



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Wanted: A GPS for Global Mission

By Lon Allison

I have discovered a friend to travel with in distant cities. She doesn't require a plane ticket, or extra room at an inn or hotel. She helps me clarify where I am going and prepares me for strategic directional changes. She is not my wife! Her name is too long to pronounce, so I simply call her GPS.

She is a "global positioning satellite direction detector." I simply plug her into my rental car, type in my directional address, and GPS guides me to where I am to go. The feature I most value is her ability to give me advance guidance. Several miles before I must turn she alerts me that I will "soon" turn. She is an able friend. We need something like this in global missions. Here's what I mean:

I know a major "turn" is coming for the global evangelical movement. I am not clear when or even how it will occur—only that it will and should. The issue at hand is the realization that the demographic center of Christianity has moved from the "West" (North America/Europe/Australia) to the Global South and East.

Readers of Lausanne World Pulse are very aware of the trend lines. Christianity's major growth is in the southern hemisphere and the Far East. Phillip Jenkins and others have written extensively on this issue. There are now more Christians in the southern hemisphere than in the northern. Since the nineteenth century the axiom of missions has been the "West to the Rest" of the world. That has changed. Now we know many Majority World countries are sending missionaries to the West. This shift is vital to the health of global evangelization, but the implications are vast.

I have more questions than answers, and look forward to the global dialogue to help find God's when and how. I am hopeful this will find major focus in the Capetown 2010 Congress. Until then, here are some questions, and perhaps one insight. I am looking for a GPS to help guide my agency and those we influence as the "turn" comes.

1. Since the demographic shift to the Global South is at hand, how do Western mission agencies and churches respond?
2. Resources, both financial and human, have, in general, not shifted. When should they? More importantly, how should they?

3. How does the Church in the West welcome missionaries from the Global South and East to re-evangelize our continents?
4. What role is there for ongoing mission to the Global South and East from the West?

If I have any insights at this point, it is the following: The whole Church is in need of massive amounts of humility and spiritual discernment to make this turn. Humility and spiritual discernment will open the doors for clear God-honoring action. The West will need humility to admit we are not faith-driven people and that the Christian movement is declining nearly everywhere in the West. We need humility to cry out like the Macedonians did to Paul: “Come to the West and help us.” The Global South and East will need humility to walk rightly as the power and leadership of the global movement turns toward them.

Recently, someone gave an idea that can start us on this journey. What if those going to Capetown from the West prayerfully and intentionally seek to meet a colleague from the Global South or East with whom friendship, trust, and collaboration might begin? What if those relationships formed at Capetown become the first steps of implanting our own global shift?

I look forward to responses from this column from brothers and sisters around the world.

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NEWS BRIEFS

AFRICA: Increased Information Technology Capacity Critical for Bible Translation Work

JAARS Africa area liaison Bill Mayes envisions a day when every Bible translation center on that continent can enjoy Web page retrieval rates of less than five seconds, as opposed to twenty seconds or more, the current rate. Toward that goal, he is developing plans for enhancing information technology capacity, an indispensable foundation needed for seeing God’s word translated into the languages of Africa and carrying out the Last Languages Initiative, a campaign launched by JAARS project partner **Wycliffe**. In fiscal year 2008-2009 JAARS and Wycliffe caught the vision of a “well-wired” Africa and have provided generously toward upgrades. Numerous countries (including Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Sudan, and Uganda) have received major services upgrades or have works in progress. (**JAARS**)

INDONESIA: Group Makes Threats and Warns Legislator to Convert to Islam

Compass Direct News reported that on 23 April 2009, after Dominikus Supriyanto won a seat in the district legislature in West Sumatra, his celebration was cut short when an Islamic group warned him to convert to Islam or lose his seat. The group, which identified itself as the Islamic Forum of West Pasaman, attacked Supriyanto’s home by throwing stones, which broke several windows. Supriyanto was home at the time and heard them yell threats about becoming Muslim to stay in politics. Despite these threats, Supriyanto has no intention of giving up his seat or changing his religion. (**Mission Network News**)

ISRAEL: CISF Names First Recipient of Scholar-Leader Award

Dr. Salim Munayer has been named the first recipient of the **Christian International Scholarship Foundation** (CISF) scholar-leader award for his work as founder and director of Jerusalem-based **Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation** and for his service as academic dean of **Bethlehem Bible College** from 1989 to 2008. Musalaha Ministry seeks to build reconciliation between Palestinian Christians and

Messianic Jews in Israel, as well as other segments of society. Munayer was raised in a Palestinian Christian family in the Orthodox tradition and can trace his roots to the Holy Land for generations. He was born in Lod and grew up in a mixed community of Arabs and Jewish Israelis. ([Assist News Service](#))

MEXICO: 2009 Culiacan Project Peaceful and Productive

Global Recordings Network (GRN) reported in June that its 2009 Culiacan Project reached thousands of people without any dangerous incidents. This is a special blessing in that the level of violence in Culiacan had been very high during the last part of 2008 due to increased drug activity. GRN further reported that almost seven thousand cassettes or CDs were given out in over 120 different Indian languages and dialects. Christian resources in Spanish and native languages, along with blankets, clothing, sewing kits, and glasses also were handed out. GRN Mexico has been holding the annual month-long outreach for many years. The project seeks to reach the thousands of indigenous Indians who travel from many parts of Mexico to Culiacan to harvest crops. ([Global Recording Network](#))

MIDDLE EAST: Arab Youth Tune into Strongholds Program

The Lebanese worship band *Stongholds* recently launched a live program on SAT-7 as a way to reach more people, both on the air and via text messages, email, and a Facebook site. During each show, band members introduce Arabic worship videos, take requests, and perform songs. They also talk to viewers. At the end of each show the hosts encourage viewers to visit the Facebook site to send prayer requests and to list songs or topics they would like to see in the next episode. "We are getting many responses. People like to send text messages, especially from Iraq," said Joyce, one of the show's hosts and also a singer for the band. ([SAT-7](#))

NEPAL: OneHope Plans "Hope Nepal"

An effort targeted for Christmas 2009 called "Hope Nepal" will attempt to reach many for Christ in a country only recently declared a secular state. Part of the effort will be televising *The GodMan* film around the country over a period of a few days. The computer-generated photo-realistic animation film of the *Book of Hope* tells the life story of Jesus and can be targeted toward a particular country or culture. The event will resemble a similar one held in India called "Hope India." Over 400 million people viewed *The GodMan* through that event, including over twelve million children who received copies of the *Book of Hope*. Although Nepal is a much smaller nation than India, it has plenty of television networks, and organizer [OneHope](#) president Bob Hoskins hopes that "Hope Nepal" will have a similar impact on the country. ([Mission Network News](#))

PAKISTAN: Refugees in Urgent Need of Relief Supplies

Pakistan's Swat Valley, once a beautiful valley with lush green mountains, is now a deadly war zone. Authorities estimate that eighty-five percent of the province's population is now displaced by the violence. [World Vision](#) (WV) staff members are ready to help and distribute relief supplies; currently, however, there just aren't enough supplies to go around. "Thousands and thousands urgently need help, but we're out of reserves and must rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters in order to expand our response during these tight economic times," said Randy Strash, disaster fundraising specialist for World Vision in the United States. Graham Strong, WV's director in Pakistan expressed concern for host communities inundated with refugees. "The Pakistani people are responding very generously to the needs of their neighbors who have fled the conflict. But with such a strain on scarce resources, there is potential for conflict over time. So it's critical for relief groups to meet the needs of not only the displaced, but also the communities hosting them," said Strong. ([World Vision](#))

PARAGUAY: Indigenous Peoples Come Together at Mennonite Conference

Mennonite Mission Network representatives in South America join Anabaptists worldwide in preparing for [Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered](#) this month in Asuncion, Paraguay. Nearly thirty

members of First Nations congregations in the USA and Canada will visit the homes and churches of their indigenous brothers and sisters following Assembly Gathered. In addition to their Paraguayan hosts, they will be joined by other Latin American indigenous Mennonite leaders. A grant from the Stella Devenpeck fund through Mennonite Mission Network (with Native Mennonite Ministries and Native Ministry Canada leaders) will help support the travel and gathering. ([Mennonite Mission Network](#))

SIERRA LEONE: Barnabas Aid Works Amidst Growing Anti-Christian Sentiment

[Barnabas Aid](#) is supporting ongoing ministry in Sierra Leone, now one of the poorest countries in the world. The country is predominantly Islamic, and Christians number only about twelve percent of the population. President Koroma, elected in 2007, is a Christian; however, the influence of Islam is growing in the country. Hostility toward Christians became evident during Ramadan in 2008, when some Christians and churches were attacked. One church, with many converts from Islam in its congregation, was attacked during worship service on 5 September 2008. Police intervened and at least twenty-five Muslims were arrested. ([Barnabas Aid](#))

SOUTHEAST ASIA: Literature Partnership Distributes Work by Indian Christian Leader

JSM-Langham Literature has launched a project to distribute *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Life-Giver* by Langham Scholar Ivan Satyavrata to pastors and scholars in Southeast Asia as well as to more than thirty countries in the Majority World. The text was selected as the seventh title in the [Global Christian Library](#) (GCL), a series of resources produced in partnership by John [Stott Ministries](#), [Langham Literature](#) and [InterVarsity Press](#). GCL seeks to provide sound biblical texts by evangelical theologians from different countries who can apply their cultural contexts. Twenty-five thousand copies of *The Holy Spirit* are being dispatched as part of JSM-Langham Literature's graduate book program for diploma-level graduates, as well as alumni who are currently in active ministry. As a theologian and leader of the Church in India, Satyavrata is committed to sharing how the presence of the Holy Spirit is key to this transformative time when millions of new believers in the region are experiencing a hunger for God. ([John Stott Ministries](#))

SRI LANKA: Gospel for Asia Continues Hard Work in the Wake of Long Civil War

Civil war between Sri Lanka's government and the Tamil Tigers rebel group is now over, and it is time to minister to the survivors, according to [Gospel for Asia](#) (GFA) president K.P. Yohannan. "While the 26-year-long conflict has come to an end by the news of the Tamil Tigers' surrender, in reality this is the beginning of pain and crisis for hundreds of thousands of people who are displaced....There are twenty-five thousand now in refugee camps, and the suffering is especially acute among the children and elderly." The United Nations estimates that seventy thousand civilians were killed in the fighting during the last thirty years. There is a concern that the number will increase. GFA-supported missionaries have been working in Sri Lanka for many years. Some are former rebel fighters, while others come from the majority Sinhalese population. Most of these missionaries now serve as pastors of Sri Lankan churches. The fact that Tamil and Sinhalese Christians work side-by-side has been a tremendous witness to the people. ([Assist News Service](#))

UZBEKISTAN: Karakalpakstan Republic Bans the Bible

The senior religious affairs official for the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic of north-western Uzbekistan has banned specific religious books and films confiscated from religious believers on at least three occasions in 2009. In a story for [Forum 18 News Service](#), Felix Corley reported that among items Nurulla Zhamolov has "banned for import, distribution or use in teaching on the territory of the Republic of Karakalpakstan" are the Bible, a hymn book, a Bible Encyclopedia, a Bible dictionary, and a children's Bible. Forum 18 reported that the authorities in Karakalpakstan routinely confiscate religious literature they find in the homes of religious believers during raids. It remains unclear what further activity the authorities will undertake in light of the bans on specific works. ([Assist News Service](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: Christianity and Other Worldviews

Christianity and Worldviews

By Jerry Root and Justin Conrad

Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*¹ reminds readers that scientists see the universe through paradigms and that these paradigms are constantly changing, giving way to new data and information. Similarly, philosophers and theologians create worldviews in an attempt to explain the universe as best they comprehend. These worldviews are helpful as generalizations, and as such they make comparisons with other worldviews possible.

