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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Stepping Outside the Westernization of the Gospel

By Lon Allison

Chicago, Illinois (USA) is in the midst of a very cold and snowy winter. Temperatures are far below normal almost every day, and this winter's snowfall totals are the highest in thirty years. When you live here, however, you get used to it. It is the way of winters in our land. However, a few days ago, my work took me to Charlotte, North Carolina (USA). Since Charlotte is further south, there was no snow, and the temperature was about sixty degree Fahrenheit (or about fifteen degrees Celsius). As I stepped from the airport terminal into Charlotte's warm evening air, the thought struck me that Chicago *really is cold and snowy!*

It is somewhat the same idea we write about in this issue of Lausanne World Pulse. Our theme is **the westernization of the gospel**. Most readers will agree that by and large, our evangelical theology and missiology is derived from a Western, or Enlightenment, worldview. One of our authors calls it the theology and missiology of Christendom. Certainly our "culture" shapes our reading of scripture and our views of life and God.

There is some truth in these assertions. One of the areas I direct at the **Billy Graham Center** at Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois, USA) is scholarships for international leaders in our graduate school. Each year we provide scholarships for fifteen to twenty international leaders pursuing masters degrees. To receive a scholarship, each recipient moves to Chicago, studies books written in English, and receives instruction from English-speaking and Western-trained scholars. We immerse our recipients in Western thought and culture and the way we read scripture. This is good, but it falls short in receiving education that translates into the student's heart culture. At least, I think this is the case. However, since I live here and have been trained here, I don't know for sure. Indeed, I'm quite as used to these styles of thinking, speaking, and living, as I am to wearing cold clothing in Chicago winters.

The point is this: the Church is greatly in need of evangelists, missionaries, pastors, and theologians from non-Western cultures to carefully read and interpret scripture and life from their worldview. The Western ways of interpreting life are not all right or all wrong—however, they are not complete. The fullness of God's image is expressed in the fullness of his creation and the multitudes of human cultures. Several of our authors are long-time missionaries or leaders from non-Western cultures. They help those of us who are primarily mono-cultural and Western to step back, drop some of our presuppositions, and ask God to reveal himself and life through multicultural voices.

This epoch of the Church affords the great opportunity for such missiology and theology to develop. I rejoice in the opportunity. I must lay aside my "professor" title and become a student again and again and again. I gladly lay aside my Chicago clothing to bask in and absorb the variety of God's adornments.

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NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: North Korea Tops World Watch List for Sixth Year

For the sixth straight year, North Korea tops [Open Doors](#)' World Watch List, which lists where persecution of Christians is the highest. Rounding out the top ten are: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Maldives, Bhutan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Laos, Uzbekistan, and China. Islam is the majority religion in six of the top ten countries: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Maldives, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Uzbekistan. Three countries have communist governments: North Korea, Laos, and China. Bhutan is the only Buddhist country on the Top Ten list. The World Watch List ranks countries according to the intensity of persecution Christians face for actively pursuing their faith. The list is compiled based on the answers to fifty questions covering various aspects of religious freedom from Open Doors' indigenous contacts, field workers, and persecuted believers. ([Open Doors USA](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: David Reeves Named President of JAARS

David Reeves has been appointed the next president of [JAARS](#), an organization which provides technical support and resources to speed Bible translation. Reeves, who will assume his new role in January 2009, originally served with JAARS before spending eighteen years in communications and aviation services in Indonesia. JAARS provides services to organizations such as [Wycliffe Bible Translators](#) and [SIL International](#). ([JAARS](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: Fredrick Boswell Named Executive Director of SIL International

Fredrick A. Boswell assumed his role as executive director for [SIL International](#) in January 2008. Previously, he served SIL as vice president for academic affairs, international translation coordinator, and entity director for SIL Solomon Islands. Boswell worked as a field linguist and translation advisor to the Cheke Holo language group in the Solomon Islands on Central Santa Isabel Island. He has also lived and worked in Peru and Papua New Guinea. Boswell's appointment follows the tenure of Dr. John Watters, who completed his maximum term limit. ([SIL International](#))

CHAD: Fears of Humanitarian Disaster

Amid reports that people are trying to flee the country, [World Vision](#) staff in Chad fear the situation could turn from a political crisis to a humanitarian disaster if fighting does not stop soon. "We did not expect things to happen this quickly. I fear that the entire capital could be destroyed. There is already much human and economic damage. Many civilians have been killed," said Lebourne Passiri, World Vision's national director in Chad. Rebel attacks, which are now centered on the presidential palace, have forced international aid agency World Vision to move staff and their families to safe houses and to close its office in the capital. It is feared that a humanitarian crisis could result if a negotiated ceasefire or a mediated transition of power are not achieved soon, as this could trigger factional fighting that would displace civilians. ([Christian Newswire](#))

ETHIOPIA: Center for Orphaned Children Opens

The Adana Children Center, sponsored by [Blessing the Children International](#), recently opened and will accept six hundred orphaned children over five years. Ten new children will be sponsored each month. Ethiopia is one of the countries hit hardest by the AIDS pandemic. With four million orphans in Ethiopia (twenty percent as a result of AIDS), it is a major problem the government describes as "tearing apart the social fabric" of the East African nation. Children at the Adana Children Center are initially cared for in the orphanage while a foster home is found. In their new home, children are loved and cared for as they receive provision and support—such

as clothing, healthy meals, life skills training, and the opportunity to go to school—from their sponsor. ([Blessing the Children International](#))

FRANCE: Majority of Births Out of Wedlock

In 2007, France became the first non-Scandinavian country in Western Europe where a majority of births are now out-of-wedlock. In France, 50.5% of the 816,500 births registered in 2007 were to unmarried parents, up from 48.4% in 2006 and forty percent a decade ago. Out-of-wedlock births kept pace with the rise of civil unions. In 2007, there were 305,385 of said "unions" registered in France, compared to only 266,500 marriages. In Sweden, Norway, Estonia, and Bulgaria, out-of-wedlock births have also passed the fifty percent mark. In the United Kingdom, births to the unmarried were forty-four percent in 2006, up a percentage point from 2005. In Catholic countries like Italy and Spain, births to married couples are still the norm (illegitimacy is twenty-seven percent in Spain and seventeen percent in Italy). Even so, in those countries, the percentage of out-of-wedlock births has doubled in the past decade. Guy Desplanques, head of France's agency for compiling demographic data, notes, "Marriage is now seen more as a celebration held to bring together family and friends, and less a necessary institution, especially given the growth of civil unions." ([Christian Newswire](#))

INDIA: Religious Cleansing by Hindu Radicals

On 23 December 2007 radical Hindus attacked thousands of Christians in India's eastern state of Orissa. Months later, hundreds of believers are still hiding out in the surrounding jungle, and two thousand are in refugee camps. According to a report for CBN News, "The attacks are part of a larger campaign by Hindu radicals to turn India into a Hindu nation." During December 2007, hundreds of Hindu radicals destroyed more than seven hundred Christian homes in India's eastern state of Orissa. Some ninety-five churches were demolished or burned to the ground. According to Hindu Umasankar Acharya whose group, Bajrang Dal, is suspected of taking part in the attacks, peace will come only when Christians in India stop proselytizing. ([ASSIST News Service](#))

KENYA: Bible League Continues Work Despite Violence

Violent clashes and deadly riots continue to erupt in Nairobi, as well as in Kenya's eastern and western provinces. [Bible League](#) staff members are navigating the country to make sure ministry continues. "Bible League has a strong focus of ministry among the poor who have been very hard hit in the violent conflict that is rocking Kenya," said Joseph Owens, vice president of Africa ministries for the Bible League. "We are continuing to provide Bibles to churches whose members have been displaced and properties destroyed. All Christians are trying to rely upon wisdom from Jesus to guide their actions in these very difficult times. The teachings of Jesus are the true hope for a better future in Kenya." Due to the conflicts, three Bible League ministry areas are completely shut down and more ministry areas may be forced to close. In 2007, Christians trained by Bible League in Kenya placed 140,228 scriptures and established 143 new churches. Owens confirms that God's Word and a commitment to Christ can sustain Kenyans during this uncertain and dangerous time. ([Bible League](#))

NIGERIA: Churches Destroyed in Shari'ah State

Around one thousand people were displaced, several critically wounded, and every church reportedly destroyed in Shira Yana, Bauchi State, Nigeria, on 2 February 2008. This follows recent incidents of religious violence in northern and central Shari'ah states. Tension is also mounting in Kano State, where around two hundred Shari'ah police were reported to have patrolled the streets of the Christian area of Sabon Gari in Kano City during the evening of 1 February. They were armed with an array of weaponry, including bows, arrows, sticks, and machetes. ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#))

UNITED STATES: IBS-STL Launches Urban Outreach New Testament

[International Bible Society](#) (IBS), a division of IBS-STL Global, launched an updated, newly-revised edition of the popular *My City My God* (NIrV) New Testament last month. The revised New Testament contains seven new testimonies from teens and Christian youth workers in major US cities, including Chicago, Denver, Los

Angeles, and New York, as well as a new introduction and notes. IBS collaborated with [YouthPartnersNet](#) and other ministries on the revised New Testament. Teen testimonies in *My City My God* tell of growing up amid violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and poverty. These testimonies reflect the grim realities of urban life for many, including that fact that nearly forty-three percent of urban teens drop out of high school, three in ten teen girls become pregnant by age twenty, and homicide and suicide are the second and third leading causes of death for teens ages fifteen to nineteen. Nearly three-fourths of teen homicides stem from gang violence. Nearly 476,000 copies of the original My City My God New Testament, including English and Spanish versions, have been distributed since its 1998 release. ([IBS-STL Global](#))

WEST AFRICA: New Trans World Radio Transmitting Site in West Africa

[Trans World Radio](#) (TWR) is now airing the good news of Jesus Christ into spiritually-needy West Africa. Broadcasts in fourteen languages began 1 February 2008 from a powerful 100,000-watt AM transmitter located in Benin, the birthplace of voodoo. The new broadcasting outlet marks TWR's fourteenth major international transmitting site; the facility has the potential to reach some sixty-three million people, many of whom belong to another major world religion. According to *Operation World* (21st century edition), most West African nations have numerous unreached people groups without an established indigenous evangelical church. Radio, then, is one of the most relevant and cost-effective ways to share Christ's love with people in this vast region. ([Trans World Radio—Africa](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: Addressing the Westernization of the Gospel

[Escaping from the Prison of a Westernized Gospel](#)

By Knud Jørgensen

“The dynamic of Christianity...is not in the sacredness of cultural forms—even those that God once used. The Christian dynamic is in the venturesomeness of participating with God in the transformation of contemporary cultural forms to serve more adequately as vehicles for God's interaction with human beings. What we seek is a Christianity equivalent in its dynamics to that displayed in the pages of the New Testament.”¹

Since the beginning of the new millennium, mission has been facing a dramatic shift in direction, from the East and South to the rest of the world. Mission is multidirectional, from everywhere to everywhere. Indeed, the majority of missionaries today come from the Global South.

This poses a challenge for Western churches, imprisoned as they are by the view that Western theology is universally valid. The Greco-Roman, Western framework of Christianity has remained in force up until our time. The Western character of the Church has resulted in churches that were born as a result of missionary work and therefore have adopted a Western style of belief.

Fundamentally, Christianity is universally equal for all; however, the forms of Christianity have not always been so.

