

# REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT (Evangelical Missiological Society)

by Kenneth B. Mulholland, Former President

Saturday, September 22, 2001

This meeting brings to a close my second term as President of the Evangelical Missiological Society, having served previously from 1987-90. It was during that term that we began to meet nationally on annual basis rather than only once every three years, joining with the ETS between the Triennial meetings of the EFMA/IFMA. Then, in 1990, the decision was made to change the name of our society from the Association of Evangelical Professors of Missions (AEPM) to the Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS), to launch the EMS Series instead of expanding the Occasional Bulletin in to a quarterly missiological journal, to create a new model of leadership with a part time Executive Director, to undertake a major constitutional revision, and to incorporate.

In the subsequent years, under the Executive Directorships of David Hesselgrave and Robertson McQuilkin and the Presidential leadership of Paul Beals and Mike Pocock, the EMS expanded its ministry, increased its membership, matured in structure, incorporated legally as a non-profit charitable organization and grew in complexity.

My own presidency in one sense marked a step backward inasmuch as the leadership fell upon a team of volunteers already engaged in full-time ministries without the aid of a part-time, semi-retired missionary statesman such as Hesselgrave or McQuilkin. The creation of an executive team to divide leadership responsibilities was formed with one of the vice-presidents, Mike Pocock, in charge of overseeing the regional gathering and another, Gary Corwin, overseeing the area of administration. Subsequently, the technological age burst upon us and Gailyn Van Rheenen, as Vice President of Publications, assumed responsibility for the establishment of a website. When the nominating committee failed to find anyone to stand for election as Executive Vice President of Constituency Relations and Vice President of Corporate Affairs last year, Keith Eitel and Scott Moreau, respectively, agreed to serve in those positions by presidential appointment. Those Vice Presidents who continued in office, Tom Steffen, Ken Gill, and Liz Lightbody performed valiantly this year. Their significant accomplishment along with the unique challenges each faced are chronicled in their respective reports. And, in general, the committees functioned well this year.

A special word of appreciation goes to Jon Bonk for the quality work he has done as program chairperson this year navigating the uncharted waters occasioned by this year's unique join gathering.

In the fall, 1996, issue of the Occasional Bulletin, I set forth my vision for EMS in terms of increased momentum and sharpened focus in five areas of engagement: the issues, the academy, the mission sending structures, the frontiers, and the grass roots. In addition to reviewing the extent to which that vision has materialized, I would like to set before you two additional areas in which I believe engagement is necessary.

## **Four Areas of Engagement**

### **Engaging the Issues**

I believe that the EMS has the responsibility not only to reflect on contemporary currents, but to shape those currents along lines congruent with both a high view of scripture and a high view of culture. We have done this through our regional and national meetings, through the lead articles in the Occasional bulletin and through the EMS Series. The volumes, now nine in number are cited in an increasing number of publications. Two have gone into a second printing. Numbers 8 and 9 are scheduled for release this week: Working Together with God to Shape the new Millennium and Caring for the Harvest Force in the New Millennium. In addition there has been a growing relationship between Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), led by John Morehead, as they seek to place apologetics at the service of missions. Also, through the EMS Restricted Publication Fund and the William Carey Library, we have been able to re-publish the Hesselgrave/Rommen, classic, Contextualization.

I would like to see serious consideration given to the publication of a CD which would incorporate the first ten volumes of the EMS Series. This would eliminate the need to re-publish out of print issues and would make the insights of the past decade available to broad audiences at an economical price.

Special mention needs to be made of the role Ken Kill has exercised as Vice President of Publications. Working closely with Bob Lenz, editor of the Occasional Bulletin, Gailyn Van Rheenen, our website point person, and Rick Kress of William Carey Library, Ken has been able to resolve long standing problems related to coordination, timelines of publications, and financial issues related to the EMS Series and other publications. Also, recently a new EMS brochure has been reprinted and made available at this meeting. A power point presentation of EMS has also been produced.

### **Engaging the Academy**

The EMS has long held many of its regional meetings in conjunction with the Evangelical Theological Society and beginning in 1988, EMS began to partner nationally with ETS in years other than those on which the EFMA/IFMA/EMS Triennial was held. This served to enhance interaction and fruitful dialogue on the part of the mission community with ETS members both formally and informally. However, in recent years, as ETS has expanded exponentially, EMS has become less of a partner and more of a marginal appendage. Nevertheless, whether or not we continue to meet nationally in conjunction with the ETS, both the 2002 and 2003 themes are similar to those chosen by ETS: "Evangelical Christianity and Other Religions" in 2002, followed by "Jesus" in 2003. The subject of our 2004 meeting will be "Syncretism". The ETS theme has not been announced.

A related issue is the need to include in our meeting an emphasis on the teaching of missions, sometimes lost due to the pressures of restricted agendas imposed by joint meetings. I believe that the incorporation of such an emphasis would attract additional Bible College Professors to our regional and national gathers, including missions professors from the emerging Bible Institutes emerging among growing minority churches. While we want to move beyond our roots in the AEPM, we do not want to in any way ignore those roots. Is it time to re-dig old wells?