Proceeding Cautiously into Understanding a Christian Worldview

However, no worldview is ever complete in itself; like scientific paradigms they must give way to more coherent and expanded ones. Christians are also capable of constructing what might be called “Christian worldviews,” but they must do so with great caution. An evangelist would do well to understand the nature of worldviews: how they work and how they can be both an asset and a liability for sharing the gospel.

Although it is possible to get a sure word about any given truth, it is impossible to get a last word. Truths that are known can be plumbed deeper and be applied wider. The God who Christians seek to describe by their worldview is enormous, and the universe they seek to contain in that worldview is complex.

Furthermore, human finite understanding, not to mention human fallenness, makes the grasping of any truth a complicated process. Consequently, any true Christian worldview must be supple and capable of giving way to more robust notions concerning God and the world. The work of the evangelist is diminished if one hints that he or she has God completely understood.

A proper Christian understanding of the world does have the benefit, so Christians would say, of the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit. But, it is here that Christians must take great care. Some might go so far as to suggest that since the Apostle Paul wrote, “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) that, in fact Christians can be confident that they possess all knowledge.

Such a suggestion would neglect that Paul speaks against the factions that existed among the Corinthian Church where some claimed to follow Paul, others claimed Peter as their leader, others still were followers of Apollos, and others claimed that their allegiance was only to Christ.

If the Corinthians had the mind of Christ in a way that suggested they had God all figured out, why was it that they were so conflicted and contention and division existed among them? Could it mean that the mind of Christ was offered to them not as an accomplished fact—they were certainly not rivals of the Divine Omniscience—but rather the mind of Christ was offered as a necessary resource.

With this resource, all true believers are under obligation to try and plumb the depths of that resource to understand as much as they can as well as they can instead of dominating others through the use of a perceived worldview. The former—plumbing the depths—will help the evangelist in his or her task, but the latter—attempts at domination—will distort God’s true redemptive plan for all humanity.

A—Not *the*—Christian Worldview

Therefore, whatever the Christian worldview might be, it is incomplete, and those who suggest they have fully grasped the Christian worldview should be regarded with suspicion. In fact, it should be a first

measure of anything that approximates a Christian worldview that it does not pass itself off as a last word. Sure words exist; a tree does not have to give up its interior rings just because it adds new rings; but a tree that is not adding new rings dies.

Similarly, anything that claims to be a Christian worldview must be supple enough not to calcify. Hence, *the* Christian worldview does not exist, but *a* Christian worldview does exist—and it is dynamic, not static. The gospel presented to non-believers must be about a God who is great and our conception of him must be growing. In other words, a proper understanding of a Christian worldview will display that humility of mind and heart that characterizes one whose love of God and curiosity to know him more is not stymied by pretensions.

Christian worldviews as they develop do so in light of questions which are asked about God and his world. Therefore, Christian worldviews are affected by time and place as well as culture and language. Some things transcend all times and all places and these things must be addressed.

Vital Concerns for a Christian Worldview

Nevertheless, history reveals that not all ages have been equally concerned about the exact same questions nor have they been faced with the exact same problems. Therefore, there can be a theology particularized to certain ages and cultures. These theologies are not in competition with other theologies for dominance; they will not necessarily contradict each other. It is merely that they seek answers, under God, to variant questions. Blended they can even produce a more robust worldview. Sensitivity to this fact will sharpen the focus of the evangelist in any context because he or she will be aware of the issues that will open the door to the presentation of the gospel.

Furthermore, those who use a Christian worldview well will be able to distinguish the questions that are perennial and produce transcendent concerns for all people in all times from those questions more contextualized. The following will answer a few perennial concerns by using various illustrations in an effort to construct a coherent and clear worldview.

1. Creation and Intention. The creation of the universe by God and his intention for that creation is central to a coherent Christian worldview and should inform and direct the work of an evangelist. So what is humanity's purpose? To begin, a Christian worldview must emphasize that God is uncreated and eternal.

Furthermore, God created the universe for his own glory and made creatures in his image. To note, since we are created in God's image and likeness, he also seeks to glorify us with him. Such a tremendous picture of love can be extracted from scripture, stirring our imaginations as we ponder God's full desire to commune with us and for us to commune with him. Although the fall of humanity was tragic, it did not take God by surprise. He fully knew humans would sin and become estranged from him. Part of his plan for creation included his plan of redemption and reconciliation in Christ.

The fact that God is a purposive God and has intentions for each of us is of vital concern when presenting the gospel to others. Estrangement of men and women from God and from one another occurs when people try to step away from God's purpose for their lives. Sin is someone playing God of his or her own life; the sins we commit are the results of our mismanagement. The forgiveness and acceptance found in Christ restores us to a life of living according to God's purpose. Understanding this feature of a Christian worldview prepares the evangelist for clarity in his or her proclamation.

2. Trinity and Community. The love of God is also essential to the message of an evangelist. How can love be understood and appropriated in the world? A Christian worldview asserts that there is only one

God who is eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to all that Christians believe. Although this teaching has a sense of mystery about it, nevertheless, it can be understood in a manner that is reasonable.

Relational attributes in a non-contingent being presuppose that relationship is necessary in that being. God's capacity to love was not contingent upon creation. His capacity to love is essential to his identity as the Triune God. The Christian God, unlike the gods of other religious worldviews, is love himself without being ego-centric and self-absorbed. The Gospel of John emphasizes the expanse of God's triune love. The Father loves the Son and gives everything to him. The Son loves the Father and offers everything to him. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has come to guide us in a richer, fuller life with Christ, thereby glorifying the work of the Son. In summary, when God created humanity and made them in his image, he made them as relational beings. The capacity to love and be loved is essential to what it means to be human.

Community is possible because humanity is created in the image of a God who exists in community. The well-known apologist and evangelist Ravi Zacharias highlights this point in a lecture, saying "diversity, unity, community in the Trinity." God's love is the source of his reconciling acts directed toward fallen humanity. He forgives sins in order to restore estranged creatures to himself in love and fellowship. Community with God is possible and so is the hope of community with others. The great commandment to love God and others is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity. This teaching, essential to a true Christian worldview is vital to the message of the evangelist.

3. Unity and Personality. How is it possible for each person to be unique, while also being in community? God made us to be in fellowship with him and with one another. In light of this it is clear that no one's identity can be discovered in isolation from others. Our identity is primarily discovered through being in relationship with God, our maker. Isaiah 6 highlights this truth when the prophet discovered his identity by looking at God. The true vision of God brings the prophet into the realization of God's holiness.

Isaiah was shaken by this revelation and was deeply disturbed. He was broken and disappointed. Nevertheless, as the prophet continued to fix his gaze upon God, he discovered God's power to cleanse from his sins; in this act of cleansing Isaiah redefined himself by virtue of the love of God. One could say that the prophet's worldview was expanding.

Finally, God revealed his heart to the prophet that Isaiah might understand his true calling in life. His purpose in life was discovered by defining who he was and what he was called to do through a relationship with God. To be united with God enabled the prophet to be united with all true believers. Unity is the road to personality. That is, unity, not uniformity, allows one to maintain the uniqueness of personhood while fitting into God's purpose and plan.

In fact, the famous saying by Christ urging us to love our neighbor as ourselves has in it the reality that in order to love another we must be able to love ourselves. But how can we when we do not even know ourselves? The answer is found in an identity understood and anchored in the presence and nature of God. Hence, that certainty will thrust us forward with confidence as we seek to better understand God, ourselves, and the world, and this too is a vital feature in the work of an evangelist.

4. Incarnation and Purpose. God comes to us in Christ. All the religions in the world recognize humanity's hunger and thirst for God. Only a Christian worldview underscores that God is in pursuit of us. The *incarnation*, God's entering our world in human flesh and form, is at the core of the evangelist's message. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

In fact, a popular saying in the early Church was that God became man so that man can be like God. This must not be confused with a worldview blurring the distinction between creator and creation. However, the incarnation does reveal a most passionate God in pursuit of people made in his image and likeness. Yet for all God's passion and love for humanity, that passion is not often reciprocated.

The famed painting of Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" in the Sistine Chapel depicts God reaching out to Adam with ardor and enthusiasm as he longingly flexes his whole posture toward Adam. Adam's response is astonishing. Instead of responding with like fervor to the God of the universe, Adam apathetically rests his forearm on his knee, barely lifting his hand toward God and with a facial expression of disinterest.

Does this not sum up the ministry of Christ, who for all the physical healings performed and cries to be reconciled with God was often disdained and impugned by so many? Nevertheless, *the passion of Christ* is indeed the passion of God. His siding with infirmed humans led him to drink in the same heartache and estrangement throughout his day-to-day ministry. And the incarnation climactically exemplified through Christ's death on the cross the fulcrum of God's paradoxical act of bringing the richest life out from the most sorrowful death. The incarnation acts as a mirror to reflect our purpose of reconciling each other and our own selves to God. The relation of incarnation and purpose should be central to the work of an evangelist.