In order to realize such universality, Christians in all cultures and nations have an equal right to produce their interpretation of the Christian faith. This implies a need for self-theologizing. Churches in the West carried out such self-theologizing for centuries. This was largely based on a shared culture. It is time to realise the limitations of that culture. We are obliged to seriously study our relationship with our own culture and how this relationship formed our understanding of the gospel. “A plurality of cultures,” writes David Bosch, “presupposes a plurality of theologies and therefore, for Third-World churches, a farewell to a Eurocentric approach...The Christian faith must be rethought, reformulated, and lived anew in each human culture.”²

A Norwegian colleague, Notto Thelle, uses the term “the double conversion of the missionary” to describe his own life and his encounter with people of a different faith in Japan. This encounter changed him as a missionary and made his Christian faith unfold in a larger world. I experienced something similar. Ten years in Ethiopia and many additional years in close contact with China and Asia have changed my life, my faith, and my theology. Two additional factors along the road of conversion were (1) meeting with the East-African Revival and (2) encountering growing and transformed churches and Christians in Ethiopia and China.

Letting Missiology Challenge Western Theology

This has, in the course of the years, made me realise that our Western theology is in “Constantine” bondage. This bondage implies a deep crisis of communication. The way out of the bondage and into the future is to let missiology challenge and even replace my Western theology.

The Asian missiologist Hwa Yung claims that “any authentic indigenous theology—indeed, any theology for that matter—must be missiological and pastoral in its fundamental conception.”³ *Missiological* means that which relates to the mission of the Church; *pastoral* refers to the process of nurturing the growth of converts and bringing them and their churches to maturity in faith and witness. This implies that the pastoral is linked to the missiological: “If the above is correct, then every theology must ultimately be judged by its efficacy in enhancing or obstructing the mission of Christ, the *missio Dei*.”⁴

My first years in Ethiopia made me realise that major parts of the theology I inhaled as a student in Copenhagen in the 1960s were quite far from being “authentic indigenous theology.” Rather, it was a theology developed within the Constantine epoch and therefore characterised by the fact that the Church was more preoccupied with “Christianization” than with mission. Today, we staunch, conservative Lutherans—and other established churches—need to admit that we are at the end of an era. This calls for a dramatic readjustment process.

As a university student I was drawn into a Western theology which, in many ways, was what Yung calls “unengaged.” We were children of the Enlightenment and therefore distinguished between theory and practise. It was my encounter with theologies from the Global South, first in Africa and then as a doctoral student at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, that helped me understand that theology cannot and must not be separated from the concrete world.

Truth cannot be separated from practise, and orthopraxis is as important as orthodoxy. Theology must therefore be based on *missional/missionary experience*—that was how the theology of the early Church came into being, as a theoretical framework of a conceptual thinking based on concrete mission experience. *Theological thinking must be missiological thinking if it aims to hold together practise and theory.*

The Bible as Casebook of Mission

The New Testament narratives are the prime examples of this. The Bible was not intended to be a textbook in theology, but to be a casebook about mission—God’s mission and our mission. The Bible includes narratives about the God who acts to our salvation and therefore equips his people to be sent to the world. Theology is therefore meant to be “an accompanying manifestation of the Christian mission and not a luxury of the world-dominating Church.”⁵

The Gospels are clearly written to witness about Jesus Christ to diverse target groups in the Greco-Roman world, and all the epistles have grown out of the pastoral needs of the new congregations in a mission situation. There was hardly time and space for the theological research of today. Rather, the scriptures of the New Testament came into being “in the context of an emergency situation, of a Church which, because of its missionary encounter with the world, was forced to theologize.”⁶

The biblical texts do not suit the unengaged theology of the Enlightenment. For the same reason, the missiology of the Global South resonates most closely with the biblical texts.⁷ A major problem, however, is that it is most often the Western, unengaged theology that has been exported to the rest of the world as part of the missionary period from the end of the eighteenth century.

This theology has become largely speculative, and often irrelevant to the mission and pastoral concerns of the Church in the Global South and in the West. It represents a blind alley and should not be regarded as the norm of Christian theology. This implies that we, together with the younger churches in the Global South, must protest against this theology; it is inadequate as a model for an engaged theology. It is a blind alley also in light of the Christian understanding and tradition as we find it in scripture, in the early Church and in the Reformation.

Authentic Theology Based on Pastoral and Missiological Practise of the Church

There can be no authentic theology unless it is based on the pastoral and missiological practise of the Church. Such an authentic theology will demand a personal engagement from the Christian and from the congregation: “Just as the church ceases to be church if it is not missionary, theology ceases to be theology if it loses its missionary character.”⁸

The first door out of my Western prison is called *contextualization* and *enculturation*. Let me say a few words about enculturation⁹:

1. **The two primary agents in enculturation are the Holy Spirit and the local community** (the laity more than the clergy), not a missionary from another culture.
2. **The focus is on the local situation.** God prefers to use the local dialect and relate to the social, economic, political, and religious context.
3. **Churches need to relate on a regional level** in the same way as the Protestant Reformation was an enculturation of the gospel in a Germanic context. In our time and age, it therefore makes sense to talk about an African or an Asian theology.
4. **Enculturation is about incarnation.** The Church, the witness to the gospel, is being born anew in each context and culture.
5. **Enculturation is both a matter of enculturation of Christianity and of Christianization of culture.** It is like the flowering of a seed that has been planted into the soil of a particular culture.

A second door out of the Western prison is to look critically at how we have identified the Church with the elite rather than with the marginalised classes. Indeed, this was a major reason why the churches were alienated from the working classes. How may a nineteenth-century, middle-class church come to terms with the twenty-first century?

The questions we need to ask ourselves are: (1) How can Western systematic theology continue to act as if it is universally valid and almost dismiss the contributions coming from the Global South? and (2) How is it possible for a Western theology to close its eyes to the screaming fact that the Church is confronted with a mission situation—and not with “Christianization”?

Endnotes

1. Kraft, Charles. 2005. *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 382.
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3. Yung, Hwa. 1997. *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology*. Oxford: Regnum, 19.
4. Martin Kähler, quoted from Bosch's *Transforming Mission*. 16.
5. Kähler, quoted Bosch's *Transforming Mission*. 16.
6. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. 16.
7. See Philip Jenkins' *The New Face of Christianity. Believing in the Bible in the Global South*. 2006. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. 494.
9. Taken from Bosch's *Transforming Mission*. 452ff.

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Facing the Empire: Trends in Ministry Formation

By Ron Fraser

“Change” is not the first thing a person associates with education. Words like “tenure,” or pictures of ivy-covered stone structures designed to keep threats to privilege from rushing in, are more likely the first picture we have in our minds. As the purveyor of treasures of “wisdom” to the young, we can perhaps justify a sense of permanence.

It is, however, the growing array of questions surrounding *what* those treasures are, and how they are being passed on, that begs us to “situate” the contemporary educational enterprise, inscribed as it is within a veritable Empire of Enlightenment rationalism (hereafter referred to as “Empire”). These questions become particularly poignant as they relate to *Christian ministry formation*, the task of entrusting faith to faithful people, to be distinguished from much contemporary “Christian higher education.”

Jesus’ Idea of Ministry Formation

The first picture of ministry formation in the Christian story is that of Jesus *inviting* twelve apprentices: “Drop everything! Follow me!” They did! He *showed* them how to pray, how to live authentically out of the presence and promise of God’s kingdom, and how to interpret the story they were in. He *gave them practice* in announcing the good news by sending them out two by two with virtually only their encounter with him. Through Jesus’ *storytelling*, the apprentices learned that following Jesus was a reflective adventure in living and relating in revolutionary ways. They learned the pulse of Jesus’ heart, loving obedience through his *modeling*, and the intimate bonds of camaraderie. They did not “go to school”; their learning “arrived” in the midst of their life together. Ministry formation was relational to the core!

Jesus' disciples were called to respond, not just to exercise intellect. And yet, even under the best educator who ever lived, they did not always get it right. This is a sobering reminder that "learning" is more than "teaching." But seeds were planted, which sprang to life after the resurrection.

Paul, with apprentices beside him, provides a similar picture of building into others the living realities of God's presence in loving service. He, too, illustrates a well-established practice of ministry formation as apprenticeship.

Christendom and Beyond

Ministry formation in the Constantinian world, several centuries later, emerged as something quite different from apprenticeship. While it differed in various settings, ministry formation was quite predictable in broad outline for at least 1,500 years: (1) learn Christian teaching (the *kerygma*) and (2) learn the sacramental arts, principally around life passages of birth, marriage, and death. Ministry became a "profession" concerned with "dispensing grace" in efficient ways—a kind of "spiritual gate-keeping" in the service of Christendom. In this context, ministry formation became a passport to privilege, and often wealth. And yet, the fact that numerous orders, reformations, and revivals kept bubbling up speaks to the gentle persistence of God calling his people to remember who they were and why they had been called.

The current post-Christendom world of the West invites its own questions about ministry formation. Most notably, will the flood of self-enclosed secularism engulf the Church and blind her to her first love? Sadly, the West's story—that "enlightened" people have outgrown their need for God—has led to what historian Andrew Walls calls the "largest and fastest recession in Christian history," even more sweeping than the first rise of Islam.¹ Millions of people continue to leave institutional, colonial forms of Christianity in the West. This trend needs to be held together with the reality that, as sociologists and census takers remind us, the majority of Canadians, at least, have not abandoned their belief in God or Jesus.

Hopeful Trends

If there is any hope for a faithful, nimble response to what Christians may be called to today, new approaches in ministry formation are beginning to play an important role. Three trends in ministry formation are particularly hopeful:

1. There is an increasing suspicion of information for information's sake. One aspect of this is that the notion of *personal truth*, properly understood, has "been far more congenial to the expansion of the gospel throughout the ages than any canon of propositional certitude."² The reality is that the unholy marriage between the *kerygma* and Enlightenment rationalism, which has dominated evangelical ministry formation, is being challenged.

This is not about succumbing to the flood of radical relativism. It is about a growing appreciation that the end of ministry formation is not information, but transformation. Information is no longer seen as an end in itself, but as a means to obedient response. As a clergy friend says, "My mental assent to certain understandings serves my relationships." This is part of the deep hunger for *authentic* (literally, *true to the original*) truth, truth which shapes us. It is truth which arrives not as an ideological "second-hand artifact," but as incarnated. It is truth with a present address, in instructors who have a story that is part of God's story, and who have a testimony as well as a title.

The rising cry against "stand and deliver education" is not a cry against authority, but a cry for the unreduced, uncut, authoritative voice of God. As Walls observes, the present situation just might provide "an opportunity of theological creativity that we haven't known since the first or fourth centuries." Like the original autographs of the New Testament itself, this creativity will reflect ways of being present in the world that *is* ministry.

Ministry formation has moved beyond exams and measuring the rational. “Discerning” ability to love, or growth of prayer life, is beyond counting. Reflective journaling that seeks to give shape and voice to faith in its more storied context is becoming widespread. Ministry formation is returning to its mentoring, relational, and apprenticeship roots.

2. There is a growing desire to integrate faith and learning. Under the reign of the modernist Empire, theology in many seminaries was featured as a “specialization.” This surfaced destructively in undergraduate education. A number of years ago, a brilliant student came to me at the end of the school year and said, “I don’t know what the matter is. I’m getting straight As in my Bible and theology classes, but I’ve never been further from God. Is this normal?”

It was a very disturbing moment. Memories flooded back of seminary experiences, and of the deep divide between “teaching about God” (theological education) and a diminishing “relationship with God” (faith formation). The ability to analyze, to dissect the world and God into ever smaller bits, so to define and control, probably does not lead to faith and love. We may know about “things,” however, it is people we are called to love. Might reducing God to his attributes be a path to atheism? Might cutting God down to the size of our rationality be the ticket to irreverent self-sufficiency? Was Friedrich Nietzsche onto something when he announced that we (Western rationalists) had “murdered God?” Is it any surprise that in places today where Christianity has experienced major growth (Africa, Asia, Latin America), that the universe seems bigger, even more populated, than that within the narrow confines of Enlightenment rationalism?

