comparison provides a framework for understanding varied approaches in different institutions (even outside of the American Stone-Campbell Christian Church movement).

## Introduction of my own Missiological Lenses

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This paper is a combination of both long-standing and recent personal endeavors. As one of Dr. Charles Taber's last graduate students before his retirement in 1998, I have carried with me many insights gleaned from a man who was better known in missiological and linguistic circles than those of us who attended a small east Tennessee seminary realized. Taber challenged me as a seminary student to consider why I felt called to serve as a missionary in Kenya, a country from which church leaders, most notably John Gatu, had called for a moratorium on all western missionaries and funding in 1971. This was 25 years before my calling to serve as a missionary in Kenya. Taber wanted me to squarely confront the dichotomy of my calling, together with the moratorium debates, encouraging me to critically examine the history of the mission moratorium for my Master's thesis; a task that I undertook and will forever be grateful for (Lines 1998). Taber was not opposed to western missionaries in Africa, but was rightly concerned that "the sending of western Missionaries to open new fields ought not to be an automatic reflex, nor ought it to take place at all without an accompanying effort to establish close and cordial relations with national churches" (Taber 1973:3). It was with that knowledge that I served as a missionary alongside my wife and local church leaders in Turkana, Kenya from 1999-2008.

After returning from missionary service, in my first semester of PhD coursework at Asbury Theological Seminary, while studying contextual theology under the tutelage of Dr. Eunice Erwin, I was surprised that required reading included articles authored by Taber. Certainly this wasn't the Taber I studied under at Emmanuel School of Religion, whose funeral I had just attended while on furlough in 2007? It was. At that point, I began to collect and read all of the writings of Dr. Taber and worked with archivists at both Milligan College and Emmanuel Christian Seminary to gain copies of his unpublished works and presentations. My wife and I even visited with and interviewed Taber's wife, Betty, who remains active in her church community in Johnson City, TN.

It was Taber who introduced me to Church Growth and Donald A. McGavran, in a course titled “The Biblical Basis of Church Growth,” in which students were required to read McGavran’s *Understanding Church Growth* and then listen to lectures in which Taber skillfully dismantled McGavran’s writing, often point by point, with careful biblical exegesis. He expected that we learn Church Growth theory, but he taught us that the kingdom of God was not limited by church growth principles.

Yet my ministry experience as a missionary with CMF International was very positively influenced by Donald A. McGavran’s church growth theories. The CMFI mission organization emerged from the American Christian Church unity movement (also known as the Stone-Campbell Movement) that placed a high value on mission and evangelism. The unity that the movement was founded on was not seen as an end in itself, but was to enhance Christian witness to non-Christians. Writing in 1824, Alexander Campbell made clear his concern that, without unity among Christians, our efforts in “conversion of the world” would be in vain (*Christian Baptist*, 2:135, 1824). He was convinced that division among Christians would be the greatest stumbling block to non-Christians accepting Jesus as Lord (*Christian Baptist*, 1:40-42, 1824). Our unity as Christians within individual congregations, without sectarian and denominational divisions, could be a key strategy in our evangelistic mission. This affirms Jesus’ earnest prayer for the Church in John 17; not merely for a unity in the Church so we could all coexist, but “so that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

The Stone-Campbell Movement Churches were among the early leaders in the modern Protestant missionary movement in America. As congregations were sending out missionaries, churches gathered to form a cooperative mission sending organization in 1849, the American Christian Missionary Society (later, the Foreign Christian Missionary Society), in which more than 100 representatives from 100 Stone-Campbell Movement churches worked together to send missionary James Barclay to Jerusalem (Blowers 2004). These churches were also leaders in the formation of the Christian Women’s Board of Missions, during an era when women missionaries outnumbered male missionaries almost 2:1.

McGavran’s father taught at the Indianapolis College of Missions, which was founded by women leaders in Stone-Campbell Movement congregations in 1909. This school moved and later became the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. As expected from a Christian unity movement, representatives from both of

these Stone-Campbell mission boards (the ACMS and CWBM) were present at the influential 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, including 12-year-old Donald McGavran. McGavran attended with his parents, and would later serve as a 3rd generation Stone-Campbell missionary with the United Christian Mission Society in India, after earning a graduate degree at the College of Mission in Indianapolis.

After returning from two terms in India, McGavran received his PhD from Columbia University and became one of the leading missiologists of the 20th century, utilizing the application of the social sciences for mission and founding a graduate theological school devoted to church growth and evangelism at Northwest Christian College. This original Church Growth Institute met around a large oak table on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the library at Northwest Christian College. Early CMFI missionaries were among the first students at the Institute. Many of them were the missionaries who preceded me and set up the mission structures and methods CMFI used in East Africa (McGavran 1986).

After McGavran was invited to move his Institute to Fuller in 1965 and serve as the founding dean of the School of World Mission, CMFI missionaries were required to complete their graduate studies at Fuller for field preparation as early as 1967. Even later, as CMFI policy was relaxed and a Master's degree from Fuller was not required for field service, the East African CMFI teams still required new recruits to take 5 core graduate level classes from Fuller: church growth, language acquisition, cultural anthropology, theology of mission, and folk religion.