## **Engaging Mission Sending Structures**

In recent years, an increasing number of missions executives have joined the EMS. This vast resource must be tapped more vigorously and be reflected both in our executive leadership and committee representation. A major distinctive of EMS which sets it aside from many other professional societies is its commitment to the practice of missions. In addition to participating in Godsmision.commUNITY, the EMS has steadily been developing closer relationships with the IFMA, with which it will be meeting jointly in Orlando on October 3-5, 2002. Increasingly, missions leaders are seeing the need for Great Commission Missiology.

## **Engaging the Frontiers**

The frontiers have had high visibility in four of the past five EMS meetings. Issues relating to responsiveness, unity in accomplishing the Great Commission, new approaches to missionary care brought about by the new conditions resulting from a focus on the frontiers and now this year, an evaluation of where we are with regard to world evangelization at the dawn of the new millennium are front-burner concerns. Involvement in EMS on the part of leadership from the AD2000 Movement and International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist convention as well as Executive leadership from Frontiers and Pioneers has underscored this commitment. A number of EMS members also hold membership of the International Society of Frontier Missions. However, my initiative to merge ISFM into EMS as a Frontier Missions Task Force and to incorporate the International Journal of Frontier Missiology as an EMS publication covered by our membership dues has failed, at least for the time being.

## **Engaging the Grass Roots**

An encouraging sign in recent years has been the resurgence of participation at the regional level due in large part to geographical restructuring and quality leadership. The most outstanding example has been the Canadian Region under the leadership of Charles Cook, which has adopted the pattern of meeting jointly with the AABC. The Northwest region has also reached out in a remarkable way to a broad constituency and, despite a downturn this past year, so has the Southwest region. Plans to establish a new Rocky Mountain region, which would give off Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming from the South Central Region show great promise provided adequate leadership can be identified. Regional meetings, inasmuch as they are more accessible and less costly than national meetings, provide opportunity for wider participation, particularly for younger, less well-known members. I believe that we are close to achieving the goal of half of our membership present at regional meetings, and one-sixth at annual meetings.

## **Additional Areas of Engagement**

### **Engaging our History**

To the list of four areas of engagement which I believe to be continuing concerns, I would like to add three more. The first is easiest: engaging our history. The EMS is now more than thirty years old. This year we achieved a monumental breakthrough. We have established an EMS archive in the Academic Information Center of Columbia International University. Archival materials have been collected and categorized. They are available to researchers. The history of the EMS would be a marvelous research opportunity for someone desiring to write a significant Master's or Doctoral Dissertation. In combination with Columbia's Visiting Scholar Program, it would also make a wonderful sabbatical project for a faculty member, or furloughing missionary or even a mission executive.

## **Engaging Each Other**

The second of these is the need to engage each other. Certainly this is related to the other four areas I have just mentioned. The technological age in which we live provides opportunity to interaction which we have not fully exploited. Were I to have the past terms to live over, I would use teleconferences to encourage team building among executive leadership, regular e-mails to members, greater use of the web, and the publication, in either (or both) hard and electronic copy.

One step forward has been the development of an EMS website under the leadership of Gailyn Van Rheenen. I believe that with proper attention this can become an important loci of missiological information and interaction. It merits greater effort. Hopefully, membership applications can be processed via the web, EMS books can be ordered, and an up-to-date membership directory maintained. Currently, one third of the e-mail addresses on our membership are incorrect.

Another step forward has been the faithful work of Bob Lenz in making the Occasional Bulletin less occasional and more regular. The format is sharp and the articles well chosen. Possibly new features could be added such as listing the top ten evangelical missions books of the year and interviews with mission leaders who are EMS members.

## **Engaging our Identity**

Perhaps the biggest issue we face in the immediate future is engaging our identity. What kind of animal are we? We are not the American Society of Missiology, engaged almost entirely with academic missiology in an ecumenical context. Nor the Association of Mission Professors, engaged exclusively with issues of classroom teaching. Nor are we representative of mission sending agencies such as the IFMA, EFMA or AIMS. We have sought to be both an academic and a professional society with one foot in the academic world and another in the world of the sending agency. I believe we ought to continue to be so. Given our understandable marginalization by ETS, we need to establish a meeting pattern that is true to our mission and accessible both geographically and financially to our membership. A one year interim solution is the scheduled joint meeting from October 3-5, 2002, in Orlando, with the IFMA, an association of mission agencies that truly wants to partner with us.

I believe that if we can resolve the issue of our identity in relationship to those with whom we have partnered in the past and present, and if we can normalize the time and place of our annual meeting, we stand on the brink of great advance. We can have a strong and creative leadership team in place that is representative of our various constituencies. We have put financial deficits, constitutional overhaul, and publication chaos behind us. Our publications are increasing in regularity and quality. We have established a website. We are attracting related groups such as Artists in Christian Testimony and the Evangelical ministry to New Religions who are viewing their task more missiologically and desire to enter into partnership with us. I look forward to the recommendations of our special task force on the dates and plans of future meetings.

Let us move into the new millennium with the confidence that God has and will use the EMS as His instrument to faithfully and prayerfully pursue the development and dissemination of Great Commission Missiology in continual dependence on His Word and Spirit to lead us and guide us.