

## Smorgasbord Religion

Alex G. Smith

**Y**ears ago as an Australian visiting America for the first time, I was introduced to a new experience of eating at succulent Swedish Smorgasbords. The vast array of a broad variety of dishes, desserts and drinks stimulated the imagination and stirred the appetite. The difficulty was choosing what to select without overindulging. In a similar way many today have a smorgasbord approach to religion, choosing only those aspects they like. This consumer post-modern mentality is eclectic, usually individualistic and extremely selective. This is seen in peoples' choices of a variety of religious dimensions and in their artistic and spiritual expressions.

Recently someone told me of an old Muslim Mosque in Malacca, Malaysia, which illustrated the penchant for the smorgasbord approach. Surprisingly that Islamic structure has towers which belonged to a former Buddhist temple. The mosque also incorporated ancient Hindu architecture and decorations on its walls and arches. I saw a similar amalgam a few years ago when I visited an old Buddhist temple on the outskirts of Chiang Mai in Thailand. There the monks had dedicated each of the inner walls, decorating them with appropriate murals, to four different religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. At the exit stands a large painting of representatives of all four great traditions. Under it a caption affirms that any who contribute significant donations to any of these faiths, will equally be guaranteed a place in heaven!

In reality life is no bed of roses. Real life faces many thorns of struggles and suffering, stress and strain, pain and problems, tensions and trials. Down through the ages religion has been a source of refuge and release in times



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of crisis. A current trend in post-modern spirituality takes a shopping cart mentality in the search for relief. This exhibits the penchant for individual selection and mixing of religious elements, whether they come from Buddhist, Hindu, New Age, or for that matter Christian traditions. The recent Body Worship and Wellness Cult is one example. It includes yoga, holistic therapies, aromatherapy, spa and exercise, martial arts, massage sex, and em-

phasis on secrets of eternal youth and longevity—all combined to reach “the perfect balance of wellness, body and business.” While much of this is both independent and individualistic, there is a growing flow of emphasis towards “corporate wellness” through communal coordination, meditative prayer, and devotional worship of and for the well being of the community.<sup>1</sup>

A subtle erosion of values has been slowly occurring even among Chris-

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#### NATIONAL OFFICERS

**President, F. Douglas Pennoyer**  
13800 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639-0001  
Phone: 562.903.4844 Fax: 562.903.4851  
Email: doug.pennoyer@biola.edu

**Exec.V.P.Admin. Enoch Wan**  
5511 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Portland, OR 97215  
Phone: 503.517.1904, Fax: 503.517.1801  
Email: ewan@westernseminary.edu

**Exec.V.P. Constituency Relations, Keith Eitel**  
P.O.Box 1889, Wake Forest NC 27588  
Phone: 919.761.2233 Fax: 919.761.2232  
Email: keitheitel@bigfoot.com

**V.P. for Constituent Relations, Fred Smith**  
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Phone: 706.886.7299 x 5424  
Email: fsmith@tfc.edu

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820 N. LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610  
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Email: tsisk@Moody.edu

**Corporate Affairs, Scott Moreau**  
501 E. College Avenue, Wheaton, IL 60187  
Phone: 630.752-5949 Fax: 630.752-7125  
Email: A.S.Moreau@wheaton.edu

**Publications, Kenneth D. Gill**  
Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College  
Wheaton, IL 60187-5593  
Phone: 630.752.5533 Fax: 630.752.5916  
Email: Kenneth.D.Gill@wheaton.edu

**Occasional Bulletin Editor, Bob Lenz**  
1385 W. Hile Road, Muskegon, MI 49441  
Phone: 231.799-2178  
Email: Boblenz2@cs.com

#### REGIONAL OFFICERS

**Northeast Vice President, Dwight Baker**  
OMSC, 490 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511  
Phone: 203.624-6672  
Email: Baker@omsc.org

**North Central Vice President, Robert J. Priest**  
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3909 Swiss Avenue, Dallas, TX 75204  
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Email: MPocock@dts.edu