Further relaxing of the policy eventually allowed recruits to take the 5 core graduate classes anywhere they wanted, but a Church Growth class was still required. Highlighting the tension in the missiological perspectives of McGavran and Taber, special permission was required from the leadership of CMFI for my wife and I to receive these five core courses from Taber at Emmanuel Christian Seminary. An outspoken critic of McGavran, Taber took opportunities, even in book reviews, to critique what he considered McGavran's straw man arguments, superficiality, "theological and biblical foundations [that] remain casual, superficial and anecdotal rather than profound and intrinsic," and "quite insubstantial empirical foundations" (Taber 1986).

Still, beyond Taber's critiques of McGavran during my seminary training, McGavran had a direct positive (dare I say *effective*) influence on the CMFI ministries we joined in East Africa. McGavran visited Ethiopia

in 1972 to lead a Church Growth seminar in Addis Ababa and then visited with the CMF team working in southern and western Ethiopia in Tosse. At the seminar in Addis, O.D. Johnson, the first general director of CMFI, presented the paper, "A Mission Founded on Church Growth Principles." While in Tosse, McGavran presented a church growth seminar to the Ethiopian church leaders and then met with the CMFI missionaries, encouraging them to "create strategies that would bring a harvest of all of the peoples to Christ in the areas where they were working" (Chapman 2015).

When all Protestant missionaries were expelled from Ethiopia in 1977, many of the CMFI missionaries moved to Kenya to begin new work among the unreached, yet receptive, Maasai and Turkana peoples. The initial survey of the far northern Turkana district in Kenya was carried out with church growth principles and social scientific research methods, focused on the potential receptivity of the Turkana people (Elliston 1979).

The extended introduction to this paper highlights the reasoning behind my inquiry and my interwoven connections with the Stone-Campbell movement, Donald A. McGavran, Charles R. Taber, the application of church growth principles in an intercultural ministry context, and as the lead professor in an undergraduate intercultural studies program. This is a complicated set of lenses, but a set that uniquely affects my own missiological vision. As I began to examine the missions/ICS programs in the 20 independent Christian Church institutions in my study, this was the set of lenses through which I examined them.

# McGavran and Taber: Visions for Missiological Education

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**Donald A. McGavran (1897-1990)**

While a biographical sketch of McGavran has already been provided, I would like to emphasize a few key features of McGavran's missiological vision and the way this was played out in an educational model.

It must be noted that McGavran's vision was heavily influenced by Roland Allen's earlier reflections on the errors of modern missions based on his experiences in China and the experiences and reflections of J. Waskom Pickett, a fellow missionary in India. From Allen's perspective, the spontaneous expansion of Christianity was being stifled by the methods of modern missions, especially the mission compound model. McGavran's response was to emphasize "a new kind of strategizing that incorporated a sociological perspective" (Skreslet 2012:141). This included focusing mission efforts where there was a greater possibility for numerical success.

McGavran described the basis for his vision as a conviction that "God wants his lost children found and enfolded" (McGavran 1986:57). From this conviction came an essential component for church growth thinking: research must be carried out to discover the facts of growth in missionary planted churches around the world. It is then with these facts that mission leaders and missionaries could engage in "planning all mission activities in the light of what is being achieved" (McGavran 1986:58).

It was McGavran that brought serious research back to Christian mission. When McGavran was young and attended the College of Missions in Indianapolis, George Hunter III describes a situation in which,

mission was taught in virtually every seminary curriculum, and there were schools of mission and prominent graduate programs. In the 1950s, 1960s, and much of the 1970s, under the impact of theological liberalism, religious intolerance, and other Enlightenment influences, schools of mission expired while, in seminaries, retiring missions professors were not replaced and mission dropped out of the curriculum. (Hunter 1992:159)

This trend was reversed by McGavran's influence through the School of World Mission at Fuller. Through his models and writings, mission again became part of the curriculum of many independent colleges and seminaries.

McGavran's educational model was fully set in motion when he was invited by President Hubbard at Fuller Theological Seminary to become the founding dean of the School of World Mission in 1965. McGavran recounts that these were the best years of his pilgrimage, as he engaged in the task of "recruit[ing] seven full-time professors and making this graduate school serve the missionary cause around the world" (McGavran 1986:57). Additionally, this model "multiplied amazingly in many lands" and "other schools of mission borrowed extensively" from the church growth research and training model.

The School of World Mission became a new model for missiological education in a number of ways. First, it was a separate school and faculty from the school of theology. While in the older institutions missiology was viewed as part of theology, or even by some as the "mother of theology" (e.g. Martin Kähler, cited in Bosch 1991:16), in this new model the schools of theology/biblical studies and missiology were now separate specialized schools with distinct programs. A second new approach was gathering faculty specialists in church growth, communication theory, anthropology, folk religion, language acquisition, evangelism, mission history, mission spirituality, mission theology and contextual theologies. Through the gathering of specialists, missiology truly became an interdisciplinary field

of study. A third new emphasis of this model was to gather missiological research through the training of students in qualitative and quantitative social science research methods.

