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# Connections

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Reflections from **COMIBAM III**, Spain

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*Bertil Ekström*  
Executive Director

## From my corner...

places as “tentmakers” with some financial support from “mother-churches.” But the growth is not just targeted for inside Ukraine. Missionaries are sent to neighbouring countries that were part of the Soviet Union as well as to other nations in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Some of these missionaries are working among the Ukrainian diaspora, such as in Portugal and the USA. There is no doubt that Ukraine has an important emerging mission movement and is probably a good example of what is happening in other countries in Eastern Europe.

The COMIBAM III congress in Granada held last November was an impressive demonstration of potential and strength in the Ibero American mission

movements. In most of the Latin American countries there is this same combination of fast growth nationally and understanding of the responsibility for evangelising the world. The increasing investment in global missions by the New Sending Countries challenges the traditional ways of doing mission. The result for both Old and New Sending Countries is new categories of missionaries, creative forms of ministries (including sports, arts, cultural exchange, relief projects, social action and media), and new types of mission organisations, such as NGOs and others.

In the last months, I have visited churches and mission movements in Africa, Middle East, Europe (including Central and Eastern Europe) and Latin America. There are so many

positive things happening all over these continents. Nonetheless, my concern is that individualism, denominationalism, ethnocentrism and protectionism are weakening the impact of global witness of Christ and hindering God’s use of the full potential given to mission movements. The Mission Commission exists to build bridges and provide opportunities for mission leaders to meet and reflect together, and hopefully, help us to overcome some of these barriers.

I know that heaven is not here yet, but it would not be bad if we all could sit on the floor, sing in harmony, share our concerns and offer our resources. Doing this would be a strong testimony of unity and mutuality in the midst of diversity (John 17; 1 Corinthians 12). <<

It was like entering heaven. The leadership of the newly planted Agape Church in Kiev had prepared a special setting that Sunday afternoon. With everything in blue and white, “planets” hanging from the ceiling, stars on the walls and lights reinforcing the sky-effect, 30 young people were received for the weekly service. The mixture of Russian and Ukrainian languages could not hide the globalised worship. I knew the songs quite well, the same that our young people sing in my church in Brazil. Sitting on the floor, we listened to testimonies and a brief Bible study based on the theme of the day. After almost two hours of singing, sharing and praying, the service ended with a time of fellowship and refreshments. In less than one year, the church has grown to some 40 members, all young, including the leadership. One of the methods for evangelism used is sport ministry. This Sunday, two football players from one of the main football teams in the capital visited the church for the first time.

Agape church, focusing on teenagers and young adults, is just one of the many new churches in Ukraine. Since 1992, when greater religious freedom was granted, the Baptist Union of Ukraine has grown from 900 to 2,700 local congregations! And the broader goal is to reach out to the 30,000 cities and villages of the country, most of them without any evangelical presence. The church-planters are sent to new



This issue of *Connections* focuses on COMIBAM—Cooperation of Ibero American Missions. This network/alliance is the regional mission movement of Latin America and as such, provides a significant model for such movements in other regions of the world. Regrettably, we do not have anything of this caliber in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, South Pacific or even Europe. COMIBAM is a network in its structure and relationships, but also provides some of the functions of an alliance

## From the heart and mind of the editor

We in the WEA Mission Commission reaffirm two truths: our high calling to focus on the ever-expanding extension of the Kingdom of God; and our commitment to affirm the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. We want to respond to cutting-edge concerns of the missional people of God—the church on the move in all of its forms and empowering by the Spirit; serving within cultures and cross-cultures; near and far; local and global; evangelizing and discipling; proclaiming and serving; praying and missiologizing; weeping and sowing.

The World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission is committed to establishing and strengthening national and regional mission movements. But what are the vital signs of viable and visible movements? What are the developmental stages of both national and regional mission movements? These discussions are to be presented on some other occasion. And the Mission Commission is committed to help establish new movements as well as to serve them, regardless of their stage of development.

### Singular features of COMIBAM

This mission movement has established a track record by its capacity to (1) shape the regional agenda, (2) direct the maturation of mission that is rooted in the church and (3) commit to all components of the needed mis-

sion infrastructure: mobilization, selection, training, sending, funding, supporting, shepherding, and researching the mission force.

COMIBAM is also a prime convener and connector for purposes beyond fellowship. Thus, it plays a key role to provide a “gathering place” for Spanish and Portuguese speaking church and mission leaders to meet intentionally. And it is clearly connected to the global mission movement.

It is also a catalyst, identifying and addressing some of the strongest needs of the Iberoamerican churches in mission. It is a coordinator, taking consensus forward to action in collaborative ventures. Its key voices demonstrate a combination of spirituality, leadership and servanthood, which allows them and the movement to become empowering facilitators with a global impact.

Finally, COMIBAM is a communicator, and its team has learned how to use all the mediums to tell their story. In terms of mission within Latin America, there is no other body that does a better job of informing and convening the church, for it is a place where information itself is happening.

One of its singular achievements has been convening three major mission congresses: Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1987; Acapulco, Mexico in 1997, and recently, Granada, Spain in 2006. COMIBAM’s leadership and their transitions have provided another platform for a diversity of individuals to grow into and serve a broader arena, starting with Luis Bush and his team, then Rudy Girón and David Ruíz of Guatemala (now on staff with the Mission Commission), Bertil Ekström of Brazil (now Executive Director of the Mission Commission), and most recently, Carlos Scott of Argentina.

And it has been my privilege to have been present and serving at all three events.

In this issue of *Connections*, we present a number of key documents either presented in Granada, or coming out of it. We highlight the broader background and context of the movement, selected plenary sessions, a report of the critical research project that grounded the congress, impressions of the congress, and a thoughtful evaluation by veteran Peruvian missiologist, Samuel Escobar. For a number of our writers, this is their first time to be in print, and thus we celebrate *Connections* as a younger global writer’s roundtable for mission issues.

You will also read reports coming from various Mission Commission-related task forces and networks and Steve Hoke reviews a new mission text book.

### Future issues

The second 2007 issue, coordinated by our managing editor, Kees van der Wilden (the Netherlands), will feature some of the newer documents that lay out best practice codes in diverse arenas of the mission movement worldwide—short term mission, member care, personal ethics of Christian leaders and others. The third 2007 issue will feature women in mission, coordinated by our colleagues Rose Dowsett (Scotland) and Cathy Ross (New Zealand). I, as editor of our journal, will be enjoying a substantial sabbatical and will return to my prime callings and tasks towards the end of this year.

### Drawing to a close

We invite your input on these topics and issues, and you can do this by writing to [connections@globalmission.org](mailto:connections@globalmission.org). Good and global friends—read, profit, grow, reflect, serve and pray! <<



**William Taylor** is the Ambassador at Large of WEA and senior staff member of the Mission Commission. Born in Latin America, he and his wife, Yvonne, served for 17 years before a move to the USA. He is the father of three adult GenXers born in Guatemala.

Last November 2006, the III Ibero American\* Mission Congress, COMIBAM 2006, was celebrated. Almost 2,000 people attended this historical gathering. Pastors and church leaders as well as leaders of missions agencies and National Mission Movements (NMM) met together with more than 280 Ibero American missionaries, representing more than 60 different countries where they are working. A group of 100 international observers attended, representing the most relevant mission networks and organizations around the world.

# COMIBAM as a Viable Regional Mission Movement

\* Ibero-America is the geographical region including Latin American countries, Hispanic speaking Caribbean, Brazil, Hispanic speaking churches in North America, and countries in the Iberian peninsula. For further information, see Uslar Pietri, Arturo, *Cuarenta Ensayos*, (Caracas, Monte Avila, 1990).

COMIBAM 2006 was the third in a progression of Missions congresses convened by Ibero American Mission Cooperation (COMIBAM) in the last twenty years. The meeting was not a celebration, but a reflection time. The invitation was made for everyone to come and be part of a process evaluating the effectiveness of the mission work from a field perspective.

Today, more than 9,000<sup>1</sup> missionaries are actively working cross-culturally, and almost US \$4,000,000 is being sent monthly from Ibero American churches to support their families and ministries. As Larry D. Pate predicted in 1989, “The Latin American missions movement is still in its beginning stages, but all indications are that it will become a rapidly increasing force in the Two-Third World missions movement.”<sup>2</sup>

## The Emergence of COMIBAM

During the international assembly of CONELA in 1984, plans were laid for an Ibero American Missionary Congress (COMIBAM) to be held in Brazil. Escobar writes, “The congress was attended by thirty-one hundred delegates representing all the Latin American

countries.”<sup>3</sup> Nuñez and Taylor describe this first meeting: “COMIBAM’s first meeting was called under the auspices of CONELA, but the movement rapidly extended its arms to take in the widest representation in Latin America.”<sup>4</sup> COMIBAM has continued working in Latin America since 1987, encouraging the emergence of an active missionary movement.

The emergence of COMIBAM in 1984 provides a dynamic to missiological reflection from Latin America and a consciousness of the important role the Church plays in the missionary process. As a result, thousands of missionaries have been sent from Latin America to plant churches among the neediest and most neglected people groups in more than 60 other countries. COMIBAM is a milestone in the connection of missiological reflection with the reality of the Latin American Church. Another important role played by COMIBAM has been to connect Latin American missiological reflection with the Global Church. COMIBAM is actively involved in the most important global forums, and working hard to remain so, opens a space for the Latin American Mission Movement’s contribution

and learning, especially among the emerging missions movements in the Majority World.

## A regional mission movement

There are some characteristics of COMIBAM that help in its development as a viable regional mission movement:

### Unity-provoking movement:

COMIBAM has been serving the church in a number of ways, but especially in the issue of unity. Bill Taylor observed: “Although COMIBAM is not an ecclesiastical body designed to bring evangelicals together in Latin America, nevertheless it has served the church of Christ in bringing together, for a common cause, groups and individuals that would not have cooperated in other programs.”<sup>5</sup> During its existence, COMIBAM has proved that mission mobilisation is a unifying factor in Ibero-America. Since its beginning, the leadership of the movement has been interdenominational, with a balanced presence of Pentecostal, traditional, independent, indigenous, as well as international churches. More than 460 missionary entities, churches, denominational boards, international agencies, Ibero American sending structures, as well as training centres, are connected—working together for the advance of Global evangelisation.

David D. Ruiz M.

1 For a complete set of graphs about COMIBAM, see: [http://www.comibam.org/catalogo2006/index\\_i.htm](http://www.comibam.org/catalogo2006/index_i.htm)

2 Larry D. Pate, *From Every People*, (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), p. 42.

3 Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides*, (New York, Orbis Books: 2002), p. 120.

4 Emilio A. Nuñez and William D. Taylor, *Crisis in Latin America*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989), p. 168.

5 Ibid,

**Building relationship movement:** Since the beginning, COMIBAM has been working to help the Ibero American Church to understand partnership. As Rudy Girón, the second president of COMIBAM stated: "I affirm that [the Church in] Latin America couldn't complete the task without a clear understanding of what partnership is all about."<sup>6</sup> COMIBAM has been creating a "partnership atmosphere" in the continent, developing and teaching strategic alliance principles and practice. As part of this challenge, some models of partnership for mission have been initiated and hundreds of opportunities to work together for missions have been opened on a regular basis. Bertil Ekström wrote later, "This cooperative spirit is the most forceful mark of COMIBAM and visible from the same leadership."<sup>7</sup> The partnership model of COMIBAM is being shared with some other movements and areas of the world, including Western countries, and COMIBAM itself is working proactively to cooperate with other organizations, movements and networks around the world as an evidence of its commitment to partnership.

### A Biblical and Ecclesiae centred movement:

**A Biblical-centred mission movement:** With strong commitment, COMIBAM is involved in getting missions back to the Bible. Since the beginning, the mission movement in Ibero-America has been taking care to understand the church, the world, and mission from a Biblical perspective. We respected the missiological proposal focused in mission strategies, mathematics and geography, but we are committed to define our Latin American Missiology from the Bible. We understand that the urgency of mission involvement of every member in the church is not because of the need of the lost, but because of the imperative of obedience to the biblical mandate of the Great Commission.

**A Ecclesiae-centric movement:** During the last six years, COMIBAM has been working to call Ibero-America to a "transforma-

tion of the church" process. As Bill Taylor describes, it is "a call to the return to the genetic essence of the church, a community of faith, vision and transforming mission in the world."<sup>8</sup> Following Taylor's definition, we work to see the church understanding its "missional identity." "It [the Church] was created by the triune God to be a people in mission on the march, here and there, close and far, evangelising, discipling, preaching and healing, inside its culture as well as outside, showing the love of the Lord and challenging toward a social change."<sup>9</sup>

COMIBAM developed "The Transformation of Church" initiative, which describes our missiological approach to the church, and we are teaching this concept openly and exhaustively to help the missional community in Ibero-America to understand that "Jesus' Church is formed by real committed Christians in a constant process to be more like his masters' model, committed to deny himself in order to be what the master wants him to be. Disciples that are ready to take up their cross every day in a clear commitment to do what their master wants them to do, and Christians, in the whole meaning of the word, that are ready to follow him and to go wherever their master wants them to go."<sup>10</sup> A call for a holistic involvement of the church toward the establishment of the Kingdom of God has been proclaimed by COMIBAM and the transformation of the Church continues in Ibero-America.

### New Wine in a New Wineskin

**A shared leadership movement:** As a result of the work of COMIBAM in Ibero-America, National Missionary Movements (NMM) have been organized in every country as a clear support to the evangelical church, so that the church, in turn, can become a missionary people capable of taking the gos-

pel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the Earth. The whole area of Ibero-America is organized in eight different regions with deliberate intent to create a development dynamic among the countries in each region, thus creating more relevant initiatives, helping them to raise the level of NMM, and creating a synergetic process to decentralize the movement. During the last twenty years, hundreds of leaders have emerged from the COMIBAM furnace. Since the year 2000, a triennial International Assembly has been convened to renew leadership, update the global vision, and define particular programs and initiatives. Every eight regions elects a regional director who becomes member of the Board of Directors, the main body of COMIBAM, in a deliberate effort to keep the leadership strongly connected with the reality of the NMMs. Every National Mission Movement is connecting to COMIBAM to be served and assisted with the different programs, resources and initiatives that COMIBAM is producing in a regular basis. They retain a healthy grade of autonomy to develop the identity that better responds to their nation's needs and focus.

**A Networking system:** Since 1997, the process of networking has been vital in the development of this movement. As a Network, we at COMIBAM understand that we are servants of the movement and that the most important role is to facilitate the development of every NMM. We understand ourselves to be the catalytic element to provoke the missionary potential of the Church in Ibero-America. We have been studying and developing a network leadership model, and the NMM leadership has been successfully trained during the past years.

The COMIBAM model is an integration of three main networks. The Church and Pastors network is the integration base of the main network. It gathers pastors and churches together to share information and experiences, identify cooperation opportunities and share needs and resources with the other remaining networks. The strength of this network is reflected most of the time in the whole NMM. Since its beginning, COMIBAM had been affirming that pastors are the key element in the whole process. This network follows the strategy of pastors influencing pastors toward the missional challenge to the Church.

The Training Centres Network gathers together biblical, theological as well as cross-cultural training centres in an intent toward better advantage of the limited resources. As

6 Rodolfo Girón, "Missões A Partir De America Latina" in Bertil Ekström, ed., *Aos Que Ainda Não Ouviram*, (São Paulo, Sepal, 1998), p. 200. "Afirmo que a América Latina, não poderá realizar a tarefa se o conceito de "cooperação" não estiver presente no trabalho missi"nário."

7 Bertil Ekstrom, *El Espíritu de COMIBAM*, (Guatemala, COMIBAM), n/a. "Este espíritu cooperativo es la marca más contundente de COMIBAM visible a partir del mismo liderazgo."

8 William D. Taylor in David Ruiz, *La Transformación de la Iglesia* (Colombia: COMIBAM, 2006), p. 12. "Es mas un llamado al retorno a la esencia genética de la iglesia, una comunidad de fe, vision y mision transformadora en nuestro mundo."

9 Ibid., 2006: 14. "Fue creada por el trino Dios para ser un pueblo en mision, sobre la marcha, aquí y allá, cerca y lejos, evangelizando y discipulando, predicando y sanando, dentro de su cultura y fuera de ella, demostrando amor y desafiando hacia el cambio social."

10 David Ruiz, *Discipleship as a Measure of Success of the Church, Essay*, (Easneye, ANCC, 2006), p. 15.

a result of a constant dialogue between them, a national training plan has been developed and every member identifies his role and potential to complete this plan. This network is the natural connection of COMIBAM to share and distil resources.

The Sending Structures Network gathers together all kinds of sending structures (national and international), churches, denominational bodies, church networks, etc., to develop a more friendly approach to the Church. They understand that the missionary call is, in essence, a call for obedience to the church, and the sending structures play a key role for the church to respond Jesus' Great Commission Mandate. They identify together the needs of the church for mobilization, information and connection, and as a result they are asked to produce tailor made services for the church. The connection between this and the Pastors and Churches network is very important for the successful future of the missionary work of the Church.

**A multilevel connecting network:** COMIBAM is committed to work hard to be responsible, with its historical role to facilitate the emergence of an Ibero American Mission Movement. Proactive relationships have been initiated and maintained with most of the relevant mission networks around the world, with a special emphasis on the relationship with the Majority World opportunities to create cross-pollination and future joint ventures. At this point, COMIBAM is a globally recognized and respected movement, and it is actively connected with most of the mission networks and organizations around the world. On the other hand, COMIBAM is an open structure where those networks, as well as other organizations, are able to connect in order to be part of this exciting process in Ibero-America.

### A servant spirit's movement

A faithful servant to the Church in Ibero-America: COMIBAM has provided valuable services for the church in Latin America and it is affirmed to be an important part of the Global Christian world. The growing expectation about its future is increasing. A biblical and ecclesiological missiology and an environment that connects theological and missiological reflection with the practical issues of missiology has been created. A lot of printed materials have been published and distributed in a commitment to develop an Ibero American missiology for the Church.

Writing materials have been developed in every country as a result of numerous congresses, consultations and training meetings to help the church understand its missional identity, be prepared to become a mission church and to understand and advance in the use of the valuable existing resources. More confident and effective pastors have been produced due to the biblical reflection and missiological challenge by COMIBAM.

The statistics gathered for COMIBAM show that the number of missionaries has grown alongside the growth of the number of churches involved and the effectiveness of the movement.<sup>11</sup> "In 1982, 92 organizations were sending a total of 1,120 Latin Americans missionaries to other parts of the world. Figures published in 1997 [during the Second Congress] indicated 3,921 Latin American missionaries serving somewhere in the world."<sup>12</sup> "At the Third Congress [2006] it was revealed that there are almost 9,000 Latin American missionaries on the field sent by more than 400 agencies."<sup>13</sup>

The history of COMIBAM will continue, and people, organizations, scholars and missiologists will recount it following the Latin American oral tradition. Surely during the process of translation and transfer of the information, a lot of organizations and peoples will be claiming the parenthood of COMIBAM. It has happened with mostly Latin America's initiative, but we need to understand that the Ibero American Mission Movement came into being in the midst of an evident Holy Spirit movement in our region, at the end of 25 years of a theological and missiological confrontation that made a profound division among the protestant churches in Latin America. It's a product of the claims for unity of the church that resulted in organizations like CLAI and CONELA, and that combined the deep commitment of the church with social action on one hand,



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and with theological reflection in the other. COMIBAM, in a sense, was a response of the church and from the church to raise their eyes from our continent to see that the world was bigger and needier than we thought and that, in the merciful work of the Holy Ghost, we were in the centre of His gracious moving.

