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# Connections

*The Journal of the WEA Mission Commission*

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Reflections from South Africa Summit



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## From my corner...

Holy Ground – was the experience of Moses when he saw the burning bush while tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro in the desert near Horeb. Africa, Middle East – holy ground – in the preparation for God's plan for his life. It was the presence of the Lord that made the ground holy not the geographical site in itself. The burning bush attracted Moses' attention but he was invited to focus on the Lord and His call and plan, not on the external phenomena.

Brazil is full of religiosity in good competition with India and other centres of world religions. God is Brazilian, is a common affirmation in this country, as an excuse for all sorts of illegal actions and last-minute solutions. The biggest Catholic country, the largest community of Spiritualists and the third Evangelical Church in the world, are some of the qualifications. Other religious groupings are also present, mainly through immigration with one of the more important Jewish communities, 2 million Buddhists, 1 million Muslims, etc.



*Bertil Ekström  
Executive Director*

Do all these make the ground holy? I am not sure. Back in Brazil after a year in the UK, I wonder if there are too many "burning bushes" without the presence of the Lord. And that is true also for the Evangelical churches. They are still growing fast but without impacting society in a positive way. Political scandals often involve representatives of Evangelical communities. Indexes of injustice, criminality and violence are as high as ever, in spite of all the apparent religiosity and professed

spirituality. The expected "prophetic voice" is frequently neutralised by immorality and omission in critical issues by our Christian leadership.

Personally I think it is the picture of our world today. With important exceptions, Christians have a hard time to live out their faith in a practical way. The lack of coherence between our good biblical theory and our daily action, both as individuals and as communities, is the greatest challenge of our days. It is many times easier to walk around in high-heeled shoes, thinking that we are important and self-sufficient, than to take off the sandals in recognition of our sinfulness and total dependency on God.

South Africa was a holy ground for us in the Mission Commission for a week in June. I believe all who attended the consultation at the Goudini Spa, outside Cape Town, felt the presence of the Lord. We wished there had been more of "burning bushes" – it was really cold during the nights. But nobody could miss the warm atmosphere of fellowship and the effects of God's manifestation. As I said during the transition ceremony, Africa has become a holy ground for me and a real blessing in my life. The challenge of "coming to Jesus" before thinking in "going out", transmitted by Bishop Niringiye from Uganda, reinforced this need for close relationship with the Master in order to be faithful to Him, His call and His standards for our lives.

My prayer is that you and I can keep the intimacy with God that makes us focus in Him and not on ourselves or on external factors. When we start believing that we can survive as Christians based on titles, diplomas, people's recognition or spiritual routines, then we are in real danger. The only guarantee for success in Moses' life and ministry was God's promise: I will be with you! <<

## PRESS RELEASE ON NEW STAFF OF THE WEA MISSION COMMISSION

**David Ruiz** (Guatemala) is the newest fulltime staff member of the WEA Mission Commission. After some months of conversation and prayer, he was formally invited by the new Executive Director and presented to the MC consultation in South Africa in June of this year.

Since 2000, David has been International President of COMIBAM International (The Ibero-American Missionary Cooperation), and from 1996-2000 he was COMIBAM's Executive Director. He continues as International Coordinator for The Great Commission Roundtable (GCR), a forum that has convened some of the larger and more representative networks and mission organizations at regional, functional and international levels around the globe. In his COMIBAM role he was a member of the Global Leadership Council of the Mission Commission. Prior to that he served for 11 years as Pastor at Centro Biblico El Camino, an interdenominational church in Guatemala City. During those years, he played an active role in the development of the Guatemalan National Missionary Movement and became its National Coordinator. He is one of the founders of the Missions Education Centre for Central America—CEMCA—the first center for cross cultural studies in Guatemala. In 1996, he left the pastorate to serve full time in COMIBAM's ministry. His personal training was as a business administrator with 14 years of experience in the private sector of his country and Central America. David is married to Dora Amalia and they live in Guatemala City with their three children, Andrea (19), David (17) and Iliá Marcela (15).

With 15 years of mission experience, David's main role in the MC will focus on developing national and regional mission movements and the network of mission leaders from the global South. In September 2006, he and his wife will live in the UK for a year of missiological studies at All Nations Christian College.

**Younoussa Djao** (Ivory Coast) has also been invited to serve in the MC as the Coordinator of the African Vision Project with special focus on the Francophone countries. Younoussa will dedicate part-time to this function alongside his work with City Team International.

Younoussa was born into a Fulani, Muslim home. He came to faith during his university studies. He is married to Alphonsine and they have three children. Since 1989, both have ministered in Sub-Saharan Africa. After a ministry of church planting amongst Muslims in Cote d'Ivoire, they both earned their Master of Theology degrees from Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, in Central Africa Republic. Younoussa has served with INTERDEV and today is City Team Ministries International's regional coordinator for Francophone Western and Central Africa. They are also associate missionaries with SIM-Côte d'Ivoire. He is MANI regional coordinator for Francophone West Africa, a member of the Interdev Partners Associate team, and a member of WEA/MC Exco.

*Bertil Ekström, Executive Director of the WEA Mission Commission  
Campinas, Brazil*

# WEA MC - Post South African Challenge of the Changeover -

## Are we going to survive?

### The Change over - its Joys, Questions and the Out-workings:

Someone asked me during the MC meeting at Cape Town, South Africa if the WEA MC is going to be as good and wonderful as it "was" with the new leadership change. This thought has never crossed my mind as the leadership change of the WEA MC was meticulously, deliberately and, over a period of

time, thought through following the request from Dr. William Taylor for succession. The Global Leadership Council has worked very hard praying, listing criteria for the new leader, and exploring the possibilities of several candidates from across the world, while keeping in mind the gender balances, the global scenario, the emerging world and several other factors. I am thrilled that the

changeover has not taken place haphazardly but with much thought and prayer. Consequently, we have not doubted the plan for changeover and the person for new leadership for WEA MC. There was much harmony and understanding as we moved forward and change over culminated in Cape Town, South Africa.

*K. Rajendran, India*

With many confirmations of the process, many days of meeting and hundreds of pages of correspondence and prayers from around the world for the right person were answered. We looked for a leader who will be able to relate to the complex mosaic of the world races without bias, a person who would know how to encourage the teams of MC Associates in the primary task of presenting Christ to the world, a person who has been an ambassador for Christ in cross-cultural situation and a person who could connect to the rest of the world in meaningful ways. This has resulted in the change over of the leadership of the WEA MC from Dr. William Taylor to Rev. (Dr.) Bertil Ekström.

Changeover is needed but abhorred by many as it brings confusion and new modes to the "done" things. New ways of relating, new correspondence, new systems and the umpteen other things altered make life uncomfortable and unstable, at least for a time. However, change and changeover is needed for moving forward. Therefore, the following challenges have to be kept in mind when a change over of leadership takes place.



Bertil Ekström has vouched to try live up to the expectations of many in the MC world. However, he has to live up between three areas to balance; expectations of others (including the insiders), taking the movement forward and trying to do what is possible even in difficult situations such as limited personnel and funding, and having the physical and mental energies to cope with all demands.

One frustrating thing for the new leader will be the undue comparison of many to the leader of the past. Bertil has to be aware but not really bother with it except to do the best in all situations as Bertil Ekström. It may take a year or a few years to stamp the way the Lord will use him.

The job of the total MC Associates, the Executive Global Leadership Council, the previous leader (Dr. William Taylor) and the other staff of the WEA and the MC is to stand around him and protect him as true prayer partners, well-wishers and as a team in order to help the new leader to succeed, affect the movement of the Mission Commission and become a positive model for the rest of the successions to follow in the mission world. I believe that we have worked through a lot of these issues before and during the leadership changeover and I personally vouch to continue to support what the Lord will do through the WEA MC for world missions.

Many would continue to address issues to the previous leader. Dr. Taylor has to sensitively pass them back to the new leader to make sure that he is supported. Bertil may do things differently and that has to be borne by the rest who were used to a different style and type of leadership. Dr. Taylor and Bertil are aware of these issues and are trusting that the Lord will continue to give them the grace they both need to succeed in the process.

The financial burden, at times, could bog the new leader down in many ways to hinder the momentum in the movement. All involved need to become ambassadors in finding the resources for the cause of world missions through the MC.

Apart from all these there will be much to be done to see the vision matched with the right personnel and the resources.

Dr. William Taylor becomes an Ambassador-at-large to support the MC and speak for the missions movement on behalf of the WEA. I am confident that his wide

understanding, his capacity to encourage and relate to people from across the world in all genders and ages - especially the youth- will become a model. We will trust that some of his experiences and thoughts would be put to paper and published in many ways. We will trust that adequate funding will help these ventures. Our prayers, blessings and best wishes on the new journey of Dr. Taylor.

### The Vision to be matched with the Task:

In new leadership vision, energy and resource building have to be kept in balance. Some have large visions and are able to see what should happen but they completely fail to muster the required human support. Thus, they end up with huge useless buildings and palaces, "haunted by the spirits". Some with big visions are able to muster the men and women to follow, but lack financial substance to keep the momentum going. Thus, the vision has to be matched with human and financial resources.

Building personnel to do something will bring thrust to the movement for which God has called us in the MC. Organising the horses to pull the cart together in the right direction needs thought, skillfulness and wisdom - especially in the cases of International / global movements where the horses are based in different locations of the world with many other differences is going to be an interesting exercise. Often, keeping them together in vision and in understanding is equally as hard as hiring them. The new visionary leadership should not forget to build a host of others who might not be in the "staff" category of the organisation. It takes more energy to motivate and mobilize the "non-staff" as the inside "staff". Much energy goes to mentor people who will become the movers and shakers of the world with an energized vision. If this type of mentoring is not done, the change becomes a hierarchical statuesque and the movement goes into maintenance rather than dynamic movement.

### Vision has to match with the Regional and National Missions' Movements and keeping them together moving in the same direction.

Vision is kept alive with continuous and relevant communication with others involved. The regional and national mission movements have constantly connected with the many networks and docked identities of the WEA MC to affect the world in unison for Christ.

In the process of change, the competing internal and external forces have to be watched or else there will be divisions in the constituency. We have several international players who claim and vouch for the same constituency. If these world bodies do not understand and cooperate, they would create confusion and divisions with their own hand-picked regional and national leaders, as in the case of an umpteen number of Protestant denominations across the world based on cultural and petty theological characteristics of the missionaries from where they have originated. These "anointed" local and regional leaders make the other local leaders guilty by singing the songs of disunity just because of other "anointed" have not joined their view of philosophy or personality led cults.

Keeping of the Global South and North united in the midst of stronger opinions, economical dominance and powers is going to be a great challenge.

Recognising and merging relevant innovative ways of moving the world to follow Christ with the 2000 years of mission ruts and baggage - including the 250 years of Protestant & Evangelical baggage - is going to be great challenge.

May God give the strength as the WEA MC GLC (Global Leadership Team) and the wider body of the MC Associates support the changes in the WEA MC as we stand around the new WEA MC leader, Bertil Ekström, to the cause of presenting Christ to the world in meaningful and relevant ways for which we are committed. <<



From June 18-24, the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission met in the Cape Town area for SA06—a global summit on select mission issues, with some 310 women and men, younger and older, from Global South and North, representing a great diversity of ministries. This is the first time we had met as a global body in Africa, and had sensed that we needed to be more involved in the missional work in and from this great continent. God in his own timing provided this opportunity with the signs of a Kairos moment for the Global South. SA06 participants represented the greatest balance of decadal groups—those in 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and the 60's. The youngest was 19 and our elder stateswoman was 85.

# A Review of SA06

The event would have been impossible without the commitment of the leadership and staff of both the World Mission Centre in Pretoria, under Willie and Lydia Crew, as well as Peter Tarantal and the OM South Africa team. Eddie Robinson as well as Henkie and Nerina Maritz of the WMC dedicated countless hours to make SA06 work. Only God knows how much that team invested—essentially some 30 people

gave two weeks of their lives to the MC. The WMC Live School missionary training curriculum gave us the carrying bags, William Crew and team handled all sound and video, and two training centres closed to serve us.

The MC convenes a global consultation every three years for mutual encouragement, growth in our understanding of the missional enterprise around the globe, dealing with glo-

bal issues and challenges, planning our joint work and strategies, and to become better equipped for our work. These consultations are issues-centered events with a strong training and planning component. While plenary sessions (40% of program time) focused on various global issues, all of our networks and task forces intentionally engaged in their own equipping and planning activities (60% of program time). We also attempt, albeit with limited success, to create sufficient “white space” in the program where people can meet each other, eat and drink, walk about, pray together, network and make significant connections for the future.

This was also our first convocation since completing the 2003-2004 re-envisioning process we had undertaken as a WEA commission. Now we were able to convene from a broader spectrum of associates, a greater number of docked entities, and opened the agenda in new ways. The program attempted to balance plenary sessions with ample time for the 12+ working teams.

We were deeply challenged by some specific sessions, especially the expositions by Bishop Zac David Niringiye of Uganda, South Africans Dr. and Mrs. Elijah Mahlangu on the HIV/AIDS crisis and response, Valdir Steuernagel of Brazil on wholistic mission, Reg Reimer on Religious Liberty, Younoussa Djao on Islam in Africa, and the younger leaders panel on Friday morning.

Midweek we celebrated the leadership transition, for after 20 years at the helm of



the MC, I was honoured to hand over to Bertil Ekström the direction of the Mission Commission. K Rajendran chaired the service, Rose Dowsett spoke on leadership change, and David Tai-Woong Lee led the dedication and charge. Canadian Geoff Tunnicliffe (WEA International Director) and South African Ndaba Mazabane (WEA International Chair) led the symbolic program segment with a ceremony to pass on the beautifully crafted Zulu wooden baton that moves into history with future MC leaders. Bertil and family returned in August to their home in Brazil. I now have a double role as Global Ambassador for both the MC and WEA and will serve Rose Dowsett in some areas of global missiology, though Yvonne and I have a passion to mentor younger mission leaders in our movement.

Two books manuscripts were finalized at SA06: “Integral Ministry Training: Design and Evaluation”, edited by Rob Brynjolfson and Jon Lewis; and Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention, edited by Rob Hay with Jaap Ketelaar and Sarah Hay. The first book should be released in November and the second in early 2007.

## What were some shortcomings of SA06?

Well, just read the 32 personal reflections in this issue of *Connections*, and you can discern many of them. Personally I believe we were short on prayer, not so much in the plenaries, but in other points of the week. We should have had a dedicated intercessor room close to both plenary and dining rooms for people to retreat to and seek God on behalf of so many issues. We needed more “white space” in the program. We needed more time to process the heavy and healing words from the Bible expositions. We also needed to control better the time given to plenary speakers, which would have allowed us to conclude earlier, especially in the night. It would have been so valuable to have time to witness the beauty of the Western Cape as well as to visit some of the vital ministries impacting all levels of society.

We perhaps could have chosen a week that did not compete with the World Cup!! But then, was it not a delight to watch all those teams play and realize that they were almost all represented at SA06? I sat next to Kees van der Wilden and Younoussa Djao whilst Holland played Ivory Coast and that was an experience in the Body of Christ!! We also know that a good number of our spiritu-

Bill Taylor,  
Ambassador at large

ally motivated participants slipped out early from the plenary to catch that one magnificent match.

We continue to pray for the 12 working teams and their ongoing vision and outcomes. We pray for Bertil and his growing staff team, so glad to welcome David Ruiz and Younoussa Djao into this group. We released Jon Lewis from staff after 14 years serving the MC and developing our publications and missionary training vision.

Listen to Bishop Zac's five challenging Biblical expositions on the WEA web site: [www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/mc/mc\\_southafrica/](http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/mc/mc_southafrica/).

Visit the MC site at: [www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/mc/](http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/mc/). Finally, be sure that you subscribe to “Connections: the Journal of the WEA Mission Commission”, with more information at [www.initialmedia.com/africa/WEA%20CONNECTIONS.doc](http://www.initialmedia.com/africa/WEA%20CONNECTIONS.doc).

So read this number of your journal with eagerness and care, a double issue that reports fully on the outcomes of SA06. Most of the articles come from the consultation, and a few were commissioned in light of our week together. <<



It was twenty years ago this month that a completely unexpected door opened before our family that led us into the marvelous adventure with World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance) and the Mission Commission.

How did the years pass so quickly? I'm reminded of the words from a song in the poignant and beautiful movie, "Fiddler on the Roof": "Sunrise, sunset, swiftly fly the years...one season following another, laden with happiness and tears." That indeed has been our journey: so rich, so hard, so fulfilling, so costly...ever undergirded by the faithfulness and sustaining mercy of God.

## Reflections from South Africa

In July of 1986, we had just finished a year of living and ministering in Deerfield, Illinois at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. It was an unbearably difficult year because we as a family were in the throes of grieving the loss of 17 years of life in our beloved Guatemala, having left that life in 1985.

Things happened during 1986 to each of our children and to us as we began the process of transition into the American culture that left us reeling emotionally and spiritually. We had just uprooted yet again and

were in the process of moving to Russellville, Arkansas, when Bill boarded a plane to Singapore at the invitation of our dear friend and WEF leader, David Howard, to the WEF 1986 General Assembly. Dave had invited Bill as an observer, but God had other plans!

I'll never forget receiving the long-distance phone call from Bill in which he told me that the WEF leadership had asked if he would accept their invitation to become the next Secretary (as the title was then) of the WEF Missions Commission! We had always processed major decisions together and the time frame was so short and Bill was so far away. We agreed that I would talk to the children, as they would be directly affected by this as well; and after all the hard losses, constant change and adjustments, it was important that their input be taken into consideration. After all, Bill had given up one of the greatest loves of his life—teaching and the opportunity to shape men and women for world mission (first, in Guatemala at the Central

American Theological Seminary and then in the USA at Trinity Seminary)—for the sake of our family who had suffered so much in the difficult transition from Guatemala to the USA. We discussed this new possibility and were trying to process what it might mean for all of us when Bill called again to say that *he had accepted the invitation!*



We were surprised and, at first, not entirely convinced that this was the right decision. But upon his return, as he talked and explained more fully what it would entail, we realized that this was a loving gift from God, returning some of all that he had "laid on the altar" in giving up Latin America and formal teaching. Dave Howard had wisely counseled us when we were trying to discern God's leading about whether to leave Trinity and go to a little church in a small town in Arkansas. He said that where there is a calling of God upon someone—in Bill's case, world mission—geography wasn't determinative and wouldn't shut the door forever. God hadn't forgotten Bill, would honor his sacrifice for his family...and, sure enough, a door to the world surprisingly and wondrously opened up even as we were heading into a place of hiddenness, far from the centers of the world mission enterprise.

The responsibilities with the Mission Commission began slowly and built gradually. At the time, Theodore Williams, the former Director, had handed over a few hand-written notes which pretty much represented the sum total of the "MC files"! From the very beginning we realized that God had chosen to give us the privilege of working with a group of men and women from around the world marked by humility, integrity, servanthood and great spiritual depth. That was and has been one of the greatest gifts of our years with the MC. We considered it such an honor to know and work with these wonderful servants of our Lord. At the same time, we quickly realized that the highly vaunted ideal of a cross-cultural, international group of people working together brought its own set of challenges. In the abstract, it's a beautiful idea. In the concrete, it required constant attention, prayer and bridge-building dialogue. We found that the supportive wisdom and discernment offered by Bill's closest colleagues on the MC Executive Council plus his many years of experience as a cross-cultural worker and Third Culture MK all combined to help him find the way through many "mine-fields" of conflict and misunderstanding!

As the job took shape and the tasks and responsibilities unfolded, our family made adjustments even as we felt a part of what Bill was doing. While Bill did travel a fair amount, he worked hard at keeping it within certain parameters and he chose to office at home which meant he was 100% present and available during non-travel times. This meant a great deal to all of us! For my part, there

were some definite challenges that came with this new ministry. Up until the door to WEF opened wide, we had always operated as a team in ministry, working side-by-side with our complementary gifts and abilities. But this time, as Bill stepped into WEF, I found myself standing on the threshold with the equivalent of a 'no entry' sign barring my way. There was no evident role or responsibilities for me to join in with him. At first, it was disorienting and I struggled to know where I fit in the scheme of things.

Of course, there was the joyful, ongoing role of raising our children and caring for our home and family life. Additionally, we continued—in Arkansas and later in Austin, Texas—to participate together in significant ministry opportunities at the local level. It was still a challenge, though, to figure out what to do with all the cross-cultural experience and skill acquired during our years in Latin America! Over time we realized that a pattern had emerged in which we were still sharing together in an internationalized ministry; it just looked different. While Bill carried the load of responsibility and work as the leader of the Mission Commission in the public sphere, I was able to support, encourage, and interact with him on a daily basis at the conceptual and practical level. We decided that a possible description for my role was "silent partner." As always in our marriage and ministry life together, Bill authentically honored me and treated me with respect and a genuine appreciation and regard for my contributions for which I have been deeply grateful. Because of that, I have truly felt a part of his work, being brought in on all that he was doing and experiencing.

At the same time that Bill grew into his new role, God was beginning to draw me into what would be a long and extended season of growth and training in the contemplative life, a rare calling in the highly "activist" orientation of the world missions sector. As God led me deeper into the realm of meditation, prayer, solitude, acquaintance with the richly layered worlds of spiritual formation and spiritual theology in the Church's long history, Bill was always supportive and encouraging of me. He was willing to trust God's work in leading me in these heretofore unknown paths and we found that our distinct yet complementary callings mutually informed and



Yvonne Christine  
DeAcutis Taylor  
Austin, Texas

catalyzed one another. And along the way we had great adventures as we shared one another's passions and callings and explored them together.

And then there was the *traveling!* So much international travel came with the WEA job, back-to-back crisscrossing of the globe, that we kidded he was meeting himself coming and going over mid-ocean with so many time zone changes! His body has "been buffeted" by the wear and tear of travel, exposure to germs and parasites, and disrupted sleep patterns. Yet I saw God give Bill confirmed grace to persevere through it all because of the deep satisfaction and joy he found in his work. There was also the very special opportunity for us to travel together to various countries over the years. We were able to go not as tourists, but as learners listening to the perspective and insights of those living and working in those cultures. I think this was one of my favorite parts of Bill's work with the MC. To learn about the moves of God, the history of each culture, the current religious-societal challenges, what was happening in the churches and the possibilities for advancing Christ's Kingdom in each setting was for me an endless treasure trove of discovery. It deepened my prayer life and my appreciation of the complex, big-picture moves of God across the earth.

Over and over through the years I've heard Bill state, "I just love what I'm doing" or "I love my job!" And I have observed



him thrive and flourish in this wonderful ministry which God called him to. What a *good* gift from the Father! During these 20 years we have seen God unfold His purposes and plans for the Mission Commission's role in His Kingdom advance. The Spirit led. We, in company with the beautiful team of colleagues and fellow servants of the MC, have followed. When we contemplate all that has happened, we can say with the Psalmist, "This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes!" (Psalm 118:23).

Once again, according to the Biblical pattern—Moses to Joshua, Elijah to Elisha—a leadership handover has now taken place. God has raised up a new servant-leader, Bertil Ekström, a man without guile, gifted and full of the Spirit. The job, the role, the mantle has now passed from Bill to Bertil. There is a rightness, a completion, a "fullness" to it all. There are new and different tasks and responsibilities for Bill to take up in service to Bertil and the MC as well as to the larger WEA arena. As we mark the ending to these rich and full 20 years, I am deeply grateful for the gift and privilege of this assignment. God has been our ever-present companion and sustainer all the way. He, of course, has been the main player in this unfolding story. As the Sustainer of the universe and ever-seeking Lover of mankind, He has granted us the privilege of having a small part in His great works. Thanks be to God!

Now as we all step together into the future...

May the High King of Heaven, great of might, hide us in the hollow of His swift, sure hand! Each day, each night, each light, each dark.

May heaven's High King, Brother of the helpless, be near us and uphold us, Each sea and land, each moor and meadow, In our lying down, and in our rising up, each step of the journey we go.

And may the joy of God be in our face, joy to all who see us. The circle of God around our neck, and the Angels of God shielding us, the Angels of God shielding us.

In the Name of the Blessed Trinity, Sacred Three-in-One, to Whom alone be honor and glory, both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen! <<

Thirty South African pastors attended to attend the WEA – MC meetings at Goudini Spa. It was the first time since 1997 that such a large contingent of pastors met with the mission leadership across the world.

## South African missions movement benefits from the WEA – MC meetings in Cape Town

The pastors met in a separate track during the workshop and seminar times. During these sessions, the leaders of eight WEA –MC consultations presented the worldwide objectives and activities of their consultations. Getting together in this unique gathering gave the pastors an opportunity to network with each other and to discuss how the South African church can more effectively be involved in world evangelization, as well as the opportunity to interact with the leaders of international mission movements and agencies.

Many of the pastors testified how the Lord used this time to refocus their priorities in the church that they represented. Here are a few of the comments that they made:

- I never knew the extent of what the Lord is doing in our world.
- Meeting leaders from all over the world has given me a new perspective on why the church exists.
- Listening to the reports of what the Lord is doing all over the world has fired me up to go back to my country with a renewed effort to mobilize my fellow church leaders to the task of reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- I have realized that the church has to reach out to the mission organizations in order that we may work together to reach our world with the good news.

- It is imperative that we meet again to discuss how best we can work together.
- The South African church leaders wish to thank the WEA –MC leadership for allowing us to join these meetings. The fruit of this wonderful gesture will be seen in the future as we become more involved in missions.
- The reports on topics such as HIV/AIDS, Ethne and regional mission movements has highlighted the fact that we need to engage the church in a more dynamic way in meeting the "real" needs in our world today.

As a result of these few days together, the pastors have asked The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) to convene several meetings in order to discuss ways in which the South African church can work together with the mission organizations in the task of mission.

*Willie Crew,  
South Africa*

Gathering a group of pastors at the WEA – MC meetings highlighted its value and the need to create more opportunities to engage the local church at future meetings. <<

# Reflections from some of the SA06 Participants

We wrote to many SA06 participants and asked them three questions that would give us a panorama of reflections, memories and recommendations.

1. What were 2-3 of the most significant things you appreciated, or learned and might be able to use in your own life and ministry?
2. What 2-3 thoughts do you have about SA06 weaknesses, or recommendations you would made for future consultations to be stronger?
3. What is your strongest "take home" memory of SA06?

So listen in to these 30 voices who speak from their heart and experience. Their words come to you as they arrived to me with no editorial work. Enjoy!

### 1. Michael Abel, Pakistan

SA06 was an exciting experience for me. One of the most memorable things was the morning Bible Readings that Bishop Niringiye from Uganda brought. He has a unique and forthright way of speaking and bringing the Word of God to bear upon people so that there is no escaping from its injunctions and encouragements. I was touched a number of times by what he said and by his honesty of when he did not speak when prompted by the Spirit to do so. That was powerful.

I appreciated the WEA Mission Commission publications being available at the Conference and the opportunity to meet so many of the writers there.

One of the main weaknesses of SA06 was the distances and the climb to the main hall which discouraged networking. There were not many sitting areas where people could sit and talk. Another area was internet. In

today's age where internet is so important a part of life, there needs to be a more efficient access to the internet. There were constant breakdowns and too many people and the card system proved to be very expensive. At the Central Asia Consultation we provide a hub with about 15 lines and wireless access and it is free. It costs around \$500 for 5 days, but is so much appreciated by people who attend. If you only charge people \$1 a day for internet that will in the end pay for the entire time of the conference.

My strongest take home memory is the way in which transition was handled in such a God-honoring way. It spoke not only of God's goodness but His people's handling of responsibility and passing it on in an appropriate manner.

### 2. Margaretha Adiwardana, Brazil

I appreciated the themes chosen, which are current issues worldwide, therefore constituting missiological problems and efforts being done and/or brainstorming and sharing of what needs to be done. Specifically for my present ministry as an NGO working in a risk context and emergency aid in natural disasters and war, I was pleasantly surprised by the many discussions on emergency aid and subsequent open doors for pastoral care for those who are working in risk contexts and emergency aid. Trauma healing is so much needed with disasters abounding. I also appreciated the global networking in serving worldwide.

On the weaker side, plenary sessions need to be in depth and ending up by challenging to be involved. Some workgroups are already firmly based, others are still struggling, and several may be starting so it is not very clear as to how to get involved or developed.

However, after 5 years of not being able to attend MC-WEA consultations, I am very grateful to God for the opportunity to attend SA06, realizing how much we need to be in fellowship with colleagues in missions. The real fact is that we cannot afford to carry out our ministry separated from the worldwide Body of Christ. We are much more effective when we learn from each other, think and pray together for God's direction and solutions to our ministerial problems in a fast changing world context and when we are working in partnership sharing what each one has to offer. In fact, immediately upon return to Brazil, our NGO started aid for refugees (IDPs) in Timor Leste. Because of the contacts and fellowship in SA06, we were able to form partnership with World Relief specifically for the refugee aid project.

### 3. Mark Oxbrow, CMS, England

I appreciated the opportunity to network with a significant number of Global South mission leaders and I listened again to some of the pain of their isolation and marginalization within the Global Christian community. I take back in to my work a commitment to continue feeding those relationships and to be more generous with my time for Global South sisters and brothers. I learnt (again) the importance of 'whole system' thinking in Christian mission and the futility of believing we can 'fix it' for God.

One the down side, time management was not good. Expecting our African brothers to come at 9.30 p.m. and present a serious analysis of mission perspectives within and from their continent was not gracious.

More preparation for the working groups would have helped—by all members. For the Lausanne Forum (04) the working group I was in had worked together (virtually) beforehand for a whole year and this made for a much better use of our time together.

My two strongest take homes are: (1) Duncan Olumbe talking about the need to learn to 'dance a different dance' in mission in Africa. (2) Kang San Tan's in-depth presentation on Islam and some of the coffee break conversations I had with Middle Eastern mission leaders as a result.

#### 4. Paul Bendor-Samuel, Malaysia

The most significant things I appreciated were these:

- The opportunity to build and strengthen relationships
- The final communion service which I found hugely meaningful and rich through the concept of sharing the elements with a number and more than once
- Exuberant African worship
- A reaffirmation of something I was already aware of, namely that, in general, the Latino and African missions movements are at quite different places in terms of identity, self-confidence, structures and resources. This has implications for my work as I seek to make Interserve available as a tool for missions movements in different countries

Yet there were some weaknesses, such as:

- Relative lack of representation of the Arab World

- A feeling that the major theme at the conference was the leadership transition. For me, as a new comer to WEA-MC, I did not come for that but to focus on issues related to world mission. On a number of occasions I felt like an outsider looking in, frustrated that I had given significant time and finance to attend what felt like a private function.
- Surprise that the conference did not attempt to identify and unpack the major issues facing world mission today and attempt to take us deeper in our reflections of those issues. I left feeling we had missed a great opportunity to do some serious, in-depth work on any one of the major issues we face. I accept that these may be 'old hat' for many participants and that maybe my expectations, as a mission leader, may not have been representative of most there coming from a missions movement background.

#### 5. Barbara Burns, Brazil

I appreciated once again the opportunity at SA06 to meet new people and refresh old friendships. It was especially interesting to participate in a small missiological group gathered to work on the subject of contextualization. My suspicions were confirmed that

this one subject is determinant in the future of evangelical missionary outreach. I was able to meet new people involved in this issue and learn from them. Our group agreed to continue thinking and speaking together via the internet, something that will hopefully generate some positive returns for the wider evangelical community.

It was a challenge to hear the African reports. Two things stood out: 1) hearing first hand of the difficulties of living in all Muslim contexts, and 2) the impact of James Engel's article on African Christianity as being 'one mile wide and one inch deep.' Almost every African speaker referred to this statement and some put direct blame on the missionaries who carried the sometimes too-easy and superficial Gospel to Africa in the first place. It made me think, "What kind of Christianity will my students here in Brazil take to the mission field?"

It was a special joy for me to participate in the passing on of Bill Taylor's baton to my good friend Bertil Ekström. I know Bertil as a capable and humble leader and look forward to seeing what will happen as he settles in as the next leader for the Mission Commission. May the Lord bless you, Bertil!!

#### 6. Chiu Eng Tan, Philippines

I was so encouraged to attend the WEA SA 06, showing mission-minded evangelicals all over the world are thinking and reflecting together on how to do the work of mission better for the cause of His Kingdom.

I think the small groups on special topics allowed us to learn from our colleagues and partners in mission. Lots of interactions in our ITMN small groups made us aware how others in other parts of the world help us to do the job better, allow us to get connected with others and humbly learn from each other.

#### 7. C V Mathew, from India, professor at Uganda Christian University, East Africa; Deputy Chair, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

It was indeed an honour and privilege for me to represent the Lausanne Movement at the WEA MC's gathering in Cape Town, South Africa. The MC's clear understanding of and deep commitment to this world for Jesus' sake was profoundly evident to anyone who attended the gathering. I deeply appreciated the clear focus of the conference on the pressing global issues which challenge the contemporary world and the worldwide church-in-mission. The sessions led by various African friends, dealing with various challenges the church in Africa faces, were outstanding and stirring. I praise God for the emerging African leadership who have a high sense of clarity in their understanding and an unflinching commitment to the task before them. I took home memories of those sessions for more earnest prayers for the African continent where I am now privileged to serve.

Fellowship was excellent. Food was outstanding. Hospitality was refreshing. But there was hardly anytime for rest, for relaxation and above all for reflection as each day was jam packed from about 7 am to 9.30 or 10 pm. There was no provision in the schedule, for those participants who have come from different corners of the world, to see the physical beauty of Cape Town, South Africa which is indeed a beautiful part of "our Father's world."

It was an immense blessing for me to witness the unique leadership transition. Bill Taylor, a missions statesman and the outgoing director of the MC passed on the baton of leadership to Bertil Ekström from Brazil. This transition—the manner and spirit in which it was done—was Christ-honouring, a good

model for other evangelicals to emulate!

#### 8. Charlie Davis, Executive Director, TEAM, USA

Catching a glimpse of what God is doing around the globe through churches from 54 nations was a mind blowing event. "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted throughout the earth, I will be exalted among the nations." Just as when Daniel was "sent" from Jerusalem by being deported, and he used Daniel to take the word that Yahweh was God to the Kingdoms of Babylon and Persia, God is sending thousands of people around the globe to carry the same word. What a privilege to be a part of this great work of God.

#### 9. Eddie Robinson, World Mission Centre, Pretoria, South Africa

It's hard to believe that WEA MC 2006 is behind us. It feels like the other day that I looked on my year planner and thought that there was still a long time to the event. Looking back on the time leaves me with a sense of accomplishment, and this for many reasons. I appreciated the working relationship between the WEA staff, the Goudini staff and the World Mission Centre. It was fantastic to see these three parties, coming from different worlds, working together with an enthusiasm and an attitude of servanthood. It strengthened my understanding of teamwork, something that we need to employ and value continuously in ministry. I believe that the unity amongst these three parties was the reason that there was the same attitude amongst the delegates, an attitude of "no complaints."

It is hard to mention weaknesses, but easier to make recommendations. One strong recommendation would be that delegates should be given some time to enjoy the environment, especially in a setting like Cape Town. Another would be to make use of alternative methods of meeting, for example a pool session. If a workgroup said, even just once, that everyone meets in the pool they would have been surprised at the relationships built. Meetings are great for planning and strategizing, but meeting in a pool is great for relationships (or a hike or a volleyball afternoon).

One thing that my wife and I will take with us was the overwhelming appreciation shown by staff and delegates toward the volunteer team. I have often heard criticism from volunteers that leaders often show no appre-

ciation, but this group of delegates was a constant encouragement. It reflects directly on the World Evangelic Alliance Mission Commission. It was a pleasure working with you!

#### 10. Fritz van der Lecq, South Africa

Amongst the most significant things, I really appreciated the daily opportunities to engage practitioners from all over the globe over in missionary practice and leadership challenges. There's nothing like vibrant conversations over meals to give legs to our ideas!

Bishop Niringiye's expositions were as challenging as they were inspiring! I particularly appreciated his definition of mission as God's grace overflowing from everywhere to everywhere—this challenge to interdependence as opposed to independence or dependence is particularly appropriate in the global church today.

Yet, while I was thoroughly impressed with the buffet of international mission perspectives, I also became aware of those with untold stories in our midst. Those who cannot boast in mission innovation or an understanding of global trends. How can we create space on the platform for those who are practicing "missions from below" where power, prestige and privilege *really* has no sway?

Strongest "take home" memory comes as I appreciated the timely reminder of just how critical it is for local mission leaders and movements to locate themselves within the context of a larger community of dynamic mission leaders that has committed itself to common ends. Not surprisingly, it has led to a recovery of a deeper vision of God's mission and my responsibility in it as a younger leader.

#### 11. Larrie Gardner, USA

From 35,000 feet and several weeks after SA'06, I look back on the meetings at Goudini with mixed feelings. I appreciated immensely the gathering of 21 member care workers from all over the world. The warmth and quick bonding among us as we shared our stories, listened to one another, and prayed for one another was great. I was pleasantly surprised by the extensive and thorough reports written by each one of these caregivers. I know a lot more about the world-wide picture of member care than ever. Another pleasant surprise was the appreciation for member care expressed by so many of the leaders of WEA MC and the plenary speakers.





I believe both ReMAP studies and findings have startled us all and those efforts are paying off by focusing our attention on needs of our workers.

My concerns were for the future of member care, the cohesion needed and the funds and opportunities to gather again and plan strategies and share resources. I believe we'll accomplish more and go further if we go together; we may go faster if we go alone, but we need one another. It costs something to come together and share and support one another, but it's very necessary. I'm not implying that member care should become a competitor for world evangelism, but it should be part of the infrastructure. We already have a number of very committed people doing this good work; let's back them and encourage others to join us.

My recommendation flows out of my own longing to take in all the sessions. I couldn't do that because I was involved with the member care track. I wanted both!

The strongest take-away in my memory was the beautiful, dignified and gracious transfer of the baton! It made me want to stand up and cheer for the maturity and godliness of the leadership of WEA MC. Keep it up, guys and gals! I believe goodness and spiritual maturity have a fragrance that flows downward. What we saw that night smelled sweet. Rose Dowsett's message that night was a keeper too. And who could forget the beauty of the setting.

One of the benefits of meetings like this is the time to meet new friends and talk together. It was a pure delight to meet Paul Bendor-Samuel, Dorothy Haile, and connect again with many old friends. I wonder if friendliness isn't next to godliness?

## 12. Jude Simeon, Sri Lanka

I have been reflecting on the SA 06 after returning to Sri Lanka and the situation in the country did not give me an opportunity to sit and write something to you. But as I have a dead-line to respond, please find below my reflections on SA 06.