### **Charles R. Taber (1928-2007)**

Born to American Brethren missionaries training in Paris, Taber resided in France the first eight years of his life and was afforded one of the preeminent advantages of a Third Culture Kid: being bilingual from birth. After a one-year furlough in the States, Taber then lived with his parents in the French colony of Oubangui-Chari, which is now known as the Central African Republic, where for five years they resided and young Taber learned to speak the Sango language from other children. During World War II, the family moved to South Africa for 6 months, then to Southern Rhodesia for 3 months, before briefly returning to Oubangui-Chari. While in South Africa, Taber notes that he began his first year of high school in English. After returning to the U.S., Taber remained to finish his last two years of high school in Allentown, Pennsylvania (Taber 2005:89).

There is no doubt these early experiences helped to form an understanding of language that would serve Taber well the rest of his life as a missionary in the Central African Republic, as a linguist with the United Bible Societies in West Africa, and later, as a professor of world mission. Fluency in multiple languages helped Taber become one of the foremost Bible translation experts, providing direction for innumerable translation projects through *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, co-authored with Eugene Nida in 1969. This text was reprinted as recently as 2003 in English and translated into multiple languages, most recently into Mandarin and published in Shanghai in 2004.

Majoring in English while teaching French as an undergraduate at Bryan College, Taber met his wife, Betty, and the two were married the summer after graduation in 1951. They served together as missionaries in the Central African Republic with the Foreign Missionary Society of the Brethren church from 1953 until about 1960. After returning to the States to care for family medical issues, Taber was invited by his former Oubangui-Chari colleague, William Samarin, to pursue graduate studies

at the Kennedy School of Missions at the Hartford Seminary Foundation. Taber immediately accepted the invitation. Samarín and Taber would later publish *A Dictionary of Sango* in 1964 (Taber 2005:90).

Robert J. Priest has noted that many prominent Christian linguists and anthropologists attended the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford Seminary during this time period, as it was the only place for doctoral work in missiology in the decades following Edinburgh 1910. This mainline Protestant school,

fielded a faculty of noted linguists, comparative religionists, sociologists (such as Peter Berger), and anthropologists (Absalom Vilakazi, Paul Leser, Morris Steggerda, Edwin Smith). George Peters, Charles Kraft, Dean Gilliland, and Charles Taber were among those who received doctorates here. (Robert J. Priest, *Christianity Today*, 10/1/2007 "Paul Hiebert: A Life Remembered")

Taber completed an M.A. in 1964, a Ph.D. in 1966, and had begun working with Eugene Nida of the American Bible Society before graduating from Hartford Seminary.

Serving from 1969-1973 as a United Bible Societies translation consultant who provided oversight for more than two dozen projects in West Africa, Taber simultaneously served as the editor of the journal *Practical Anthropology* for the four years previous to its merging with *Missiology* in 1973. After completing a term with the UBS, Taber was invited by Tetsunao Yamamori to help start an institute of world mission and church growth at Milligan College, Tennessee. After six years of teaching at the undergraduate level in which he felt he was not well suited, Yamamori leaving to take another position elsewhere, and the mission institute at Milligan College never materializing for lack of finances, Taber began teaching at Emmanuel School of Religion, a graduate seminary that served the Christian churches/churches of Christ, in 1979, where he taught for 18 years. During this time he served as the president of the Association of Professors of Mission in 1981, the president of the American Society of Missiology in 1985-86 and as an ASM Publication Series Editor from 1988-1997 (Taber 2005:92).

In his autobiographical reflection, Taber noted a few major realizations through the years that will help us understand his missiological vision. First, while working with the UBS in West Africa, he and Betty

“came to realize as never before that the Bible does not need to be protected by a nineteenth-century philosophical scaffold; it just needs to be turned loose” (Taber 2005:92). For Taber, this meant that the Scriptures did not require the incessant interpretations of missionaries or translators. While Taber held a very high view of Scripture, he came to understand that the “national church was capable of being guided by the Holy Spirit using the Scriptures” (Taber 2005:92).

Another insight was that mission was best accomplished as “carried out by a single, holy catholic, and apostolic church when it manages to transcend its divisions, even momentarily” (Taber 2005:93). This renewed focus on unity in the church and in mission led the Tabers away from the Brethren Church and into the fold of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Taber became very intentional concerning his convictions on the priority of the unity of the church in mission, sometimes digressing into discussions on the topic when presenting papers or writing journal articles. One example can be found when he was asked by *Missiology* to be the “evangelical” respondent to a presentation in which there was to be a Catholic respondent, a conciliar respondent, and an evangelical. Taber utilized much of his piece commenting on being called an evangelical:

Beyond whatever doctrinal consensus there may be between persons who call themselves evangelicals, the term is commonly used in a specifically partisan and exclusive sense. Too many evangelicals, perhaps because they lack an institutional embodiment, seem obsessed with building fences between themselves and other Christians and spelling out the importance of those fences. My roots are in the evangelical movement, and in many ways my personal doctrinal position agrees with the central tenets of the evangelical consensus. But I reject the partisan and divisive use of the term and disassociate myself explicitly from all fence-building efforts in the name of evangelicalism. I serve notice that I will no longer respond to the evangelical label — not because I reject the content of evangelical faith, but because I want to maintain unbroken fellowship with all Christians, including those with whom I disagree heartily. As a matter of deep conviction, I ask to be called “Christian” without divisive qualifier. (Taber 1981:88)

I include this extended quote to provide a sense of the conviction Taber felt concerning this issue. If God's mission is carried out at its best when Christians transcend divisions, as Taber had experienced on the field, then he would no longer be partisan as a missiologist.