May the Lord help COMIBAM to maintain a close relationship with Him and be moved by His Spirit to continue producing its dynamic significance in God's mission for Ibero-America and the world, and its relevancy to Christian mission today. <<

### Correction

In last year's special edition on Europe the author of "Beyond the Preamble, searching for God in a secularizing Europe" was said to be Rob Hay. In reality though this article is written by Darrell Jackson.

Since the beginning of this year Darrell is the Director of the new research centre at Redcliffe College, (UK) established with the purpose to: 'researching mission in Europe - innovating mission in Europe!'

11 To see the complete set of graphs, see: [http://www.comibam.org/catalogo2006/index\\_i.htm](http://www.comibam.org/catalogo2006/index_i.htm).

12 Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 160.

13 Samuel Escobar, report on COMIBAM 2006, [unpublished], "En este Tercer Congreso se afirmó que hay casi 9,000 misioneros latinoamericanos en el campo enviados por más de 400 agencias."

“Results and Challenges among the un-reached” was the theme of the Third Ibero American Mission Congress that took place in Granada, Spain on November 13-17, 2006. The congress was summoned and organized by COMIBAM International.

# COMIBAM as a process leading to a Congress

An attendance of approximately 2000 participants from 37 countries represented in national delegations, alongside 288 Latin missionaries brought from their fields of service, interacted for four days, analyzing and evaluating the last two decades of the work that Ibero American churches have been carrying out among people groups of the world that have not had a clear opportunity to hear the gospel message.

The Ibero American Mission Congress was an historic occasion. Representatives of the Ibero American mission movement were gathered with a select group of missionaries in order to evaluate its development and to plan necessary adjustments for the immediate future. It was not the beginning, nor the end of the history of missions from our context, but an important new step in the development of the Ibero American missions movement.

The history of this Third Ibero American Mission Congress began in 1916. A group of mission agencies and missionaries, mostly North Americans, met in Panama City to reflect together about the process and the

method for the evangelization of the continent forgotten in the Edinburgh plans in 1910. Jean-Pierre Bastian wrote about this congress: “*Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the congress was the start of a continent wide evangelical movement that gave the work a clearly protestant vision of what they needed to accomplish.*”<sup>1</sup> There began a process that brought the impulse to invest economic and human resources towards the evangelization of the world. It seemed that this part of the world could be reached alongside the efforts that were being put into Africa and some parts of Asia, to complete the goal of evangelization in the current generation,<sup>2</sup> as was the motto of John R. Mott.<sup>3</sup>

The continent responded to a well-learned lesson: proclamation as a task of local evangelization. However, Brazil and Puerto Rico seemed to awake early to their responsibility to share the gospel in other nations—closer for Puerto Rico, and farther for Brazil.<sup>4</sup> Evangelistic movements emerged in the 60s and 70s, with footprints of the past work still evident.

Missiological developments in Latin America followed Edinburgh in a very uniform way from 1916 to the late 50s until the emergence of Liberation Theology in the period between CELA I and CELA II. Liberation Theology provoked strong divisions between the more traditional and progressive wings of the Evangelical Church. Because of their connection with global realities, shaped especially by the cold war, the divisions were more difficult to solve. From 1961 to 1971, ISAL (Church and Society committee in Latin America) led the reflection on missiological issues for the conciliar churches, but it was disbanded for political and internal reasons. The other wing held the first CLADE (Latin American Congress of Evangelicals) in 1969, and has been leading the process of missiological reflection for the more traditional Evangelicals.

On the one side, the lack of a clear leadership for the Church moved UNELAM (Movement Pro Unity of Evangelicals in Latin America) to convene a Continental Assembly of Evangelicals with the purpose of establishing a Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI). “For the first time in the history of the Ecumenical Evangelical Conferences, 110 churches were represented in that assembly.”<sup>5</sup> The creation of CLAI was approved, and later founded in 1982.

On the other side, as a result of the Consultation of Evangelicals in Latin

David D. Ruiz M.



- 1 Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina*, (México: CUPSA, 1990), p. 159.
- 2 WEF books, *The Evangelicals: The story of a Great Christian Movement*, (New York/Paternóster), p. 144
- 3 David Ruiz, “Cambios paradigmáticos en el liderazgo global de las misiones,” *Manual de la II Asamblea Internacional de COMIBAM*, (El Salvador: COMIBAM, 2003).
- 4 Bertil Ekström. *El Espíritu de COMIBAM*, (Miami: Patmos Press, 2006).

5 Bastian, 1990: p. 222.



America (Panama 1982), the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, an organization linked with the Billy Graham Association, and World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF—now WEA), worked together to form the Confraternity of Evangelicals in Latin America (CONELA) in 1982.

As the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) invited key pastors for international mission conferences in the US, a burning desire was produced to plan for an Ibero American Missions Congress: COMIBAM 87, as it was called. Their goal was to bring together in Sao Paulo, Brazil a significant group of leaders that could hear the Macedonian call for the first time. This was how the passion to see the Ibero American Church involved in world missions began.

They achieved their objective. The adopted commitment at the end of the congress was: *United by the fervent desire to be light to the nations, we—the participants in COMIBAM 87, trusting in the help of the Lord, in the direction and the power of the Word and of the Spirit—invite all of our brothers and sisters in Ibero America to get involved with us in the faithful completion of the mission that He has given us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47).*<sup>6</sup>

COMIBAM 87 has a place in history as the date when the Ibero American Church began to turn from being a mission field to becoming a mission force. Missions from Latin America to the rest of the world were born. Two phrases were coined at that congress. The first is, “From mission field to mission force,”<sup>7</sup> illustrating the paradigm shift that began at this event in Latin America: to see the church in Latin America as responsible for taking the message of Jesus Christ to all those who have not yet heard.

For many Latinos, the waiting to see the mission force active became too long, and others expected a miracle. The former ones left prematurely, or better said, expectantly, because even when some of them returned hurt, others of those “Quixotes” continued



Granada, Spain

on the field and are there today! Many still there remind us of the second saying that came out of that congress: “Neither with dollars nor computers, but with my Spirit said the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> This is a Latin American paraphrase of Zechariah 4:6, reminding us that Latin missions are not about resources, but about the urgency of the task and obedience to the command of the Master.

The following ten years included hard work and many emotions, watching the “small spark that can get a fire going,” as a

famous chorus we sang at that time in many Latin American countries goes. During these years we worked on both maxims: that the Ibero American churches would produce the force that would be able to complete its part in the evangelization of the world, and that it was not an issue of resources. Many small and poor churches began to teach lessons to the big and rich churches about how to fulfill the Great Commission.

COMIBAM 97, the Second Ibero American Missions Congress, grew out of the felt need in the movement to evaluate what the movement had achieved since 1987, and to project a new vision for the future of the movement. The Second Congress,

6 COMIBAM 87, *Declaration, Results of the Iberoamerican Missionary Congress*, São Paulo, Brazil, November 1987.

7 This phrase was coined by Luis Bush, the first president of COMIBAM during the opening ceremony of COMIBAM 1987.

8 This phrase was coined by Rudy Giron who became the second president of COMIBAM late in 1990.

COMIBAM 97 (Acapulco, Mexico), came in midst of accomplishments and many emotions. The meeting between agencies and mission-minded churches in Panamá, 1994 showed that the movement had matured to a level of being able to do its own self-evaluation of development and to suggest adjustments and necessary changes in the course of action in order to be the most effective.

The calling of the Second Ibero American Missions Congress, COMIBAM 97 was, "An evaluation and projection of the Ibero American mission movement." The focus of the evaluation was based, principally, on the missionary process. Missionary screening, training, sending and pastoral care and supervision on the field were under scrutiny.<sup>9</sup>

One theme that was not included in the evaluation in COMIBAM '97 was social action as missions' work. At that time, it was more an element of division than it was of unity. This theme was not covered officially in the congress, but it was in God's agenda, and a few weeks prior, Hurricane Pauline seriously affected the port of Acapulco, leaving many people in great need. The arrival of the participants in the congress was a ray of hope for many of them.



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Almost 50 percent of the congress participants went out to the streets to help those affected, serving with the hands of Christ instead of enjoying the beauties of Acapulco during their free time. Obviously, none of those helped understood what COMIBAM or missiology meant, or even less, "unreached people," but all knew the meaning of the love in the hands of those who went to them.

The Second Ibero American Mission Congress transformed the movement. On

the day it ended, plans for "Ibero Americanization" began, aiming that the Ibero American peninsula would take a more significant role in COMIBAM.

At the same time, the regionalization of Ibero America came into being and allowed for a potential development of national missions movements. The new administrative model of the movement was also created, and above all, a system of relief in leadership that would avoid an authoritarian leadership and maintain the direction of the movement connecting it with the Ibero American missions movements. Bertil Ekström, The new President of COMIBAM International, outlined the vision for the future: "COMIBAM seeks to be a facilitator and a catalyst, working to strengthen existing mission efforts in Latin America and to start new ones".<sup>10</sup>

The Third Ibero American Mission Congress, COMIBAM 2006, confirmed that we have achieved the objectives set forth in COMIBAM 97. The congress was celebrated on the Iberian Peninsula, with the Spanish Church playing a significant role. Also, the process of the selection and organization of the delegations, as well as the definition of which missionaries would come to the congress, was in the hands of regional directors in open communication with their participating countries. This demonstrates that the Ibero American mission movement is bigger than what we saw gathered in COMIBAM 2006.

But this congress also had its own purposes, and one of them very concrete: to see missions from the perspective of the field. During this time we made a self-evaluation about our fruit among the un-reached. More than 280 active missionaries, working



in more than 60 countries helped us to understand the reality of our missionaries on the field, and we humbly recognized that our churches must grow in their support and care for them. We also recognized the spirit of sacrifice that moves our mission force to the field and keeps them there in the midst of all struggles.

The second purpose was to ask about the effectiveness of COMIBAM as a catalytic element in the movement, and valuable consultations were celebrated. The desire is to collaborate in working plans, becoming more effective and responding to the needs of the field and of the mission community. A more relevant working plan for the future was put in the hands of the new leadership of COMIBAM.

The third purpose was to present a fresh proposal for the future. For the first time in our history, the leadership sat together with active missionaries in order to define the future of the Ibero American Mission Force. This was done through dialogue, reflection and prayer together. The 24 National Mission Movements met every day to reflect and to plan processes to respond to the daily information and to dialogue about the serious responsibility for the future of the Mission Force.

There is no doubt that COMIBAM III was part of the history of missions from Ibero America. Today, a new page has been written, and we are sure that, as in the other two congresses, this page is also a beginning of a new and glorious chapter in the history of missions from the Ibero American Church. <<

<sup>9</sup> COMIBAM 97 Declaration, Results of the Iberoamerican Missionary Congress, Acapulco, México. November 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Luis Bush, "COMIBAM 97: An assessment of the Latin American Missions Movement," *AD2000 and Beyond* [website] <<http://www.Ad2000.org/re71216.htm>> (12 December 1997).

It is a joy for COMIBAM International to present this preliminary report of what took place at the III Ibero American Missions Congress. Two years ago, what has been called "The COMIBAM III Process" began. The goal of this process was to do a thorough evaluation of the Ibero American missions force so as to present proposals for adjustments and changes in the missions movement. This process will continue for another two years in the areas of research and analysis of both senders and the receivers on the mission field.

# General Report of the III Iberoamerican Missions Congress

November 13 -17, 2006, Granada, Spain

After enjoying times of communion and reflection, of analysis and criticism, moments of prayer, and projection toward the future, we now have the task of consciously processing all of these feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas so that the Ibero American missions movement can best be served. We desire to use the results to make changes as we look toward the unreached peoples of this world.

We want to state that this report does not try, in any way, to be an exhaustive and analytical report. We expect that the materials produced in the next year will be more complete. We are hoping, with this report, to continue the momentum that God has given us and to provide initial information so as to continue to reflect with others on what has taken place. What you will find is a simple evaluation that hopes to highlight a few of the themes that have come out of the Congress. We hope that the concepts and the final objective conclusions will be processed in the coming year.

**Jesus Londoño** is the Executive Director for COMIBAM and presently lives in Granada, Spain.

*Jesus Londoño*

### The Congress in Statistics:

Participants	1,958
Countries of Iberoamerica represented	25
Regions of COMIBAM represented	8

### Description and numbers of participants

Pastors	410
Missions educators	104
Business people in missions	62
Leaders of agencies or sending structures	141
Leaders of prayer movements	33
Leaders or denominations/ directors of missions	171
Leaders of programs (Adopt-a-People, partnerships, member care)	65
Directors of national missions movements	25
Invited missionaries (paid for by COMIBAM)	288
International observers	77
Presidents of denominations or evangelical councils	31
Staff	35
Volunteers	140
Other	378

### Other numbers of interest

Men	60.31 %
Women	39.69 %
Single	20.78 %
Married	77.68 %

### Preliminary report of Phase I of the research project, Phase I - Field missionaries

The preliminary report was presented to all participants at the congress, and was called "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Ibero American Missions Movement." It was led by the director of the Project, Dr. Levi DeCarvalho, who first explained the proposed method and strategy for the project.

The challenge was presented with the question: "What will we do with all of this information?" The statistics represent precious lives placed in the service of the Lord, entrusted by God to the hands of the Ibero American church. "What can and must we change and how are we going to do it?"

Also presented was a panorama of the profiles that were taken into account in the research process, including among others: mega spheres, theological group, years of service, gender, marital status, type of work (ministries), age, country of origin, country of service, sending structure, etc.

What follows are some themes that show a sampling of the preliminary results of the research and trends that are emerging in these areas:

1. Biblical and missiological training—before leaving and after arriving on the field. Specific courses:
  - In general, missiological studies are relegated to a secondary place compared to biblical-theological studies.
  - Courses in language learning, cultural anthropology, and practical studies only partially exist in the majority of cases.
  - “Recycling” courses (further studies after arriving on the field): Less than one quarter of workers report having taken courses since arriving on the field.
2. Field specialists
  - It is unquestionable that workers need to receive help for problems on the field.
  - Because of this, we see the need to prepare specialists in distinct areas.
  - More than half do not have any specialized help.
  - The number of specialists in training/preparation is very small in relation to the demand for this type of ministry.
3. Budget and the selection of field and ministry
  - More than half of workers have the responsibility of raising their own support.
  - There are few churches that have committed to the total amount of necessary support for their missionaries.
  - There is little participation on the part of churches and agencies in the selection of field and ministries for their missionaries.

*What does all this mean?*

- a. A high percentage of missionaries that work in other cultural contexts have not been adequately prepared for cross-cultural ministry.
  - b. Missiology or education in missions is still insufficient or nonexistent in many cases.
  - c. The majority of missionaries do not receive the specialized help that they need to resolve problems in the field.
  - d. The number of field specialists is insignificant in comparison with the needs of missionaries and is not growing as it should.
  - e. The majority of missionaries have the responsibility for raising their own support, even though they are on the field the majority of the time.
  - f. The participation of churches and missions agencies is still minimal when it comes to the selection of field and ministry for missionaries.
4. Financial arrangements -- details
    - Half of the missionaries have no health plan on the field.
    - More than half of the missionaries have no retirement plan, 18 percent hope to have one before they die.
    - More than half of the missionaries have no prepared exit plan for possible emergencies on the field.
  5. Adaptation to the field
    - Of the missionaries who need to minister in a language different from their own, a high percentage still have communication problems.
    - Many missionaries have difficulty in making friends with civil authorities.
    - Culture shock can last longer than expected.

6. Gender, marital status and leadership
  - The role of women in missions is a question that needs to be carefully discussed.
  - At the same time, the role of singles requires serious consideration.
  - Women and singles many times desire that their leaders understand their problems through their own experiences, and not only in theory.
7. Communication between leaders and those led
  - A leader who doesn't communicate clearly and objectively cannot expect that his/her missionaries will be effective in their efforts.
  - Regular communication with missionaries helps to reinforce the philosophy of teamwork.
  - Strategic communication demands planning and dialogue in order to minimize doubts and prevent conflicts and frustrations.
8. Relationships between missionaries
  - The “how” to resolve interpersonal conflicts is more important than detecting the conflict.
  - In times of crisis, one-third of missionaries have difficulty in asking for help.
  - A little more than half of missionaries report that they have learned to work together with fewer personal conflicts.
9. Singles
  - Single missionaries suffer principally with feelings of loneliness.
  - In addition, they suffer from discrimination for being single, occasional depression and for being harried.
  - Agencies prefer that their leaders be married.
10. Work and rest
  - One-third of missionaries do not take vacation.
  - Another third do not rest sufficiently.
  - Women are those who suffer more from burn out.
  - In reality, half of the missionaries are facing a burn out.
11. Success and failure
  - One-third of missionaries do not feel successful in their work.
  - Those who have been on the field between two and five years are those that most suffer the feeling of failure.
  - Even with that, 81 percent of missionaries are willing to stay on the field and do not think about returning home early to their home country.



With the themes of calling, training, sending, and field work, the following is a preliminary evaluation:

### Calling

The majority of those interviewed feel a “calling” through a feeling that God placed in their hearts. Hence, the church plays an important role in giving the congregation a missions vision from the Scriptures (develop calling). Also, there is a need to strengthen missionaries through ministry in their churches as training for their field experience (provide training opportunities). At the same time, the majority of those interviewed demonstrated concern that their churches, although change has occurred, still need to work better with those who feel called to missions. Churches should be able to direct these people in their preparation, sending and work in the field.

Single people are experiencing greater support in missions. A great number of the interviewed singles have reported that their churches supported their missions calling without any problem. The majority said that they felt secure in going to the field as singles; only a minority felt resentment in having gone as singles.

In general, singles selected their missionary field without concern for their marital status. A small percentage said they were not yet on the field when they felt the call to be single.

### Training

It is evident that there is an imbalance in the time invested in biblical-theological training and missiological training for missionaries. The great majority of missionaries invest three or four times the amount in the first over the latter. For the people who are crossing frontiers, into distinct cultures, it is fundamental to consider the balance and relevance that we give to each part.

Training should include an awareness of the different cultures that the missionary will encounter on the field, although it doesn't have to be specific for the group with which he/she plans to work. The curriculum in Bible schools and seminaries, in general, does not consider cross-cultural issues. It is urgent that we reconsider the minimum studies and the specifics that we want to provide to our missionaries. In this way, we can provide quality teaching, focused on the needs of the field.

### Sending

The delicate balance between feeling called and the selection of field, type of work, sending agency, and personal and ministry budgets need to be reconsidered by all. If leadership exercises a more active role in these decisions, maybe the relationship between worker-leader will be strengthened.

One needs to recognize and praise the spirit of sacrifice that thousands of men and women have made, having left for the field without a minimal financial backing, trusting that God would supply each of their needs. The majority do not have a health plan or an adequate retirement plan. Anticipation of emergencies should be a subject discussed in preparation for sending.

It is recommended that we reflect together about the minimum/basic requirements demanded by the field, contemplating different ministry contexts and the spiritual and ministerial formation that we desire to promote. There are many people that encounter things in the field for which they are not prepared.

The responsibility for raising necessary funds for work falls on the shoulders of the majority of the interviewed missionaries. We believe that a dialogue between senders and those sent is critical for assisting this process and minimizing the conflicts that arise because of this tension.

In our missions conferences and congresses, we frequently speak about the unreached, but for the majority of those interviewed, the needs of these groups was not a significant factor in their selection of a field. It is urgent that we re-think our mobilization strategy for this.

### Work on the field

The definition of strategies and objectives on the part of agency leaders/missions boards and good communication of these ideas is fundamental so that those on the field have a clear understanding what is expected of them. The weakness that we have detected in strategic communication between leaders and those being led has made it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness on the field. On the other hand, the so-called “member care” of the missionary is not separate from their evangelistic/missions activities. There is a need to unite the two things by people with recognized field experience that can help mis-

sionaries with specific ministry needs as well as spiritual needs.