First of all, I thank the Organizers for giving me the opportunity to take part at this Consultation. I was inspired and challenged by the Bible expositions, especially by the Bishop from Nigeria who challenged the mission workers from the Southern part of the world and brought in the reflections on the

failures of the mission field and taking us through a journey for repentance and reflections.

I was greatly privileged to be a part of the joint information management initiative and the discussions in the task group gave us new insights and net-working with like minded organizations to expand the mission work by sharing information and resources. The meeting with Mission Agencies gave me an opportunity to be inspired, as the last two years after Tsunami most of us in the mission field in Sri Lanka were in the verge of burning out and we needed refilling, and I believe the Missions Consultation gave us new inspirations and thinking.

I was somewhat disappointed to see that the working groups did not get the opportunity to present the outcome of their working groups in the consensus of the larger mission's body. The result will be that these mission agencies who participated will not have an ownership for these group recommendations. Therefore, I suggest that in the future when we plan for a larger consultation we create space for business meetings plus ratifications of recommendations as well, which will give us some mandate to continue the work.

My take off memory, as I would say, was that it gave me opportunities to meet new faces and it also encouraged me in my work and it was a place of affirmation for the calling and ministry. I was richly blessed being part of the Mission Commission Consultation 2006.

## 13. Dave Livermore, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, USA

The blessings and joy of being at this gathering far outweighed these small suggestions.

It's one thing to read about the internationalization of the missions movement in the worldwide Christian church, it's another thing to experience it first hand. That was by far the greatest joy for me at SA06. I had the chance to sit and talk with some of the key leaders of emerging missions movements from places like Uganda, Kenya, Brazil, India and more. I keep replaying those conversations in my head. Thankfully, many of these missions movements are not simply replicating the structures and practices of our Western missions movements but instead, are developing their own mobilizing, sending,

training, and care structures. And nothing better demonstrated to me the monumental shift needed in our missions thinking and practice than the teaching from Bishop David Zac each morning. Zac's re-framing of missions as "The Great Invitation" over and above our tendency to build empires under the guise of the "Great Commission" has me re-thinking how I read the text, how I conduct research, and how I go about my own missional engagement. I have great hope for the Mission Commission of WEA as we increasingly learn to listen and do mission together with the multicultural missions force going from everywhere to everywhere.

Given the significant paradigm-shift being suggested from the likes of Zac's teaching, we needed further time to collectively reflect upon those ideas and talk about the practical implications for our own ministries.

The lecture-centered plenary format seemed to mitigate against the desire to better engage the younger generation in this kind of gathering. I wonder how we might creatively find ways to tap the expertise in the room without so many presentations.

While the historical aspect of the conference was helpful and honoring of key leaders appropriate, I longed for more sense of what lies ahead in the Commission. What might that be? What could be as God moves in and through this group? I realize by simply being an alliance, it's a difficult task to cast vision for a group made up of so many of their own "visions," but a bit less of "here's what we've done" and more about discovering what might be might be an area for improvement.

On a few occasions, some serendipitous moments spontaneously occurred in the midst of some of the space given over meals etc. for just sharing life together. As I began to talk with brothers and sisters from various journeys and cultural contexts, what a joy to suddenly discover an unusual sense of mutual chemistry and understanding. The communication with a few of these individuals and hence the growing relationship since then is undoubtedly the greatest return on the investment for having been at SA 06.

*More testimonies throughout the magazine.*

Mission partnerships are complex. I am therefore borrowing the use of dance imagery to convey these complexities. A great and enjoyable dance—whether Maasai, Salsa, Rumba, Lingala or Tap dancing—requires intricate and well coordinated moves. Similarly, mission partnership can be likened to a missional dance!

# Dancing a Different Dance

By Duncan Olumbe (Coordinator Mission Together Africa)

I look at existing mission partnerships, both nationally and globally, and see countless types of missional dances. Such great diversity demonstrates the creativity and expression of the various dancers on the global mission dance floor—and is therefore healthy. However, a closer look reveals a cacophony of styles and steps; a deafening of Wows and Oops. What appears well-orchestrated from afar turns out to be ballroom brawls on close scrutiny. It seems that the presence of mission leaders (dance instructors) has been akin to the many cooks who spoil the broth!

Part of the confusion, it seems, lies in the complexity of creating truly global missional dances. No wonder: the predominantly global North missional dance instructors are shouting their voices hoarse on a dance floor whose majority dancers are from the global South. And the emerging global South dancers are busy doing their thing in desperate attempt to outdo each other! Surely, with such a scene, who would not join me in longing for a different dance?

However, before I describe what this different dance would look like, I wish to closely examine the current missional dances which I wish were done differently. I see three predominant types of dances worth a brief exploration. I hope this would help us gain a deeper understanding of current mission partnerships in order to propose different missional dances.

## Power Dance

The first and perhaps most prevalent mission partnership is the Power Dance. It

seems to have its dance books plagiarized from leading global secular superpowers. So familiar is it, especially when I recognized where else I had seen the beat and tempo. Aha! It echoed the all-too-familiar power-game between developing countries and economic powerhouses of World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund). This was best exemplified by the largely failed SAPS (Strategic Adjustment Programs) of the 1980s and 1990s. These were grotesque dances between "the giants" and "the dwarfs," with the giants prescribing the tunes and steps in total disregard to the dwarfs! They even included pre-recorded cheering squads to drown out the squeals of pain from the downtrodden. Even when it became apparent that failure was an understatement, the giants stepped up the tempo by introducing the ESAPS (Enhanced Strategic Adjustment Programs)!

In embarrassing similarity, the majority of the powerful global North mission leaders (dance masters) have seemingly perfected the art from IMF and WB! As a result, mission partnership has grossly been one-sided—with our dear western brothers and sisters calling the shots. Even when they have attempted to address this ominous inequality, it seems they have been caught listening to their echoes instead of genuinely listening to the gasping and rasping voices from global South! Of course it takes two to tango and so I think it is only fair to say that we as African dancers have abetted and even sometimes cheered on this humiliating fiasco. I have also seen fellow African mission leaders who, as faithful stu-

dents of their Western dance masters, have religiously embraced the art of dominance, arrogance and pretension in mission partnerships! With many years of this type of dance, I almost despair. I honestly wonder: "can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23).

## Imitation Dance

Secondly, we have the Imitation Dance. It borrows a lot from the sons of Sceva. Acts 19:13-17 tells the embarrassing story of the seven sons and several itinerant Jewish exorcists who, having observed how Paul in the name of Jesus staged an amazing "dance" during power encounters with demon possessed people, decided that they could also do the same simply by invoking the name of Jesus "whom Paul preaches." The result—thorough beating up and fleeing away naked and wounded—was not what they had bargained for or advertised! Instead of a resounding applause from the audience and a request for a repeat performance, they were grossly humiliated. Graciously though, God used this disastrous "dance" to cause his name to be magnified among the audience.

As I look at some of the ongoing mission partnerships, especially between African and western mission leaders, I cannot help but see such striking similarities. Given the apparently successful western mission enterprise, African mission leaders are often tempted to imitate the western dance by invoking the name of Jesus "whom the western mission enterprise preaches." Examples include

*Duncan Olumbe  
Mission Together Africa  
(MTA) Kenya*



direct importation of Theological College curricula, church planting models, discipleship programs and even mission personnel from the global North without due contextualization. What is the result? Africa is littered with many wounded and humiliated dancers! But even more tragic is the fact that instead of these wounded dancers recognizing their folly, they go ahead and mistake God's grace (in using their humiliation to cause his name to be glorified) as God's stamp of approval! Small wonder they go on repeating the same mistakes and in the process perfecting the art of imitation.

I am also beginning to suspect that of late the western mission leaders are falling for the Imitation Dance given the phenomenal growth of Christianity in the global South. A number of western dancers are scouting for "what works in the South" in order to use as talisman in their post-Christian contexts. Suddenly, there is an unprecedented scramble for African, Asian or Latin American mission dancers to go dance in the western mission parlors. In fact some western mission agencies are busy installing leaders from the global South simply to give a semblance that they are "sensitive to the Christian majority world." In all these imitation dances, I foresee similar

outcome—wounded and humiliated dancers, bewildered and wondering what hit them. I do not want to be misconstrued as implying that learning from each other is wrong. I think what is critical is that unless we are willing to pay the price of knowing and following Jesus personally, we cannot depend on the experience of others to effectively do our mission jig in our respective contexts.

### Position Dance

Thirdly, we have the Position Dance. This is best exemplified in the encounter where James and John requested Jesus to grant them special status of sitting closest to him (Mark 10:35-45). These two brothers wanted to be closest to the Centre of Power—Jesus. And the other ten disciples were livid at such audacity! It is significant that Jesus refused to be part of this routine dance which reeked of Gentile leadership styles. First, he ascertained whether they knew the price they would have to pay for being that close to him. And even when they affirmed their willingness (which I am not sure they fully understood), Jesus pointed to the fact that it is God's prerogative to assign who sits closest to him! Put simply, it is not in our realm to choose who we shall be in God's order of leadership. Jesus finally spent time

panel-beating their warped views about leadership and service. Jesus' leadership was a servanthood dance, not greatness (in position).

When I look at contemporary mission in Africa, I see depressing curtain raisers to the Position Dance; naked and sometimes bestial jostling for positions of power. The strategic alignments, realignments and counter-alignments among my African fellow mission dancers to be closer to the "Centre of Power" are sickening. Often this positioning is in relation to western mission with POWER—in terms of finances, equipment, connections, or simply raw power. The resulting dance is intensely brutal as fellow African mission leaders perfect the art of under-cutting, blackmailing and/or blocking each other from any presumed source of power. And those who succeed to ascend to the hallowed tables of global mission powers (sometimes through hook and crook) are too preoccupied with how to remain there for life; instead of mentoring and developing emerging mission dancers. On the other hand, those who, like the ten disciples, are not on the apparent league of Who-is-Who, get dangerously indignant and wait strategically to dethrone those who apparently outdid them. In this game there is no semblance whatsoever of servant leadership, Jesus' style.

As I reflect further on Matthew's account that it was the mother of James and John who made the request to Jesus, I see the idea of the mother playing the role of a king-maker. This is strikingly similar to when key mission leaders desperately tries to position their "sons and daughters" to be closest to the centre of Power. In several cases this has led to tragic choices of mission leaders. In fact sometimes what passes as a smooth leadership transition is simply a veneer of strategic manipulation by the "mothers and fathers" of mission! Is it really possible for both global North and global South mission leaders to be willing to entrust succession matters to God instead of manipulation? Are we ready to entrust leadership to emerging younger mission leaders, some of whom might be dancing a totally different style from ours?

### Dancing a Different Dance

Who would not get depressed at the above scenario of mission partnerships? This is what leads me to long for a different dance. How can we create a better scenario? Though I do not have pat answers, I think we must dare think out of the box and ask disturbing questions. I am convinced that perhaps the way forward might be in seeking answers to these disconcerting questions.

How can we who are involved in global mission partnerships, dance to a higher calling, a different audience, a more celestial tune, and with an eternal perspective? At the heart of all this is the question: to whom are we really dancing? Is our primary goal human acclaim or God's glory? As an African mission leader, am I preoccupied with Africa's glory or God's? I shudder as I wonder: how different is the African missional dance from the current African political ones like NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development)? Do I sense some disquieting echoes in the over-hyped African Bible Commentary? Is it really possible in our day to be content to do everything we are supposed to do and then say "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." (Luke 17:10)

I long for a difference dance! However, how can we allow enough space for the different dancers — African, Asian, European, American, etc. — with all their different rhythms, beats and paraphernalia? What would it take to avoid the pitfalls of re-inventing the same old, boring styles simply under a different name and producer? Why is it that we seem to think that harmony and uniformity must be the hallmark of a truly global mis-

### 14. Marcia Tostes, Brazil

The Conference was held in a lovely resort in the wine producing region of southern South Africa. It was a very African setting with the typical, round, grass-roofed huts. Beautiful and adequate, perhaps, for more African climates, that is, hot ones. The truth is, to the surprise of many, it was really cold. The warmth came from the good fellowship among the participants united to reflect on the missionary movement.

I was very impacted at the conference through the devotionals given by dear Bishop Niringiye, which led us to think that Jesus' call, far beyond the emphasis on GO, emphasizes the COME AND FOLLOW ME—an invitation to follow Jesus to the most remote corners of the world, taking the Gospel and showing the Lord's love and compassion. Besides that, I left with the riches of contacts, partnerships and the reminder that we need to discover our potential and share it, may it be spiritual, physical and so on. We Christians need to learn more about cooperating with one another in strategic ways. Through the meeting of the Member Care Group, I learned a lot through 'living' with people such as Marjorie Foyle and Larrie Gardner, in the way they handled the situations we had to face, with wisdom and love.

### 15. Hikari Matsuzaki, Mission Mobilisation Task Force, Japan

What blessed me the most in SA06 was the morning devotion. Getting a glimpse of African spirituality in it was one, but I was totally surprised by the fact that every message confirmed things I had been hearing from the Lord in last few years. How could it be, unless it was from the Holy Spirit, that a Ugandan Anglican Bishop and a grassroots worker from the other end of the planet would get the same idea? Listening to those messages again on the website has reconfirmed it. Many thanks to Bishop Niringiye for his person and ministry. For listening, please go to:

[www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/mc/mc\\_southafrica/devotions.htm](http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/mc/mc_southafrica/devotions.htm)

sion dance? Why not re-discover the beauty in the apparent chaos of a spear-throwing Maasai dancer alongside a vigorous Latin Salsa dancer and a choreographed American Ballet dancer? Must we always be comparing and judging each dancer through the lenses of either the over-bearing western dance masters or the ever-acquiescing non-western mission leaders? I earnestly pray that the object and focus of our dance would be God and a celebration of his cosmic redemption plan.

Finally, I wonder: how can we steadfastly resist the temptation to listen to our own applause? How can we instead position ourselves to listen to God as our dance Composer, Conductor, Partner and Audience? Why is it so difficult for the older-soon-to-retire dancers to stop playing king-maker dance games? How can there be a genuine passing on of dance shoes to those emerging younger dancers with a desire to do things differently for God's glory? What or who will save us, in the face of failures, from mistaking God's grace for his stamp of approval? How can we encourage a loving space to honestly admit our failed "tribal" dances (and dancers)? Why do I sense that the power

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of our missional dance cannot be divorced from the quality of our relationship with the Great Dancer—our Triune God? Otherwise it remains a hollow rendition however much human applause it generates.

For this refreshingly different missional dance, we need to position and re-align ourselves to God's drumbeats. We must be willing to bravely open the closets and honestly confront the ghosts of our past failed missional dances. We also have to dare dream of what God is able and willing to do in and through us if we choose to accept his sovereign coaching in our dances. Ultimately all our dances will be consumed in the Heavenly Eternal Dance comprising of dancers from "every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" together with angels dancing "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:9-12). It is this hope which makes me almost begin to faintly hear the drumbeats of a different and refreshing missional dance. How I pray to God that I do not wake up only to discover it was but a dream! <<



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## Echoes of the Rise of African Churches in Missions

# Issues, challenges and models of African churches' participation in Global Missions

Philip Jenkins, in his recent studies published as "The Next Christendom" (Oxford, 2002), predicted "The Great Shift of the Center of Evangelical Christianity" from the North to the South, from the West to the Rest, and from traditional mission sending bases to the recipient mission destinations. The following are some of the signs of this trend:

### 1. Large Christian communities

One of the significant observations by Jenkins was that three of the ten countries that have "the largest Christian communities" in the world today are in Africa, namely, Nigeria, Congo (D.R.) and Ethiopia. The others are two each from Asia, Latin America, Europe and one from North America. He also projected that by 2025, the population of Christians from Africa (633 million), Latin America (640 million) and Asia (460 million) alone (totaling 1.733 billion) will constitute 66.5% of the projected global population (2.6 billion) of Christians at that time. The above predictions indicate that Africa (together with the other continents in the South and East) will be playing a very significant role in global missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If the church in Africa is growing and occupying such a strategic position in the global church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, then the resources to do missions and the harvest forces to be deployed into world missions will not be lacking. Already, such awareness is increasing among African church and mission leaders. As a result, they are taking a number of initiatives to identify

the resources, locate the harvest forces, and harness and deploy them in such a way that the African church will fulfill this mandate upon her.

### 2. From mission field to a mission force

The continent of Africa, which was hitherto a mission field, has become a major mission force in the present decade. African churches, denominations and indigenous mission agencies have long accepted the challenge of reaching African peoples and beyond, giving rise to indigenous missionary efforts, initiatives, mission agencies, denominational mission boards, missions strategies, missions training institutions, and National Missions Associations that were not there fifty years ago. This is the case in all the regions of Africa south of the Sahara. African churches and mission agencies are also focusing more on the specific groups, targets and audiences that have not had such opportunity of hearing the gospel before. Regional, national (e.g. Ghana Evangelical Missions Association; Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association) and continental alliances are being developed by some ministries to focus on the identified areas of the greatest needs in Africa. We also have many African missionaries, pastors, and evangelists reaching out to people groups in other continents and pastoring churches in other countries outside Africa—some of such churches made up of non-Africans (e.g. Rev. Sunday Adelaja's church in Kiev that has a membership of over 20,000 Ukrainians). The church in Africa has produced outstanding leaders who are mak-

ing their mark in leadership within the global evangelical and missionary circles.

### 3. Increasing national and local initiatives

The sacrificial commitment to world missions by the African church was very clearly demonstrated at a consultation on indigenous missions in Africa held two years ago, where several exciting missions initiatives were unveiled. The consultation was convened by the Movement for African Initiatives (MANI) for the purpose of "catalyzing, mobilizing, and multiplying the resources of the Body of Christ in Africa for the fulfillment of the Great Commission."

The venue for the consultation was a local church in Ibadan, Nigeria known as Glory Tabernacle, whose 3,000 members raise the equivalent of US\$25,000 per year to help support over 200 missionaries. The Glory Tabernacle is a model of an African church that is sending and supporting missionaries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Over 200 mission leaders were present: from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Rwanda, Botswana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, South Africa and Mauritius. There were a few non-African observers present too. This consultation was primarily to highlight and show-case what the indigenous efforts and initiatives in the areas of *missions mobilization, training, sending, funding partnership*, are achieving; and to discuss how to increase such efforts to achieve more in extending the Kingdom of God!

### 4. The church in Africa comes of age

The Anglican Church in Africa, which is leading the crusade for the reformation of the Anglican Communion, declared recently that "the church in Africa has come of age." A statement by the Anglican Bishops from Africa after their Conference held in Nigeria, October 26<sup>th</sup>-November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 stated further that: "...The church has gone beyond the stage of mission 'from the West to the Rest,' to that of mission from 'everywhere to everywhere'... The time has come for the church in Africa to address the pitfalls in our present theological and Western worldview education... and engage intelligently with our peculiar challenges from an African perspective."

Rev. Reuben Ezemadu, Nigeria

### 5. Being the light and the salt in the market place

The Fellowship of African Christian Economists (FACE) has just been inaugurated. FACE is an association of Christians who are also practicing economists and other social scientists with a keen interest in development and public policy issues in Africa. In a declaration of the goal of FACE, the promoters stated thus: "Through our association as Christian economists, we are called upon to bear witness to the Lordship of Christ and to the expression of a Kingdom Approach in economic and public policy and in the management of the wealth that God has blessed our continent (Africa) with."

### 6. Calling the world-wide church to her knees

On May 15, 2005, the Global Day of Prayer was observed around the world by an estimated 40 million believers in every continent. This is was an initiative from the church in Africa calling the church world-wide to join her in interceding for the transforming power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit to bear on the challenges of the continent and the whole world. On June 4, 2006, the participation of the global church in this African prayer initiative almost doubled that of 2005.

### 7. Taking full responsibility for the task of Bible translation in Africa

A Congress on Bible Translation in Africa was convened in Petermaritzburg, South Africa September 19-23, 2005 to tackle the challenges facing the translation and engagement of the Bible in Africa, especially as the goal of

the world-wide Bible Translators is to see that the Bible is available in every needy language of the world by the year 2025. The purpose of the congress was to "optimize the resources in Africa in the cause of Bible Translation by stimulating dialogue and interaction between current and potential partners" (in translation and use of the Bible in Africa). Declaring that "Bible translation has come of age in Africa," the promoters observed that until recently, "Bible translation in Africa was done and, therefore, in a sense 'owned' by missionaries from the West; however, Africa has started to take full responsibility for this task. Not only do mother-tongue speakers now render the first translations of the Bible into many African languages, but new (second and third) translations and study bibles are being made in response to the needs expressed by Christian communities."

### 8. The best is yet to come!

It is a common feature of the African church to thrive in the midst of spiritual battles, physical limitations, limited resources, social upheavals, and insecurity. In fact, the church in Africa exists in such a context and flourishes within that kind of environment. The church in Africa is increasingly becoming a missionary church, even in the face of such limitations, oppositions and challenges. The context of religious pluralism, ethnic and cultural diversities, multilingual realities, unwavering belief in the supernatural, tenacity and persevering spirit, adaptability and creativity, now strengthened by spiritual fervency, have placed the African church in a position to contribute even more towards the final push in world evangelization and missions (albeit in cooperation and partnership with other sections of the Body of Christ world-wide, especially our brethren in Asia, Latin America, Middle-East and Central Asia who share similar experiences).

### Factors which impact the African church's initiatives in global missions

- There is a remarkable decrease in the number of missionaries coming from outside Africa into Africa at the moment.
- The level of funding and support from outside Africa for the missionary/evangelistic projects and programs in Africa is diminishing.
- The decline in spirituality and increase in disaffection for Western Christianity in the continent are also very strong factors.
- There is an increasing awareness among

- African Christians and denominations of their role in missions.
- The profile of African ministers and ministries is rising within the global church, as many of them are playing significant roles of leadership within a number of international ministries and global evangelical networks.
- The church in Africa is also being empowered economically as the number of middle income earners and successful business people become evangelical Christians around the continent.
- The high rate of emigration of African Christians to Europe, North America, Middle East and now former Eastern Europe also swell the number of African potential missions force exported abroad.
- Increasing stability in the hitherto very volatile regions and countries of Africa is creating a missions-friendly environment in those areas.
- The rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic ministries and the popularity of the "wealth and health" message among both the African elite and the downtrodden, on one hand, create avenues for holistic missions.
- The various regional and continental groupings provide opportunities for cross-border free movement of nationals.
- Abundance of natural and mineral resources in Africa to be exploited and utilized for the development of the continent which will also rub off on the church.

### Critical issues and challenges facing African initiatives in missions

- The missionary initiatives of the church in Africa are mostly "mission agency driven," in most cases generating unnecessary tension between mission agencies and denominations/local churches.
- There is still manifestation of the strong influence of Western models and patterns of mission. Dominant in the mindset of many African Christians and church leaders is the image of a missionary being "white" and coming from 'abroad,' the missionary task being that of the church from abroad and as such, so the tools and resources for carrying on the task must also come from abroad.
- There is also an undeclared rivalry between Western mission structures and the emerging ones. While the emerging missions are craving for space and visibility in the new things the Lord is doing with and through His church globally, the older ones are fighting for relevance and sustenance of the status quo. Of course they result in some



- untoward developments and polarization.
4. Islam remains a critical and major challenge to every initiative to fulfill the Great Commission in Africa. This is compounded by the use of government organs and political machinery where Muslims are in majority to undermine evangelistic and missionary initiatives.
  5. Socio-economic challenges as posed by the HIV/AIDS scourge, ethnic rivalries and clashes, abject poverty, political instability, corruption and vices continue to stare at the face of every effort being made to bring the love of Christ to our people in the form that meets their holistic needs.
  6. The popularity of the unbalanced “gospel of prosperity” to a great extent is undermining the initiatives by the church in Africa to send and support her own missionaries, because majority of those who should go and who should send have their priorities and values misplaced, exchanging eternity for momentary gains. This is also associated with the shallowness of the Christianity that has been exported to Africa that is described as the *one mile wide but one inch deep* syndrome.
  7. We are also not oblivious to the spiritual strongholds that contend for the souls of our people. We are aware of the resistance and challenges that are coming from the kingdom of darkness. We are therefore determined to take up the whole armor of God to fight the good fight of faith.

#### Phases of missions’ evolution in Africa:

1. **Western mission initiatives:** Initially along the coastline, then thrusts into the interior; in some cases exploring trade routes and exploiting favorable political platforms.
2. **Apprenticeship with limited objective:** Africans working with and under Western missionaries as agents, assistants, helpers, etc., just to accomplish current tasks, not necessarily for the purpose of integrating them in the team for continuity.
3. **Delegation with limited vision:** As a result of nationalization and indigenization policies of many African nations following independence, Western missions turned over the leadership of denominations to Africans with little or no envisioning/empowerment for missions involvement, and maintenance of existing institutions and structures with limited resources and paternalistic relationship which encouraged dependency on the West, thereby stifling local initiatives.
4. **African mission initiatives:** The current missionary zeal that is emanating from Africa is more or less borne out of self-

discovery and self definition regarding the nature and the mission of the church in Africa, and the determination to overcome all the limitations and labels imposed upon her to become a legitimate part of the Body of Christ as well as fulfill her mandate in God’s divine enterprise. These describe the various models and patterns of mission structures and activities coming from Africa which defy conventional description of missions from other perspectives.

#### Trends of missions in Africa

Some notable trends characterize the mission initiatives and models in and from Africa:

1. There is an increasing awareness and involvement of denominations and local churches in missions. Even though the indigenous missions movement was spear-headed and driven by indigenous mission agencies, denominations and local churches are discovering and taking up their rightful place in the missionary enterprise.
2. There is a lot of spontaneity in missions sending and going in and from Africa. Many of those who go do so when and as the Holy Spirit leads them. As a result, the majority of those who go are not sent or supported by any group, church or agency in the traditional sense of sending. However, the majority of such have had very successful ministry (e.g., Sunday Adelaja in Kiev, Ukraine). Some denominations also do not follow the conventional prescriptions for effective sending structures nor do their policies fit into what is considered to be the code of best practice in member care delivery, yet they have a steady flow of well-motivated volunteer missionaries that spread across the globe and are successfully planting churches, first among their own people in the Diaspora and also among the native hosts (e.g., The Church of Pentecost, Ghana).
3. Mission agencies, the denominations and local churches involved in missions in Africa are demonstrating initiatives in defining, structuring and carrying out mission from the African church perspective. This was very much evident in the creative ways denominations and mission agencies in Africa defined and determined the target groups they were to reach and the best way to reach them, the types and forms of support to raise and how to raise them, and the type and duration of the training they were to give to their missionaries in order to accomplish the set goals during the AD 2000 & Beyond era. This has con-

tinued to characterize most of the efforts of the sending churches and mission agencies in Africa today.

4. Some Western missions and global networks are restructuring and repositioning themselves to empower, encourage and resource the denominations they have established in Africa to take initiatives in missions and assume responsibility for the remaining task of reaching the unreached in their countries and beyond. In many cases, some of these Western Missions define their involvement and role in missions in terms of how such role will enhance and strengthen the church in Africa to fulfill her part of the mandate.

#### Locating the harvest forces in and from Africa

The harvest forces in Africa can be classified into several categories, such as the Recruiting, Training, Sending, and Supporting Force on one hand, and the Going Force, on the other. We can also look at the harvest forces in the following ways:

- A. **The harvest force in Africa**  
The large growing number of Evangelical and Pentecostal believers in Africa constitutes a dormant but potent harvest force of change agents if they are empowered to truly witness of Christ through their transformed lives in the society. The increasing number of mission agencies and churches in Africa that are involved in missions as well as the National and Continental Evangelical Associations, Movements and Networks are good signs that the African church is becoming aware of her potential for leading in global in missions.
- B. **The harvest force from Africa**  
Believers (professionals and students) from Africa in Diaspora as well as missionaries and ministries from Africa in the rest of the world are harvest forces that could be properly envisioned in order for them to consciously anchor the global missionary role of the African church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The increasing number of African leaders in leadership positions in global networks and ministries within the evangelical movement also could be vanguards of the African church in this anticipated role.
- C. **The harvest force to Africa**  
Despite the decline in the missionary support and personnel that come from outside into Africa, the church in Africa will still need the assistance and partner-

ship of the wider Body of Christ in fulfilling her 21<sup>st</sup> century mandate. Strategic partnership with agencies, ministry networks, resource networks, national and regional associations, and personnel with specific expertise will definitely enhance the effectiveness of the African church and ministries in accomplishing the role that the church in Africa has to play in world missions this century.

- D. **Categories of the ‘Goers’**  
Among those who have been going on their own or are being sent by the church and mission agencies into the mission fields within and beyond Africa, the following have been identified and will still remain the significant groups of the harvest forces from Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:
  1. **Career and full time missionaries.** These are those who have definite and clear understanding of their call into the cross-cultural missionary assignments and are trained and strategically deployed into the specific fields or area of their calling on a long-term basis. Because of their involvement in the missionary enterprise full time, they need support from others in the form of regular stipends for their personal (and family) upkeep and for the ministry they are involved in.
  2. **Tentmaker-missionaries.** These have a definite sense of calling into missions in cross-cultural settings, and perhaps in places that have limited access. They acquire training in cross-cultural ministry as well as in relevant skills or professions that will serve as a means of getting into least accessed places and generating local support for his/her sustenance during the period of service in such places.
  3. **Fortune seekers (traders, business people).** Such people travel far and wide and get into places that are not easily accessible to conventional missionaries. Their business partners, clients, patrons, and colleagues are usually people of influence and power who are potential change agents in their communities and countries. If the believers among these “fortune seekers” are deliberately encouraged to be “ambassadors of Christ wherever they go in search of “fortune,” the church in Africa will have in them both mission supporters and goers at the same time.
  4. **Golden fleece pursuers.** Thousands of African young people leave the shores of

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### 16. Evan Overbay, Communications Coordinator, European Christian Mission

I appreciated that fact that the WEA MC did not focus on job titles or position. As this was my first time to attend at SA06 it was good to be able to contribute to the discussions though I may not have been a director of a mission etc.

I commend the fact that the WEA MC would like to have, in addition to their current leaders, younger leaders attend. However, I recommend that each session last no longer than 45-60 minutes long. The younger generation has a shorter attention span. While the content was good in each session, I suggest a slight reworking of the session times, possibly shorter sessions, but more of them. I realize that this will take some work, as the WEA MC would like to be well rounded, and some compromises will have to be made for both the older and younger generations represented.

Through the course of the week in South Africa, it was great to see so many leaders in one place so fired up about mission and the Lord’s work. My best memory of SA06 was the people. Each one has a determination and dream to spread the gospel to the world. It was encouraging to know that the gospel is spreading despite what we see in the statistics or hear on TV. Yes there is still much work to do, but there is a lot of work being accomplished for the Lord.

Africa every year in pursuit of education in other countries and continents. Their schoolmates and professors are potential leaders and opinion molders in their respective communities and countries. As in the role students have played in the missionary movements through the ages, these African believers can become a strong force in fulfilling the mandate of the African church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century if properly envisioned and motivated. Rev. Sunday Adelaja is a perfect example.

5. **Adventurers.** These include the semi-skilled and unskilled Africans who undertake the often risky adventure by road and sea to Europe and other continents with the hope of making a better living outside the continent of Africa. Those believers among them who survive the ordeal and eventually settle down to decent living abroad can become useful tools for missions.
6. **Fun seekers (African pilgrims, tourists, holiday makers, excursionists, etc.).** These are the Africans who spend their annual leave and leisure outside their traditional homes and places, either for rest and/or for educational and religious exercises. They also come across people who have not been exposed to the claims of Christ and can become the first epistle such people could be reading. Such believers can deliberately plan to seek such fun and leisure in

places where they would have opportunities to either encourage missionaries and their ministries in the remote areas or utilize the time to carry out some outreaches among the unreached.

7. **Skill hawkers.** These include the highly skilled and qualified professionals whose skills and professions are needed in most of the countries that are closed to conventional missionary work. God has been using such people like medical doctors and nurses, professional footballers, oil company workers, UN employees, Transnational Corporations employees, etc., to penetrate closed doors and spread the gospel even among royal families of countries and kingdoms that are resistant to the gospel.
8. **Diplomatic corps members.** Christians who work in diplomatic missions abroad or are employees of governments, international corporations, UN related organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), etc., enjoy certain privileges, immunities and easy access and passage that can be utilized for the sake of the Kingdom if they are properly envisioned and encouraged. Peace keepers, Technical Aid Corps members, National Youth Service Corps members, aid agencies workers and volunteers, etc., are all assets to the missionary program of the church in Africa and around the world.



### Categories and models of missionary initiatives in and from Africa

A. Categories by origin: The missionary initiatives in Africa can be identified by how they originated as follows:

1. **Offshoots of initial missions from the West:** Some of the older missions from the West, right from the beginning, established indigenous or national mission outfits to work along with them, especially in vernacular and contexts which such structures were considered most

appropriate and reasonable to employ. For example, the Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS), which was set up in 1949 by the then Sudan Interior Mission to reach the natives of the middle belt and Northern Nigeria.

2. **Independent Charismatic/Pentecostal groups:** These are the denominations and ministries that were started by Africans in response to the move of the Holy Spirit in their different countries and dispensations. These groups were very “missionary” in their approach as their members founded branches of their denominations

where ever they found themselves. For example, the Church of Pentecost, Ghana.

3. **Christian youth and student movements:** Like other continents, student and youth groups in Africa have been vanguards of missionary initiatives within and outside Africa. A number of the current mission agencies in Africa today came to be through the visionary leadership of former leaders of evangelical student/youth groups. Most of the pioneer missionaries of the church and mission agencies in Africa are graduates of higher institutions. Currently, the national, regional and continental student organizations have missions as a major focus of their activities and engagements. For example, FOCUS of East Africa, Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES), Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students (GHAFES).

4. **Indigenous mission agencies:** These are mission agencies founded, led, funded to a great extent, and directed by indigenous believers in a given country, with little or no link to a mission from the West. The majority of such agencies work cross-culturally and in many countries other than their country of origin and operate several aspects of the missionary enterprise, while others specialize. For example, The Sheepfold Ministry, Kenya; Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), Nigeria; Christian Missionary Foundation (CMF), Nigeria; Adonai Missions International (AMI), Central Africa Republic, etc.

5. **Mission departments/societies of denominations/local churches:** Some denominations and local churches, as they become aware of their responsibility in missions, now set up their own structures to recruit, train, send and support missionaries from their churches. For example, The Missions Department of the Baptist Convention of Ethiopia.

B. Categories by specialization: the second category has to do with the specialization of the various groups. While most of the mission agencies focus on mobilization, training and sending, a number of indigenous agencies/groups specialize in missions-support, media or research. Examples include the Gospel Bankers, Mission Supporters League, Christian Missionary Fund, and Mission Unit of the Hosanna Christian Guest House, all in Nigeria to mention a few. The Media Village in South Africa is becoming a major missions promoting media outfit in Africa, as well as Inserve (also of South Africa), that is doing missions research. <<

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### 17. Stanley Ow, Singapore Centre for Evangelism & Missions (SCEM)

My wife, Choy Yoke, and I were thankful to God to all of you for organizing the wonderful WEA Mission Consultation in South Africa. The devotions and night meetings were inspiring and challenging with the main focus on completing the Great Commission. The 'dance' and 'movement' of human agencies conducted and orchestrated by the move of God Almighty. We are living in the final lap of the human race and others cheered us on from above. Hebrews 12:1

I was blessed to be at the session on "Building National & Regional Mission Movement." Many excellent contacts had been made with connections to Europe, Arab World, New Zealand and Africa.

The night meeting on the AIDS/HIV pandemic in Africa kept me pondering and wondering what can be done as it spread through this earth like a wild fire. We must face the challenge before us.

My wish lists: 1) It would be great if we followed the earlier plan to have a half day tour of Cape Town and especially a prayer session at Table Mountain; 2) Under-gird the conference with intercessors and prayer warriors. Have a designated place or room for 24/7 prayers; 3) Bring along national costumes of all nations represented for a particular evening including national flag as it is a global missions gathering of 300 participants. (We actually brought the national costumes from where we had served as missionaries for 8 years). Is God moving us towards the regions and the globe through the WEA meeting? I wonder of His timing.

### 18. David Packiam, pastor and mission leader, Malaysia

What I appreciated most was the challenge to look beyond set structures and models. It began with the morning messages and carried through the sessions. Those present were serious about wanting to work together and learn from each other. I was surprised by the number of churches and agencies that were there and their desire to want to establish partnerships and work on relationships to ensure that the gospel message was preached. There was a genuine need to want to strengthen and encourage one another. The whole atmosphere was one of wanting to be cohesive and not competitive or selfish.

There was a smooth transition of leadership and immediate support to continue the good work that has already been established. It was a time of reflection and looking to the future with hope and strength in the Lord.

The location was good but accommodations could have been better. The spa village was Spartan and cold but bearable. The food was good. The breakout sessions were excellent platforms for honest, frank and open discussions.

The most memorable feature was the enthusiasm of the next generation—the youth—to the challenge. It was a blessing to be there to participate in all that was happening around the world.



# Passing on the baton

Dick, my husband, frequently teases me: however little time I have to read the newspaper, I always try to read the obituaries—not so much the brief death notices, but the short biographies of people who have recently died. Here, in a few hundred words, maybe a thousand, a whole life is summarized. Think of that: maybe 80 years reduced to a few paragraphs.

**Y**ou see, I am fascinated by what people will be remembered by. A lifetime: what does it add up to? It's an important question for us as Christians and as leaders.

My children, now adult, also tease me about reading obituaries. As they have grown up, it's just been one of Mum's peculiarities.

Early in December, I sat beside my 27 year-old daughter's bed in hospital. She was due to have major surgery the next day to remove a brain tumor, and we had been told, gently but realistically, that she might not survive, or maybe survive so damaged as to be unrecognizable as the person we knew and loved. Suddenly Rachel said, "Mummy, what would you like to be written in your obituary?" Actually, at this solemn crisis moment of her life, the real question she was asking was, "How will people remember me? What will you tell my little children about me as they grow up if the Lord takes me to Heaven tomorrow?"

These are important questions because they expose deep truths. What is the core of

our lives? What do we want to be remembered for? Will it be for the things that are most important from God's eternal perspective? And how will that look when we stand before God?

When we read Acts 20, we find Paul at a critical transition point. He is handing on the baton, reflecting on the past, looking ahead. We shouldn't lionize Paul and put him on a pedestal: he was a redeemed sinner with many flaws (and I'm glad I wasn't his wife!). But this redeemed sinner passes on the baton to a bunch of redeemed sinners. That's the reality of Christian leadership, including the transition of leadership within the Mission Commission from Bill to Bertil.