Ministry formation is responding to these concerns with integrative programs, pedagogies, and assignments. A more healthy balance between *being*, *knowing*, and *doing* has emerged. And creating space for Jesus (learning to pray, meditate, and serve humbly and daily with him) is at the center.

3. There is a growing desire for community. Tired of having their faith relegated to private piety by the Empire, many believers are seeking authentic ways of allowing the grace of community to shape their faith and service. They are finding support in revisited conceptions of Christian community. The “missional,”³ or “borderless,”⁴ church reflects very high views of the Church. God’s kingdom has a church. She *is* mission, the agent of God’s presence; she doesn’t *do* mission. The resurrection community bears testimony to God’s *shalom* in its worship and teaching, its service and suffering, in every relationship. Through community, boundaries between sacred and secular disappear and every human experience (even dark ones) is brimming with meaning.

Intentional community is increasingly a part of ministry formation. John Harris argues that ministry formation must have “belonging” and “vulnerability,” without which community is only a dream. Living in community enables the relational underpinnings essential for growth “far beyond academic engagement in the classroom.”⁵ As ministry formation moves beyond an “instructional transaction,” the credentials of staff will increasingly emphasize the ability to practice faith communally.

Facing the Empire means that now, more than ever, the Empire’s tenure is up for review. It means that the good news of God’s presence is *already* happening *in, through, and beyond* us. Ministry formation will hopefully continue to take its cue from the nature of God’s kingdom, rather than from the dictates of the Empire.

Endnotes

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2. Raschke, Carl. 2004. *The Next Reformation. Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 19.

3. Comes from Darrell Guder's 1998 book, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*.
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Imitation in Cross-Cultural Mission: Discussions in an African Context

By Jim Harries

Introduction

Learning can occur either by hearing and following instructions, or by imitation. For example, to peel an orange, first take the unpeeled orange into your left hand with the lump facing up. Pick up a knife and, clasping the handle in the palm of your hand, have your pointer finger along the back of the blade. Press the blade forcefully against the skin (outside) of the orange, near the lump, while making a back-and-forth motion.

Or I could say "Do this" and demonstrate. Demonstration is, in fact, how most people learn most of the time.

Learning by Imitating

"Learning by imitating" is very effective. Learning by following instructions in a manual requires a pre-existing detailed knowledge of language, which must itself have been acquired through imitation. It requires learning every eventuality. For example, telling someone to turn the key to start a car engine will not help a novice driver (who has not seen an example to imitate) unless you tell him or her to put it into the hole first, which hole it is, which way to put it, how far in to push it, which way to turn it, how much pressure to apply in turning, not to be surprised by the engine starting, etc.

Careful consideration of human learning will help us realise the vital and dominant role of imitation: watching someone ride a bike, then riding it; toddlers observing adults walking on two feet before trying it themselves; etc. "The meaning of a word is its use in the language," says Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.¹ Surely, then, observation and imitation set the foundation for all subsequent education. Even in the African Church I have seen children kneel, sob, and cry in repentance for their sins—not only because their hearts are strongly convicted (they may or may not be), but also because they have seen adults do so. Even African spirituality, at least to a degree, is learned through imitation.

If learning is rooted as strongly in imitation as indicated above, then we can assume that what is available to imitate will have a determining effect on people's comprehension, education, and worldview. A worldview is a platform on which subsequent learning occurs. Such a platform, I suggest, resembles a language and is integrally linked to a language. Someone who has received elementary schooling in German is ready to be taught in German at a university. Yet that particular platform is also built on a specific set of imitation experiences that determines the potential for further learning.

How can we help people who have such a foundation for ongoing learning? Specifically, how are we going to introduce them, or further enlighten them, to God's truth? There are two options: either continue the established learning process, or provide translation to enable further learning from a different foundation.

So, using our example above, someone familiar with German studying in the United Kingdom will either need to continue to be taught in German, or learn English. Therefore, in cross-cultural mission, someone rooted in a non-Western imitational platform will either have to go through a process of translation to transfer onto an unfamiliar (to them) platform, or be taught according to their existing platform.

Yet, conventional wisdom seems to ignore the gap between “imitational platforms.” This is like saying that a German-speaking person travelling to study in the UK will succeed without any English instruction. Or that someone qualified in mining engineering can, without difficulty, be enrolled in a masters degree sociology programme. In other words, someone with a foreign imitational platform is expected to be able to build on what he or she has without taking into account his or her particular platform. That is, differences in basic understanding arising from diverse foundations of imitation are ignored in ongoing personal development when, for example, theological education originating from one platform(s) (i.e. “the West”) is dispensed globally without interpretation or translation.

There are two levels of knowledge. One is like language, such as English, German, or Kiswahili. Another is the imitational foundation that underlies the use of language. The latter is not carried by words. Translating bread (English) to *brot* (German) does not tell my reader about the differences in behaviour between Germans and Brits in relation to bread. Presuppositions underlying what we say are contained in the background and not in the words that we use. Mere translation of language is not adequate for achieving intercultural transfer of knowledge with any profundity, unless there is a parallel translation occurring at the pre-suppositional level.

Learning in Mission

Instruction seems to be a dominant model in Christian mission from the West to the non-West. Hence, there is a widespread emphasis on theological *education* that comes with the export of books and educational programmes. Students from outside of the West pour into European and American universities to learn a multitude of disciplines, including theology. Learning English is more and more desired to aid such processes. Literature production, radio programming, websites, television preaching, CDs, etc., are the growing methodology of mission.

These methodologies are perpetuated by the “rewards” given to their followers. Non-Western leaders are increasingly those with competence in some Western field which allows them to be “understood” by and therefore come to be “rewarded” by westerners who hold the purse strings. This spreading of theological (and other) knowledge ignores the fact that the foundation of learning is in imitation.

Western missionaries do not always realise that others are watching them with the intent to imitate what they are doing. When a missionary drives (instead of walks) to a meeting, nationals take note. If a foreigner uses an intercom system, nationals have another behaviour to imitate. Using a foreign language is associated with “true” (Western) spiritual power. Giving clothes or blankets or providing a church roof are noted as components of effective gospel witnessing. The African person may think that Western missionaries would not give this example if they knew Africans could not imitate it. The African, in seeking to imitate the missionary, would then need a vehicle, the English language and an intercom system in order to be effective.

Minimising the “Foreignness”

The gospel of Christ can be known by its foreignness or unfamiliarity. What is foreign can be the most visible. When your paperboy arrives by bicycle and delivers the newspaper, your child tells you, “The newspaper has come.” But what if the newspaper boy lands by helicopter, then drops the newspaper through the door. Will your child say, “The newspaper has come”? Of course not! He will say, “This is amazing! A helicopter has landed outside!” The coming of the newspaper is no longer the news.

If a foreigner brings the good news of Jesus, the foreignness can be the first thing noticed. Consistent association of foreignness with the gospel will result in association between the gospel and foreignness. If the gospel is foreign, and if the missionary is a wealthy westerner, then we have the prosperity gospel. Facets of Western life consistently exported to Africa with the gospel come to be known as part of the gospel and are, in fact, syncretism.

This issue can be resolved by minimising the cultural gap between the preacher and those being preached to—between evangelist and congregation. Many westerners are experts at this within their home shores. Hence, Western churches have young peoples' programmes run by youth, women's programmes led by women and so on.

Why is the same wisdom not applied to Africa? Why are African libraries filled with books written by those in the West? Why is formal theological education in Africa almost invariably in English? Why are short-term missionaries, who have little chance to avoid being "foreign," crowding the continent? Why do other areas of the world (e.g. China) keep westerners out?

The peculiar humility and abject poverty of the African people plays a part. A poor person's answer to a proposal from a wealthy person is usually "yes." But does that make a wrong into a right?

Many African people resist the efforts of foreigners to gain an understanding of their languages and cultures. This is for many reasons:

1. The African culture is one in which knowledge on the whole is not shared freely.²
2. The details of African lifestyles often grate "unpleasantly" with Western values, resulting in criticism.
3. Being ignorant does not stop foreigners' material generosity, so those interested in financial advance may prefer donors to remain ignorant.
4. From colonialism through today, there has been a demonisation of all that is "African."³

More reasons could no doubt be added; however, these barriers must be overcome to render mission work effective.

"Appropriate" Western knowledge ("appropriate" being defined as an African understanding of Western words) is often the only alternative to an African wanting to advance in today's world. Certainly, this applies to theological education. But is meeting unfamiliar educational targets provided from abroad the wisest option for the long-term benefit of a church or community? It is hard to know, because this option is subsidised and alternatives are often excluded. For example, free education in Kenya is offered to all children—provided it is in English and follows a foreign curriculum. In the Church, books, trips abroad, lucrative salaries, support for orphan children, gifts, scholarships, grants, and loans can be conditional on the recipients (overtly) accepting westernisation.

In reality, the foundation set by imitation continues to provide the basic direction for African thinking. Whatever happens subsequently to help the person develop should build on that foundation.

Drawing a Conclusion

Being responsible requires understanding. The basis of understanding, we have discovered, is imitation. Westerners attempting to share the good news of Jesus with African people must imitate Africans in terms of

language, as far as possible, in day-to-day life. Only then will the missionary begin to be in a position to communicate a gospel that is not “foreign.”

“Going native” has, in the past, been seen as spurious. Yet because it is only to the degree that a missionary goes native that an African can be given an achievable example to imitate, the failure to go native is a failure to communicate. Its outcome is evident in the African Church; in many settings, it is a lop-sided dependent Church that is addicted to material prosperity and is unable to draw clear boundaries between what is Christian and what is Western.

For a foreigner to fall in line with the culture of his or her host people is only natural, if strenuous at times. There is a desperate need for Western missionaries who can be accurately persuaded to be vulnerable enough to imitate African people, so as to acquire something of their presuppositional foundation, and in turn, be able to present the true gospel.

Endnotes

1. Hanfling, Oswald. 1989. *Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*. Basingstoke, England: Macmillan Press, 42.
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3. Douglas, Mary. 1999. “Sorcery Accusations Unleashed: The Lele Revisited, 1987.” 177-193 In *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute*. 69(2):177-193. <http://links.jstor.org/sici=0001-9720%281999%2969%3A2%3c177%3asautlr%3E2.0.co%3b2-V>. Accessed 21 October 2005.

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A Critical Evaluation of the Westernization of the Gospel

By Daniel Kim

Personal Evaluation

About ten years ago a new missionary engaging in language and cultural learning in Asia thoughtlessly threw a surprising question to a senior missionary: “Why can’t they (national people) accept the gospel from the West? They seem to accept everything from the West: food, music, movies, car, technologies, etc.” A deep, sub-conscience captivated his pre-assumption that the gospel is of the West. I carelessly pre-judged him, thinking, “How dare you bring the ‘westernized’ gospel of Jesus Christ from your country to Asia without de-westernization?”

I honestly recognize that I might not have been much different than this Western missionary. Although I am Asian, I grew up and was educated in the United States. Because of this, I have been “westernized” in many aspects of my life, especially my biblical and theological training. My westernized education and training have left tremendous marks on my mission work—in spite of my intentional attempts at contextualization.