Cooperation between co-workers is in part a reflection of the communication between leaders and those led. Those that have needs on the field, be they personal, family or ministry, surely will evidence relational problems in the future (either mid-term or long-term). Adding burnout to this, as in the case of the majority of missionaries, the picture becomes even more concerning.

We need to train more specialists to attend to the needs of missionaries. The investment that is being made in this is very minimal to attend to the growing demand for this type of member care.

Despite the fact that the majority of those interviewed lack the minimum financial resources to develop their ministries, they continue firm in their work. If there is something for which to praise our missionaries, it is the spirit of sacrifice for the work with which the Lord has entrusted them. The hand of the Lord is pushing them forward and His Spirit has used them to complete the work that He has given them. For this, as a movement, we are very proud.

In the field, many workers, singles as well as marrieds, experience feelings of loneliness. In terms of being accepted on the field, some of the singles said that they had no difficulty in being accepted by nationals, while others had some limitations on certain occasions. In addition, they report that the majority of their agencies prefer that their leaders be married.

Jesus took his disciples to a place apart, for a rest from their work. In the same way, our missionaries need to be taken away, to a separate place, from time to time, to renew their energy, receive counseling, take relevant courses for their ministries, and to renew relationships with brothers and sisters in the faith that have recognized their calling and invested in it, be it financially or in prayer. We must reconsider our manner of helping them on the field—not to spoil them, but to care for the treasure in jars of clay that the Lord has placed in our hands as a movement.

There are strengths in our movement that we must recognize, but there are also weaknesses that we must confront and resolve. May God give us humility and courage to recognize our strengths and change our weaknesses so that His name may be even more glorified among the nations. <<

# Message to the Church in Ibero America

## A COMIBAM Congress Plenary

To look back over two decades of sowing and reaping in the Muslim world in an attempt to extract some lessons for the future of cross-cultural missions from Ibero America is not easy for me. I have always been more inclined to concentrate on the challenges of the present and future, rather than remembering the successes and failures of the past. However, since our Father is so committed to extending to all peoples the awesome blessings He promised to His friend Abraham (of justification by faith and reception of His Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>), we must apply our best powers of reflection to try and give our beloved Redeemer all the satisfaction He deserves.<sup>2</sup> I trust that this is the objective of this COMIBAM conference.

Living and witnessing for twenty years in an Islamic society will certainly impact one's perspective regarding many things. When my wife and I have returned to visit churches in South America, we have commented on various contrasts between the two contexts. We have also felt a growing unease about several tendencies of modern-day Latin American evangelicalism, which I consider serious hindrances to the task of bringing "the gospel of the grace of God"<sup>3</sup> to Muslim as well as other peoples. With all humility and respect, I would like to share five of these concerns in this "Message to the Church in Ibero

America." I trust that the Holy Spirit will confirm what He considers important and discard the rest.

### 1. "Christo-humanism"

The first concern that comes to mind is what I have called, in a deliberate contradiction of terms, "christo-humanism."<sup>4</sup> I am referring to the generalized tendency of many believers to transfer the predominant worldview of our modern Western societies to their religious experience. That is, to maintain themselves at the center of their new "Christian" universe: "The most important thing is my happiness, well-being and fulfillment. God exists to grant me all the desires of my heart."<sup>5</sup> Through my 'faith', my prayers, fasting, offerings, and church attendance I can get Him to grant me whatever I want." (Even in missionary work we easily fall into having "our" contacts, "our" projects or "our" converts(!) as the main focus of attention and "worship".)

The contradiction, of course, is that the Christian universe already has a Center, and that Center is not you or me (nor your church or my denomination), but rather the "Sun of righteousness,"<sup>6</sup> He who died and rose to be Lord,<sup>7</sup> the One to whom all nations

belong<sup>8</sup> and who deserves to receive them as an offering,<sup>9</sup> by whom and for whom all things were created, and who must in all things have the preeminence.<sup>10</sup>

Coming from a context where Christians are persecuted, I find the glitzy gospel presented in many of our churches and TV programs quite disconcerting. Everything seems focused on making me feel fulfilled, satisfied, appreciated... designed to tell me what I like to hear, with no fear of giving offence... rarely any coherent dealing with wrath, sin, judgment, condemnation, suffering or martyrdom. I have often wondered: if following Jesus were as costly in Latin America as it is in the Muslim world, how many members would our congregations have? In North Africa we do not ask, "Who wants to accept salvation?"—and we should not ask that elsewhere either. The question is, "Who wants to give themselves, body and soul, to this Lord and Savior?"

If we are unable to restore a radical Christ-centeredness in our churches and mission endeavors, it would be better (and more honest!) for us to simply join the New Era and openly worship ourselves... we would have lost all spiritual relevance and any possibility of becoming true bearers of "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"<sup>11</sup> for those blinded by the lies and idolatries of the "god of this age."

*Lord, send into Your harvest laborers with a grand vision of Christ and a burning passion for Him and for His glory among all the nations!*

8 Ps.2:8.

9 Rom.15:16.

10 Col.1:16,18.

11 2Co.4:4-5.

1 Gal.3:8,14.

2 Is.53:11. I find it interesting that we, the modern heirs of the "father of the faith," find ourselves at the same distance as he (two thousand years) from the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the "Heir of all things" (Heb.1.2)... Could it be that the time has come for the completion of this great missionary project God first announced to Abraham?

3 Acts 20:24.

4 There are many "echoes" here of the syncretism, commonly referred to as "Christo-paganism," that resulted from the shallow evangelization conducted in past centuries by Roman Catholic missionaries among many of the indigenous peoples of Latin America.

5 Ps.37:4.

6 Mal.4:2.

7 Rom.14:9.

## 2. Theology of results

A second concern is the “theology-of-results” mentality that seems to have become popular in this time of abundant reaping in Latin America. “If things come easy, with no major complications and quickly produce the abundant ‘fruit’ we expected, we can know it was the will of God; otherwise, it wasn’t.” “God’s will is that we concentrate all our efforts on those peoples where we can get the biggest ‘harvest’ with the least investment of time, energy and money.” Though criteria like these may be useful for profit-seeking businesses, they have never helped in discerning the will of God. It is sobering to reexamine the context of the classic “missionary call” passage of Isaiah 6: God calls, Isaiah responds and the results are... incomprehension, rejection and destruction... and the promise of an eventual small rebirth.

We need to urgently recover a “theology of obedience” in which *any* effort, *any* sacrifice is more than worthwhile if requested by the One to whom we belong.<sup>12</sup> I remember the words of a North African brother commenting on the habit of praying for more freedom to propagate the Gospel: “We don’t need more freedom; all we really need is more obedience!” Obedience to God’s commands when they make no apparent sense and when they go against our natural inclination is the only way we can show evidence of the two things He most values: our *faith* and our *love*.<sup>13</sup>

Besides, the obedience of faith *before* seeing tangible results seems to be the spiritual foundation on which our Lord is pleased to build all His grand projects among humans. The “father of the faith,” Abraham, as well as the “author and finisher of the faith,” Jesus Christ, comes to mind. *Abraham* was given divine promises that he would possess the land of Canaan and have descendents as numerous as the sand of the sea, but he died having received only one son of that promise and a burial plot sufficient for his wife Sarah and himself. “Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God

had power to do what he had promised.”<sup>14</sup> Hebrews testifies: “These all died in faith, *not having received the promises*, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them... Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.”<sup>15</sup> *Jesus Christ*, the supreme example, who sends us as he was sent,<sup>16</sup> being owner of the universe, obeyed his Father’s will till the cross, yet he died abandoned by all and possessing only the clothes he wore... However, as a result of that radical faith-obedience we, the spiritual descendents of Abraham and Christ, today count ourselves in the millions.

Something similar has also happened in each of our Ibero American nations. There was one or more generations of sacrificial sowing on the part of the initial bearers of the faith who, *without seeing hardly any results*, persisted in obeying their Captain, some of them even to the point of martyrdom... But the abundant harvest we see in our countries today is something that we owe to the foundation of faithfulness and obedience that they were willing to lay, much more than to any modern methods or strategies. Now it is our turn to express our gratitude, and settle our debt, doing the same for others!

*Lord, send into Your harvest laborers who are committed to follow and obey Christ in everything, no matter what the cost!*

## 3. Narcissistic activism

I have termed my third concern “narcissistic activism.” We live in an increasingly frantic age. When we return from North Africa to South America, I feel bewildered by the multiplicity of meetings and other programs the churches put on *inside* their sanctuaries, and the pressure that is exerted for *all* members to attend *all* those activities. The worrying part for me is that we seem to have no other aim than the *number* of attendees in our meetings, and that we are satisfied with simply *entertaining* the believers, maintaining superficial relationships lacking in authenticity or commitment.

We often allow our *programs*, including our missionary activities, to have greater importance than *persons*... sometimes even more than the *Person* who gave his all out of love for us. It would seem that we have forgotten that the most powerful and enduring appeal of the Christian faith is the Person of Jesus Christ, the possibility of having a

*personal* relationship with Someone so incomparably beautiful, and of being part of a family of persons who attempt to allow Him to reproduce in them His wonderful *personality*.

The scant attention that our evangelical activism dedicates to the personalized forming of the character of Christ in the believer seriously limits the possibility of carrying out the mission such as our Lord conceived and practiced it: “He ordained twelve, that they should *be with him*,”<sup>17</sup> “make *disciples... teaching them to obey*,”<sup>18</sup> “predestined to be *conformed to the likeness of his Son*,”<sup>19</sup> “until Christ is *formed in you*,”<sup>20</sup> “to present every one *perfect in Christ*.”<sup>21</sup>

There is one aspect of the formation of the character of Christ in us that He emphasized as fundamental for the world to be able to know Him: our love and our unity.<sup>22</sup> In my years supervising missionary teams among Muslim peoples, what has saddened me the most is having to deal with unresolved interpersonal conflicts between brothers and sisters unable or unwilling to talk with sincerity about their problems, to forgive from the heart offenses suffered, to humble themselves, be reconciled and continue serving together for Jesus’ sake and in submission to the “new command” He left us.<sup>23</sup> Brothers, *the missionary candidate who has not demonstrated clearly in his character the cardinal Christian capability of forgiveness and reconciliation had best not go to witness abroad where he will only be negating with his life the message he proclaims!*

From the perspective of what the mission field requires, and related always to our Ibero American evangelical “narcissism”, there is one more thing I would like to mention: a witness excessively centered around our church buildings and based on terminology and rituals that the non-evangelical find hard to understand. Most evangelicals seem to know only one method of evangelism: invite the unbeliever to church! To be able to fulfill Jesus’ expectation that we be “light” and “salt”<sup>24</sup> in our neighborhoods and among the nations, we need to follow His example<sup>25</sup> and devote ourselves much more to leaving our enclosures to be “in the world” (without being “of the world!”), relating on a day-to-

12 Rom.14:8, 1Co.6:19-20.

13 Heb.11:6, 8, ff.; Jam.2:14-26; Jn.14.21-24. (It is interesting to see in the New Testament several expressions that use “*obey*” where nowadays we tend to use “believe”: “*obedience* to the faith”, “*obey* the gospel”, “*obey* the truth” (Acts 6:7; Rom.1:5, 2:8, 10:16, 16:26; Gal.3:1, 5:7; 2Tes.1:8; 1P.1:22, 4:17). –It is impossible to truly believe and not obey.

14 Rom.4:20-21.

15 Heb.11:13,16 (emphasis added).

16 Jn.20:21.

17 Mk.4:14.

18 Mt.28:19,20.

19 Rom.8:29.

20 Gal.4:19.

21 Col.1:28.

22 Jn.13:35; 17:21.

23 Jn.13:34; 1Jn.3:16; Fil.2:3-5.

24 Mt.5:13,14.

25 Mt.9:10-13; Lk.15:1.

day basis with people who would never go into our churches but who need to see or hear something of Jesus in us. Christ related our “light” with *good works* that He wanted us to do in our societies,<sup>26</sup> like He also did.<sup>27</sup> The reiterated biblical exhortation to dedicate ourselves to good works<sup>28</sup> which are visible expressions of God’s compassion and concern for people, is one that we as evangelicals need to learn to heed if we want to earn the privilege of being heard—let alone *believed!*—when we share the message of God’s love.

*Lord, send into Your harvest laborers with the Spirit and character of Jesus, experienced in forgiveness and reconciliation, who know how to relate to people and how to demonstrate in practical ways Your goodness and mercy!*

#### 4. Evangelical Zionism

Living in an Arab context, it is frankly shocking to see the naivety with which so many Latin American evangelical churches have identified themselves with different aspects of Zionism (such as the prominent use of the Israeli flag), and the ease with which, in the name of a supposed “fulfillment of prophecy,” practically any act committed by someone from “the chosen people” is justified. I wonder if we have ever sat down to think how far this is from the *universal* message of all the biblical prophets and apostles, who did not shrink back from proclaiming the judgment of God on all *human* sin, showing *no favoritism or partiality*.<sup>29</sup>

It is essential for us today, just like it was for the disciples of yesteryear,<sup>30</sup> to leave the fulfillment of prophecies and the details of eschatology in the hands of the sovereign Lord of history, and dedicate ourselves to the task He commended to us: to live and announce among *all* peoples (including the Jews) the only Gospel of salvation, that is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ<sup>31</sup> unto “*everyone who believes*.”<sup>32</sup>

It seems to me that more or less related to this topic of evangelical Zionism is the tendency that I perceive in many evangelical circles to mix together the Kingdom of God and the national interests of countries where believers are numerous or influential.

26 Mt.5:16.

27 Acts 10:38.

28 Eph.2:10; 2Tim.6:18; Tit.2:14; 3:8.

29 Dt.10:17; 2Cr.19:7; Lk.20:21; Acts 10:34-35; Rom.2:11; Gal.2:6; Eph.6:9; Jam.2:1; 1P.1:17.

30 Acts 1:6-8.

31 Acts 4:12; 17:30-31; Gal.1:6-8, 2:14-16.

32 Jn.3:16, 12:46; Acts 13:39; Ro.1:16, 10:4; 1Jn.5:1.

Apparently, we believe that with the political, economic, or military power of *this world* we can advance the Kingdom that is “not of this world.”<sup>33</sup> When in the national press of many Muslim countries articles regularly appear attributing the bellicose foreign policy of the current president of the United States to his evangelical faith and the influence of evangelicals in North American politics, I cannot but worry about the credibility of the gospel message we are communicating to these peoples. And when I hear recognized Christian leaders publicly support, as supposed spokesmen of all the evangelical churches, undertakings such as the invasion of Iraq or the bombing of Lebanon, I can only wonder when and how “the good news of peace through Jesus Christ”<sup>34</sup> will come to be understood by Iraqi, Lebanese and Palestinian Muslims....

We would do well, as individuals and as churches, to decide clearly (just as Joshua and Elijah exhorted long ago<sup>35</sup>), which kingdom do we want to represent—that of Jesus or someone else’s?—remembering that “no one can serve two masters.”<sup>36</sup>

*Lord, send into Your harvest laborers who are dedicated exclusively to Jesus, to His values and His kingdom, who show no partiality and who leave the future in Your hands!*

#### 5. Partisan arrogance

The last concern I want to mention is once again one that I believe can be perceived more easily from a place like the Muslim field, where the followers of Jesus, as far as we know, are more or less one out of every 50,000 people. Before the reality of so many unreached people groups, it is sad to hear of “missionary projects” that, in the end, are only efforts so that, in places that already have several evangelical churches, there may be one more “of our denomination.” The desire to “plant our flag,” whether as a church, denomination, or mission agency, usually has much more to do with fleshly pride than with the Spirit of Christ. Neither your denomination nor my agency will go to heaven, only persons redeemed by the blood of the Lamb... all together and all as one. In the country in which I serve, the leaders of the approximately forty small secret national churches (one for nearly every million inhabitants!) have said that they do not want to use, nor for anyone from the outside to impose on them, denomi-

33 Jn.18:36.

34 Acts 10:36.

35 Josh.24:15; 1K.18:21.

36 Mat.6:24.

national labels. They are simply members of *Kenisat Nur* (Church of “The Light”), or *Kenisa Kalimat Al Hayiat* (Church of “The Word of Life”), etc., from such and such a city. I believe that, as foreign workers, we should respect this desire. Will we be able to, or will our partisan arrogance betray us in the end?

Among the missionary agencies, at times, something similar happens: we end up having to “reinvent the wheel,” creating a whole other supervision and support structure, just because the agency that already has teams working in that place “is not ‘ours’ and in the end, whose will the results be?!” “My brothers, this should not be!”<sup>37</sup> Partisan or denominational (or ethnic or classist or nationalist) arrogance, just like any other *idolatry*, brings along with it a grave danger (like Nebuchadnezzar learned when boasting of his beautiful Babylon<sup>38</sup>), because we are dealing with a jealous God, a consuming fire,<sup>39</sup> who resists the proud,<sup>40</sup> and will not give His glory to another.<sup>41</sup>

*Lord, send into Your harvest laborers who are humble, who fear You and honor their brothers and sisters, who are big-hearted and open-minded, desirous of serving Jesus together with all “those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart!”<sup>42</sup>*

«Father, thank you for extending to us your immense and unmerited grace, for making us part of your purposes, your family, your Kingdom. Sanctify us, help us to throw off all these hindrances, all this weight and the sin that prevents us from giving ourselves entirely to completing the race that Jesus laid out for us. <sup>43</sup> Send, from your Church in Ibero America, many laborers, called by You, anointed by your Spirit and determined to be servants for Jesus’ sake, to take ‘the light of the gospel of the **glory of Christ**’ to those peoples who have not yet experienced the blessing of knowing You as is only possible in the beautiful face of Jesus Christ. <sup>44</sup> ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!’ <sup>45</sup> Amen and amen!» <<

*"Antonio Peralta is for security reasons a pseudonym"*

37 Jam.3:10.

38 Dan.4:30-33.

39 Ex.34:14; Dt.4:23-24.

40 Jam.4:6; 1P.5:5.

41 Is.42:8.

42 2Tim.2:22.

43 Heb.12:1-2.

44 2Cor.4:4,6.

45 Rev.5:13.



Acts 13:1-3 “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

# Projections and challenges for the Ibero American mission movement

From this story, we know that the church of Antioch played a very important role in the life of the universal church of the first centuries. It was a church that crossed social boundaries, built up broken lives, covered physical and spiritual needs, resolved interpersonal and doctrinal conflicts as described with the Jerusalem Council, had a shared leadership forming a pastoral team, and was willing to extend the limits of the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

We wonder as a church: What will be the work for which the Lord has called us in the coming year, and the new challenges that He will place in our hands? What is the direction we must go, and how must we plan for it? How can we understand that we are a church on mission? Who must we appoint for the ministry? Who will the next pastors

and cross-cultural missionaries be? Antioch was an open door for the evangelization of the world. We, as Ibero Americans, are challenged to follow this model.

The church living in mission is a church that understands itself to be sent to the world. It is a church that looks for God’s purposes, participating actively in worship of the Lord, called to live a Trinitarian faith, a relational faith. Called to live a life in relation with God and with our neighbor—a relation of communion with one another, where our priority is in being, not doing.

As servants, we understand that when we are involved in the mission, we are sharing the mission of our missionary God, and we are not working for any personal project.

We are in the service of the Missio Dei, and our mission is to share His. We listen, we discover and we obey the voice of the Lord, sending His servants to the work to which He has called them. This is the model to follow (Acts 13:1-3).

It is interesting when we study the book of Acts to observe how the church goes through stages; the church in Jerusalem was

the initial center of the activity of the church, then Antioch. After the persecution, the action center moved from Antioch to Syria. Jerusalem had its moment, and now it was

coming toward a new era in which it would be necessary to respond to the unreached. It is then that the church in Antioch assumes this commitment. Luke talks about this congregation not because it is the richest or the most powerful, but because it knew how to accept the challenges of the moment.