Paul must have said much more in his tough-tender farewell to his dearly loved Ephesian brethren, but Luke summarizes for



Rose Dowsett, UK

us here, under the inspiration of the Spirit, some of Paul's reflections. What do we see that we want to copy, so that it is part of how we are remembered?

First, there is the issue of character and lifestyle. Paul had a clear conscience that he had lived with integrity, had been willing to pay the high price of costly service, had worked hard. He had loved the Ephesian community with realism and

humility. Are we godly in our living and growing more like Jesus all the time? The quality of character of Christian leaders has perhaps never been so urgent as it is today, when the world's ideas of 'successful' leadership are so far removed from God's priorities.

Second, Paul could point to his acute awareness of the dynamic ministry of the Holy Spirit, in personal guidance, in his ministry, in recognizing God at work and



then following where he led. Are we hearing God's Spirit, falling in line with him, discerning what he's doing? Leadership is not about human schemes, but about discerning what God is doing and following him.

Third, there is the clarity of Paul's message. He is crystal clear about repentance and faith, and that the gospel is good news of grace; and he has taught the whole will of God, not just bits of it. In our multi-religious, hostile or indifferent world, are we clear and sure and courageous? Are we longing to be, and to help others to be, radical total disciples: no reductionism, but all of life, in every sphere, living out daily repentance (letting God change our minds and behavior and values), turning, trusting, marked always by the good news of grace?

Fourth, Paul was convinced of the value and also of the vulnerability of the church.

Like the Ephesians, we are bought with Christ's blood: we are utterly precious, even in our fallenness, and likewise those we lead are precious to him. But we are also vulnerable—to heresy, division, deception and persecution. So our leadership must be with discernment of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, as we seek to warn and protect and shepherd God's people.

Fifth, Paul had a passion and focus until the end of his life. Above all, he wanted to bear witness to the good news of God's grace. Will we, too, be remembered as those whose passion to declare and live the grace of God remains undiminished until we die? God is good, in life and death, in joy and in tears. He is the God of all grace.

Lastly, Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders reverberates with his trust in God. God's grace is sufficient. It's the place where

we are secure, whatever the circumstances. For the grace of God encompasses his love and faithfulness, his compassion, his eternal commitment, all the resources of heaven poured out on us on earth, the place and means by which we taste already the wonders of the Kingdom. It is both our inheritance and our legacy.

Bill and Yvonne, Bertil and Alzira: we are not ready to write your obituaries yet, and we hope it may be a long time yet before they are needed. But as you continue your journey, all your life long, may you keep growing in grace and in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God; so that one day, when you stand before your Savior he will welcome you with these precious words: 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

What an obituary that would be! <<

## Reflections on the MC Leadership Transfer

Succession planning and transition in leadership is a delicate process, but when it is handled and managed properly it can ensure the success and future of any organization. It is my observation that many organizations lack either a plan or strategy of transferring leadership to the next generation. The other day I passed by a shopping mall where major construction is taking place. What often fascinates me with such buildings under construction is the scaffolding they erect. I note two things worth mentioning about scaffolds: they are temporary platforms, and they are a raised framework to provide support for the workers. Because they are not part of the building, once the work is completed they are easily dismantled without affecting the structure. The principle of leadership I see here is that leaders are to acknowledge that they will not always be around and that part of their responsibility is to purposefully erect and raise a platform for new leaders. I call this 'scaffolding in leadership.' Sadly, some leaders, because of lack of foresight and planning, are like scaffolds that

became one with the building; their individuality is so wrapped around the organization that it is difficult to separate the two.

When World Evangelical Alliance International Council (IC) received notice from Dr. Bill Taylor that he would be handing over the reins of the Mission Commission he has served so well for twenty years, my initial and normal reaction was panic. But as time went on and plans to manage the transition unfolded, my apprehensions were calmed. The process of identifying Bill's successor resulted with the appointment of Rev. Bertil Ekström, who will now lead the Mission Commission to the next level of growth and service. The Mission Commission has set a wonderful precedent, which we hope will be emulated not only by other Commissions but by the wider WEA family. The standard has been raised.

For me, it is significant that the Mission Commission chose an African nation to hold its 10<sup>th</sup> Global Consultation and the platform

to demonstrate the passing of the leadership baton. It is well documented that Africa does not have a good record of transferring power. But there is something unique about the nation that hosted the Consultation, South Africa, a nation that has moved from the harrowing past to non-racial, non-sexist democratic government. Under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, South Africa was

blessed to see this giant leader hand power to his successor after completing his first five-year term. He demonstrated that scaffolding in leadership is a temporary thing and that the success of a nation depends on a peaceful transfer of power. Africa is blessed to have hosted this great occasion and thus to bear witness to the history-making transfer of leadership. May the Mission Commission grow from strength to strength. It is my hope and prayer that Bertil will remember where to go when he next passes on the baton... <<

*Ndaba Mazabane,  
South Africa*

This text was originally presented as a plenary session at the Consultation in South Africa, June 2006. The article gives a brief historical review of the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, beginning with some general considerations on the history of the Alliance and focusing on the Mission Commission from its beginning in 1975.

# From Seoul to Cape Town

## A missionary journey

### Historical review

#### The birth and re-organization of the WEA

In 1846, the Evangelical Alliance was formed during a gathering in London attended by 800 Christians representing 11 countries from Europe and North America.<sup>1</sup> Soon, there were branches of the Evangelical Alliance in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, United States, Sweden, India, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Austria, Denmark and Italy. Before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, national alliances had also been established in Russia, Poland, Estonia, Malta and Greece.

From the beginning, the Evangelical Alliance had an emphasis on evangelization and mission alongside the desire for unity of Christians. David Howard quotes William Hogg, who states that:

"From the first it was strongly missionary and tried to foster a co-operative, united missionary endeavour. The monthly journal of the Alliance, *Evangelical Christendom*, from its first issue in 1847 carried considerable news

of missionary work everywhere. Each of the great Alliance conferences devoted much attention to the subject of missions and missionary co-operation."<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, the name was changed to World's Evangelical Alliance. Though not organized by the World's Evangelical Alliance, some important mission conferences were organized in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Edinburgh 1910, Panama 1916, Le Zoute in Belgium 1926 (where African leaders met), Jerusalem 1928, Madras 1938. The World Council of Churches had been formed in 1948, partly as a result of some of these conferences. It is interesting to note that both Panama 1916 and Le Zoute 1926 were reactions to Edinburgh 1910, because Latin Americans and Africans felt that Edinburgh did not evaluate correctly the status of the Christian churches in respective regions.

The World's Evangelical Alliance had lost very much of its dynamism, and the last conference organized by the Alliance had been held in 1907 with a low attendance. There was a need for something new, and in 1951, 105 years after the foundation of the Evangelical Alliance, The World Evangelical Fellowship was founded, based on the former Alliance. This time the gathering was in the

Netherlands with 21 countries represented.<sup>3</sup>

Four commissions were formed in 1951: Evangelism, Missionary, Literature and Christian Action. The chairman of the Missionary Commission, as they called it, was Dr Clyde W. Taylor from the USA, and the commission had the purpose to "promote closer coordination and cooperation between missionary societies in different countries where greatly needed."<sup>4</sup> Clyde Taylor, together with other WEF leaders, made many trips around the world encouraging Evangelicals to unity and mission. He later became the General Secretary of WEF and a key person in the preparations for the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization in 1974.

A transition took place in 1975 when Waldron Scott was seconded by the Navigators in the USA to lead the WEF, becoming the first fulltime executive secretary. Now the commissions were the Theological Commission, the Missions Commission, the Communications Commission and the Women's Commission. Scott held the position of General Secretary until 1982 when David Howard was invited to the replace him.

*Bertil Ekström,  
Brazil*

<sup>1</sup> John W. Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship—A Centenary Tribute to the Life and Work of the World's Evangelical Alliance 1846-1946*, (London & Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1946), 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> David M. Howard, *The Dream that Would not Die*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Harold W. Fuller, *People of the Mandate – The Story of the World Evangelical Fellowship*, (Grand Rapids: WEF and Baker Book House, 1996), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Howard, 1986: 32.



## The Mission Commission

Looking more specifically to the history of the Mission Commission since 1975, we could describe it as a history of hard work and success. In 1972, Clyde Taylor, who had been in charge of the Missionary Commission since 1951, made a trip to Asia and reported the following on the mission situation around the world:

We eventually reached certain conclusions regarding evangelical mission strength in the world. There are only 9 evangelical missions associations in the world... The total missionary staff of these 9 fellowships approximates 20,000 overseas missionaries. For a total picture... there are at least 30,000 evangelical missionaries on active duty now. Of these, two-thirds are directly or indirectly related to WEF.<sup>5</sup>

Based on these observations, Taylor proposed the establishment of a commission on Mission “that could give leadership and capitalize on the desire for cooperation between these various missions efforts.”<sup>6</sup> The result was that the General Assembly of WEF in 1974, immediately after the Lausanne congress, decided to form the Missions Commission with the following purposes:

1. To provide coordination, services, and exchange of information to member associations;
2. To offer assistance and resources for seminars, study conferences and international meetings as desired;
3. To provide mutual assistance in developing missions, education, and exchange of personnel; and,
4. To encourage the establishment of national committees where none exist.<sup>7</sup>

In 1975, in Seoul, Waldron Scott, the General Secretary of WEF, added to those purposes three reasons for the commission’s existence:

1. The World Evangelical Fellowship must keep the missionary task of the Church before the evangelical churches throughout the world;
2. The World Evangelical Fellowship needs a body to stimulate and provide guidance on

5 Howard, 1986: 173.

6 Howard, 1986: 174.

7 Howard, 1986: 174.



3. There is the need for a bridge-building body between the new Third World Missions and the traditional Western Missions so that help can travel in both directions in the furtherance of the Lord’s work worldwide.<sup>8</sup>

There were also other recommendations such as that the MC should not be composed of less than 20 members appointed by the Executive Council, that a steering committee of not more than 7 members should be named, and that a full-time executive officer of the commission should be appointed, preferably ‘a youngish person of some missionary experience from the Third World, who would introduce refreshing Third World Mission concepts to the MC.’<sup>9</sup> The steering committee was formed by Dr Wade Coggins, USA; Dr David Cho, Korea; Ernest Oliver, England; and Theodore Williams, India.

Taking this meeting of the steering committee of WEF in Seoul in 1975 as the starting point for the Mission Commission as we have it today, I would like to divide the 31 years of the existence of the MC in seven periods.

### 1. 1975 to 1979 – The emergence of missions movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America

1975: Dr. Chun Chae Ok (South Korea) was appointed the first Executive Director of the MC. She was the first Korean woman in history to serve as a missionary, working in

8 Howard, 1986: 175.

9 Howard, 1986: 175.

Pakistan for 13 years.

1977: The first meeting of leaders of mission associations happened in January in Bombay, India. Twelve people attended. Ernest Oliver from England became the chairman succeeding Wade Coggins.

1979: In January a meeting was held in Bad Liebenzell, Germany. Twenty-seven mission leaders from six continents gathered. Papers were now given on “Unreached Peoples,” “Aid and Development,” “Emerging Third World Missions,” and “Strategy for Third World Mission.” Ernst Vatter became the new chairman of the MC and Chun Chae Ok announced that she could not continue as Executive Director. Dr. Theodore Williams (India) was chosen to be the new Executive Director and Panya Baba of Nigeria was also elected to the commission. The first official publication of the MC came out from this gathering entitled *World Missions—Building Bridges or Barriers*.

### 2. 1980 to 1985 – Bridging North and South – old and new sending

1982: The next major meeting of the MC was in Bangalore, India, where Theodore Williams lived. Forty leaders from five continents considered the theme “Together in Mission,” with emphasis on training of missionaries and partnership between Western and “emerging” missions. A book also came out from this consultation called *Together in Mission*.

An open letter from the participants was circulated to churches around the world, noting:

1. The need to re-evaluate the quality and validity of missionary training programs;

2. The urgency to create avenues by which missions training programs become responsive to changing situations and needs;
3. The importance of stimulating spiritual development, prayer and holy boldness in facing human opposition and satanic forces;
4. The importance of conserving present personnel for the purpose of producing an increased percentage of long-term missionaries.<sup>10</sup>

Another outcome from this gathering was the formation of several units within the MC, such as the Research and Information Unit, the Missions Education Unit, and the Missiology Unit (divided into Theological issues and Practical issues). The Research and Information Unit started to produce a bulletin called “Bridging Peoples” in a co-operation between the MC and OC International.

1984: In this year, Tom Chandler, who had worked as a missionary in Singapore and Indonesia, joined the MC on a full-time basis as administrative assistant to Theodore Williams. Under Chandler’s leadership, several mission conferences and consultations were held. Contacts started with the leadership in Latin America, which later became the COMIBAM conference and continental mission co-operation.

1985: A Consultation was held in Jos, Nigeria.

### 3. 1986 to 1989 - Leadership transition and missionary training

1986: Ten years after the official formation of the Missions Commission, a new epoch starts. During the General Assembly of WEF in Singapore (where WEA at that time had its International Office), Dr. William (Bill) Taylor (USA/Costa Rica) was appointed the new Executive Director. Due to other responsibilities within the WEF, Theodore Williams had stepped down and became the MC Chairman.

The Mission Commission, under the leadership of Bill Taylor, has developed from a few committed people to a worldwide community of mission leaders, representing both old and new sending countries. Apart from the example of some passionate MC leaders, encouraging mission work around the globe, and many good intentions, what

10 Howard, 1986: 179.

Bill inherited was an almost empty file with the title Missions Commissions. As we have seen, a lot had been done in the name of the MC, but there was not much of an organized structure to pursue the established goals.

Bill had natural links to Latin America and I suppose that it was not difficult for him to give support to the growing mission awareness in the Latin American continent. The COMIBAM conference was being prepared and Theodore Williams had already engaged the MC in the process.

1987: COMIBAM I – Sao Paulo, Brazil. The conference was not a MC event but an important milestone for mission movements in the Ibero-American countries, sparking the emergence of mission movements all over the continent and giving birth to the COMIBAM partnership that we see today. During the tough years of financial shortage and leadership transitions, it was the MC, who helped COMIBAM to survive.

1989: An important emphasis from the beginning of Bill’s leadership was Missionary Training. A first consultation on Missionary Training was held in Manila, Philippines, resulting in the book *Internationalizing Missionary Training – A Global Perspective*, edited by Bill Taylor.

### 4. 1990 to 1992 – Cooperation and strategic alliances

1992: New staff: Dr. Jonathan Lewis (Argentina/USA)

With a continuous concern to see training centers established among the new sending movements, Jon Lewis was invited to be part of the MC staff. So far, Bill had been the only staff, so it was a 100% growth of personnel. Jon has developed a network of mission trainers and teachers known today as the IMTN, and participated in seminars and consultations in many places. In 1995, Jon moved to Argentina to help start a training center in Córdoba that has become a model for pre-field cross-cultural training. But Jon’s skills were not just in Missiological Pedagogy, but also revealed in administration and publication of books. His contribution during the last 14 years as MC staff has been tremendous.

The second global MC convocation in this new phase was the consultation on Strategic Alliances in Global Ministry held in Manila in 1992. Based on the plenary sessions and discussions of this consultation, the book *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in*

*Missions* was published. During the Ex Co meetings in Manila, David Lee of Korea was named Chair of the MC, replacing Theodore Williams.

### 5. 1993 to 1997 – ReMAP I and National Mission Movements

The fifth period of the MC was intensive, focusing primarily on the Attrition project and on National Mission Movements.

1994: The ReMAP I study (Reducing Missionary Attrition Project) was launched with Rudy Girón as the coordinator. Mission movements from 14 countries were studied in terms of their premature loss of missionaries.

A seminar on Missionary Training was organized in Pasadena, USA, attended by 96 key leaders from 32 countries, and resulting in the book *Establishing Ministry Training; A Manual for Programme Developers*, edited by Robert Ferris.

1995: A Regional Consultation for Missionary Training was held in New Zealand.

1996: The results of the REMAP I study were presented and discussed in a consultation at All Nations Christian College, in Ware, UK. The book *Too Valuable to Lose* came out of that study and has been adopted by many as a text book in Missionary Training.

1997: The consultation in Vancouver, Canada, focused on National Mission Movements. A task force on NMM was created under the leadership of Met Castillo and Geoff Tuncliffe.

COMIBAM II was organized in Acapulco, Mexico, with an active participation of the MC and its leadership.

### 6. 1998 to 2001 – Global missiology and Great Commission Roundtable

The sixth period includes the final years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and the first of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium. Interesting things were happening on the global scene of mission. The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, started in 1989, had announced the intention to bring its activity to a close. The Lausanne Movement had lost much of its support in Europe and was searching for new ways of being relevant. New networks had been formed gathering mission movements regionally or ministry-focused organizations internationally. An initiative came from Norwegian mission leaders to convene a meeting for the



leadership of all these networks and umbrella organizations related to mission. In March 1999, 100 leaders met in Hurdahl, Norway, to discuss the situation. An important process of reconciliation between mission leaders started in this meeting. The result was the creation of the Great Commission Roundtable, with a Facilitation Team formed by two representatives from the MC, two from the Lausanne Movement, two from the AD 2000 Movement and two from other international networks. GCR has played an important role for some years by bringing people together from the different networks. The situation is slightly different today, with a stronger Lausanne and a more open architecture in the MC and the need for GCR in the future has been discussed.

1999: Approaching the year 2000, there was not much of serious missiological reflection among Evangelicals. In 1999 a consultation on Global Missiology was convened by the MC in the historical site of Iguassu, Brazil, where Jesuit mission had its heyday in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. One-hundred and sixty mission leaders from 53 countries reflected historically, theologically, missiologically, practically and strategically on the mission of the church. Important themes for the new millennium were identified which have given the reflective agenda of the MC since that date. The book *Global Missiology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* has become a reference in missiological thinking.

The task forces and networks met three days before the main consultation and the task force on NMM presented a comparison between mission movements based on a research on both OSC and NSC. Out of that, a manual for Starting and Strengthening National Mission Movements was published in 2001.

2000: A new staff member was added to the team. Bertil Ekström, Brazil, was invited to focus on NMM, particularly in the NSC.

2001: In the spirit of GCR, a consultation was co-convened between the MC and GCR in Port Dickson, Malaysia. The main focus of the consultation was the cooperation between the different players on the mission ground. During the two days the MC was gathered after the GCR consultation, most of the time was dedicated to the task forces and networks.

## 7. 2002 to 2006 – Globalization and re-envisioning of the MC

The seventh period in our histori-

cal review starts with the GLC meeting in Hoddesdon, UK in 2002. The first steps to re-envisioning of MC were taken during that meeting. K. Rajendran was appointed as the new Chairman of the Global Leadership Council (the new name of the former Executive Committee). A series of factors led to a deep analysis of the future of the MC, and the GLC started to plan for major changes in the structure. A survey was done among the MC associates and a SWOT analysis by the GLC members helped to define the re-envisioning of the MC.

2003: The consultation in Vancouver presented the results of one of the studies done by one of working groups linked to the Task Force on Missiology. The book *One World or Many*, edited by Richard Tiplady was launched and the plenary sessions discussed various aspects on the impact of Globalization on Mission.

2004: The GLC met again, this time in the Netherlands, to finish the work on restructuring the MC. Two other important things happened in this year: the invitation to Kees van der Wilden to become a staff member, and the launching of the REMAP II research focussing on missionary retention.

2006: Cape Town, South Africa – Global Mission Issues Summit

## How has the missionary force developed from 1975 to 2006?

It could be hard to answer that question. But if we compare the available statistics we will notice the following:

In 1972, there were from Africa – 1,000 missionaries; Asia – 900 missionaries; Latin America – 800 missionaries; and 700 from other regions – a total number of 3,400 missionaries from the Two Thirds World. I would guess that was less than 10% of the cross-cultural missionaries. In 1980, the number was for Africa – 5,700; Asia 6,000; Latin America 1,100 and other regions 700 – a total number of 13,500 missionaries (something between 15% and 20% of all cross-cultural missionaries). In 1988 the numbers were Africa 15,000; Asia 17,300; Latin America 3,000 and other regions 700 – a total number of 36,000 – 30% of the total missionary force. In 2001, Africa had decreased to 12,500, Asia increased to 69,200 and Latin America increased to 10,200 and other regions increased to 3,600. Two Thirds World had 86,000 cross-cultural missionaries – now

43% of all the cross-cultural missionaries.<sup>11</sup> I believe that the numbers today are approximately 50% of the missionary force coming from the Two Thirds World and 50% from the non- Two Thirds World.

## Conclusion and challenges

Based on the history of the Mission Commission, we can conclude that the MC has accomplished its objectives with an emphasis on the following aspects:

1. A meeting place for mission practitioners and candidates to reach a high level of commitment has been provided by the MC;
2. Bridge-building between the various mission movements has been a priority of the MC during these years, leading to cooperation and partnerships;
3. Missiological reflection, missionary training and production of mission books have been important contributions to the worldwide mission community;
4. The Mission Commission was established primarily to encourage the emergence of national mission movements around the world; and
5. The work done by the MC has been one important factor in the growth of mission initiatives around the world and of the number of missionaries, particularly from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Is there a future for a structure like the MC? Are we just the left-over of some kind of outdated type of organization that no longer has any real value except for keeping the memory of past success? I am not sure that we have found the ideal model for our times but I can assure you that we have been trying. The re-envisioning of the MC originated in an open discussion of our future, including the possibility of closing down. This consultation shows that perhaps we still have a reason for being. The challenge is to continue to be relevant both for OSC and NSC. We are not an exclusive club of old good friends, although we recognize that we are friends and some of us not so young anymore. We welcome more friends and younger people, both women and men, to join us.

Looking at our history and the core val-

<sup>11</sup> The statistics are from Keyes, Lawrence, *The Last Age of Missions*, 1983: 64-65 (ref. 1972 and 1980); Pate, Larry, *From Every People*, 1989:18-20 (ref. 1988); and from Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 2000 – CD Rom (ref. 2001).

ues that guide us, what are the challenges for the next few years?

1. Keep our passion, for Jesus, for his Kingdom and for his Mission. We are committed to reach the unreached, wherever they are. In everything we do this must be the ultimate goal—that people everywhere have the opportunity to respond to the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Continue to provide a meeting place for those who are and desire to be engaged in mission. A therapeutic community of leaders where we can relax and be ourselves, but also where reconciliation and healing of wounds occurs. We are all involved in a daily warfare, in different levels and not least spiritual. The MC would like to be a bridge between leaders and not a wall.
3. A third challenge is for the MC to be inclusive, but not without a profile. To be honest, I am still not sure what it means to be evangelical. The definitions vary in different parts of the world and it is so easy to put people in excluding categories. For a Latin American it is almost shocking to learn that in India some Catholics are more Evangelical than some people from mainline churches. Coming from a Baptist Pentecostal background, I have difficulty in understanding the anti-Pentecostal attitude among some Evangelicals. At the

same time I reprove the immature attitude of some Pentecostals and Charismatics thinking that they are more spiritual than others. And I could go on and you know exactly what I am talking about. How do we keep a profile as Evangelicals at the same time that we are sufficiently open to include those who have a true commitment to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment? I believe we need to work hard in overcoming old paradigms that have divided Christians into different boxes and start to relate more intentionally to the WCC Mission Department, to the Lausanne movement and other international networks related to mission and even to some of the charismatic movements that are becoming more mission minded.

4. We are truly global, no doubt about that. The consultation in South Africa was a proof of that. Three-hundred people from 57 nations: North-South-East-West, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, Down-under and Up-above. But what could we do to be even more representative in terms of the worldwide church? Apart from the ecclesiastical barriers that I have already mentioned, I think we still have fences that need to be demolished. Our gender distribution is not something to be boastful about. People from non-English speaking countries can still feel limitations in participating in dis-

cussions. We have few younger people in the MC, reflecting, of course, the fact that they are few in leadership positions in our mission movements. The challenge for us as MC in general and for the Task Forces and Networks in particular, is to continue to engage people from different regions of the world, women and men, young and not-so-young. We would also like to see working teams on missiological reflection, strategic issues, member care, and so on., using other languages as well.

5. Reflective practitioners – At the same time that we are fully engaged in missionary action in various ways—as church leaders, mission executives, on-field missionaries, mission teachers, etc., our desire is to be reflective as well, constantly evaluating what we are doing and searching for better strategies of serving the Kingdom. It is important to maintain a balance here: reflection without action is ineffective; action without reflection is hazardous.

We are not the only ones on the missionary scene today, but I believe we have a mandate that relates to the WEA-structures and beyond. Let us think, discuss, reflect, pray, commit ourselves and plan during this week as if the fulfillment of the Great Commission depended on us.

“To the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus Christ!” <<

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Many years ago, Panya Baba, of the Evangelical Church of West Africa in Nigeria, told me the grand story of how the Gospel finally came to the Gwandará-ra unreached people of his nation. Their story illustrates what the Mission Commission has been about, what God is doing today in our world, and the role that each of us has to play in God's Kingdom enterprise. This northern Nigerian agricultural people group, at that time numbering close to 10,000, had existed for most of its history untouched by the Gospel. Our story can be told in two chapters. Chapter one reviews how earlier teams of dedicated European and North American missionaries on two different occasions had attempted to penetrate this spirit-worshipping people group with the Good News, but to no avail. They withdrew without seeing tangible evidence of God's breakthrough. It seemed so fruitless.

## Reflections from Twenty Years in this Global MC Journey and Enterprise

*As we get started — the power of the Dancing Story of God, for our Story has a Story Teller*

Chapter two begins in the late 1980's when yet a third missionary team accepted the challenge to proclaim Christ amongst this unreached people group. Christian missionaries with their families moved into the new territory, received permission from the local elders and leaders to live on and to cultivate the land. The new team already spoke Hausa; so the main barriers were not linguistic but cultural and spiritual. Gradually trust developed and over time the missionaries realized that in "deep Hausa" this people group was called not the "Gwandará" but the "Gwandará-wa". But what was the difference? The term "Gwandará-wa" speaks of "a people who prefer to dance". Where did this name come from? As the missionaries dialogued with the old story-tellers, they learned that early in the nineteenth century Muslim armies had invaded Nigeria from the north, forcing conversions at sword point. A few people groups such as the Gwandará-wa had rejected Islam because they disliked the rules and legalism of the new religion and they preferred the freedom of their spirit-worship, they would rather dance than choose Islam. And that is how they got their unique name!

The missionaries returned to their homes and discussed the situation, asking the question: "How does this new information shape our communication now? What could be a new way to bridge the Gospel of Jesus to these peoples who so love to dance?" Instead of stamping out indigenous cultural patterns, they yearned to speak of a Gospel of grace and liberty communicated in understandable ways. One of their methods was unique: they would dance the Word of God to the Gwandará-wa people! Appropriate rhythms and movements began to unveil the Creator and His creation story of redemption; on through the story of the nation Israel; into the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Christ. The Holy Spirit used the Gospels and the book of Acts to break through with supernatural power, and people began to turn to Jesus Christ!

But who were these creative missionaries who prior to finding the cultural key to the Gwandará-wa had been equipped in their own cross-cultural training program? Neither North Americans nor Europeans, they were some of the now close to 1,500 African cross-cultural

missionaries of the Evangelical Missionary Society. This is the mission agency of the Evangelical Church of West Africa, one of the larger Christian denominations in all of Africa with over 2 million attendees. Some of the EMS missionaries themselves are first-generation believers in Christ, imbued with a passion to take Christ to the unreached people groups of their own country. And today there are not only missionaries but mission leaders from the same Gwandará-wa people in Nigeria.

But more significantly, at the heart of the historical development of our Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the term *peri-choresis*: *peri*—around, and *choresis*— mutual interpenetration, and from this term we derive choreography, chorus, dance. This was one of the terms that the early church fathers were able to describe the inner life of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity mutually share in the life of the others, so that none is isolated or detached from the actions of the others. As John Piper states it in his book, "Desiring God", "Within the triune Godhead (Father, Son, and holy Spirit), God has been upper-

most in His own affections for all eternity. Therefore, God has been supremely happy in the fellowship of the trinity." The Triune Three dance so skillfully that while we know they are three, at times they appear to be one, at times two and at times clearly three, but we can't quite tell at any given moment. They spin, touch down and invite us into the dance. And thus the global Christian Trinitarian Missional Community is birthed—through Israel and then the Church—then and now and tomorrow.

The MC has moved in a kind of global, missional dance during the years that I have been honoured to serve it. Its future is contingent on many things, some known, revealed, and some yet to be revealed. The key is not whether it is an alliance, a network, a family, a missional community. The key is how can this missional community serve the global church in a new world for the future? And what kind of leadership will it take? And what will be its dance?

### Reflections from 20 years...stretch marks of growth

I confess that in June 1986, I was surprised by God, by history...and it's all written on a paper place mat that I preserved from a conversation in a Singapore hotel with David Howard (then International Director of WEA) and Theodore Williams (both MC leader and WEA Chairman). I was born in Latin America, had always dreamed of returning to serve and die there. But my father, my mission leader, spoke to me in almost prophetic terms when early in my mission career he told me, "Bill, your future is not here in Latin America." That was confirmed by my wife's words many times, for God had given Yvonne a gift of prophetic insight and wisdom. But I could not believe God would ever take me out of Latin America. But he did in 1985, when we moved to the USA where I would teach on the mission faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School—TEDS. But God used TEDS to extract me from Latin America but not to stay there, and within a year we were living in a small town in central USA where I had a part-time pastorate. Enter Dave Howard, my mentor since the early 70's. For he invited me to Singapore, June 1986, to attend the WEA General Assembly. And it was there, less than 12 hours after arrival that the surprise request came to serve the MC. It was an urgent decision and I believe I gave a reckless "yes" without the initial affirmation from my family. It created tensions with Yvonne for this was a major career decision

that I was making without her full participation. But within a month God confirmed that radical decision.

I have in my files those core dreams from notes I took during my first Executive Committee meeting in Singapore for I was the secretary note taker. And so began my MC life, starting with a very part-time-no-pay job, then raising support to half time, and finally in 1990 a full time venture with God and his global movement. During those early years I was mentored and guided by gifted and godly global servants, and I mention a few of them: Dave Howard, then international director of WEA; Indian Theodore Williams, then chair of MC and WEA; American Wade Coggins, former leader of EFMA who helped us create the core MC infrastructure; New Zealander Ray Windsor, medical missionary to South Asia, a veteran, patient, indefatigable servant who offered to serve me. Later God brought Korean David Tai-Woong Lee who followed Theo Williams as MC Chair. Jon Lewis came on staff and later Bertil Ekström and then Kees van der Wilden.

As I reflect on these last two decades, I'm struck by the striking convergence that came to me, for all my dreams, my education and training, my experience, my skills, my commitments...they all fit within and were poured into the MC. The MC in those early years was created to serve what was called twenty years ago "Emerging Missions", or "third world missions", but it rapidly grew to embrace the entire worldwide mission movement. I have had the privilege of serving with collegial colleagues (and God delivering me from most of the non-collegial people who were building their own empires). These women and men of the MC became my global tribe, my people, my clan. And the concept of collegiality plus interdependence became a marker for the MC. And for that reason at MC events we wear name tags with no titles, for we are community of equals in our diversity.

### The growth and maturity of the Mission Commission

Many times Jon Lewis and I reflected on the reality that the MC was so much more than just two staff members. It was the sum total of over 150 people who volunteered to engage, to serve, to produce, to cover their time and travel. And here I could name the entire MC Global Leadership Council and the nearly 200 MC Associates. We convened key consultations that would generate strategic

publications. Jon Lewis taught me the difference between program, process and product outcomes that make consultations dance and work for us. We began to resource the global church in mission and not just Third World Missions. We linked with other like-minded movements, and grappled with the challenge of trying to work with people who sought our subservience to them and their vision and structures. On a number of occasions we had to disengage and release these groups to their destiny. Early on the Lord also taught me, "Bill, any group of ministry that is conceived out of division or clouded motives does not have my ultimate blessing. So beware!"

*Bill Taylor, WEA  
Global Ambassador,  
USA*

I thank God for the staff team he brought to the MC. Jon Lewis came on board in 1992, offering his singular gifts in strategic thinking, funding ideas, missionary training, and publications. Because of his skills, MC publications have had an impact far beyond the size of our staff or even the MC Associates team. Jon brought his abilities to convert our consultations from plenaries into process and product convocations, geared for a long term impact. Bertil Ekström joined us in 2002 and Kees van der Wilden in 2004. Little did any of us know at that time that Bertil would be God's choice to lead the MC into the future. I so thank God for him, for never at any time did we sense that Bertil wanted this job. He would have been crazy to want it, but those kinds of Christians are out there! And at SA06 we presented David Ruiz of Guatemala as a new full time staff, with Younoussa Djao of Ivory Coast to facilitate our African Venture Project.

In 2003 it became evident that the MC had to re-envision or re-structure itself if we were to be viable and vital for the future. We had inherited and grown an established structure, but that structure, and the WEA parameters perhaps, were hindering and not helping. Over a two year process we listened to our full community, engaged a very serious self-evaluation process, critiqued ourselves, and asked many questions. Were we an association, an alliance or a network? Were there other terms to describe us? Ultimately we concluded that we wanted to operate as a network whilst providing the services of an alliance. But that would mean that those who committed to us would have to contribute financially on a yearly basis. We dissolved the old MC Associate program, released all of our friends, and then we invited them back under the new guidelines. Most of the decisions were ratified in a 2004 meeting of the Global



Leadership Council in The Netherlands. And that freed up our architecture to invite more colleagues and categories of people into the MC Associate relationship; we created some new MC units and developed a linking/docking mechanism that would foster win/win relationships with other global ministries like SEALINK, ETHNE, TIE, IPA, The Refugee Highway Partnership, and other groups now in dialogue with us. But if we are to become a ministry that the Spirit can use we must always be open to change and growth.

### Some personal theological and missiological stretch marks

I had been formed in a conservative, cessationist, Evangelical background, although early on during my 17 years in Latin America I began to suspect that there was more to God and his church. In WEA I would meet the global church. In WEA I would encounter the presence of the power of the Spirit in the world and church. In WEA I would engage with gracious sacramental liturgical servants. In WEA I would grow my world and my understanding of the Body of Christ. This year we celebrated the Centennial of the Azusa Street Movement, with the massive implications of that vast, global Pentecostal/charismatic movement around the world. For above all I want to be a practicing supernaturalist; to be known as an empowered evangelical.

Early on in my work with the MC I sensed the need to think more seriously about mission, since for so many years I was considered an activist. It was at our 1999 missiological consultation at Iguassu, Brazil, where we coined that pregnant concept of the “reflective practitioner”. This speaks of the person who graciously combines both commitment to action as well as commitment to reflection. The Iguassu consultation challenged us as the MC and all of our MC Associates. It released us to speak with courage, to critique with grace, truth and love, to engage with, write about and follow up on the core themes. For we must face the need to seriously examine what kind of a Gospel has been taken around the world, whether in North America or Africa. What does Rwanda teach us, or the high rate of HIV/AIDS in “Christian” nations?

I began to learn new language and new ways of looking at the world come into my life. We were challenged to question established definition, to question the numbers game, mission statistics, slogans that can create false expectations. We were challenged to move into both networks and alliances, to create docking mechanisms and to re-envision the MC structures. We went beyond the Three Selves to the Fourth and Fifth Self: self theologizing and self missiologizing, and from there into Trinitarian Missiology. We realized that we need a much more robust spirituality. We had to ask questions about how to equip, support and shepherd men and women for effective, longer-term cross-cultural ministry.

I also learned some hard lessons as I related with strong mission leaders around the world. I found myself being used by a

few, and I asked God to free me from people who wanted to connect with the MC out of clouded motives. We suffered dearly the loss of some of our key leaders because deep personal issues that disqualified them from ministry. I well remember weeping on many occasions, and asking God to purify my own heart as I served him.

### Shaped by many

In many ways I have been shaped by three generations, and ultimately my silent partner God has given me key older women and men who have spoken into my MC life. At this stage of life I tend to prefer the people with scars, those with unanswered prayer, those whose life is marked by a long obedience in the same direction. I have been drawn to the older veterans of mission and discipleship, and strangely struck by some of my peers who were program performers but not willing to be de-constructed and later re-constructed by the burning Spirit of God. I have been shaped by many of the younger generations with their future before them, restless, creative, innovators, incubators, questioning systems and structures, seeking the mind of God for the future of church and mission.

And I have been indelibly shaped by my wife, Yvonne. She is the reflective member of our family, the contemplative, the theologian, my editor, speaking into me from her depths of wisdom and encouragement. And it was not easy for her to find her place within the MC, for this seemed to be such a solitary role, too much on the road. She became my silent partner and my co-pilgrim, for together we would battle to finish well. I rightly spoke of her wherever I went, but few really knew her. Until SA06!

I was called into deeper spirituality by the knocks of life, by the reality that many prayers were not being answered, by the shattering experience that came to me when somebody I deeply loved for so many years walked away from Christ in a crisis of faith, and who has not made the way back. In the last ten years I have been forced to ask the riveting question: why am I a Christian, really? Again it was the call to the long obedience in the same direction and then gradually receiving the gift of being able to live with greater mystery, which in turn has freed me from certain pressures and addictions.

**I am profoundly grateful to God that we face a leadership transition during SA06.**

During the season that Yvonne and I, and our three children, served in Guatemala, my father taught me a profound lesson. He has served with brilliance and godliness as the CEO of our American mission agency, combining visionary and shepherding gifts. He had an uncanny capacity to spot emerging leaders and challenge them to rise above the average. But during his 59<sup>th</sup> year he told the mission Council that he and my mother wanted to celebrate their next birthday in Spain as field missionaries. The Council was stunned, for they had never heard this before. The chairman, a successful banker, said to my father, “Bill, no bank president ever returns to be a bank teller.” To which my father responded, “I do not work in a bank.” And they left for Spain to serve five strong years as servants, leaving the legacy of a unique conference centre west of Madrid, Pinos Reales. But some time afterward, Dad shared wisdom with me. “Bill, be sure to leave when people want you to stay, instead of trying to stay when people want you to leave.” I thank God for this leadership transition, for the trust the MC has shown both to me and to Bertil. We are co-servants of the MC and the global, missional church.