When I was in the United States, I used evangelistic tools such as *Evangelism Explosion*, the *Four Spiritual Laws*, and the *Bridge Illustration*; however, when I began planting churches as a missionary in Asia, I began using evangelistic tools that were culturally appropriate to the native culture. I am a Presbyterian ordained minister in the United States and am familiar with Presbyterian ways of worship, baptism, and church

organization. On the mission field, however, I have wrestled to contextualize local expressions of worship and church organization to avoid any form of imperialism and syncretism.

As director of the Chiang Mai Theological Seminary, I have constantly struggled with the current seminary curriculum that has been transplanted from the typical evangelical seminary. Although I do not deny the proper place for formal biblical and theological training which comes from the West, I agonize over how to de-westernize the seminary training to make it more suitable to the local context. Is formal training the only and the best way? How about informal and non-formal biblical training? Is systematic theology the only way to teach a theology class? Can we adopt narrative theology as a way to teach a solid theology? Much homework is needed. Being de-westernized or culturized is a long process which requires divine discernment, constant dialogue, and much prayer.

Biblical and Historical Evaluation

The beautiful essence of the gospel is its flexibility and divine capability to root in any culture or people group. In Acts 10, the de-jewishization of the gospel was inaugurated at Cornelius' house where the Gentile Pentecost birthed the Gentile Church. The Jerusalem Counsel in Acts 15 confirmed the de-jewishization of the gospel to the Gentiles. Harold Kurtz elaborates on the impact this had on the spread of the gospel:

The Roman Empire would not have been threatened by those early Christians if they had kept their Jewish roots—insisting that everyone who became a follower of Jesus had to de-culturize, leaving their Greek/Roman culture and becoming cultural Jews. It was when the good news of Jesus became Romanized that it threatened the established powers and authorities.¹

Unlike the biblical example of the de-culturization of the gospel, parts of Church history painfully portray missions as *Europeanization*.² Indian converts were required to dress and cut their long hair like Portuguese and Chinese male converts. The conversion of the natives required them to leave their cultures and adopt Western civilization, with its nobler “moral precepts,” “better methods of work,” and “high culture.”³ Transplanting the westernized gospel was a form of religious imperialism that was culturally inappropriate and insensitive.

Contemporary Evaluation

Both non-Western and Western missiologists believe that transplanting Western Christianity to the non-Western world is no longer acceptable. Bong Rin Ro expresses his frustration of seeing Western, un-contextualized, theological ideas crammed into Asia.⁴ William Kornfield, quoting a Southern African Christian leader, warns that the Western cultural transplant is one of the greatest threats to the growth of the Church worldwide.⁵

To be effective, any missionary strategy must be reproducible. The westernization of the gospel, however, is a gigantic hindrance to reproducibility. The *reduplication* model of church planting, illustrated by Wilbert R. Shenk, portrays missionaries consciously or unconsciously transplanting and reproducing in another culture the type of church of their origins, with its organizational structure, laws, ways of worship, and theology.

In some aspects, westernized Christianity has captivated the gospel in Western culture for centuries. Examples of this include:

1. A church needing full-time clergy who have graduated from a Bible college or seminary.
2. A church meeting once a week on Sunday morning around 10 or 11 a. m.
3. A church needing a building.
4. A church needing a three-point sermon.

5. Church planting needing lots of funding.

The cry of the de-westernization of the gospel is also happening in the West. The West has been slowly learning from the East. Multiculturalism has enhanced the dialogue and communication to understand better the need of the de-westernization of the gospel.

Two gigantic tidal waves impacting the westernization of the gospel are globalization and urbanization. Each impacts the way Christianity is spread around the world. For example, globalization of worship is evident in many urban churches around the world. Songs and musical instruments from the West are gradually accepted by non-Western Christians. Unfortunately, in some instances, this has led to non-Western Christians rejecting their own cultural songs and musical instruments.

Practical Evaluation

So how do we “de-westernize” the gospel? Two points should be noted.

1. **De-westernization of the gospel should not lead us to “Easternize” the gospel or “Africanize” the gospel, but to rediscover authentic, apostolic, biblical Christianity.** Every culture is imprisoned in sin. We must ask ourselves, what parts of Western Christianity are “Western culture” and what parts are true “biblical Christianity”? I do not advocate denying every aspect of Christianity through the West. Indeed, rich Christian heritages have been transmitted through Western Christianity to non-Western Christianity.
2. **De-westernization is a long process which requires time, critical dialogue with nationals, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.** It is a growing process. The Body of Christ from every part of the world should work together to make the gospel suitable to every culture and language. This, as the worldwide Church, must be our goal in the coming years.

Endnotes

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4. Ro, Bong Rin and Ruth Eshenaur. 1984. *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*. Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 64.
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PERSPECTIVES

The Productivity Myth

By John Edmiston

The three moments we most remember Jesus for are times when he was completely, physically motionless, when he was: (1) wrapped in swaddling clothes as a baby, (2) nailed to the cross, and (3) laying in the tomb. At these three moments Jesus' productivity was not measurable by any modern, corporate missionary standard; and yet it is precisely these moments that changed the world.

Similarly, many of the prophets and apostles did their greatest work while in prison or in exile. These men of faith did not have corporations—instead, they had deserts and disciples. Indeed, none of the prophets or apostles seemed to have ministered from organizational strength; they were Spirit-led individuals: “The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

These observations, along with several others, have led me to question the way we often do missionary work today. We have blended modern management theory with the urgency of the Great Commission to create an addictive and compulsive “productivity treadmill” that is emotionally, mentally, and spiritually exhausting. The presence of spiritual qualities such as love, joy, and peace has been replaced by Excel spreadsheets and the need for an increased number of indicated decisions for Christ per donor dollar. As a direct consequence the Church is being deprived of deeply spiritual missions exemplars that can inspire future generations.

First Corinthians 3:10-15 tells us about God's reward system, which blesses those who work with “gold, silver, and precious stones.” Generally, such works are small and difficult but of exceptionally high quality. By contrast are the works of “wood, hay, and stubble,” which are larger and easy to build, but of quite low quality. In the eternal perspective the small “diamond ring” ministry will last and be rewarded while the large “haystack” ministry will perish. (This is not to condemn all large ministries.) Thus, the truly effective and productive missionary is not the one with the largest organization, but the one whose precious and godly work of love survives into eternity. There are several ways we can better attain this high goal:

1. **We must reclaim our times of worship**, both our private times of prayer and Bible study and our corporate worship, including missionary prayer meetings. Let us dare not serve God without worshipping him regularly. Indeed, how can we build with “gold, silver, and precious stones” if the Spirit of prayer is absent from our lives? The idea that we have so much to do for the kingdom that we have no time to worship God is utterly false. The reformer Martin Luther said, “I have so much to do today that I must needs spend three hours in prayer.”
2. **We must study God's methods of ministry and accept them**, even if they include times “in the wilderness.” True ministry is God's Spirit working through us. Even when we are imprisoned or persecuted like the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 33), God's word can come to us in great power. Spiritual power is often unleashed when we are at our weakest (e.g., Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail; John on the island of Patmos). Second Corinthians 4:7 reads, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” Second Corinthians 12:9-10 says, “And [Jesus] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore I will rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may overshadow me. Therefore I am pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am powerful.”

The biblical heroes of faith often ministered from weakness, poverty, and isolation—sometimes spending years at a time withdrawn from all public ministry. Church history continued this pattern with classics such as *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was written from jail, and *Practicing the Presence of God*, which was a record of a prayerful monk who lived a simple life by doing chores in a monastery kitchen.

We missionaries must repent of seeking significance through corporate paradigms. We must start embracing the cross, along with all the costs involved in doing that. Jesus does not want his servants to be spiritually destitute. God calls us to be more than executives. He calls us to be carriers of his light and vessels of his grace.

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Missions with Spanish and Portuguese Accents

By Grant McClung

More than twenty years ago, I was given the opportunity to be a part of a delegation of North American observers to a historic interdenominational missions congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

It was called by the Spanish and Portuguese acronym, “COMIBAM ‘87” (“Comibam” meaning “Congreso Misionero Ibero-Americano” or the “Ibero-American Missions Congress”). More than three thousand participants from the wider world of “Ibero-America,” including all of the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries of the Americas, as well as the colonial “mother” countries of Spain and Portugal, came together.

Looking back and looking around, we can thank God for what was “then” (1987) and what is “now” (2008). These following seven areas of our Ibero-American world evangelization partners hold great potential for what “will be” in the years to come:

	Then (1987)	Now (2008)
Personnel	limited full-time missionary personnel	a growing percentage of missionaries from Ibero-America
Pioneers	mission to unreached people groups was a dream for most	dedicated personnel opening up and remaining in “restricted access” nations and among unreached people groups
Parishes	some local churches involved in world missions	an explosion of supporting congregations who are praying, giving, and going into world missions
Partners	around sixty Ibero-American sending organizations, with around 1,600 cross-cultural missionaries	more than four hundred sending organizations and ten thousand missionaries
Publications	few Spanish and Portuguese-language missions resources	a proliferation of printed and electronic missions training resources. In my own denomination, we have just mailed my own www.Creyenteglobal.com (the Spanish version of my www.Globalbeliever.com) to over 1,200 pastors and local congregations in the US and Puerto Rico alone.
Professors (Trainers)/Promoters	only a handful of trained missions teachers/mobilizers	a wider array of Hispanic/Latino missions veterans with professional training in missiology and intercultural ministry
Prayer/Missionary Passion	mainly focused on evangelism in Hispanic/Latino culture	a “white hot” missionary fervor for “the ends of the earth”

As a teenager, I had my first short-term missions experience into the heart of Mexico. Now, after scores of missions experiences across Ibero-America, including my own missionary leadership in Spain and Portugal, I can say that “missions with Spanish and Portuguese accents” will be one of the defining trends in the future of world missions. Additional trends and information can be found at such sites as: www.comibam.org and www.comhina.org.

Dr. Grant McClung is an advisor to the Missions Commission of the [Pentecostal World Fellowship](#) and is a member of the International Executive Council for the [Church of God](#) (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA).

Together as One: Reconciliation in Serving In Mission

SIM (Serving In Mission) is almost 115 years old. Any organization with that much history has baggage, some of which is not very pretty. In the past eight to ten years we have been unpacking one of those bags, namely, our past exclusivity among our missionary force.

Internationally, SIM has been a very diverse mission; however, there has been very little diversity among missionaries sent out from SIM USA. We have addressed the problem of our exclusivity at several levels, including our board governance, leadership, hiring, recruiting, church connections, and our past. We knew that in the past some American mission agencies had not welcomed African American missionary candidates. As we examined our archives, we discovered that we were one such agency.

During the early twentieth century the colonial governments in parts of Africa did not want African American missionaries in the countries they controlled, and the Sudan Interior Mission, one predecessor of the current SIM, complied with their request by not accepting African American missionaries. The policy changed in 1957; however, as far as we could tell, the period of not accepting African American missionary candidates had never officially been acknowledged by SIM. When this came to the attention of the SIM USA board, they responded in July 2007 by passing the following apology and request for forgiveness:

“SIM USA has become aware that during an undetermined time in our past, our predecessor, the SIM North America Council, did not accept African American candidates as missionaries with SIM. This practice was adopted to comply with the wishes of the colonial governments which then controlled the African countries where SIM worked. The practice was an unwritten policy, but was ended by a formal Council vote in 1957.

SIM USA recognizes that this practice was a sinful exclusion of our African American brothers and sisters from a potential avenue of ministry. We confess that sin to God, and we ask the forgiveness of Jesus’ Church here on earth. Specifically, we ask the forgiveness of our African American brothers and sisters in Christ and of the African American evangelical mission’s community in the United States. Our desire is to be a missionary agency for the *whole* Church, and to be kingdom partners in mission with all those who share our biblical commitments.”