Later, we read in Acts 15 that some Christians from Judea who visited Antioch believed that Jews who were not circumcised could not be saved. Paul, Barnabas, and some other believers sent by the church decided to resolve this conflict of values in the Council of Jerusalem. What is the reason that Paul, Barnabas and those that were with them could see what God was doing among the unreached, and, on the other hand, these others, who were of the Pharisees, could not? They had accepted Jesus as the Messiah and participated in the life of the church. Where was the difference? The radical difference was that, while the Pharisees had received the gospel, the church of Antioch, in addition to receiving it, had united with the mission of God in the world. And from there was thrust the missions endeavor. The Spirit was active in Jerusalem, but it was in Antioch where the Spirit was doing new things, opening doors and expanding horizons. There, the church was subject to the impulse of the Spirit.

Carlos Scott



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## The missions of all the people of God

Every Christian is called to participate and exercise the universal priesthood of believers. The mission has its place wherever it wants. Impelled by faith, the Christians crossed the border between those who believe and those who don't believe, and on the other side of this border they gave testimony of their faith. Today, as a church, we are confronted with great challenges, like the 4,000,000 people who still do not know the Lord. The church must fully assume, without delay, its responsibility in world evangelization. It is a command, because there are millions of people that still do not have access to a clear presentation of the gospel. The church together is responsible for the evangelization of all people and races, of all languages. A universal faith, but one that is not a missionary faith, is nothing more than rhetoric without authority, which makes it sterile. To complete the work demands that we cross geographic, cultural, social, linguistic and spiritual borders, and that we accept all the consequences this requires.

## Dimensions of a new missionary paradigm

The challenges also include great multicultural cities, the re-evangelization of the West, testifying in the world of religious plurality among unreached ethnic groups where they are found (whether that be in large cities or in restricted access countries); linguistics, translation, and contextualization; being agents of reconciliation in a world of violence, of displaced people, of refugees, of immigrants, in the midst of religious persecution and an immense amount of suffering. More Christians died in the 20th Century than in the previous nineteen centuries.

We must assume our role in questions of the environment and all of God's creation; this challenge implies also responsible and effective participation in the society, the deepening of Biblical knowledge through systematic teaching in local churches, and the maturing of leadership models that promote teamwork and active participation of believers. We need to have a real understanding of the unity of the people of God, a greater participation in the world missions movement, becoming participants in the universal church, sharing the global challenges in an integrated action of the gospel; a sincere

search for cooperative models; and we need to understand missions as a process and not as a project.

## Missions mobilization

In the first COMIBAM (Ibero American Missions Cooperation) Congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1987, they estimated the Ibero American missions movement to be approximately 60 organizations that sent some 1,600 cross-cultural missionaries.



Ten years later, in preparation for the second COMIBAM Congress in Mexico in 1997, a more systematic research was done, with the goal of evaluating the missions movement of the past decade. It was concluded at that time that there were more or less 300 sending organizations and a little more than 4,000 cross-cultural missionaries.

According to statistics from 2006, Ibero America has more than 9,000 missionaries sent to other fields, and some 400 sending organizations. We give thanks and glory to God for this growth, but we are also conscious that missions mobilization continues to be one of our principle challenges.

We are a capable missions movement, but we are still not a missions movement that has come to a point of developing all of its potential to bless all nations. Despite the number of Ibero American evangelicals (70 million), we still observe that there is not a correlation with a greater sending of missionaries to the least evangelized or unreached peoples. At the same time, there is a growing concern about the sending of missionaries without adequate training, without strong financial support, adequate pastoral care and provision for their return.

## Unity and cooperation

The Word of God encourages us to live worthy of the calling which we have received. We are challenged to live in humility, being kind, patient, and tolerant of one another in love. We are challenged to maintain unity in the bond of the Spirit. One body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:16). From the beginning, the Lord has challenged us to work in teams. The mission could be the foundation for our unity.

Cooperation in the practical task of missions is the first step towards a deeper unity. We will grow in our testimony based on the unity of Christ, which calls us all to participate in God's mission.

But speaking of a global cooperation raises some questions that we must answer: Will we mutually help one another? How can we build a better missions bridge of cooperation? Should our structures be improved, changed or suspended? Should we rethink our missional understanding in order to better our missions dialog? What will be our participation in the sending of missionaries from the third world to other continents or the West? What principles and values must we follow? What is it that we must do? What is the cost that we must pay? What is our calling and what is our passion?

### *Participate helping others through cooperation*

The passion of the gospel must make us to participate, cooperate and share (Philippians 1:5), and not to compete. We can speak of "communion,"—*koinonia*, the New Testament word translated as communion, sharing, contribution, or in common. What is clear is that the idea is of sharing something, a business, a purpose, an experience, money, whatever, but it must be shared. The apostle Paul says, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern*" (Philippians 3:17). Common faith must have an expression in practical participation, and this participation has concrete consequences.

We are called to serve one another because of the passion we have for the gospel. We need each other (1 Corinthians 12:21-22). We are members one with another. No one can say to another, "I don't need you" (2 Corinthians 10:12, 17-18). This is sin and we must repent. Our problem, many times, is to think that we don't need anyone, and we miss out on sharing with others.

So that cooperation can exist, there needs to be a level of trust that is difficult to build when someone seems to be self-sufficient. The beauty of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, being God, is that he humbled himself voluntarily, to be among us.

*We ask ourselves: how can we build a better missions bridge of cooperation?*

In theory, the answer we have is that we must relate to one another. The problem comes when we don't appreciate the relationship we have with others. We must have unanimity with the Father's plans (Luke 6:27-31). This unanimity with Him speaks to us about being like-minded and being of one accord (Philippians 2:1-11). We speak of forgiving one another, of humbling ourselves, of understanding our different cultures and mutually helping one another. There is no one who is better, no one inferior. It also means that we have to work on better communication, on face-to-face relationships. Our problem is that many times we don't appreciate personal contact, and we say to ourselves, "Why am I going to go see him/her?" "Why waste the time?" As servants, our presence, our commitment, our flexibility and our cooperation are indispensable. Together with this, we must enrich the dialog among the body of Christ: the global church. There is no North or South, East or West, there is only one body.

When we serve through cooperation, we can say what the apostle said of Epaphroditus, "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18).

The fact that we can decide together to do missions would be a sign of the defeat of Satan and evidence of unity and global cooperation. The fact of what we can do together with our differences in cultures, of wealth, of backgrounds—will require the help of the Holy Spirit and the willingness to sacrifice our own needs for the best of the mission. We are from different countries, challenged to be citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20) and this reminds us that we have a future in common and the same identity.

As a church, we take part in the mission of God in the world, announcing that: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). We will take the gospel to all nations until the Lord returns. This is our understanding of the mission and our participation, with our eyes fixed on the kingdom of God. <<

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The First Ibero American Missionary Conference, which took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1987, served to awaken many of our churches to the work of reaching the unreached with the gospel of Christ. The motto “Latin America is no longer a missionary field; we are now a missionary force,” in due proportion, reflected the new consciousness among church and mission agency leaders about our responsibility in accomplishing the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20, Acts 1).

# COMIBAM III

## Research Project – Phase I

After that first Conference, several new missionary agencies came into being throughout the entire Ibero American world, each having its own perception of the missionary mandate and working out its own strategy of mobilization, missionary training and sending. All in all, these movements had one purpose in common, which was to communicate the gospel of Christ to peoples who are beyond the normal reach of our dynamic, strongly evangelical churches, mainly because of linguistic and cultural differences besides geographical barriers.

The Second Missionary Conference, which took place in Acapulco, Mexico, ten years later, sought to strengthen the new missionary force which had come into existence in the previous decade. Just as the first gathering had been a wake up call, the second conference served to unite the diverse initiatives into a concerted effort to reach the unreached for Christ. We acknowledged that God has been raising a vibrant strong human force which is willing to go to the most unreached parts of the globe with the gospel of Christ (Luke 19:13). The Acapulco conference underlined the fact that God has blessed the new Ibero American initiatives and is driving us into new challenges and opportunities to minister around the world.

**Dr. Levi DeCarvalho** lives in Brasil. He is the coordinator for the research program of COMIBAM of which the first phase was presented during Comibam III in Granada, Spain.

We firmly believe that now is the time to assess what we have done so far and meet the challenges of this new “globalized” century as we venture out into the unreached world. It is high time we assessed our missiological assumptions and began to critically examine our missionary practices with the aim of sifting through the good and the bad which has characterized our initiatives. The purpose of this exercise is to improve our cross-cultural service and reach a new level of maturity in our missionary work.

Any missionary movement which grows into maturity needs to promote a sober analysis of its strengths and weaknesses in order to paint an accurate picture of its own development. This is precisely what Ibero Americans intend to do. The litmus test of our missionary work, however, is to be found on the mission field. The people that hear the gospel through our missionaries and accept it as their own are the real proof of the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of our missionary endeavors. Assessing our fruit, however, will require a meticulous assessment of our missionary movement as a whole. We understand that our cross-cultural workers reflect the Ibero American church in all its strengths and weaknesses and we need to come to grips with our own reality in the process. In our missionaries and in their fruit we will discover ourselves.

The leadership of COMIBAM has decided that this research project will take between 3 and 4 years to be completed. Thus, we will

ensure that all phases in the process will be properly covered and analyzed, starting with Phase I which encompasses our missionaries working among various unreached groups around the world.

COMIBAM purposefully decided to invite 300 field workers to attend the Missionary Congress which took place in Granada, Spain, on November 13-17, 2006.

They were our special guests whom we sought to hear carefully and dialogue with in order to acquire an accurate picture of their own missionary pilgrimage and field experience. These missionaries have helped us to understand the entire process which goes from mobilization through candidate training and sending to their actual field work with all its challenges. These special guests took part in the research which was carried out in preparation for the conference (which we have dubbed as “Phase I” of the Research Project). The idea was to have as wide a representation of our missionary force in this research as possible. We wanted to ensure that we had among our respondents both conservative and Pentecostal, new and experienced, denomination- as well as agency-sponsored people, with much or little missiological training, who are involved in several ministries, such as church planting, Bible Translation, community work and leadership training and mobilization.

The gist behind the project is to work towards our intended outcome, i.e., to fulfill our missionary calling as the Spirit

of God moves in our midst and calls our churches, training and sending agencies and field workers to develop and perfect those gifts and opportunities which the Lord has entrusted to us among the least reached peoples of the world.

## A. Project Statement and Objectives

The present research project proposes to describe and assess the Ibero American missionary process, through an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, with the aim of proposing adjustments and corrections to the missionary endeavors of the Ibero American church among the unreached groups of the world. As a result of this project, COMIBAM intends to create a positive environment and foster a suitable momentum which will facilitate the discussion and implementation of the necessary adjustments and the creation of new programs so that the Ibero American missionary movement will become more effective, with the goal of increasing and perfecting the fruit of our missionary labor.

## B. Research Procedures

COMIBAM has defined four procedures for the research project as follows. (The original wording has been slightly altered by the research coordinator. The words in bold type are the watchwords adopted by COMIBAM for the entire project.)

### 1. **Getting Acquainted**

We need to become acquainted with what is actually happening in our missionary efforts as far as our successes, failures and challenges are concerned, from the perspective of the missionaries on the field (Phase I), the church base (Phase II, comprising church/denomination leaders, trainers and senders) as well as the receiving peoples (Phase III, comprising the least reached/unreached ethnic groups around the world targeted by our cross-cultural workers).

### 2. **Listening**

We need to listen to our missionaries (Phase I), church/denomination leaders, trainers and senders (Phase II) and the target audiences (Phase III) as far as the dynamics of the work and the fruit of our labor are concerned, each segment according to its own perspective.

### 3. **Finding**

- (a) The strengths and
- (b) The weaknesses of the Ibero American

missionary movement as well as  
(c) The models which have proven successful in mobilizing, training, sending and on the field, especially in relation to church planting among the unreached.

### 4. **Proposing**

On the basis of this research, the Ibero American missionary movement, as a whole, will propose the necessary adjustments to the process, with the expressed aim of improving and multiplying the fruit of our missionary endeavors among the unreached.

## C. Research Methodology for Phase I

The methodology used by the Research Team during Phase I has been as follows:

- (a) Survey research
- (b) Interviews
- (c) Case studies

The survey research, interviews and case studies have focused on those missionaries who responded to our invitation to participate in the research process. We were able to secure the assistance of several mission agencies and denominational departments of mission which graciously allowed us to contact their cross-cultural workers, according to the profiles we had envisaged for the participants (see "D" below).

Over 1,000 invitations were sent out with a positive response from 428 workers, out of whom 300 were invited to attend the Granada Conference in November 2006 (Phase I). These missionaries were called upon to discuss the outcome of the initial survey research of which they were the objects and help those present to consider the necessary adjustments to the missionary process in which they participate in many ways.

## D. Profile of Participating Missionaries - Phase I

What follows are the key elements which have helped us define and select the missionaries who were invited to participate in the research project (Phase I). We wanted to ensure that the following variables were represented in the universe of the Ibero American workers who took part in the initial phase of the research:

1. *Mega sphere or people group* (missionaries working among Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Tribal, European and Hispanic American spheres [including North America])

2. *Field exposure* ("old" as well as "new" missionaries on the field)
3. *Theological persuasion* (missionaries who represent conservative, Pentecostal, charismatic, interdenominational and other theological positions)
4. *Sending structure* (independent, denomination-affiliated and agency-affiliated missionaries)
5. *Ministries* (missionaries working with church planting, Bible Translation, community development, leadership training and mobilization)
6. *Pre-field Missiological training* (short-term or long-term exposure to missiological principles)

## E. Phases and Outcomes

### Phases

The Research Team has suggested that the entire research project be divided up into three distinct phases, as follows:

*Phase I* of the Research Project has provided us with the necessary grounding to evaluate the primary needs of our missionaries, their deficiencies in training, sending and field supervision ("missionary care") as well as their strengths, especially in relation to their field practices. These findings are being shared with our constituencies, who will then have the opportunity to do their own analysis of the data collected and make the necessary adjustments to their strategies and programs.

*Phase II* will be the opportunity for pastors/leaders, trainers and senders to evaluate their own contribution to the Ibero American missionary movement. COMIBAM is expected to coordinate a series of discussions and assessments through its networks (churches and pastors, training centers and sending structures) with the stated goal of gathering vital information about our movement, suggesting changes and working towards the creation of new programs which will facilitate the implementation of the ideas generated through this process. Phase II will focus on the sending side of the missionary enterprise, which looks at the ways in which they select, train, deploy and assist their workers on the field.

*Phase III* will provide us with information about the fruit of our labor on the field. We will focus on obtaining the views of the receptor peoples who welcome our missionaries into their lands, their homes and their hearts. This will be by far the most complex phase of the entire Research Project since we will be dialoguing with local and national church leaders and church members who have bene-

fited from the different ministries represented by our missionaries (Bible translation, community development, church planting, leadership training, etc.).

The three phases of the Research Project, when put together, will give us a complete picture, as it were, of the entire Ibero American missionary movement. Our goal is to accomplish our missionary calling as the Spirit of God moves in our midst and calls our churches, training and sending agencies together with our field workers to develop and perfect those gifts and opportunities which the Lord has entrusted to us as we serve the unreached/least reached peoples of the world.

The proposed timeline for the three phases has been tentatively set up as follows. The timeline may need to be revised as we proceed with the project.

- Phase I – 2006
- Phase II – 2007
- Phase III – 2008

**Anticipated Outcomes**

COMIBAM has defined the anticipated outcomes for the research project as follows:

All key words in the project (*getting acquainted, listening, finding and proposing*) will concur to our proposed adjustments and will facilitate the aim of improving and multiplying the fruit of our missionary endeavors among the unreached/least reached groups of the world.

**F. Preliminary Findings of Phase I**

What follows is a summary of the main findings of the research conducted for Phase I. We must bear in mind that the “crude” facts point to deficiencies that need proper attention by the parties concerned—the sending structures and/or the missionary himself/herself, as the case might be. In other words, the data cannot be taken in isolation; they must be analyzed in terms of the overall pattern that emerges from the combination of factors in their proper contexts.

The Report to the Granada Conference, a summary of which follows, was intended as a working document for the discussion groups (“random tables,” as they were called) which met every afternoon after the plenary sessions. The idea was to discuss the issues which were selected for each day according to four major categories: calling, training, sending and field work. These categories were intended for analytical purposes;

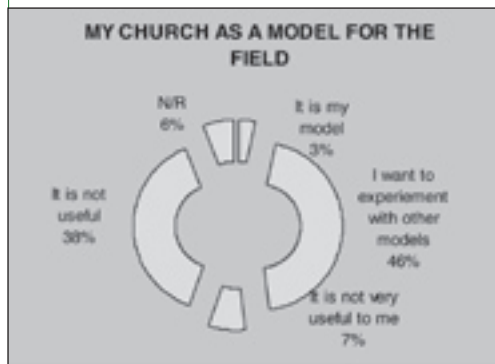
obviously, all issues must be taken in the light of the overall patterns which were uncovered through the research.

**1. Spiritual discipline**

90% of the workers said that their spiritual discipline, prior to arrival on the field was strong. Only 49% could say the same after arriving on the field.

**2. The sending church as a model for the field**

Only 3% of the workers surveyed declared that their sending church serves as a model that they can reproduce on the field, whereas 7% believe that some aspects of their sending church can be used on the field. 45% have said explicitly that they want to try new models in their church planting ministry. On the other hand, only 52% of the workers declare that they feel comfortable when they visit their sending church, although they are fully aware that they have undergone profound change as a result of their cross-cultural experience. Only 14% feel as though everything is the same as before.



**3. Pre-field financial help**

41% of the workers report that they received financial help from their churches toward their pre-field training; another 35% were accepted as candidates but no financial help was offered. This means, in practice, that only one out of every three candidates received any financial help from their churches during their pre-field training programs.

**4. Pre-field training**

56% of the workers surveyed report that they were exposed to Bible and Theology training for 3-4 years (another 20% had it between 1 and 2 years). Only 52% were exposed to some kind of missiology train-

ing. A reported 27% took more than 6 months of cultural anthropology. Only 25% were exposed to language learning courses prior to field experience.

**5. Continuing education on the field**

Only 23% report that their agencies have offered any kind of formal training since they have arrived on the field. Another 12% report that they have undergone further training through agencies other than their own. This implies that 65% of all workers surveyed have not had any kind of formal training since arriving on the field.

**6. Access to Field specialists**

Only 38% of all workers surveyed report that they have access to field specialists (people who are knowledgeable about their field problems and are capable of helping them in those areas). Over half of all workers have no access to such specialized help. Only 5% report that their agencies are in the process of formally training the kind of specialists that are needed for their specific ministries. The following table represents the percentage of workers whose agencies have field specialists in their cadres:

Missiology-trained specialists:	27%
Specialists in other areas:	11%
No specialists:	12%
Specialists in training:	5%
Don't know:	45%

**7. Budgeting and financial commitment**

35% of the workers report that they are responsible for calculating their personal and ministerial budgets. On the other hand, 54% have the responsibility of raising their own support. 18% of the workers have all their financial needs met by their own churches, 17% receive half of their financial needs from their own churches and 30% receive less than half of their support in the same way.

**8. Choice of Field and Ministry**

56% of the workers surveyed have chosen their own field by themselves (i.e., location or ethnic group). The exception are Bible translators who have chosen their field in dialogue with their agencies. An impressive 70% have chosen their own ministries (Bible Translation, Community Development, Leadership Training, Church Planting, etc.) by themselves.