Half way through SA06 we would celebrate the transition ceremony and our 300 participants would witness the passing of the baton to Bertil Ekström. I have pledged to serve him and the MC as I am able. I will also assume a new role with WEA, under Geoff Tunnichliffe. When the process towards this transition was initiated in 2003, I have reflected much on leadership and changes. I was led to an excellent book that analyzes four models of leaders who retire, or step down (perhaps forced to step down). First are the generals who are removed from command and who then plan a coup to restore order and power. Then come the emperors who are also removed and who scheme to return to power. Then we see the governors (in the USA system), who step down graciously and move into new careers. Finally we observe the ambassadors, who relinquish power with gratitude but serve their mission in other dimensions and in light of their gifts and experience. I want to be an ambassador for both WEA, the MC and the global church.

### Now as we gaze into this seminal week:

We are the Mission Commission of World Evangelical Alliance, with a strap line: “Catalyzing, Connecting and Strengthening Global Mission Movements and Networks” We dream to envision the proactive, synergetic, enabling of the global mission community

to fully live, proclaim and extend to all peoples the transforming message of the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus through the power of the Spirit. The MC aims to inspire, advocate and strengthen God’s mission agenda among the global Christian community. We serve, catalyze and facilitate global missional affinity clusters for greater effectiveness, developing strategic relationships and resources. We value Evangelical, Trinitarian missiology, grace-characterized relationships and mutual accountability, grass roots needs-analysis and strategic vision, churches, mission agencies and training programs, collegiality and servanthood, reflective practitioners and forward thinking.

So might we listen to the corporate, collective yet singular voice of the Spirit? During SA06 we would have 12 very different working teams, each with heavy agenda and priority commitments. We then had plenaries, developing many key mission issues. We would eat and drink together from morning to night. So how were we listen to each other, to the world, to the global Church, to the voice of the Trinitarian Community? SA06 was not designed to be a single-focused event. So we needed each other, whether we were interested in national and regional mission movements; or missionary training; or global member care; or the new Joint Information Management Initiative Sharing; or global missiology; or the new mission mobilization task force; or our passions focus on the least reached peoples; or strategic alliances and cooperative ventures; or new realities in global tentmaking; or the Refugee Highway Partnership; or we are a South African pastor or mission leader; or whether we are passionate about business as mission.

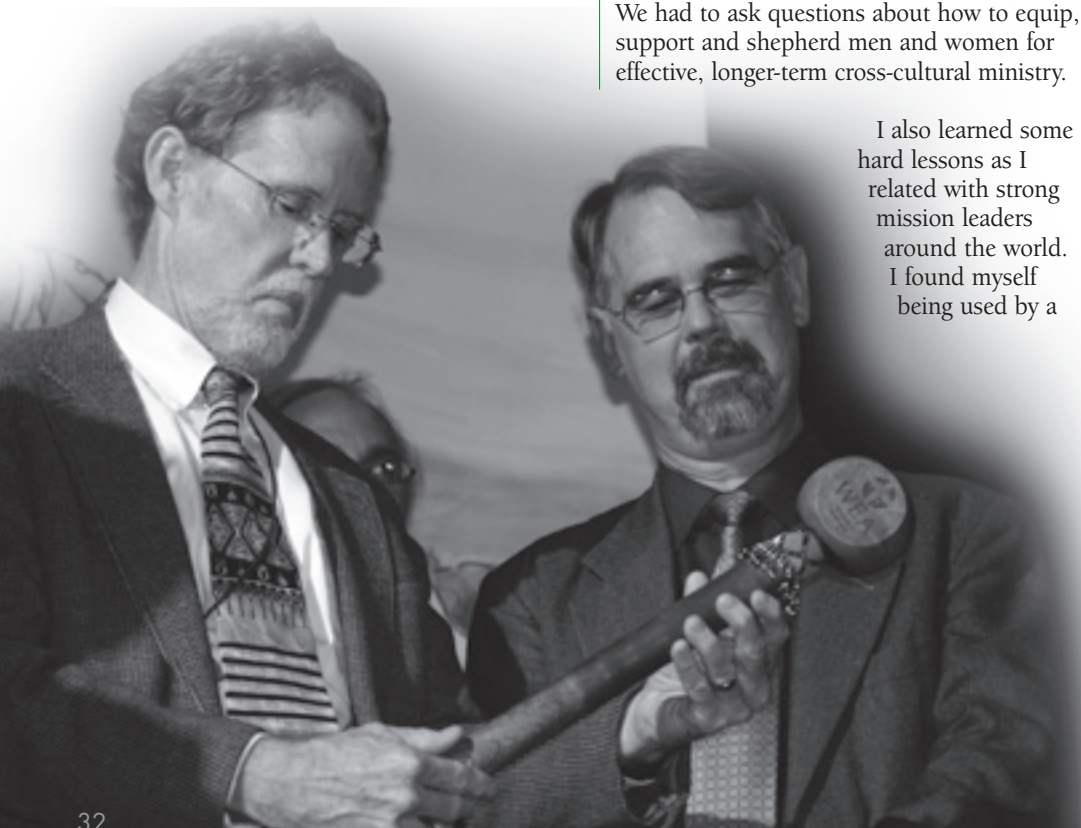
How could we learn from each other during this week as we worked, prayed, listened, grew, created, strategised, prayed and were changed by God? And here is where we might learn from an icon of the Trinity painted by the Russian iconographer Andrei Rublev in 1411. It is one of the most powerful icons for many in both the Eastern and Western churches, painted from the perspective of the three visitors to came to Abraham and Sara. Created in classic Orthodox iconography it does not match our understanding of what the Trinity would look like, but take it on faith. One of the striking elements of this depiction of the Trinity—the Father on the left, the Son in the middle and the Spirit on the right—is that their heads are inclined to each other, almost in a non-normal fashion. In the background are the oaks of Mamre, an empty tomb, and the other iconic components. But I draw



attention now only to the inclined heads, for through an icon divinity and community speak to us. The Son defers to the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit to the Son and the Father, and the Father to both the Spirit and the Son. And so during SA06, and as part of the core values of the Mission Commission, we want to defer to each other, to listen to each other, to pray and weep and laugh together, to grow and be transformed in community. It is a challenge that comes to us from art and theology, another picture of the dancing Trinity.

Finally a sensitive Portuguese word called “saudade”, and here I credit Valdir Steuermagel for introducing me to a seminal word from the Brazilian culture. It speaks of longing, yearning, painfully hoping for that which is not yet. As this terms fits my heart desires even as I review my journey with God, my 39 years of marriage to Yvonne, my three children and five grandchildren, as well as my twenty years with World Evangelical Alliance and the Mission Commission. I have “saudade” that is God-birthed in me, the longing to see God bless Bertil, his team and the Mission Commission in strikingly new ways in the near and long-term future. I have “saudade” in my yearning for ultimate justice to be made on earth where Satan, his angels and all who have opposed the living God are finally punished. And I have “saudade” as I await the day of my own resurrection.

And meanwhile, may God find me and all of us faithful until death to our Christian commitment, to our marriage vows, to our dedication to loving and “inclined heart” service to one another, to full integrity and accountability in our global and missional callings. <<





“The men of Issachar, who understood the times and what Israel should do” (1 Chr 12:32)

I have lost count of the number of times I have heard mention of these “men of Issachar” quoted in recent years.

During the recent WEA Mission Commission “Global Issues Summit” in South Africa, both WEA International Director Geoff Tunnicliffe and Bishop David Zac Niringiye of Uganda mentioned these mysterious figures. I didn’t hear much about these “men of Issachar” until this decade began, but now they seem to be everywhere. They seem to have become a cipher for the anxiety and uncertainty faced by many, as we try to give leadership to our churches and mission organisations at this time. We’re not always sure what we should do, so the reasoning goes, but they did, so let’s at least try to be like them.

# Challenges on Missiological Challenges for the Future

But how literally should we take their example? After all, they were among the groups that joined David before Saul’s demise, so maybe we are being told that we should overthrow the existing church and mission power structures (-\_-)? Or, more figuratively, maybe their example is to show us that we should try to recognise where God’s anointing and empowering is moving, and that we should do the same?

## All change, please

The Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance is in a time of transition and change. In South Africa in June, we saw the transition from the leadership of Bill Taylor to a new Executive Director, Bertil Ekström. Bertil’s presentation earlier that same week, during which he reviewed the MC’s work over the last 20 years under Bill’s leadership, showed that it has focussed on some of the key missiological challenges of our time – missionary training for the emerging (and now fully-emerged) non-Western missionary movement, partnerships, missionary attrition and retention, and missiological reflection drawn from all parts of the world. He summarised the current status of MC activity as “a packed file”, i.e. lots of programmes under way.

But what are the most pressing strategic priorities for the global missionary movement today? How do we get an overview of the complexity? Because the very title of the recent consultation – the “Global Issues Summit” – reflects a problem that was encountered as a theme for the event was sought. No single issue presented itself as a priority. At the Summit, we met together in fifteen different taskforces and networks. We did not cohere around a specific issue (although we did benefit from a diverse programme of presentations during our week together). It feels like we are standing in a “wide open space” at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with lots of options and issues to focus on. This applies to the global evangelical missionary movement as a whole, and to each of us in our own personal networks, organisations, colleges and churches.

Maybe we have been victims of our own “success” (I use the word cautiously), both in the Mission Commission and in the global missionary movement itself? We have seen how the Mission Commission of WEA has grown exponentially during the 20-year tenure of Bill Taylor. In June, there were 300 people in attendance from 54 nations (compare this

to around 120 in attendance at the 1996 equivalent consultation on missionary attraction in England). That is some growth! The Mission Commission is not just made up of its national and regional missionary alliances like COMIBAM, Global Connections and the like. It includes cross-cutting taskforces like the International Missionary Training Network, the Mission Mobilisation Task Force, international mission agencies, and individual MC Associates.

Richard Tiplady  
MC Associate and British  
Director, European  
Christian Mission

This diversity is one consequence of globalisation. According to Thomas Friedman, in *The World is Flat* (his latest book, reviewed elsewhere in this issue of *Connections*, and a follow-up to his seminal *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, we are now living with Globalisation version 3.0. Globalisation v1.0 was characterised by the globalisation of countries (we now call this “empire” or colonialism). Globalisation v2.0 is characterised by the globalisation of corporations – the global behemoths of McDonalds, Nike, Marlboro and Coca-Cola. Globalisation v3.0 is the globalisation of individuals. Individuals now have the opportunity to operate globally, setting up businesses, charities and other enterprises that have a reach far beyond their local or even national context. Individuals and

smaller groups now have the opportunity to follow Christ into the whole world, and so we are seeing the development of new forms of missionary entrepreneurship. Let’s remember that this is a classic recurring pattern in mission history. Many of the solid, reliable, trusted organisations that some of us are part of were start-ups (and upstarts) once. So let’s not stress about the new guys. And many of these new initiatives exist outside the “approved” forms, networks and structures of global mission.

## New mission, new leaders

Let me give one example, from Europe. The 24-7 Prayer Movement is a rapidly expanding global movement of young people committed to prayer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They draw conscious inspiration from the eighteenth-century Moravian missionary movement, which had a huge impact on the motivation and philosophy of the emerging Western missionary movement that we associate with the pioneering work of William Carey and others. They have a vision of an “army” of young people in every European nation, praying to and calling out the living God.

For the past few years, they have sent teams of young people to the summer party capital of Europe, the Mediterranean island of Ibiza. These young people have prayed around the island, spent time cleaning up the beaches of the abandoned detritus of Europe’s holidaying youth, such as litter, bottles, and used condoms. They have waited outside nightclubs to guide drunk and high young people who stagger out of nightclubs into taxis at 4am, helping to stop them wandering onto the highways and being knocked down by waiting cars. They have performed Christian dance music sessions in nightclubs, they have prayed with people who are lonely, and they have helped them to find Christ. In 2005, they established “a long term resident 24-7 prayer community committed to prayer, mission and justice on the island” – in other words, they have sent long-term missionaries. And all without the input of a ‘proper’ mission agency.

This raises questions of power and control to us. How do we learn from and support these new initiatives, without smothering them, trying to take over, or patronising them. How do we help them to achieve what they want to achieve?

Secondly, how do we act in the area of leadership development in the global missionary movement, especially for younger/emerging leaders? I am no longer young

- I turned 40 this year!! I have attended the last 4 of the MC’s triennial consultations, and each time I see more people present younger than I am. And that’s not just because I am getting older. The MC has been very intentional in drawing younger leaders into its networks and events. I have benefited from the investment into my life of leaders like Stanley Davies (the now-retired former director of Global Connections) and Bill Taylor. I’m now the chief executive of a mission agency myself, and I want to do the same for others. Two of my three senior staff are in their 20s, and one of them was at the “Global Issues Summit”, watching, networking and learning for himself.

I find myself asking why we don’t see more of this? Do we have a fear of personal redundancy if we train up others? If so, that is to miss the point. It is not only about training up leaders to take over our programmes, our institutions, our life work, our legacies, to carry them on. Certainly we might need to do that. But many of them won’t want to carry on our work. They will want to develop their own. It is about training up a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders who can develop their own initiatives, and who can release new resources of energy, passion and vision into the mission of Christ in the world.

## Leading through the chaos

The growth and diversity of the global missionary movement presents real challenges to those of us who aspire to serve it by leading within it. Many Western mission agencies developed models of leadership in the second half of the twentieth century that can best be described ‘military’. This isn’t all that surprising, since many of those who fought in World War Two served as missionaries afterwards, and they brought with them and served under the leadership styles with which they were familiar. In the last twenty years, this leadership style (in which you obeyed those in authority over you) has begun to prove itself ineffective. We have also seen similar hierarchical leadership styles in the non-Western missionary movement. Maybe this is partly because such styles are considered more appropriate to the cultural context from which these organisations have emerged, and partly because strong entrepreneurial leaders, who can tend by personality towards more autocratic leadership styles, have developed these



new mission organisations from nothing.

But such a style of leadership isn’t appropriate in a diverse global movement. I don’t think that the Mission Commission would have grown as it has if Bill Taylor had tried to lead it in this way. And I doubt that we will see Bertil

Ekström trying to do so either.

But what about the rest of us? All of us, regardless of our global, regional, national, organisational or ministry contexts, face similar leadership challenges. Few, if any, of us are the only ones ministering in the places we serve, and I doubt that any have the authority to dictate what all the others in our orbit should be doing. So how can we lead in a diverse environment with many actors?

I have stated already that command and control styles, in which we try to impose our will onto reality, won’t work. Managerial skills will still be useful, but they won’t be sufficient. Leaders need to be like poets, like artists, like prophets. We will have to create a language, a conceptual world, a set of images that resonate with and articulate what others are already feeling or hoping for. In so doing, we will give people the ability to explain to themselves and others what it is they aspire towards. We will create narratives into which people can fit their own stories, to help them to connect their experiences into the bigger story of what God is doing in the world today, and to drive the changes that we want to see.

Philosopher Richard Rorty writes that, “a talent for speaking differently, rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change”. Our role as leaders who are artists, poets and prophets is to help people, not to see new things, but to see familiar things in a new light. In so doing, we will be able to lead in a complex, dynamic world, and have an impact far beyond our immediate context.

We stand in a wide open space. Much is up for grabs. It could be a time of paralysis, or it could be a time of making things new. We have the opportunity to try new things, to experiment, to take risks (and to fail, and to take risks again). What a great time to be alive, and what a great time to follow Christ into the whole world.

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[www.24-7prayer.com](http://www.24-7prayer.com)









The key assumption of the studies during SA06 is that the work of spreading the good news of the Kingdom depends on God. Our work is to find our place in it; our work is about obedience. This is the challenge for each generation—to find its place and calling in God’s mission.

## Finding our place in God’s Mission

The assumption that dominates contemporary evangelical mission praxis is that Gospel mission is our business and depends on us, to the extent that we can even develop strategies to ‘finish the task.’ It is difficult to trace how we got here. I wonder whether it has to do with the Scripture portions that we read, on which we have based our mission paradigms, or the way we read the Scriptures. I have also wondered whether it has to do more with the cultures and socio-economic and political context of Europe and North America, the home of the modern missionary movement. Certainly all three factors have contributed to the getting us where we are. We must also acknowledge that our current mission paradigms are inadequate in enabling us to find our place in God’s Kingdom mission. We need to shift paradigms. We also need to re-read Scripture and find other anchor Scriptures for mission praxis.

### Rethinking the ‘Great Commission’; embracing the ‘Great Invitation’

The point of departure in plotting the coordinates of our location in God’s mission is critical. Where one starts their journey and how they start impacts their progress. The traditional starting point for most Christian perspectives on mission are one or more of the four versions of the so-called ‘Great Commission’ passages: Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, the Lucan version of Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:7-8, and the Johannean version in John 20:21-23. In fact, if we consider the motivational, biblical point of depar-

ture for the various Christian mission traditions, it is possible to place them along this ‘Great Commission’ spectrum. For example, the Evangelical Protestant paradigm of the last two centuries is based on Matthew 28:18-20; Pentecostals and Charismatics Mark 16:15-18; and Mission strategists on Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:7-8.

The blind spot of the ‘Great Commission’ paradigm is an inadequate positioning of our life and mission in the context of God’s rule and sovereignty. The Evangelical-Protestant bias toward Matthew 28:18-20, was certainly shaped by the European and North American origins of the modern Evangelical mission movement. Missiologists, notably Samuel Escobar and Andrew Walls, have pointed out a correlation between territorial empire and mission motivation over the last two centuries—reference to Pax-Romana and Pax-Britanica. I guess we now need to add ‘pax-dollar’ paradigm to acknowledge the emergence of economic empire. It is important that we acknowledge and reflect on how our contexts shape our reading of Scripture.

A re-reading of the gospel accounts in the current world context in general and the extent of the spread of the Good News about Jesus in particular, demand that we re-think the ‘go-paradigm,’ with its conquering and triumphalist undertones, in the ‘Great Commission.’ I suggest that instead of beginning with the commission at the end of the gospels, we start with the ‘invitation’

of Jesus to the disciples at the beginning of the gospels.

Consider for a moment, Jesus’ first invitation to Simon Peter, and, as far as we can, Simon Peter’s perspective, in Luke 5: 1-11. By the time of the meeting recorded in this passage, Simon must have been already acquainted with Jesus as the Rabbi who teaches with authority in Galilean synagogues. He had already been introduced by his brother Andrew, who was also a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-42). Now, they were at the Sea of Galilee, at work, after a disappointing night. Simon, like the others, must have been attentively listening to Jesus preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God, with the challenge to “repent and believe the good news” in order to enter and participate in the Kingdom (cf Mark 1:14-16).

However the defining moment for Simon Peter is the mighty catch at Jesus’ command. It was a new encounter with himself: an undeserving sinner. Then, the invitation by Jesus (also to Andrew, and the Zebedee brothers) “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Henceforth, their lives would be fashioned according to the life of the Teacher-Messiah. The disciple’s vocation is to follow: “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men,” which is also translated “Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.” It is in following him that they would become fishers of men. Like the rest of his colleagues, Simon left every-

Dr D Zac Niringiye,  
Uganda

thing and followed Him. His entire life would hitherto be shaped by Jesus Kingdom mission. What a great invitation—to participate in making the kingdom of God a reality! It is instructive to note that the invitation “follow me....” were also Jesus’ last recorded personal words to Simon Peter, after the resurrection (cf John 21:15-22).

It is amazing how dominant this invitation to ‘come’ is in the gospels. To this day it is Jesus who invites us to live in God’s mission, His mission. It is him who carries us to the ends of the world, where he is at work. We go where Jesus invites us to follow Him! My plea to us, therefore, is to shift paradigms—from the Great Commission to the Great Invitation; from the preoccupation of ‘making disciples’ to ‘being disciples.’ This is the message of what we now call the Lord’s Prayer.

### Prayer and living God’s Mission – Luke 11:1-13

Note that what prompted the disciples to make the plea “Lord, teach us to pray” was their observation of Jesus’ life—an integrated life. “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34). Note what they asked: “Lord Teach us *to* pray” and not “Lord Teach us *how* to pray.” Their request could be phrased like: ‘How can we live like you?’ It is a quest about living and not just the activity. Our challenge too is more about the disposition of our lives, the discipline of prayer and what it is all about, rather than how to pray. We should not be surprised then that Jesus’ response focuses on the disciples’ life rather than the dynamics of prayer. Firstly, it is living in relationship with God: *Father* (the intimacy of fellowship, Abba—Daddie). Jesus clarifies that the context and content of prayer is relationship with God as Father. It is all about God, his sovereignty and his glory—“Hallowed be *your* name, *your* kingdom come, *your* will be done.”

Jesus’ mission while on earth was the Kingdom of God. He preached, taught and demonstrated the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was not just his message; He was its message. In him the rule, reign and dominion of God were present on earth in a new way. As Origen, one of the church fathers expressed it, Jesus is the *autobasileia*—the Kingdom in person. Indeed “there is no way to know the Kingdom except by learning of the story of this man Jesus. For his story defines the nature of how God rules and how such a rule creates a corresponding world

and society” (S Hauerwas, 1981: 45). The Gospel is not just about salvation; it is about the Kingdom of God; God’s praise and glory in all creation — bringing “*all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ*” (Ephesians 1: 10). Thus, the greatest human need is living in God’s kingdom. The purpose of prayer is aligning ourselves with God’s will, in order that we may fulfill God’s purposes, for God’s glory—living in God’s mission—in Jesus’ footsteps. Prayer is not just an activity but a disposition of life, an orientation towards God’s will for God’s glory. Discipleship is about kingdom living. The ultimate longing of the followers of Jesus is that God’s Kingdom becomes a reality: “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph 1:11).

### Mission – the “blowing of the Wind of God”

A critical question for us, his disciples in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: How is God accomplishing his mission of bringing everything under Christ? To answer that we need to ask: How did Jesus fulfill God’s Mission on earth and after he ascended? How did the gospel progress from “Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”? Luke notes the Gospel record was what “Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1), intimating that the Acts was the record of what Jesus continued to do.

The emphatic answer is: By His Spirit!! Note the words of Jesus to his disciples: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:8).

But then, how does the Holy Spirit work? Jesus’ answer to Nicodemus gives us a clue: “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). A closer look at the story of how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Samaria and the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8 may shed some light on the workings of the Holy Spirit and our responsibility as those ‘born of the Spirit.’

The gospel came to the peoples of the greater Judea and Samaria through scattering resulting from persecution. The surprise is that God used the death of Stephen and the violent and hostile Saul as the agency of spreading the good news of the presence of God’s reign in Christ! That is the work of the Spirit.

Philip’s encounter with the Eunuch is the work of the Spirit from beginning to end:

- The leading of the Holy Spirit
  - “The angel of the Lord said to Philip...” v 26
  - “The Spirit told Philip...” v 29
- Philip listens and obeys the Holy Spirit
  - “He started out...” v7 without hesitation;
  - “Then Philip ran...” v30
- Philip listened to the Eunuch as he listened to the Holy Spirit by asking questions
  - Asked questions about who he was v27-28
  - Asked about what he knew... v31
- Proclaimed good news about Jesus, the Kingdom of God v35
- The Eunuch’s spontaneous response (must be the Spirit at work!)—request for baptism, bringing joy v 36-38
- When it was time to move on, Philip did—again by the Holy Spirit, this time by flight.

Mission is the work of the Holy Spirit. Ours is to locate ourselves ‘where the wind is blowing’; Mission strategy should be about listening to God and what he is doing. I believe that one of the hindrances to the progress of the spreading of the gospel is our preoccupation with our story and strategies to multiply it in other context, rather than disinterest discerning the moving of the Holy Spirit. We have difficulty with listening. This too may be a sign of our lack of faith in the Holy Spirit! Our participation in God’s mission needs to be seen as our journey of finding what the Lord is doing; where the wind is blowing.

### Mission – A journey of conversion

The story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10, 11 provides another example of the ‘blowing of the wind,’ in some of the most unlikely places and in some of the most unlikely ways, at least according to Peter. The account opens with a surprising affirmation: that God heard Cornelius’ prayers and was now acting on his behalf! For any Jewish person this was an anomaly. As a gentile, Cornelius was considered to be an ‘outsider,’ “separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigner to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without



God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). What is more, while Cornelius distinctly saw a vision and recognized it as such and immediately acted in obedience, it took Peter multiple appearances in order for him to be persuaded to act in obedience to his prompting.

When you compare the two encounters with God, Cornelius’ and that of Peter, and follow closely Peter’s reactions, it is clear that even for Peter this is was a journey of learning the way God works, by his Spirit. It is significant that Cornelius is the one who invites Peter—an invitation from the Gentiles, among whom God has been at work!

- ‘I am the one you are looking for. Why have you come?’ v 21
- ‘Stand up, I am only a man myself’ v 26 (note: he does not say I am Jewish but simply a man like Cornelius) v26
- ‘You are well aware that it is against the law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean’ v 28,29
- ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and who do what is right’ v 35
- ‘Can any one keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit, just as we have. v 47;
- Note also the rebuke to Peter and reluctance with which the Jewish believers accepted the Gentiles as brethren 11v3, 18

Is it possible that like Peter, we have long-held views and traditions, theological or otherwise, that may hinder us in engaging with God in the unfamiliar places? Jewish perspectives of Gentiles as outsiders could be compared to Christian perspectives of people of other faiths, in particular Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. I wonder what God is doing and how he may be working among them, even though we consider them outsiders. We must be constantly reminded that no one is out of reach of the Sovereign God!

Mission then, is not primarily what we do; it is a journey of transformation—“Follow me and I will make you...”; a journey to witness what God is doing and find our brethren by announcing the good news of Jesus; a journey to experience God in the unfamiliar places—getting to know God in fresh ways, outside our comfort zones. As we do, we encounter over and over again, God’s grace in abundance—for us and all that respond to the work of His Spirit.

**Mission – the abounding of God’s grace**

Another hindrance I believe to the progress of the gospel is the concept ‘mission frontier,’ which has delineated some areas as mission field and others as missionized. The extension of this idea is classifying churches, some as ‘sending’ and, by implication, others as ‘receiving.’ Not only is this based on an inadequate theology of the Church, it also reflects an inadequate understanding of the nature of the gospel. That well-quoted saying by Emil Brunner needs re-echoing, that “the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.” Churches do not send; churches are God’s sent people. It is not only true that everywhere we live is God’s mission field, but we are God’s mission field. We are all subjects of God’s abounding grace. That is one lesson from 2 Corinthians 8, 9.

The background to this passage is the appeal for material support to the poor in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16: 1-5) and also contributing to Paul’s needs in his travels (Philippians 4:10-19). The first to respond were the churches in Galatia; then the Corinthians; and then the Macedonians. However, the Macedonian response was overwhelming, because “out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity” (2 Corinth 8:1-7). Paul was therefore appealing to the Corinthians to emulate the example of the persecuted, poverty stricken, joy-filled Macedonians, to complete the work of giving that they started. Failure on their part would be a negation of God’s abundant grace that they had and continued to receive. Giving was the out-flowing of the grace of God. To the recipients, the collection would itself be a sign of God’s grace, which would prompt thanksgiving and gratitude. Those who give would receive even more, so they can continue to give.

The Church is the community of God’s grace, a sign of the Kingdom of God. God’s manifold grace is visible in the Church through its manifold gifts (*charismata*), of the Spirit: spiritual gifts—people, spiritual skills and competencies—and natural gifts—money, acquired skills and competencies, language and culture, material resources. The Church is only a steward of God’s grace, so are the individual Christians (2 Corinthian 9: 8-11). Every community called ‘church’ has grace in abundance. It has enough and has to share!

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all

times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (2 Corinthians 9:8-11).

Mission is therefore the flow of God’s grace (generosity). The Church as a community of God’s grace lives out its life in flow of God’s manifold grace. Grace, the lifeblood of the being of the Church, is ‘released’ and ‘realised’ in Mission.

In this flow of God’s grace, partnership is not a mission strategy; or an option reserved for the well internationally connected. Partnership is the life of the Church; it is flow of grace within and the outflow of grace without. Four key principles enunciated by the Apostle Paul:

- Principle of equality—the goal
- Principle of ‘plenty supplying need’—the process
- Accountability
- Transparency

**Note what Paul says:**

“Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little” (2 Corinthians 8: 13-15).

Global partnership in God’s mission is therefore the work of the Spirit. This is what the Bible calls fellowship in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, partnership without fellowship in the Holy Spirit becomes simply like a business partnership that is governed by contracts.

It is the flow of grace that enables the preaching of the gospel. Cross-cultural mission has always been a result of the reciprocal flow of resources. A good example is Bible Translation. Although a lot of pioneer missionary accounts credit the work of transla-

tion to the missionary, translation would have been impossible without the participation of the indigenous people, teaching the foreign missionary their language.

This flow is from everywhere to everywhere, wherever the Holy Spirit is at work—because everywhere there is some bounty and some need. It is inappropriate to speak of churches some as ‘sending’ and others as ‘receiving.’ The language of ‘dependence’ and ‘independence’ also negate generosity and reciprocity. Both dependence and inde-

pendence block the flow of grace. Moreover, the one is a denial of God’s plenteous grace and dehumanizing; the other is arrogant and patronizing. Henry Venn’s principles of self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing contradict the principle of generosity and reciprocity.

Every Community of grace receives and gives (generosity and reciprocity)—sharing! We need each other. We are poorer without each other; we are richer together, in every way. What is needed is an honest and hum-

ble assessment of the plenty and the needy in the Global-local community and then to enable generosity and reciprocity to be expressed through mutual sharing prompted by invitation and information—solicited or unsolicited. Mission gives the opportunity to redress inequality, break down the barriers between the North and South and through humble and loving partnership to enable mutual access and utilization of the gifts of grace. Mission then becomes a global movement of gifts and resources. <<

# Persecution, Advocacy and Mission at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

“Wait a little longer” (Rev. 6:11) “I appeal to Caesar!” (Acts 25:11)

There could hardly be a clearer statement of the inevitability of persecution, and martyrdom for some, past and ongoing, than Revelation 6:11. The quota of martyrs is not yet filled.

While the souls of the martyrs wait, longing for justice, and their number is being increased, how are we, the living followers of Jesus to understand persecution, suffering for righteousness’ sake, and martyrdom? Especially, how does the certainty of persecution, suffering, and martyrdom inform our apostolic mission to advance the frontiers of the kingdom of God?

**The Inevitability of Persecution**

Jesus in John 15:20 says, “Remember the words I spoke to you, ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” And Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12 states: “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted....” These unqualified statements make clear that persecution for the followers of Jesus is both inevitable and normative.

Mysteriously, it is sometimes through persecution, suffering, and martyrdom that God spreads his glory and his name, making them

expressions of both Christian spirituality and mission.

*Reg Reimer  
Abbotsford, BC. CANADA  
June 2006*

To understand this better we need to overcome misguided thinking about persecution, suffering, and martyrdom.<sup>1</sup> First, the recent *Left Behind* series by LaHaye and Jenkins illustrates one popular idea that intense persecution is in the unpredictable future. While this may fit an eschatological scheme, it has the negative effect of minimizing the persecution that is an ongoing present reality for many.

Others, mistaken in the opposite direction, relegate persecution, suffering, and martyrdom to some ancient time, considering them isolated historical events. However, the truth is that followers of Jesus—now embracing a third of the human race by some counts—are experiencing more persecution and martyrdom than at any time in history.

A third fallacy, primarily Western, confuses the “suffering for righteousness sake” of

the New Testament for general human suffering. Glenn Penner explains: “Because the biblical texts on persecution cannot readily apply to a setting where there is little persecution, the tendency seems to be to misapply these passages to situations of general physical, psychological and spiritual suffering.”<sup>2</sup>

While illness and natural disasters are serious issues, they must not be equated with persecution and martyrdom.

Another challenge is the issue of ‘proportion.’ For example, ridicule suffered by a Christian student in a university is not the same as, and cannot be equated with, the intense persecution suffered by Christians in the oppressive nation of North Korea.

**The Effects of Persecution**

There is a tendency, especially among those who have not experienced it, to roman-



ticize persecution and to conclude that only good can come from it. Because there are times and places where intense persecution coincides with the rapid growth of the church, it is often concluded that there is a causal effect (the church in the Book of Acts and modern China come to mind). But it does not necessarily follow that the church grew *because of* persecution and that persecution must, therefore, be good. The church grows not because of persecution but by the power of God and the faithfulness of God's people regardless of their circumstances

Tertullian, the North African church father, was sometimes right when he said, "The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow, *in blood of martyrs is seed.*"<sup>3</sup> But it is also true that harsh persecution through the centuries has crushed many Christians and decimated churches—in the Middle East and North Africa, for example. Some individual Christians and churches flourish under fire while others falter and fail.

The deprivation, cruelty, and dehumanization suffered by victims of persecution are not "good"! This is the devil's work! In Vietnam, for example, it is well documented that in the past 30 years Christians have been harassed, discriminated against, arrested without cause, starved, beaten, imprisoned, raped, dispossessed and chased for home and fields, and even killed for Christ's sake. Only the Evil One takes pleasure in inflicting these injustices on those made in the image of God!

In September 2005, a Vietnamese Pastor was released from a terrifying 15-month imprisonment. He had been rotated to five different prisons, was sometimes in rooms with 100 criminals and other times in a solitary cell. He had been attacked by prisoners with HIV/AIDS. He confessed to feeling alienated from his family and his church after his release. The feeling worsened. Six months after release he uttered the words, "I only discovered real loneliness when I got out of prison. My colleagues, my own brother and even my wife don't understand and won't believe what I tell them." Persecution is not good!

People much prefer the more positive reports of those who seem to flourish in persecution. It is truly amazing that *for many, the persecution they suffer becomes a means of receiving grace!* They testify of God's strengthening presence in the harshest conditions. They report on God's miraculous provisions

in times of extreme need. And so, persecution and suffering become an occasion for God's comfort, often through others. Prison can become an opportunity to witness. One Vietnam pastor led 69 people to faith during a six-year prison term, discipling some through the sewer pipes!

Persecution and suffering can also be an opportunity of sanctification. James writes, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial" (James 1:12). Persecution also restores focus on Christ and can generate Christian unity through solidarity. For some, persecution and suffering lead to martyrdom, becoming a doorway to eternal glory.

### The Anatomy of Persecution

The recently published *Servants in the Crucible*<sup>4</sup> is a significant 10-year global study on persecution that seeks to identify the implications of persecution for sending agencies and sending churches.

The study identifies two major kinds of persecution. *Top-down persecution* occurs where the church has been established and where thousands of believers are gathered in church communities. The Christian community is seen as a threat to the prevailing state ideology, as in communism. The state enacts top-down, severely oppressive efforts to abuse, imprison, kill and even eliminate Christianity.

In situations where there are few Christians, as in Saudi Arabia and North Africa, *persecution is better described as bottom-up*. In such places it is a combination of government, society, and family who partner to suppress even nascent manifestations of Christianity, giving few opportunities for Christian belief to root and grow.

And there are other helpful taxonomies of persecution. For example, one China researcher has identified seven sources of persecution in that context. Persecution may come from the Communist Party, the government, the family, neighbors in the community, from other churches, from corrupt officials, or from over-boldness or self-invitation.<sup>5</sup>

Johan Candelin of the WEA Religious Liberty Commission describes the evolution of persecution as often originating with disinformation, then moving to discrimination and finally to full-blown persecution.

Penner helpfully points out that the persecution of Christians is not purely

"religious" even in the New Testament. Sometimes it was *religious* (Acts 8), with Christians seen as a threat to the prevailing religious system. In other instances the reason is *political*, as Christians are perceived as a threat to the civil order (Acts 12:1,2; 17:5-7; 18:12ff). The reason may be *social*, as when the acceptance of Jesus is seen as rejecting societal and family norms (Matt. 10:36 and John 15:18-20). Acts 16:16-24 gives a clear illustration of an *economic* reason for persecution. The jealousy of the Jewish leaders who are challenged in Acts 5:16-18 and 17:5-7 is perhaps an *emotional cause* for persecution.<sup>6</sup>

### General Definitions – Religious Freedom/Liberty and Persecution

The broadest and most universally accepted definition of religious freedom is found in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.* Implicit in this, is the notion of a 'right' for one cannot infringe upon this same right of another.

Our discussion is more narrowly focused on the persecution of Christians, for which there is no universally accepted definition. A recent attempt by Charles Tieszen is helpful: *Any unjust action of varying levels of hostility, perpetrated primarily on the basis of religion and directed at Christians, resulting in varying degrees of harm as it is considered from the victims perspective.*<sup>7</sup>

The word "martyr" has recently been devalued since terrorists use it for themselves. The word martyr is now best qualified by the adjective "Christian." A Christian martyr, following David Barrett, is a Christian who voluntarily suffers death as a penalty for witnessing to or refusing to denounce faith, or a tenet, principles or practice belonging to it.<sup>8</sup>

### The Growing Phenomenon of Persecution

Some of the very high figures on the number of Christians being persecuted and martyred, sometimes published these days as firm and unqualified, cannot be substantiated. A responsible estimate is Paul Marshall's contribution on "persecution" in *Eerdmans Encyclopaedia of Christianity*.<sup>9</sup> He says that while it is impossible to total the number of

Christians who suffer violent persecution, the Christian communities in countries and areas where such persecution occurs number at least 230 million. Several hundreds of million more suffer from widespread discrimination.

Hundreds of millions of Christians! And yet the secular world and even many Evangelical Christians remain abysmally unaware of what is happening!

### Sources of Persecution

There are at the beginning of this 21<sup>st</sup> century, *four main engines driving the persecution phenomenon.*<sup>10</sup>

1. The first is *communism* in the countries of China, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba—and North Korea in a negative category all on its own. The residual effects of communism also affect religious freedom significantly in the countries of the erstwhile Soviet Union, especially Central Asia.<sup>11</sup>

"Religious freedom" in communist countries generally means that religious organizations must be under the state's administrative control. The objective and common result is that religious organizations are co-opted by the state. To accommodate the pressure from the West to improve human rights and religious liberty, China (in 2005)<sup>12</sup> and Vietnam (in 2004)<sup>13</sup> promulgated new religion legislation intended to create the impression at least, that there is more space for religion. But so far there has been no movement among the numerous house churches to register, and with good reason.

Religious leaders would prefer laws that protect the democratic rights of believers, though communist states are not ready for this. It is very clear that the ideological basis for these state's religion policy is unrealistic. As long as they remain "illegal", house churches will be subject to reprisals based on unfounded fears and arbitrary whims of the anti-Christian communist authorities.

Communist states have shown flexibility in adapting their repression methods. Orthodox communism long considered all religious expression to be useless superstition. However, in the mid-1990's, realizing it had an ally in the traditional animistic practitioners, Vietnam began to promote "beautiful indigenous culture and historic beliefs and customs" as an antidote to rapidly growing Christianity among its ethnic minorities.