This apology was formally read by Steve Strauss, director of SIM USA, on 18 January 2008 at Columbia International University's 2008 Missions Strategy Seminar: "Together as One for God's Greater Glory," based on John 17:23. The focus of the seminar was reconciliation within the Church to enhance mobilization for missions. After the public apology, Strauss washed the feet of three African American church leaders as a symbol of SIM’s repentance.

(This article was edited from a Serving In Mission news release.)

URBAN COMMUNITIES

Introduction: Ministry with the Urban Poor in Nordic Climates

By Glenn Smith

One rarely connects the urban poor as we are defining it in this series (see the statistics in the side bar) with the Northern Hemisphere. However, as we are in the middle of winter in the north, I thought it would be appropriate to ask two practitioners who work with the urban poor in Canadian cities to contribute to our series.

As we have walked with practitioners over the past six months into Cap-Haïtien, Luanda, Bophal, Calcutta, Cairo, and into the Roma communities in Romania, we have seen that poverty is a broad concept. It touches economic, social, physical, and spiritual realities. It affects peoples' identity and ability to participate in the welfare of the community. It includes social exclusion, absence of harmony in life and well-being, and deprivation at every level of life. However, as Jayakumar Christian points out, the causes of poverty can be traced to "inadequacies in the worldview."¹

A worldview can be a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty. All cultures and societies have within their worldview construct aspects of fallenness. And as we have seen, true Christian spirituality cannot be divorced from the struggle for justice and care for the poor and the oppressed. Spiritual formation is about empowering Christians to live their faith in the world.

As you hear from Cornelius Buller and Michel and Lynne Monnette, you will see that economic poverty is not the primary theme. In fact, compared with the first six cities we have studied, this should not even be an issue. Yet this is why good missiology with a holistic understanding of poverty allows us to examine communities through a different lens. Buller discusses youth ministry with Aboriginal peoples from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the Monnettes describe a new initiative in Canada's oldest poor neighbourhood in Montréal, Québec.

As I write this introduction from Montréal, it is negative twenty-two degrees Celsius (negative seven degrees Fahrenheit). It is the same temperature in Winnipeg. We have had over two hundred centimeters (over six feet) of snow in Montréal already this winter. As you read the stories of these marvellous practitioners imagine what it is like to minister with people facing these climatic realities. In Nordic cultures all over the Northern Hemisphere there are urban poor living in substandard situations facing harsh climatic conditions. It is important to learn from their realities.

Endnote

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Working Definitions and Facts

"Urban poor" defined: Those living on less than US\$1 or US\$2 per day (Millennium Development Agenda). Those living with inadequate income, shelter and access to infrastructure and basic daily services. Those who have an unstable asset base, little to no access to their rights as citizens and are voiceless and powerless in their communities.

Number of urban poor: est. 2 billion

"Slum community" defined: Communities with inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation, poor structural housing, overcrowding and insecure residential status (UN-Habitat).

Number of people living in slum communities: est. 924 million

du Nord d'Haïti. He is also professor of urban missiology at Bakke Graduate University in Seattle, Washington, USA.

Hochma: A Different Way to Plant a Church with the Urban Poor

By Michel and Lyne Monnette

In 1999, a friend of mine recounted the story of a church plant in downtown Chicago, Illinois (USA). I said to myself, “I want be a person like that!” Then in 2000 I read a book in French by Ray Bakke and Glenn Smith entitled *Espoir Pour la Ville—Dieu Dans la Cité* (English: *Hope for the City—God in the City*) in which the authors recounted similar stories in other cities. The call to a quiet life in the suburbs was not for our family. What God started in the Garden of Eden he will conclude in the celestial city spoken of in the Book of Revelation. We understood the city as a privileged blessing of God.

At the same time I was reading books on church planting and was looking for different ways to approach church planting with poor urban dwellers.¹ We have launched a very different approach with the urban poor in our neighbourhood. Rather than talking about church planting, we describe our experiment as a “contribution to community development.”

Hochma: An Overview of One of Canada’s Poorest Neighbourhoods

We work in *Hochelaga-Maisonneuve*, better known as *Hochma*. If you know Hebrew, you will recognise this as a play on the word for “practical wisdom.” We have learned that the poor seek wisdom often above all else. Since Canada’s first census in 1871, Hochma has been the poorest neighbourhood of any large section of a Canadian census metropolitan area. According to Canadian urban geographer David Ley,

The deindustrialization of Montreal’s “city below the hill” has been particularly devastating. By 1986, the collapse of the economic base in the industrial southwest resulted in unemployment of over twenty percent, and demographic flight, as the population fell by one-half from its 1961 level of 107,000. A similar economic catastrophe hit the francophone waterfront neighbourhoods east of downtown, and in each instance recreational and tourist initiatives have featured prominently in redevelopment plans.

The Lachine Canal, a former industrial thoroughfare running through the heart of the southwest, has been declared a national historic park, while in the east, new tourist and leisure amenities have been constructed around the Olympic stadium. Nonetheless, these initiatives have scarcely dented *the most extensive concentration of deep poverty in any Canadian inner city. East of downtown Montreal is a solid block of over twenty census tracts in acute distress where more than forty percent of persons fall below statistics of Canada’s low-income cut-off* [italics mine]. Unlike the patterns in Toronto and Vancouver, Montreal’s geography of poverty remained remarkably stable throughout the 1990s.²

The broader borough has a population of 128,440 people. (The Greater Montreal area has 3.5 million people.) Our neighbourhood includes 48,735 people. Interestingly, the greater metro area is the third most densely populated area in North America with 847 people per square kilometre. It follows New York City and Boston (Massachusetts, USA). Hochma has 5,472 people per square kilometre. The neighbourhood is composed mainly French-Canadians. Only ten percent of the population are immigrants; only three percent are recent arrivals. Ninety-five percent of the residents are francophone (compare this to Montréal, which is only sixty-six percent francophone). Visible minorities comprise nine percent of the population. By every social indicator, it is a suffering area. Below are some comparisons.

Issue	Hochma	Island of Montréal
Single-parent families (the percentage in 1981 was 35.3%)	51%	33%
Unemployment rate	12.8%	9.2%
People living under the poverty line	30%	12.8%
Average family income	\$40,364CAD	\$62,409CAD
Rate of victimization ³	35.6%	26.5%
Rate of externalisation ⁴	28 cases per 1,000	21 cases per 1,000
Teenage pregnancy rate	64 cases per 1,000	28 cases per 1,000
15-24 year olds not going to school	49%	31.6%
Juvenile delinquency rate	78 cases per 1,000	61 cases per 1,000
Life expectancy at birth	Men: 68.6 years Women: 76.9 years	Men: 74.8 years Women: 81.1 years
Suicide mortality rate	21 cases per 100,000	15 cases per 100,000
Infant mortality rate	8.9 cases per 1,000	5.6 cases per 1,000
Avoidable mortality rate	92 cases per 100,000	63 cases per 100,000

From the profile of the population in the borough of Hochma done by the CSSS (Family and Social Welfare Centres of Hochma, Olivier-Guimond, and Rosemont), the mortality rates in this borough for the most important causes of death are higher than any other part of Montréal. See chart below.⁵

Issue	CSSS (rate per 100,000 people)	Island of Montréal (rate per 100,000 people)
Cancer	277	253
Sicknesses linked to the circulatory system	366	320
Sicknesses linked to the respiratory system	93	79
Trauma, non-intentional (accidents, falls, intoxication, etc.)	28	23
Suicide	21	15

During the 1990s, Hochma was the scene for an intense territorial war between two biker groups—Hell’s Angels and the Rock Machine. It was a violent battle for control of the Canadian drug trade. With the death of an innocent 7-year-old boy and a federal anti-drug law, the neighbourhood is less violent, but still very poor.

The Church in Hochma

Residents of Hochma are negative toward the institutional church.⁶ Because of this, we knew we could not simply use new methods—we had to have a totally different manner of thinking about how to be the people of God with the urban poor. Even using the expression “church planting” implies a certain paradigm—a meeting place, Sunday school, a way to worship, preaching, attendee figures, etc. Modern Christians think of church planting in economic terms. In our neighbourhood this will not work. We have changed our vocabulary to reflect our vision. We are using community development models and methods and want to contribute to the spiritual transformation of the neighbourhood. Our conversations with friends and neighbours start there. We seek to *incarnate* Jesus in our neighbourhood; we do not simply seek to bring people to God.

The marginalization of the social significance of religion and church involvement in Montréal (also defined as “secularization”) calls us to take our devotion to Christ more seriously. Spiritual formation is about empowering Christians to live their faith in the world. True Christian spirituality cannot be divorced from the struggle for justice and care for the poor and the oppressed.

The fundamental question we needed to examine is how poverty affects worldview and how worldviews can transform poverty. Poverty is a broad concept touching economic, social, physical, and spiritual realities; it affects peoples’ identity and vocation. But as Jayakumar Christian points out, the causes of poverty can be traced to “inadequacies in the worldview.”⁷ A worldview can be a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty.

Our mission statement translated from French reads: “We desire to establish an innovative community that pursues reconciliation with God, with others, and with ourselves in the neighbourhood of *Hochelaga-Maisonneuve* by Jesus Christ; a community rooted in discipleship and integral mission oriented to the re-establishment of human dignity for the most marginalized of the neighbourhood.”

We started a weekly Bible study with people in our immediate neighbourhood; our focus is on the parables of Jesus and the spiritual practices of the Christian life. We have regular conversations in local coffee shops on the weekends. During the Christmas season last year, fifty-five people came to a supper and party we organized. We launched an economic development project. With a Montreal-based Christian organization, we started a network with all the Protestants and Roman Catholic congregations to explore ways to reconnect the Church with the milieu.

God’s heart beats for the poor. God’s people are his representatives to proclaim with love the reconciliation that our culture often rejects because of its anti-institution bias. But this culture searches for authentic community. We want to offer the residents of Hochma the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

1. Rick Warren’s book *The Purpose Driven Church* helped me to learn that there is a big difference between planting a congregation and transplanting Christians. The book by Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, helped me understand some biotic principles of growth. These books (plus five years of professional work in Paris to help French church planters) equipped us for the work we have undertaken in Montréal.
2. Ley, David and Heather Frost. 2006. “The Inner City.” In *Canadian Cities in Transition, Local Through Global Perspectives*. 3rd edition. Eds. Trudi Bunting and Pierre Filion. Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press, 195.
3. *Victimization* refers to children who have suffered from abandonment, negligence, sexual abuse, or physical abuse and are now living in youth centres.
4. *Externalization* refers to children who suffer from behaviour disorders or have committed a minor crime and are now living in youth centres.
5. Compilations done by Public Health of Montréal (Direction de la santé publique de Montréal) starting from an electronic file of deceased people compiled by the Department of Development of Information & Management of Information (Service de développement de l’information et la Direction de la gestion de l’information) of the Department of Family and Social Welfare (MSSS—ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux), February 2001. Electronic.
6. The reasons for this are many and we do not have space to address them here.

7. Christian, Jayakumar. *Powerless of the Poor: Towards an Alternative Kingdom of God Based on the Paradigm of Response*. Ph.D thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, USA, 340.

Michel Monnette was born in a poor neighbourhood of Montréal. He did his theological studies at the Université de Montréal, but now owns a major technology company. **Lyne Monnette** was born in Sherbrooke, Québec, but grew up in Montréal. She studied accounting and management at the Université de Sherbrooke. She and Michel have three children.