Conclusion

To conclude upon such a large topic as constructing a coherent Christian worldview amidst a plurality of belief systems is a difficult task, but nevertheless possible and important. The previous work has outlined how one might systematize and understand the essential aspects of a Christian worldview through illustrations of Creation and Intention, Trinity and Community, Unity and Personality, and Incarnation and Purpose. These illustrations help to shape the way we view God, the world and ourselves.

But as previously warned, to hold dogmatically to a particular worldview often risks the chance of being incoherent and inconsistent with truth. Truth, as previously stated, must be examined and plumbed for wider applicability. This does not mean we conclude with a milquetoast summary, but rather with a firm and confident arrival at a worldview that is informed biblically and historically.

Only such a worldview will stand the test of time, people, and places, and will further add to the continuum of a coherent and informative understanding of God, ourselves, and the world. It will furthermore leave open the opportunity for others, like us, to offer helpful explanations to perplexing and pervasive questions. This, in turn, will provide the evangelist with the necessary tools to understand the context in which he or she conveys the timeless truth of the gospel, making his or her work more credible and lastingly impactful for future generations.

Endnote

1. 1962. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dr. Jerry Root (left) is associate director of the [Institute for Strategic Evangelism](#) at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, USA. He has taught in the evangelism masters program for the past eleven years. Root has invested nineteen years in student ministry, evangelism, and discipleship. **Justin Conrad** (right) holds a masters degree in theology from Wheaton College. He is active in theological, philosophical, and political researching and writing.

Pioneering Church Planting Movements

By Younoussa Djao

Introduction

When we look at the remaining task to be finished of reaching and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20), we quickly realize that there is much resistance to the gospel. We also see that there are some common characteristics that non- or less-reached nations share. For example:

- Resistance to the gospel
- Strong community/family-based culture
- Oral culture
- Strong spiritual strongholds
- Major non-Christian religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, Traditional Religions, etc.
- Poverty
- War

Strategies that have worked well in other parts of the world are not giving the same and expected results among these nations. Albert Einstein is quoted to have said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

Below I would like to describe some principles and a process that have made a break-through possible among some of these remaining nations to be reached. Wherever these principles and this process have been implemented (that I know of), there have been many churches planted in a very short time. In one country in sub-Saharan Africa, one leader who got trained and went to implement this approach said, “We have planted about forty-two churches in three years; but with this approach, the Lord has helped us plant 150 churches in three months.” There have been good results among Muslims, Buddhists, Traditional Religions, etc.

Because the space allowed in this article is too short to give details, I will give principles followed by a short description. Every principle comes from scripture. I will use Luke 10:1-11 (parallels: Matthew 10:5-14; Luke 9:1-6) as the main text.

I. Go Where Jesus Is about to Go

Jesus sends seventy-two of his disciples, two by two. The Bible says that he “sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go” (Luke 10:1-11).

The success in church planting happens when God himself is at work. So we will see success only if we go where he is at work. The Church Planting Movement (CPM) is not a human-made movement. It is an act of God. Making sure that we do church planting where God is at work is crucial.

The question then is how do we know where God is at work?

II. Make Sure to Pray!

Jesus told his disciples that they should pray that God raises workers for the field. The most strategic prayer will be to ask God to raise workers from *within* the harvest field to do the work. Raising and developing local leaders to do the work without much help from outsiders is a key for long-term success.

We should also pray to know the mind of God and where he is at work. When we discover that and join him where he is at work, we will undoubtedly see success. Also, any spiritual victory is won in prayer. Reaching people and winning them for Christ is a spiritual battle. Prayer is at the beginning, middle, and end of any successful ministry.

The long-term work of reaching a people group should remain on the shoulders of local leaders.

III. Look for the Person of Peace

In Luke 10:5-8, Jesus gives instructions about what to do when the disciples get to the places where they will minister. He says that the first thing to do is to look for a person of peace—and when they have found him or her, to stay with that person (i.e., do their ministry through that person). Jesus said, “Do not move around from house to house.” I believe Jesus is saying that we should not do house-to-house evangelism. The first and main activity of a church planter is to discover the person of peace in a given area or people group. When he or she has found that individual, he or she should do his or her ministry through and with this person.

The presence of the person of peace is the indication that God is at work in that place or among that people group. The person of peace is characterized by hospitality and other things; however, the main characteristic is his or her interest in the spirituality the church planter expresses through his or her attitude, language, the things he or she speaks about, etc. He or she has a spiritual hunger, is seeking the truth, and is attracted by any spiritual person and/or spiritual discussion. God is working in the life of that person. This is what creates the connection with the church planter.

Another characteristic of the person of peace who will play a role in reaching the area or the people group is that he or she has influence in the community, bad or good. For example, in John 4, the Samaritan woman had a bad testimony and influence in the village; however, she happened to be the person of peace and opened up her community to salvation. Another example is Cornelius in Acts 10; he had a good testimony and influence in the community and he happened to be a person of peace and opened up his family and household to salvation.

IV. Either Do Your Ministry through the Person of Peace or Leave

When a person of peace is not found in a community or an area, Jesus said to not do anything—to just leave. It means that it is not a place where Jesus is about to visit; God is not at work there; it is not God’s time for that place. Leave, pray more, and plan to come back later.

Sometimes a missionary will spend years in one place without seeing anyone interested in what he or she has to say or do. We spiritualize that by saying he or she is sowing and someone else will come and harvest. After some time, maybe up to six months, if we don’t discover a person of peace, we should leave, visit other places, looking for the person of peace.

When the person of peace is found, the church planter becomes his or her shadow. He or she will do ministry through that person and his or her network of relationships in the community: family members, friends, etc. We should avoid as much as possible winning one person at a time, instead focusing on families and affinity groups in the community.

Sometimes among Muslims, Satan will “give” us one family member and keep other family members. In this situation, when we win one, the rest become upset and not only persecute the one, but become even more opposed to the gospel.

The church planter should focus on the other members of the family of the person of peace and also his or her other network of relationships in the community.

The church planter’s agenda, as an outside leader, becomes “model, equip, watch, and leave.”

V. Respond to the Needs: Compassion Ministries

Jesus said, “Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you’” (Luke 10:9). Before even giving the word, we should respond to the needs of the community. The best way to show the love of God is to help people in practical ways to meet their needs. This way of showing God’s love opens up communities and gives the church planter the opportunity to look for the person of peace. We have seen communities opening up because a Christian comes in and helps with health issues, schools, seed banks, etc. Hundreds of churches have been started because the love of God for people has been practically showed.

VI. Give the Word of God by Doing Discovery Bible Studies

When we start giving the word of God, our goal should be to make disciples, not converts. In Matthew 20:18-20, Jesus said to make disciples and teach them to obey. A disciple is someone who obeys his or her master. We should do “obedience-based discipleship” and avoid the “knowledge-based discipleship,” where people are filled with knowledge, but their lives have nothing to do with what they know. The level of knowledge should progress with the level of obedience.

Instead of teaching or preaching, doing *Discovery Bible Studies* helps make obedient disciples. It also helps people see the Bible (not the church planter) as the authority.

The Discovery Bible Study is simple and consists of: (1) reading or listening to the scripture, (2) asking everyone to say it in his or her own words, (3) asking everyone what he or she understands (formulate the truth), and (4) asking everyone how he or she will obey the truth discovered. Because it is a group discussion, there is a group self-correction in the process.

V. Start Churches that Multiply

As the group does the Discovery Bible Studies, the members will discover the truths about God, Jesus, humanity, etc., and come to the conclusion of their need of Christ. Decisions will be made. They will be baptized and organized in communities of disciples (churches). If the church planter works according to the agenda of “model, equip, watch, and leave,” he or she will build the DNA of reproduction in the disciples that will lead to churches that reproduce.

For more on the Pioneer Church Planting Movement, visit:

- [David Watson’s blog.](#)
- [Reaching the Online Generation.](#)
- [CPM Training Resources.](#)
- [Church Planting Round Table.](#)
- [City Team Ministries.](#)
- [New Generations International.](#)

Younoussa Djao is with [New Generations International](#) and [Serving In Mission \(SIM\)](#).

Christian Response to Islam: A Struggle for the Soul of Christianity

By John Azumah

(Editor's note: Azumah's latest book, My Neighbour's Faith, is on the topics discussed in this article. See sidebar in this article for Azumah's comments on his latest book, along with publisher information.)

One of the crucial issues facing Christians around the world today is finding the right balance in our response to the various challenges posed by Islam and engagement with Muslims. The quest for an appropriate Christian response to Islam and engagement with Muslims has sadly polarized Christians along evangelical vs. liberal, truth vs. grace, or confrontational vs. conciliatory lines.

As an African, my own struggle is the way these positions are presented as absolutes in *either/or* categories. In the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City (9/11), the Iraq war, the Madrid bombings, etc., the division among Christians has deepened. Reflecting on the situation, Joseph Cummings talks of a titanic struggle going on in the heavenly realms—a struggle not between Muslims and Christians or between Islam and the West, but “a struggle within Christianity itself, a struggle for the soul of the Christian faith.”¹

What Cummings is suggesting, and I couldn't agree more, is that Islam *per se* is not necessarily the greatest challenge facing Christians today, but rather how Christians choose to respond to Islam. There seems to be a general consensus that we should be talking about Christian *responses* rather than “response” to Islam.

To work out what constitutes an appropriate Christian response to Islam, there is a need to identify the various faces of Islam needing responses. I want to suggest four needing considered Christian responses:

1. The militant and violent face of Islam, including Islamic terrorism.
2. The ideological face of Islam in the form of Islamists conceptions of an Islamic State.
3. Islamic/Muslim criticism, rejection, and polemics against Christian beliefs.
4. Islamic missionary activity—*daw'ah*.

These faces of Islam impact Christians in different ways in different contexts, and will therefore elicit different responses from Christians depending upon the context.

Responding to Militant Islam

In our post 9/11 world, Islamic militancy seems to have become the driving force for responses to Islam and engagement with Muslims. In order to think of a Christian response to Islamic militancy, it is vital that at least three facts are stated. For as Jesus said in John 8:32, there is freedom in knowing the truth.

1. *Apart from instances of communal violence in Indonesia and northern Nigeria, Christians are not the primary targets of jihadists Muslims.* The targets are specific governments and states (Islamic governments and states included). Western democracies are surely prime targets.
2. *While Christians and several other non-Muslims have been victims of Muslim militancy, the actual number of Christians killed in Islamist violence pales in significance when compared with the number of Muslims killed.* In other words, Muslims are the main victims of Islamists violence.
3. *Research shows that Islamic militancy creates disaffection in Muslims concerning Islam.* Some convert to Christianity (where there is a friendly Christian presence) or simply backslide.