**Northwest Regional V.P., David Stockamp**  
6012 SE Yamhill St., Portland, OR 97125  
Phone: 503.235.3818  
Email: DAS3STOCK@aol.com

**Southwest V.P., Tim Lewis**  
1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, CA 91104  
Phone: 626.398.2107 Fax: 626.398.2185  
Email: tim.lewis@wciu.edu

**Southeast Regional V.P., Al James**  
P.O. Box 1889, Wake Forest, NC 27588-1889  
Phone: 919.761.2166 Fax: 919.761.2168  
Email: ajames@sebts.edu

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3622 E. Galley Rd., Colorado Springs, CO 80909-4301  
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**Canada V.P., Glenn A. Flewelling**  
Box 4291, Three Hills AB T0M 2N0 Canada  
Phone: 403.443.5835 Fax: 403.443.5540  
Email: glenn.flewelling@prairie.edu

tians in the West. The Barna Research Group declares that today "only 9% of professing Christians have a Biblical worldview."<sup>2</sup> This startling change over the last half century has affected the Church dramatically. Church goers are taking a smorgasbord approach to religion, and pastors often follow suit. Among this mishmash, a "Christian Yoga fitness craze" is gaining popularity through a "kind of worship outside of self" versus seeking self-awareness. It sometimes uses Christian "chants" from the Bible in place of Buddhist chants and mantras, but it still does the same identical yoga poses and exercises.<sup>3</sup> Books on Christian

Jesus" is "part of a fast-growing movement that seeks to retool the 5,000-year-old practice of yoga to fit Christ's teachings." Common with Hindu-Buddhist yoga are the yoga teacher/master, who sits in a lotus position (usually on the church's platform or altar), with a group of students on mats down below in front of her. The use of traditional breathing exercises, forms of meditation, the clasped hands, other gestures, and various positions are practiced. One problem is that Buddhist yoga meditation is very different from Christian meditation, even though Christian yoga proponents say that "meditation is not anti-Christ." One pastor of an

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yoga began to be published as early as 1962. Today bookstores are replete with many volumes and videos on the subject. In the early 1970s "hot yoga" was introduced, which supposedly enables one to burn fat more efficiently using Sanskrit mantras and phrases. This sparked further interest in the fitness craze even among believers. Hundreds if not thousands of Christian yoga classes are held regularly across the USA, mostly in churches. In July 2005 a national Association of Christian Yoga Teachers was organized.

Cindy Senarighi, the founder and a key proponent of "Yogadevotion," leads yoga groups in her church. She suggests "mantras" for "breath prayer" such as Yahweh and the Jesus prayer. She also incorporated lifting arms in praise to the Lord into forms of Christian yoga as she instructs her yoga classes in the main chapel of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, MN. Soft praise music is often played during the exercise sessions. In 2005, in its Religion Section, *Time Magazine* declared that "Stretching for

Alabama church noted that many postures for prayer are found in Scripture and superficially suggested that "yoga is just another way to pray."<sup>4</sup>

This Christian yoga movement has upset yoga purists, both Hindus and Buddhists, as well as some Protestants and Catholics. Many suggest that Christian yoga basically is an oxymoron. Opponents of Christian yoga insist that it is impossible to separate true yoga from its Hindu-Buddhist roots. This is because its Eastern worldview focuses on the goal of being at one with the universe, a Monistic awareness that humans are only an insignificant part of the whole. However, the dualistic worldview of the Christian includes Creator God, who is outside of and apart from His creation, not the essence of it. Also many Christians fearfully affirm that it is difficult not to worship or honor the Hindu gods, the Buddha, spirit-masters behind the art, or nature-gods invoked in yoga salutations in the traditional forms of yoga. Discerning and distinguishing

Continued on page 6

# The Universal Priority of Proclamation

Kurt Nelson

## Introduction: The Dilemma

In recent years, I have found myself wrestling afresh with the historical tensions between social action and evangelism in Christian mission. I have a close friend who works with a relief agency, which is almost exclusively focused on social action, and I work for a mission agency which is focused primarily upon the proclamation of the gospel and the related ministries of equipping church planters, and establishing new churches. Our friendship and our associations with these two diverse agencies have engendered a healthy, ongoing dialogue about the longstanding debate surrounding the relationship between evangelism and social action. Does either one take precedence over the other, or are they, in some sense, “co-equals?”