**9. Retirement and Emergency Plans, Medical Assistance**

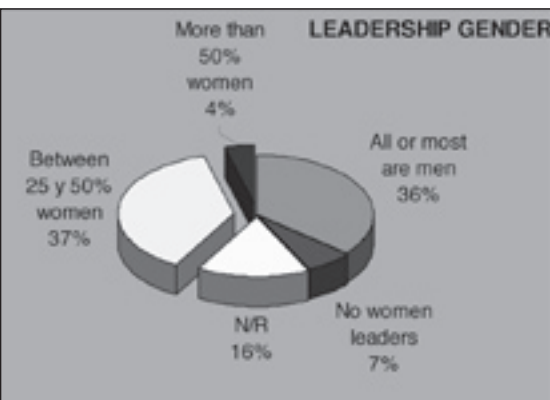
47% of the workers surveyed do not have a retirement plan. On the other hand, 45% report that they do not have any medical plan and another 25% say that they have access to medical help through a paid service only in their countries of origin. 54% report that they have no emergency plans in place in case of need. Only 22% have devised any such plan before leaving for the field. (However, all Bible Translation workers report that they have made emergency plans. Churches and agencies have made more emergency arrangements for singles than for couples/families.)

**10. Field Adaptation**

A third of the workers surveyed (34%) report that they are able to preach effectively in the local language whereas 22% report that they had or still have some kind of cultural shock or cultural adaptation problems. 60% report that they have made many friends among local people. However, less than half have been able to make friends among local authorities.

**11. Gender, Marital Status and Leadership Roles**

Only a third (37%) of the workers report that between 25% and 50% of their leaders are women.



Over 58% report that the majority of their leaders are married.

**12. Communication**

As far as daily, personal communication between leaders and field workers is concerned, only 43% think it is open and effective. Those who think it is ineffective amount to 38% of the workers surveyed. As for the communication of goals and strategies between leaders and workers, the opinions are divided: one third deems it

effective, another third deems it ineffective and a further third considers it irregular.

**13. Personal Relationships**

24% of the workers report that they have relationship problems within their own agencies (reaching 35% if we add those who confess that they have such “attrition” from time to time). A little over half (54%) have learned to cooperate effectively with their colleagues with minimal personal conflicts.

**14. Crisis Handling**

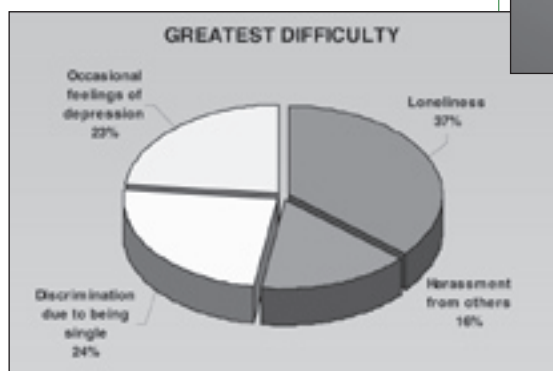
67% of the workers surveyed report that they feel free to seek help from their colleagues in times of crises whereas 33% do not feel free to do the same (or they do not receive the kind of help that they need).

**15. Singles**

The major difficulty singles face on the field is the feeling of solitude (37%) followed by gender discrimination (24%), occasional feelings of depression (23%) and harassment (16%). Actually, feelings of solitude are more prevalent among single men (40%) than single women (36%). 76% of the workers indicate that their agencies have a preference for married leaders. This is relevant if we consider that 34% of the workers surveyed are single men and women.

**16. Rest and Burnout**

An amazing 30% of the workers surveyed simply do not take any time out to rest from their ministries; however, 29% do manage to take some time off work annually. Another 21% who do go out on vacations consider that they do not get the kind of rest that they really need.



Another 13% who take vacations on an irregular basis report that the results are mixed in terms of feeling restful and reinvigorated.

The following table may be helpful in this regard:

	No	Infrequent	Total
Women	31%	12%	43%
Married	30%	15%	45%
Single	27%	11%	38%
5-10 yrs of service	36%	13%	49%
> 10 yrs	26%	17%	43%

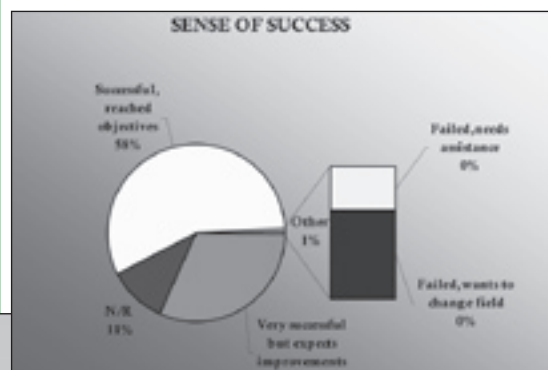
The overall picture is further complicated by the fact that 17% do not have a regular time schedule and 6% report that they do not have a weekly time off.

In view of this situation, it is small wonder that 17% of married workers and 25% of singles experience frequent burnouts whereas women (25%) are hit harder than the men (14%). An amazing 47% report sporadic burnouts.

**17. Feelings of Success and Failure**

58% report that they feel successful in their ministries, whereas 31% have the opposite impression about their own performance on the field.

In spite of it all, 59% of the workers surveyed plan to stay on the field for many years to come, whereas 24% plan to stay on their posts for a few more years and then move on to another field.



Only 6% report that they have a desire to return home.

**Conclusion**

The guiding question behind all three phases of the research project is, “What are we going to do with all this information?” The research represents precious lives which have been invested in the Lord’s work. We are not playing any games here. Some workers have risked their ministries by allowing us to collect sensitive information about them; keeping that infor-

mation discrete is our duty and responsibility. The anonymous data we have collected and sorted out, however, is to be shared among church and mission leaders with the stated aim of fostering a healthy debate about our practices as far as the selecting, training, sending and assisting of our workers are concerned.

Having said that, a word of caution is necessary: the complete picture has not emerged yet and therefore any premature criticism or unwarranted use of the data collected thus far should beware of jumping into too hasty conclusions. Phases II and III come next and only after we have finished all three phases will we be in a position to assess the data in all its dimensions and implications. For instance, we have not yet assessed our working models on the field nor have we discussed the practical side of our own missionary. This and much more will come in due time.

This present report is intentionally non analytical. The reader, therefore, is free to explore the issues and start his/her own analysis of the data. This is what we did at our Mission conference in Granada last November. We wanted the leaders and workers present to digest the “raw” information

and explore ways in which together we can meet the challenges that have arisen out of the data collected thus far.

One thing should be stressed, notwithstanding all our shortcomings and limitations. No other missionary movement has yet done what we, Ibero Americans, have begun to attempt, and that is to assess our weaknesses and strengths as a movement. It might be an interesting and useful idea to encourage other movements to do the same so that we can compare notes and envisage ways of mutual assistance in areas where we can be of benefit to one another.

When I shared these preliminary findings with a group of Western observers who attended the Granada Missionary Conference, I was asked what had surprised me the most about our findings. Implicit in the question was the assumption (which is doubtful, in my opinion) that there is nothing new in this kind of research. My answer was simple: despite all the hurdles that our workers have to face on the field, as reported here, the amazing fact is that

most of them are adamant about staying on the field. Workers from different latitudes might have second thoughts about remaining on the field without such basic services as medical care, emergency and retirement plans and access to trained consultants whilst battling irregular vacation times, feelings of loneliness and frequent burnouts. Our workers have a strong sense of calling and obedience to the Lord who has called them to be where they are to do what they are doing—even if feelings of failure creep in from time to time. I might even dream of what might happen if we were able to solve or minimize some or many of the problems we have raised here. But that is something we can revisit when we report on the next phases of the research project.

I wish to thank all those workers who took part in Phase I of this Research Project, their sending structures, the other research team members—Ninette Jiménez (El Salvador), Carlos González (Spain) and Samuel Guerrero (México)—and the people who helped cover the expenses involved. We hope that by raising these issues and sharing these findings, the Ibero American missionary movement will be better able to meet its own challenges and devise ways of maximizing its efforts in order to bear more fruit among the unreached peoples of the world. <<





When I lived in Brazil from 1962 to 1964, I attended Baptist churches and I was impressed with the missionary vision they had. Besides having an active missionary program within their own large country, Baptists had been sending missionaries to Portugal, Chile and Bolivia since 1907. In 1976, I had the privilege of being a speaker in the First Missionary Congress organized by the Brazilian evangelical student movement, Alianza Bíblica Universitaria, in the city of Curitiba. There were over 2,000 applications for the 500 places that were available at the congress. I was moved by this missionary drive.

## COMIBAM III: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

So Brazil was the logical site when several sending agencies and mission promoters decided to organize the first COMIBAM congress in 1987, followed by a second congress in 1997. These congresses became rallying points for people and organizations involved in the sending of Christian missionaries from Latin America. Thus, it was with a deep sense of history that I attended the Third Congress of COMIBAM held in the Congress Palace of Granada, Spain, November 13 to 17, 2006. My feeling is that the Latin American missionary movement is coming of age.

Almost 2,000 people came from the five continents, among them 287 Latin American missionaries who work mostly in Northern Africa and Central Asia, regions where the population has had very little or no contact with the message of the Gospel. The Third Congress was organized from the offices of COMIBAM in Guatemala and Spain. In the corridors of the Congress Palace as well as in the streets of Granada, I met an incredible variety of persons from the global evangelical community. Side by side with the missionar-

ies were pastors of sending churches; rank and file Christians that promote missions in their local church; executives and staff from mission agencies in Latin America, USA, Europe and Asia; professors of Missiology; and researchers of mission. There were also many young men and women considering God's call to service in a mission field.

Though the congress kept a tight schedule, it also allowed for a great variety of personal encounters and specialized groups, and times of warm brotherly and sisterly fellowship in the atmosphere of an "Ibero American Bazaar." In just two days, I was able to meet an exceptional variety of people. For instance, I had conversations with Pastor Xoan Castro, promoter of national missions in the Spanish Baptist Union, and with Stella Maris Merlo, an Argentinean missionary who serves in the South of Spain. An unforgettable lunch allowed me to renew contact with seven pastors from the Christian Missionary Alliance in Peru, who now serve in England, Miami, Paraguay and Peru and who were my students at the Alliance Bible Institute in Lima in the 1980s. My wife and I had breakfast with Ann Borquist, American Baptist missionary in Brazil, who studied at what is now Palmer Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and who, with her husband Bruce, is now training missionaries in Brazil. On another morning, we joyfully had breakfast with Rosemary Dowsett, a Scottish missionary who served in the Philippines and who partners with the WEA Mission Commission.

One day, we had an unplanned lunch with Latin American missionaries Loida Tejera from the Dominican Republic, Luis Rangel from Bolivia, Andrés Duncan from Costa Rica, and Andrés' wife Angélica from Mexico, who served in Kurdistan and presently supervises missionaries from Northern Mexico. As we talked, we found with great joy that they all had been active in evangelical

student movements associated with IFES in their countries. From similar movements came Wout Van Laar from the Netherlands, who now leads a mission organization and Pablo Carrillo from Mexico, one of the pioneers of Latin American missions in the Muslim World.

My agenda included meetings around coffee with Douglas Birdsall, who is organizing Lausanne III, a conference to be held in 2010 to celebrate the centennial of the famous missionary conference of Edinburgh 1910. I also had a good conversation with Guillermo Powell, whose grandfather was a Canadian missionary in Argentina and who works now for Logos, the well known media organization that produces software for the formation of Christians. Logos has included the Spanish version of my book, *Changing Tides*, together with forty other books in its *Biblioteca Digital de la Misión* (Digital Mission Library) in Spanish ([www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com)). We had also a brief session of the *Escuela Superior de Misionología Transcultural* (Advanced School for Transcultural Missiology) related to two evangelical seminaries in Spain.

In content, style and leadership, this



**Dr. Samuel Escobar** is professor in missiology. From Peruvian background he served, with his wife Lilly, as missionary for IFES in Peru, Argentina, Brasil, Spain and Canada.

was a Latin American Congress. With very few exceptions, the speakers, the facilitators of small groups, and the missionaries who shared about their work were all Latin Americans, and so was the music and the festive worship style. According to David Ruiz, former President of COMIBAM, 80% of the almost two million dollar cost of the event was provided by Latin American sources. Yet, Spain was also represented. In the opening evening Mariano Blasquez, President of the Spanish Federation of Evangelical Entities, the body that represents Spanish Protestants, brought greetings from the Spanish churches. The mayor of the city of Granada also gave his official greetings to the visitors.

David Ruiz from Guatemala has led COMIBAM through a decade of significant growth since 1997, and much of the success of this congress is no doubt due to his diplomatic and organizational abilities. In his opening message the first evening, he spoke about "Mission at the foot of the cross," stressing that suffering is part and parcel of the call to Christian mission. A similar emphasis was the dominant note of the following evening messages that were presented by Brother Yousef, an Egyptian pastor, C. Sekar and K. Rajendran, pastors from India, and Bob Fu from China. At a time in which prosperity theology is so pervasive in evangelical circles in Latin America, this biblical emphasis on the cross and the cost of commitment was salutary.

The whole program of the Third Congress was evidence that the Latin American missionary movement related to COMIBAM is coming of age. On one hand, there were enthusiastic reports, inspiring moments, and thematic consultations on subjects as diverse as sending structures, integral care of missionaries, ways of reaching different ethnic groups, linguistics, and Bible translation. On the other hand, a key component of the program included what I call "a critical reflection on mission practice," which filled a good part of each morning. A research team, led by Brazilian missiologist Levi de Carvalho, worked several months prior to the congress to survey a sample of 428 missionaries with a 110 question survey. Four case studies were selected to address the following issues: the call to mission, training for mission, the sending of missionaries, and field work.

After a time of worship, each morning began with the testimony of a missionary about the subject chosen for the day, followed by a summary of the survey results regarding that particular subject. The subject was further explored by a panel discussion, which

included the missionary who had spoken that morning, other missionaries, mission executives, and pastors or members of receiving churches. One morning the speaker was Antonio Peralta, a missionary from Uruguay who works in the Magreb and who expressed concerns about evangelical Zionism, or the narcissistic activism that affects many churches today. The second morning we heard Humberto Coello, a Mexican missionary in Turkey who presented a message titled, "Good intentions are not enough." The third morning Najuaá Diba, Brazilian missionary in Kosovo and later Albania, shared her dramatic as well as practical experiences of planning and caring for churches in Albania. The last morning, Carlos Zapata, an Argentinean working in Central Asia, shared about the unique needs and challenges of that region. These sessions were a time for critical reflection, review of both successes and failures and a realistic presentation of the needs and challenges. The panels that followed were led by veteran missionaries and missiologists Rudy Girón, William Taylor, Bertil Ekström, and the author of these lines.

As a missionary among university students for twenty-six years and a professor of Missiology the following twenty years, I had followed with special attention the development of the COMIBAM movement. The initiative for their first congress in 1987 was an effort to gather together and coordinate several evangelical agencies that had started to send missionaries from Latin America to other parts of the world. It is estimated that by 1980, there were 92 evangelical sending agencies and 1,120 Latin American missionaries. This movement emphasized transcultural mission in areas that were still unreached by Christian missionaries. By 1997, the year of the second congress in Acapulco, Mexico, the figures had grown to 284 sending agencies and 3,921 missionaries.<sup>1</sup> During this third congress, it was stated that there were almost 9,000 missionaries in the field sent by 400 agencies. These figures, compiled by researchers, tend to be conservative and they do not include denominational agencies or spontaneous movements that refuse to be recorded. Neither do they include the migrants who contribute actively to mission as volunteers without links to sending agencies in the countries to which they have migrated. The growing figures are evidence of

a growing missionary dynamism.<sup>2</sup>

In its origins, COMIBAM was closely connected to the American missiological school that I call "Managerial Missiology." From it, the movement adopted concepts and categories such as "unreached peoples," "10-40 window," and "adopt a people." Time and reflection have widened the vision, and in several of the testimonies I heard or read in Granada I could find the language and concepts of the Holistic or Integral Missiology that has been developing in Latin America since 1970. The list of books that COMIBAM published for this congress includes: the missiological reflection by David Ruiz in *La transformación de la iglesia* (The transformation of the Church); the open evangelical theology of Justo L. González in *Mapas para la historia futura de la Iglesia* (Maps for the future history of the Church); a collection of personal stories by missionaries, *Testimonios de misioneros ibero americanos*; and the Spanish translation of a practical handbook about the care of missionaries, *El cuidado integral del misionero*, edited by Kely O'Donnell with contributors from around the world.

This congress was an enriching experience and has provided us with a vision of hope by showing the missionary drive that emerges from the evangelical ranks of Latin America. I found most comforting that there was a celebrative tone without a hint of triumphalism. The new President of COMIBAM is Argentinean Carlos Scott. His final message stressed the risks and challenges faced by the missionary movement. "We need," he said, "a real understanding of the unity of the people of God, a larger participation in the global mission movement. We have to become participants of the Church universal, sharing the global challenges in a holistic action from the Gospel, a sincere search for cooperative models and an understanding of mission as a process not merely a project."

The maturity expressed in the readiness to be self-critical and realistic is a promise for the continuity and growth in depth of this movement. COMIBAM is a symbol of the new missionary situation in the world, in which the drive, vigour and commitment to obedience in God's call to mission, following the example of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, has moved to the Southern hemisphere. I praise the Lord and thank Him for COMIBAM. <<

1 Ted Limpic, *Catálogo de organizaciones misioneras iberoamericanas*, (Miami: Comibam-Unilit, 1997). p. 191.

2 The most recent data may be found at [www.comibam.org](http://www.comibam.org).

“Once, Latin America was declared a mission field. Now we declare ourselves to be a powerful, mobilizing church for global mission.” Such was the tone set at the passionate mission congress of COMIBAM that took place from November 13 – 18 in the Spanish city of Granada. No less than 2,000 representatives of churches and mission organisations from Latin America flew in for this occasion. Among them were 300 Latin American missionaries and 100 observers.

# From mission field to missional church

## Missionary congress of Latin Americans in Granada

The choice for Granada was remarkable. It was not Latin America, but Europe where the meeting took place, and precisely in the place where Columbus took off in 1492. In this place, where the violent colonisation of the New World started, people now considered strategies to evangelize the world in the reverse direction. If the Spanish kings had known about it, they would have turned over in their graves located in the nearby cathedral. The choice for Granada also had a practical purpose: it enabled missionaries from Europe, Northern Africa and Asia to participate.

The congress became a true *fiesta* with a mix of Latin cultures: The rhythm of the Argentinean tango, the Brazilian samba, the thin Andes music from the Cordillera, and the gracious Dominican Merengue filled the congress hall. Jubilant flags of dozens of nations filled the platform. The passion



**Wout van Laar**  
(58) is pastor of a Protestant Church in the Netherlands and General Secretary of the Netherlands Mission Council. In the eighties he worked in Chili.

for mission that filled the congress centre made us think about the early years of the mission movement of Europe; it brought us back to the time of the first love, that time linked to the English cobbler William Carey, who motivated numerous men and women to leave their countries with great willingness of sacrifice and commitment and without knowing where the journey should bring them.

The congress was organised by COMIBAM. The 'Congreso Misionero Ibero Americano' is a cooperative structure focussed on the transformation of the Latin American church to missional church. Through networks, consultations, literature and so on, they work toward the organisation of churches to bring the gospel to all people. The background of this cooperation is the strong 6% annual growth of the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Numbers of 75 million members in 2005 are mentioned. From the end of the 1970s, Latin American churches have sent out an increasing number of missionaries. But only after the COMIBAM '87 congress in Sao Paolo did the movement become a solid movement. In 24 countries, national networks were established that help churches look over their national borders so as to be mobilised for global mission. It is from an attitude of gratitude to God, who made the churches grow in such a strong

Wout van Laar

way, that the churches want other peoples to join in this richness. At the moment, about 9,000 Latin American Protestant missionaries are working all over the world, with emphasis on the unreached areas in the world. This number excludes the Latin American migrant societies all over the world that spontaneously preach the gospel in their immediate region.