All the facts therefore point to the fact that Islamic militancy is more of a threat to Muslims and Islam than to Christians and Christianity. For Christian citizens whose nations are targets of Islamic terrorist groups, Paul makes it clear in Romans 13 that dealing with such threats is the responsibility of governments and state security forces. In times like these Christians should remain patriotic citizens without compromising their prophetic calling or sacrificing their pastoral care for the weak and vulnerable.

Responding to Islam as an Ideology

Related to but different from Islamic militancy is Islamists' concept of an Islamic State where *shariah* law is enforced as the legal code in civil and criminal matters. The history of early Islamic conquests of Palestine, Syria, and North Africa teaches us that Muslim militancy *per se* has never been the main factor for demographic changes in favor of Islam. Instead, pressures from the discriminatory tenets of the *shariah* and the humiliation of Christian minorities have been the single most effective factor in the conversion of Christians to Islam.

Islamic ideology therefore poses a serious challenge to Christians in Muslim majority countries in ways that Muslim personal and family laws in the West do not. Christian responses to Islam as an ideology will therefore vary from context to context. Speaking about ideological opposition, secular ideologies are to Christianity in the West what Islamic ideologies are to Christianity in Muslim countries.

Christians in the West should have the same concerns about secularist forces as Christians in Muslim countries as about the enforcement of *shariah* law. However, in light of 1 Corinthians 12: 25-26, Christians everywhere have a duty to stand in solidarity with and speak on behalf of Christian minorities facing discrimination and persecution wherever that may be. This does not mean, for example, that British Muslims should be demonized for the treatment of Christian minorities in Pakistan.

Responding to Islamic Anti-Christian Polemic

In its scripture (the Qur'an) and traditions (the *Hadith*), Islam is generally critical and polemical of Christianity. Anti-Christian polemic is deeply rooted in Islamic source books, and individual Muslim figures and groups have taken it up as their vocation. I have had occasions to challenge my Muslim friends to substitute the term "Muslim" into every place the word "Christian" appears in the Qur'an and to read the passages and tell me how they would feel if they were reading that about Muslims from the Bible.

Of course, I also tell Christians that in order to appreciate the Qur'anic anti-Christian material, they should read what the New Testament, especially the Gospels, say about Jews in general and Jews religious leaders in particular. That said, the question is not *whether* Christians should respond to Islamic anti-Christian polemic, but *how* we should respond.

I have heard some Christians say the best form of defense is attack. I personally do not like the word "defense," let alone "attack." It sounds like we are seeking revenge, which is unbiblical (see Romans 12:19). Christians are commissioned as witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel (Acts 1:8), not as defenders of the faith.

The aim of our response should be to correct and remove misunderstanding as far as we are able—not to attack Islamic beliefs and undermine the integrity of Islam sources. Robust apologetics, not polemics, should be the Christian response to Islamic anti-Christian polemic.

Responding to Islamic *Daw'ah*

Islam and Christianity are the two main missionary religions. While both religions have always taken

their missionary calling seriously, it could be said that from the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century Christian missionary activity far outstripped its Islamic rival. However, since the post-colonial era (late 1950s onwards) Christian mission in Western hands has come under much accusation, attack, and suspicion, and has since been increasingly on the retreat into university departments and theological seminaries.

The few who venture into missions often do so as clandestines in hostile territories. Simultaneously, Muslim governments and organizations have embarked upon very aggressive *daw'ah* in Africa, Asia, and the West. This has been given a huge boost by the discovery of oil in large commercial quantities in Muslim countries.

Islamic *daw'ah* itself, however, is not the real challenge to Christianity. The challenge lies in the criminalization of Christian missions resulting in Christian missionaries resorting to clandestine strategies in order to share their witness with Muslims. The other challenge is governments (mainly Islamic) and fundamentalist groups who put legal impediments in the way of people who want to change their religion, especially conversion to Christianity.

By way of response, rather than behaving like drug traffickers always figuring out how to be one step ahead of law enforcement agencies, Christians need to publicly and consistently speak up for religious freedom. We have had the civil rights and gay rights movements and this might be the time for a Religious Rights Movement. The question Christians need to raise with Muslim scholars, activists, governments, and organizations is how Islam can criminalize an activity it is itself actively engaged in across the world.

Christian Response as a Witness to Islam

It is essential that any Christian response to Islam is not seen to be driven by fear and self-preservation. Jesus is very clear that: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." The crusades are a good example of a Christian response to Islam out of fear and self-preservation. But what is more, the legacy of the crusades and the witness it left in the Muslim psyche about Christianity speaks for itself. To quote Cummings once more:

It used to be commonly said that Islam was Satan's greatest masterpiece. I believe that is not true. I believe that Satan's greatest masterpiece was the Crusades. Why? Is it because the Crusades were the worst atrocity that ever happened in history? I think Hitler was worse. Stalin was worse. Pol Pot was worse. What is so horrible about the Crusades is that it was done under the symbol of the cross; that Satan succeeded in distorting the very heart of the Christian faith. The cross is at the heart of the entire Christian faith, and for the Muslims and the Jews of the world, what does the symbol of the cross now signify? The cross now signifies, "Christians hate you enough to kill you." What is the cross suppose to signify? It is suppose to signify, "God loved you enough to lay down his life for you, and I love you enough that I would lay down my life for you." Satan succeeded in taking the very heart of the Christian faith and turning it around to mean not just something different, but to mean the exact opposite of what it was supposed to mean.²

A Ghanaian proverb counsels that if someone deliberately breaks wind into your face and you muster all your muscles to take revenge, you could end up soiling yourself with stool. However we choose as Christians to respond to Islam, the question that should guide us is: *What witness are we likely to leave behind in our response, and how will it serve the course of the gospel and our mandate as witnesses to that gospel?*

Endnotes

1. 2008. "Toward Respectful Witness." In *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims*. Ed. Dudley Woodberry, 319. Pasadena, California, USA: William Carey Library.
2. Ibid, 322-323.

My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for Christians: An Introduction

By John Azumah

John Azumah. 2008. My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for Christians. Corby, England: Cana Publishing/Hippo Books.

In the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on America, interest in Islam among Christians across the world has been on the increase. Since then, on a regular basis we read about and see Muslims blowing themselves and others up in the name of their religion, while at the same time we hear Muslim leaders and Western experts proclaiming that Islam is a religion of peace.

One theological student in India once said to me, "Sir, I am confused! We hear Islam is a religion of peace, but we also read about and see Muslims praying with AK-47 rifles and teenage girls shot dead or disfigured for not wearing a veil!" To add to the confusion, Islam itself is far from being a monolithic entity. There are Muslims who assert and genuinely believe that Islam is a religion of peace, while there are others whose discourse and activities proclaim the opposite. All are using Muslim scripture and traditions, and all claim their version of Islam is the "true" Islam.

The war in Iraq and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has further added to the confusion by splitting the Evangelical Christian front as to what constitutes an appropriate Christian response to Islam. On the one end are those who strongly believe Islam is a threat and must be exposed as such. This approach ends up instilling fear in Christians about Islam. On the other end are those who insist that the best approach to Islam is to act out of love and grace to Muslims. Hard questions and difficult issues are swept under the carpet.

The purpose of writing *My Neighbour's Faith: Islam Explained for Christians* is to attempt an approach to Islam which is guided by truth and grace following the biblical teaching that Jesus was full of truth and of grace. To sacrifice one on the altar of the other is to betray Christ.

My approach in *My Neighbour's Faith* is guided, on the one hand, by my experience of having Muslims as neighbours in Africa. Islam is therefore the faith of my neighbour and as the ninth commandment teaches, Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour. On the other hand it is guided by the same experience of Islam in Africa as a rival tradition to Christianity—the only missionary religion after Christianity, a religion that raises questions and makes demands and claims over Christians and Christianity in ways that no other religion does. Telling the truth about Islam includes raising the hard questions and talking openly about the difficult issues in the conviction that good relations can only be built on accurate and critical knowledge of one another.

In doing so, however, I have endeavoured to keep the human face of Islam at the heart of my writing. In Africa, as already noted, Islam is not an impersonal system of beliefs or the religion of immigrant communities. Rather, it has a human face: the face of a close relative, a neighbour, a teacher, and even a head of state. Maintaining the human face of Islam is therefore crucial if Christians are to avoid the trap

of ending up with a hateful discourse. In my treatment of Islam, grace is an important factor because it is a tradition that has shaped the lives and values of millions of people across generations and continues to guard the identity and destinies of millions today.

A vital need to provide Christian theological students with credible and balanced information on Islam in order to prevent them from falling prey to unhelpful material on the market or simply separate themselves motivated me to write *My Neighbour's Faith*.

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Overcoming Illiteracy: God's Word and Lasting Fruit

By Jerry Jackson

When I think of the topic “Overcoming Barriers to the Gospel,” I am reminded of the words of the late Paul Hiebert when he said, “We need to recognize that the effective communication of the gospel is central to our task. There is little point going ten thousand miles to give our lives if we cannot bridge the final five feet.”¹

That, of course, raises the question of what it means to effectively communicate the gospel. Much has been written on this topic, but I think the obvious place to start is by providing the Bible in a language and format that will touch the hearts of the unreached.

We have Cameron Townsend and countless other diligent translators to thank for the thousands of languages which today have the Bible available. But I have become convinced over my forty years of full-time ministry that the completion and production of a printed text of the Bible—although absolutely indispensable—cannot and must not be the end of the gospel communication process.

My friend, Bob Creson, president of [Wycliffe Bible Translators USA](#), agrees:

We know that if we don't create oral strategies we're going to miss huge percentages of the population, because many people are illiterate, and they will never learn to read and write. And it's important that they hear the good news of the gospel.

The Need for Oral Strategies

My eyes were opened to the reality of the need for such oral strategies in the early 1970s. The Lord had called me to give up a comfortable job as the manager of an avocado-processing plant, and follow him on a journey of faith. We sold our home, moved with our four children into an old school bus which we converted into living quarters, and traveled around the western United States as God led us. Wherever we stopped, we sought opportunities to minister to people in whatever way they needed.

While working with a Mennonite mission on a Hopi Indian reservation in Arizona, we came across a bookcase with more than one hundred Hopi New Testaments sitting on it. At that time, there were only a dozen or so Hopis coming to church, and we wondered where all the Bibles had come from.