Our ministry in Cuba regularly confronts us with a population of over 11 million people, the vast majority of whom live in abject poverty. What makes this disparity most shocking is the contrast between Cuba’s poor and the wealth of the world’s richest nation only 90 miles to Cuba’s north. However, another form of poverty that overshadows the island nation is Cuba’s spiritual poverty. According to *Operation World*, less than four percent of Cuba’s population are evangelical Protestant Christians, and “as many as three million people are followers of spiritism or voodoo cults.”

As we seek to minister the love of Christ to over 11 million people, over 90 percent of whom are locked in the dual prisons of spiritual darkness and abject material poverty, how do we prioritize the needs and our responses to them? Do we seek to improve the economic welfare of the masses (against the mandates of the U.S. economic embargo), or do we focus on the spiritual

poverty—or both? Which takes precedence in our mandate and in our mission? Which takes priority in our utilization of resources, and in our planning and execution of the missionary task?

Three years ago, I led a medical team to minister to the poor in Northern India, Nepal and Bhutan. In four days, we treated over 700 patients by supplying free medical care. We also shared the good news of the gospel with the pa-

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tients and the family members who accompanied them to the clinic. Which of these aspects of ministry was more important: the physical treatment of disease, or the spiritual message of salvation? How did we address the spiritual depravity of the impoverished sick and dying who came to our clinic for physical relief and medicine?

## An Option

David J. Hesselgrave addresses a number of critical missiological issues in his book, *Paradigms in Conflict*. In Chapter 4 entitled, “Holism and Prioritism: For Whom is the Gospel Good News,” the author revisits the tensions present in these two scenarios above. After observing a recent trend among evangelicals toward greater focus on the “poor,” Hesselgrave traces the historical development of three primary positions on the relationship between social action and evangelism: “radical liberationism,” “holism,” and “traditional prioritism.” Hesselgrave argues against

the first two positions from both logical and Biblical (textual and lexicographical) perspectives. He defines “radical liberationism” as “promoting justice in society to establish Shalom on the earth.” “Holism” is described under two styles, as either “revisionist holism,” in which “evangelism and social action [are] full and equal partners,” or “restrained holism,” which describes the two as “more or less equal partners, although a certain priority is reserved for evangelism.” Hesselgrave argues solidly for the position of “traditional prioritism,” which he describes by stating that: “The mission is primarily to make disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive.” In further ex-

planation of his view, the author clearly prioritizes the various options that confront the church: “With reference to spiritual transformation and social transformation, it gives priority to spiritual transformation. With reference to spirit, mind, and body, it gives priority to the spirit or soul. With reference to social action and evangelism, it gives priority to evangelism.”

Hesselgrave acknowledges that these dichotomies necessitate certain choices in our work, which he poignantly captures in the words of C.S. Lewis, “Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live forever, and this must be true or false. Now there are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better bother about very seriously if I am going to live forever.”

In closing this chapter, Hesselgrave concludes “that in announcing the good news to the poor, both Isaiah and Jesus intended it to be the kind of good

news that first and foremost had to do with the salvation of sinners." He then urges the missions community to focus its resources on taking the good news of Jesus' gospel to the most unreached and the most receptive to the message around the world.