2. A second major engine of persecution is *the rise of religious nationalism* centered chiefly in South Asia. Where country and religion have been identified with a state (e.g. Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Hinduism in India) Christians have more and more been treated as second-class citizens and subjected to violent communal attacks. Churches in India and Sri Lanka are regularly documenting church burnings and other violent attacks on Christian communities. These countries, some with democratic traditions, are adding anti-conversion laws to their repertoire of anti-Christian weapons.

In Burma (Myanmar), the military regime that completely lacks popular support, wraps itself in the cloak of Buddhism in its war against Burma's mainly Christian ethnic minorities.

3. The third and now most alarming engine of Christian persecution is the Muslim world increasingly influenced by *growing Islamic extremism*. From Morocco in northwest Africa to the easternmost islands of the Indonesian archipelago, three types of Islamic persecution are spreading.<sup>14</sup>

The first type is *direct state persecution*, such as in Saudi Arabia, where non-Islamic expressions of religion are simply forbidden. Saudi enforces *sharia law* which requires the killing of anyone who converts away from Islam. This extreme measure is also part of the legal code in Mauritania, Sudan, and Iran. A major component of the costly civil war in southern Sudan has been the attempt of the Khartoum government to impose its brand of Islam on Christians and animists.

A second type of Islamic persecution is *the violence of mobs and radical groups*, often at the instigation of radical Islamic leaders. The Coptic church in Egypt, for example, is subject to such violence.

A third type of persecution comes *directly from Islamic terrorist organizations*. The Laskar Jihad group has massacred thousands of Christians in the Mulukas and Sulawesi in Indonesia.

4. The fourth engine of persecution which is planting itself in the West is *secular intolerance*.<sup>15</sup> Secularism has a belief system similar to some traditional religions in that it has an exclusive claim to truth and a hostility toward alien belief systems. Freedom of expression (freedom to evangelize) and the autonomy of churches are areas of concern. Also, with the rise of sexual libertarianism (promiscuity, homosexuality, abortion) teach-

ing on morality and ethics is being restricted. There have been prominent cases of prosecuting Christians in Canada and Sweden.

A major threat also lies in the promulgation of so-called "hate laws." Ostensibly put forward to reduce religious friction, they sadly result in limiting free speech and religious expression. There is a case of Christian pastors being charged in Australia for violating hate laws by giving a seminar on Islam. The Australian law became a tool in the hands of Muslims to prosecute Christians in a liberal western democracy!

### Biblical and Historical Responses to Persecution.

With the New Testament as a guide, the early church as the first example, and the experience of Christians through the centuries, we can observe that the followers of Jesus have responded to persecution in one of three main ways. They flee it, they endure it or they resist it.<sup>16</sup>

*Flight.* The New Testament instructs (Matt. 10:23) and describes (Acts 8:1 and 9:25) fleeing from persecution. It is significant that in the biblical record, however, flight is not primarily to escape harm, but rather it is strategic in the context of mission. When danger threatens, strategic withdrawal is permitted. Even Jesus hid himself (John 8:59) because "his time had not yet come." But Jesus continued relentlessly on his mission which he knew included great suffering before the glorious resurrection.

Countless waves of followers of Jesus have fled persecution and gratuitous suffering through the centuries and, like the church in Acts, have carried the Good News of the Kingdom with them and helped it flourish on new ground.

*Fortitude.* The weight of New Testament Scriptures, especially the Pauline letters, calls on Christ's followers to stand firm in the face of all adversity, and to remain faithful even unto death. For many persecuted people and communities through the centuries, flight has not been an option—so they have had to endure!

*Fight.* There are clearly times when it is appropriate to stand up for one's right to worship and to serve God and his church. St. Paul provides clear examples on several occasions during his tumultuous missions (Acts 16:37, 22:24ff and 25:10 and 11). In the trial before Festus, Paul says, "I appeal to Caesar!" thereby



seeking his rights under existing law. Further, on his release from prison in Acts 16, Paul is not content with mere freedom. He says in effect, "They knocked us around and stuck us in jail without a trial even though we are Roman citizens, and now you just want us to slip away. Don't you think the persecutors should face the legal consequences?" And so it is today. Many Christians are today persecuted in contravention of their own national laws and international treaties signed by their governments.

### Advocating for the Persecuted

Biblical permission to advocate against the injustices of the persecutors by legal means forms part of our mandate to advocate for the persecuted. Missionaries have historically stood against injustices such as suttee, infanticide and slavery, and can do so against religious persecution, based on the dignity God himself gave humankind by creating us in his own image!

Charles Taber's "In the Image of God: The Gospel and Human Rights," is a landmark article in this regard.<sup>17</sup> He says that the idea of universal, panhuman and non-discriminatory rights is of quite recent origin. He argues convincingly that while this idea may have some roots in ancient Greece and in the Hebrew Scriptures, it was Jesus who set the benchmark.

"(Jesus) alone among all religious founders and leaders rejected all forms of discrimination and insisted that all human beings ought to be treated in exactly the same way. His own dealings with women, with children, with lepers, and other ritually polluted people, and with foreigners radically undermined all the distinctions that human societies of his day unanimously institutionalized. He extended the category of "neighbour" to all humankind and insisted that the two Great Commandments applied to all."<sup>18</sup>

Likely the most valiant human attempt to capture human dignity is the United Nations 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. While it and numerous other elaborations are admirable, they are all too often impotent.

Taber concludes, "When all is said and done, there is only one resource available to Christians to bring non-Christians to see human dignity as Jesus did. It is the intrinsic credibility and persuasiveness of the Gospel, since the truth of human dignity is a component of the Gospel and has no secure existence apart from the Gospel."<sup>19</sup>

### Missiological Work Required in Light of the Present and Growing Reality of Persecution, Suffering, and Martyrdom

The reality of the situation in the world today confirms with unmistakable clarity the certainty of persecution, suffering for righteousness sake, and martyrdom predicted by Jesus for his faithful followers. What then shall we do?

1. *Communicate the Liberating Gospel.* And do this in the full way just described. This is not formulaic evangelism, but a mandate to call Christians to costly discipleship.

2. *Advocate for the Persecuted.* This is at once a highly spiritual and practical response. We must intercede in prayer with perseverance for those who are persecuted. We must take risks to come alongside those who suffer for the Lord's sake. We must stand with them in their response—whether flight, endurance, or fight.

Part of the prophetic denunciation of the principalities and powers which demean and desecrate God's children through persecution involves shining the light on evil, appealing to laws, national and international, and providing information for engaging world opinion on the side of justice.

The role of 'front line' missionaries in this advocacy is sometimes considered controversial. But missionaries may choose to share discreetly the information they often uniquely possess and allow others to do the public work.

Ron Boyd-MacMillan has helpfully summarized and evaluated seven "intervention tactics."<sup>20</sup> He calls them (1) prayer/intercession, (2) truth-telling/publicity, (3) private representation, (4) legal intervention, (5) illegal intervention, (6) political pressure, and (7) positive contribution. I would add another (8), "constructive engagement"—building relationships with the persecutors and appealing to their self-interest to stop repressing believers.<sup>21</sup>

Advocacy for religious liberty will inevitably pull us into the larger human rights cause. Though religious liberty has been called the mother of all human rights, rights are ultimately a seamless whole.<sup>22</sup>

3. *Materially Aid the Persecuted and Their Dependents.* We must give sacrificially to sustain the persecuted and those dependent on them. Appropriate aid may also help the persecuted decide to stay put rather than flee and further deplete a suffering church.<sup>23</sup>

4. *Prepare for Persecution.* An indispensable tool in combating persecution is mature disciples. Ambassador Robert Seiple, citing Rwanda, once remarked that the biggest threat to successful intervention of Christians today is the superficial faith of many.<sup>24</sup> Too much of what is called evangelism and mission recently has bordered on the pharaseism of quantifying so-called first-time decisions. Let us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century recapture the 1<sup>st</sup> century example of calling people to daily decisions to follow Christ in costly discipleship.

Our movement has done embarrassingly little to help Christians prepare for persecution. Many organizations are anxious to help Christian prisoners of conscience, but few do the hard work of engaging Christians in persecuted or threatening situations to prepare for the inevitable. Preparation for persecution is on the agenda of some persecuted church organizations, but the topic requires much more attention.<sup>25</sup> There are a too few seminary courses on persecution and on doing mission in contexts of violence. Such emphasis must increase.

5. *Formulate Theologies to Guide our Mission and the Church.*

5.<sup>1</sup> *A Theology of Persecution, Suffering for Righteousness Sake and Martyrdom.*

It is a useful first endeavor to rediscover what persecuted saints through the ages thought and did in their circumstances. But it is also true that theologizing is a never-ending task and must be done anew in each generation. A call for more theological reflection on these matters also emerged at the Persecuted Church Interest Group (PCIG) at the LCOWE gathering in Pattaya, Thailand in 2004. Among the topics the study suggested were the relationship between the contemporary struggle for human rights and the way of the cross, and the sovereignty of God in persecution and suffering and the growth of the church.<sup>26</sup>

5.<sup>2</sup> *A Theology of Religious Freedom and Advocacy*

Ironically, those coming out from under generations of communism also found themselves unprepared for "freedom." They still reaped the bitter fruits of repression.<sup>27</sup> Is there sufficient theological reflection on how to live obedient to Christ in a pluralistic, free society? And surely we could benefit from deeper theological reflection on advocating for religious freedom.

6. *Create Appropriate Strategies for Sending Churches and Sending Agencies.* Missionaries, whatever their origin, must be willing to embrace a lifestyle that reflects a biblical

view of persecution suffering and martyrdom. Personal security is not the goal of mission. Christians in persecuted contexts are also greatly encouraged and challenged when they see missionary families sharing their vulnerability. Such boldness does much to authenticate the Gospel message.<sup>28</sup>

Persecuted contexts also dictate that missionaries must, even sooner than they otherwise might, remove themselves from visible leadership and work through intermediaries, new converts and local Christians.

Finally, the church in parts of the world now exempted from persecution, suffering and martyrdom desperately needs to experience the fellowship of the suffering. Missionaries working in contexts of persecution have an important role here. They can mediate the experiences and spiritual lessons of the suffering to their sending churches.

7. *"Consider the Body"*—the Call to Unity and Partnership. A chief strategy of the Enemy in contexts of persecution is to divide and isolate the followers of Jesus. On the other hand, every report of victory testifies of Christian solidarity! This is true of the personal relation-

ships of the persecuted. But is it also true of mission organizations in contexts of persecution. We must learn better to demonstrate that we share the same spiritual DNA!

The situation of increasing worldwide persecution makes doubly urgent the call for kingdom collaboration among all of God's people and organizations. Ironically it seems the barriers to partnership and collaboration are often highest in persecuted contexts. Working to overcome obstacles and opposition as we minister with and to those who share the sufferings of Christ today is not an option.<sup>29</sup>

### A Final Word

While the souls of the martyrs wait, and are being added to, we, the living followers of Jesus pursue his mission. This includes learning and sharing the hard but necessary spiritual lessons of persecution and suffering for righteousness sake, in the way of the cross, especially when justice is not at hand. But it also includes appealing to Caesar, that is to human instruments of justice, on behalf of God's persecuted children made in his image. This is a paradox, but not a contradiction. <<

### END NOTES

- 1 Charles Tieszen's article "Mission in Contexts of Violence: Forging Theologies of Persecution and Martyrdom." It is based on his masters thesis at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2005, entitled "A Theological Framework for Understanding Persecution."
- 2 Glenn M. Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross: A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship* (Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice Books, 2004), 8-9.
- 3 See Tertullian, *Apology* L.
- 4 Mohit Gupta, *Servants in the Crucible: Findings from a Global Study on Persecution and the Implications for Sending Agencies and Sending Churches* (soon to be published manuscript, 2005).
- 5 "Seven Dimensions of Persecution in China Today" in China Development Brief, No 53, May-July 1997.
- 6 Penner, 162.
- 7 Tieszen, 5.
- 8 David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia, First Edition* (Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 1982), 8.
- 9 *Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol. 4*, (Eerdmans, 2005) 163. Cited by the *Library Journal* as probably the best encyclopedic reference on Christianity. See also *Religious Freedom in the World: A Global Report on Freedom and Persecution*, a Freedom House publication edited by Paul Marshall. (Nashville, TN, Broadman Publishers, 2000).
- 10 These are well developed by Ron Boyd-MacMillan in *Faith that Endures: The Essential Guide to the*

- 11 *Persecuted Church Today*, due to be published by Baker this September.
- 12 Forum 18 News Service of Oslo, Norway provides extensive coverage of this issue. Go to [www.forum18.org](http://www.forum18.org).
- 13 see "New Wine in Old Wineskins – an Appraisal of China's Legislations and the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" (by YING Fuk-tsang of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong).
- 14 The Religious Liberty Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has published a series of monographs on the Vietnam situation. Go to [www.evangelicalfellowship.ca](http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca).
- 15 *Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol. 4*, (Eerdmans, 2005) 162, 163.
- 16 See pages 28-30 in Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 32 entitled "The Persecuted Church" edited by Patrick Sookhdeo, a summary of the findings of the Persecuted Church Interest Group at the LCOWE 2004 forum held in Pattaya, Thailand. This small volume is filled with material on this topic and contains an excellent, annotated bibliography as well.
- 17 By Charles R. Taber in the July 2002 issue of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 98-102.
- 18 Ibid. 99.
- 19 Ibid. 102.
- 20 Ibid. 16-33.
- 21 The Institute of Global Engagement, founded by Ambassador Robert Seiple, is a rare example.

## REFLECTIONS

### 19. Peter Tarantal, OM director South Africa, coordinator of WENSA—World Evangelization Network of South Africa

My life is already full and I do not want to be on any more committees, but because I have been so touched by the Consultation, I want to serve with WENSA to make a difference. It was great for me as a younger person to experience missions first hand.

The pastors' track has been another building block in the mission's impetus from South Africa. Many of the pastors present at SA06 have committed themselves to be involved with the National Missions Consultation for Christian leaders taking place in Johannesburg at the end of October 2006. WENSA will also facilitate a workshop between mission agency leaders and key pastors in the next few months on ways in which we can better work together. We are also excited at the prospect of a greater harvest of people going from SA to the nations.

- 22 See the outstanding analysis "Religious Liberty: From 2005 into 2006" by Elizabeth Kendall, analyst for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission at [www.worldevangelical.net](http://www.worldevangelical.net).
- 23 A number of persecuted church organizations have in recent years moved beyond the charity approach and sought creative ways to support poor and marginalized Christians so they might stay put instead of flee or migrate.
- 24 Personal conversation with Robert Seiple, first US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, October 2002.
- 25 Open Doors has published *Standing Strong Through the Storm* (Santa Ana, CA, Open Doors International, 2004) compiled by Paul Estabrooks and Jim Cunningham. This 400-page book is a substantial course widely tried and tested in persecution contexts.
- 26 In Lausanne Occasional Paper No 32, cited above, 8.
- 27 Danut Manastireanu of Romania is one of the few I know who have done clear thinking and reflecting on lessons learned from the collapse of the Soviet Unions and the Eastern Bloc. He has some excellent seminars on "Post-communism."
- 28 Mohit Gupta, develops this idea in *Servants in the Crucible*, 69-73.
- 29 An outcome of the 2004 Lausanne Forum is a collaboration initiative among persecuted church organizations. It has encountered significant resistance from organizations that should be part of it.



In his “Report from a Trappist Monastery,” where Henri Nouwen spent seven months, he writes about his spiritual journey and life struggles. Leaving an active life of “teaching, lecturing, and writing” Nouwen went into experiencing a monastic life, which became a life changing experience for him. On his diary notes of July 13 he says: “I am more and more aware of the way my life-style became part of our contemporary desire for ‘stardom.’ I wanted to say, write or do something ‘different’ or ‘special’ that would be noticed and talked about.” Being at that monastery, Nouwen discerned a different reality: “Maybe,” he says, “—when you have become fully aware that you have nothing to say that has not already been said—maybe then a monk might be interested in listening to you. The mystery of God’s love is that in this sameness we discover our uniqueness. That uniqueness has nothing to do with the “specialties” we have to offer that glitter like the artificial silver balls on a Christmas tree, but has everything to do with our most personal and most intimate relationship with God. When we have given up the desire to be different and experience ourselves as sinners without any right to special attention, only then is there space to encounter our God who calls us by our own name and invites us into his intimacy.”<sup>1</sup>

1 Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary. Report from a Trappist Monastery* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 13, 65, 67.

# Wholistic Mission

## An affirmation of sameness!

Being part of this missiological consultation and addressing you on the theme “Wholistic Mission,” I really don’t come with anything new, even knowing my own addiction to “stardom.” The newness that I bring is more of the same: the same gospel of Jesus Christ. The same love expressed by the Triune God. The same grace wonderfully lived out by a God who is hungry for salvation, relationship and community. The same mandate to build a community which becomes a sign of God’s kingdom in the midst of a disintegrated and disintegrating world. The same mandate of expressing love, serving the poor and struggling for justice, in the name of the Triune God. The newness that I bring is the simple voice of a representative of a generation who carries the fulfilling sense and experience of being part of God’s call and God’s people to serve him in this generation and who, together with so many others, did it with passion, immaturity, joy, failure and commitment. The newness that I bring is also called brokenness—my brokenness—wrapped in the paper of the illusions of my generation.

At the closure of our II Brazilian Congress of Evangelization, in 2003, Ricardo Gondim, one of our key national leaders said: “At this congress we have much to celebrate, because, full of dreams, we did wholistic mission. We were a generation pregnant of possibilities—some tempting, others threatening—and at every step a new dawn was born, and with it new doors were open. With our keys in hand, we ventured through those doors, trying to revert a little of human misery, save a few, plant peace, talk of justice. Transform our humanity into one soldered to the hope of showing the Kingdom of God that is among us.”

Then Gondim goes on to say that, besides celebrating, we should also raise our voices of lament: “Yes, we do have our lament and our complaint. After all, we are children of our time. We are today in the middle of an historical hangover. Of course many of our dreams have abandoned us, as night abandons the serenader in a dawn that refuses to rise. Yes, it seems we live in an empty

time, a moonless night with no stars; a cold time, a world full of anguish and empty of hope. We are children of this time, because it seems that history is void of meaning; it seems as though people are drunk or under the effect of anesthesia, it seems history has been caught on its wrong foot (...) We live in the midst of a generation full of frustration, because we feel we weren’t able to achieve our goals, we didn’t get what we wanted to.”<sup>1</sup>

### How do I come? “Your head thinks where your feet stand”

From the Brazilian liberation theologian Frei Betto, I learned an expression which says much about our journey and what we stand for while we are on it. He says: “A cabeça pensa onde os pés pisam,” which could be

1 Ricardo Gondim, Desafio e Consagração, in *Missão Integral. Proclamar o Reino de Deus, vivendo o Evangelho de Cristo* (Viçosa, BH: Ultimato and Visão Mundial, 2004), 283, 285, 286.

translated as “Your head thinks where your feet stand.” In fact, it is impossible to talk about Wholistic Mission without discerning the “ground” where we stand. In other words, it is impossible to talk about the meaning of wholistic mission without discerning the context of our journey. Meaning and journey walk together in a theology which has the concept of incarnation as one of its foundational experiences and gifts. It’s an affirmation of the incarnation of Jesus and of the wonderful local manifestation of the Gospel. It’s the assertion that we are citizens of our places and have experienced the gospel coming into that reality and relating to us from within our life’s reality, be it personal or communal.

Today I stand here addressing the subject of Wholistic Mission, which also means that I am sharing my life and my journey. This also means that I am asking about your life and about the way we, together, have experienced God’s love and God’s grace, our call and the world in which we live, by which I mean especially the pain of the world in which we live.

It is impossible to talk about Wholistic Mission without talking about reality

### Am I able to discern where I am coming from?

I come with the desire to be reminded again about who God is, how he comes to us in Christ Jesus, calling us into his Trinitarian fellowship and affirming his presence with us.

I come hungry for his word and in need of having it come alive in this community so that we are amazed by the way he looks at us, as part of his family, affirms our belonging to him and tells us to “go and tell,” as he told the prophet Isaiah.<sup>2</sup>

I come with a sense of gratitude for the privilege of being part of this family, called to serve the Lord in this generation.

I come disturbed by the way we have been able to distort the gospel and twist its body into a “consumer good.” This happens in so many ways. It can be the new Faith Cathedral of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, in Lusaka, Zambia, built on a forbidden piece of land and accused of being a “satanic church.” It can be the picture of former Bishop Rodrigues—also former

2 Isaiah 6:9 (NIV).

leader of the evangelical politicians in the Brazilian Congress—taken to jail, charged of corruption. It can be the way jobs are promised, by irresponsible pastors and churches, to poor jobless people in so many broken places like in Quilemane, Mozambique, in Chennai, India or in Bogotá, Colombia. It can be the way people are proclaimed free from their bondages, healed from their sicknesses in the name of Jesus, but reminded that if it did not happen it is because the victims did not have enough faith. It can be through my own desire of magical solutions from a “power-God,” who breaks into my life and fixes my messy body, messy relationships or my messy soul.

I come scared by a contradictory reality, looked at by a puzzled set of eyes. A world where some solutions are at hand but we are not able to deliver them: the HIV-AIDS pandemic is just an example. Why do mothers have to continue to deliver babies who are contaminated with that deadly virus when it takes so little to avoid it? A world where countries go back to old and impossible solutions, like we are witnessing in Bolivia today, because their joining the neo liberal model, at the nineties, has not taken their children off the streets, nor provided jobs for their working force, nor have their land distribution solved the land issues, and no signs of hope have invaded their “malocas.”

A world of insecurity where 9/11 in its Northern and Southern expressions have made it clear to us that this world of ours is a scary place to live in, and that no one, nowhere, should take life for granted and should take security as given. A world where a bomb can unexpectedly explode, a lost bullet can reach you in your bed, a knife can penetrate your ribs without notice and another teenager can be killed at the cemetery where you are burying two other teenagers, also killed, as I heard a pastor witness just the other day.

I come puzzled by Nature, speaking louder and louder. The year of 2005 was the

3 Prevention of mother to child transmission can be reduced substantially by giving Nevirprine to both mom and baby. The drug is very cheap and reduces quite substantially the risk of passing the virus to baby. It also helps if the Mom is on ARVs, if needed, to reduce her viral load, if she can have a C-Section (to reduce babies contact to blood during delivery), and use of bottle feeding or shorter duration of breast feeding to reduce transmission of the virus to the baby.

Tsunami year for all of us but especially for some of you. It was the year of Katrina for others of you and for us. In Brazil, it was, as some would say, the year in which the Amazon river started to die, showing us pictures of a scary dry river. To me, it was the year I sat in a circle with a poor family, in the inland of Mozambique, looking at an embarrassed mother who could not tell me how old her daughter was. Mozambique! Poor Mozambique! In November last year, when I was there, they were experiencing draught. After that they faced floods and lately became victims of an earthquake. Is there anything else we need? Puzzled I walked away from that circle, carrying with me more contradictions than I can stomach, and more lack of radical discipleship than I can face, because that very night I went to sleep in an hotel room while that family... while that family.

I come empty-handed in a world facing religious tensions we thought were gone as signs, we would say in the last century, of an “uncivilized” time. And now they are there and they are here. They are there, from where I stand, as expressed by a new breaking out violence between Muslims and Christians, as churches and mosques are put on fire. They are here, in a western world accused, by Muslims, of being corrupt and decadent, enslaved by a dissolute society, and we have to agree with those accusations. Representatives of other religions look at us and see us sitting on quite different chairs. Some chairs are the simple chairs, occupied by simple missionaries in simple homes; chairs that witness signs of love. Other chairs are the powerful chairs which do not use any other language than the language of power and of bullets. I must confess that my evangelical lenses, to look at this reality, does not seem to fit that well and I am becoming quite sure that these lenses need to have the color of love, of service and of humbleness, if not of martyrdom.

I come with the prayer that the Holy Spirit might bring to our hearts and to our fellowship a new perception of and a new fascination with God’s love, God’s grace and God’s call to us, people of his body; a call to serve him today in such a way that Jesus can be seen and people can dance... dance in the hands of God.

### Wholistic Mission! Revisiting its journey and meaning.

The day was over. I tried to sleep, but the images of the day kept dancing before my



eyes. Never mind. It had been memorable. To see with my own eyes camels and zebras walking freely, and to chase giraffes, hoping for a good picture, was thrilling. However, what made the day unique was meeting the Isiolo people in that semi-desert area of Kenya.

To imagine the possibility of living in that windy desert is quite difficult. But if the annoying wind blows unceasingly, the dust penetrates every single corner of your body, with a special preference for your eyes. I had never eaten so much dust in a day. But what is dust in the eyes compared to the pain caused by absolute poverty. This poverty is shown by the dust covered faces of the many children, which do not have enough food to eat, houses in which to live and beds in which to sleep. And yet, there they were, the children singing about Jesus and the “old man” saying his prayer, expelling demons and interceding for the present church leaders. Our visit, that day, had two “must-stop” places. The first one was that big tree which embraced us and represented the community meeting place. The second one was the well where water, a symbol of hope, would pour forth once the pump was installed. The meeting of the community was a time of listening and of talking. In order for the church to talk about Jesus, the water of life, it had to listen to the needs of the people: “Now that we have water, what shall we eat?”

For the church to do mission in Isiolo, the message of the Gospel, as precious as water in the desert, needs to go hand in hand with water, so precious that life depends on it. If there are only words, the wind will sweep them away and, mixed with the dust, they will disappear. Words in Isiolo have to become incarnate. Interestingly, one of the words for incarnation in Isiolo is water. Word and water are twins there, and as such they enhance two symbols of life: Jesus, the water of life, in whose name water to live is given to the people. Words and symbols may change from place to place. However, mission, in

word and deed, life and sign, must assume the language of the incarnation. Mission in Isiolo needs to be wholistic mission.

Here I am. Talking and talking about myself. Telling stories and trying to find out where I stand. I know I could have started differently. I could have started with a biblical approach, quoting passages of the Gospel we need to listen and to listen to always again: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”<sup>4</sup>

In fact it does not matter that much where you start, as long as you go through the circle. The hermeneutic circle, doing the homework as we thought it should be done: listening to the word, asking for the Holy Spirit to bring that word to our life and our community, listening to the voice of history and trying to understand the place we stand and the experiences we are going through, be it at a personal, relational, cultural or social level. Therefore, wholistic mission is a way to listen to Scriptures, to listen to your community and to yourself, searching and groaning, expecting a guiding word of God to come, receiving that word and trying to follow it as a sign of kingdom obedience.

Frankly speaking, I do not like the expression “wholistic mission” very much. The Gospel does not need that expression and neither should we. We only need it because of our “hardness of heart.”<sup>5</sup> We need it because of our ideological divisions and

4 Mark 16: 15-18 (NIV)

5 This concept appears in Mark 10:5, when Jesus addresses the issue of divorce.

our cultural barriers. We need it because of some narrow mission agendas and because of our traditional surrender to a market driven agenda.<sup>6</sup> We need it as a reminder to ourselves that in order to get involved in mission we need to listen to the whole gospel and commit ourselves to live it out. We need it as a reminder that in order to get involved in mission we need to learn what incarnational love is as well as be willing to listen to the voices of our world, specially the voices of pain, suffering and oppression, so dramatically expressed in the lips of children and the heart of mothers.

Wholistic mission is a call to repentance; a repentance that calls us back to the word of the Gospel and calls us towards the lost and the poor.

Wholistic mission is a call of affirmation. An affirmation of God’s love, expressed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ as well as an affirmation of the wonderful locality of the gospel, which always feels at home wherever it arrives, allowing us to say that we are citizens of our places as well as citizens of God’s kingdom in a beautiful expression of twin citizenship.

Wholistic mission, as we use it, is a contemporary expression, very much at home in our evangelical family and in our recent evangelical mission initiatives.

First, we could say, it was used very much by us, in the formerly called Third World, in order to affirm our Christian identity in relation to the force and the voice of the western but especially North American mission initiatives. As Samuel Escobar would say: “Tired of being told by North American centers of evangelical power what we should think, what we should read and what it

6 As the Brazilian economist, Roberto Campos, would say “If politicization is the plague of the so called Progressive Catholics, ‘mercantilization’ is the plague of Protestantism.”

meant to be evangelical, we decided that it was time to begin to reflect the faith as adults and based on our own initiative and responsibility.”<sup>7</sup> In order to say it positively and, as it so often happened at the emerging time of the expression, to say it in relation to evangelization as the “Evangelical Declaration of Bogotá” said: “The process of evangelization must occur in concrete ways in human situations... The time has come for us evangelicals to take seriously our social responsibility. In order to do this we must build on a biblical foundation which implies evangelical doctrine and the example of Jesus Christ carried to its logical implications. Christ’s example must become incarnated in the critical Latin American situation of underdevelopment, injustice, hunger, violence and despair. Men cannot build the Kingdom of God on earth, but evangelical action will contribute towards the creation of a better world as a foreshadowing of that Kingdom, whose coming we pray for daily.”<sup>8</sup>

Today its use can be seen, not only in our own theological thinking frames and in some of our church life, but also in our mission initiatives. One of the best examples of this could be to have a look at the website of PMI and to have them talk about who they are and what they do: “A wholistic mission—We proclaim the gospel in word and deed. Our workers share the gospel while they serve the community using their professions for the good of those whom they serve for the love of Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>

It is not necessary to say that this way of mine to look at wholistic mission is strongly biased towards Latin America. Simply because this is the place where my feet stand and when speaking about wholistic mission we need to know where we stand.

A biased approach does not mean that it is not necessary and that it is unilateral at the level of prejudice. There are dimensions to wholistic mission that need to be contex-

tual, and the more contextual it is the more relevant it will be to the local community and to many other places. Wholistic mission is obviously not something limited to Latin America, and even in relation to the development of that emphasis in that continent I only mentioned the beginning and not the development of the concept and its implementation. In fact it is used worldwide, and Ken Gnanakan, in his paper “Integral Mission and Holistic Transformation,”<sup>10</sup> made reference to that journey: “With what could be seen as a landmark, Evangelicals soon entered into ministries that put into practice some of this integral thinking. Holistic mission soon became a buzzword and Evangelicals boldly pursued various efforts to display a concern for the world.” Afterwards he says: “Recent efforts such as the Micah Mission have served to give direction in such thinking, exploring even more concrete ways to express ‘integral mission’ or ‘holistic transformation’ in our world today.” The Micah Declaration of Integral Mission says:

“Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task.”<sup>11</sup>

Since it is impossible, at this time, to trace the historical journey of the movement of Wholistic Mission I would like to outline some of its main highlights:

- The message of the Gospel is Christologically interpreted in the sense that the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is

10 Ken Gnanakan, A paper entitled: *Integral Mission and Holistic Transformation. An Evangelical Perspective*.

11 “Micah Declaration on Integral Mission” (September 27,2001).



the model for the mission of the Church. In other words, the mission of the church is simple and collectively to follow Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we cannot transform the gospel into our program and our mission into our project, be it personal or institutional.

- The gospel addresses people and communities where they are, starting with their present dimension of life and projecting it towards eternity.

Therefore, we cannot say that the priority of the Gospel is the individual person and that we do not need to care about people's immediate needs and the places and conditions in which people live.

- While the gospel is a message to every person, reaching at the deepest dimensions of personhood, it never stops nor can it be circumscribed to that dimension. The message of the gospel is also a good news message to the community.

Therefore, we can never say that the gospel is an individual message and that the communal dimensions of it are a natural consequence of that individual approach.

- While the gospel recognizes the different dimensions of human life, they are all recognized as created by God, marked by sinfulness but by him redeemable. The whole person is addressed by the whole gospel because God's message of salvation honors the entirety of God's creation and the dignity of every human person.

Therefore, we cannot discriminate people with the assumption that God has preferences, as we cannot say that the priority of the Gospel is people's eternity and therefore our priority is to save people's soul.

- The message of the gospel is wholistic in the sense that it responds to the immediate needs of every person as well as takes that person towards an experience of personhood and an experience of belonging to a community. While our Christian presence can start with an emergency and service delivery approach, we always want to move beyond that, aiming for a transformation that empowers people, dignifies the community, and honors God, the creator of all things.

Therefore, we cannot reduce our social dimension to its 'assistentialist' dimension.

- The message of the gospel asks the church to get involved in every dimension of society also stressing the importance of the political involvement. However, that political involvement needs to be qualified toward an advocacy approach, recognizing God's central emphasis on justice as well as the prophetic denunciation of injustice and idolatry.

Therefore, we cannot transform our political involvement in a platform to obtain state benefits for our Christian institutions.

Translating those highlights into a theological frame I would call upon Ed René Kivitz's theological synthesis of what he calls "Missão Integral." He says that a theology of wholistic mission offers a lens through which the Scriptures are read in the search of guiding landmarks in order to give direction to our Christian life and the life of a Christian community. Afterwards, he quotes that famous Bible passage which was brought to our attention by John Stott: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).<sup>12</sup>

In his small article, Ed René, in a classical theological approach, gets us acquainted with the implications of such a theology. In other words, a theology of wholistic mission would mean that:

*Soteriologically*, God's sovereignty over the entire universe is seen through those who have been restored to the image of Jesus Christ.

*Ecclesiologically*, it is the affirmation of a new humanity in Christ Jesus. This new humanity becomes visible in the Church which is made out of those who have been rescued and are in continuous process of transformation through the action of the Holy Spirit.

*Missiologically*, it is the expression of God's Kingdom which will be brought to fulfillment in eternity. The church is God's priority instrument through which Christ will exercise his lordship over all creation.

*Anthropologically*, it is the expression of God's redemption in relation to the totality of the human being. As Kivitz would say "a body without a soul is a corpse and a soul without a body is a ghost."

<sup>12</sup> Ed René Kivitz, Uma Síntese Teológica da Missão Integral, in *Missão Integral*, 63-65.

*Kerigmatically*, it is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as a call to repentance that wants to guide our whole lives at the service of God's Kingdom.

The call expressed by wholistic mission is an invitation to total surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Kivitz says, the experience of forgiveness of sin, the acceptance of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the integration in Christ's body, which expresses collectively the "benefits of the cross" as a prophetic sign of the Kingdom to come.

### Wholistic Mission Shortcomings are always on the table!

Wholistic mission can never be a product and always needs to be a journey. It's a journey searching for a path of love, an attitude of service and an attempt in discipleship obedience. It can never be transformed into a program that can be applied everywhere because it always needs to listen and to establish a walking path which honors locality as much as a pilgrim dependency upon the voice of the beloved one. Wholistic mission needs to be open. Open to be grounded in Scripture. Open to be guided by the Spirit. Open to listen to local life questions and to drop tears of pain in the deepest identification with human suffering.

In its journey, I would say, the shortcomings necessarily emerged as an expression of our humanity as well as of our vulnerability and sinfulness. The shortcomings also emerged in the movement of time, making it clear and evident that those who embraced the path of wholistic mission need to walk in openness to repentance.

There are three set of shortcomings I would call attention to and in order to do that I need to become local again, because I can only speak about my context.

*The first set of shortcomings* deals with the relation between a more theological approach to wholistic mission and the life of the evangelical churches in Latin America. While there was never some kind of abstract theological process embraced by fulltime academic theologians among us, those who embraced the platform of wholistic mission, in its formative expression, were mostly connected to the mainline evangelical churches, did not relate that well to many grassroots church experiences, were not able to call a massive new generation into its ranks and did not handle communication, especially mass communication, very well.

## REFLECTIONS

### 20. Rachel Kull, Spain, Member Care

I was encouraged to hear what God is doing in and through my brothers and sisters in Africa. Bishop Zac's messages continue to challenge my thinking and my way of looking.

The schedule was very packed. It would have been nice to have some networking time; I was on the run from 7:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. (or later). It would have been nice to have had an afternoon free to be able to do some sightseeing around the area with some of my new friends that I made during the week. Many times more productivity happens in an informal setting than in meetings that are set up.

One of my stronger take-home memories relates to how I saw MC top leadership handle difficult situations, and I was impressed by the gentleness in those who were in authority.

### 21. Jenny Manson, Member Care, New Zealand

A highlight was the devotional series by Bishop Zac Niringiye of Uganda. In his very charming and cheerful manner, he offered new insights and asked some challenging questions. One of these was to consider how much the old 'colonial' idea of expanding territory might still unconsciously be subtly influencing our mission thinking. The "Go into all the world" command, so familiar to us all, may have overshadowed the many "Come" invitations in the gospels and we may have lost sight of the fact that God is already 'there' working. He suggested that it is time to shift from the Great Commission to the Great Invitation to find our place in God's kingdom and mission.

I participated in the Asia-Pacific member care regional group, with delegates from India, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and China. A trend I noticed coming through from around the world was the role mission member care people are playing in training churches to be good senders and most importantly to offer good care and support on return.

have to come to the conclusion that the irrelevance of the Roman Catholic Church is not a fact and that this church has not only an amazing ability to renew itself and to survive, but this church is also the one that is growing significant and globally. The evangelical growth, on the other hand, is starting to face the limits of its growth while not giving up its "ufanistic" rhetoric. Besides that limit we need to recognize that when the relevance of the evangelical church grew, the consequences were devastating: in politics our involvement has been a shame, in the world of communication the media of the intelligentsia makes fun of us while we communicate well to the more popular sections of our population. In the VIP area we have lived out a gospel without social and political consequences and diminished the Christian faith to an experience of well-being.

And finally, we should pay attention to the area of cross cultural mission. It should

be recognized that the wholistic mission movement, around Latin America, concentrated much on our own context, with the emphasis on service, prophetic call, quality and faithfulness of our Christian life. While this phenomenon happened, another movement was taking place, witnessing the emergence of a mission movement which was simultaneously native as well as influenced by the school of church growth, the unreached people movement, the AD 2000 movement and significantly inspired by the dynamic North American mission movement. In the later years, we saw those two expressions coming closer, with PMI, a Latin American mission agency, being a significant example of it. The wholistic mission movement came to the conclusion that it needs to raise its eyes and see the mission field, while the cross cultural mission movement saw that mission was not only a way to do mission in many places but was also a mandate to do mission in Christ's way.



The second set of shortcomings comes as a natural development of every emphasis which is never complete and needs to leave the doors of time open for a new generation because new challenges emerge and new needs and challenges call for new approaches. While a thorough analysis of this phenomenon cannot be made in this paper, I would like to call attention to some of the areas which are a must today, if mission is perceived as being an act of obedience to the gospel and a response to Christ's call to serve him at every generation at every time. Let me try to call attention to only a few of those new challenges:

1. In Latin America, the wholistic mission movement stressed the social responsibility of the Church and the economic and political dimension of that responsibility. While this emphasis is not simply result oriented, we need to recognize that the economic and social dimensions of the life of our people have not become better, and the poverty level is still a crying reality. Even after the breakdown of the Berlin wall and the supreme reign of the neo liberal proposal. And even after the growth of the many evangelical churches. The churches grow but the tragic and difficult socio-economic reality of our people has not been changing accordingly.

