

Addis Ababa Bible Training Institute Report

The Law of Unintended Consequences



All students, no matter when, where, or what course of study, represent an investment in the future. But that future is always unknown – except to God Himself. These two Graduates of Bible Training Schools in Africa (not the AABTI) are representative of that unknown future. On the left in the picture above is “I.D.” who is a Graduate of a Bible Training Program in Uyo, Nigeria. I.D. is now a student at “Ethiopian Airways Aviation University” in Addis Ababa and is studying Aviation Maintenance. He is sponsored by a new Nigerian Airline in Southeast Nigeria. “I.D.” and I share an interest in Aviation but also share interest together in the work in Nigeria and common brethren from my distant past time at Nigerian Christian Hospital. In the middle is Desmond who is a Graduate of a SIBI affiliated Bible Training School in Buea, Cameroon. The two of us share a love of science and medicine. He has a master’s in microbiology and is finishing work on his Doctoral Thesis on the Genetics of Tuberculosis in both the organism and its hosts. He has been in Ethiopia doing advanced Genomics research on TB. We also share a love for the work in Cameroon through my wife Deborah’s work in a nearby community in Cameroon for two years in 1972.

These two continue their love for and service to the Lord through their current career paths. They are both a joy to be with and will likely have great opportunities for service in the Kingdom through the years to come.

But what of the “Law of Unintended Consequences?” This comes from the potential for their and every student’s impact on future generations. A powerful illustration of this comes from the life of a 12-year-old Chinese “Cabin Boy” on

a Chinese junk who jumped ship in Indonesia in the 1880's. Charlie Soong (his assumed Western name), ended up on a British merchant vessel and a year or so later was on an American merchant vessel captained by a Methodist from Wilmington, North Carolina. This captain recognized in Charlie great intellect and talent. The Methodist congregation in Wilmington sent Charlie to both Duke and Vanderbilt Seminary and Charlie excelled and graduated in his late teens. He was then posted by the Methodists to Shanghai, China. His story is told well by Sterling Seagrave in his book, "The Soong Dynasty" which is available on Amazon as a Kindle book. Charlie's story is told differently in the book versus the Wikipedia article. Anyone interested in Missions should consider reading about him.

The "Law of Unintended Consequences" is seen in Charlie's success in life. He fathered six children. His 3 daughters became incredibly prominent figures in the history of China. One was the wife of "Sun Yat-sen," the revolutionary that was instrumental in releasing China from the oppressive imperial power of the "Dragon Lady" Dowager Empress of China. He was also the first President of the Republic of China. Another daughter became the wife of Chiang Kai Shek, the leader of the Nationalist Chinese Government which was the progenitor of the current government of Taiwan. And the other daughter became a Bolshevik in Russia and returned to China in the mid 1920's and spent the rest of her life with Mao Zedong's government. She was a high cabinet minister in Mao's government even up to the time of Nixon's rapprochement with China. One of Charlie's sons was the first head of the Nationalist Bank of China (Taiwan).

The prominence and success of Charlie and his children are impressive, but the question comes when considering the impact of their Biblical training. Apart from their denominational affiliation, it is also notable that none of the family sustained the original purposes of the Methodist congregation, though the extent to which Charlie and his family's work with the Methodist church continued is not well noted in Sterling Seagrave's work. What do we learn from this interesting story? I believe it is the lesson from the "Law of Unintended Consequences" which is that it is very easy to be distracted from God's "Kingdom Purposes." All of us must be daily attentive to God's purposes for our lives. We should maintain a clear focus on God's word and His messages to His people throughout the Biblical record. The "Law of Unintended Consequences" almost always results in something different from God's original purposes for us. With faithful service, though, it can result in great Kingdom results.

Seeking to Remember "His Purposes,"

Jim Wilson and the Students of AABTI