Does the preponderance of the Biblical text support Hesselgrave's conclusion? I think that it does. Hesselgrave cites Isaiah 61:1 at the beginning of chapter 4, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." This begins the prophecy of Isaiah that Jesus read in the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day, as recorded in Luke 4:18-19. Hesselgrave comments on this passage:

Nevertheless, Larkin recognizes the spiritual priority in Jesus' proclamation. He notes that in communicating the purpose of his coming as prophesied by Isaiah, Jesus quotes four infinitives and three of them have to do with preaching. The poor are evangelized; the prisoners have release; and the blind have sight proclaimed to them. The year of the Lord's favor or the Jubilee Year is proclaimed. 'Luke, then, regards the primary activity of Jesus' ministry as preaching. Other tasks are present... but these either validate or become the content of the gospel message' (Larkin, 1998, 158).

### What Does Jesus Say?

A cursory examination of the Gospels reveals a clear and strong prioritization of proclamation of the gospel message in Jesus' ministry over and above addressing the physical needs of the poor. While Jesus demonstrated many acts of power and compassion, I am not aware that He ever improved the economic standing of any individual. Jesus miraculously healed the sick, raised the dead, delivered the spiritually oppressed, and only on rare occasions, fed the multitudes (but not because they were poor, rather because they were hungry after listening to Him teach for a prolonged period of time). Feeding the multitudes on these two occasions was primarily intended to demonstrate His divine nature, His power, and His compassion; and was not aimed at alleviating poverty.

But what do Jesus' teachings and His words demonstrate in terms of His priorities? Beyond the feeding of the multitudes, Jesus gave His disciples only one command to feed people: and that command was clearly addressed at feeding people spiritually, not at supplying food for physical nourishment (John 21:15-17). On only one occasion does Jesus advocate selling one's possessions and giving the proceeds to the poor, and even this command is in the context of Jesus addressing greed and obsessive worry about material belongings (Luke 12:33). When Jesus speaks about clothing people, it is not a command to His disciples, but rather a promise to His disciples of God's faithfulness to

to every nation of the world, including poor and rich alike.

References in the New Testament regarding the poor are extremely limited, in comparison to the Old Testament references. Jesus only refers to the poor 16 times, and of those references, many refer to spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3, 11:5; Luke 4:18, 6:20, 7:22; Revelation 3:17). Other references acknowledge the fact that the poor will always exist (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8). Some references simply describe the condition of the poor (Mark 12:42-43; Luke 21:3). Only three of Jesus' references about the poor are accompanied by a command to give them material assistance (Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21;

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provide what they will need in terms of provision of needed clothing (Matthew 6:30; Luke 12:28).

By contrast, Jesus gave repeated commands to His disciples to go and to preach the good news of His Kingdom to the entire world (Matthew 10:7, 27; Mark 16:15; Luke 9:60, 16:16). He prophesied that His delegated mission of proclamation would be fulfilled throughout the entire world as He intended it to be (Matthew 24:14, 26:13; Mark 14:9; Luke 24:47). Furthermore, Jesus affirmed that the primary purpose in His incarnational ministry was proclamation and preaching (and, by implication, not healing, feeding, miracles, deliverance, and so forth); (Mark 1:38; Luke 4:43). And finally, Jesus affirmed that His greatest gift and purpose for the poor was that He and His followers might give them the spiritual "good news" (Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18-19, 7:22). The mission of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, is crystal clear. His singular priority was proclaiming the message of salvation to all peoples and

Luke 18:22) and all three of these references describe the various Gospel accounts of the rich young ruler, in which the focal point of the story is not meeting the needs of the poor, but rather exposing the greed and spiritual poverty of the wealthy ruler.

Clearly, the primary focus of Jesus mission was to address the impoverished spiritual condition of the hearts of rich and poor alike, rather than upon alleviating economic poverty.

### What Did Peter Say?

Peter is the first disciple we hear from in the Book of Acts on the day of Pentecost. Addressing the crowd of observers who had just witnessed the miracle of Pentecost, Peter explains the event as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel in which God promised to pour out His Spirit on people and to demonstrate His power by signs and wonders, with the intended result that "everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved," (Acts 2:16-21). Peter went on to preach the gospel and called for

a response (as a true evangelist!), and 3,000 people were saved that day (Acts 2:38-41). Later, when he was directly confronted by a beggar asking him for money, Peter responded, "silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk," (Acts 3:6). The crippled beggar was healed both physically and spiritually that day, though Peter gave him no money.