We do not know, in socio-economic terms, what the next step, in Latin America, should be, but we do know that a market economy has not been the answer to the needs of our people and we are afraid to conclude that the continuous growth of our churches will not mean more bread on the table, more children in school, a better wealth distribution in our societies and more security and justice for our communities. Some of the recent developments in Latin America are not very encouraging and point to old populist solutions which will certainly not be the answer to our needs, but might mobilize our desperate population. The Chavez phenomenon coming from Venezuela is scary but fuelled with petrodollars. The Evo Morales experience in Bolivia is a path of dignity to a discriminated Indian majority, but an impossible road for a poor and dependent country.

2. What we see with Evo Morales is the reemergence of the old indigenous cultural religiosity which gives the Indian population a new dignity and sense of belonging but is not the social economic answer that country needs, and leaves the local churches and the mission movement itself in a difficult posi-

tion. What happens to the presence of the evangelical and Catholic churches in those places? How can we affirm the traditional culture of those ethnic groups without considering their old religion a must to their cultural expression and without considering the Christian faith as an expression of imperial influence? Hasn't the Christian faith become indigenous after all this time?

3. It is hard to deny that we are part of a western mentality of production and progress with an understanding of nature which, at the end of the day, makes life impossible. It is an understanding of dominion and not of conservation and this mentality needs to come to an end. It is very interesting how easily our churches work within the frame of progress and how little we are part of an environmental movement which stresses the importance of keeping the environment healthy and clean. We need to reclaim the creation as a Christian agenda, expressing our commitment to environmental movements with a clear agenda: clean air, clean river and clean environment; good food for all and sustainable land distribution.

4. In his book entitled "O Ser Humano em Busca de Identidade", Gottfried Brakemeier addresses the future of humanity and raises the question of the future of human beings. Mentioning Sigmund Freud, he refers to his three great humiliations the human being has experienced in modern times. The first one was the "cosmological" humiliation when human beings discovered that he/she were not the center of the universe. The second was "biological" when humanity was confronted with the theory that he/she was the product of natural evolution. The third one came with "psychoanalysis" when human beings discovered that he/she is not even the owner of him or herself, experiencing many things that are not under our control. Today, Brakemeier says, we are facing a fourth humiliation and this one could be called "genetic," when our "construction material" is put on the table and all mystery seems to disappear.<sup>13</sup> This is an agenda we are facing and will be increasingly facing and many foundational and essential questions about the nature and meaning of life, its beginning and its end, are wide and scarily open.

13 Gottfried Brakemeier. *O Ser Humano em Busca de Identidade. Contribuições para uma antropologia teológica*. (São Leopoldo: Sinodal; São Paulo: Paulus, 2002), 9.

The last shortcoming I want to refer to could be called spirituality. There is little need to demonstrate how much the school of wholistic mission, at least around us, carried in its own womb the seeds of a western style of thinking and acting. The cerebral dimension of doing theology was much more present than a kind of theology of the heart. The active mode in which the life of the church was perceived dealt much more with doing than being. The reality of the intervention of the church in society dealt more with systems and structures than with culture, spiritual tensions and allegiances, and a community which knew how to handle tears, anguish, hearth pain and the celebration of life.

There is obviously a lot of celebration around an approach that values Scripture, builds on a Trinitarian foundation, honors Christ as Lord and Savior, focuses on a community called to be a sign of the Kingdom, and stresses vocational service—transformational service. And this is the approach we saw taking place around the understanding of wholistic mission. This celebration, however, does not avoid some feeling of dryness and the perception that while the head was well taken care of and the feet were kept busy, the heart was left too much alone. In his book entitled "Satisfy your Soul: Restoring the Heart of Christian Spirituality," Bruce Demarest wrote about his own journey from a classic western theological approach into the world of spiritual formation. "Why had I missed or overlooked them?" he asks, referring to a path of spirituality he had missed for so long. He answers: "Practices such as solitude, contemplating the presence and nature of God, keeping a spiritual journal, and so on. A new awareness of God's being and work all around me grew. And a strong, quiet steadiness, like a rock of strength, seemed to settle within me. The promises of God I'd known in my head were settling down and becoming real in the core of my being."<sup>14</sup>

In order to integrate his journey of spirituality into his "own tradition," as he says, he came up with three concepts to be kept in balance:

Orthodoxy ... right beliefs  
Orthopraxy ... right action  
Orthopathy ... right affection<sup>15</sup>

14 Bruce Demarest, *Satisfy your Soul. Restoring the Heart of Christian Spirituality* (Colorado: NavPress, 1999), 28.

15 Demarest, 28. Manfred Grellert in his preface to

To keep those three desires, options and convictions in balance should also be the goal of those committed to that mission which has been walking under the banner: "The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world," never forgetting to take our whole heart with us, in order to better embrace a loving God, whose Trinity is an expression of community and whose commitment is to share grace: salvation by grace in Christ Jesus, with a flavor of justice.

In his already mentioned article about wholistic mission, Kivitz finishes by saying that "the pastoral and missiological avenue of wholistic mission is affectionate and relational in detriment of being methodological; it's community oriented in detriment of being institutional; it's devotional in detriment of being managerial." Then he says: The Church is the community of grace. A therapeutic community, an agency of social transformation, a historic sign of God's Kingdom, and instrument of the Holy Spirit, while she serves Jesus Christ unconditionally. He is King of Kings Lord of Lords, and to Him be the glory forever.<sup>16</sup>

### Wholistic Mission is Missio Dei. It's a journey in discipleship

In his memorable words to Peter, as we can see at the end of the Gospel of John, Jesus' eyes embraced Peter as only he can do it, his words became as lovely and as firm as they can be and he said: "I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."<sup>17</sup> Continuing, Jesus might have told Peter that his journey is only a journey: "all through the journey you will recognize, Peter, that I am the Alpha and the Omega. In it you recognize that your journey is only a small part in my kingdom journey. In it you recognize that you do not even have control over that journey of yours, being suffering the supreme example of it." So it should also be with our way of understanding and of living out what we call wholistic mission. One generation, as ours, walks a few miles and a coming generation walks some

*Missão Integral*, will speak of a dialectic perspective. "Maybe our theological axis" in terms of wholistic mission should be dialectic, he would say: "word and spirit, spirituality and mission." (12).

16 Kivitz, 65.

17 John 21: 18 (NIV).

other miles and if we have the privilege to pass the baton on, generation by generation we should celebrate and say Soli Deo Gloria.

If we see a new generation wearing other or even better clothes of obedience we should celebrate that too, knowing that at the end of the day all of us will be asked about our willingness and our readiness to answer that life giving and life shaking question: DO YOU LOVE ME?

Peter is told to go. We are told to go. To show. To be and to do what he has told us to be and to go. And this he told us several times and in many ways, always looking at us with that look.

One way in which his word comes to us, and with that I want to conclude, is that call to go that comes to us in the words of Micah: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."<sup>18</sup> It's simple. It's beautiful. It's hard to get and to want.

To act justly  
To love mercy  
To walk humbly with our God.

That's all! That's enough!

It's justice in a world of injustice. Well known injustices. Creative ways of doing injustice. It's injustice inside out and none of us can wash our hands. In repentance we need to listen to God's call for justice.

It's loving mercy, even if it is so hard for us to understand what this exactly means. It's love seen at the cross. It's love that breaks through death. We never understand it but always receive it and smile with grace.

It's a humble walk with our God. In fact there is no other way to walk side by side with God, even if we insist in walking stubbornly, enjoy walking the arrogant step of sufficiency and like to show ourselves as carrying powerful weapon, while we walk with belligerent steps. But we know that our walk should be the same as that of Jesus Christ, who walked as a servant and called us to walk with him.

There are many ways in which a paper like this could be finished and yet there are

18 Micah 6:8.

so many more things I would like to say. And I did not even mention the one thing you consider so very important. But then I am reminded that wholistic mission is not primarily about content, but about attitude and about journey, a word which I have used far too often. All that I did today was to share with you a little of a journey here and a journey there. A journey so much messed up by my reluctant obedience, but which is carried by God's grace. A journey which is so very dependent upon God's love, that becomes so real to me through you. A journey which rests in the arms of God's people, here represented by this very gathering. A journey which comes to a quick stop. A stop to look around and say alleluia for fellowship. A stop to become silent in the light of the pain of our world. A stop of reverence in the presence of the Triune God. A stop in order for us to pray together:

*Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power,  
and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.*<sup>19</sup> <<

19 According to the Book of Common Prayer, 1928.



The aim of this paper is to propose a heuristic field-map for mission practitioners seeking to enter into an authentic and Christian encounter with non-Christian religious worldviews. Using Hans Frei's *Types of Christian Theology*, I hope to encourage an evangelical outlook that empowers a range of context-specific responses that are deemed tenable within diverse evangelical traditions. Current polarizations between pluralist and particularist categories are reflected, on the one hand, in relativistic attitudes toward religions, and on the other hand, in rejectionist responses of all religions. Unless we develop a more adequate "way of seeing," both parties will find it difficult to move beyond a culture of distrust, closed categories, and misdirected conclusions.

# The Christian Challenge of Religious Encounter

## Hans Frei's Types of Theology as a Heuristic Tool<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is an abridged version of the paper presented in WEA South Africa 2006 Mission Conference.

### I. Current Perspectives on Non-Christian Religions

Categories of a theology toward other religions are traditionally grouped in the threefold typology of pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism. These categories were criticized for their sharp distinctions between positions on the non-Christian religions, and for their failure to take into account the complexities between various proponents of religious encounter. For example, many evangelicals will be exclusivist in their position on the finality of Jesus for salvation, but will be open to incorporating the insights from other religions for life and faith. New models are still being proposed and debated with no real consensus on this evolving debate on the theories of religion.

Recent evangelical positions on non-Christian philosophies straddle between inclusivists, such as Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, Mark Heim, and particularists such as Gerald McDermott, Timothy Tennent,

Ida Glasser, and Terrence Thiessen.<sup>1</sup> In *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?*, Gerald R. McDermott argues from Scripture and the writings of Jonathan Edwards that evangelicals will discover new insights when we engage with the teachings of other religions. As long as we retain our commitment to the Bible, such engagements with non-Christian truths are necessarily shaped and colored through a distinctively evangelical lens. McDermott presents biblical arguments that God wants Gentiles to know him, that people outside the Jewish and Christian churches have known him, and that God's people can learn from those outside the Jewish and Christian churches (2000:73-90). Evangelicals can learn from other religions—not only truths arising from creation and general revelation, but also

<sup>1</sup> Within the limitations of this paper, I will highlight a few writers and commend readers to read other publications.

new insights found in these religious traditions. For example, he discusses virtues in Confucianism, Buddhist thinking of "no-self" and Islam's integration between religion and public life which can be shaped by biblical reinterpretations. He distinguishes fundamentalists, who question the value of human culture that is not created by Christians, from evangelicals, who recognize God's 'common grace' working in and through all human culture (McDermott 2000:34).

Timothy Tennent, Associate Professor of Mission at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, recognizes that no longer can religious conversations be entered with Christians positing themselves at the head of the table, controlling the agenda and conclusions. Rather, Christians today need to sit at the roundtable and engage in dialogue with competing faiths. Tennent demonstrates what such roundtable discussions may look like through interactions with Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (2002). Tennent tells

the analogy used by A.G. Hogg about a man looking up at the moon whose view is obscured by clouds. He needs to shift his position to an open field in order to gaze at the radiance of the moon (2002: 232). He lists two potential errors in exclusivism: first, a failure to fully appreciate God's activity in the pre-Christian heart; and second, an unwillingness to honestly engage with objections from non-Christian religions. Tennent then presents himself as an "engaged exclusivist"—one who is committed to uniqueness of Christ but also one that is more open toward general revelation and is serious about engaging the religions from a missiological perspective.

Evangelicals such as Harold Netland, Amos Yong, Terrence Thiessen and others are exploring new models for engaging with non-Christian religions. Amos Yong has pointed out that exclusivism is primarily a soteriological category, helpful for clarifying the question of the un-evangelized, but not so adequate for developing a theology of non-Christian religions (Yong 2003:26-27; Thiessen 2004:32). In dealing with the question of who can be saved, Thiessen proposed the following five categories:

1. Ecclesiocentrism: salvation coextensive with the church;
2. Agnosticism: Scripture is silent on this issue of who can be saved;
3. Assessibilism: Hopeful (not simply agnostic) about the possibility of salvation beyond church boundaries. Non-Christians can be saved although non-Christian religions may not be regarded as instruments for salvation.
4. Religious instrumentalism: God's salvation is available through non-Christian religions, a form of inclusivism.
5. Relativism: Many ways of salvations as part of God's divine program. (Thiessen 2004:33-35)

While remaining rooted in the evangelical camp, Thiessen proposed assessibilism as a new position for engaging with non-Christian religions. In an excellent chapter on "Is Assessibilism a new idea?", Thiessen surveyed and argued that early church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and other Protestant writers, such as Lesslie Newbigin and J.N.D. Anderson, fall into this category of writers who both affirm the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation while at the same time are more open in acknowledging God's works among non-Christian religions.

### Why Would Western Theological Categories Need Contextual Reformulation?

As a case argument, let us consider barriers for Malay Muslims in Malaysia to accept a Jesus wrapped in Western clothing. To appreciate the complexities of inter-religious discourse, we need to delineate seven interconnected factors impacting the nature and dynamic of a Christian-Muslim encounter in Malaysia:

1. Theological differences between Islam and Christianity
2. Religious misunderstandings inherited from centuries of Christian-Muslim relations
3. Racial and cultural differences between Muslims and Christians (the latter are mostly Chinese and Indians) in Malaysia
4. Social pressures within the Malay community against conversion
5. Legislative barriers hindering freedom of conversion, marriage, burial and religious practice
6. Political structures organized along racial lines
7. Economic deprivations for converts, e.g. withdrawal of special privileges for housing, business, children's education
8. Impact of global events such as Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, war of terror, and trade protectionism in Western countries.

In a situation where ethnicity and religion sharply coincide, complicated by socio-historical and political barriers domestically and internationally, an adequate Christian theology of non-Christian religions, with its attending perspectives on the nature and method for engaging people of other faiths, needs to take into consideration these multi-dimensional realities. There is no such thing as a purely spiritual conversation. Where does one draw the line between culture and religion? Can Malay Christians follow Jesus while remaining in their culture? How do Christians develop a map for discerning the possibility of being a hybrid of Christian-Buddhist? In sharing these struggles, I hope we will appreciate that these are complex issues which require more interactions and that our deliberations will encourage more dialogue among evangelicals concerned with these issues.

Thus far, discussions dominating academic discourse on religions are on salvation and revelation. Although these two issues are critical, the Christians who are a minority in the context of other world religions struggle with other basic issues of identity and inter-

religious relations: what does it mean to be post-Muslim Christians, and post-Buddhist Christians? How do we interpret our past religious-cultural practices? With our new found faith, how do we relate and engage with people of other faiths?

To these set of questions relating to Christian interaction with people of other faiths, positive developments occur when Christian studies are undertaken to engage with specific beliefs of other religions. Ida Glasser's *Bible and Other Faiths* (2005) and Chowkat Moucarry's *Faith to Faith* (2001) are two recent attempts at engaging Islam based on careful readings of the Quran and sensitive treatment of Islamic beliefs. A second type of contribution relates to those context-specific studies which help Christians to understand other religions on their own terms rather than stereotyping all religions as evil: David Burnett's *Spirit of Buddhism, Spirit of Hinduism*; Paul J. Griffiths's *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes* and Peter Riddell and Peter Cotterrel's *Islam from Within*. A third development is in the area of engaging non-Christian worldviews sensitively, but through a missional-orientation: David Lim and Steve Spaulding's *Sharing Jesus in the Buddhist World*, and *Sharing Jesus Holistically With the Buddhist World*, deals with Buddhist contexts. A number of Asian writers such as Ubolwan, David Lim and others, contributed to these publications.

However, these developments, discussed and debated in missiological forums, have not resulted in radical reformulation of practices on the mission fields or in Asian or African churches. In terms of actual practices, the Christian populace is straddled between those who uncritically embrace relativistic values and those who vociferously resist any suggestions that evangelicals can learn anything from non-Christian religions. Among non-Western churches, particularly those who have suffered persecutions from Muslims or those who have rejected past bondages of spiritism and idolatries, any attempts for mutual learning with belief systems of other faiths are still viewed with suspicion, if not openly resisted as another form of syncretism. Faced with increased wars between religions, fears of serious debates over competing faith claims, and increased fundamentalism between and within religions, evangelical Christians need to revisit their positions on the value of non-Christian religions without settling into simplistic and comfortable security in a castle which no longer exists. How can evangelicals move beyond this impasse, without necessar-



ily giving up tenets in evangelical affirmations, and yet enter into living as a people of God in concrete social and political realities?

## II. Hans Frei's Five Types of Theology

In this section, I will use Hans Frei's model of five types of theology to help us develop a more critical appreciation of the variety of approaches toward non-Christian religions.<sup>2</sup> Frei developed his analysis from Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*. Niebuhr's five types of Christian engagement with culture are: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture. Both Frei's and Niebuhr's analyses of Christian's interaction with their respective cultures may offer some help for Christianity's engagement with other religions. Frei was frustrated with how different categories of theologies are lumped together, without accounting for the nuances and differences in their respective theological approaches. Similarly, the impasse among evangelicals' approaches to other religions may be due to our inability to account for the different nuances between pluralism and exclusivism. So, instead of engagement, evangelicals find it easier to retreat to forms of rejectionism or isolationism. Because we continue to adopt traditional categories in thinking about non-Christian religions, evangelicals find it difficult to move outside of our theological boxes. In an age of increased religious tensions, we are faced with dangers of erecting more fences than bridges for inter-religious encounters. Instead of labeling various approaches as liberal, evangelical, catholic or confessional, it may be helpful to evaluate our approaches to people of other faiths through Hans Frei's types of theology. I am not relying on Hans Frei's theological presuppositions; rather I am using his theological categories as a *heuristic tool* for finding new ways to seeing and engaging with people of other faiths.

### Two Extreme Types: from Outsider to Insider's Orientation

Frei's basic idea is there are two extreme and opposite ways in which Christianity relates to modernity, and there are three mediating points in-between these polarities.

**Type 1** is Christian theology developed from some modern philosophy, worldview

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Professor Gavin D'Costa for introducing Hans Frei's *Types of Theology* to me.

or agenda such as enlightenment thinking, materialist, atheistic, ecology, poverty, or justice. You will be confident in the rightness of your position according to evidences derived from science, genetics, or psychology, or some discipline. In applying Type 1 perspectives to the theology of religions, we may argue that whenever pluralistic approaches rely on concepts of tolerance, or all religions are the same as their integrative framework, then they run the risk of developing a Christian approach that is lacking in biblical or Christian foundations. People in this category then judge all perspectives according to how they fit into their point of reference. Sometimes, they will pick and choose those acceptable elements in Christian theologies as long as they support their agenda or perspective! The other extreme pole is **Type 5**, which is an attempt to repeat a scriptural worldview, classic theology (Calvinistic, Lutheran, Barthian, Wesleyan) or denominational theological position (Catholic, Reform, Pentecostal, Baptist), and to see all realities in those terms. The Bible becomes your only reference for encountering people of other faiths, ignoring any nuances in the real beliefs of other cultures. From such a vantage position, you will reject any new attempts at formulating theological engagements with non-Christian religions. For example, non-Western theologies or contextual theologies are rigorously evaluated based on "foundational" truths of Western theological interpretations and categories. Some conservative evangelicals operate along this line of thinking in its extreme forms. Therefore, we judge Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism through Western theological categories. We compare the best of Christianity with the worst of other religions. The context is irrelevant and deep seated belief systems are seldom addressed. Nominalism, legalism, fundamentalism and parochialism thrive within communities that operate under this Type 5 theology.

### Three Mediating Types of Theology

In between the two types of theology are the types of theology which seek to engage with non-Christian cultures or religions. These three types of theology are at the heart of those who seek some form of engagements. **Type 2** engages with Christian theology through interaction with social sciences, management theories, psychology, and non-Christian religious studies, applies it to understanding Christianity and shows the relevance of the gospel for today. Embracing the extreme forms of Type 2 theology, mission practitioners may allow

specific agendas or pet projects such as dialogue, wholistic mission, justice, modernity, managements, strategies-in-mission, and spirituality to be the integrative framework for engaging with people of other faiths. We will then develop our theologies and biblical support from these agendas or integrative frameworks. Neither the Christian gospel nor the real beliefs of non-Christian faiths play any primary functions in the development of approaches or strategies for mission. Although these organizations may be working among Africans or Muslims, their points of reference tend to be sustaining historical traditions or stated vision statements and pragmatic results. For Type 2, Christianity and non-Christian religions are appendices or illustrations to the overall mission goal. On the one hand, when we listen to some pluralists committed to a politically correct framework of tolerance or new age writings, one gets the sense that there is no serious religious encounter taking place. On the other hand, evangelicals can be susceptible to similar reductionism when mission is defined narrowly in terms of evangelism, conversion, or driven by ideologies such as completing the Great Commission, or speeding Jesus' second coming. Theoretically, such pragmatic agendas will be short lived and without theological orientations. In most cases, a critical evaluation of these mission programs and projects will reveal that limited interest or investments are placed in the study of non-Christian religions, or the interaction between the history and culture of the people groups.

**Type 3** is in the middle because it refuses to allow any single agenda or framework to dominate the multi-perspectives needed for engaging with the social, cultural and religious worlds of people. It recognizes that there is no such thing as a purely religious encounter. Real engagement with Islam must include an understanding of its distinctive sects, political structures, historical meanings, economic realities and the future envisage by adherents of these concrete communities. The best way forward in encountering people of other faiths is not coming with a set of presuppositions or doctrines or projects, but setting up dialogues between Christians and people of other faiths. The key idea is *correlation*—"the aim is to correlate issues raised by the Christian faith and practice with other approaches to those issues" (Ford 1999: 24). Are there correlations between Buddhist's vision for nirvana and enlightenment with the Christian's vision of salvation? We cannot arrive at simplistic conclusions without

the needed engagements in speaking with Buddhists and the study of their religious meanings to the subject. In poverty alleviation projects among Hindus, we need to take into account predominant Hindu worldviews on karma and social structures of classes currently operating in the Hindu society. These are not merely points for polemics, but they help us to see if there are aspects of these religious beliefs which will contribute to building appropriate models for such relief projects. In seeking correlation, it does not mean one needs to buy wholesale into another religious belief system, rather, one recognizes the intricate balance between religion and cultures and seeks to authenticate the gospel into social contexts. Based on intimate knowledge and careful study of the real beliefs of other faiths, evangelicals are then in a reliable position to make judgments, to come up with truth-validations, and to allow the Christian gospel's interaction with any contradictory truths.

Frei highlights Paul Tillich (1886-1965) as the best known exponent of a theology of correlation. Tillich used "religious symbols to meet the fundamental questions raised about the meaning of life and history" (Ford 1999: 25). The symbol of the kingdom of God correlates with the meaning of history, and the symbol of "Jesus as the Christ" correlates with the meaning of history. Inclusivists such as Gavin D'Costa and Marcus Borg generally may be comfortable with this position, but so would be assessibilists such as Terrence Thiessen, missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, Islamicists Kenneth Cragg or anthropologist Charles Craft. They are examples of theologians fitting into Type 3. People who describe themselves as radical or open evangelicals or those experimenting on forms of new communities within insider movements will be most likely to be launching from this Type 3 base of mission theology. The key liberating fact is these folks are no longer operating on one meta-narrative, but they have that capacity to engage with people in their contextual realities, believing that God is far bigger than their Christianity.

**Type 4** tries to avoid the middle path of correlation by giving priority to the Christian narrative and position. It is "faith seeking understanding" based on a prior commitment to Scripture and the Gospel. Such faith-commitment does not exclude the need for dialogue. Instead, it seeks to find new ways of being believers in the midst of non-Christian cultures while maintaining roots and identities within the historic Christian community.

## 22. Howie Brant, SIM, USA

On the positive side, Bishop Zac's messages were like a double-edged sword striking at both Western missional blind spots as well as intertribal and ethnic division that so plague the non-Western church. His earnest plea was that we bring our missiology and ecclesiology together with a new "Kingdom Theology" that transcends distinctions of rich and poor, sending and receiving, mission and church. The consultation provided an excellent forum for African nations to hear what God had done in Latin America through COMIBAM and to think about how they could change their focus from being a mission receiving country to a mission sending country.

Yet there were some SA06 weaknesses and thus some recommendations:

- The consultation lacked any one driving theme or message. As a result there was no concrete action plan coming out of SA06 and no real sense of direction for the way ahead.
- There were many references to the "undeclared war" between existing older and emerging missions. But no one pointed the way to resolve these issues and as yet no forum has been created for open dialogue on the topic.
- I would like to see a consultation where there was an open form to honestly discuss issues that would enable older sending missions and new emerging missions to work together for the kingdom of God.
- South and East Asian voices were noticeably missing at the consultation. We heard very little about what God is doing in China, Korea and India. As some of the strongest mission movements are coming from this part of the world, they need more visibility.
- My sense is that there were many people at SA06 who would have been willing to contribute time and effort to the larger goals of WEA Mission Commission. But there was no opportunity given for people to volunteer or be organized into working groups.

My strongest "take home" memory of SA06 was realizing how I was personally blessed beyond measure by the opportunity to worship the Lord with people from so many backgrounds—all with the same passion of seeing God's Kingdom expanded in our generation.

Mainstream evangelicalism will be most comfortable with this position. Scholars such as Timothy Tennent and Gary McDermott mentioned in this paper will belong to this type of writers.

Most evangelicals move between the Type 5 and Type 4 continuum, with the pragmatics and dogmatics more likely to fall into Type 5. Missiologists and practitioners who place priority in cultural understanding and the study of other religions tend to operate in Type 4, and the innovative radicals and scholars of religions into Type 3. We need to note that theologians and missionaries cannot be type-cast into one category, nor are we suggesting that once you adopt this position on one issue, you are unable to move between types of missionary approaches. The value of Frei's model is to help us reflect on the way we think about issues surrounding inter-religious encounter. At the least, it should help us to be self-critical about our presuppositions when we disagree with people on this complex subject.

## REFLECTIONS

### III. Some Implications for Religious Encounters

In this section, using Frei's *Type of Christian Theology*, we seek to illustrate how evangelicals may explore fresh ways of thinking about engaging people of other faiths. Christian encounters need to move beyond a superficial level of Christian behaviors and religious identification. The first level of engagement is in a person-to-person exchange of views. Over time, and depending on context, these religious conversations may move into discovery of deeply held beliefs, rituals and religious symbols. Ultimately, genuine religious encounters aim at worldview transformations.<sup>3</sup> Where possible, we will discuss some practical outworking of interfaith rela-

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion, see my essay, "Elements of a Genuine Encounter with Chinese Buddhists in East Asia," in David Lim and Steve Spaulding's, *Sharing Jesus in a Buddhist World* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003).



tions arising from this need for the Christian gospel to engage with other faith-worldviews. A non-Western contribution to the debate of religious encounter is not normally focused on doctrinal study or philosophical approaches. Rather, such reflections are best focused on the daily interactions between firm believers who seek to engage with their neighbors on every aspect of life.

### Theology of the Kingdom of God and Islam

Muslims, Jews and Christians share similar roots in monotheism, Judea-Christian prophetic traditions and inter-religious civilizations. The Kingdom of God, Covenant, The Holy Spirit, and Cross Textual readings of the Holy Scriptures are promising symbols for breaking the impasse within evangelicalism in exploring religious encounters. In this section, I will discuss how the theology of the Kingdom of God may be used as a framework for engaging with people of other faiths.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus' message of the Kingdom is an invitation to follow God's ways rather than the nationalistic aspirations of establishing a political Jewish Kingdom. Rather than spiritual promises to heaven, his parables break open Jewish worldviews to say that the true people of God are not just the Jews but also Gentiles. Parables act as not merely stories about the Kingdom, but the very means for inviting Jews as well as Gentiles into the Kingdom of God. The miracles of Jesus are another tool for worldview transformation, as these miracles are signs of God's surprising inclusion of the poor and the lepers who exhibited faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Instead of proclaiming Jesus' divinity, these miracles and healings are signs that God is vindicating Jesus' way of life and mission.

Muslims, more than other religionists, need to encounter true faith and become followers of such a radical kingdom. When they see faith and ethics embodied in life witness that exceeds religious righteousness, like the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 15), Muslims will discover that Christians are also people of the book. Religious encounter, in this way, cannot be achieved without long term friendship, without liv-

ing in the midst of Muslims, and without exhibiting that "righteousness" of faith. The Kingdom of God must include not just the religious but every aspect of the life of the Christian. It will be like a pearl, precious and pursued by the merchant who is willing to surrender everything for the sake of possessing it. Over time, the signs of the Kingdom will be a coherent and consistent message, lived out in humble obedience of a follower of Isa-Al-Masih, and speaks powerfully and relevantly to Muslim mindsets. God's Kingdom will necessarily be broader than the local church, in its life and expression of worship.

### The Spirit and spirits of Buddhism and Hinduism

Rudolph Otto, Emil Bruner and Wilfred Cantwell Smith have all written on the luminous nature of religious truths which cannot be purely captured in propositional statements of truths. Certain things have been revealed to us in Scripture and can be known, but there are other truths which can only be known progressively; and there are still truths outside our experiences about God which we can probably discover through non-Christian religions. Such discoveries are only available when we move out of our comfortable paradigms of Christendom. In an unpublished lecture at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1995, Peter Beyerhaus introduces the Tripolar Approach to other religions. Beyerhaus proposed a tripolar view of non-Christian religions which take into account three sources of all religions: human and their cultures, God and the supernatural elements in all religions, and the works of

the devil in all religions. In a tripolar view of religions, we take seriously the supernatural elements within all religions. There are powerful forces at work, principalities that brought people under bondage. These demonic forces are at work in both Christendom as well as in non-Christian religions. Therefore, Christian encounter is not merely an exchange of reasoned arguments and theological debates.

Type 5 theology will brand all non-Christian religions as demonic, and will fail to distinguish those aspects of religious from cultural, while Type 1, when combined with a monopolar perspective of other religions, will fail to grapple with the realities of demonic influences on religions. Likewise, Type 4 theology, when combined with a bipolar view of religions, will merely engage in religious and philosophical exchanges, and will again dismiss the beliefs of spirits in African traditional religions. Type 3 theology recognizes that every issue of importance will need input from both religions, from the least level of exchanging religious perspectives to the deeper level of developing criteria for evaluating truth claims over these issues or problems. Therefore, no theological assessment is possible without first engaging in a genuine and biblical encounter of correlation between religions. <<



Kang San Tan worked several years for OMF International as the Director for Missions Research in Malaysia. At present he teaches at Redcliffe College, UK. He is also a member of the Global Missiology Taskforce of the WEA-Mission Commission. His interests are on Asian Theology and Christian Encounter with Muslims and Buddhists.

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4 See Tan Kang San, "Kingdom-Oriented Framework for Encountering Buddhist Worldviews" in *Connections: The Journal of the WEA Mission Commission*, Vol. 3, No.1, April 2006. Based on a lecture given at Bible and Nations Conference at Regent College, Vancouver in June, 2003.

The International Missionary Training Network (IMTN) was one of several MC-related working teams that gathered for the triennial WEA Mission Commission Consultation held from June 18-24, 2006 at Goudini Spa in South Africa. The first IMTN work session was held on Monday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, with 38 participants. Over the next four days, we reviewed what had been completed since Langley 2003, and tried to develop a strategy for the next three years. This article constitutes a report on the work completed and a personal reflection on how the IMTN should operate over the next three years.

# Out of and after South Africa 2006

## IMTN REPORT SA06, July 25, 2006

### Presentation of IMTDE chapters

Four chapters of the new publication, *Integral Ministry Training Design and Evaluation*, (editors Brynjolfson and Lewis) were presented, and the IMTN was given the opportunity to reflect and evaluate the content of each chapter. These chapters were *Philosophy of Ministry Training*, by Jonathan Lewis, *Understanding Integral Ministry Training*, by Rob Brynjolfson, *The Outcomes Profiling Process*, written by Jonathan Lewis but presented by Rob Brynjolfson, and *Designing Ministry Training for Adults*, by Evelyn Hibbert. Various suggestions for improvements were received, and the authors are now incorporating many of these into the final product. This publication is expected to go to print in the fall of 2006.

### Strategy session

The final day was dedicated to administrative and strategic planning. Jonathan Lewis formally stepped down as the appointed director of the IMTN. Rob Brynjolfson assumed this leadership and led the network in a strategy process. This process included the evaluation and development of the IMTN goals, identify-

ing areas of key concern, and dividing up into working groups based on the IMTN goals.

### Expansion of the IMTN goals

The goals of the IMTN, as derived from the Canada 2003 White Paper, were reviewed while asking the question, "Should the IMTN pursue other goals not expressed in this list?" The resulting discussion identified two concerns that needed to be expressed as new goals for the IMTN. The following list of seven goals represents the new direction and work the IMTN needs to pursue over the next three years.

### IMTN Goals – June 2006

1. Provide and maintain an efficient global communication network among missionary trainers.
2. Stimulate vision for viable, integral and accessible missionary training programs worldwide.
3. Coordinate development of culturally appropriate missionary training resources in major training languages.
4. Coordinate the work of the IMTN associates as consultants to regional training centers and for training trainers.

5. Facilitate the assessment of global missionary training to recognize effectiveness and address needs.
6. Identify issues and trends affecting the church and the global mission and explore the implications these represent for relevant and effective missionary training.
7. Promote a philosophy of life-long learning and encourage the development and use of in-service training and resources.

### Formation of work groups and projects

The IMTN broke out into working groups according to personal or institutional interests based on the IMTN goals. Each work group was to determine ways to work toward the fulfillment of each goal. The seven goals were covered by five working groups and were designated by shorter titles. These are: Communication (two members), Stimulate Vision (three members), Resources (two members), Consultation (three members), Assessment (seven members), Innovations & Trends (seven members), and In-Service Training (four members). Each group was asked to identify the significant training needs represented by their goal and to develop a plan or project to address that need.

Rob Brynjolfson,  
Canada



**A look ahead (personal reflection)**

Jonathan Lewis presented a vision for the IMTN, which was also published in Connections (Vol. 5, No. 1), entitled *Towards South Africa 2006*. This was presented as a proposed agenda for the IMTN. Responses to the proposal varied. Many participants were new to the IMTN and felt they had little to contribute by way of response. A graphic with a world map dotted with stars representing training centers that would operate as hubs, drew comments of concern. Some felt that the graphic seemed to intimate a “colonialist” outlook. Others were concerned that their country or region did not have a star and was being left out of the planning. Jonathan helped us to understand the map was a visual representation and never intended to portray actual functioning centers or real plans. It was meant to provoke discussion. The proposal was scrapped. Participants in general were more concerned with immediate felt training needs rather than tackling global objectives.



It is difficult to lead a broad network into a cohesive and workable plan for the future. Everyone seems to have their own agenda and concerns. This is illustrated by the fact that the network felt the need to expand the IMTN goals during our time in South Africa to include some of these. What emerged from this discussion and the work over the next four days was an observation that the IMTN, as a network, encompasses at least three constituencies. These are the formal academic institutions, the dedicated missionary training centers, and those involved by agencies in in-service training. In Langley 2003, the needs and concerns of the academic institutions were in the forefront, while at South Africa 2006, it appeared that the emphasis was on dedicated missionary training centers or non-institutionalized train-

ing programs. While each of these constituencies shares similar interests or concerns relating to training, they also face unique and different challenges. Even after identifying these constituencies, the network decided to divide into working groups according to personal or institutional interests based on the IMTN goals.

**Where will we be going over the next three years?**

It is my intention to encourage these working groups to pursue the projects that each group suggested. Some of these are both valuable and viable. I will provide support and encouragement and will try to coordinate some of the communication needed to pursue these goals.

REFLECTIONS

**23. Hendrik Saayman, Moreletapark Reformed Church, South Africa**

As a pastor of a local church, I was so privileged to have been invited to the WEA Mission Commission conference held in South Africa. I appreciated the fact that I was amongst some of the world’s best missions leaders and was able to listen to them. I had many opportunities to meet some of these people, and I think that the networking that took place outside of the formal program was even more significant than the formal program itself!

I was pleasantly surprised by the high quality of the workshops and the “thinkers” that I listened to. It was especially a surprise to hear the African voices, and I was very proud of the fact that I was also part of Africa! To me, the fact that WEA chose to host this conference in Africa was a prophetic act, because I believe that Africa is ready to stand up to fulfill her calling in the Kingdom of God.

I was also blessed by meeting missions pastors from other parts of the world and sharing and learning from them. It was encouraging to realize that we all struggle with the same challenges and to know that God is working all over the world in miraculous ways.

We, as a SA group of pastors, were privileged to get a unique overview of trends in missions from some of the keenest minds in the missions world. One of the trends that was of particular interest to me was the whole issue of member care. As a missions

pastor who is responsible for a hundred missionaries in the field, it is important to know how to take care of them so that they can be efficient and satisfied and cared for. It helped me a lot to hear the different viewpoints and best practices.

Overall, I can say that I was blessed by attending the conference and believe that God will use it in my ministry to be a blessing to the nations.

At the same time, I recognize that the IMTN needs to pursue a global strategy to address the training needs of the older and newer sending countries. As such, the agenda presented in Jonathan’s article, *Towards South Africa 2006*, will not be discarded entirely. The IMTN will continue to pursue strategic relationships with Resource training partners like Bethany International, Worldview Resource Group and others to address the goals of the IMTN and the training needs around the world. These centers are embracing a broader vision of training, and are beginning to influence and benefit the training in their regions, which in turn will help us accomplish strategic global strategies for missionary training.

Would you like to join a working group and help pursue the goals of the IMTN? Do you have a question, comment or suggestion? Please write us and let us know how we can serve your constituency or how you can help us serve better! [robb@worldevangelical.org](mailto:robb@worldevangelical.org) <<

Take twenty-five people, different shapes and colors and textures, stir in some difficult but vital missiological subjects, divide into smaller quantities, knead gently and let them prove for five days in a warm place, check progress and... ..No! the baking isn’t by any means near complete yet, but the yeast is at work, and the aroma is full of promise!