In part, the congress was meant to evaluate the efforts of the mission up to now. There was opportunity to listen to the experiences of the 300 Latinos from the fields to learn from them and to adjust strategies where needed. COMIBAM, though initially a rather conservative movement dominated by Northern American evangelicals, has gone through quite a development, as revealed in different ways during the congress. First, results of a serious and critical self examination were presented. Not only was the role of the sending church and the missionary examined, but connections on the field with existing Christian societies were taken into account; sometimes with great cultural sensitivity. The weak points were honestly stated—weak missionary training, lack of sufficient funds for missionaries, lack of *member care*—all with creative adjustment focussed on the continuation of the task. The mission movement of Latin America has grown up



and has its own part in the evangelisation of the world. A powerful self-consciousness determines that no longer is the North needed to develop strategy. North Americans played no role in the programme of the congress. The few representatives from the North limited themselves as careful listeners.

It was interesting to notice that the congress was not primarily focussed on Europe as a work field, but on the whole world. Most attention was given to the unreached areas of Northern Africa and Asia.

Increasingly, mission takes place from South to South. People work in intercultural teams where local churches are the facilitators. Sparks of recognition are visible between Latin American and Indian churches. In the margins of the world and within the context of poverty, new forms of mission come into existence. "We share the same experience of understanding what it means to suffer lack and unrighteousness." In the rich West, we see how the initiative for mission is taken over by the churches of the South. Those who don't have the money will be the main players to do mission in the 21st century, as they have the passion for the gospel. That brings us to the secret of following with joy through suffering, a recurrent theme during the congress.

Many critical questions could be asked about COMIBAM. All errors made in the

past—and even still make—are repeated among the Latin Americans. But there is also continuous movement through experiences from the field and the growing number of contacts among the churches of Asia and Africa. It is significant that almost all main speeches came from people from the South.

The Indian pastor C. Sekar, during his talk, searched for biblical answers for global poverty. He stated that establishing orphanages and hostels doesn't solve the problem. He defended a holistic mission that works on a "socio-spiritual transformation of humanity and society." "The gospel challenges us to break with the structures of poverty and return people their dignity. In a world with increasing religious fanaticism, a radical change of traditional methods is required."

The Egyptian church leader Hermano Yousef spoke about a large prayer movement in the Middle East. We looked at a video showing 12,000 people in his country participating in a week of prayer. He asked for cooperation in humility. With urgency, he asked for our attention on the Egyptian church, which is either neglected or denied by government, Muslims and foreign missionaries. "There are several missionaries in Egypt. But everyone starts afresh and nobody sees the Egyptian church itself, while they for centuries have tried to share the gospel in the Muslim world. Please help us in the task of being a witness."

Antonio Peralta, already having worked for twenty years in Northern Africa, sees a lot of activism, focused on quick results. Success and blessing are not the same. Blessing follows obedience. How will Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians interpret the gospel of reconciliation and peace as long as the evangelical churches applaud the bellicose politics of Bush? He considers the blending of faith and national interests of so-called Christian countries as an enormous stumbling block for the Christian witness in the Muslim world.

Also, testimonies were heard from countries like Albania, Turkey and China, usually emphasising cooperation with local churches. Hardly anyone spoke in terms of crusades against Islam. Repeatedly, a strong call was made to reflect the inclination of Christ. What counts is sharing our lives, with respect for the local cultures.

The new president of COMIBAM, Argentinean Carlos Scott, expressed during his inaugural speech a deep criticism of the theology of prosperity and desire for quick results and success, numbers and power. "We don't believe in offices and zero budgeting, but in God's power manifested in weakness." Scott sees this movement as a spontaneous answer of the renewed activity of the Spirit of God, "Who made the structures of our denominations stumble and called us for involvement in the missionary task" "At a certain moment you realize that something is happening—you feel the wind getting stronger and you raise the sails." "The movement happens to be contagious. We can neither control it nor say how it will continue. The Spirit crosses borders and reaches, also through our missionaries, the most remote places of this world. Praise be to God!"

Granada 2006 was a remarkable congress and a milestone in the history of the missionary movement. Before we, in the European continent, submit to the temptation to put COMIBAM in a certain corner and thus to look for confirmation of our prejudices, we should ask ourselves what the Spirit of Christ has to tell us in the North through these developments. Are we willing, for the benefit of the world and ourselves, to develop the humility that is needed to build bridges between our missionary endeavours and the vital mission movement of the South? <<

In arbitrary order you find impressions of delegates of III Comibam Congress, that took place from November 13 - 18, 2006 in Granada, Spain.

# Impressions of III COMIBAM Missionary Congress

## Alex Araujo, coordinator of Interdev Partnership Associates.

During the first COMIBAM, in 1987, we dreamt of the day when Ibero America would have its first generation of experienced missionaries that could give back to the movement. At COMIBAM III, I found myself awed that our dreams were now reality. The underlying theme was no longer what we could do as a region, but what we are actually doing. We saw our own Latin missionaries speaking of lessons learned. The Ibero American missions movement is no longer a baby or an adolescent, but a young adult, showing signs of maturity, stability and strength. Latins can speak with authority within the global missions movement.

I was deeply encouraged by the extensive study of the strengths, problems and opportunities presented during the plenaries. What a blessing that there was so much to evaluate from the past 20 years. And what a blessing that the movement could look honestly in the mirror, see what is true and learn from it.

I also noticed that those of us who were in Brazil in 1987 were in the minority at COMIBAM III. Most delegates had not been there at the beginning, and this also is a sign of maturity. The event in Granada was not an attempt by the first generation to keep something alive at any cost, but the manifes-



tation of a movement whose existence and stability seems assured under God's mercy and leading.

I saw signs of maturity also in the dangers lurking in relational corners and cordial handshaking and hugging in the hallways. We Christians are not exempt from jealousies and resentments and impatience that poison Christian fellowship and ministry cooperation.

The stability of the movement can lead us to relax and drop our guard concerning temptations toward power, control, and personal preferences. Unity is always at risk, because that is the one key way Satan can weaken the witness we bear to the Lord incarnate. It is significant that our Lord specifically mentioned this in his prayer in John 17: he knows that Satan can harm us if he can divide us.

My prayer for the Ibero American missions movement is that it will remain one in Christ, and that it will work hard to extent that oneness with the other regional expressions of this movement in Africa, Europe, and Asia to bring glory of the Lord to the ends of the earth.



**Alex Araujo** coordinates Interdev Partnership Associates (IPA). IPA promotes strategic mission partnerships among the least reached peoples of the world. Alex, born and raised in Brazil, has served with IFES in Portugal, Comibam in Brazil and Partners International in the USA. Married to Katy, Alex has three adult children and one grandchild.



in this generation and the next. May COMIBAM flourish in supporting that!



**Rose Dowsett** serves as International Chairman of Interserve International, is a member of the WEA Theological Commission, member of the ExCo of WEA Mission Commission and a WEA Mission Commission Associate.

**Carlos Pinto (Peruvian with Latin America Mission on loan to HCJB Global in Quito Ecuador)**

**Bertil Ekström, Executive Director WEA Mission Commission, past president of COMIBAM (1997-2000) and senior consultant to Comibam's Executive Board.**



**Bertil Ekström** is the past president of the Brazilian Association of Cross Cultural Agencies and COMIBAM, the Latin American Continental Missions Network. He serves the WEA Mission Commission as Executive Director Designate. He is a staff member of Interact, a Swedish Baptist Mission, and is also with the Convention of the Independent Baptist Churches of Brazil.

The celebration of a continental mission movement that has grown and matured was one of the important aspects of the COMIBAM III congress in Granada. From a few sending structures and some hundred missionaries in the 1970s, the Ibero American mission movements have developed into a major force in global missions today, with over 500 sending organizations and around 9,000 missionaries. The first COMIBAM congress in Sao Paulo in 1987 was a decisive factor for promoting cross-cultural mission in the Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries.

An interesting innovation in Granada was the morning sessions based on the experience of Latin missionaries working in different parts of the world. The lessons learned, many times with great sacrifice, will help to shape selection, training and member care of missionaries. Criticism can be made to the lack of biblical reflection during the congress and the poor engagement with the Spanish

churches. Nevertheless, COMIBAM III is an important milestone in the history of global missions and a promising sign of an even greater participation of Ibero America in the evangelisation of the world.

**Rose Dowsett, chairman of Interserve International and member of the ExCo of WEA Mission Commission.**

The birth and growth of the Latin American mission movement has been one of the lovely acts of God in the past

decades, and COMIBAM III joyfully bore testimony to that. My habitual worlds are Asia and Europe, and I came as an (invited!) observer, to my shame with neither Spanish nor Portuguese; but I did not feel an outsider, warmed as I was by the generosity and friendliness of people at every turn, and supplied with excellent translation for all the plenary sessions. Latin exuberance in worship, very different from my own tradition, was enriching. I left with a strong sense of how much, under God, the Latin American churches have to contribute to the global Christian family and to the cause of world mission

**What I heard about, now I have seen**

I confess that even though I had heard about COMIBAM since the 80s, I was skeptical about their vision. My regional ethnocentrism and the scheme of helplessness that comes with a culture of poverty contributed to my thinking that perhaps the COMIBAM goal was more an ideal and a dream than a reality. How could our Latin American churches, which are comprised by people who for the most part live under conditions of poverty, become an international missionary force? Then during the 90s I heard that Latin American missionaries were serving among Muslim people and I was still skeptical. BUT, when I saw the 300 "Ibero American" (Spanish and Portuguese speaking) missionaries sharing about their joys and pains as they are serving in Africa, Asia, India, and Europe I had to say: "What I heard about, now I have been able to see and believe."

A historical icon and a landmark in missions took place in COMIBAM III. Seeing the flags representing the missionary sending countries and the flags of the countries of service added flesh to the conference motto statement that "Ibero America is no longer a missionary field, but a strategic force for sending missionaries." The traditional image and idea that a missionary has to come from an affluent Western country was challenged by COMIBAM missionaries as they presented a different model. It is fascinating to observe that while the Latin American missionary goes to the missionary field with limited financial resources, this ends up becoming a strength. The lack of funds pushes them to

**Carlos Pinto** from Peru, South America, serves with the Latin America Mission on loan to HCJB-World Radio Missionary Fellowship as consultant for the Latin America regional director. He is also part of the SIM Ecuadorian office as part of the board of directors and as a consultant. Married with Rebecca with whom he has served in community and church development among tribal communities in the Amazon of Peru with Wycliffe. As a Christian psychologist he served as international coordinator for the Latin American Association of Pastoral and Family Counseling - EIRENE.

develop more interdependent relationships between themselves as missionaries, as well as with people of their host country. This situation becomes precious as it is basic for promoting horizontal and mutual trusting types of relationships that are on a deeper level. These relationships allow missionaries to engage in relational evangelism, which seems to invite a better response to the gospel.

Now, we as Spanish and Portuguese speaking missionaries are able to thank God that He is the one who is making the Ibero American missionary force a reality. And the global missionary community as a whole is called to begin a revision of our concepts and practices in our missions endeavors. I pray that soon the Ibero American, Asian, African, North American and European missionary leadership can sit down together around a table and share on equal terms about the Lord's invitation to be one, and about how to cooperate in our ministries together.

Personally, I would have liked to see more recognition of the churches that are behind the 300 missionaries invited to COMIBAM III. Their role is critically important, and this type of recognition would also provide a platform for the supporting churches to be able to learn from one-another, and to be able to better help new churches learn how become effective sending churches.

**Antonia Leonora van der Meer, Evangelical Missions Center, Brazil, where she serves as principal of the Mission School.**

There were over 2,000 participants. Sadly, there were too few representatives from Spanish and Portuguese churches. The Mission of the Conference was "Meeting of

Ibero American Missionary Movements to Examine, Improve and Multiply fruit among the Unreached."

The strong aspect of the Conference was that we listened to experienced Latin missionaries from several hard places. It helped us to understand our strengths, weaknesses and challenges, as we seek to learn and to serve better. Three hundred missionaries were our special guests.

The opening message of David Ruiz, the President of COMIBAM, challenged us to consider suffering as part of our missionary challenge. I felt a lack of biblical expository preaching and devotionals. We need to keep grounding ourselves in the Word.

The problem of the afternoon workshops for interest groups was that you get people who are just starting and those who want to deepen the issues and establish networks. So a number of parallel meetings were organized. It was a great opportunity to meet people and to establish or renew relationships.

**Chacko Thomas, OM, United Kingdom**

It was no small privilege to attend and interact with so many COMIBAM participants. For me it was like being back in Latin America, where I spent many years on the OM ships. People we normally don't see at missions conferences occupied the stage.



And their topics too were not the usual. We listened to the Ibero American missionary stories from the field in order to learn objective lessons about the mission process, and to make necessary adjustments to be more effective in the field and thus help the church to multiply its effort among the unreached.

There were three Egyptians in the conference, one of them a speaker in an evening session. After a presentation of the vibrant and in some places persecuted church in North Africa and the Middle East, he pleaded with the conference to work closely and in consultation with the national church. "It is a lie of the devil that we can do it alone," he said. A married couple from Morocco participated in one of the Panel sessions. In another panel session, a pastor from Albania represented the missionary receiving churches. Both of the latter, incidentally, were converted through Latin missionaries, and are now serving the Lord full-time; one through radio ministries, the other pastoring a significant mission minded church in Albania. As well, there were the experienced mission leaders like Bill Taylor, Samuel Escobar, David Ruiz and Bertil Ekström who ably led the panels on themes such as Training, Sending, Missionary Care, etc.

Two experienced researchers working with COMIBAM used daily sessions to show where Latin American Missions have come from and where they are today, especially highlighting the issues facing Latin Missionaries. Their findings formed the basis for discussion in the Work Groups that met daily for an hour. Each group had Latin missionaries attending. "Your findings will be taken seriously and implemented," said Dr. Levi de Carvalho, on behalf of COMIBAM. The research is available in Spanish, Portuguese and English on [www.comibam.org](http://www.comibam.org).

**Antonia L. van der Meer**, known as *Tonica*, served for many years in several functions with IFES, including 10 years as pioneer staff in Angola and Mozambique. For the last 11 years she serves the Evangelical Missions Center which trains tentmakers and other missionaries, with many former students serving long-term in several difficult contexts. She is now principal of the Mission School. She finished her doctorate in missiology at the Asia Graduate School of Theology writing her Dissertation on "Understanding and Responding to the Needs of Brazilian Missionaries serving in Contexts of Suffering."



**Chacko Thomas** is a Minister at large with OM's Special projects serving with George Verwer. This year Chacko completed 40 year with OM having served in India and on three difereent OM ships in various leadership and ministry capacity. He now enjoys the freedom to minister internatioanlly as an evangelist, Missions speaker and a Bible teacher.

I was glad to see clear proof of Latin America formally joining the world mission force, with some 400 mission agencies sending out an estimated 12,000 workers, though only 2,000 are serving outside of Latin America. Some 780 Latinos serve among the Muslims, 246 in India and 128 among the Buddhist people. Altogether, there are about 1,440 serving in the 10/40 Window. This brought much joy to me.

I thank the leaders of COMIBAM for planning a session with a Chinese speaker, Dr. Bob Fu to speak on his topic, "Missions in the midst of martyrdom." His three points, Stand up (for the gospel), Speak up, and Shut up, and the few apt illustrations (especially the illustration of a young lady who was imprisoned and terribly tortured but who refused to betray her pastors or other believers) are hard to forget.

The closing ceremony was as spectacular as the opening ceremony, with flags of many nations and a talk by David Ruiz, who passed the baton of COMIBAM over to Carlos Scott from Argentina. David has been at the helm of the movement for nearly seven years as its president. Perhaps the reflection of the Korean mission leader speaks for all of us. He was asked by a Japanese lady, "What would you take back from this conference?" After a short pause he said, "Koreans are

not the only ones doing missions." We all, including Latinos, can add the name of our nation to this reply. While "Standing on the shoulders of Giants" gone before them, Latin missions has its own distinct identity. There are many things we can learn from them, however long or short we have been in missions. Latino churches are blessing the world by the design and power of the Holy Spirit. With more than 85 million evangelicals, they have a major role to play in missions. May the huge church growth in Latin America spill over, or better, overflow into the rest of the world.

### Rosa María Orriols Madrigal

It was a great thing to see so many people seated around the daily, programmed table discussions, with so many people from the field and churches exchanging impressions and extracting conclusions. The seminar for women that I attended grappled with many themes key to women missionaries, presenting the reality of the situation, positive and negative. The conclusions formed material that should serve as a foundation for some realistic study. The practical discussions were not just brain-storming.

There are some things I found lacking: the deficient logistics, where in some cases, instead of feeling encouraged, one

was caused to feel badly. I perceived a lack of professionalism with many tasks, and perhaps more in the style of the "North," but without the organizational skills of the "North." Some of the morning speakers, although valid missionaries, lacked weight and did not have sufficient depth. And though the congress was held in Spain, it showed little Spanish participation; instead of being an Ibero American congress it seemed more South American.

### Carlos Madrigal

Granada 2006 was a missionary event without precedent in Spain. One of the most outstanding parts was to sit around the tables with so many people from Latin America and the mission fields. This demonstrates COMIBAM's capacity to convene around a key theme—the commitment to missions—that rarely brings together large numbers of people. I am sorry that the occasion did not create an opportunity for the Spanish church to feel stimulated herself with more participation and leadership. Who loses here, COMIBAM or the Spanish church? Probably what was missing earlier in the process was to sit at many "tables" to get to know each other, to encourage each other and to exchange opinions.

Some of the plenary sessions sounded more like laments than challenges, though they did represent the "voices from the field" and it is necessary to hear them. And loudly! But it is also time to share on a grand scale the "great things God has done through..." those who have paid the price (Acts 14:27). For there are outstanding field results! What better than "the witnesses" who have seen the result of their efforts, who can encourage us to "fight...even to the point of shedding our blood?" (Acts 12:1-4). To leave a footprint in the history of missions and the world requires and will require more senders and sent ones willing to be the seed that dies in order to give life.

### K. Rajendran, General Secretary India Missions Association and chairman of WEA Mission Commission

I remember, in the 70s, praying for Spain as one of the hardest countries to share the Gospel. I had visited with the Logos ship in 1980s for evangelism, but I do not remember much response to the message of new life in Christ. Of course I did not speak Spanish! However, visiting Granada again in 2006, where there were





approximately 2,000 enthusiastic Latin believers, leaders and missionaries from 37 countries engaged in carrying the Great Commission across the world, was unbelievable for me. I was amazed by the sheer number of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian speakers, and of course a rather lost crowd of English speakers who were carried away by the excitement as much as by the messages, meetings and fellowships. I realized that the Latin churches have come of an age to address the world with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The enthusiastic Latinos from Latin American countries made great financial sacrifices to be there. I saw some of them traveling by bus from Granada to Barcelona for many hours to catch the international flight and thus save money. I saw them eating cheap packed sandwiches instead of eating in the expensive airport restaurant. Between their Spanish and Portuguese and my Hindi, it was bad for communication, but the gestures of warmth and sign languages of Christian love were overwhelming. I praised God for His work in their lives for making such efforts and sacrifice to be involved in the Gospel movements. It was a wonderful feeling.

“Gloria a Dios,” I would say in my very limited Spanish.



**K. Rajendran** is the General Secretary of the India Missions Association and the Chair of World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission ExCo and Global Leadership Council.

The COMIBAM team worked very hard to organize and to translate messages in English and other, non-official, languages. It was a great experience to meet some great stalwarts in missions from across the world. The exhibition and the display of different types of ministries by the Latin missionaries working in different parts of the world were admirable.