When we asked the Hopi Christians why the printed Bibles were sitting on a shelf instead of being used, they said that there had been a revival some years back during which many Hopis had come to Christ. Missionaries translated the Bible into their language and gave them copies for personal use. But when the translators followed up, they realized that the Hopis couldn't read and they were using the Bibles as part

of their traditional religious practices. The story goes that the translators then took the Bibles away and stored them in the church where they remained—unused and virtually useless.

God's Word and Lasting Fruit

That story really upset me. I had already read of tremendous revivals in other parts of the world where people quickly returned to false religions. I wondered if that was the way of all revivals. I began to investigate. What I discovered was that both the Welsh and Wesleyan revivals had long-lasting impacts—and both had the word of God readily available.

However, some other movements of God had limited access to scripture and produced very short-lived results. I'm not applying this across the board—my investigation wasn't that extensive—but the evidence I did see pointed to a direct correlation between scripture and lasting fruit. This cemented in me the calling to provide God's word to people in a form they can use.

Years later, after we had settled in Albuquerque (New Mexico, USA) and started **Faith Comes By Hearing** (FCBH), I attended a mission conference in Korea. I sat for hours listening to extended discussions about various strategies for getting the word of God to unreached peoples. At one point, I asked what percentage of these people could even read the materials being proposed. The answer I was given was “a low percentage.” (I've since found out that half of the people alive today are functionally—or completely—illiterate.)

I came home from that meeting with a new resolve to help overcome the barrier of illiteracy and get the gospel to millions who'd never heard. FCBH has since set a goal of recording the New Testament in two thousand languages—which would allow ninety-seven percent of the world's population to have the audio Bible in their heart languages—and establishing 1.8 million Bible listening/discipleship groups by 2016.

Even before that conference, we had recording teams in numerous places and were giving free Bible cassette tapes to people all over the world. These tapes were overcoming the barrier of illiteracy; however, we soon realized that many people faced another barrier—poverty. What do you do when the batteries in your cassette player die and you cannot afford another set? For the fifty percent of the world who live on less than two dollars a day, this is a very real question. Do you buy batteries for your cassette player, or do you buy rice for your kids to eat? We knew there had to be a better way.

The Solar-Powered Audio Player

After our entire ministry spent three days in fasting and prayer, our engineer presented me with the prototype for what would become a self-contained, solar-powered audio player. We called the unit a Proclaimer. Since 2006, we've sent almost 120,000 Proclaimers to more than one hundred countries. Once on the field, trained workers use the units to set up listening/discipleship groups where the poor and illiterate can hear the pure word of God.

FCBH has received literally thousands of testimonies from people all over the world saying how powerful it is for them to hear the scriptures in their native language. In places considered hard to reach, people are gathering to listen to and discuss the word of God. As they do so, they are learning how to apply scripture to their lives and situations. Out of these simple listening groups, churches are being planted and whole communities are being transformed. On top of this, in many places, hearing the Bible is actually helping people with literacy and increasing the demand for print scriptures!

I also cannot help but think that many of the other legitimate barriers to the gospel faced by Christian workers (e.g., cultural misunderstandings, prejudice, and the westernization of the gospel) are also overcome by allowing indigenous people to simply hear God’s word in their heart language.

I believe that the word of God in a language and format that can reach the unreached is the most powerful tool for evangelism and discipleship we will ever have.

May God continue to bless his word in every translation and format in which it goes forth!

(Contributor: Jerrid Stetler)

Endnote

1. 1999. “Cultural Differences and the Communication of the Gospel.” *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. Eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 373-383. Pasadena, California, USA: William Carey Library. Used by permission.

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PERSPECTIVES

Wholism and the Bible

By Kristin Jack

Introduction to Wholism

The term “wholistic” has become familiar in recent years—even something of a buzzword—however, it is worth pausing to examine its meaning and whether or not the concept is indeed biblical. Interestingly, the English word “holy” has its root in the old German word *hailaz* or “whole.” The concept of wholism itself is an acknowledgment that life is generally made up of organic systems which function in an integrated way and are not easily divided into their component parts without something of the total being lost.

The converse also holds true—that most entities are more than the sum of their parts. When applied to humanity, wholism sees the person not so much as a bipartite (body and soul) or even tripartite (body, soul, and spirit) being, but rather as multipartite. Truly, the human being is fearfully and wonderfully made, with at least physical, spiritual, social/communal, emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral dimensions to his or her make up. From this understanding flows the concept of wholistic ministry: the belief that God created all these dimensions for his glory and that, in Jesus, the deepest, God-planted longings of each of these dimensions are ultimately fulfilled.

Was Jesus Wholistic?

If this is true, we would expect to see examples of such ministry in the life of Jesus. Certainly Jesus' teachings spoke to the minds of men and women. Certainly he healed the hearts and bodies of those he touched. Beyond question he held out the offer of spiritual rebirth while calling men and women into just communities, and on to a path of moral and spiritual growth. Sometimes Jesus ministered by the overtly miraculous, at other times by something as mundane as the touching and washing of dirt from the disciple’s feet.

He instructed his disciples to administer healing through the laying on of hands and through the loving application of bandages and balm (Luke 10:8-9; 30-36). The ministry of Jesus was indeed to the whole person. Jesus never carried out some aspects of ministry as a form of “pre-evangelism” or with an ulterior motive. He did not heal or feed people on a Saturday in order to soften them up for Sunday’s altar call.

Everything Jesus did he did as an end in itself, because he saw his Father doing it (John 5:19); because it reflected the compassionate-holy heart of God; because it demonstrated the coming of the kingdom. All of Jesus’ ministry was filled with divine significance; none of it could be trivialised as “unspiritual.”

We often proclaim that Jesus came into the world to save souls, but this truth only yields its full meaning when we examine the biblical meanings of those words. The Old and New Testament words generally translated to “save” (*salvare, salus*) also have the meaning of redemption, deliverance, healing, and making whole. *Nepes* or “psyche,” which we translate as “soul,” seldom appear in scripture with the connotation of “a ghost trapped in a body” (as Greek philosophers and Christian Gnostics supposed), but rather has the meaning of “life” or “life-force.” Throughout the Bible, this life-force is regarded as intrinsically related to all other aspects of one’s being—heart, mind, breath, and most significantly, blood. In saying that Jesus came into the world to save souls, we are also saying that he came into the world to give life abundantly (John 10:10).

The ministry of Jesus was life-affirming in every way. He came to redeem every aspect of our humanity, including the human body, which was originally designed by God and declared “good” and which one day Christ will renew in the resurrection to be “like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). In the meantime, we are told to “use our bodies for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

For the believer there is no defeat even in physical death, but the sure hope of entering heaven in a perfected resurrection body. However, it needs to be said that scripture depicts this heavenly state far more like the unspoiled Eden that unfallen man and woman first enjoyed than like the phantasmic realm of ideal forms that Plato envisaged and the Church later borrowed. Scripture does not suggest we will be floating on clouds and strumming harps. The life to come will be—like the incarnate Christ—wholly material and wholly spiritual, the perfection of both. For as we read in Revelation 21, the new heaven descends and fills the new earth, and the dwelling place of God will be with humanity forever and ever.

Integrity and Inter-connectedness

Another aspect of wholism is that of integrity, the inter-connectedness of all parts. As we have said, life is more than the sum of its parts. Every dimension touches and affects every other dimension. Change one aspect and every aspect is changed in some way. Ministering to a person’s spiritual needs will affect his or her physical being and vice-versa. Ministering to a person’s social needs will effect change in his or her emotional being and vice-versa.

This principal of integrity holds true at every level of organisation—individual, family, or community. When stated this way, these truths seem obvious and self evident. Yet how often we carve Christian ministry up into segments, isolate them from one another, and then exalt certain aspects as “more spiritual” than others! As David Korten puts it:

...we become accustomed to dealing with complex issues in fragmented bits and pieces. Yet we live in a complex world where nearly every aspect of our lives is connected in some way with every other aspect. When we limit ourselves to fragmented approaches to dealing with systemic problems, it is not surprising that our solutions prove inadequate. If our species is to survive the predicament we have created for ourselves, we must develop the capacity for whole-systems thought and action.¹

It is no mere coincidence that just as recent times have seen an emphasis on Christian wholism, so too they have witnessed a renewed interest in the Kingdom of God as a biblical theme. For the Kingdom of God as articulated by Jesus and the prophets is the wholistic and integrated vision we are seeking to reclaim. As John Driver explains:

In the biblical motif of the kingdom we find summed up God's salvific intention for a new humanity within a restored creation characterised by healed relationships with the creator as well as with fellow humans and the rest of the created order. The biblical view of the Kingdom of God responds to the deepest needs of humanity and offers a framework in which to understand more holistically the nature and mission of the messianic community.²

The Kingdom of God

Many authors have attempted to define what scripture means when it speaks of the “Kingdom of God.” But the concept is one of such breadth and depth, such profundity and multi-layered dimension, that it surpasses any narrow definition. Jesus himself always spoke of it parabolically, casting light on its many different facets with similes and metaphors—“the Kingdom of God is like ...” No doubt Jesus was far more interested in demonstrating the kingdom than defining it. But what is clearly implied in his use of the term is that something of the power and reign of heaven has touched the earth, and that this is being demonstrated in the effects of the fall being reversed through the ministries of Jesus and his followers:

- “Jesus called the twelve and gave them power and authority to drive out demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:1-2)
- “...heal the sick and tell them ‘the Kingdom of God is near you!’” (Luke 10:9)
- “...later Jesus replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’” (Luke 10:18)
- “So you should pray...your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Luke 11:1-2)

The motif of the kingdom is one of the overarching (perhaps the overarching) themes of scripture as it moves from the opening stanza's in God's paradise on earth to the closing chapters with the kingdom paradise finally restored. It is the subject to which Jesus returns again and again in the synoptic Gospels (where he mentions it on more than one hundred occasions). Jesus preferred to use the expression the “gospel of the kingdom” rather than “gospel of salvation” or “gospel of Christ,” which would later come into more common usage.

Endnotes

1. 2001. *When Corporations Rule the World*. San Francisco, California, USA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 11.
2. In Shenk, William, ed. 1993. *The Transfiguration of Mission*. Newton, Kansas, USA: Herald Press, 85.

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Three Men...Three Worlds...One Choice

By Grant McClung

Meet Michael, Miguel, and Mustafa—three men from three different “worlds.” Each one has arrived at his appointed destiny before God’s judgment seat (Matthew 25:32; Romans 14:10; Hebrews 9:27). Each one is rehearsing his personal moment of reckoning.