Finally, through autobiographical reflection, Taber "learned that sin and salvation are not purely individual matters, as the standard evangelical model seems to suggest." For Taber, it was not merely individuals, but "the structures and systems" that rebelled against God. In this light, salvation is seen as God's sovereign project "to restore all things to God's rule" (Taber 2005:93). This was often presented in his writing by a focus on the gospel of the kingdom of God (Taber 2000:134).

In seeking to understand Taber's educational approach, it is important to note that while he spent the last 34 years of his life as a missiologist, he began his career with doubts as to the validity of missiology as a separate field of study that stands on its own in the academy, or even in a graduate seminary. In his 1979 inaugural lecture as Professor of World Mission of Emmanuel School of Religion, Taber most clearly presented his philosophy on missiology and theology in seminary education. His lecture asked the question, should missiology be a separate subject in the curriculum? His answer was no, mission should not be relegated to any one department, such as Christian Doctrine or Practical Ministries. In a fragmented world that does not recognize the inherent call of mission for everyone, the situation in the seminary is lacking:

Mission courses often have a "tacked-on" look in relation to the rest of the curriculum. One finds for instance, a course in "the biblical basis for mission," taught by a missions professor and with no apparent connection to the regular program of biblical studies. The same obtains for "theology of mission," "history of missions," and others. The situation looks precisely as though the curriculum had been designed with no thought for mission; then, as an afterthought, as a kind of remedial program or prosthesis to correct omissions in the "regular" program, missions courses were added. (Taber 2007:4)

Instead of perpetuating this afterthought, Taber insisted that mission should concern the entire faculty and students and be an integral part of every course at a seminary. Likewise, mission cannot be separated from

theology. “The activity of God, the person and work of Jesus, the role of the Holy Spirit, the church, salvation, eschatology,” all of these must include the “missionary motif in a central place” (Taber 2007:7).

As a trained linguist who also studied and utilized both sociology and anthropology in his missiological research and in the classroom, Taber was a proponent of the use of the social sciences for mission. Engaged in the field of translation theory and the concept of “dynamic equivalence” throughout his career (Taber and Nida 2003), Taber often pushed his students to consider the ways that the Gospel might be interpreted and understood differently in various cultural contexts. This focus on translation theory led Taber to encourage both indigenous theologizing and missionary acceptance of local interpretations of Scripture (Taber 1978; 1993). He also viewed the social sciences as “potentially useful instruments to improve [missiology’s] understanding and performance,” but warned that they should be used both “responsibly and critically” (Taber 2000:138).

### **A Comparison of the Models**

Taber’s educational model for missiology can be seen as very different from that of McGavran. Although similar in the incorporation of the social sciences into missiology, Taber held to a holistic vision of mission as part of the entire seminary curriculum. McGavran’s vision for missiological research led to a separate institution in the Seminary that trained interdisciplinary mission specialists.

In these brief sketches we see two models of mission education from leaders of missiology from within the Stone-Campbell movement. Key features of each model includes:

## **McGavran Model**

- Focus on researching and evaluating numerical church growth
- A focus on duplication of efforts and models that work
- The study of missiology as a separate discipline in separate programs and maybe separate schools (but accessible to all levels of church leaders)
- Missiology faculty should be specialists who work apart from Biblical Studies and Theology faculty
- Focus on understanding where resources are best utilized
- Missionary best prepares with interdisciplinary missiological education
- Establish new schools and new mission degree programs at the graduate and postgraduate levels
- Collaboration with evangelicals in mission is prioritized over ecumenical engagement

## **Taber Model**

- Focus on aligning ourselves with the Kingdom of God and joining in the *missio Dei*
- Dynamic Translation of the Gospel
- Missiology should be evident in the entire seminary curriculum because missiology is the mother of theology
- The study of missiology within all the seminary disciplines
- Professor of Mission should work in concert with Biblical Studies and Theology faculty
- Focus on understanding culture and contextual translatability
- Missionary best prepared with biblical studies, theology, and social sciences together
- No need for new schools or even mission degree programs at the graduate or postgraduate levels
- Ecumenical collaboration with all Christians in mission is prioritized over sectarian divisions

These two models are not exhaustive and they also are in danger of reifying models that were never meant to be models. Yet these two models do provide some key differences in approaches not only to missiology, but also in the education of missionaries. These two models are both influential in missiological education in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ institutions surveyed. While the McGavran model seems to have had the most influence on current mission and intercultural studies programs, continued value might also be found in the Taber model. I will return to this issue after a summary of findings in the survey of missions and intercultural studies degree programs.

## **A Brief Survey of Christian Church/ Church of Christ Missions and ICS Programs**

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What sort of training best prepares a cross-cultural missionary? This is the question I've been concerned with since being invited to serve as the sole Intercultural Studies faculty at Hope International University in 2012. Not only was I asked to teach everything from cultural anthropology to language acquisition to world religions, but because I had recently finished my doctoral studies, I was asked to make revisions to the ICS degree program as I saw fit, a program that had changed only slightly from its original form in 1978. Changes that were made since 1978 seemed to imitate the ICS curriculum at the graduate level at Fuller Seminary, which was understandable, as the previous professors of mission before me had received their ICS degrees at Fuller in the 1980s and 1990s.