Among many other seminars, David Ruiz, Carlos Calderón, Luis Martí, Bertil Ekström and I worked on a think-tank seminar on “Which Way Forward for Missions across the World.” The hand picked participants were field missionaries, missions’ leaders, and the donor community. We really appreciated the opportunities to work together about current issues and the way forward as missions and missionaries. There



were special attempts to reach the Muslims and the people who are influencers of the nations. In every country of work, there are new models being established in reaching out to the people. We were conscious of the Western Protestant missionary movement. They did a great work, yet the new Two-Thirds world missions may have to change some of those strategies to reach out to the new generation of peoples in the new independent countries of the post-Western colonial era.

The transition of leadership of COMIBAM International, from out-going President Rev. David Ruiz from Guatemala to incoming President Rev. Carlos Scott from Argentina, was commendable. It was wonderful to see the changeover without confusion and systematic planning. May this be a model for the rest of the world and especially the Two-Third World.

I believe that COMIBAM, as a regional mission movement, will affect the world and will be a role model to help other movements to flourish. We in the WEA MC are grateful for the active participation of COMIBAM in helping shape other missions’ movements in the world.



**Hugo C. Morales** Van Amburg, Guatemalan, is a member of the coordinating team of the COMIBAM strategic alliance, and a member of Interdev Partnership Associates. With more than 12 years of experience in the field of strategic alliances, he has been a consultant for the Billy Graham organization, Lausanne, and has taught these topics in Latin America, Europe, the USA and Asia.

### **Hugo C. Morales, Former Development and Partnership Training Director COMIBAM International**

#### ***Uncomfortably joyful***

It is Friday, November 17th, 2006, around seven in the evening in Granada, Spain. We are in the final stages of what has been an exhilarating experience. For the past week, close to 2,000 people from all over Ibero America have been listening, talking, eating, walking, praying and worshipping together, convened by COMIBAM International to learn and understand the realities and the advances of our missionaries on the field. All of this, in order to be encouraged by what God is accomplishing through us among the least reached peoples of the world, but also to be challenged by their shortcomings, our shortcomings, and jointly seek His ways for improvement, renewal and continued growth.

It is the last evening and I’m on the platform, behind the curtains, singing along and waiting to introduce the next part of the program, when suddenly, as the worship team is leading the crowd in a “All Nations will worship Christ” song, an Argentine pastor, Baptist no less, runs up to the stage and

grabs the Argentine flag and starts waving it madly and inviting others to do the same. In a matter of seconds, folks from all over Ibero America are scrambling on stage, grabbing their respective flags and waving them as they dance and sing and make “a joyful noise” unto the Lord. It is a heavenly mayhem.

And I’m uncomfortable, as a matter of fact, very uncomfortable. It’s been hard enough putting the program together, no less making it move on a faint sense of schedule... and now this? But the wave is too much: too big, too loud, too jubilant, too Latino, too much fun. Without even noticing it, my feet begin to tap, my hips start to swivel, and for a few minutes I join the crowd feeling uncomfortably joyful.

As I look back, not only at the congress itself, but at the process that brought us there and will continue to lead us in the days to come, I realize that “uncomfortably joyful” stands in its past, present and future. God conceived COMIBAM in the hearts of Ibero American men and women who have strong personalities, a clear calling towards cross-cultural and global evangelization and a very pragmatic sense of their limitations. But also men and women who know and have experienced God’s abundant resources and provision, especially through partnership amongst themselves and with others. Through the years, as the Ibero American missions movement has grown and matured, and more men and women have joined and are participating in its leadership, this continuous struggle to stay humble before God and before fellow men, in order to see God’s hand move in favor of the unreached, has created an environment of joy, “uncomfortable” joy. “No, these are not exactly my plans, this is not exactly how I had envisioned this project, but they are our plans, fruit of our common vision. I am not altogether comfortable, but I’m joyous, because we have not strayed from our higher purpose, and God will use us, his Ibero American church, to proclaim Jesus’ name and make disciples of all nations.”

And so we live in an era where doing it “my way,” my “Godly” way is more possible than ever. But the drops that fall from Jesus’ towel as he prepares to wash his disciples’ feet reverberate and resound in the ears of our conscience, and the feeling of the cloth cleansing their skin hurts as it peels off the excuses of our going-it-alone mentality.

Humble before our Master and humble before our fellow servants, feeling uncomfortably joyful... uncomfortably joyful... maybe, not a bad place to be, after all. <<

## Missiological Reflection on Bill Gates

### *The subversion of human beings*

Rose Dowsett

At a recent international trade fair, Bill Gates, the multi-billionaire founder of Microsoft, enthused about his vision of the home of the future. Nor was this about some far-distant future: with prototypes already in production, Gates confidently projected that within a decade, 20% of American homes would have installed the technology he was demonstrating.

In a vast kitchen, pride of place was given to a console from which, at the touch of a button, you could switch on or off the lights in any room you chose. Another button selected music and television programmes, again giving choice for different rooms. Other buttons opened doors or windows anywhere in the house, closed curtains, opened the garage, switched on the oven or dishwasher. All this, Gates enthused, without having to move one step from where you sat in your favourite chair beside the console. Alongside him was a giant refrigerator, programmed to recognise and record every item removed from it, and then to order automatically (via computer, directly linked to your favourite store) a delivery of replacements.

To me, this was no vision, just a nightmare. First, in a world of widespread poverty and exclusion from even the most basic provision of clean water, food, healthcare and education, this seemed the most obscene use of wealth. The Lord warned us that there will always be poverty, but that those who have wealth are inescapably accountable for its use. Authentic discipleship calls us to simplicity, restraint and generosity.

Secondly, this application of technology seems to me to defy what it is to be human. In this scenario, technology is no longer a useful tool, but instead it controls and masters us. What kind of life is it to sit and push buttons? Already, a significant part of the world’s

population doesn’t know how to function if a computer, a cellphone, an ipod or TV crashes. What bizarre captivity we have walked into when we are at the mercy of machines. The Lord created us to be creative and to harness the resources of the earth wisely, but we have turned the work of our hands and minds into idols.

Thirdly, Bill Gates’ “vision of the home of the future” was entirely concerned with *things*. But the biblical concern is with relationships. A home should be a place of mutual love, care, nurture, hospitality—the most basic building block of community and human flourishing. Without for one moment romanticising poverty, we all know that a very simple home can be most truly a home, where people love and care for one another, while a house of great wealth can be a place of great alienation one from another and of great unhappiness.

Don’t misunderstand me. I am not against all technology. I realise that in many instances it can and does serve us well, and can greatly enrich human life. That has always been the case. I also know that Bill Gates donates large sums of money to improve the life of those in acute need, especially in Africa. Further, it is very complex to try to resolve what might be a just distribution of wealth in today’s world. It is also not always easy to know when to say ‘No!’ to some available technology (the latest in computers?) and to be content with something simpler. In fact, whatever the standard of living in the place where we live, whether surrounded by great wealth or great poverty, there will always be choices as to how to live appropriately. Our Lord Jesus chose to live as a peasant when he could have been born a rich prince.

But I can’t help feeling that Bill Gates’ vision for the home of the future is very far removed from the way we should live as Christians, even if our personal circumstances would make it financially possible. And I found myself praying that we might have a more audible prophetic voice and more visible prophetic lifestyle, whoever we are and wherever we are, so that the world may see what the Creator intended homes really to look like. What do you think?

The very faithful corrector of *Connections*, Koe Pahlka, already comes with a first reaction: “the article reminded me of Proverbs 17:1 - Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife”. <<



**Rose Dowsett** serves as International Chairman of Interserve International, is a member of the WEA Theological Commission, member of the ExCo of WEA Mission Commission and a WEA Mission Commission Associate.

## Report on behalf of the IMTN

COMIBAM began in Sao Paulo, Brazil in the year 1987. It was organized, following the strong movement of the Spirit already evident in Latin America, to allow the Latin Church to develop an intentional strategy to evangelize the un-reached people groups of the world.

This third Congress of COMIBAM (the second was celebrated in Acapulco Mexico in 1997) distinguished itself from the others through the planned process of significant evaluation of the Ibero American missionary activities in the entire world. For this reason the event was called: "Process COMIBAM III." The objective intended, as a consequence of the congress, to bring forward fundamental and serious proposals identifying needed adjustments and changes to ensure the best results for missionaries.

We expect that this process, which begun two years prior to the congress, will extend for another two years, especially in the task of investigation and analysis, both inside and outside of Latin America. This congress was justified to distinguish itself from the two prior events in both its purpose and focus. We see surprising growth in sending Latin missionaries and we see encouraging *vistas* in the opportunities and challenges that the Latin Church faces.

The protagonists at the congress were the missionaries. They were given the task of bringing to the congress "*the voice from the field*" that was needed in order to fulfill the desired evaluation. They spoke to us every day, in plenary sessions, panel discussions, and "work tables." Those of us in attendance listened with great interest to discern what God wanted to say to His Church "*from the field to the sending base.*" Personally, I felt as though we were reliving the pictures captured in Acts 14 and 15, when the believers heard "*how great were the things God had done through his servants,*" all of whom lifted up praise and worship to Him who extended His grace to all the nations. Yet, going beyond this encouraging value, we were able to listen attentively to the problems and difficulties which our missionaries experience and the problems and difficulties which present themselves to us.

Each afternoon, we met in distinct thematic consultations. The consultations were designed to enable participants to find

agreement with what they perceived the future work should be. Each consultation was divided into the following categories:

- Training
- Pastors and churches
- Sending structures
- Women and missions
- Member care
- Intercession
- Bible translation
- Strategic alliances

Immediately after participating in these consultations, we met separately by country and according to distinct national missionary movements. There, we were able to reflect and dialogue regarding what was heard from the field in more precise ways. These reflections were then discussed over "work tables" and consultations in order to arrive at practical and relevant conclusions regarding the implications for the fields and needed action steps in order to continue advancing and perfecting the cross-cultural missionary commitment.

In relation to the area of training (The consultation which I was to facilitate along with other colleagues), the preliminary conclusions are grouped in the following way:

1. *Training is unavoidable.* Training should be integral and it should be dedicated to the transformation of the candidate to become an approved worker. The consultation affirmed the philosophical principle of working according to the "be," "do" and "know" of each candidate. Candidates should be prepared adequately and intentionally so that, as they leave for the field, they are living messages.
2. *Training for women.* One theme that stood out was the need to train women who, until now had been considered support personnel, but who are in need of the same level of training as men.
3. *Pre-field orientation:* Each worker should go through an orientation for each area of responsibility, including his role in the working team prior to leaving for the field. Teams that are formed in community and trained to resolve conflicts work best.
4. *"Pressure cooker" training:* Missionary training should include situations where candidates are put "under pressure" to simulate the realities of the field.
5. *Focus on character:* Areas of vulnerability, humility and character need to be empha-



Dr. Omar Gava is the coordinator of the Training Center for transcultural missionaries in Córdoba, Argentina. He also serves in the ExCo of COMIBAM as the coordinator for the network of training centers within COMIBAM.

sized in the training process.

6. *Measured growth:* Because teamwork and interpersonal relationships are weak points in the work of the missionary, assessment criteria should be established in order to know the candidate and the degree of preparation achieved, both in his relationship to God as well as with his colleagues.
7. *Life-long learning:* The missionary needs to live in a process of integral training for life.
8. *Tentmaker training:* Training for the bi-vocational (tentmaker) worker is indispensable, especially for restricted access nations.
9. *Training for unity:* Training must convey the value and importance of collaboration and integration on the field with missionaries from other agencies, cultures, churches, etc.
10. *Training to work with the Church:* Training must communicate the importance of working in a closely linked relationship with the local church in the field.

### Conclusion:

As might have been imagined, the congress was celebrated with a *happy Latin climate*, which as usual, infected all of the non-Latin participants. With reflective synergy and self-evaluation, an evaluative process began that we are continuing until we achieve the desired results already mentioned above. There were very enriching moments of dialogue, diversity of participants permitting distinct themes from different angles, experiences and point of view.

Finally, I want to emphasize the distinctive value of having had as a point of reference, or discussion, *the voice from the field* and not that of "the specialists." Specialists are not always objective, nor do they speak from the point of experience and reality that a practitioner will do.

We bless the missionary God who once more has confirmed His faithful word and promise *to be with us* in the fulfillment of His purposes to "*go to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*"

To Him and only to Him be the glory. <<

Omar Gava, Training Coordinator of COMIBAM International

## Update on Joint Information Management Initiative (JIMI) Taskforce Initiatives and Strategy for 2007

The JIMI Taskforce has made good and encouraging progress since the Summit in South Africa, SA06. This is a short report of what is happening and being planned for 2007.

### 1. WEA MC survey on needs and resources among MC Associates

This initiative is aimed at getting a better understanding of the needs and resources within those groups that the WEA MC Associates represent, and to develop an information system that will link these needs and resources with one another. An additional aim is to assist WEA MC Associates in becoming a better “organized” global mission community that collaborates in strategic mission.

A questionnaire will be sent to the WEA MC Associates in the second half of 2007.

*Dr. Sas Conradie has been born and raised in South Africa where he was involved in mobilising students for mission. He assists as facilitator for the Joint Information Management Initiative of the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission and is involved in the Association for Christian Community Computer Centers as volunteer regional area director for Europe and Africa.*

### 2. Network of Information Facilitators

The JIMI work sessions at SA06 envisaged a network of Information Facilitators as a key JIMI building block. These Facilitators would be information leaders in regional and national mission movements who know the mission resources and needs within

their movements well and have the ability to develop this knowledge into an information system. Discussions with mission database leaders showed that existing mission databases could become part of this network. There is a need for:

- networking these existing mission databases and information services;
- contextualizing databases;
- ensuring that information is effectively used; and
- helping national and regional information facilitators develop their own information systems/mission databases.

An Information Facilitator/Mission Database network is being developed within JIMI to assist information leaders in other countries to develop such databases in their own contexts. Although a core group is emerging, Information Facilitators for areas such as the Middle East, Latin America, Caribbean, some African regions, Europe, and certain Asian countries are needed. Please contact the JIMI Taskforce for more information or to help.

Apart from the regional and national Information Facilitator network, there seems to be a need for JIMI thematic information interest groups as well. These would focus on certain themes instead of regions. Some thematic databases already exist and could be expanded. Interest groups could include Theological education, HIV/AIDS, Community development, Tentmaking/Business as mission, Unreached people groups, Environment, and Funding for mission.

### 3. Mission Resources pages within Agora

A “Mission Resources” page in Agora, the WEA MC newsletter, will be one of the ways to distribute information on needs and resources. It is hoped that the first pages will be distributed during the first half of 2007.

### 4. Advocacy for IT in Mission initiatives in global mission conferences

Advocacy for IT (Information Technology) in Mission initiatives is emerging as a key JIMI initiative. JIMI Taskforce members already participated in a number of mission conferences while others will attend mission conferences in 2007 and endeavor to put *IT in Mission* on the agenda. JIMI intends to negotiate with organizers of mission conferences to include *IT in Mission* workshops in future events to promote the use of *IT in Mission*.

### 5. Assistance in internationalizing IT in Mission initiatives

JIMI leaders are playing a key role in helping an *IT in Mission* initiative develop an internationally recognized International Advisory Council to broaden their impact. This form of support could be provided to other initiatives.

### 6. Networking with IT in Mission initiatives in other Christian movements

The JIMI Taskforce intends to develop links with IT and media ministry leaders in other movements and networks such as the Lausanne Movement. This would facilitate greater collaboration in this sector. <<

*Dr. Sas Conradie*

## Report from the Ethnê Initiative

# Ethnê Initiative: Onward to the Least Reached

The Ethnê Initiative continues to move forward. We are in process of reconfiguring the Steering Committee so that a larger number will be from the COMIBAM family. Several from SEAsia, originally on the Steering Committee, will voluntarily step back to join the larger more informal Convening Group.

Several of the strategy groups continue to move forward with great initiative.

**The Strategic Prayer Initiative** continues to gain momentum around the world. A partial meeting of this Strategy Group was held in Lisbon in November. At this time, the group agreed to extend the global UPG (Unreached People Groups) prayer initiative to a second year (July07-June08). Specific, daily prayer requests are available online through Global Prayer Digest, PrayerGuard and Joshua Project.

Collaboration with the International Prayer Council continues through the provision of specific UPG prayer material for their publications. More and more churches and networks are indicating their involvement in this initiative. The full 2 DVD set of 12 testimonials, one each from all 12 regions of the world, is completed and available in 17 languages. A Young People's Prayer Guide (and a number of other prayer tools) is online at [www.ethne.net](http://www.ethne.net) in several languages.

**Frontier Crisis Response Network**  
Key facilitators of this Strategy Group have been working very hard to pull together a

series on training for Disaster Relief. It has been hard work, but we are beginning to see the "light at the end of the tunnel." We are still doing some fine tuning, and seeing how we can adapt it to local/national/regional needs, but it essentially involves four levels of training:

(1) *Training individuals and families:* on how to shelter in place for seven days, including how to prepare and use a survival kit; simple first aid training and practice; and simple training for warning signs of emotional trouble.

(2) *Training local churches, communities and organizations:* (after they have successfully passed the initial survival stage) for how to respond to victims in need. We would include vital elements of "CERT" (Community Emergency Response Teams) a course offered online which is recognized by many government entities. It includes Fire Safety, Disaster Medical Operations (limited), Light Search and Rescue Operations, Community Organization, Disaster Psychology, etc. This level is where we begin to introduce Church Planting Movement concepts, not in order that the responders become church planters, but that they would understand the "person of peace" concept. Also, we outline the scriptural basis for effective response and how to be the presence of Jesus in hostile places in a way that does not threaten the work or workers.

Both Levels 1 & 2 would include an introduction and explanation of potential disasters.

(3) *Training national church, organisations and networks:* on how individuals and/or groups can respond nationally—in their own



" Kent Parks is currently serving as SEAsia Regional Facilitator for the Network for Strategic Missions and as the Facilitator for SEALINK, and emerging SEAsia UPG network.

nation or nearby as the case may be. This training would include review of levels 1 & 2, then further training on cultural, geographical, religious, or political issues that impact response efforts. Also, there will be a discussion on possible networking with other faith-based organizations, military, UN, or other NGO's which would also be responding.

(4) *Networking the Global Body:* by connecting those groups/organizations/ individuals who are planning to respond to a catastrophic event such as the tsunami. As you see, each level broadens the scope.

We hope to begin the training in the second half of this year. Please keep this process in prayer.

**The Holistic Gospel Movements Strategy Group** continues to provide a number of trainings around the world. Recently, they met with leaders of the Strategic Prayer Initiative group to plan more coordination of strategic initiatives with focused prayer.

**The Ethnê Member Care Group** continues to publish excellent tools and seek to connect workers among the Least Reached Peoples with the Member Care resources which they need. <<



## Report of the Taskforce Member Care

# Does Member Care Live Here?

I was giving a retirement interview with a member who had served well for 50 years. At the end of the interview I asked, “Joel, looking back, what do you think?” He said, “I’d do it again in a flash.” Why would he? What retains happy, productive people in missions?

*Laura May Gardner*

following skills that make for high morale:

Good member care is a major factor. Member care is demonstrated by strategies and structures that care for the members and promote their well-being.

Member care is not coddling members, catering to their wishes, replacing friendship and mutual care, or replacing reliance on God to meet needs.

However, it is more than strategies, structures, and commitments. It is an ethos—the culture of an organization, “the way we do things here.” How will we know whether our organization practices good member care?

You know you’re not practicing good member care when...

- Members display lack of satisfaction and low creativity
- Members feel viewed as an expense rather than an asset
- There is an atmosphere of fear and blame
- Members feel disrespected and unvalued
- Members feel distant from leadership and powerless
- Members display low trust in leadership
- There is high attrition

Some evidences of good member care are...