Michael. “I think we must know each other,” says Michael as he “approaches the bench.” Michael supposes that he will be eternally “okay” since he had lived in the United States of America—a gospel-saturated world with a proliferation of evangelical churches, Christian programming in his language on multiple television channels and radio stations, a flood of Christian literature, and other “Christian” cultural amenities.

From the bench comes the sobering reply: “Sorry, I never knew you.” The verdict for Michael: “lost.”

Miguel. Miguel had a similar story, reared in the context of a religious system that provided enough of a distant, superstitious, medieval religiosity that inoculated him against the real thing. The “real thing”—a personal born-again experience with Christ—was certainly not a hidden thing in his Latin American country where evangelicals and Pentecostals were front-page news across his cultural world in dynamic, explosive growth. In Miguel’s “world,” the good news of the gospel was proclaimed openly, frequently, and with passionate evangelistic fervor. It raced like wildfire among families and across neighborhoods, transforming entire communities and nations.

Like his North American counterpart, Miguel had come face to face with many gospel exposure opportunities and numerous gospel invitations. But because he never accepted Christ, Miguel’s verdict was the same as Michael’s: “lost.”

Mustafa. What had made Mustafa’s world different from Michael’s and Miguel’s? Mustafa had lived in the vast, unevangelized Muslim world and his name could be exchanged with many other personal names from the Hindu, Buddhist, or Tribal worlds (the world’s largest blocs of least evangelized humanity). Mustafa, like the billions of others from those massive unreached populations, was born, reared, and eventually died in a world where there was absolutely no prominent evidence or understandable symbols of Christian presence or proclamation. Mustafa’s personal world was void of any exposure to the gospel: no gospel presentations, not one Christ-follower, no local fellowship of believers in Jesus.

The verdict for Mustafa is likely the same as that of Michael and Miguel: “lost.”

In the end, all three men from three very different worlds were likely tragically lost without Christ. Biblically speaking, there are no “degrees” of lostness. One can miss heaven by an inch or by a mile—but he or she has still missed heaven, whether he or she has lived in Tennessee, Tabasco, or Timbuktu.

One Choice for Those Who Follow Christ

But there is “one choice” that must be made by those who follow Christ and obey his missional agenda for the “three worlds” and the remaining least evangelized worlds on our globe. The one indispensable and strategic choice that must be made is the *prioritization of preaching the gospel to the least evangelized as quickly as possible*. Mustafa must have as equal an opportunity to hear (at least once) and respond to the gospel as Michael and Miguel have been given in repeated gospel presentations.

Here is God’s “one choice”: He does not want “...anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Scripture indicates that God “...commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30) and has given marching orders to us to make sure that they have the basis upon which to repent—the presentation and understanding of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Romans 15:14-15 says,

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?

Let us not give up on our efforts to evangelize the worlds of Michael and Miguel. If we, however, like the original missional Church, are serious about the least evangelized who have never had their first gospel presentation, our “one choice” will practice the Apostle Paul’s passion: “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation. Rather, as it is written: ‘Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand’” (Romans 15:20-21).

Three men...three worlds...one choice. Mustafa is waiting.

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The Great Commission—An Exploration of the Old and New Testament

By Thomas Schirmacher

The Great Commission as Climax of the Four Gospels

In Christian tradition, “the Great Commission” is a term for the instruction of the resurrected Jesus Christ to his disciples—that they should spread his gospel to all the nations of the world. In a narrower sense, the term defines five specific texts in the New Testament. In an even narrower meaning, the term often just defines Matthew 28:16-20.

Jesus' most important concern between the resurrection and his ascent into heaven seems to have been world missions, made possible by his sacrificial death on the cross as the most important aspect of his suffering, death, and resurrection. All four Gospels include some form of the Great Commission given in the period of time following the resurrection (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:13-53, particularly vs. 44-49; John 20:11-23, particularly vs. 21-23; and Acts 1:4-11).

In each Gospel the sending of the disciples into the world at the end points back to the twelve apostles being chosen by Jesus in the beginning. Jesus chose the disciples "that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:13). From the very beginning, the goal of their intensive training through living and working with him was to prepare them for the Great Commission.

Their training as missionaries was not arbitrary, but clearly according to Jesus’ deliberate plan:

- First, Jesus preached alone.
- Second, Jesus preached while the disciples observed.
- Third, Jesus let the disciples preach while he observed.
- Fourth, Jesus sent the disciples out for a short mission (Matthew 10:1-11; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6) and discussed the results with them.
- Last, Jesus sent the disciples alone. They then began to do the same with other Christians.

Thus, training toward independence is a central element of missions. The Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew (28:16-20) is not only the end of the Gospel of Matthew, it is also its climax and its goal. For this reason, Matthew emphasizes from the first chapter on that the good news is also for the heathen (e.g., 5:14; 9:37-38; 12: 8-21).

The Great Commission and the Old Testament

Although the apostles spoke of Jesus' commandment several times after Pentecost (Acts 1:2, 10:42), they never cited the Great Commission directly. Peter combines the Great Commission with a reference to the Old Testament as an argument for his preaching the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:42-43).

For this reason, it is not surprising that the Great Commission according to Luke is derived directly from the Old Testament (Luke 24:43-49). According to Jesus, all parts of the Old Testament speak not only of his coming, dying, and rising, but of forgiveness to be preached to all nations.

The Content

Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew's Gospel justifies world missions by the assurance, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (28:18), and that he will always be with his Church (28:20). Thus, the Great Commission is not only an assignment but also a promise. Jesus himself carries the responsibility for discipling all nations, for, he says, "I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The success of world missions confirms the promise of Christ's dominion.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 includes the command to make all people "pupils" (disciples). The first step is personal conviction and repentance. Baptism in the name of the Trinity must be experienced personally. This is still the way God has chosen to win whole nations. Thus, the goal of converting whole people does not contradict the need for personal repentance.

Conversion and baptism according to the Great Commission do not mark the conclusion, but the beginning of personal renewal, as well as the renewal of the family, church, economics, state, and society. Every individual should become a pupil (disciple) of Jesus Christ. In the command to teach "them to obey everything I have commanded you," the Great Commission includes the exhortation to teach the whole range of biblical ethics. In transforming the individual, his or her everyday life, and his or her environment, mission overcomes sinful structures and visible injustice.

History

The prevailing historic view until the eighteenth century was that the Great Commission had been directed to the New Testament apostles alone. However, there were theologians who held to the modern view. These included St. Augustine, the German reformer Martin Bucer, and the Dutch Reformed missiologist Gisbert Voetius. The change was introduced in 1792 through William Carey's book, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*.

Carey pointed out that the Great Commission was binding "even to the end of the age." One of his best arguments for the validity of the Commission was the fact that it included the command to baptize that all churches and theologians considered valid. If the Great Commission was directed only to the apostles, churches would have had to stop baptizing people. Carey also argued that the Great Commission would be fulfilled, as was authorized by the power of the Lord of Lords.

Carey's view became more and more common, and soon the Great Commission became the most quoted base for Christian mission in all confessions. In the 1960s, missiologists in the ecumenical movement

wanted to exchange the commission or command for the *missio Dei* concept. Today, however, both views are seen to complete each other.

In higher criticism there have been several attempts to prove that none of the Great Commissions in the New Testament stem from Jesus. However, the debate has not come to a common conclusion.

In the Church Growth Movement, initiated by the American Methodist missionary to India Donald McGavran, the Great Commission according to Matthew received special emphasis. The Church can only grow if it spreads within people groups; and it can only grow if people are not made Christians, but are disciplined into mature Christians who then again make the Great Commission their own task.

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URBAN COMMUNITIES

Greater New York and the Five Boroughs: Prayer, Part 1

By Mac Pier

The astonishing fact of our time is that the majority of the world's six billion people now live and work in sizeable cities. Moreover, we live at the time of the greatest migration in human history. The southern hemisphere is moving north, East is coming West, and everyone is coming to New York! I remember well the day several years ago when, sitting in Manhattan, I read a New York Times report that 133 nations had been found living together in one Queens zip code. - Ray Bakke¹

Of the more than eight million people who speak more than 170 languages and hail from more than one hundred countries, New Yorkers can be divided roughly into three types: native New Yorkers give the region its solidity; commuters give New York its velocity; and immigrants give New York its dreams. This two-part article will document the partial realization of the 4,000-year-old dream given to Abraham on a starry night in the Middle East—that all the nations would be blessed. All the nations now reside in the neighborhoods of Greater New York.

God promised to bless the nations through Abraham and, as Abraham's spiritual descendants, God is blessing the nations through modern-day believers. God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 uses what I believe are the two most important words in the Bible uttered by God—"I will":

I will make your name great. (v. 1)

I will give you a land. (v. 2)

I will bless all the peoples of the earth through you. (v. 3)

Modern-day New York City is at an historical crossroads between God's promise to Abraham and the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan: the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21. The final metaphor used in the Bible to describe God's people is a city—we all have an urban future.

For those of us who are serious about biblical and world history, we need to seriously ponder the extraordinary facts about Greater New York at the dawn of the twenty-first century. New York City:

- is the largest Jewish city in the world
- is one of the largest Muslim cities outside the Muslim world
- contains one of the communities (Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn) with the highest density of Africans of any community in the world
- contains the largest enclave of immigrants in the Western world in Chinatown (Manhattan and Flushing, Queens)
- is nearly as large as Chicago and Los Angeles combined
- is (Metropolitan New York, that is) larger than Dallas, San Francisco, Atlanta, Seattle, Boston, Phoenix, Minneapolis, Miami, and Las Vegas combined
- is one of the most international cities in human history when considering population and density
- has one of the most international churches in human history; representatives from every continent on earth worship in its borders

The events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) drew New York City into even sharper focus. In his book *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*,² Ralph Winter suggests that every four hundred years there is a global shaping event that radically changes the trajectory of the Church. Beginning with the crucifixion (A.D. 33), followed by the invasion of the Barbarians and the burning of Rome (A.D. 410), the invasion of the Vikings and capturing Dublin (A.D. 834), the Crusades (A.D. 1095–1291), and the missionary work of Hudson Taylor to the Inland of China (1853) and William Carey to the Indian coast (1793), each 400-year epoch represents the geographic progression of the gospel.

Winter surmises that with the exception of the Crusades, God took what was meant for evil and turned it into good by growing the Church during each 400-year period.