Tasked with making these curriculum changes, my own inclination was to use the coursework at Asbury Theological Seminary's ICS programs from recent years. Additionally, I began to survey the independent Christian church/churches of Christ institutions that had missions, cross-cultural ministry or intercultural studies programs listed among their majors. Twenty institutions were identified with missions/intercultural studies programs that traditionally identify with the independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

The requirements, curriculum, and faculty for seven types of degree programs (3 undergraduate programs and 4 graduate programs) were examined from the following institutions:

1. Boise Bible College
2. Central Christian College of the Bible
3. Cincinnati Bible Seminary
4. Cincinnati Christian University
5. Dallas Christian College
6. Emmanuel Christian Seminary
7. Great Lakes Christian College
8. Hope International University
9. Johnson University
10. Kentucky Christian University
11. Lincoln Christian Seminary
12. Lincoln Christian University
13. Louisville Bible College
14. Manhattan Christian College
15. Mid Atlantic Christian University
16. Milligan College
17. Nebraska Christian College
18. Ozark Christian College
19. Point University
20. St. Louis Christian College

### **Accreditation of Mission/ICS degree programs:**

- 13 out of 20 have regional accreditation
- Seven are ABHE accredited only
- All four MDiv programs are regionally and ABHE accredited. Three out of four MDiv programs are ATS accredited. The one MDiv program that is completely online is not yet ATS accredited.

For many of the smaller institutions that began in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the explicit goal of ministerial training for churches, accreditation was not initially an issue. This is especially true for institutions that have served the congregationally - oriented independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ that rarely require an MDiv for ministerial ordination or consideration as a candidate for paid ministry positions. Over time, for the institutions that have grown from Bible colleges, to liberal arts colleges, to universities with multiple colleges, accreditation has been an important element in continuing to attract new students and ensure a level of quality and academic rigor.

Three institutions have had MDiv programs since their inception as an institution: Cincinnati Bible Seminary, Emmanuel Christian Seminary, and Lincoln Christian Seminary. These three MDiv programs are accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. A fourth institution, Hope International University, has recently added a regionally accredited, completely online MDiv program, building on its 20 years of experience with online programs and recognizing the need for continuing education of ministers in fulltime positions. ATS does not at this time accredit online MDiv programs in which more than 2/3 of the coursework is online.

Both Taber and McGavran worked for institutions that maintained regional accreditation and sought the highest qualified faculty available to fill open positions as their colleagues. Taber encouraged all students considering long - term cross - cultural ministry to complete the MDiv

degree in which 15 of the 90 semester hours could be focused on missiology. McGavran not only encouraged pre-field training through study at the School of World Mission, but worked for Fuller to become the institution of choice for furloughing and mid-career missionaries to continue their missiological education and research.

Faculty in Mission/ICS Degree Programs:

Full-time Mission/ICS faculty: 25

Holding a terminal missiology/ICS degree (either DMiss or PhD ICS): 8

Highest degree and awarding institution:

DMiss, Asbury Theological Seminary	MDiv, Lincoln Christian Seminary (3)
PhD, ICS, Asbury Theological Seminary	PhD, ICS, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
DMiss, Biola	DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
MA, Columbia Seminary	PhD, ICS, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
MDiv, Emmanuel Christian Seminary	MMin, Trinity Theological Seminary
DMin, Emmanuel Christian Seminary	PhD, New Testament, Union Theological Seminary
MA, Fuller Theological Seminary	MA, Sociology, University of Cincinnati
PhD, ICS, Fuller Theological Seminary (2)	MS, Foreign Languages, University of Tennessee
PhD, Linguistics, Indiana University	MA, Linguistics, University of Texas
MA, Johnson University	DMin, Westminster Theological Seminary
MA, Lincoln Christian Seminary (2)	

With as many fulltime missions/ICS faculty, it is surprising that only eight hold terminal degrees in missions and ICS. In institutions following a McGavran model of specialization and separate programs for ICS, it would seem that as faculty retire in these programs, more candidates holding the PhD in Intercultural Studies will be considered and hired. It is surprising, yet reassuring to find 16 out of the 25 faculty holding degrees from institutions outside of the Stone-Campbell church movement.

It is consistent with a Taber model to find that in the two institutions in which he had the most influence, Milligan College and Emmanuel Christian Seminary, the missions professors hold a PhD in Linguistics and a PhD in New Testament. Both have served as Bible translators and translation consultants, as Taber had before serving as faculty.