### What Did Paul Say?

The Apostle Paul is often and accurately referred to as the first and foremost missionary and chief Apostle. As the author of the majority of the New Testament Epistles, and as an inspired theologian, Paul epitomizes the missionary passion and focus of Jesus, Who called and sent him as an Apostle. Paul's ministry exemplifies the ministry of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. So, what did Paul have to say about the poor and about the preaching of the gospel? While it is beyond the scope of this paper to do an exhaustive study, a brief survey will serve to affirm the clear sense of mission priority demonstrated in the Apostle Paul's life and ministry.

Paul's writings reflect minimal treatment of the subject of poverty. Once he alludes to the Jerusalem Council's admonition to remember the poor, and affirms his personal commitment to do so (Galatians 2:10). At another time, Paul quotes Psalm 112 in affirming that God Himself gives gifts directly to the poor (2 Corinthians 9:9). Paul reflects upon the poverty that Jesus entered into through His incarnation (2 Corinthians 6:10, 8:9), and elsewhere recounts a contribution made by the churches to the poor among the Jerusalem saints (Romans 15:26). Finally, Paul refers to the sacrificial act of giving up all of a person's possessions to the poor as worthless act of service, if the sacrifice is not motivated by love, (1 Corinthians 13:3).

But, what does Paul have to say about the ministry of evangelism and preaching the good news? The answer consistently appears throughout Paul's

autobiography and fills the pages of his Epistles. He speaks repeatedly of his God-given compulsion to preach (1 Corinthians 1:17, 9:14-18, 27; Colossians 1:23), especially to the Gentiles (Romans 1:5), and of his eagerness to fulfill God's calling for him to preach the gospel (Romans 1:15). Paul expresses his personal confidence in the power of the gospel message (Romans 1:16-17), and his ambition to preach Christ where He is not known (Romans 15:20). He recounts God's plan and purpose in the preaching of the gospel to Israel and to all the peoples of the world (Romans 10:1-21). Paul speaks repeatedly of preaching Christ (2 Corinthians 4:5; Ephesians 3:8; Philippians 1:15-16, 18; Colossians 1:28); preaching the Son (2 Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 1:16; 1 Timothy 3:16); preaching peace (Ephesians 2:17); preaching Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23); preaching Christ resurrected (1 Cor-

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inthians 15:12); preaching the gospel (Romans 1:15, 15:20; 1 Corinthians 1:17, 15:1-2; 2 Corinthians 2:12, 10:16, 11:4,7; Galatians 1:8-9, 11, 2:2, 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:9); and preaching the faith (Galatians 1:23, 3:8). There can be no question of the absolute priority of evangelism through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. A thorough reading of the New Testament can leave no doubt that the priority of the ministry of Jesus, as well as the Apostles, was that of preaching the good news of the gospel.

Yet, no one would argue, to my knowledge, against the wisdom and value of acts of compassion and social ministry (demonstration) accompanying the ministry of evangelism (proclamation). In many cases, these acts of compassion serve to soften hearts, to open doors for the message, and to

demonstrate the love of God in creating a platform for the ministry of the gospel. The question is one of priority. Which comes first?

### The Need for a Singular Priority

This dilemma reminds me of a message from Bill Pollard, the former chairman of ServiceMaster. Bill recounted a conversation he had with Peter Drucker about ServiceMaster where Drucker told Pollard that the word "priority" originated in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and then added, "Bill, it wasn't until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that we pluralized the word priority. For most of its history, the word has been singular." Drucker added that there is really only one priority ("that which comes first") and urged Pollard to determine what that one priority was and to make it of first importance and to keep it there.