On 9/11, under the azure blue sky, nineteen terrorists forever changed the way we think about our city, our nation, and the world. The extremist Muslim leadership that sent them on their mission understood something that few leaders, churches, agencies, and denominations have understood—New York City represents a spiritual battleground on a global and cosmic scale.

Could 9/11 be that 400-year turning point?

The Strategic Nature of New York City

A 1999 PBS documentary on New York City described it as the most influential city in human history. Saskia Sassen of Princeton asks her readers to imagine a gigantic three-legged stool, a colossus of New York, London, and Tokyo, which controls huge and growing proportions of the world's resources. Of the three, Sassen states that New York is the leading global city on the planet.

Like Tokyo and London, New York is a financial capital; like Toronto it is an international capital; like Washington, D.C., it is a power capital; like Paris it is a cultural capital; and like Los Angeles it is a media capital. Yet no other city in human history has been all of these things simultaneously. Five of the six most powerful media outlets in the world are in Midtown Manhattan: NBC, CBS, ABC, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

In a 14-year period, the number of unchurched people in the United States has doubled, according to Jim Mellado, president of the [Willow Creek Association](#). The spiritual and cultural influence of the Church will largely hinge on our abilities to lead, unite, pray, think, and reach out in contextually sensitive ways. There has never been a more opportune or sober moment to become countercultural in our thinking. Through our discipleship, we must work to reverse the culture's values that led so many in the past half century to leave places of influence in exchange for a big backyard and a luxury car in the garage.

The New Urban Pentecost: Twenty Years of Praying

"They were all together in one place." - Acts 2:1

My wife Marya and I were lying in bed one November evening in 1988 when we heard what sounded like a firecracker in our Flushing, Queens, neighborhood. When our housemate Maureen came home, she told us a murder had just occurred. A Chinese couple was showing their son his wedding gift (a condominium on a nearby street) when the mother was shot and killed after a bungled, drug-related robbery attempt.

Ten days after the murder, Marya drove home from her night shift at the hospital, and as she pulled into the driveway, her eyes met the eyes of a man who fit the description of the murderer. During that same time we received the news that Marya was pregnant with our third child; we already had a 4-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son. This question gnawed at us: Do we want to raise our children in this environment?

We had moved to New York City from South Dakota in 1984 to work with [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#). Our original plan was to be in New York for two years and then return to India. We had spent the summer of 1983 in Bihar, India, with [Operation Mobilization](#), and lived for ten weeks in a state the size of Nebraska but with a population of 100 million. In much of Bihar the ratio of Muslims and Hindus to Christians is 100,000 to 1.

Every Friday in India we prayed three to nine hours. This life-changing experience converted me to the priority of extended united prayer. In 1984, we sold our possessions and moved to New York City; Marya was pregnant and we had secured only temporary housing. Our initial plan was to stay in New York City until 1986, but it soon became obvious to us living in Flushing, Queens, that God had brought the whole world to New York City and, in particular, our neighborhood. It was no longer necessary to travel to distant parts of the world to minister among other nationalities.

We have lived for twenty years in a neighborhood with one hundred language groups. For a season, people spoke seven languages on our side of the street alone—Russian, Greek, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Afghani, and English. Our neighborhood is also *one of*, if not *the most*, religiously plural neighborhoods in the world.

When we take a right out of our front door and travel west on Beech Avenue, within four blocks we pass a house mosque (people primarily from India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), a Russian Orthodox Church, a traditional Buddhist temple, and a Frank Lloyd Wright–designed Confucian temple. Further down on Parsons Boulevard is Church of St. Mary's Nativity (Roman Catholic). When we walk from Parsons Boulevard to Bowne Street on Ash Street, we pass the Korean American Presbyterian Church, one of the largest Korean churches in North America and one of three hundred Korean churches in northern Queens.

Traveling south on Bowne Street, we pass a Jewish center. Then we pass the Boon Chinese Church—the largest Chinese church on the East Coast of the United States. On the next block is the first Hindu temple in North America, serving the twenty thousand Hindus in the area. A number of apartments have been built around the temple to form a tightly knit Hindu community in the neighborhood.

Two blocks over, near the intersection of Kissena Boulevard and Geranium Avenue, a mosque that cost \$3.2 million to build and was funded by two hundred families stands tall. The story of the mosque's construction was written up in the *New York Times* architectural review. A few blocks away, the Freedman's Synagogue stands on the corner of Sanford Avenue and Kissena.

Interestingly, above the doorframe of the synagogue is the verse from Isaiah 56:7: "My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations." As one can see, within a half-mile radius of our home, every major world religion is represented.

Our home church in New York City, First Baptist Church of Flushing, celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2007. It is a multi-congregational model with five services—in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish on Sunday. It has an ESL (English as a Second Language) and community program reaching out to the immigrants who call the Flushing neighborhood home.

A History and Theology of Urban Prayer

The New Testament is essentially the story of two cities. It is the story of Jesus going to die in Jerusalem, the religious capital of the world. It is also the story of Paul going to die in Rome, the political capital of the world. The city-centric nature of these men's missions is not accidental. Jerusalem has dominated the urban landscape of the Bible and the modern day since David captured the city in 2 Samuel 5. For three thousand years Jerusalem has been and remains the religious capital of the world. Psalm 48:2 describes Jerusalem as "the joy of the whole earth," "the city of the Great King." Isaiah 62:6–7 commands God's people to give God no rest until he makes Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.

In the opening chapter of Acts, Jesus issues only one command in verses 1–14. The command is simply to wait. As the disciples were waiting, they were praying, repenting, and reconciling with one another. Simultaneously, God was bringing the fifteen nations into Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. That is the biblical and historical pattern—God's people pray in unity and God choreographs the nations into the neighborhoods.

As the Book of Acts provides the *model* of urban prayer, Isaiah provides the content of our prayer. In his final section (chaps. 55–66), Isaiah paints a picture of Jesus as the anointed conqueror. He provides the following snapshots that profoundly resonate with the realities of our urban populations: build houses of prayer, rebuild broken city walls, bring good news to the poor, and give God no rest—pray continually.

Reconciliation. In Isaiah 56, scripture commands us to make God's house a "house of prayer for all nations." It speaks to the power and urgent necessity of **reconciliation**. Most of the churches in our urban centers are tribal—either by ethnicity, economic class, or denomination. Jesus quotes this passage in John 2 when he cleanses the temple of the money lenders.

The greatest barrier to spiritual impact is the enormous trust deficit between diverse Christian groups. We can only love those we know. We can only know those we trust. Here in our region, we have learned to spell love—*time*. There is nothing more powerful to build trust than simply to travel and spend time with people on their turf.

Reformation. Isaiah 58 commands us to *rebuild the broken walls of our cities*, to declare a true fast of justice. Our cities are broken in so many dimensions that we are in desperate need of **reformation of society**. We live in this city with the greatest disparity between rich and poor, and as the rich get richer, the poor become even more marginalized. Over 700,000 public school students perform below grade level in math and reading—we need to pray and act. Seventy percent of children of prisoners will end up in prison unless there is some type of intervention—we need to pray and act.

Reached. Isaiah 61 commands us to *bring good news to the poor*. This was Jesus' inaugural address. It speaks of the need to proclaim the gospel so that it is accessible to the poorest of the poor as well as to the rich. Living in the most religiously plural city in the world, we need to pray desperately for people to be **reached with the gospel**.

We are not only religiously plural, but we also live in one of the most densely populated places on earth. Over twenty-one million people, representing one out of every three hundred people on the planet, live within fifty miles of Times Square. During the workweek there are 250,000 people per square mile working in Midtown Manhattan.

Revival. Isaiah 62 commands us to *give God no rest*. Many churches across our region have embraced this vision of **revival**, of an awakening to Christ in all his glory through relentless, aggressive, unrelenting prayer. Korean churches are praying at 6:00 a.m. daily. Midweek prayer services number in the hundreds of thousands across the nation. Observing the Church at prayer in New York City is like having a front-row seat to Revelation 5, where people will gather from every nation and tongue. The modern-day Church of New York City is the closest approximation to this Revelation 5 reality in human history.

Endnotes

1. Pier, Mac. 2002. *The Power of a City at Prayer: What Happens When Churches Unite for Renewal*. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press.

2. 1999. Pasadena, California, USA: William Carey Library.

Dr. Mac Pier is president of the [New York City Leadership Center](#) and [Concerts of Prayer Greater New York](#). After working on staff with [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#), he eventually served as founder and mobilizer of the united prayer movement of 6,200 churches throughout New York City, Long Island, northern New Jersey, and Fairfield County, Connecticut. His leadership has led to Concerts of Prayer being described as one of the most developed urban prayer and pastoral networks in the world. Pier's latest book, *Spiritual Leadership in the Global City* (New Hope Publishers) was released in 2008.

Greater New York and the Five Boroughs: Prayer, Part 2

By Mac Pier

The Church of New York City at Prayer

Three distinct centuries of prayer have had an impact on New York City. In the eighteenth century Theodorus Frelinghuysen led the Reformed Church into seasons of revival through his preaching in 1727 in New Jersey. Across the Atlantic, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, of the Moravians in Germany, launched Herrnhut in 1727 (the Lord's Watch), a 100-year prayer meeting that thrust three hundred missionaries out around the world—many to America. You cannot understand American Protestantism apart from Count Zinzendorf's leadership. In his book, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal*,¹ Richard Lovelace said that the Moravian movement was the closest approximation of New Testament Christianity in two thousand years.

In 1747, Jonathan Edwards wrote *An Humble Attempt*, his call to visible unity and explicit agreement. This was the birthing of concerts of prayer. Concerts of prayer became the methodology of gathering quarterly to pray with other congregations for revival. This movement spread throughout New England and had an impact on the New York City region.

A century later, layman Jeremiah Lanphier launched the Fulton Street Prayer Revival on 23 September 1857. During a climate of slavery and economic devastation, six people gathered for prayer near Wall Street. Within weeks, the simple prayer meeting grew to fifty thousand daily participants and sparked a national revival that swept one million converts into the churches (nearly four percent of the national population) in eighteen months.

The revival planted the seed of the evangelical social awakening that lasted from 1865 to 1920. This awakening saw the beginning of the homeless ministry movement, which included the [Salvation Army](#), [Bowery Mission](#), and the [Christian and Missionary Alliance](#).