Names of Specific Degree Programs:

**BA/BS in Christian Ministry (Bible/ministry) with a concentration or major or minor in Missions/ICS:**

1. Boise Bible College
2. Central Christian College of the Bible
3. Cincinnati Christian University
4. Dallas Christian College
5. Great Lakes Christian College
6. Kentucky Christian University
7. Louisville Bible College
8. Manhattan Christian College
9. Milligan College (the Missions major concentration is a Bible/Ministry major with 6 units of Mission courses and 18 units of a sociology minor)
10. Ozark Christian College
11. Point University

**BA in Intercultural Studies (multiple concentrations):**

1. Hope International University
2. Johnson University
3. Lincoln Christian University

**BA/BS in Cross-Cultural Ministry:**

1. Mid Atlantic Christian University

**BA in World Missions:**

1. Nebraska Christian College

**BA/BS in Intercultural and Urban Missions:**

1. St. Louis Christian College

**BA in Cross-Cultural Business Administration:**

1. Hope International University

**BA/BS in Cross-Cultural Media Communications:**

1. Johnson University

**BA/BS in Global Community Health:**

1. Johnson University

**MA in Intercultural Studies:**

1. Johnson University (ONLINE)
2. Lincoln Christian University

**MA in Ministry with ICS specialization/concentration:**

1. Hope International University (ONLINE)
2. Lincoln Christian University (ONLINE)

**MAR Leadership Studies: Urban and Intercultural Ministry:**

1. Cincinnati Bible Seminary

**MDiv with concentration/specialization in Christian World Mission/Intercultural Studies:**

1. Cincinnati Bible Seminary
2. Emmanuel Christian Seminary
3. Hope International University (ONLINE)
4. Lincoln Christian Seminary (HYBRID: up to 2/3 online)

Nomenclature in these programs displays a shifting that has progressed in many institutions from “missions” to “cross-cultural ministry” to “intercultural studies.” Some institutions, including where I teach, previously even used the term “church growth” in their ministry and missions degrees.

Tracking Fuller’s School of World Missions (and Institute of Church Growth), we find that while Fuller was among the first to transition to degrees in intercultural studies, the name of the school itself did not incorporate the term until much later than some other institutions. A timeline of some of some of the nomenclature changes is provided by Charles Kraft (Kraft 2005:237-239). I have added key dates for Asbury Theological Seminary and Biola for comparison.

1965: McGavran and Tippet are the founding dean and faculty of the School of World Missions and Institute of Church Growth.

1975: Fuller launches a cross-cultural studies program.

1976: Fuller begins to offer a PhD in Missiology.

- 1981: Fuller begins to offer a PhD in Intercultural Studies
- 1983: Biola launches the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, offering the PhD in ICS
- 1983: Asbury Theological Seminary began the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism offering the PhD in ICS
- 1991: Fuller offers a new curriculum, containing 15 concentrations in Missiology.
- 2003: The Fuller School of World Mission is renamed the School of Intercultural Studies.

My own current institution, Hope International University, in the shadow of both Fuller and Biola, closely followed Fuller Seminary's pattern. Cross-Cultural Missions was a concentration in a BA in Ministry and Church Growth, until a major revision beginning in the fall of 1994 dropped the use of the term Church Growth and a BA in Intercultural Studies began. Further highlighting the influence of McGavran on HIUs programs, when Pacific Christian College reorganized as five colleges and changed its name to Hope International University in 1997, *Donald A. McGavran University* was a serious name being suggested by the president and the Board of Trustees.

Other recent nomenclature changes in missions and ICS programs are notable and may be pointing to a further continuing trend. In the fall of 2015, Moody Bible Institute will officially change the name of its "mission" program to "Intercultural Studies." Multnomah University announced in March 2015 that they are changing their "Intercultural Studies" nomenclature to "Global Studies." These two name changes are significant through the lenses of McGavran and Taber models.

On the one hand, the largest Bible colleges in the nation are now following in the McGavran model of specialized programs in intercultural studies. While in many institutions this change is touted as necessary to reflect the varied opportunities available to graduates with a degree in "intercultural studies," as opposed to a degree in the more colonially termed "mission," it still points to a very specialized evangelical Christian view of educational preparation for those called to minister interculturally. On the other hand, the shift to "global studies," "area studies," or even

“international relations,” not only recognizes that there are already fields of study within the academy at the undergraduate level that provide the social scientific perspective needed for intercultural ministry, but also that these fields truly provide a degree that is multi-faceted and not specifically identified as Christian. This would be a more thoroughly Taber model at the undergraduate level. Even in the undergraduate institution where Taber last taught more than 30 years ago, Milligan College, a ministry student with a desire to concentrate in Christian Missions completes the Bible/Ministry major, two 3 unit missions courses (Introduction to Christian Mission and History of Christian Mission), and a 18 unit minor in Sociology. It is expected that the student will then attend seminary to further prepare for ministry.

One final category from the research will be examined to reveal more of McGavran and Taber models in our undergraduate and graduate institutions.

Number of semester units/hours required for program completion:

- Most undergraduate missions/ICS programs are 120-130 semester hours/units
- Exceptions: Three are over 130 hours because of large Bible coursework requirements: Central Christian College of the Bible: 138 hours (54 hours of Bible); Louisville Bible College: 140 hours (51 hours of Bible); Mid Atlantic Christian University: 137 hours (50 hours of Bible)
- Most undergraduate missions/ICS concentrations require significant biblical studies semester units/hours:
  - About 30 units of Biblical Studies required
  - 4 programs are 45 units or higher
  - 2 programs are under 25 units of biblical studies:
    - One is 21, the other is 12 units, which is the lowest requirement.