# Global Missiology Report

## Post SA06

During SA06, the team working on *Missional Ecclesiology* made good progress towards the goal of a valuable book, and was greatly helped by the input of three new contributors. We made significant decisions about the next steps for the Encounter with Other Faiths project, and found more women keen to contribute stories to the Women in Mission project. These two projects are also heading towards books, and we plan that all three books should reach publication over the next 18 months, funds permitting. Three new groups brainstormed and did valuable preliminary work on the projects of Spirituality in Mission and Missionary Formation, Contextualization Revisited, and Strategy in Mission. One other new project, addressing suffering and persecution, will start later in the year.

None of these subjects is easy, and despite the small working groups, each group represented different views and concerns and identified yet more views and concerns. This

in itself is important, as evangelicals need to listen to each other with respect and to grow in cross-cultural understanding (and from other parts of the Christian family, too). Within the Mission Commission, we accept that there will be divergent convictions in some areas, as we all come with our presuppositional baggage and are shaped more than we know by our own backgrounds and cultures. So, as we continue to work on these projects, we deliberately aim to stimulate debate and understanding as well as to translate the discussion into mission practice. We want to understand God’s Word better and to apply it more faithfully as it speaks into the wide variety of contexts within which we live and serve. And we want to resource our brothers and sisters in their ministry.

Each new generation in mission needs to revisit these and many other topics, and to then help shape our own generation’s mission praxis to be more in tune with God’s heart.

Not all the groups have a book as their goal. Some want—at least initially—to provide some discussion-starter articles in Connections and elsewhere. We are also committed to putting resource articles on the Mission Commission website, and would value help in identifying papers and shorter articles that would be helpful to a wider readership by this route. These need not be in English.

*Rose Dowsett, UK*

If you would be interested to join in one of the working groups, or can recommend people who would make a valuable contribution, please would you write to me at [106011.462@compuserve.com](mailto:106011.462@compuserve.com)? If you would like to get involved, but are not comfortable working in English, please write to me, or to Bill Taylor at [btaylor@worldevangelical.org](mailto:btaylor@worldevangelical.org), and we will explore how best to include you. We really do want our groups to reflect the concerns and insights of brothers and sisters worldwide. <<





Winter in South Africa! With some of us coming from warmer parts of the world, we alternately shivered and delighted in the weather. "We" were 21 member care workers who came from diverse places—Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Germany, India, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, North Africa, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and the USA.

# Looking to the Future from the Perspective of Member Care

Change was the order of the day for us at the conference. The 'big' change was Bill Taylor's gracious and dignified transition from the position of Executive Director of WEA Mission Commission after 20 years of wonderful leadership. Bertil Ekstrom's commissioning was a solemn event as he picked up the mantle of the Executive Director role. The member care contingent also experienced a major change when Kelly O'Donnell stepped down from his positions of leadership, first as coordinator of member care, and also as a member of the Leadership Team of Member Care within the Mission commission.

In the wake of Kelly's stepping down, a four-person Leadership Team (LT) was empowered and invested with the responsibility to carry forward the good progress we had experienced under Kelly's leadership. This four-person team brings geographic as well as task diversity to the leadership role. Who are these four people? Pramila Rajendran promotes and delivers member care, through consultation, training, and helping to start the member care department for the India Mission Association which provides an umbrella for 208 mission organizations in India. Harry Hoffman is the youthful face of the LT, bringing with him a most welcome computer savvy and ingenuity. Harry established The Well-Member Care Center in Thailand, and has now moved on to a larger Asian country to establish a new Member Care Center. Marina Prins also brings youth and creativity as she serves South Africa. She serves in and from Capetown. Marina's book, *Member Care for Missionaries*, has blessed us all as we work to inform the sending church about missions and missionary care. And Laura Mae (Larrie) Gardner is the fourth member of

this LT, bringing many years of missions experience, ranging from translation to leadership, from counseling to developing member care, from writing to crisis intervention for Wycliffe and other mission agencies. We believe this mix on the LT reflects not only geographic representation but also a breadth of experience, creativity, and vision. In addition, we tap into a huge network of workers and resources. Besides all that, we are comfortable with each other and love working together.

Larrie Gardner  
Harry Hoffman  
Marina Prins  
Pramila Rajendran

During the week of SA06, our member care meetings alternated between hearing reports from each participant, enjoying the stimulus of several teaching sessions, and planning for the future. We were strengthened by the reports and sobered by the challenges some of our colleagues face. We were blessed and privileged to hear stories and pray together. We were very encouraged to see the appreciation for the contributions of member care. In the plenary sessions that we were able to attend, we heard references from almost every speaker to the need for more member care. When statistics were given, the presence or absence of member care with regard to longevity of members was acknowledged.

Our concerns include building cohesion within this core group of member care practitioners, enlisting new member care workers, establishing regional networks or groupings of member care providers, identifying cutting edge issues in missionary care, connecting well and responsibly with the leadership of WEA MC, identifying areas of concern, and sharing and resourcing those concerns.

The needs and challenges for member care are huge. We must change the perception held by many mission leaders that we are 'junior counselors,' consumed with 'helping the hurting.' One of the participants expressed his opinion like this: "Member care should not be about helping people, it should be about helping people do something better. A constant criticism I hear from leaders is they don't want their organizations to become counseling centers. Keeping the counseling banner in the forefront of member care will only continue this perception and

keep member care from truly integrating into churches, organizations, and communities. The central theme of member care is not helping the hurting. It is effectiveness, helping people grow and thrive where they don't belong so that they can be even more effective and influential. The new realities are chronically high stress, strained interpersonal relationships, conflicts, crisis and trauma. Removal and withdrawal are not options for increasing numbers of us as we internationalize. We need to be happy about where we have come from, but also passionate about getting on to where we need to go."

We want to promote basic and biblical resilience, godly selfcare, sharing across the walls of mission agencies and serving as diverse colleagues with one heart and passion—that the Kingdom of God be extended on this earth.

Now as a new Leadership Team, each one of whom has a fulltime missions assignment, we need your prayers as we move forward on new paths to strengthen existing member care efforts and incorporate new workers and new strategies.

A conversation is communication by two or more people, often on a particular topic. Conversations are the ideal form of communication from at least one point of view, since they allow people with different views of a topic to learn from each other. A speech, on the other hand, is an oral presentation by one person directed at a group.

Conversers naturally relate the other speaker's statements to themselves, and insert themselves (or some degree of relation to themselves, ranging from the replier's opinions or points to actual stories about themselves) into their replies. For a successful conversation, the partners must achieve a workable balance of contributions. A successful conversation includes mutually interesting connections between the speakers or things that the speakers know. For this to happen, conversers must find a topic on which they can relate in some sense.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conversation>

## Global Voices – 1 Conversation

### Report of the Mission Mobilization Task Force following SA06

SA06, for the Mission Mobilization Task Force (MMTF), was a culmination of what had been developing within members leading up to their attendance at SA06 and a crystallizing of thoughts. This has produced a clear and exciting way forward for the team as they reflect upon mission mobilization.

The first meeting of the MMTF in October, 2005 saw the beginning of an extended dialogue between mobilizing practitioners from different traditions and cultural backgrounds. In March, 2006, they established a small pilot project to research trends and views on mobilization. Armed with questionnaires, the team soon discovered that the discussions they were having among themselves resonated with those they interviewed. Therefore, at SA06, key decisions were made to facilitate a wider, deeper, and broader conversation which would impact the research they are undertaking.

By conversing and listening to local people, the MMTF team will begin to piece together these 'Global Voices' into '1 Conversation.' Contained within 1 Conversation will be the sense of equality, unity and openness of ears, hearts, minds and spirit. In this way, trends and mutually beneficial partnerships could emerge, alongside a potential the formation of a Best Practices Code on mobilization.

The MMTF team will be conducting over 30 conversations each over the next 12 months. This will be followed by 12 months of translation—both linguistically and culturally—alongside the national, regional and global analysis. Their findings will be presented at the MC gathering in 2009.

#### The MMTF research proposal reads:

This study seeks to examine the lived experience of mission mobilization within the context of what David Bosch refers to as "...the crisis in mission" (*Transforming Mission*, p. 7),<sup>1</sup> with a view to evaluating and highlighting those efforts deemed as 'best practices' within the Global Mission Community (GMC). A growing body of literature has stimulated discussion amongst the GMC regarding the missional stance of evangelicals. This in turn has promoted much dialogue between individual believers, missionaries and mission leaders, congregations, training institutions and mission agencies. The current research undertakes to explore the dynamics of mobilization, and thus provide a body of data that will inform interested parties as to the status and direction of mission mobilization practices.

<sup>1</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991)

Trev Gregory and  
Min-Young Jung



The project utilizes a qualitative methodology incorporating open-ended interviews amongst individuals, and content analysis of institutional literature, connected with (on various levels) mission mobilization. While a more quantitative approach could, in some areas, offer the potential of greater statistical clarity, it is felt that a more nuanced approach is required to obtain a greater understanding of the different conceptual intricacies of the subject matter and that an emphasis on cross-cultural 'meaning' necessitates a multi-faceted description of the interactive processes involved in mission mobilization.

The research will undertake to interview participants from the following regions: North America, South America, Africa, the Mid-East, Europe, the Indian sub-continent, North-East Asia, and Oceania. <<

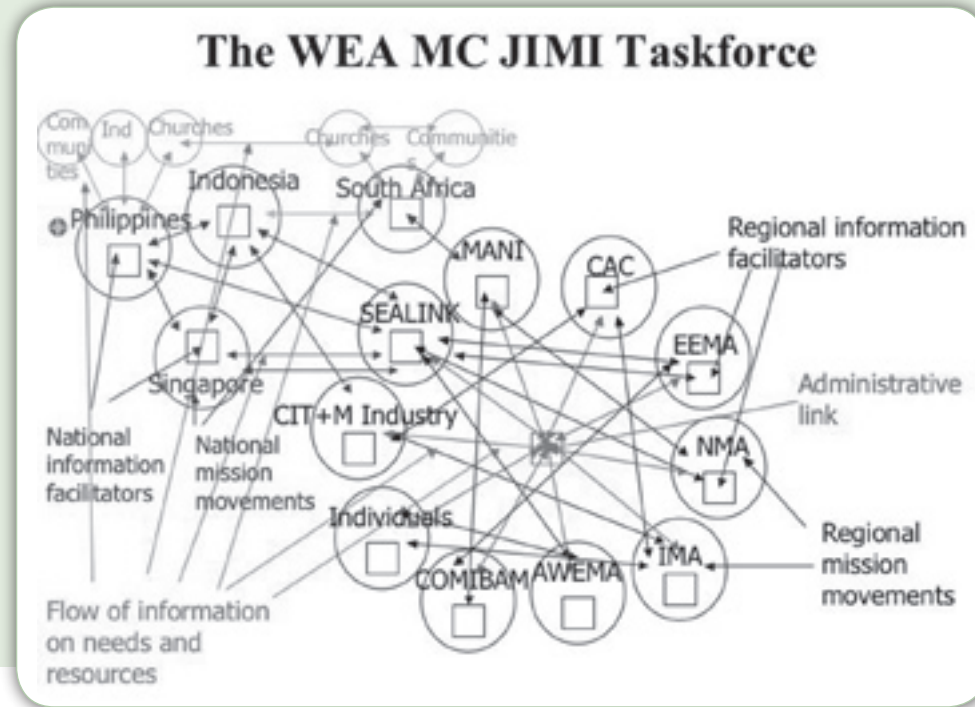
For further information write to [trev.gregory@mission.org](mailto:trev.gregory@mission.org) and [min-young\\_jung@sil.org](mailto:min-young_jung@sil.org).



# World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission Taskforce on Mission Information Sharing and Media Collaboration

SA06 Track report, 18-24 June 2006

## The Joint Information Management Initiative



holistic and integral mission. This will be done through the Global Share System developed by xGlobal Mission Innovation that will provide a technical platform for linking resources with needs. Develop a model of such a system focusing on South Africa during the next 12 months and expand after evaluation.

### 9) JIMI taskforce steering committee

A steering committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Sas Conradie was appointed to provide leadership to the JIMI taskforce. For further information contact Dr. Conradie at +44 1825 768252; jhcgenevag@yahoo.co.uk, or via Skype at sas.conradie. <<

### 1) Introduction

Many people in the global mission community are struggling with the question of how to improve the linking of resources with needs, so that people's lives can be improved physically, emotionally and spiritually. Despite the abundance of resources, resources have been wasted and many needs in communities remain unmet. During the past 2 years, the Joint Information Management Initiative (JIMI) evolved from an idea to a taskforce of the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission (WEA MC). The taskforce had its first official meeting during the WEA MC Consultation in South Africa. During these discussions, it became much clearer what JIMI is and where it fits into the global mission movement.



### 2) What is JIMI?

JIMI is a global information collaboration forum to help the church advance as an effective global missionary community within a globalized world. JIMI's vision is to be a network of inter-connected communities of believers in Jesus Christ who share resources with one another.

### 3) Needs expressed during JIMI discussions

The following were expressed by participants as major needs that could be addressed through a forum such as JIMI:

- a. Bridge the divide between linking resources and needs in and between national and regional mission movements as well as within the WEA MC, and connect people and groups to avoid duplication;
- b. Provide information on donors and verification of funding recipients;
- c. Link mission databases and mission research networks;
- d. Gather and distribute information on resources that will enable local churches in reaching communities;
- e. Bridge the digital divide in the global mission community;

- f. Find and distribute secure information systems and find solutions to protect against hackers, protect privacy and prevent liability action;
- g. Provide practical infrastructure that gives technical assistance to reporting, evaluation, etc.,—perhaps templates for reporting, etc.;
- h. Encourage and equip information facilitators that will improve the flow of information between communities and between national and regional mission movements.

### 4) Examples of collaboration in information management

Collaboration in information management that links resources with needs already exists. The function of the JIMI taskforce could be to be a catalyst for the expansion of these initiatives:

- a. A Christian orientated local radio station broadcasting 18 hours a day in a Tsunami affected area links communities with resources and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with listeners.
- b. Linkserve is a database of people who are interested in humanitarian and secular activities;
- c. Computer Centers in various countries that provide computer and theological training and could be used as community information base. The Association of Christian Community Computers Centers (AC4 with website [www.techmission.org](http://www.techmission.org)) provides a global network for these Centers.

### 5) JIMI mission

Participants decided the JIMI mission is to find ways to bridge the gap between resources and needs in local communities and as a result, improve linking global resources with global needs so that more people can be transformed through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God expressed in communities.

### 6) Key networking groups

To achieve this mission, JIMI would provide a networking forum to link key groups and information facilitators within national and regional mission movements. Networking groups will include:

- a. Information facilitators who know the resources and needs within their movements. See the graph of the envisaged network.
- b. Researchers, analysts who make information applicable to communities;
- c. Technicians who can create the infrastructure for effective information management and missional collaboration;
- d. People who can verify information and research;
- e. Christians in various media sectors who can relay information;

### 7) What does JIMI do?

JIMI as WEA MC taskforce could engage in the following activities:

- a. Discussion and linking forum for Christian IT and Media Industry in WEA MC.
- b. Encourage Christian IT and Media Industry in becoming more mission orientated.
- c. Facilitate strategic initiatives in areas such as donor linking initiative (provide a connection point between donors and mission initiatives), mission resource linking systems, and community information management systems.
- d. Support national and regional mission movements in improving information management and information usage.

### 8) Pilot initiatives

As a first step towards facilitating cooperation in information management initiatives and linking resources with needs within the global mission movement, participants in the JIMI discussions decided upon the following pilot initiatives:

- a. A resource and needs inventory of participants in the SA06 Consultation and WEA MC Associates through a survey.
- b. A monthly WEA MC electronic information bulletin on resources and needs within the global mission community and especially the regional and national mission movements.
- c. An information management system that will enable local churches in building capacity to respond to Jesus' Great Invitation to: a) witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth; b) disciple local believers; c) engage in

## REFLECTIONS

### 24. Sylvia Soon, WEA International Service Centre, Canada

One of my impressions and lesson learned was simple: It gets cold in South Africa. Seriously now....

I appreciated the warm fellowship with brothers and sister who are serving the Lord all around the world. It is a blessed and rare encounter for someone like me who serves from a static location. It was extremely encouraging to hear first hand of the incredible things that our God is doing in every corner of the world, especially for one like me who lives a secular country (Canada) where churches are a dying breed and religion is frowned upon. The updates on missions in Islamic countries and the presentation on China were particularly eye opening. But it was the Bishop's daily devotionals that really struck a chord with me. The conference was superbly organized and programs were well executed. I would appreciate a warmer location for future consultations—spoken like a true “woose” (Canadian word for “wimp”).



# God Means Business!

## Brief Observations on Business as Mission, BAM

Mats Tunehag, WEA Mission Commission Associate - Business as Mission. Lausanne Senior Associate - Business as Mission (Sweden)

### 1 BAM is being a follower of Jesus

What does Jesus say are the key characteristics of true followers of Him? They help the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and those in prison (Matthew 25). Unemployment is a major underlying cause to malnourishment and starvation, homelessness, disease and limited access to medical treatment, and to debt and crime. Providing people with jobs is alleviating (and preventing) these dire conditions. One may paraphrase Jesus' words in Matthew 25: "I was jobless and you gave me a job!" Entrepreneurs have a special calling to serve in the market place, by doing business "as unto the Lord."

### 2 BAM is rooted in Scripture and history

God is the original entrepreneur, who started with an idea and created a number of good things. We are created in God's image, to be creative and to create good things. God told Adam & Eve to "till the garden," thus to be involved in a value added processes and to live in trustful relationships. Thus, business is rooted in God's character and in who we are. The central business activity of providing meaningful and sustainable employment is a demonstration of justice and love, grounded in the character of God. In history there are many examples of God-fearing men and women who have loved God and served people through business. Abraham was a successful businessman. Jesus worked in a small family business for many years. The honorable woman in Proverbs 31 is a businesswoman. We should learn from mission pioneers like the Nestorians who conducted business along the Silk Road and the Moravian entrepreneurs who had a far-reaching impact. "The Father of Modern Norway" —Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771 – 1824)—witnessed the transformation of people and communities as he catalyzed a church movement and facilitated an entrepreneurship movement.

### 3 BAM is a relevant response to needs

Where you find the poorest of the poor, you'll often see unemployment ranging from 30 to 80 percent. The name of Jesus is rarely heard in these regions. And the rampant unemployment makes people vulnerable to human trafficking; little prospect of decent jobs creates high risk environments for trafficking and prostitution. These evils and dire needs correlate. We can never have long-term, sustainable and relevant solutions unless we address economic issues and business development. BAM gives an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the love of God among the least, the lost and the lowliest.

### 4 BAM is business with a Kingdom of God purpose and impact

BAM is not any business activity or just a job creation scheme. The Russian mafia does business and human trafficking creates jobs. Business as Mission is about real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses; with a Kingdom of God purpose and impact; leading to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically and socially—to the greater glory of God.

### 5 BAM is holistic transformation of individuals & societies

The graph shows a continuum; from a limited paradigm where profit for shareholders is the primary purpose of business, to a broader paradigm with other stakeholders and bottom lines. Corporate Social Responsibility considers the social and environmental impact of business and also recognizes society at large. The BAM paradigm includes all four bottom lines and also engages the Body of Christ among the accountability entities.



### 6 BAM is recognizing the Body of Christ

We need to tear down the "Pyramid of Christ," which permeates so much of our thinking, language and actions. We tend to encourage the climbing of the pyramid where "serving God full time" reaches its climax on the top. The Greek Gnostic thinking values people with "spiritual vocations" and looks down upon people dealing with business. This is not only a heresy, it has also debilitated Christians in business to fulfill their calling as business people. If God has called you to business, don't lower yourself to become a pastor! Your business calling is your highest calling. And if you are called to be a pastor that is your highest calling.



### 7 BAM is a growing global movement

There are a growing number of national and regional BAM networks and consultations. The Lausanne movement has acknowledged the Biblical imperative and strategic importance of Business as Mission. An increasing number of books and articles are being published, churches and mission agencies are developing BAM programs and thousands of business people are moving from merely sitting in church pews and giving money, to making a difference around the world in and through business.

PS: [www.businessasmission.com](http://www.businessasmission.com) has a lot of BAM material in several languages and links to various BAM initiatives

## REFLECTIONS

### 25. Keith Sparzak, Mars Hill Global Outreach Pastor, USA

Our team really appreciated the teachings of David Niringiye. His insights were compelling. His winsome way of communicating made the surgical nature of the principles he was sharing inspiring instead of creating guilt and shame over the way we, especially in the West, have often done (or failed to do) mission in a way that honors the King of the Kingdom. He was careful to knit hope into the essence of his messages in a way that motivates us to get it right. His words are still echoing in our ears and have been shared in some of the various circles we have sat since the conference.

I/We were also pleasantly surprised (read: "blown away") by the words of a certain gifted and lovely woman who stood beside the man who has been used by God over the last couple of decades to develop the WEA into the entity and force that it is. Yvonne's description of those who formed the early core of leaders Bill gathered together in the early days of his tenure as the leader of the WEA have been indelibly etched into my memory as a challenge to my own attitude—*oh that I might be deconstructed by God and bear the fragrance of brokenness*. Her words in many ways were a, if not the, highlight of the conference for me.

The one strong negative of the event I have in mind was the setting. While God could not have done much better in the ascetics surrounding the conference center, the center itself was lacking. The fact that the rooms were unheated made it very uncomfortable for conference attendees. In fact, were it not for the pleasant distraction of the World Cup being broadcast in the evenings, I suspect that the grumblings of some might have rivaled those of Israel to Moses in the wilderness, post-Exodus.

### 26. Becky Stephens, Inter Varsity, USA

What I most appreciated were the God-ordained connections with specific people that amazed, affirmed and shaped me during SA06. I had prayed for it—but did not expect it in the depth and breadth God chose to answer. God gave me much needed encouragement for my present ministry and clear direction for my future through several conversations and times of prayer. I believe (and hope) that the Lord will continue to use some of those people to direct and mentor me in the future. It was also great to be with 300 other people from around the planet who have the same passions, vision and missiological bent as I do. That's hard to come by. I appreciate the connections with godly people and the great resources that SA06 brought together for God's purposes in the world.

On the down side, there was simply too much content and programming. The number of reports crammed into the evenings and the endless meetings scheduled for 15 hours/day was not a blessing. (By the last day I physically could not listen any longer. And there were many, many others who obviously were in the same boat. It grieved me because I felt we dishonored our African brothers who had been saved as "the best for last," but who spoke to a very small—and distracted—audience). I'd recommend open afternoons (12-4?) for free time, informal connecting, exercise and rest. And some other way to organize reporting so that it's not a constant stream of information that we cannot take in, process or use.

It might be wise to send preparation materials ahead of time to people in work groups. As a first time attender, I felt that I was messing around in someone else's business or that I was an unneeded add-on to the work group. Perhaps those working on projects from previous WEA conferences need to have closed groups and offer other alternatives for new people. Or if more ownership and increased effective participation or input is really desired, more information and participation needs to happen prior to the conference.

My strongest take home memory comes from the conversations and/or prayer times with David Zac, Timothy Olonade, Richard Tiplady, Rob Hay and Moss Nlha.



SA06 at Goudini was a turning point for the leadership team of the international tentmaking movement. TIE (Tentmakers International Exchange) has been searching for fresh ways of carrying out our task, namely to provide direction to and support for the work of tentmaking worldwide. TIE docked with the Mission Commission at the Vancouver meetings three years ago and decided this time to meet as a full Board of Directors in partnership with the Capetown Congress. All except four of our international Board were able to attend, giving us opportunity to explore our future and also test what that meant for others as we dialogued with groups represented at the Congress.

# Tentmakers International meetings at SA06

**W**e met on eight occasions during the Congress, but made the meetings open so that others who wished could listen and contribute their own perspectives. Several gave valuable insights that helped us find that fresh direction.

Some of the major decisions can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Two images helped define the way we saw our role. In the past we tended to see our role as bringing together a team of horses, strong, willful and independent, and somehow bring them into a team all going the same direction. That was always going to be hard work and place huge demands on leadership.

We found another image more helpful. We imagined a marathon race with thousands of runners. In a marathon, there are tables at intervals with drinks, refreshment and medical aid for those running. We began to see our task more in terms of being at these tables offering sustenance to those who want it and also serving those who provide the tables. We began to see our role in terms of resourcing for those seeking it instead of management of a global movement.

- 2) A consequence of this was a major change in structure and style. We have moved to a less formal style, less formal job descriptions, and a strongly networked approach to what we do. The International Director of the Board becomes Chairman of the Management Team. Our representatives

are people who are champions of the tentmaking cause with far less emphasis on a highly defined role. Our executive secretary is now Johnny Chun of South Korea while Ken Smith of USA continues to manage our financial operation.

- 3) We also changed our name, just a little, to avoid some confusion. We are now Tentmakers International, dropping the word 'Exchange' which was always hard to explain.

- 4) We have reworked a lost and broken web site, rebuilding it as [www.tentmakersinternational.info](http://www.tentmakersinternational.info). This will be the site of many of our resources and the links to contact personnel.

- 5) We see our key tasks in terms of networking, resourcing, consulting, gathering and encouraging and we are reworking our web site and our structure to reflect this.

- 6) We plan an international Congress and Consultation in July next year, in Port Dickson Malaysia. The Consultation will particularly include Mission Commission representatives as we explore issues of mutual interest.

- 7) We held many very fruitful conversations with fellow travelers in mission and formed strong bonds in many areas. Particularly useful were the conversations with the Business as Mission leaders as we talked over things we have in common and areas where emphases are unique.

- 8) We had an especially good seminar with South African pastors attending as part of the Congress and they were supportive of the theme that tentmaking cross-culturally arises out of a marketplace or faith at work emphasis in the home church.

Three further realizations gave tremendous encouragement.

*Derek Christensen  
Chairman, Tentmakers  
International, New Zealand*

The first was that the management team is made up of an amazing group of gifted people who are determined to work together

and maximize our relationship in this task. Since the Congress this has shown in a new wave of communication and ideas as well as a deep sense of God's Spirit in our midst.

The second is that we have been delighted at the growth of an incredible network of tentmaking enthusiasts in Africa, especially in francophone Africa under the gifted leadership of Rev.Tiowa Diarra of Mali. Some 25 countries now have representatives, several training courses have been held and there will be an All Africa Congress in Mali in August of 2007.

Thirdly, completely outside of our own group, there were many affirmations within the Congress as a whole, of the fact that tentmaking has become a major strategy for mission in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our challenge is to provide sufficient resources to assist and maximize what is happening. <<

The 1996 WEA-MC study on attrition, ReMAP, reported and subsequently published its findings in the widely read book *Too Valuable to Lose: exploring the causes and cures of missionary attrition*. ReMAP II was a follow up study commissioned by the WEA-MC. It reported a summary of the findings at SA06 in plenary and then in workshops, with the comprehensive findings being published in a book due out in January 2007. Whilst ReMAP examined causes of attrition (why people left the mission field) and highlighted major issues in selection and member care, ReMAP II examined retention (why people stay and what aids their longevity) and looked at issues across the entire organisation and its multitude of functions.

# Worth Keeping...Worth Hearing

(Plenary & Workshops)

Presenters: Valerie Lim, Jaap Ketelaar and Rob Hay

**T**he study covered the areas of education level of missionary candidates, the selection process, preparation time, orientation, spiritual life, personal care, member care, organisational values, leadership, staff development, ministry, ministry outcome, finances and the role of the home office. This far-reaching and crosscutting study discovered very significant differences between the functions of high retaining agencies and those of low retaining agencies. This means that we need to pay attention to what it says. It is worth hearing! Why? Because high retaining agencies average almost double the length of service than low retaining ones. Perhaps even more surprising was the finding that whilst low retaining agencies have seen a dramatic reduction in their retention rates over the last twenty years, the high retaining agencies have been counter cultural and seen their high retention rate remain largely unchanged.

However, it also means that the findings need to be shared widely throughout the mission agency and not just with the personnel and member care specialists. There are important issues here for executive leaders, finance directors, field leaders, communication departments, pastoral carers, church leaders, trainers and many, many more.

Whilst the study was praised for being statistically sound, the book is written for non-statisticians and uses a very approach-



able "health rating" to show clearly how well we are doing on an issue and whether that issue related to retention.

Very positively, ReMAP II showed us that where we had heeded the results from the first study, significant improvements had been achieved. For example in recruitment, ReMAP I confronted the missions world with the inadequacy of their selection procedures, But

the missions world was listening, and across almost all areas of selection, new and old sending countries are now much more rigorous in their screening procedures. However, there were many new areas that were shown to be important in setting the best agencies apart from the rest – around 40 in total. Here we examine just five broad areas and ask ourselves what they may mean practically for us and our organisations.



**Leadership**

Leadership is the pivot point around which the organisation turns. Obviously, it needs to be combined with the lubricating oil of communication and other aspects of organisational functioning like direction, values etc. but it and it alone shapes the health of an organisation like nothing else. Edgar Powell says, “No organization is stronger than the quality of its leadership, or ever extends its constituency far beyond the degree to which its leadership is representative.” Mission organisations are no different, as the ReMAP II results show: fifteen out of the sixteen questions that examined aspects of Leadership had a strong relationship with an organisation retaining missionaries. Unfortunately, for such a key area, only the character of the leader stood out while other aspects of leadership were rated more or less mediocre and we cannot afford for this to remain so.

- Mission is full of specialists and empty of trained, skilled and experienced leaders and yet up to 80% of people who go into mission not expecting to lead end up in some kind of leadership position.
- How much effort, finance etc. do we spend on leadership training? Is this proportional to its importance or should we change it?

**Organisational Values**

Organisational values are, if you like, what gives the agency its character and shapes the way it operates. Twenty-one specific ratings contribute to reasonable overall ratings of five and six out of ten for OSC and NSC respectively. Seventeen of those for OSC and fifteen for NSC showed a high correlation with retention. This is not really surprising as people bond with an agency over the issues covered here, things such as: children’s schooling, pastoral care, health care, vacation and re-entry facilities. The organisational values are what missionaries identify with and what shapes the nature of the relationship between the organisation and the missionary and therefore strongly dictates the strength of that relationship.

Work-Life Balance is one important area within organisational values. In general we have a major work overload problem that is not unique to the task-orientated West and is now increasingly affecting the Global South as well. It includes issues of the immediate physical effects of exhaustion and in the long term, stress and depression, loss of spiritual vitality as well as the ability to evaluate, reflect and think creatively to improve current practice and meet the challenges of the future with creativity and energy.

Communication has been described as the lubrication in an organisation. If it is not used liberally and regularly, movement and functions become stilted and jerky rather than smooth and problem-free. Encouragingly the rating is reasonable across this area: five for both OSC and NSC, although given the centrality of communication it would be wise to work hard to improve these ratings still further. Almost all of the individual ratings correlate with high retention in both OSC and NSC and although the overall rating is OK, there is much variation amongst individual ratings.

- Have we lost the “family” identity but not successfully found a replacement?
- Do people have to choose between a life and mission service? Is this acceptable? Is it part of mission?
- Do most people take all their holiday entitlement and use it for rest and refreshment?
- Do leaders model good work/life balance or are they the worst?

**Preparation Time**

Our research attempted to determine the minimum pre-field training that the mission agency required of the missionary but agencies may regularly exceed this figure in the training undertaken so this may account for the low results in some cases. Also from discussing these results with agency leaders it is clear that many are increasingly moving away from a “one size fits all” and a minimum requirement is therefore difficult for them to define.

Does pre-field training contribute significantly to the missionaries’ ability to persevere and ultimately do well (survive and thrive) as the years go by? The answer is Yes...BUT.

Yes, pre-field training certainly helps retention: that was shown in ReMAP and reinforced in the ReMAP II results. The problem is that whilst pre-field training requirements in total are two and a half to three years they emphasise the wrong type of training. Again just like the first study, ReMAP II reemphasised the fact that formal missiological training was more effective than bible school training. Ten years on from ReMAP we continue to require almost three times as much bible school training as formal missiological training – a poor investment and an area where priorities need to change in the future.

- You would not let a dentist near your mouth without training...why is mission any different?

- How much training was required 30 years ago, has biblical knowledge and teaching of candidates increased or decreased?

**Personal Care**

Personal Care covers a wide range of factors that concern individuals being able to function well and do the ministry they are called to. This includes family issues, social and spiritual needs and health and safety considerations. The area of personal care is very important with strong correlation with retention in both OSC and NSC. This correlation was across the majority of factors (9 of 14 in OSC and 10 in NSC) although there were interesting differences between OSC and NSC.

The team is the operating norm for much of the missions’ world and offers an energy, flexibility and skill set that is hard to equal with lone pioneers. However, it also offers huge challenges. The same diversity that can spark ideas and compliment skills also gives rise to tensions and conflict and here we find that the effectiveness and reality of those teams is questionable. OSC demonstrate individualism and less regard for mutual support and conflict resolution than NSC and it is not strongly linked to retention whereas in NSC it is linked much more strongly. Overall, the results do show that OSC and NSC wrestle with the same issues and see the same struggles and weaknesses on team building and functioning.

- Are people in your organisation viewed an expense or an asset? (perhaps not an expense because of being a “faith mission”)
- Do we value people? (perhaps not as much if we do not have to pay for them!)
- How do we differentiate between sacrifice and burnout?

**Staff Development**

Staff Development is important. Biblically we are all called to be growing and learning people who are on a journey of faith and therefore will encounter change as a continual reality. To meet this challenge we must be investing in ourselves and those in our organisations. Gone are the days when you could do some pre-field training, be it secular or biblical, and then go to the mission field and remain there, with no further training input, until retirement. The good news is that agencies are developing their people but there are some areas of concern that need addressing, all of which seem to be mirrored across OSC and NSC alike.

REFLECTIONS

**28. Tiowa Diarra, Mali**

I was pleasantly surprised by the Bible lectures from Rev. Zac about our great commitment to the Lord. I have really enjoyed listening his reading of the Gospels that gives us a new insight in how to deal with our mission in the world. I have also learned from and appreciated the smooth transmission of leadership between Bill Taylor and Bertil. Evangelicals have learned that it is possible to make leadership change without anger, jealousy...and to glorify the Lord of the harvest. I have learned with such a joy about the progress of World Mission in every continent. It was exciting to hear thrilling stories from the Middle East and Asia (Pakistan and China for example).

It was very sad to miss people from Eastern Europe who are making significant contribution in World Mission. I did not know why they were not present. Next time would like to see more interaction between Working Groups (TI and Mission as Business for example).

My strongest memory comes from receiving an overview of world mission, the trends of mission in the world, the impression that mission is moving in the midst of persecution and trials of any kind. The Dancing of God Father, God the Son and God the Spirit is bearing fruit as people are being born again, churches are being planted, new people are reached out and the Kingdom of God is advancing. This is a great encouragement and brings us more commitment.

**29. Mark Young, Dallas Theological Seminary, USA**

Gathering with over three hundred like-minded folks from all over the globe for a week of worship, fellowship, networking, encouragement and strategizing was nothing less than a marvelous gift from the Lord. I don't think any of us, trapped in our settings and challenges, can gain a sense of the scope of God's magnificent work for the redemption for all peoples. SA06 provided such a powerful glimpse of the breadth and depth of the presence of God's people globally that I left with a renewed conviction that God is doing far more than I could ever imagine. Particularly powerful for me was exposure to the energy, vision, and commitment of the indigenous mission movements from the newer sending countries. A refusal to ignore the hard edge of suffering, poverty, disease, and the tireless efforts of Satan to deceive and destroy the lost, provided an impetus to sorrow, repentance, and renewed commitment that permeated the week. I've been marked deeply by SA 06.

Within the broad subject of staff development Leadership Development & Mentoring was a significant enough area to be explored in detail. In OSC it correlates with retention across almost every individual rating and in NSC it is almost as consistently linked. The strong ratings for development of leadership amongst people served, highlight the importance placed on sustainability and indigenisation in OSC and this was reflected almost as strongly in NSC. Given the poorer ratings for leadership in our own organisations, it would seem that leadership development is something we are better at external to our organisations than internally, where we are generally still struggling.

The use of appraisals and individual reviews is highly correlated with retention. It seems that mission partners need the opportunity to be praised but also to be encouraged to improve or change the ministry and

also feed into the organisation, ideas and observations which help it to fulfil its vision and goals. The overall score shows that whilst both OSC and NSC cover this area reasonably, there is still room for improvement.

- How do you promote reflection?
- Do you have a meaningful and effective appraisal or review system? If so – is it holistic or just work orientated?

**Conclusion**

Current annual attrition is around 9500 missionaries per year but ReMAP II shows that over half of this (5700) could be prevented, simply by sharing the good practice demonstrated by the high retaining agencies! Doing nothing is not an option, we would have to answer for such negligence in our stewardship- we must hear and act...these things are worth hearing! <<

REFLECTIONS

**27. Steve Moore, EFMA, USA**

SA06 gave me the opportunity to connect with and learn from peers around the world who have experienced similar challenges in their ministry and leadership. Hearing how they have responded and benefiting from their perspective was a significant blessing to me. I have built upon that input with specific follow-up questions by email that has enabled me to reframe my response to these similar challenges. Hearing fresh stories of how God is at work around the world strengthened my faith and expanded my vision. My personal and professional network was greatly expanded and several very practical opportunities for collaboration are being pursued as a result of those new relationships.

I found the Bible teaching stimulating and provocative. It would have been helpful to provide time and space for more meaningful small group interaction that was focused on responding to the ideas presented. Big picture questions were raised about the role of strategic planning in mission, for example, with little or no opportunity to clarify the issue or wrestle with its implications in a learning community. At times the program was too full, making it difficult to stay on schedule and forcing presenters to rush through their material.

My most significant memory was an unexpected and divinely appointed conversation with another mission leader God used to renew my spirit, broaden my perspective and deepen my personal resolve to press forward in the calling He has given me. I wrote about it in my journal that night and have reflected on it numerous times since. SA06 created an atmosphere in which God spoke into my journey, both from the platform and just as meaningfully, across the meal table. I'm thrilled I was able to attend.



# National Mission Movements Network

## Background

The National Mission Movements Network is formed by national and regional mission leaders, associates of the Mission Commission of WEA. The NMM Network started as a Task Force on Starting and Strengthening National Mission Movements and the first report was presented in the consultation in Iguassu, Brazil, in 1999. During the meetings of the Global Leadership Team at High Leigh, in England 2002, the Task Force was defined as a Member Service "Department" of the MC and a Network of Regional and National Mission Movements (RMM and NMM).