Urban Youth Adventures: Winnipeg's North End

By Cornelius Buller

Urban Youth Adventures (UYA) is a new Winnipeg (Manitoba, Canada) inner city initiative with a vision to help youth overcome poverty and its affects. UYA focuses on the north end of the city. Rail yards divide the north end from the city's central business and commercial districts. These yards are a physical, social, and economic divide. They are the heart of an industrial and commercial zone that is also the scene for prostitution, drug trade, and violence.

Nestled up against the yards and the warehouses are the poorest housing tracts in the city. These include social housing, slum landlords, empty lots, boarded-up houses and businesses, for sale and lease signs, burnt out buildings, and dumpsters. The provincial government recently announced significant new money to catch up with maintenance issues, including leaky roofs, mould, and bugs in the social housing units. "Beware of Dog" signs are common along with fences, gates, and alarm systems. In some neighbourhoods, it appears everything is at risk. Most yards are not well kept. New initiatives, such as Habitat for Humanity and government-funded programs, resist further degradation of these neighbourhoods. Beyond the rail yards there are transitions for new housing and properties that are well kept. Businesses are active and prices are more in line with market values. There are fewer "Beware of Dog" signs.

Problems on the North End

The people who live in the seven neighbourhoods that comprise the north end of Winnipeg reporting Aboriginal identity range from fourteen percent to fifty-five percent of the population. (Winnipeg as a whole is at nine percent.) These neighbourhoods also report significantly higher proportions of people under twenty years of age. One neighbourhood, Lord Selkirk Park, reports that forty percent of the population are under age twenty. Many children are raised by older siblings. Parents can be difficult to find. In the summer, children roam in groups at night and destroy windows and gardens.

Poverty in this population is entrenched. It is generational. High incidences of alcohol and other substance abuse as well as sexual abuse of children have been reported. Our ministry has encountered disproportionately high numbers of children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorders (FASD). Sufficient and healthy foods are absent from significant numbers of homes. Supplies of clean, untattered, and proper (sufficiently weather proof) clothing are limited. There is much suspicion between people. Caucasians stand out and may feel unwelcome. Some people are hurting, fearful, and angry. There seems to be a fairly high level of racial awareness and racism is experienced. One Métis person explained that she and her family are targeted by more visibly Aboriginal persons in the community.

Mission and Urban Youth Adventures

UYA focuses on youth out of the conviction that given nurture and encouragement, youth can accomplish great things for themselves and their communities. Our intention is to help youth become agents of community transformation.

We believe that God not only *desires to* but *is* reconciling the world to himself in Christ and that the Holy Spirit is a key divine mover in this (e.g., Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9-16). Followers of Jesus are called to participate with God in this God-driven initiative (2 Corinthians 5:16ff). We believe that children and youth have important parts to play and that they are also called to co-labour with God. We take a passage—“a little child will lead them” (Isaiah 11:6)—and we apply it to our context. If we believe in children and bless them, work with them, and empower them to hope and to dream, and if we continue to help them acquire knowledge, skills, disciplines, attitudes, and access to resources, they, their families, and their communities will be transformed.

Mission in this community must be done in humility. When the rich reach out in mission to the poor, it is quite easy to fall into the trap of trusting in ourselves. Instead, we must go as called participants with God in the mission of God. We go, knowing that we are incomplete and that the people we meet co-labour with God in the mission field that is our own broken lives. If we do not go with this respect, humility, and openness both to receive grace and to learn, then perhaps we will come to our suffering brothers in the manner in which Job’s friends visited him (Job 2:11ff). Our desire is to work together with people and anticipate seeing God do great things all around, including within ourselves and our sending communities.

We build relationships with youth and their families. Programs are not the goal. We ask our volunteers to relate to youth in small groups and one-on-one. We encourage them to listen to the youth, to get to know what is important to them and what is going on in their lives, and to listen to their dreams. Our programs and activities are set up to help us provide specific encouragement and positive reinforcement. At this point, our *Great Plains School of the Arts* is our major focus. Currently, we provide afterschool music lessons and lunch hour practice times in a neighbourhood school. There are also “jam sessions” (opportunities to play and sing with other musicians) for the youth who take lessons. The sessions are held in a neighbourhood church. Also, staff visit homes of the youth in order to build relationships with the families. Finally, there are performance opportunities.

We introduce biblical principles through short “God talks.” Our overarching theme is: “Who are you and who do you want to be?” We speak about topics such as: “I am specially made,” “somebody loves me,” and “respect starts with me.” We do not force God on youth, nor do we use fear or intimidation. However, we are open about our faith and pray with kids as opportunities arise. We do not treat all kids the same; instead, we value their unique situations. We try to create a positive atmosphere for workers and to be encouraging in our interactions so that this will serve as a model for the youth. As staff, we support and listen to volunteers to see how their experience is going and how we can make things better. UYA has a Results-Based Management (RBM) system which requires that we work together to give feedback, both positive and negative, after every event. Listening to the youth, staff, volunteers, and community are key parts of this.

The Beginnings of Transformation

UYA is seeing the beginnings of transformation in individual lives and a few signs of positive developments between community institutions. Two examples demonstrate this.

First, one jam night a volunteer spent time with a voice student, teaching her a simple song on the piano. Afterward, with everyone watching, the volunteer invited her to play for everyone. She was reluctant; however, she was talked into it and afterwards everyone clapped. As a result, other kids were also willing to perform. One staff member told me,

I feel I have been transformed through conversations in which the kids or their parents let us into their lives. When you can see them opening up or becoming vulnerable, that is incredibly powerful. Seeing the kids excited about learning something during the lessons is a huge motivation for me. One boy comes up to me after each guitar lesson and tells me about his progress and I give him a high-five. It’s mostly the little things that seem to transform me. Maybe it is similar for those we are working with.

Second, we are youth with FASD become more focused. For example, during her noon-hour music practice sessions, one girl was always asking, “Can I leave now?” More recently, when practice time was complete and it was time to go, she said, “Okay, but I’m going to play one more song first.” This desire and ability to focus on practice is remarkable and in time we trust will transfer to other areas of her life.

If you think of UYA and Winnipeg in your prayers, pray for love, faith, and hope to grow in our hearts and in the hearts and lives of youth, families, and community participants. Pray for wisdom and revelation to keep on track with God’s call. As a new organization we are seeking to develop: a network of community volunteers; a persistent prayer network; a network of churches that will support us with accountability, prayers, volunteers, and finances; and sustainable financial support. In all things, our desire is to demonstrate the unity of love and hope we have in God through Jesus Christ by the present power of the Holy Spirit.

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RESEARCH

[Doing Strategy as the Whole Church](#)

By Sandi Lee

When discussing strategies to increase the efficacy of world evangelization, we often focus on developing new and innovative plans, programs, and methodologies. We are constantly looking for the next revolutionary evangelistic paradigm to effectively engage diverse peoples in a rapidly changing world with the unchanging truth of the gospel. We may be so oriented toward the future that we fail to look and learn from our past to better inform our future steps and strategies. As we look more carefully at where evangelical Christians are in world evangelization, we will likely see how much more we must embody the truth of Christ and be the Church Christ has called us to be—to be one body and be one with Christ, just as Christ and the Father are one.

The Whole Church

For the last two years, the [Lausanne](#) Strategy Working Group (SWG) has started its gatherings from both personal and communal self-reflection as evangelicals, as well as toward the past with a greater focus on scripture to serve as the measure and guide of an evangelistic approach.

When the SWG gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2006, participants shared the factors that persuaded each of them to come to a living faith in Christ and into the work of world evangelization. Time and time again, participants shared that they came to faith through personal contact with a Christian who was tied to a body of believers and received teaching on the Word of God. When considering strategies solely provided in the Bible, the group found that powerful evangelism took place when witnesses, empowered by the Holy Spirit, were sent out, sought contact with non-believers in their respective contexts, and connected to a body of praying believers.

When the SWG convened again in Budapest, Hungary, in June 2007, participants took their observations to the next level from personal and biblical reflections to the assessment of the state of world evangelization in the twenty-first century and how far we have come since the first World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910. One of the major needs identified in 1910 was the challenge of reaching the Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu worlds.

A century later, we still see this as a top priority in world evangelization; the percentage of the world’s populations that adhere to these non-Christian religions has not changed dramatically. We asked ourselves: Why

has the Church not been able to make much progress in one hundred years? What have we been focused on and what have we *not* been doing? What are the necessary preconditions to bring about periods of revival and dynamic world evangelization?

Overall, there was consensus that in order for us to be more effective in world evangelization today, the Church must be the *whole* Church. It must incorporate the voices of the Majority World where the Church is growing fastest and most dynamically. It must hear, defend, and serve the poor, the suffering, and the disempowered. It must not only proclaim the truth of the gospel, but hear it from unexpected places, and embody the truth of the gospel within our individual lives as Christians and in the corporate life of the Church.

The Whole Body

Four points need to be addressed concerning the “whole” Body of Christ.

1. *Children*. This is why the commitment to actively work in unity with other members of the Body of Christ is essential. It means loving and empowering the youth and young adults in our church. According to the United Nations, youth (ages 15-24) constitute eighteen percent of the world’s population. Almost eighty-five percent of the world’s youth live in developing countries, with approximately sixty percent in Asia alone. A remaining twenty-three percent live in the developing regions of Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. If we want to reach the youth of the world, and if we believe youth respond to youth, it is critical we love and empower the youth in the Church.
2. *Women*. Actively working in unity with other members of the whole Church also means supporting the role of women in ministry. As of January 2008, women constitute nearly fifty percent of foreign missionaries in 2008 and over forty percent of national Christian workers.¹ Since the original Fall in the Garden of Eden, the ministry commissioned to both men and women became divided, and a divided house cannot stand. Should the ministry of women go unsupported, we are fighting a battle with one arm tied behind our back.
3. *Fragmentation*. The Church is more diverse today and more fragmented than it has ever been in its history. As of January 2008, there are over thirty-nine thousand denominations in the world.² Moreover, the number of denominations is growing at the rate of two new ones per day, while the number of believers and their respective contexts continues to increase in both number and complexity.
4. *Glocalization*. The Church is simultaneously more globalized and more localized than ever before—the effects of what is called *glocalization*. Ethnic and economic diversity continues to increase in the Church from the effects of globalization. With the challenges of increasing population diversity and cultural collisions with the unfamiliar, Christians gravitate toward the familiar in specific neighborhoods. The challenge in the face of glocalization is how do we then embody “the whole Church” as ethnic churches often minister in separate localities under different roofs (or sometimes even separately under the same roof)? How do we work together to reach a wider population without losing effective ministry among ethnic groups? How do we work together with other ministries without duplicating efforts or competing over resources?

Prayer and Intercession

One of the top priorities of world evangelization identified by the SWG is on intercession and prayer. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus demonstrated that before engaging challenges of public ministry, facing hostile opposition, or clashing with spiritual powers, he dedicated his time to prayer. When reaching out to do the impossible, whether healing the hopelessly sick, interfacing with social outcasts, or raising the dead, Jesus always interceded and prayed. Prior to his greatest test on the cross, he prayed above all for the unity of believers.

It is no surprise then that from the very nascent stages of the Church and throughout its history, the Church has experienced the most dynamic growth during times of spiritual renewal and during times of religious persecution, both when believers were deep in prayer in their utter dependence on the Lord. From the persecution of the early believers in Jerusalem and the Roman Empire, to the European Reformation, the First and Second Great Awakenings in the United States, and to the Great Century in missions and prayer revivals in South Korea, the greatest expansion of the Christian faith took place during the times of great prayer movements marked by religious fervor, passion, and purification. It was in these times of revival that the Church in its myriad of expressions has come together in purpose, vision, and energy, calling those from beyond its boundaries into the community of faith.