- Undergraduate missions/ICS specific major coursework unit/hour requirements:
  - Undergraduate: 9, 12 (2), 16, 17 (2), 18 (3) 21, 22, 24, 30, 33 (2) 36 (2), 37, 39
  - Graduate: 15 (3), 12, 36

While graduate programs incorporating intercultural studies are fairly standardized, with MDiv concentrations maxing at 12-15 units and most MA ICS programs at 36 units, undergraduate programs vary significantly in category, both in the number of biblical studies requirements and in the number of ICS/missions specific course requirements. Again, this points to programs and institutions that are following different models. In general, larger numbers of units in biblical studies seem to be a carryover of the particular identities of institutions that began as Bible colleges. Lower numbers of biblical studies requirements are found in both institutions that have either never identified as Bible colleges or have transitioned their missions/ICS programs into separate tracks and schools from ministry and biblical studies degrees. Through my McGavran and Taber model lenses, the higher the number of required ICS specific courses in an undergraduate program, the more the program fits into the McGavran model of missiological education.

## **Conclusions? Pulled in Two Directions**

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The more I look over the survey of the mission/ICS programs in these 20 institutions through the lenses of the McGavran and Taber models, the more I am pulled in two directions. In some ways, these models represent deep institutional identities, convictions, and priorities. While one could critique the McGavran model of missiological education as increasingly disconnected from biblical scholarship and theology or of providing a limited Christian application of the social sciences, this represents a particularly evangelical conviction for engaging in effective mission in all contexts of the world. Likewise, the Taber model of missiological education can be critiqued as being susceptible to a view of mission that is overly inclusive of all activity as mission and allows the social sciences to

overly influence theological vision, yet this represents a more universally Christian perspective of our participation in the growth of the Kingdom of God, sometimes in unquantifiable ways.

In the Stone-Campbell movement, we see a stronger emphasis on mission majors and degree programs in those institutions that began as small Bible colleges in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The older institutions that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are more focused on commonly found social science majors for those interested in cross-cultural ministry or mission training. These majors include sociology, religious studies, and global studies. Again, these appear to be related to particular institutional identities.

This reveals a pattern of institutions that began as Bible colleges to have included some sort of concentration/emphasis or degree in missions early on in the institution's history. Many of these institutions began in the early 1900's and were started in reaction to what was viewed as liberalism in biblical interpretation and biblical criticism in the more well-established American universities and seminaries.

The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ institutions followed in this pattern. As the Stone-Campbell unity movement began to divide in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the more formalized churches identified with the structured denomination: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These churches continued to rely on the older Stone-Campbell training institutions: Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Butler School of Religion (now Christian Theological Seminary) in Indianapolis, Lexington Theological Seminary, KY, and at the Disciples Divinity Houses in the Divinity Schools of University of Chicago, Vanderbilt, and Yale.

In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) affiliated colleges and universities, all started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or modeled after the older institutions, not a single institution has a missions/intercultural studies major at the undergraduate level, yet most have international studies or global studies, neither of which has an expressed intent for preparing graduates for intercultural Christian ministry. The vast majority do not have a Bible/Ministry major. Those who are interested in pursuing a seminary degree in preparation for ministry are best suited by an undergraduate degree in religion. Indeed, ministerial ordination in this now mainline denominational church requires an MDiv. Yet, the very inclusive view of mission in the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) is not one that many in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ find consistent with a more evangelistic vision.

Certainly there are answers beyond a ‘mission is evangelism,’ ‘mission is everything’ debate. How can we move forward? We need to look closely at each other’s programs and begin a process of identifying what our priorities are. What’s missing? What is there that is no longer relevant? Should we be creating more schools of World Mission, or should we seek to add mission into more of our other programs? Or, is there a way to accomplish both?

One missing piece of the puzzle is a long term look at the outcomes of the programs surveyed. What are graduates actually doing with their degrees? How many are serving in traditional cross-cultural ministry contexts? How many are doing something else? Are significant numbers of graduates of undergraduate intercultural studies programs using their education in fields other than church supported ministries?

Unlike many academic disciplines, there is not a standard model for academic programs in missiology and intercultural studies. It would seem that part of the ongoing calling and mission of an organization called the Association of Professors of Mission would be to continue to research, study and compare more of our institutions and programs. Would it not be beneficial for our organization to even provide guidance, resources and suggestions in this area? Could a basic standard curriculum be suggested for the undergraduate level? Or, would the suggestion be that an undergraduate level of study in missions/intercultural studies must not be proliferated or encouraged, but that emerging Bible colleges and small Christian universities should add sociology, anthropology or global studies departments to serve the needs of those students preparing to serve interculturally? These are questions for a broader discussion, a discussion that I hope the contribution of this paper will ignite by providing us with two missiological models that will help us sharpen the focus of our missiological educational priorities.

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## Appendix A: Missions and Intercultural Studies Programs in 20 Independent Christian Church/Churches of Christ Institutions:

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1. BA/BS in Christian Ministry (Bible/ministry) with a concentration or major or minor in ICS:

Institution                      Accreditation    Total Units    Bib Studies    ICS units    Internship?