The focus of the NMM Network is closely linked to the purpose of the MC and has defined its objectives as:

- Listen to the leadership of the National and Regional Mission Movements (NMM and RMM) about their concerns and priorities;
- Identify key issues on cross-cultural mission that need to be addressed today by the larger missionary community;

- Facilitate the dialogue between the different NMM and RMM through regional and global consultations, training seminars and publications;
- Address relevant issues for mission today in task forces, working seminars and printed materials;
- Offer orientation and opportunities of connecting with consultants for starting and strengthening the NMM;
- Publish books, journals, bulletins, research papers and other materials that deepen the understanding of the mission task and give valuable substance for further reflection and action;
- Provide occasions for interchange of experience and resources between the different NMM through periodical meetings; and,
- Promote continuous discussion on good standards for mission work such as "code of best practice" for cooperation and networking

## Consultation in South Africa

Mission leaders from 30 countries gathered for the National Mission Movements Network meetings at Goudini Spa, outside

Cape Town, during the Global Summit of the Mission Commission. The participants requested to set aside the already prepared program and to meet with an open agenda and with the freedom to discuss the issues they felt relevant for their situation. The combination of the planned activities and the new topics suggested by the mission leaders resulted in a productive and interesting series of meetings that culminated with the proposal of concrete steps for moving the NMM Network forward.

Representatives from the different mission movements shared information about the situation within their countries as well as the mission initiatives to other nations. The emergence of new sending movements, such as in North Africa, was an encouragement to the participants. At the same time it was affirmed that initiatives in places where the Christian presence is weak require support and co-operation from the more established movements.

Key questions for national movements were discussed such as common terminology, the need for a national co-ordination of mission entities and the integration between mission organisations and the churches and training institutes. It was questioned whether a NMM is a purely Western concept that does not easily adapt to non-Western contexts. The group concluded that the challenge is to find the right model for each context using proved experience from other countries and continents without necessarily replicating the model. The importance of sensibility to the context and cultural setting was emphasised, especially by foreign organisations coming to newer movements.

Another important aspect discussed was the way mission movements could be connected worldwide and the role the NMM Network can play linking movements and organisations together for sharing and co-operation. It was pointed out that there are both sending and receiving countries and that the stress should

not lie only on how to send missionaries but also on the requirement to receive. Examples from Europe, of the so called Welcome Project, show the importance given to a planned and co-ordinated receiving of missionaries by the national churches offering training and orientation before they start working in European countries. Suggestions were also made of different models of co-operation between mission agencies as well as with other organisations such as the Evangelical Alliance in a country or region, relief agencies, training institutes and secular organisations like UNICEF.

On the question of how the MC can strengthen the NMM, the group suggested that:

- A careful selection of people should be done in order to assure the right leadership in the NMM Network meetings;
- Continue to foster a good relationship to the Lausanne Movement
- Focus globally on resources and strategy and regionally on networking and good practices;
- Encourage mission organisations in countries where there is no NMM to connect;
- Mentor, nurture and counsel the NMM;
- Influence the churches and the National Alliances through WEA to be involved in mission;
- Use a code of best practice for stimulating discussions on mission and models for co-operation;
- Give priority to the regions where the regional co-ordination is weak and connect with the existing regional platforms for mission leaders such as CRAF in the French speaking Africa;
- Participate in regional conferences; and
- Connect agencies and movements for sharing of resources.

The Consultation in South Africa reaffirmed the importance of the National Mission Movements Network and identified the challenges ahead in order to advance co-operation, the good use of available resources and the emergence of new initiatives focusing on less evangelised areas of the world. The growth of the mission movements worldwide is a clear indicator that healthy Christian churches still respond to the Great Commission.

*Coordinators of the NMM Network:*

*Kees van der Wilden  
David Ruiz  
Younoussa Djao  
Bertil Ekström <<*

## REFLECTIONS

### 31. Carlos Pinto, LAM, HCJB, SIM, Ecuador

What I most appreciated about SA06 was the opportunity to see the different "faces of God" represented by the different leaders from different sectors of the people of God around the world. This was a gift and an expression of the grace of God. I was surprised that the local or regional church was given the opportunity to serve and lead in worship and teaching of the Word. I was also surprised that younger mission leaders of the newer generations were able to express themselves before all of us. There was a sharing of the baton and a much needed mentoring emphasis between the generations.

What I learned is that there is a great desire for cooperation between older and younger sending missions, but at the same time there is still a lack of trust and even pain due to way in which Western missions in a certain way imposed their conditions on how to do mission. My recommendation is to give more time to dialogue in light of the tremendous daily Biblical expositions and other plenaries.

My strongest take home memory is the greater and more realistic understanding of global mission, and the potential if we cooperate, whether we are pragmatic missionaries or those given to more missiological reflection. God began touching my heart in the jungles of Peru and there he revealed the tribal societies of the Amazon. Later my heart was extended to serve him in Ecuador and there to see Latin America as a mission field. After SA06 God extended my heart to understand that mission is necessary and possible from every place and continent to every place and continent.

### 32. Mike Wall, All Nations Christian College, UK

It was fascinating to hear about the Chinese church and in particular how the Chinese Christians are reaching out to neighbouring Muslim countries. We could have had more Two Thirds World leadership and profile. It would be good to have included a study trip to see mission work in Cape Town area of South Africa. To have had the participants list in advance would be very helpful. My strongest "take home" memory of SA06 was watching the World Cup match with a crowd of newly made mission friends from all around the world.

### 33. Simon Speer, Redcliffe College, UK

It was a great privilege to be at the WEA Missions Commission Consultation in South Africa. It was thrilling to see the diversity of participants and to be reminded again of the dynamic nature of the world-wide Christian family and mission enterprise of which we are a part.

The quality of the plenary presentations was very high and I particularly appreciated the combination of celebrating the Missions Commission's recent history and the commissioning of new leadership for the future. Excellent presentations on China by Samuel Chiang were one of the highlights and gave me much food for thought as we develop an Asian Studies programme here at Redcliffe College. As a participant in the International Missionary Training Network, I was able to benefit from the insights of fellow trainers in a fascinating variety of contexts.

Morning Bible expositions by Bishop David Zac Niringiye contained a healthy mixture of inspiration and provocation and it was great fun to share a ride to the airport with the Bishop at the end of the Conference.

For future consultations, I would recommend that greater time be allocated to grappling with the issues raised by plenary speakers. The programme in South Africa occasionally felt rushed and I would have appreciated more time for small group discussion and Question and Answer sessions. As a 'generalist' in mission I would also value the opportunity to participate in more than one Track, rather than having to specialise for the whole week. You can have too much of a good thing!

Apart from the obvious highlight of watching England play Sweden in the World Cup with fellow countrymen, a Swede and a Ugandan, the memory from SA06 that will sustain me is the sense of dynamic momentum as the Missions Commission embarks upon a new era. We look forward to discovering what God has in mind for us.

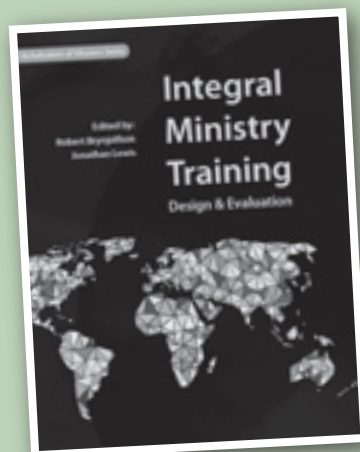
## REFLECTIONS

### 30. Zaza Lima, Brazil/North Africa

I was pleasantly surprised by the desire of our hearts in serving the Lord together, as a body, not creating our kingdom but to reveal the values of the kingdom of God...I was surprised by joy (as Bill Taylor stated in his opening memories and lessons)—by the joy of meeting people from everywhere who believe and try to be faithful to the Lord in spite of all the weaknesses and limitations. I was surprised by the privilege of dancing with Marjorie Foyle!

I learned a lot with the member care team—about pain, joy... and the place of the grace in all of that! I was a new member but I felt "at home" very quickly! Accountability and roots are very important in our ministry, we need to learn more and more how to work together in humility. We need to be released from our pride and power relationships...we should have time for listening and humility for changing our "agendas."





The Mission Commission is proud to announce the release of its newest book, *Integral Ministry Training Design and Evaluation*. Edited by Rob Brynjolfson and Jonathan Lewis, this volume is the product of work by the Mission Commission's, International Missionary Training Network and its global cadre of associates. Building on the MC's 1995 publication, *Establishing Ministry Training*, it includes re-editions of some of these original chapters as well as several new ones.

## Publications news from the Mission Commission

The work is divided into three sections. The first two encompass the theoretical foundations of integral ministry training and the practical process elements of developing and/or evaluating training using self-generated integral training standards. A third section is dedicated to program descriptions from around the world, and practical evaluation tools. This edition forms the backbone of a course on integral training design that has already been successfully tested in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the U.S.

Some of the concepts promoted in the book challenge widely held values and assumptions related to the broad field of ministry training. Initial response to these by both educators and students have not always been positive. Nevertheless, by the end of the course, there is always evidence of a paradigm shift towards an approach to training that promotes effectiveness and other Kingdom values. And the practical processes described are helpful to anyone attempting to design or evaluate training.

Here is what those who have sponsored the course for their own students are saying:

*This book emerges out of a context of nearly twenty years of WEA Mission Commission focus on this strategic dimension of world mission. The book will become both a text and handbook to shape missionary training for years to come.*

William David Taylor, Ph.D., Global Ambassador, World Evangelical Alliance and its Mission Commission

*These writers have given us a wonderful gif, one that helps to put preparation of the missionary in its proper holistic context. There is something in this book that is capable of dramatically impacting how the next generation of missionaries will emerge.*

Pastor Timothy O Olonade, Executive Secretary/CEO, Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA)

*At this crucial moment for equipping and sending cross-cultural missionaries, this book comes as a strategic tool for the development of a high level of excellence in holistic missionary training. The writers of each chapter provide their perspective based on the authority and support of vast experience in their field.*

Dr. Omar Gava, Coordinator for Missionary Training, COMIBAM International

*"This book must be read by all missionary trainers and used as a course material to equip those who are*

*involved in training. It prepares trainers to develop contextualised curriculum and equips them to use teaching methods that effectively prepare the students for the ministry for which they are called."*

Dr. C. Barnabas, Executive Director, Indian Institute of Missiology

The book is scheduled to be published December this year. Anyone interested in receiving a pre-print promotional offer of this book for a highly discounted cost, should contact the editor at: robb@worldangelical.org. <<

### 34. Marty Shaw, Singapore

## REFLECTIONS

Of course the conversations around the tables and in between sessions were a great part of the time there and resulted in many new relationships. The value of such opportunities are hard to put a price on. I appreciated the leadership, including the upfront people were representative of what is happening missions today. Voices from around the world were represented and respected. Finally the individual groups were very stimulating both in challenging some of my previous thinking but at the same time validating other thoughts. The topics were timely and applicable to the issues in missions today.

But there were some voices missing from this conference that either had been at previous gatherings or could have added to the sense that this was truly a global gathering. That is not to take away from those who were present, as it was a great group. The question I kept asking was "who do I know that should be here, but who are not?" Still all and all I believe that the WEA MC is a crucial part of what is happening in world missions today.

My strongest take away came from the morning messages, when it was said that "church planting may not express the full intention of the New Testament, and that we need to be community planting." The theme of the holistic Gospel among evangelicals is growing stronger and through that I anticipate that we will make a great impact for the Kingdom in the years to come.

My recommendation would be to seek more participation of the local church, contact with the country, expositions, other material. ... I do not know how to do that, but I've got the impression that something like that was missing in the 'official time'!

My strongest "take home" memory of SA06 comes as I recall the people, faces, dance, hope...the opportunity of being together addressing deep questions- the maturity and commitment of the member care team in spite of all the tensions! The devotionals—it was great to meet up such servant leaders- O Encontro!!!

# The World Is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century

Thomas L Friedman

Review by Richard Tiplady, MC Associate; British Director, European Christian Mission

*"In the year 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue". And in so doing, he achieved two things. He 'discovered' America (although one suspects that the First Nation peoples of what we now call North, Central and South America might be surprised to hear that). And he also proved that the world wasn't flat (which was of course the basis on which he made his voyage to discover an alternative route to "The Indies" and its lucrative spice trade).*

For just over 500 years, thanks to Columbus, we have been working on the assumption that the world is round, not flat. And now Thomas Friedman has come along to explain that in fact it isn't round, but flat, as we thought all along.

Of course, when Friedman refers to a flat world, he isn't really referring to the shape of the globe. Instead, he is referring to a world without walls, made possible by various trends, all of which can be grouped under the heading of 'globalisation'.

Friedman's key thesis, which he explores in all 566 pages of this book, is that several key developments have come together to create a new version of globalisation. These changes are political, technological and organisational. Among them are the Fall of the Berlin Wall (as a symbol of the collapse of communism and the end of the bi-polar world that dominated global politics from the 50s to the 80s), the emergence of the internet in its various technological forms (such as the World Wide Web, instant messaging and the blogosphere) and business processes such as outsourcing and offshoring (embodied in their most widely-known form - the Bangalore call centre).

It is this final example to which Friedman turns again and again throughout the book. As an advocate of free trade and the benefits of globalisation, he notes that all these developments have combined to enable India and China to compete for Western business and to aspire to outstrip the West in economic development. Writing primarily for a North American readership, he argues that these facts should not

inspire a new era of protectionism, but are an opportunity for the West to keep moving up the value chain, as well an opportunity to end poverty for 40% of the world's population.

So what do I think of this thesis?

First, Friedman is (to say the least) somewhat starry-eyed about the possibilities created by what he calls "Globalisation v3.0". He seems to be infatuated by a few successful Indian companies, and he extrapolates from them to paint an over-optimistic picture of the possibilities for world development. In fact, if you want to find a writer to annoy you by his / her hope inspired by globalisation, Friedman's your man.

Secondly, his writing style ... I can only describe it as "dull, dull, and dull". To be honest, if I hadn't agreed to review the book for Connections, I would probably have put it down before I reached half way. Which is a shame, since Friedman raises some important issues, and offers some valuable insights. It just takes some perseverance to get through to them. For example, in correspondence with the former Executive Director of Global Connections, Stanley Davies, he wrote to me about this book; "the section "Too frustrated" (starting on p.479) is particularly challenging, as it reveals some of the underlying causes of the rise of radical Islam. That whole section is worth the price of the book in itself. Friedman highlights the key concept of humiliation that is a warning to all of us in any communication we seek to engage in, whether to staff, family members or anyone we seek to influence, and especially Muslims".

This is an important book, one that is already being widely recommended to business leaders as outlining the main challenges facing those who are trying to operate in the globalised world of the 21st century. But perhaps its biggest problem is that it embodies what Edward Said called "orientalism", that is, painting the non-Western world in the image of the West and then describing it as either "backward" or a success, but only when it compares well with Western modernity. In this worldview, Japan, then Korea and other "Asian Tiger" economies like Malaysia "caught up" first, and now it is the turn of India and China. In his new book, "Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond", Pankaj Mishra notes that the new economic elites of India and China collude with this neo-orientalist discourse, reinforcing the self confidence of Western advocates of the free market and democracy.

In fact, the West itself is suffering pain in this Flat World, as China's hunger for energy and its construction boom raise the price of oil and steel, cheap exports undermine European economies, and white-collar workers lose their jobs in the USA. The fantasy of endless economic growth – that 2 billion Chinese and Indians will one day enjoy the lifestyles followed by Europeans and North Americans – is absurd. It condemns our global environment to an early destruction, and looks set to create deep reservoirs of nihilistic rage and disappointment among hundred of millions of educated have-nots (look at the anger of Palestinian youth in the Gaza Strip if you want a clue as to what that looks like).

The Western dream of universal prosperity is infectious, and understandable in a world wracked by poverty, disease and early and pointless death. Our challenge is to offer an alternative hope, based on a new creation, life in all its fullness, and good news for everyone, not just for those whose education and economic opportunities culminate in the hope of a Mercedes or a BMW. <<







Professor DT NIANE of Senegal, a specialist in the Mandé world; former Director of the LS Senghor Foundation in Dakar said: "After 10 centuries, Islam should be given citizenship in Africa". Islam in sub-Saharan Africa is growing in size and influence. Accurate statistics on religious affiliation are difficult to get. They are too sensitive for governments with mixed populations. But most experts agree that Islam is spreading very fast in Sub-Saharan Africa.

# Islam from a Sub-Saharan Africa perspective

## I. DEVELOPMENT & OBJECTIVES

Islam entered Africa within decades after its foundation in the seventh century. This encounter between Africa and Islam goes back to 615 CE when the first Islamic migration to Abyssinia, now called Ethiopia, took place, though its impact there at this early period is not clear. The spreading of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula to other regions, including North Africa to the borders of the Sahara, was done by Muhammad's successors.

The growth of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa today is evident when we look at the numerous projects, including clinics, schools, village wells and farming assistance, that have been funded across the region these past 10 years. It is not possible to travel in Sub-Saharan Africa countries without encountering evidence of a vigorously resurgent Islam.

The mosques are well built. In the villages, these mosques are not far from the roads and brightly painted. They are a visible sign that the village has accepted Islam.

The poverty is obvious and always on the increase. Islam offers a ray of hope in a world where quality of life is rarely considered. Men are given the opportunity of starting businesses in Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Niger, etc. with a loan from a Muslim bank. When they cannot repay the loan, they are simply asked to become a Muslim, if they were not. Muslim businesses and businessmen are prospering. They encourage the more fortunate person to help those who are struggling. If it is done in the name of Islam, then it will bring the doer favor.

There is a clear and well defined agenda

of Muslims that is being implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## II. REASONS WHY ISLAM IS SO ROOTED IN AFRICA

It is undeniable that Islam is deep rooted in African populations. Sheik Hamidou Kane wrote in the *Bulletin of the Muslim Association of the African Students of Dakar*:

"If Islam is not the only religion of West Africa, it is the first by the importance. I want to also say that it seems to me that it is the religion of its heart."<sup>1</sup>

Monteil sees eight principal causes of such a success of Islam in Africa:

"There is initially... the dislocation of the animistic society, under the blows of the European technique. The adoption of Islam opens new prospects: it allows a true reorganization... In the second place, Islam is presented in the form of a simple, clear and solid faith: it is enough, to adhere to it, to believe in the unicity of God and the mission of the Prophet... Third factor: flexibility of adaptation to Africa, in other words, Africanization of Islam... The share should be made also to the prestige of a religion which represents a social rise... The feeling of Muslim fraternity also strongly plays, since the Muslim feels at home everywhere where co-religionists are... The propagation by the Africans

1 Vincent-Mansour MONTEIL L'Islam noir: Une religion à la conquête de l'Afrique, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986, 4<sup>e</sup> éd.) p.64.

themselves, of course, has its importance: it contributes to remove from Islam its character of foreign religion... The fear of slavery was decisive in many cases... Into the economic field finally, the Muslim tradesman introduces the saving in draft; its example involved the introduction of new cultures... by the traffic caravaner will open new prospects."<sup>2</sup>

He added that "none of these factors is, undoubtedly, in oneself, sufficient: their conjunction involves an irresistible movement."<sup>3</sup>

Rene Moreau, as for him, sees three significant factors of the rooting of Islam in the African context. These three factors are:

"Firstly the analogy between the mission of Muhammad in the middle of his contemporaries known as < pagan > and what occurred to Africa; secondly... propagation by men of the oral word and not by literary theologians; thirdly, because of the priority of the oral word, the stress laid on a religion of the transcendent force collected by the knowledge."<sup>4</sup>

He specified that "these three factors put the Quran in the middle of the life of people, but not initially by the study of its understandable contents."<sup>5</sup>

The factors raised to explain the influ-

2 MONTEIL, pp.76-77.

3 Ibid.

4 René Luc MOREAU Africains musulmans (Abidjan/Paris: INADES Edition/Présence Africaine, 1982), p.50.

5 Ibid.

ence of Islam on the African world do not seem all determining, even if the combination of all these factors is considered. One can however raise six factors which seem to better explain the success of Islam in Africa in general. It is: (1) its adaptation to the African context, (2) its propagation by men of the word, (3) its propagation by Africans, (4) its presentation like a religion of transcendent power, (5) the social prestige attached to it and (6) its community nature.

## 1. The adaptation of Islam to the African context

Islam did not arrive on a neutral ground in Africa. The populations were marked by cultural, social and religious values different from those brought by Islam. For example, the Islamic monotheism is foreign with the design of God in the traditional religions. But, with a great flexibility, this religion adapted and then rooted in this milieu.

An attentive reading of the Quran shows how the testifying of a unique God does not "skim the ground" of the old religious world of Arabia, but organized differently the sacred (cf. Surat 27.91; 53.19-22; the ka'aba; the pilgrimage; and others). Islam thus draws its capacity of adaptation from its experiment with the Arab animist milieu of before its birth. Moreover, it contains many elements which were already practiced by the African populations.

For example, although it condemns the polytheism, Islam accepts the existence of goods and bad spirits. It recognizes their influence in the life of the men, and it admits that the dreams and the visions are a real contact with the spiritual world. The consultation of the soothsayers and the practices of magic for all kinds of reasons, which is a feature characteristic of the African tradition, are recognized by Islam.

Also, polygamy is one of these traditional elements accepted by Islam. Monteil declared with reason: "conversion [to Islam] hardly involves rupture with the habit, that on the contrary... [it] stabilizes."<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Islam, a religion of orality

Although Islam is a religion with a book, it is especially by the oral proclamation that it was transmitted. It is always by

6 MONTEIL, p.76.

this mode that it is still propagated today. As of the beginning, the first agents of islamization on the African ground were more of people of the word than of the writing, more of spiritual and the guides who transmitted the heritage received from their masters than that from professors of university.<sup>7</sup>

This phenomenon is significant when it is known that the cultures of Africa in general are always a culture of orality. It is enough to see the importance that hold, for example, the "griots"<sup>8</sup> in the society.

The populations being illiterate, this teaching mode of memorizing and reciting that propagators of Islam used, was very effective.

Although the fact of knowing to read and write spreads today, this teaching mode is always effectively used by Muslims. The Muslim must memorize the Quran and be able to recite it and use his contents according to his needs. Islam is before all an oral religion and the African culture stresses more on the oral than on the writing.

## 3. Propagation by Africans

The penetration of Islam on the territory of the Sub-Saharan Africa was the work of the Arab and islamized Berber tradesmen of North Africa.<sup>9</sup> But thereafter, its propagation was the work of African tradesmen, preachers and reformers. This fact is of capital importance. Monteil pointed out precisely that this fact "contributed to remove from Islam its character of foreign religion."<sup>10</sup> Today still much of Africans, even intellectual, regard Islam as an African religion. One sees how much this factor contributed to the rooting of Islam in the Sub-Saharan African context.

## 4. Islam, a religion of transcendent power

As of the beginnings of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, the role of the Arab, Berber and African "marabouts"<sup>11</sup> was dominating.

7 MOREAU, p.56.

8 The "griot" is, in Africa, a traveling poet and musician, considered as agent of the oral tradition.

9 MONTEIL, pp.80-99 and Peter B. CLARKE West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from the 8th to the 20th Century (Londres: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1982), pp.7ss.

10 MONTEIL, p.77.

11 In Sub-Saharan Africa, a **marabout** is a character

Clarke reports that the king of the empire of Mali (XI century) and its people converted to Islam because a Muslim missionary prayed for the rain whereas a dryness was endured on the country. The invocation of the local divinities had not changed anything. But after the prayer of this marabout, the rain would have come.<sup>12</sup> Moreau wrote:

"These men had easily access to the local chiefs as prayers endowed with particularly effective gifts both for the rain and for successes for war. All started, and all can start in certain areas, by a competition between traditional forces and Islamic capacities, between the local priest and the marabouts... Many chiefs accommodated maraboutic families in their entourage to profit from their blessing (luck), for health, peace, success in the fights of competition."<sup>13</sup>

Amon D'Aby from Ivory Coast says that the essential concern of the animist<sup>14</sup> is summarized in his life on earth, which he would like as long and as happy as possible. Such is the essential problem which arises for him and whose solution must bring peace and serenity to him. To discover this solution, he addresses to the forces of nature, questions the destiny, adores deaths, and others.<sup>15</sup>

With this expectation, the work of the marabouts could only facilitate the acceptance and the integration of Islam by the African populations.

## 5. Islam, a religion of social prestige

The growth of Islam went hand in hand with that, extraordinary, of this new social force; Islam developed in its centre, playing a role of binder there, that it is for an association of mutual protection and support or for the benefit of the collective success.<sup>16</sup>

to whom one lends multiple capacities. He could using talismans restore health or the social order. These magic practices are criticized by the orthodox Muslims.

12 CLARKE, p.41.

13 MOREAU, pp.58-59.

14 It speaks here about the populations in their traditional context.

15 F.J. AMON OF ABY "Attitude of the animist vis-a-vis Islam and to Christianity" in Mr. CHAILLEY et al. Notes and studies on Islam in Black Africa (coll Research and Documents, N O 1, published by the CHEAAAM; Paris: J Peyronnet & C IE, 1962), p.107.

16 MOREAU, p.76.



Monteil described this as the "prestige of a religion which represents a social rise."<sup>17</sup> Muslim of the middle social class did not choose Islam for religious reasons but for socio-economic reasons. Very few people of the middle social class and higher practice their religion. They are there because of their socio-economic wellbeing is related to the Muslim community.

The trade is still today the means for growing much rich. However, it is held and controlled by Muslims. Conversion to Islam then becomes the way to be able to enter this milieu. For these tradesmen, the religion represents a way, a fraternal solidarity, perhaps a capacity likely to be moneyed in amulets, in divinatory practices in order to secure a socio-economic wellbeing.

Islam is thus not only one means to grow rich by the trade but also the way to acquire supernatural capacities in order to secure a social notoriety.

## 6. Community nature of Islam

From the very beginning, Muhammad wanted to turn Muslims into a single and fraternal community: *the umma*. Although the various groups and tendencies within Islam show that this *umma* was not carried out, there is however a social cohesion. One can speak about the existence of a Muslim solidarity. The greatest attraction of Islam lies in its Community solidarity. It is a super-tribe<sup>18</sup>

Kraemer wrote:

"Islam has the strongest influence on its members... because it [sic] gives them the unshakable feeling of their solidarity with the Islamic community which is, according to the tradition, the best community of the world."<sup>19</sup>

And, speaking about the attraction of Islam on the African kings and princes, Clarke wrote:

"Islam had also an international dimen-

17 MONTEIL, p.76.

18 Joseph KENNY "the Church and Islam in West Africa at the XXnd century" in Church and history of the Church in Africa: Acts of the conference of Bologna of October 22-25, 1988 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988) p.192.

19 Hendrick KRAEMER "Islam, a religion, a way of life" in the Review of the Evangelization, N O 87; January-February 1960; p.34.

sion and integrative qualities which made it attractive for the leaders of broad empires where there were pluralism and a considerable cultural, religious and politics diversity."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, this community nature of Islam was, and is still today, a socio-politic factor of its rooting in the African context in general. The community bond is a very significant socio-cultural element in Africa. Islam came with this value and contributed to maintain it during one time when individualism and selfishness seem to want to set up in value with the modernism.

In short, it is the conjugation of these factors which allowed the rooting of Islam in Africa. In fact, the factors for me were determining, because they made Islam a religion according to the heart of the populations of many Africans.

## III. CHALLENGES

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Islam is a challenge to the Church in many ways:

- Missionary religion
- Militant religion
- Persecution and discrimination
- Inducements
- Doctrinal and intellectual challenges
- Seduction of supernatural power

### 1. Missionary Religion

Islam is a religion with missions at its heart. Every Muslim should strive to please Allah and to offer Allah's religion to others. Islam has been able to cross geographical and cultural divides to gain followers and to make certain adaptations to other cultures for its success.

Islam is a missionary religion. It is energized by its theocratic world vision and mission. All of life should be subsumed under the laws of Allah: personal life, family life, culture, society, religion, government. The roots of the vision are in the Quran; therefore, Muslims are under a mandate to establish this vision wherever Islam is present. Muslims are on a mission. Islam is a mobile religion. It can be carried across populations and cultures.

Islam's origins in a tribal society made its attributes, notably its patriarchal family and polygamy, applicable to African tribes.

20 CLARKE, p.261. Our translation.

Muslim traders carried Islam to Africa, and it adapted to the cultural layers of African Traditional Religions in African societies. The simplicity of belief and the practice of the pillars of Islam have made it appealing and approachable across cultures.

### 2. Militant Religion

Islam is a militant religion. "Jihad" is an important concept. It has two aspects:

- the Islamic requirements that the individual must practice to be a worthy Muslim;
- the warfare of the community against infidels and those who attack or resist Islam.

All Muslims are under mandate to practice jihad because they believe that Islam is the correct and perfect religion and that all other religions are inferior.

Not only are they to follow the teachings of the Quran, but they are also to emulate the model of their prophet Muhammad, who led his fighting forces into battle to defend Islam and to make Islam dominant. Waging community or national warfare must follow certain rules interpreted and provided by religious leadership.

Thus, Islam as a missionary, mobile, and militant religion has become one of the fastest growing religions worldwide. It has become a religious and political force in Africa, has risen to challenge Christianity as the first largest religion in many West African countries and in all North Africa countries. Muslims have sent missionaries and monies to bring about Islamic revival and has continued to expand across Africa.

Muslims must Islamize non-Muslims by persuasion and conversion. Sometimes force has been a method. If non-Muslims do not accept Islam, they must submit to Islamic authority and rule.

### 3. Persecution and discrimination

Sporadic violence against Christians and Jews has been a constant feature of Islamic history. The greatest contemporary example is the suffering inflicted on Christians in Sudan by fanatics who insist on imposing Sharia law on the whole country. In Nigeria the Muslims who push for Sharia insist that it is only for themselves, but most Christians realize that it affects them too, and see the Sharia drive as part of a plan to make Nigeria an Islamic state, with Christians in a second-class posi-

tion. If the Quran is ambiguous about the position of Christians in an Islamic society, some important medieval treatises on constitutional theory are very plain: Christians are not free to manifest their faith publicly or to evangelize. Any Muslim who becomes a Christian would be put to death etc.

Countless deaths and untold suffering has been inflicted on Christians in many countries by fanatics who insist on imposing Sharia law on the whole country. Muslims who push for Sharia in these countries insist that it is only for themselves, but most Christians do not believe them, and see the Sharia drive as part of a plan to make the country an Islamic state, with Christians in a second-class position.

### 4. Inducements

Christians in some countries see their Muslim mates advanced to high positions in civil service, while them themselves, often with better qualifications, are left behind. Major contracts are awarded to Muslims, while Christians can only get subcontracts to do the real work but not get the returns. The invitation is sometimes bluntly made: Become a Muslim and all this wealth and position will be yours. A number of them succumb.

Many women marry prominent Muslim men who can sometimes be reasonable husbands. There is no Sharia requirement that a Christian wife must become a Muslim, only that the children follow the father, but very commonly these women do become Muslim. Very often the marriage is because of love, but sometimes Christian girls are attracted by the promise of a high life style.

### 5. Doctrinal and intellectual challenges

Islam denies the Christian beliefs of:

- the Trinity,
- the divinity of Jesus Christ,
- the crucifixion and death of Jesus for the sins of the world,
- the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb.

Islam has attacked Christianity for its polytheism and corruption of the Scriptures.

Apologetical arguments are another way that Muslims try to make headway among Christians. The late Ahmed Didat of Durban was a leader of that and he has many disciples.

The following are some of the stock arguments that Muslims use to attack Christian beliefs and establish their position.

- Against the Trinity, they accuse us of polytheism.
- Against the divinity of Jesus, Muslims point with delight to the abundant evidence that he was really human. One Muslim placard read: "Allah never dies, not even for three days".
- Muslims say that Muhammad was a prophet, and that the Bible foretold him.
- Muslims argue that the Quran recognizes the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel, but they say the originals have been lost and only corrupted versions circulate today. So whatever in the Bible agrees with the Quran they accept as authentic; whatever contradicts the Quran they reject as a corruption.

Muslim intellectual arguments against Christianity and for their own case are rather weak and unconvincing. But they do like to debate, and a Christian who is disillusioned with the Church or has some ulterior motive might accept the arguments, especially if he has been poorly thought in his faith.

### 6. The seduction of supernatural power

I get the impression that people rarely convert to Christ or to Islam but rather join the Church or Islam. It seems that most people do not inquire what is the true religion or the true Church, but ask where will my needs be satisfied, where will I get my miracle, where will I feel at home and listen to preaching that tickles my ears.

There are many members of churches who shop around prophetic churches, evangelical revivalists and even *marabouts* for healing or various other favours. The unifying factor in all this is the search for power to be well, to succeed, to resist enemies etc. It is not surprising that such people should patronize Muslims as well if they have any reputation for supernatural power.

In West Africa a tradition has grown up over the centuries of religious medicine. Charms are made from Quranic verses or from various other words that amount to "writing in tongues"; the ink of Quranic writing is washed off and made into a drink; certain men are reputed to have come very close to God and therefore have access to divine power or blessing (*baraka*). So people come to them for prayers and instructions about certain rituals they must carry out (including offerings) to get what they want.

There is a phenomenon that is developing and that is totally new and unique in the Muslim world. It is religious rallies modeled

after Christian ones, with hand-clapping, cho-ruses, drumming and dance, and advertisements for all to come and get their miracle. Prayers and rituals are prescribed or carried out with all the expectation of results that characterizes Christian assemblies.

Muslim involvement in healing ministry will reach those Christians who are making the rounds to get what they want, but it has an empty and flat echo in the contemporary competitive world of spiritual power.

## IV. RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

Christians, with few exceptions, have maintained their distance from Muslims. They have done little to understand Muslims, to prepare to send missionaries to Muslim people, and to develop a Christian apologetic for Muslims. Christians have continued to be unfamiliar with Muslims and their religion. Mass media has associated the words jihad, terrorism, Al-Kaida, etc. with Islam. Muslims are stereotyped as warlike, savage, and uncivilized.

Some opinion leaders have talked/written of the coming clash of civilizations between the Islamic world and the Christian world. Christian churches and mission agencies are awakening to the presence and strength of Islam, to its missions in Africa, and to its agenda to become the dominant religious and cultural expression. Christian mission agencies are restructuring their strategies to include the unreached Muslim people groups.

Many strategies have been developed and being implemented here and there. Some of these approaches have been used for years now. The Church's effort to reach Muslims is still to make a breakthrough.

Muslims are very resistance people to the Gospel. I have met many missionaries working among Muslims and using the traditional missionary approaches. Most of them are frustrated, discouraged because they are not seeing fruits of their efforts. I have even heard some Church leaders saying that the work among Muslims is an undoable task.

The Church Planting Movements (CPM) approach can help the Church in Africa address effectively the challenges it faces in reaching out Muslims. It can help the Church in Africa be better equipped for that work?

David Watson captures the Church Planting Movements when he wrote: "Local



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churches within a people group rapidly and regularly planting multiple new churches within the same people group as a normal part of being and doing church.”<sup>21</sup>

David Garrison wrote, “A Church Planting Movement is a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.”<sup>22</sup>

Jerry Trousdale did the following description: “These movements, by definition, are based on highly transformational, “every-member” discipleship. They require targeted intercession, relentless rejection of foreign culture, focus on finding a man or woman of peace, family-based evangelism, and intentional local leadership development, among other critical elements.”<sup>23</sup>

All these definitions contain the key elements that I see in a Church Planting Movement. They are:

- *Reproduction* – churches planting churches, churches that reproduce themselves
- *Multiplication* – it is not addition of new churches to existing ones, but multiplication
- *Culturally relevant* – churches that are culturally rooted in the context.
- *Transformational and every-member discipleship*
- *Local leadership*
- *Family-based evangelism*

There are elements in Church Planting Movement that will help address the resistance of Muslims to the Gospel.

1. *CPM addresses the issue of closed doors:* There are places today where Islamic people groups and communities have been penetrated through compassionate service. When the Church demonstrates the love of Jesus in practical ways it will have access to these resistant “unreached” peoples. In general these peoples are the most impoverished and damaged peoples (e.g. war, poverty, disease, etc.) Addressing their need with love will open their hearts. Then relationships of trust will be built that will lead to bringing them to Christ.

Another element of the Church Planting Movement that addresses this issue is the presence of a man or woman of peace. This is the proof that God is at work in the area and also that He has prepared at least someone who will be willing to learn, teach, obey, and bridge the Gospel to his community.

21 David Watson, Workshop Notes, not published.

22 David Garrison Church Planting Movement: How God is Redeeming a Lost World (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004) p.21

23 Jerry Trousdale, in a City Team International internal document.

2. *CPM addresses the community nature of the Islamic culture:* The CPM is a family-based house churches and avoid, as much as possible, church buildings. So it keeps a strong community character that suit the Muslim context in Africa.

3. *CPM addresses the need to see supernatural power at work:* In a CPM process, God is at work and where He is at work, one sees His mighty deeds. There are many powerful testimonies of God operating miracles in a CPM process. David Garrison wrote that power in the spirit realm is a consistent factor in the success of CPMs today. He quotes one missionary as saying “All the Church Planting Movements I have seen in China are full of healings, miracles, and even resurrections.”<sup>24</sup> In Sierra Leone where there is a successful CPM going, there are testimonies of such miracles.

4. *CPM addresses the cultural issues:* In CPM, autonomous house churches are established and led by local leaders. Thus there will be a cultural continuity. As David Watson said, the lay leaders help insure cultural continuity in natural way.

**CONCLUSION**

Muslims are growing in numbers and influence. They offer religious help to millions. They have a religious, social, and political agenda. They present one of the greatest challenges to Christianity and to Christians.

Despite of all that, the promise of God for the posterity of Ishmael will be fulfilled.

Gen 25:13 And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations. The first-born of Ishmael was Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam

Isa 42:11-12 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voice*, the villages where Kedar dwells. Let the dwellers of the rock sing, let them shout from the mountain tops. Give glory to Jehovah and declare His praise in the coastlands.

Isa 60:7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you. They shall come up on My altar pleasing Me, and I will glorify the house of My glory.

Ishmael’s spiritual posterity will glorify God. He is expecting the Church to make that happen.

24 Garrison, p.233

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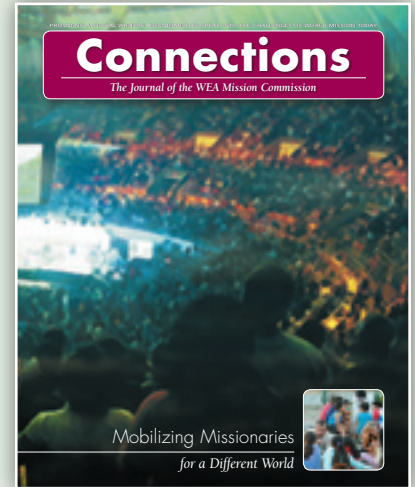
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