On 1 January 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Baptist and Methodist missionaries teaching literacy to freed slaves saw the largest response to the gospel of any ethnic group in church history among African Americans. The first African American church in New York was started in 1790 by Peter Williams as described in *Signs of Hope in the City*.²

In 1888, the Student Volunteer Movement came alive in New York City and subsequently, twenty-five thousand young people became missionaries in forty years. The early nineteenth century revival movement in Korea and resulting explosion of church growth can be traced to Horace Underwood and the 1857–1958 revival (as described by Rev. Jimmy Lim, executive director of the New York City Council of Churches in the 2007 video “It Started with One”).

The 1906 Asuza Street revival in California had a profound impact on New York City. The revival that spread to the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa boomeranged back to New York in the form of incoming immigrants of Pentecostal persuasion. The fastest-growing churches in the twentieth century in New York City were Pentecostal.

The modern concerts of prayer movement began with a meeting in June 1987 between two [Here's Life Inner City](#) staff and an Intervarsity Christian Fellowship staff member. The plan was to invite sixteen churches to participate in a concert of prayer on 5 February 1988 at First Baptist Church of Flushing, led by David Bryant. Bryant helped to reignite the global prayer movement by traveling to 350 cities worldwide and gathering churches in united prayer. When the evening arrived, more than seventy churches had gathered! By the fall of 1989, seven regions of Greater New York were participating in annual rhythms of united, congregational prayer. More than 150,000 people have participated to date.

A Movement Matures

As the prayer movement grew, it began to take on diverse expressions. Congregations began praying together in 1988; pastors began praying together in 1989. Our first pastors' concert of prayer took place at Brooklyn Tabernacle, where four hundred leaders participated. This evolved into the Pastors' Prayer Summit, which began in 1991 with less than one hundred pastors. It has met annually in January ever since, attracting more than four hundred pastors and leaders. The themes of the summit include worship, prayer, and community. The summit has been described by many pastors as the most powerful spiritual experience of their year.

In 1995, the murder rate in New York City peaked at more than 1,500 murders, and churches began a daily prayer vigil patterned after the Lord's Watch from Count Zinzendorf. What started with thirty churches in 1995 grew to more than one hundred churches and has continued unabated until today.

Churches pray around the theology of Isaiah following specific prayer requests for revival in the Church, reconciliation between churches and peoples of varying cultures and ethnic backgrounds, reformation of

society, and reaching out with the gospel. In the next five years the murder rate would drop by forty percent.

In 2004, we launched a new prayer initiative called **Pray New York!** enlisting church members to prayer-walk the ZIP codes around their churches. In four years, more than twenty thousand people have participated, simultaneously praying in the more than two hundred ZIP codes of New York City on the first Saturday in June. This was coordinated borough by borough by local pastors and ministry leaders.

United Prayer Births Collaborative Mission

After 11 September 2001, three collaborations emerged which have become the largest of their type in the nation. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, **World Vision** approached **Concerts of Prayer Greater New York** (COPGNY) to create the American Family Assistance Fund to assist victims and their families. Largely through churches, participants raised and distributed to victims more than \$6 million USD. Pregnant wives of the men who had been killed and unemployed workers from the restaurant Windows on the World were among the hundreds of grateful recipients.

In 2003, COPGNY hosted the National Leadership Forum on the Gospel in the City. Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church preached expositionally from the Book of Acts. As a result, a church-planting collaboration began with seventeen denominations joining in the work. Together we identify, train, and fund church planters. Our decadal goal is seven hundred new church plants in Greater New York, and we are on our way with more than fifty church planters in training each year.

In 2004, I took a team of pastors to attend the Willow Creek Leadership Summit. We were evaluating whether or not it would be an appropriate training resource for urban leaders in New York City. We decided to partner with the Willow Creek Association and began with six training sites in 2005, expanding to ten in 2006 and 2007. Of the 8,500 participating leaders in our region in the past three years, more than sixty percent have been ethnic minorities. This has been an incredible resource locally and globally, with the number of participating leaders globally reaching 100,000 in 2007.

In 2007, the New York City Leadership Center was incorporated to further address the leadership challenges of Greater New York. This embryonic effort will draw from the best regional, national, and global talent to train leaders in the world's leading global city. The purpose of the center is to synergize the best class training and service opportunities to radically impact Greater New York socially and spiritually.

The evangelical social awakening after the Fulton Street Revival parallels the movement of collaborating agencies after twenty years of praying together. God has raised up a community of intercessory organizations including Houses of Prayer, **Eagles' Wings**, and **New York City Intercessors**. The trust level is high among these diverse communities who are working toward a common goal of the renewal of our city, region, and beyond.

Endnotes

1. 1979. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press Academic.
2. 1997. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, USA: Judson Press.

Dr. Mac Pier is president of the **New York City Leadership Center** and **Concerts of Prayer Greater New York**. After working on staff with **InterVarsity Christian Fellowship**, he eventually served as founder and mobilizer of the united prayer movement of 6,200 churches throughout New York City, Long Island, northern New Jersey, and Fairfield

County, Connecticut. His leadership has led to Concerts of Prayer being described as one of the most developed urban prayer and pastoral networks in the world. Pier's latest book, *Spiritual Leadership in the Global City* (New Hope Publishers) was released in 2008.

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Himalayan Global Summit 2009

By Charisma Lepcha

New relations and shared visions were established 19-21 March 2009 when the Himalayan people journeyed from different parts of the globe to the Baptist Conference Centre in Jomtien Beach, Pattaya, Thailand, for the Himalayan Global Summit 2009. It was a gathering of 250 leaders from the Himalayan Nepali Church and the Nepali Diaspora Church representing fourteen countries.

The opening ceremony hosted a flag procession representing the many nations home to the diasporic Himalayan people. As the flag bearers made their way inside the hall and lined up in front of the stage, excited delegates all prayed in accordance to the theme of the conference: "From the Himalayas...to the ends of the earth," based in part on Acts 1:8.

Engaging with Nepali and Himalayan Churches Today

The summit was an attempt to go beyond the Himalayan borders in order to understand and engage in the present-day growth of Nepali diaspora churches around the world. Today, hundreds of Nepali churches and fellowships have been started and established by Nepalis who have left their homes seeking better job opportunities in different parts of the world. It is reported that in Malaysia alone there are about sixty churches of the diaspora. However, most of these churches are temporary establishments which may not exist when the current leaders return home, shared Dr. Adon Rongong, chair of the summit. "One of our objectives should be to reach out to the native people of their adoptive countries, train local leaders, and give a permanency to the Church," he explained.

At home, the Himalayan churches are also experiencing a growing mission vision and sending missionaries to other countries. "It was important to bring the Himalayan Church into the mainstream missionary sending movement," said Daya R. Pradhan, national coordinator for the summit. It was thus a chance to share the vision and also make known the opportunities and resources between Himalayan churches within and beyond the region. In sharing what God is doing in different parts of the world and the kind of role that needs to be taken by the Himalayan Church, this meeting was a great opportunity to share a common vision to fulfill the Great Commission.

Expanded Mission Vision

The slogan "Himalayan people, missionary people" has also taken a transformed meaning since it came to use in 1998. During its initial use, it was understood as Himalayan people reaching out to Himalayan people in the Himalayas, with focus on Nepal, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Bhutan. At the turn of the millennium, it was understood as Himalayan people reaching out to the Himalayan diaspora in urban India, East Asia, Gulf countries, and other parts of the world. Now, it has a broader meaning as it indicates Himalayan people reaching out to the world despite the cultural and linguistic differences. With emphasis on cross-cultural missions and the need to reach the ends of the earth, the Himalayan people now have a broader mission field.

Dr. Thomas Wang, president of Great Commission Center International and the main speaker at the conference, added a new rendition to the existing slogan: "Asian people, missionary people."

It has thus challenged and encouraged the Himalayan people to identify themselves as part of a larger movement. “It is timely and stretching our tent,” said Solon Karthak, Nepal coordinator for the summit.

In many ways, Wang has been a key patron and a visionary to this movement. He has been a part of the Himalayan Congress of Evangelism (HIMCOE) from its early days in 1994. His prayers and guidance thus far has been an encouraging and an inspiring story for most Himalayan leaders. “He is the father of this movement,” said Pradhan, who feels that Wang has always come and given awakening calls to the Himalayan people.

Another speaker at the summit was Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira, **Lausanne** senior associate for diasporas and international director of the **Filipino International Network** (FIN). Explaining the diaspora phenomenon in today’s world, he gave examples from the Filipino movement and equally challenged the Himalayan diaspora. FIN has also helped start Nepali Christian fellowships in the Philippines.

From revered speakers like Pastor Robert Karthak and Dr. Mangal Man Maharjan from Kathmandu to Jigme Norbu from Bhutan, delegates from Myanmar, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Germany, and a host of other representations shared the stage in the three-day conference.

On the third day, six workshops were conducted on topics like cross-cultural missions, diasporic ministry, women’s issues, children’s training, linking of returning new believers to church, and ministry in Malaysia.

Indeed, the summit demonstrated an outstanding support and cooperation from both the Himalayan and the diasporic churches in their first ever gathering outside the Himalayan region. There was a sense of historic achievement.

Dreaming Big into the Future

True enough, the future is exciting for the Himalayan people. “It is a big dream, but I can see Himalayan churches sending professional missionaries to unreached nations,” said Pradhan. There is also a need for young, emerging leaders to help carry the movement since plans are being made to organize many regional programs and perhaps a few more global summits outside the Himalayan region.

The Himalayan Global Summit 2011 will be held in Hong Kong.

On the final evening, representatives from various countries unanimously agreed to pursue the goal and objectives outlined in the Jomtien (Pattaya) Declaration. It was resolved to:

- continue for greater revival and impact of previous resolutions,
- bring awareness among believers about the diasporic community,
- expose new believers in the diaspورا to scriptural foundational teachings for their growth, maturity, and fruitfulness,
- enhance communication among Himalayan and diasporic churches,
- create unity,
- and develop relationship to better equip the churches.

We pray that this networking and linkage would be an asset in times of adversities and persecution. “The climax of the conference was the candle-lighting ceremony,” said Tira, referring to the time after communion during the concluding ceremony when each delegate held a candle and waited for the flame to be passed on from the stage. The room soon lit up as each delegate came forward and made their

commitment to world missions by putting down his or her signature on the world map laid out on the table before the stage.

It was truly a wonderful time for both Himalayan and diasporic Himalayan representatives from different places and backgrounds with widened goals and common visions. The celebration would continue as the jubilant delegates sang and danced to the theme song of “Himalayan people, missionary people...” before the night came to an end.

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