Boise Bible College	ABHE	128	45	16	2-4 units STM and 8-12 weeks
Central Christian College of the Bible	ABHE	138	54	22	3 units= 300 hours
Cincinnati Christian University	Regional, ABHE	120	33	18	9 units= 7 months or 3 months + practicum class
Dallas Christian College	ABHE	129	21	12	3 units
Great Lakes Christian College	Regional, ABHE	130 (BS only)	44	37	3 unit= 12 weeks

Kentucky Christian University	Regional	121	63 (includes ministry units)	9	12 units = 6-8 months
Louisville Bible College	ABHE	140	51	21	2 units of missions internship
Manhattan Christian College	Regional, ABHE	125	30	12 (emphasis), 6 (track)	
Milligan College	Regional	128	12	24 (6+18 unit Sociology minor)	2-4 units= 2 month internship
Ozark Christian College	ABHE	128	57	30	4 units
Point University	Regional	124	39	17	Flexible

## 2. BA in Intercultural Studies:

Institution      Accreditation      Total Units      Bib Studies      ICS units      Internship?

Hope International University	Regional, ABHE	120	30	33	1 unit= 8-12 months + 6 units of practicum classes
Johnson University	Regional, ABHE	120	33	18-30 (depends on concentration)	3 units= summer internship

Lincoln Christian University	Regional, ABHE	130	30	39	12 units= Semester long, 4 units= 2 months
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BA/BS in Cross-Cultural Ministry:

Institution                      Accreditation Total Units Bib Studies ICS units Internship?

Mid Atlantic Christian University	Regional	137	50	36	6 credits, flexible
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BA in World Missions:

Institution                      Accreditation Total Units Bib Studies ICS units Internship?

Nebraska Christian College	ABHE	138	38	24	12 units= 1 semester outside the US
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3. Other Specialized BA Programs:

BA/BS in Intercultural and Urban Missions:

Institution                      Accreditation Total Units Bib Studies ICS units Internship?

St. Louis Christian College	ABHE	127	42	18	3 units. Flexible.
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## BA in Cross-Cultural Business Administration:

Institution                  Accreditation    Total Units    Bib Studies    ICS units                  Internship?

Hope International University	Regional	122	18	ICS: 12-21 Bus/Mgt: 36-45	3 units
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## BA/BS in Cross-Cultural Media Communications:

Institution                  Accreditation    Total Units    Bib Studies    ICS units                  Internship?

Johnson University	Regional, ABHE	122	30	ICS: 18 Media Comm: 21	3 units
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## BA/BS in Global Community Health:

Institution                  Accreditation    Total Units    Bib Studies    ICS units                  Internship?

Johnson University	Regional	129	30	ICS: 18 Public Health: 29	3 units
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## 4. MA in Intercultural Studies:

Institution                  Accreditation                  Total Units                  Internship?

Johnson University (ONLINE)	Regional, ABHE	36-48 (depends on concentration)	3 unit integrative project
Lincoln Christian University	Regional, ABHE	36	

5. MA in Ministry with ICS specialization/concentration:

Institution	Accreditation	Total Units	Bib Studies	ICS units	Internship?
Hope International University (ONLINE)	Regional, ABHE	42	18	12	Final Project
Lincoln Christian University (ONLINE)	Regional, ABHE, ATS	36	6	9	3 units

6. MAR Leadership Studies: Urban and Intercultural Ministry:

Institution	Accreditation	Total Units	ICS units
Cincinnati Bible Seminary	ATS	54	15

7. MDiv with concentration/specialization in Christian World Mission/ Intercultural Studies:

Institution	Accreditation	Total Units	ICS units
Cincinnati Bible Seminary	Regional, ATS	90	15
Emmanuel Christian Seminary	Regional, ATS	90	15
Hope International University (ONLINE)	Regional, ABHE	72	12
Lincoln Christian Seminary (HYBRID: up to 2/3 online)	Regional, ABHE, ATS	75	15

## **APPENDIX B: Abnormal and Common Courses in Undergraduate ICS and Missions Degree Programs.**

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Abnormal undergraduate courses (courses occurring three times or less in the programs curriculum lists)

- Language Acquisition (1)
- World Geography (1)
- Church in Context / Contextualization (2)
- Missiology (1)
- Evangelism (1)
- Church Growth (0)
- Spiritual Conflict / Spiritual Warfare (2)
- Intro to Islam (1) / History of Islam (1)
- Cross-Cultural Counseling (1)
- Cross-Cultural Psychology (1)
- Latin American Cultures (1)
- Business as Mission (1)
- Linguistics (1)
- TESOL (3)
- Race and Ethnicity (2)
- Sociology of Religion (1)
- Sociology of Family (1)
- Dynamics of Culture Change (1)
- Community Development (2)
- Mission Administration (1)
- Short - Term Mission Trip Leadership

Common Undergraduate Courses (courses occurring in more than 5 programs):

- Foundations or Introduction to Missions, Christian World Mission
- Cultural Anthropology/Cultural Anthropology for Ministry/Applied Anthropology
- Living and Working Cross-Culturally, Strategies for Mission
- Intercultural Communication
- Urban Ministry
- World Religions/Comparative Religions
- Research Methods
- Contemporary Mission Methods
- Biblical Theology of Mission
- History of Mission
- World Christian Movements (Perspectives course outline)