- Members are in touch with leaders and feel their input is valued
- There is an atmosphere of safety—members feel free to try new things, freedom to express their opinions without fear of retaliation
- Members are loyal toward the organization
- Members feel they can use their gifts—they are given opportunities to grow

Ethos is maintained by leaders and can be changed by leaders. Whether an organization is large or small, has adequate infrastructure which is well resourced or not, the morale factor is impacted more by leaders than by infrastructure. Leaders who display emotional intelligence (understanding people) can change an organization by displaying the

The first is **accessibility and availability** on the part of the leader. This is expressed by communication, warmth, hospitality, approachability, admitting faults and being nondefensive, welcoming and soliciting feedback.

The second skill is **genuine care**, letting people know they matter by listening to their concerns, knowing their family, participating in group activities and allowing themselves to be seen in informal settings. Genuine care is communicated when the leader knows their name and uses it.

The third skill is **wise and timely affirmation**. People join organizations like ours in order to help others. One would think appreciation from recipients is sufficient affirmation; it isn’t. Many times a worker receives little or no affirmation from those he serves, so

if it doesn’t come from the leader, it doesn’t come at all. Trust in leadership increases when the worker realizes his leader notices what he is doing and approves it.

The fourth skill is **respect**, treating others with dignity and as having value. Respect is composed of noticing, behaving, and reacting in positive ways. It is easy when given for the worker’s skills, productivity, innovations and contributions. It is hard to extend respect when a worker is arrogant, belligerent, passive-aggressive toward supervision and leadership, nit-picking and critical, whining and wheedling to have his way, subtly impeding leadership. Respect then must be courageous and truthful. True respect does not allow people to continue in dysfunction, or behave in ways that dishonor the Lord and damage the organization.

In conclusion, **leadership development**, choosing people with both heart and skill to serve as leaders, and giving them additional training in areas mentioned here—is essential to becoming an organization that serves as a witness to a watching world because of the unity it displays. <<

## Interdev Partners Associates-IPA

*IPA seeks to help individuals and organizations partner well with Christ and one another. Its mission is to promote and develop strategic mission partnerships, and to bring together mission groups, churches and national leaders to help them work together.*

The IPA team continues to grow as more partnering practitioners look for mutual encouragement and learning with others of like mind, gifts and ministry focus. We are now 26 formally enrolled members, with several other like-minded colleagues keeping in close fellowship. Our members have been active in their respective regions throughout the world as well as in lending their support to the WEA MC and other larger networks.

Our book on best practices in partnering, “Body Matters,” has sold out, and we are preparing to re-print it by the end of March 2007. We had expected that it would be well received by a small circle of practitioners in strategic mission partnerships, and therefore printed only 1000 copies. We are encouraged to see the book being used by ever-increasing circles. It has become text in seminary courses and part of training material for mission agencies and leadership development organizations. We are grateful that the accumulated experience of several partnering advisors has been captured and made available to the wider missions family.

IPA is also preparing a partnership devotions book with contributions from several experienced partnering people. We hope to release it by the end of March as a 31-day reader. This book arose out of our experience at IPA’s 2006 Summit week. During this time, we were



**Alex Araujo** coordinates Interdev Partnership Associates (IPA). IPA promotes strategic mission partnerships among the least reached peoples of the world. Alex, born and raised in Brazil, has served with IFES in Portugal, Comibam in Brazil and Partners International in the USA. Married to Katy, Alex has three adult children and one grandchild.

## Mission Mobilization Task Force: Research Update and Methodological Considerations

The Mission Mobilization Task Force (MMTF), headed by Trevor Gregory and Min-Young Jung, continues to refine its research project focusing upon the culturally diverse practices of mobilization within the Protestant evangelical tradition. A great deal of dialogue has taken place within the team in an effort to establish the most viable means of eliciting data. This has been no easy task, as the methodological approach to any research project necessarily shapes the line of questioning and ultimately, any conclusions finally drawn. By “methodology,” we refer to the underlying principles adopted by the researcher that determines the actual techniques or tools of enquiry. The same principles are not shared by every researcher. In fact, in the world of social science, opposing stances on methodology have ensured lively debate since the discipline’s earliest days.

The argument entails a basic philosophical clash between quantitative (positivist) and

*Dr. Malcolm Gold  
(primary investigator)*

qualitative (interpretative) approaches. Quantitative research seeks to convert its data into numbers, and in so doing, looks for patterns, correlations, and cause and effect relationships between variables. For example, should we want to know if there is a causal relationship between students who perform well in school exams and higher paying occupations in later life, we would probably need to look at school exam records and then match them against corresponding income levels. Within quantitative research, one can enumerate the data and suggest a probable cause to an outcome; in this case, a researcher may conclude that higher pay in later life (the outcome or dependent variable) results from superior performance in school exams (the cause or independent variable).

This approach seems straightforward enough; for years within the social sciences, it has been the predominant methodological approach. Clearly it has many benefits, not least its tantalizing promise of predicting future outcomes. Yet one may counter the usefulness of this overtly scientific approach by asking whether or not the theory (or idea) being tested is truly the most pertinent issue, or in other words, are the right questions being asked? By limiting oneself to a narrow hypothesis, a number of problems emerge. Firstly, how does the researcher account for those exam under-achievers who, in fact, become high-earners, or those students who perform well in exams but choose to pursue careers that are relatively poorly paid? Secondly, who decides what constitutes “high income” and “low-income” or whether good exam grades are a true indication of an ability to perform well in a future work environment? A major critique of the positivist approach is that definitions and theories are imposed upon the social world by the researcher and the data is often made to “fit” the theory.

Within qualitative research, the researcher is interested in the concept of *verstehen*—usually translated to mean “understanding” (see Weber, 1978). Here, the chief aim of the project and the collection of data is not to simply test an established hypothesis but to discover and interpret the meaning of the social action taking place as understood by the subjects of the study. The qualitative approach is not concerned, primarily, with trying to establish causal relationships between stimuli and social action;



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it maintains the view that people often negotiate stimuli in different ways and are not obliged to respond to it in a uniform fashion. Qualitative research strives to understand the meanings of the social action taking place within the context of the group. As Harvey states, “The researcher...is expected to access the members’ own self-accounting” (Harvey, 1990: 10).

Given the complex field of study the MMTF is set to embark upon and the potential for an imposition of theory, concepts, and definitions, it has been decided that a qualitative methodology should be adopted. The full team meets again in April 2007; the following is our research proposal. We appreciate your prayers in our endeavor.

*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), 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.*

*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 multifaceted 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 subcontinent, North-East Asia, and Oceania. <<*

*References: Harvey, L. (1990). Critical Social Research. London: Unwyn Hyman. / Weber, M. (1978). Economy and Society. Berkeley: University of California Press.*

marked by an increased call to the spiritual and biblical foundations of partnering. Our business agenda was often displaced by spiritual reflection. By the end of our week, the general sense was that the first goal of partnering in the Kingdom is not about getting the job done faster or more effectively, but to be an expression of the unity of the body of Christ. Partnership is the natural outflow of Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17.

We came to the realization that our teaching, training and mentoring on partnerships needs to be adjusted to give greater emphasis to the biblical perspective and to the devotional nature of what we do in and for the Lord.

Another current focus is to be helpful to the functional unity of our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and to those from abroad who seek to minister in the region. To that end, we are exploring with some Middle-East focused people and agencies whether and how we can help in practical ways. We do not have a plan or a program to install, yet we share in the concern that the church be an agent of unity, grace and peace in this troubled region.

# The Tentmaking Movement of the Future

## Tentmakers International (TI/TIE)

We all know that we live in the midst of a rapidly changing world. Mission and church leaders have adapted to world changes by developing many new mission methods and strategies since the beginning of this century. One of the most outstanding strategies is tentmaking missions. Many mission leaders in many countries now talk about tentmaking missions as a key mission strategy of the future. In the last two decades, tentmaking missions became a very critical issue in missions in many countries in Asia, in South America and in Africa as well as in America and England.

TI (Tentmakers International) has, since 1992, been working hard and to assist and guide national tentmaking movements. Some countries in Asia, South America, and Africa send tentmakers who do tentmaking missions effectively. But we still face many difficulties and problems in serving nations. I believe that for effective tentmaking missions we have to emphasize and deal with three important issues.

### 1. Evaluation

We should talk about tentmaking in terms of an effective and creative mission strategy. Just sending some good Christian business people or workers to foreign countries is not tentmaking missions. We should recognize that tentmakers are actually doing missions. Their priority is sharing the gospel and serving the Lord.

John Maxwell said, "Success is defined as the progressive realization of a predetermined goal." To succeed as a tentmaker, he should know and have a predetermined goal. And the goal of a tentmaker is to do mission work effectively.

We can be deceived and think that we do missions because we sent some Christians to foreign countries, but in reality they are not really doing mission work. In the last

two decades, we have been told that many tentmakers have been sent, but we couldn't get many mission reports from many of those tentmakers.

We need to evaluate the mission work done by tentmakers in the past. We have been busy sending tentmakers to other countries. Now is the time to evaluate the work done by them and build some strategies for effective tentmaking missions. We should know how effectively the tentmakers are working in their mission fields and how we can meet their needs and support them if needed.

### 2. Training

During the last two decades, I met many so called "tentmakers." They are good Christians working in foreign countries. They call themselves tentmaking missionaries, but many of them are not well equipped to serve effectively in the mission work they do.

Many of them do not know how to make friends and share the gospel effectively in cultures different from their own. They do not know how to make disciples. They just live in a foreign country as Christians, and from time to time, they share the gospel without a preplanned mission strategy.

Should we call them tentmaker missionaries because they are Christians and live in foreign countries and share the gospel from time to time? As Christians, we are all called to live for His glory, but not all Christians are workers or missionaries. Christians who just get a job abroad and share the gospel when they want to do it without any priority to missions should not be called tentmakers, because the term tentmaking is connected with missions. They are Christian workers abroad.

To become a doctor, a person needs medical training, to become a teacher, he needs to be trained. To become a tentmaker missionary, one needs missionary training. Without training, he cannot do effective mission work.

This training can not be done in one or two weeks. It should include some spiritual training (such as personal evangelism), discipleship training and church planting—spe-

cific training designed to help tentmaker missionaries. TI and many other mission agencies will be glad to help tentmakers with excellent training programs.

*Rev. Johnny Chun*

### 3. The National Tentmaking Movement

The 5th TI International Congress in Malaysia, like the previous congresses, will be very helpful for the tentmaker movement. It is designed to strengthen and motivate the tentmaker movement locally in Malaysia as well as internationally.

For the tentmaker movement to function at its full potential, tentmakers, mission leaders and church leaders—including TI representatives—should work very actively in their own country. Conferences or meetings can only give us the knowledge about tentmaking missions. But without a national movement where many mission agencies and local churches work together, the international tentmaking movement cannot be active. Therefore, now is the time for mission leaders and church leaders to move actively together for tentmaking missions in their own country.

As the executive TI secretary who has been working with the tentmaking strategy for the last 15 years, I urge mission leaders and church leaders to take the initiative in the tentmaking movement and work together with missions agencies and denominations in your own country.

### Conclusion

Talking about the tentmaker movement is not doing tentmaking missions. Paul didn't just talk about tentmaking. He didn't just talk about how to make tents; he actually made tents in his service to God's Kingdom. TI talked about tentmaking missions for the last 15 years. Now is the time to listen and learn from real tentmaking missionaries and mission leaders and work with them. If we are interested in world evangelism, we must move together. <<



*Johnny Chun is executive secretary of Tentmakers International. He is also executive director of Mission International and former director of the Korea Association of Tentmakers (KAT)*



# The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends

Steve Hoke

Authors of the following book are: Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, Douglas McConnell.  
Publisher: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

At a recent training event with our mission, a senior at BIOLA University, seeing my review copy of **The Changing Face of World Missions**, remarked brightly: "Oh, we read that book this fall and it was great!"

There can be no better recommendation for a text book on contemporary trends in missions than the affirmation from a bright student that the book was readable, helpful, and well-written. She added upon questioning, "It was a little heavy in places, but it really stretched my worldview."

This volume is the second of an eight-volume series titled **Encountering Mission**, a series designed to replace the outdated series of texts used in the 80s and 90s written by J. Herbert Kane. **The Changing Face of World Missions** is intended for upper-level undergraduate and graduate students preparing for cross-cultural ministry, and lay and church leaders wanting perspective the changing context in which missions is now conducted.

Beginning with an Introductory chapter that brilliantly summarizes the key trends in mission and a critique of evangelical missions of the last quarter of the 20th century, the authors underline the growing concern about the limits of the Western mission ministry moving into the 21st century: "As modernity yields to postmodernity, those working in the field of missions need discernment so that they do not simply exchange one set of problems for another" (12).

The conviction of the authors is that "North American evangelical schools and their graduates can remain rel-

evant only to the extent that they read, listen, and interact with believers from around the world about the conduct of the missionary enterprise. This means that students and educational leaders should be reading material developed by Christians from other cultures" (14). Having said that, we would expect a future volume compiling the best insights and wisdom from missional leaders around the world.

A guiding principle in choosing the trends for this volume arose from agreement over the distinction between a trend and an issue. For the authors, "the word **trend** refers to a relatively enduring and growing phenomenon. An **issue**... is more temporally limited and the focus of debate or discussion among those who reflect on global outreach" (13). They select 12 trends which they divide into three critical contexts. The **global context** describes major trends in the world (e.g., globalization, changing demographics, world religions to multiple spiritualities, and the changing basis of knowledge—from modernity to postmodernity). The **missional context** deals with trends internal to the body of Christ and the mission community (e.g., global Christianity, changing motivations for missions, increasing awareness of spiritual power, and innovation in missions operations). **The strategic context** focuses on trends of a strategic or procedural nature (e.g., collaboration, international partnership, new technologies, and contextualization).

A number of outstanding resource features for teachers and students using the book as a course text include informative side-bars for specialized vocabulary, mini-case studies, key con-

cept descriptions (e.g., "The Supremacy of God in Missions through Worship," p. 177), comparisons and contrasts (e.g., "Globalization: Winners and Losers," p. 39; "Evaluating Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare," p.190), statistical summaries, Biblical insights, and guidelines ("Questions to Guide Financial Decision Making," p.295), and selected resources on that topic. The case studies alone make this volume invaluable.

Michael Pocock's excellent first chapter on "Globalization" serves as a representative sampling of the quality of the research and the writing throughout the entire book. Each chapter follows a four-part outline:

1. Identifying the trend. A wide survey of recent and current authors establishes the definition and direction of the trend. In Chapter 1, Pocock reflects back to McLuhan (1964) to ground the origins of globalization in the term "global village," moves forward to Thomas Friedman's definition in **The Lexus and the Olive Tree** (1999), and draws on Richard Tiplady's description of the pace in **One World or Many? The Impact of Globalisation in Mission** (2003).
2. Evaluating the trend: Pocock draws on authors as diverse as Catholic Robert Schreiter (1990), Protestant Max Stackhouse (2000), Evangelical Bob Goudzwaard (2001), and organizations such as the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA, 2003) to evaluate the trend from both conflicting and complementary perspectives. In each section, the author is clear in revealing his concern over the impact on missions. Pocock asks, "Should missionaries maintain their home-grown ministry methods in dif-

ferent cultural settings? Is what they do any different from what TNC's do as they globalize industry and business?" (28).

3. Reflecting on the trend in light of Scripture and theology: The highlight of each chapter to me was the quality of theological reflection on each trend. The authors present a scholarly and balanced perspective on the Biblically positive and negative elements of that trend, tapping a rich range of theologians, missiologists and economists as needed to provide topography to the discussion. The over fifty citations in each chapter make the reading slow-going, but enriching and mind-expanding.

4. Engaging the trend: what should ministry look like in a globalized world? Professors and mission leaders using this text will appreciate its structure. While most popular articles on globalization in the last decade have defined the trend and jumped quickly to "So what?" implications for missions, this section moves to action implications only through definition, description, evaluation and theological reflection.

Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell all bring impeccable credentials as field missionaries, scholars and professors at well-known seminaries and graduate schools in North America. This book is mandatory reading of every student of missiology in the West as well as the majority world. Every new missionary being sent should know of this resource. Most importantly, every mission executive leading a mission organization and every mission pastor facilitating church-based sending must comprehend these trends so their efforts do not encounter misunderstanding and ineffectiveness. Finally, field and team leaders would be greatly helped by mastering the principles covered in the chapters on Globalization, Multiple Spiritualities, Changing Motivations, Partnerships, Spiritual Warfare, and Contextualization. To effectively engage the emerging trends and issues, this volume is a clear mirror for detecting the changing face of global missions. <<



**Dr. Steve Hoke**, Vice President People Development for Church Resource Ministries (CRM; Anaheim, CA), is a Third-Culture Kid from Japan, and serves churches and mission agencies in the area of missionary training and leader development. Steve is co-author with Bill Taylor of **SEND ME! Your Journey to the Nations** (1999), and has served on the WEA-MC-IMTA since 1991. His passion is to equip and encourage front-line mission leaders to minister with Spiritual Authority in the difficult places of the world. He lives with his wife Eloise in Fort Collins, CO.

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During the June 2006 consultation of the Mission Commission in South Africa, the African Joint Venture Project was presented as a new initiative of the National Missions Movement Network (NMMN). The reason to start this project was in reaction to the request of several Mission Commission Associates in Africa that the Mission Commission look for possibilities in helping the African church in their missional endeavours.

# National Missions Movement Network

The background of this request is obviously due to the growing awareness and desire for missional involvement of the African church, but also because of a longing of the church to see a cooperative approach between the networks that are willing to work together with them. Within the Mission Commission network, several resources are available: the International Mission Training Network (IMTN), Member Care, the NMMN itself, and docked entities like Tentmaker International. The vision is that these resource groups join together to offer a more complete, concentrated set of tools for the use of the African church. That is why this project is called "the African Joint Venture."

While in South Africa, African leadership was able to meet with representatives of the mentioned networks and discuss possible cooperation for their specific regions. Also, some developments related to the Joint Venture Project have begun, related to Francophone West Africa. From this region, the request was directed to the Mission Commission to help them in the translation of applicable missional literature, specifically in the area of training, into French. At the moment the book, Working Your Way to the Nations has been translated and is almost ready to go to press. It is expected that the translated book can be presented at the CRAF meetings, which will take place during the month of May in the Central African Republic and Togo. The conferences provide a new opportunity to meet with the leaders of the Francophone region to discuss and plan for further steps of the Joint Venture in the nearby future.

Another book that is presently in the process of translation is the brandnew IMTN book, Integral Ministry Training Design and Evaluation. This book is a strategic tool for the development of a high level of excellence in holistic missionary training.

*Kees van der Wilden*

Regarding the Anglophone part of Africa, discussions are taking place to plan for a consultation, hopefully in the second half of this year, where several of the mentioned networks will participate.

Any suggestions for the further development of the Africa Joint Venture are most welcome. Please send them to: kees@worldevangelical.org

If you are interested in obtaining one or more copies of the French translation of Working Your Ways to the Nations, called "Prepare ton Chemin vers les Nations", please contact Kees van der Wilden: kees@worldevangelical.org <<



*Kees van der Wilden serves WEA-MC as a staff member. He is the Managing Editor for Connections. Together with David Ruiz he coordinates the leadership of the National Mission Movement Network (NMMN) track of WEA-MC*

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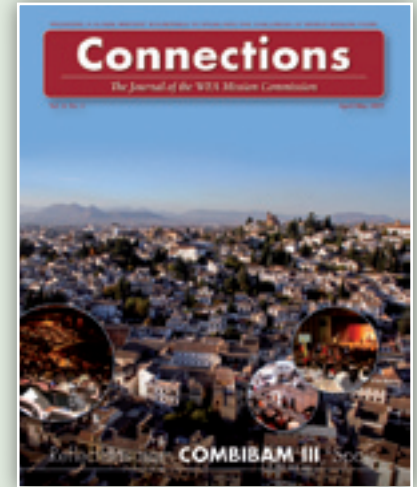
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# Connections

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Serving mission leaders and field based practitioners around the globe...



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