Samuel H. Moffett insightfully addresses the need for prioritization re-

lated to the tension between social action and evangelism. Calling these two "partners," Moffett notes:

Now in most practical, working partnerships, there must be a leading partner, a first among equals, or nothing gets done. Which should be the leading partner in mission: evangelism or social action?

I submit that what makes the Christian mission different from other commendable and sincere attempts to improve the human condition is this: in the Christian mission our vertical relationship to God comes first. Our horizontal relationship to our neighbor is 'like unto it,' and is just as indispensable, but it is still second. The leading partner is evangelism.

This is not to exalt the proclamation at the expense of Christian action. They belong together. But it does insist that, while without the accompanying

deeds the good news is scarcely credible, without the word the news is not even comprehensible! Besides, the real good news is not what we in our benevolence do for others, but what God has done for us all in Christ. Evangelism, as has been said, is one beggar telling another where to find bread.

The supreme task of the Church, then, now and for the future, is evangelism. It was the supreme task for the Church of the New Testament. It is also the supreme challenge facing the Church today.

### Conclusion

I agree with Moffett and with Heselgrave in the prioritization of evangelism and disciple-making with an affirmation of the great value and requisite ministry of the accompanying (but secondary) partnership of social action. The ministry and words of Jesus and of His Apostles clearly support the "traditional prioritism" of evangelism.

So, how does this prioritization play out in ministry among the poor in Cuba and India? One church with whom we work in Cuba has sought to establish a feeding program to enhance the living standard of one Cuban community. Despite their best intentions, they have not significantly changed the living standard of this community nor have they promoted greater economic self sufficiency. By contrast, I have witnessed tens of thousands of Cubans starving for the gospel message, hungry for a Bible of their own, and thirsty for Biblical training, Christian books, tapes, CD's, and other training materials; but I have yet to see a malnourished or starving Cuban. Of course, to demonstrate the love of God and respond to our duty to our fellow man, we do supply and provide for the physical needs of those we encounter by distributing much needed clothing, medicine, eyeglasses, vitamins, and other resources. But the first priority we have embraced is ministries that foster the proclamation of the gospel and resource the Cuban Church to enable it to equip leaders and multiply churches in order to

fulfill the Great Commission throughout Cuba.

In India, Nepal and Bhutan we established our four-day medical clinic with four different "stations" for each patient to visit. The first station was for registration; the second was for an examination by the doctor; the third was for counseling, in which a person was available to share the gospel and pray for the patient; and the fourth was the pharmacy, where the patients' prescriptions were filled. In this mission we truly sought to treat the whole person by ensuring that everyone heard the gospel in an atmosphere of loving support, accompanied by a demonstration of Christ's love through practical medical care. Although 705 patients were treated, 814 people heard the gospel (this number included the family members who accompanied the patients). Of these, 278 people made professions of faith in Jesus Christ after hearing the gospel. One middle-aged man from Nepal particularly caught my attention, and the Lord put a burden for him on my heart. He had traveled two days to get to our free clinic in order to have a doctor examine several large tumors on his head and neck. The doctor delivered the tragic news that the man had terminal, inoperable cancer. Yet, this man heard the gospel, trusted Christ, and returned home with the assured hope of ultimate healing and eternal life. I will never forget the peaceful resolve in his eyes. He left our clinic knowing that God would receive him into eternal dwellings. All we could do for him that day was to diagnose his disease and to give him the hope offered in the gospel. And, in the end, the good news of the gospel was all he ultimately needed.

**Kurt Nelson** is Executive Vice present of Field Ministries of East-West Ministries, and has oversight of 30 countries where his agency ministers. He leads short term teams to several countries throughout the year, as well as provide management, and oversight of the Office of development and Human resources for the mission. ■

### Smorgasbord Religion

Continued from page 2

between Buddhist and biblical prayer, worship, chanting, meditation and such like is essentially a journey back to the roots of each religion. Today's eclectic mix and match mentality and pick and choose attitude lack that discernment for the most part. Is Christian yoga potentially more dangerous than spiritually devotional? *Time* quoted Subhas Tiwari, professor of the Hindu University of America in Orlando, who succinctly affirmed that "Yoga is Hindusim." To attempt to extract yoga from Hinduism or from Buddhism is fundamentally impossible.<sup>5</sup>