Strategy and Theology

Commensurate to this focus on prayer and intercession is our commitment to biblical theology as the foundation of our missional activity. It is critical that every missional activity we embark on is inspired by and securely founded on biblical theology. Otherwise we are eager runners without a master plan of training, handicapping ourselves, or worse, running passionately in the wrong direction. Without our biblical theological moorings, our reflections and activities can become distorted, unfocused, misdirected, or unrecognizable. It is for this reason that in the Lausanne Movement, the SWG is working in concert with the Theology Working Group.

It is critical for different parts of the Lausanne body to be communicating and working in concert together as a model for the Church to work together and *be* the whole Church. As Jesus commanded, we must love one another, for it is by our love for each other that the world will know we are his true disciples (John 13:35). He said this in the context of having washed his disciples' feet and having explained that it is not enough that we call him "Teacher" or "Lord," but to do as he has done (John 13:13-15).

We must embody unity in our own service to one another. We must strive to work in unity in all—both those far and near, including the "stranger in our midst" (meaning, anyone within our sphere of influence, but outside of our normal patterns of engagement. This is where our engagement as a body with the world must increase, as we encourage each other to reach beyond ourselves, ask questions, be open, trust, and lean upon the Lord as we embark in untraversed terrain. It is to go in the confidence of leaning upon the Lord in prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit to answer prayer, the unchanging truth and relevance of the gospel, and the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as experienced in each other. Where strategy meets with theology and is empowered by prayer, our common commitment to be the whole Body of Christ will bring us closer to world evangelization.

Endnotes

1. Barrett, David B., Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, 2008. "Missiometrics 2008 Reality Checks for Christian World Communions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 32(1): 28-30.

2. Ibid.

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The Unreached Clusters of Southeast Asia

By Justin Long

"People group clusters" are groups of individual peoples clustered based on language and ethnic affinity. Worldwide, there are 252 clusters; 113 of these are considered least-reached. In this article, we focus on those in Southeast Asia.¹

Southeast Asia is made up of ninety-two clusters, totaling roughly 567 million people. One-third of the world's people group clusters are found in this region. Of these, forty (nearly half) have over ninety percent of their population within Southeast Asia. Eighteen clusters are immigrants, with fewer than twenty percent of their numbers in Southeast Asia.

For brevity, we will focus primarily on those which have more than ten million members. We will then look briefly at those with less than ten million members. The ten largest clusters include:

Cluster	Number of members
Vietnamese	73 million
Central Filipino	70 million
Jawa	58 million
Thai	51 million
Malay	46 million
Sunda-Betawi	33 million
Chinese	32 million
Burmese	32 million
Madurese	21 million
Mon-Khmer	21 million

With the exception of the Chinese and the Mon-Khmer, over ninety-five percent of each of these groups reside in Southeast Asia. However, because of their size, even five percent residing abroad can result in significant numbers.

Vietnamese. The Vietnamese cluster is made up of just two groups: the Vietnamese themselves as well as the twenty-nine thousand Jing. The Vietnamese are found in twenty-eight countries. Some 72.6 million are found in Vietnam itself, another one million are found within the region (in Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand), and the remaining three million are outside the region, mostly to France (600,000) and the United States (1.2 million). Reaching the Vietnamese, then, involves reaching Vietnam. Fortunately, this country is becoming more open; however, one should not neglect the migrant populations in the US and France. The Vietnamese cluster has significant work going on, but it is still majority Buddhist. To fully engage this cluster will likely require 730 pioneering swarming teams.²

Central Filipino. The seventy million Central Filipino cluster includes twenty-seven peoples. The largest groups within the cluster are the Tagalog speakers, the Ilocano, and the Visayan (each with more than ten million people), as well as the Central Bikol, Hiligaynon, Mestizo, Pampango, Pangasinense, and Waray-Waray. There are also a number of smaller groups. This cluster is considered reached, and missionaries from this cluster are being recruited and sent elsewhere.

Jawa. The fifty-eight million Jawa cluster is made up of just nine people groups, including the fourteen million Javanese, five million Jawa Banyumasan, twelve million Jawa Mancanegari, three million Jawa Pesisir Kulon, and twenty-two million Jawa Pesisir Lor. All of these (except the Javanese) are unreached. While the Javanese

have spread to ten countries (including some in Europe), all of the least-reached peoples within this cluster are found in Indonesia itself. Some 580 pioneering swarming teams would likely be required to fully engage the group; a very large effort is already going on.

Thai. The fifty-one million Thai cluster is comprised of two very large groups (the Northeastern Thai and the Central Thai), two megapeoples (the Northern Tai and the Southern Tai), and three smaller groups (the 521,000 Khorat, as well as several thousand Tak Bai and Tsun-Lao). All of these are unreached. While there are many efforts being made to reach the Thai, these efforts are not enough, considering the enormous size of these groups. It will take perhaps 510 pioneer swarming teams to fully engage the groups. Most effort is taking place in the northern part of Thailand and there are many regions of the country that are virtually untouched. While the Thai are mostly found in Thailand itself, several small groups can be found in surrounding countries as well as in Western nations such as the United States and Canada.

Malay. The forty-six million Malay are diversified and made up of some forty-one groups. The four largest are the twenty-six million Indonesians, twelve million Malay, three million Pattani Malay, and two million Orang Pantai Timur.

The remaining groups have a population of less than twenty thousand people, with the exception of the East Malaysian Malays (269,000), Kota Bangun Kutai (120,000), Menadonese (115,000), and Riau (114,000). Although ethnic religions still dominate them, virtually all of the very small groups have been reached. The larger groups are all majority-Muslim. Some 460 pioneer swarming teams will be required to fully engage this cluster. There is substantial work among Indonesians and among the smaller groups; however, the remainder of the Malay groups have comparatively very little work going on.

Sunda-Betawi. The thirty-three million Sunda-Betawi cluster is, like the Jawa cluster, located primarily on the Indonesian island of Java. Very few migrants from this cluster have moved abroad. It is comprised of just four groups, three of which are unreached. The groups include the thirty million Sunda, 3.6 million Betawi, and two smaller groups: the Badui and the Sunda-Banten. Islam is the dominant religion. It would take perhaps 340 pioneering swarming teams to fully engage them. There are significant partnerships focused on this cluster; however, much remains to be done.

Chinese. The thirty-two million Chinese cluster, on the other hand, is a largely expatriate population that has settled into the region and become part of it. While ninety-six percent of all the groups in the Chinese cluster reside inside East Asia (mainly in China itself), the Chinese within Southeast Asia (2.6% of all Chinese globally) are the second largest concentration of Chinese in the world and over half of all expatriate Chinese. Perhaps 320 pioneering swarming teams are needed to fully engage this population; fortunately, there is much going on among the Chinese of Southeast Asia, with numerous churches and evangelistic efforts. Indeed, some of the largest and most well established churches in Southeast Asia are among Chinese.

Burmese. The thirty-two million Burmese cluster is made up of eight people groups, the largest of which is the twenty-nine million Burmese itself. The two other megagroups include the 2.2 million Arakanese and the 1.1 million Yangbye. Over ninety-eight percent of the cluster is in Southeast Asia. The groups within the cluster are majority Buddhist, and all are unreached. The cluster needs perhaps 320 pioneering swarming teams. Surging Buddhist influence and governmental instability in Myanmar is providing both challenges and opportunities for the gospel as well as public visibility for the nation.

Madurese. The twenty-one million Madurese cluster is another Indonesian cluster. It is made up of four people groups, three of which are unreached. The two largest are the Madurese and the Pentalungan. All are majority-Muslim groups living primarily on the island of Madura and Java. Some expatriate Madurese also live in

Singapore. The Madurese cluster needs perhaps two hundred pioneer swarming teams. There is significant local work on this need.

Mon-Khmer. Finally, we need to look at the Mon-Khmer cluster. Unlike the other clusters, the Mon-Khmer is made up of over 150 separate peoples. Out of the twenty-four million Mon-Khmer, twenty-one million reside in Southeast Asia. Of the 150 groups, ninety-six are unreached. Most of these groups are ethnoreligionists or Buddhists. The three largest are: the fourteen million Khmer, the 1.3 million (mostly Christian) Khasi, and the 1.2 million Muong. Two other large groups include the Mon (878,000) and the Wa (845,000). More than three hundred pioneering swarming teams would be needed to fully engage this cluster. While most are found in only one or two countries, the Khmer are found in Cambodia, Vietnam, the United States, and several European countries. Still, reaching the Khmer will mean ultimately reaching Cambodia itself.

Smaller “Megaclusters”

In addition to these large clusters, there are nearly thirty “megaclusters” consisting of populations between one million and ten million each. Over half of these are unreached. The Minangkabau-Rejang, Bugi-Makassar, Bali-Sasak, Melayu, Banjarese, Filipino Muslims, Shan, Lampung, and Acehnese have more than four million people. Many of these megaclusters are majority Muslim. Exceptions include the ethnoreligionists (Borneo-Kalimantan, Tai, Zhuang, Miao/Hmong, and Cham), the Buddhists (Shan and Lao), and the Hindus (Bali-Sasak, on the Indonesian island of Bali, and the Tamil speakers, who are spread throughout the region). Collectively, these clusters account for over 115 million people and will require perhaps three hundred pioneering swarming teams to fully be engaged.

Beyond these megaclusters, there are an additional ten million people in smaller clusters with populations under one million in Southeast Asia. Many of these are migrant groups.

The situation in Southeast Asia is complex. There are national partnerships and significant efforts underway; however, much more needs to be done. If you want to make a difference, why not connect with one of these partnerships or networks, and collaborate to create a pioneer team among one of these clusters?

Endnotes

1. For the purpose of this analysis, I will be using the publically available [Joshua Project](#) data, backed up by information from the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and the subscription-based [World Christian Database](#).

2. For more information on swarming and swarming teams, visit www.momentum-mag.org/swarmingmanual/index.php/Main_Page.

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LAUSANNE REPORTS

Theological Trends in Africa: Implications for Missions and Evangelism

By Gideon Para-Mallam

The Rev. Billy Graham once observed, “If you lose your health you have lost something, but you have not lost everything. If you lose your wealth you have lost nothing. If you lose your character you have lost everything.” The Church in Africa will do well to heed this word of wisdom. The absence of Christian integrity

is a key trend that marks church growth and activity on the continent. This article elaborates certain critical trends and their implications for the mission of the Church in Africa.

Negative Trends

1. An Emphasis on Numerical Growth rather than Spiritual Growth

Success in ministry is measured by quantity rather than quality. Numbers are celebrated and quality is compromised in the process. Several theologians and missiologists, including the Rev. Dr. John Stott, observe the numerical growth of Christianity in Africa as being “an inch deep and a mile wide.”

Indeed, the foundations of Christian discipleship are weak in many churches experiencing explosive numerical growth across sub-Saharan Africa. This is the case from Lagos to Lusaka, Kinshasa to Kumasi, Accra to Addis Ababa, Abuja to Yaoundé, Nairobi to Kampala, Harare to Blantyre, Cape Town to Dare Salaam. Churches need to refocus on their character and how this impacts their commitment to completing the task of world evangelization.

Revelation 2-3 reveals the importance of character and the consequences of a church without moral identity. Since 1988, there has been a growth of mass conversions and a resurgence of church planting in my native country of Nigeria. Because of this, I began asking myself questions concerning the character of the emerging Nigerian Church (which includes churches with strong neo-Pentecostal roots). Some of these Charismatic churches boast having some of the largest church attendances in Africa; one congregation in Lagos records a weekly attendance of fifty thousand people. Prayer meetings attract up to two million attendees.

