

Theology and Disciplines of the Foreign Services:

The World's Potential to Contribute to the Church

By Theodore L. Lewis

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It has been a pleasure to know Ted Lewis over a period of over 20 years. He has been a regular visitor to Ridley Hall as well as Wycliffe Hall during that time. One can only commend an American visitor who feels such a sense of commitment and loyalty to both these theological educational institutions.


Ted is an unusual person. His career has pursued two parallel tracks, one his work in the US foreign service – spanning assignments in Vietnam, Korea, Laos and the Congo – and the other theology and ordination. He has not enjoyed an easy life. There have been many setbacks, struggles and vicissitudes in both areas. His wife left him, he fell out with his incumbent and he got panned by a supervisor. He admits that he has often been on the receiving end of unfavourable reports, some in his view deserved, others not.

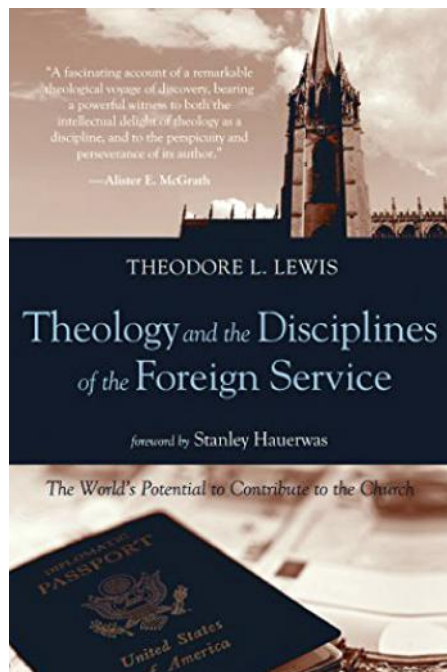
But Ted has the virtue of perseverance, an attribute he demonstrates in spades. He has persisted with both of his callings, endeavoured to be of service through them, and made some fruitful connections between them. Ted makes an interesting comparison between the discipline of biblical criticism and the in-depth analysis of a country's social, economic and political realities involved in work for the foreign service. He is a man who digs beneath the surface, whether that is the text of the Bible or the culture of a particular country. So he sees

some interesting similarities regarding the work he has done as a priest on the one hand and an officer on the other. There is almost something prophetic about the way the foreign service deals with the ambitions and apprehensions of nations.

Ted has already written an interesting and radical perspective on church history, *To Restore the Church*. Now in his old age, Ted has written an account of his life, *Theology and the Disciplines of the Foreign Service*. He has been encouraged to do so by two eminent theologians, Alister McGrath and Stanley Hauerwas; the latter has written an appreciative foreword, rightly describing Ted as a 'modest man with a fierce intelligence'. Ted has told the story of his life in a way that is deeply reflective, which is constantly musing critically – and self-critically – on what was going on.

It may seem strange to review this book in a journal on business. But there are plenty of parallels between business and the foreign service, and

Ted often writes about economic issues in his observations on the countries where he worked. In Saigon his main task was to monitor the supplies of pork. I think Ted's book is a model for the kind of reflection I would like to see many businesspeople undertaking when they retire: seeking to make sense of their work and life under God. 



Richard Higginson is Director of Faith in Business, Lecturer in Christian Ethics at Ridley Hall and co-editor of this journal.