In cultural anthropology and missiological practice, to avoid syncretism, it is recommended that in the conversion process the old forms are primarily maintained, while giving them new meanings. Thus the indigenous practices are redeemed over time. But in Christian yoga the opposite seems to be occurring. It is not conversion but adoption of non-biblical forms that is taking place. While Christians are not directly converting to Hindusim or Buddhism, they are adapting yoga in its primary form, often without understanding its roots and meanings. While attempts are made to transform Hindu-Buddhist yoga to fit a Christian expression in the Church, is sufficient attention being given to discerning that all elements of yoga can be or must be reinterpreted? Or is this practice a compromise with worldly wisdom and practice? Is there an adequate theological base being developed from Scripture on this matter first, before a wholesale acceptance of yoga meditation in this smorgasbord confusion?

Another perplexing area for multiple choice concerns meditation. A year ago an American told me that a close relative went to South Africa, where an Anglican (Episcopalian) nun "transmitted meditation" to him, using the Buddhist processes. Biblical meditation is very different than the Eastern forms. Buddhists meditate to disengage the mind, suppress the rational processes and be-

come detached. Christian meditation engages the mind, utilizes the rational processes and becomes focused on God not self. While meditation is commanded in Scripture, Christians seldom practice it. The Church often does not emphasize it. Are folk approaches of other eclectic religions robbing the Church of its neglected opportunity for meditation? At the same time the filmmaker, David Lynch, who is, according to *Time* magazine, "well known for the bizarre and a reactive iconoclast," has a goal "to give every child in the U.S. the opportunity to learn and practice Transcendental Meditation. He has established the non profit David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace for that purpose." Touring to scores of campuses he talks to students about meditation. "He himself has received a mantra, a very specific sound thought," and has practiced this form of mediation for thirty years. His goal is to involve students in TM so they can "create a wave of peace in America that will be a catalyst for peace in the world."<sup>6</sup>

Like choosing from Baskin-Robbins's 31 Flavors of ice cream, it is unlikely that the shopping cart approach to religious matters will change quickly or abruptly. Hopefully, this brief sketch will at least caution Christians facing the temptation to join the crowd in imbibing instant smorgasbord religion. Even better, maybe discernment, understanding and wisdom will begin to rule again, to help maintain a sense of stability and sanity in issues of faith in these pluralistic times.

**Endnotes**

1. *Spa Asia*, Jan/Feb 2006 issue, Wellness Media Pte Ltd. Singapore.
2. Quoted by R. Mark Beadle, *The Virtual Christian Academy*, *The E-News of the VCA* Vol. 1 #3. March 9, 2006.
3. ABC TV News 4/25/2006, 6:25pm PST.
4. "Stretching for Jesus," *Time Magazine*. September 5, 2005, Time Inc. New York NY.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Ellise Pierce. "Are the Kids All Right?" in *Hemisphere Magazine*, March 2006, ps.98-101, United Airlines.

*Alex Smith spent 20 years in Thailand serving in pioneer evangelism, church planting, and training national leaders. He is presently Northwest Director for OMF International. ■*

## Upcoming Regional Meetings

### SOUTHWEST

The EMS SW regional meeting for 2007 will be Friday, March 16, 2007. It will be held at the US Center for World Mission in Pasadena, Calif. Contact: Susan Chon, Assistant to the President. **Email:** susan.chon@wciu.edu **Phone:** 626.398.2414.