Yet the impact of the gospel on society is diminished by the disjuncture of belief and practice. During the Langham Nigeria Preaching Seminar '08, Rt. Rev. Dr. Cyril Okorochoa, Anglican Bishop of Owerri Diocese, observed that Nigerians are tired of hearing ministers preach about Jesus. They want to see Jesus lived out by preachers through lives of personal integrity.

One major result of the disjuncture between belief and practice is the lack of depth found in many Christians. Religiosity is widespread; however, godliness is scarce. People from all walks of life profess faith in God; however, this is not displayed in everyday life practices. Is it any wonder that Christians going into government are unprepared to withstand temptations of the office? They fail to be true ambassadors of Christ in government. Many have instead brought shame to Christ's name.

Unfortunately, we are discovering that Christian politicians are not immune to corruption. By using the illustration that Zambia is a Christian nation because President Frederick Chiluba is born again, the Rev. Kuzipa Nalwamba, a woman cleric of The United Church of Zambia (UCZ), observed that

In most of our nations Christianity has a public role, yet we have not developed an adequate theology....How that is harnessed and channelled towards mission rather than the Church merely gaining clout would have far-reaching effects on the Church's prophetic role in society and therefore its mission. But the public role of Christianity is a mixed blessing because collusion with the state [is] a real temptation for the Church. History attests to how that can harm or enhance mission.

There is no denying that God will turn the tides in Africa. The twenty-first century is Africa's century in Christendom. There have been prophecies emerging from different parts of the world regarding the roles reserved for Nigeria and Africa in catalyzing world evangelization in these last days. There is abundant reason to believe this claim. Africa has ample natural and human resources waiting for the right generation of leaders to develop; our adventurous Christian youth can support any spiritual movement that God will orchestrate. Add our immense capacity to adapt freely to all natural environments, and you will have a force waiting for mobilization

and ready for deployment. The African Church of the twenty-first century must not only guarantee proclamation of the gospel, but ensure its survival for coming generations.

2. Christianity as a Social rather than a Spiritual Phenomenon

Does church growth in Africa represent genuine conversion? Or does it represent spiritual and social convergence as instigated by modern contextual realities such as poverty, invasion of culture, political instability, and corruption. These factors notwithstanding, in his book *The Next Christendom*, Phillip Jenkins describes the unprecedented growth as **the great shift**: “Over the past century...the centre of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America.”

Unlike previous centuries, the majority of Christians now originate and reside in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. But one may ask, “Since we have the largest Christian population in Africa, what responsibility does this place on us?” Dr. Andrew Walls describes the global Christian advance as “serial.” Jenkins claims that,

In the providence of God, it is the Christians of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific that are next in the series....It means that the Christians of the southern continents are now the representative Christians, the people by whom the quality of twenty-first and twenty-second century Christianity will be judged, the people who will set the norms, the standard. And the quality of twenty-first century Christianity will depend on them.

In light of this reality, it is imperative we ask ourselves, “What legacy will the African Church bequeath to the rest of the world fifty to one hundred years from now?” If the majority of today’s Christian world does not pay adequate attention to developing disciples after conversion, Christianity in Africa becomes a social rather than a spiritual phenomenon. A blossoming Christianity devoid of discipleship suggests a weak doctrinal grounding. This approach lacks depth, will hurt our commitment to evangelism, and could scuttle the mission of the African Church.

3. Nigeria: Africa’s Litmus Test

One in every four Africans is Nigerian. One in every five black people in the world is Nigerian. With a population of nearly 150 million, there is no doubt the Nigerian Church and nation are bound to have a significant impact on the African continent. The general perception of Nigeria is its failure to set a good example for the rest of Africa. Recently, I read a screaming headline in one of the Nigerian daily newspapers: “Nigeria Still Sinful Despite Many Churches.” This calls for sober reflection, genuine repentance, and a reorientation on the part of the Church. Here are several issues the Nigerian Church is facing:

- **The creation of megastars.** The “Man of God” syndrome is aptly described in the book *Preachers of a Different Gospel*, by Rev. Femi Adeleye. “Men of God” have become “stars and celebrities.” Preaching has become a skilful marketing art. Jesus is relegated to the background. Where is the humility of John the Baptist, who declared, “He must increase but I must decrease” (John 3:34)?
- **The existence of doctrinal distortions, pulpit abuse, falsehood, and the commercialization of the gospel.** “Cash for Christ” is sometimes found in churches—the more cash you pay, the greater your chances of seeing a bigger miracle take place.
- **The commonness of the prosperity gospel.** Nigerian churches have exported this to the rest of Africa. Today, this gospel of greed is a disturbing trend with appealing momentum. Capitalist desperados are masquerading as church planters. In his book *Foxes in the Vineyard, Insights into the Nigerian Pentecostal Revival*, Sean Akinrele quotes Bishop Mike Okonkwo, former president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN):

The PFN leadership has discovered that money has sadly become the yardstick for success in the Church, especially the Pentecostals.... Prosperity messages have therefore taken centre stage of most preaching at the expense of full gospel messages. This has degenerated to the extent that people now come to church primarily to get rich outside the richness in their souls. Pastors, too, have cashed in on the gullibility of unsuspecting members as symbolism in oil, mantle, honey, palm-leaves, sprinkling of blood, and other mediums are now evolved to build the faith of the people unto materialism.

- **The prominence of bossy leadership.** In Christ, we learn a new and liberating model of leadership: servant leadership. The African continent, caught in the throes of conflict arising from tussles for power and resources, are desperate for this biblical leadership model. The current posture of spiritual grandstanding depreciates the gains of the Charismatic renewal movement across Africa and makes the tasks of evangelization less convincing in its genuine appeal.
- **The lack of making the cross central.** Where is the cross in the way we live as Christ's followers? Today, popular theology inspired by the prosperity gospel exponents, "He go butter my bread and sugar my tea. Me, I no go suffer." This needs to be reviewed if we are to be faithful to the teaching of the one who hung on the cross for the redemption of humankind. In *The Chosen One*—a Ghanaian home movie—a prostitute made an observation that resonates with the African Church: "Nowadays, pastors want to be like Jesus, but they are not ready to suffer like Jesus." If this is true, it means the message of the cross is neither being portrayed to a needy world, nor are believers receiving sound doctrinal teaching required for proper spiritual formation. Rev. Ft. Mathew Kukah, a leading Catholic crusader for social justice in Nigeria, observed, "Many preachers are promising to make their followers millionaires, landlords, and landowners....This Christianity is a *crossless Christianity*, preaching a *crossless Christ*. It pretends that we should apologize for the cross of Christ because to be a Christian is not to suffer. It pretends we should apologise that God may have made a mistake for allowing Jesus...to be buried in a borrowed tomb....This kind of Christianity is transitory and it does harm to the foundation of the faith." The Church cannot afford to live in denial of the cross. If the cross is denied in our Christian emphasis, then our Christianity has lost its biblical distinctiveness.

Positive Trends

These trends are widespread across denominations. Despite this, the African Church has made major contributions to the Global Church through missions, evangelism, and prayer.

1. The Uniqueness of the Charismatic Movement

The Charismatic renewal experienced across Africa should be celebrated and theologically guided. There may be questions about the Pentecostal resurgence regarding practice and doctrine, but it should never be discarded. I recall an African proverb which states that "a mother does not throw away the dirty water and the baby inside after the bath." Reflecting along this thought line, Rev. Nalwamba added,

I think we need to consider trends in the Renewal/Charismatic movement and its relationship to the African traditional worldview/religion. One reason why the Charismatic movement has had such a growing appeal is that it takes seriously the spiritual world and spiritual phenomenon which mainstream Christianity tends to sideline. A theologically sound and balanced approach to these phenomenon would contribute to the deepening of faith and mission on the continent.

2. The Example of the Anglican Communion in Africa

The Anglican Communion has stood out globally in spearheading a strong protest within the Anglican Communion worldwide. Their effort also represents a global, prophetic voice against the agenda to institutionalise and mainstream gay ordination in the Church. This is helping to shape the agenda for evangelicals in promoting biblical ideals in the marketplace. It helps our Christian witness and defines our

identity. Throughout history, compromise has never helped in advancing the Church's mission. This is a positive influence the Church in Africa should model to the rest of the world. May more bold prophetic steps be taken in other areas, such as corruption, good governance, social justice and equity, gender balance, and good stewardship of the environment.

3. The Missionary Impact of the African Church

The African Church has become a blessing to the rest of the world. It has moved from a missionary-receiving continent one hundred years ago to a missionary-sending continent today. Nigeria has been in the forefront. A strong commitment and sacrificial missionary spirit is moving across Africa in response to drumbeats of missions. For example, within the context of the [International Fellowship of Evangelical Students \(IFES\)](#), several universities and college graduates are missionaries in villages and cities both in African and beyond. From Nigeria alone, there are nearly 5,200 missionaries serving in other countries.

The Way Forward—A Return to Basics

I have not written this article to put down my continent or to let others use this to discredit what God is doing in Africa. I am sharing our struggles as we forge ahead with a new wave of God's movement across the continent. Like every renewal movement, there are bound to be excesses. These must be addressed in context. Old African stereotypes within missiological circles will not foster better understanding of the continent nor appreciate the substantial contributions Africa will continue to make to Christendom.

Calisto Odede, a mission enthusiast in Kenya, shares, "We have come from a long way. The background and history of Africa is loaded with all sorts of imaginations of who the Africans are, what they are able to do, and what they cannot be able to do." Adam Hoshchild points out that

1. When the Europeans began imagining Africa beyond the Sahara, the continent they pictured was a dreamscape, a site for the fantasies of the fearsome and the supernatural. Ranulf Higden, a Benedictine monk who mapped the world about AD 1350, claimed that Africa contained one-eyed people who used their feet to cover their heads. A geographer in the next century announced that the continent held people with one leg, three faces, and the heads of lions. In 1459, an Italian monk, Fra Mauro, declared Africa the home of the roc, a bird so large that it could carry an elephant through the air.

Odede continued, "Unfortunately, such imaginations about Africa/Africans remain. We still struggle against worldviews that undermine our ability to belong and proclaim. Even within missions' circles, negative stereotypes persist. But many of us are convinced that the hour for Africa has struck."

The hosting of the [Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 2010](#) by the African Church in Cape Town, South Africa, should be embraced as an opportunity to reinforce positive trends throughout the continent. It should also initiate critical discussion on ways to reverse negative trends by promoting sound biblical teaching in churches. Transformed lives conform to God's redemptive vision of why he created us. We are here to impact society and serve as God's agents of redemptive change. To accomplish this task, we need to be rooted in the knowledge of God's word. Biblical depth has no shortcut to a blossoming Christian life. Without biblical depth, we lack critical Christian minds. Without depth in God's word, we lose our prophetic message.

Correcting these trends is now a sacred duty we all must undertake sooner rather than later if we are to preserve the divine mandate of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. This will define our character and shape our prophetic duty. Its urgency stares us in the face; procrastination is not an option. We must each pledge ourselves to arrest the current drift toward spiritual lawlessness. May the Church in Africa impact our society with proper biblical values. We must prioritize *character* over *charisma*.

Chuck Colson once wrote, “The first Christians worshipped God and lived as a holy community, conforming their character to the demands of Christ rather than to Caesar. They didn’t purpose to turn the first-century world upside down. They did so by who they were.” There is a bright future for the Church and society in Africa if the required safeguards are put in place to consolidate gains and eliminate excesses.

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