### NORTH CENTRAL

The North Central Region of the EMS will meet at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School on February 3, 2007 with dual themes: "short-term missions" and "mission in the Hispanic and Latin American world." Further information is available at [www.tiu.edu/feb3](http://www.tiu.edu/feb3). Dr. Robert J. Priest Director, PhD Program in Intercultural Studies Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

### SOUTHEAST

The Southwest Regional meeting of EMS will take place on March 9-10, 2007 at Blue Springs Baptist Conference Center, Marianna, Florida. **Topic:** "The Short-term Volunteer Movements: Missiological Implications." The meeting is parallel to SE Region of ETS Under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Kinchen, President of The Baptist College of Florida, Graceville, Fla. **Plenary speaker Dr. Ken Matthews ETS theme:** "In the Beginning. . . ."

**Conference Fees:** \$40 for EMS/ETS Members, \$20 for students, \$50 for Non-Member, extra \$12 fee for those not staying at the Conference Center.

**Room Rates:** \$33.50 to \$55.50 Contact Laura Tice at (850) 263-3261 ext. 446 or [lltice@baptistcollege.edu](mailto:lltice@baptistcollege.edu).

For additional information about the EMS Southeast Regional Meeting or for information about presenting a paper, contact Dr. Al James at 919-761-2166 or [ajames@sebts.edu](mailto:ajames@sebts.edu).

### NORTHWEST

The 2007 Northwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society will be a two-track event held on Friday, March 9 and Saturday, March 10. Both events will be hosted by WorldView Center at 6012 SE Yamhill St. Portland, OR 97215 (503-235-3818) or [Office@worldviewcenter.org](mailto:Office@worldviewcenter.org).

**Friday, March 9, 2007, from 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

**Track One:** Scholarly papers will be presented. **Topic:** "The Short-term Volunteer Movements: Missiological Implications." There is no cost for this meeting. Supper will be provided. Those interested in presenting a paper should contact David Stockamp at [DAS3STOCK@aol.org](mailto:DAS3STOCK@aol.org) for details and paper parameters.

**Saturday, March 10, from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM**

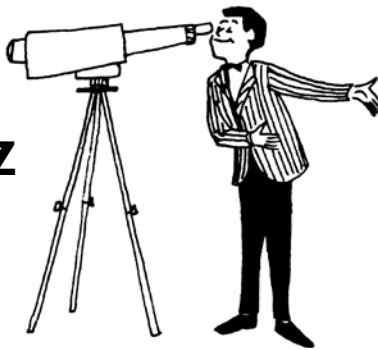
**Track Two:** Presentations of Short-term Missions: Its Impact and Implications. **Keynote Speaker:** Dr. David Mark, Latin America Regional Coordinator for the Evangelical Covenant Church. "On Someone Else's Terms."

Those interested in making presentations on this subject are invited to contact David Stockamp at [DAS3STOCK@aol.com](mailto:DAS3STOCK@aol.com) (Phone: 503-235-3818) for details and parameters of presentation.

The cost is \$7.00 for students and \$15.00 general admission, payable at the door.

**O**ur lead article is written by Alex Smith, the International Representative for OMF, and one of EMS's leading consultants on Buddhism. We know that the Buddhist religion piggy backs on other religions and infiltrates their doctrine, as well as spawns new religious thinking and experiences, i.e. New Age in America and elsewhere. Alex uses that approach as he reminds us of the way that eastern thinking has captured the minds and hearts of evangelical churches with their approach to meditation using some of the methodology of the East. It is a warning to us

## As seen through the **LENZ**



as to the way we can fall into wrong patterns of worship.

Kurt Nelson has taken chapter 4 of Dr. Dave Hesselgrave's book *Paradigms In Conflict* and has given us a biblical study on the conflict between the balance of presenting the gospel and the place of social action in that context.

He makes a strong case for the presentation of the gospel as primary, and not co-equal with social action. Some will disagree with this conclusion. Is there anyone in our EMS family who would like to write an article in response to this position? Thanks Kurt, for a good study that brings us back to scripture as the foundation for our missiological strategy.

There is more detailed information about our regional meetings at the website, and we invite you to go there for the latest information and speakers in your region.

—Bob Lenz, editor



**Evangelical Missiological Society**  
P.O. Box 794  
Wheaton, IL 60189

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