

## Theme: Reflections on Missions Practice

# Power Encounter— of the Wrong Kind:

## A Preliminary Phenomenological Survey on Inappropriate Exercise of Power Experienced by Short-Term Missionaries

*Ant Greenham*

**I**n his examination of American Christian experience and the global growth of Christianity, Noll makes a startling assertion. He argues, “No body of Christians has been as capable at exercising power as American believers, though few have been more reluctant to address questions of power face-on” (Noll 2009, p.59). He sets out this claim in a discussion of Christian abuses in nineteenth century West Africa, but maintains there is an ongoing penchant to act oppressively—even by evangelicals.

If the inappropriate use of power by evangelicals is as common as Noll implies, it warrants some research. I thus conducted a brief, preliminary, phenomenological survey to test for its presence in (evangelical) missionary circles during November and December 2014.

### Research Questions

Using access kindly granted me to a specific group of potential respondents, I sent out emails containing three questions to fifty individuals (or married couples). They were all appointed to overseas missionary assignments by

a large North American organization. The assignments were for set periods of time, the appointments falling roughly between the years 2007 and 2012.

### The questions were:

Have you ever felt you were the victim of an inappropriate use of power or control on the part of a co-worker or supervisor? (In addition to overt cases of inappropriate control, examples could include the use of authority or the semblance of authority to discourage debate, to assert that certain subjects should not be discussed, or to create a culture where it is inappropriate to question or complain.)

If so, please describe what happened in a few sentences. Please do not reveal names or otherwise identify the persons or organization involved.

How do you feel this situation could have been avoided or better handled; by the other party, yourself, or both?

In addition, I approached ten long-standing personal contacts who had been involved in missions with essentially the same questions. This control study was to gain an independent perspective on the same phenomenon (inappropriate use of power or control) from a completely different set of indi-

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# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

*from the Editorial  
Committee of OB-EMS*

## A Word from the EMS President

**T**his last year has been a year of transition for the Evangelical Missiological Society. We met for the first time in a stand-alone format for our national meetings in Dallas in September. This year's 2015 conference theme was "Controversies in Christian Mission." An enormous amount of effort went into this conference on the part of those coordinating conference logistics (under the leadership of Bill Harris), on the part of those doing program planning (under the leadership of Ed Smither, Rochelle Cathcart, Brad Gill, Robin Harris, Robert Priest), and most importantly on the part of all who prepared and presented the scores of papers that made up the heart of our missiological time together. With 238 registrants, representing 128 organizations (including 33 colleges, 20 seminaries, and dozens of mission agencies and churches), we had a solid launching. Ed Smither and Rochelle Cathcart (along with individual authors) are busy finalizing the manuscript preparation of our EMS volume on Controversies in Christian Mission—to ensure its timely availability in print by next fall.

The EMS Board of Directors has also experienced significant transitions, and spent a significant amount of time planning and strategizing for the future. The Board had a good spirit of optimism and hope for the future. Among other things, the Board desired to plan ahead in terms of annual themes, with the following themes announced:

2016 – Mission in the Local Church/The Local Church and Christian Mission (October 14-16)

2017 – Engaging Theology, Theologians, and Theological Education in (or from) Majority World Contexts

2018 – Mission and Evangelism in a Secularizing World

One of the most important strengths of the EMS has always been its regional meetings. Because these regional meetings are usually held on a single day, with low registration costs, and low transportation costs, they are an ideal venue to bring students to. The EMS regional VPs are working hard on our behalf. Please support them in your prayers as well as by attending, by helping get out the word on the conference, by being a presenter, and so on. Check the date for your region, make plans to attend, and invite your students to attend. Consider whether you might be willing to be a presenter. Regional VPs will welcome offers to present by missiologists. If you teach a course this coming Spring, consider whether you could legitimately give your students course credit for attending a regional EMS meeting and writing up a report.

You should know that nearly every EMS Board member has made one or more financial donations to the EMS this year. Our website now makes such financial giving easy. As a board we are deeply convinced that the work of the EMS is Kingdom work, and that the EMS merits our prayers, our energy, and our resources. Please pray with us God's blessing and guidance on the EMS. And do consider making a contribution to the EMS, should God so direct you.

*Have a blessed New Year,  
Robert Priest, EMS President*

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By Enoch Wan (with Mike Pocock)

**I am glad to introduce our readers to the newly formed Editorial Committee of *Occasional Bulletin*:** Enoch Wan (Chair), Mike Pocock, Lloyd Rogers, and Fred Lewis. Please send us your suggestions for future improvement: enoch@enochwan.com.

The theme of this issue is: "Reflections on Missions Practice." The first article by Greenham sounded a needed note. I felt like the essence of it should be discussed very fully in mission candidate orientation sessions, and that mission organizations should lay out their approach in their policy manuals for workers to serve as a reference point for handling conflicts between workers and supervisors. The scriptural principles alone are significant and should be fully grasped by workers, and reviewed from time to time. It is a sad fact that missionary conflicts are far more

frequent between workers than with the unsaved population from whom they expected resistance. Establishing a sense of justice, where things are handled wisely and helpfully is probably the best we can do to achieve longevity and satisfaction among missionary workers.

The case study of the Belgian Gospel Mission was instructive, especially for handling financial difficulties in the worst of times. The whole challenge of maintaining founding principles about the support of the organization and workers when faced with exigencies should help today's agencies and workers get perspective on their situation today.

Hadaway's article on Pioneering vs Harvest missions struck a good balance, one that I personally sought to address years ago in "Focus and Balance" in *EMQ*. Although the author recognizes the sovereignty of God in producing ripeness and harvest conditions, he

could have been even stronger in showing that now response comes without a working of the Holy Spirit, so that where responsiveness becomes evident, our strategy should be to move toward that harvest. Is it not almost an insult to God's Spirit to say in effect "Thanks for bringing this people to a point of readiness, but I want to go where you're not working yet!" I believe that in Acts 17 where Paul mentions that people are where they are by God's appointment and to facilitate their finding of him, he also says that God establishes "their times" we don't know whether he means the time when they exist, many people have existed that don't today, or does he mean that their times of openness are established, like the day of their visitation. In any case, I believe we should move towards emerging or existing harvest fields without feeling guilty about it.

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## Power Encounter—of the Wrong Kind

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viduals. Five of them replied, three of them giving examples of power abuse. It is probable that those who did not reply (from both groups) saw no need to do so because they had not experienced an abuse of power. It is also possible that some of the main group (of fifty) did not receive my message because it was sent to a dormant email address.

## Responses

I received twenty-nine replies from the fifty appointees of the large North American (missionary) organization. This represents a 58% response rate.

Of the twenty-nine replies, seven, identified as Group One (G1), said they had experienced no abuse of power issues and had no further comments of significance; eight, identified as Group Two (G2) had a "no" response but expressed appreciation that I was conducting the survey and/or had observations on the topic, while fourteen, identified as Group Three (G3) said they had in-

deed experienced an inappropriate use of power or control.<sup>1</sup> For comparative purposes, the three respondents from the control group who reported abuse of power are identified as Group Four (G4). Interestingly, this is similar to the fourteen members of G3, who comprise 28% of the fifty appointees surveyed, including those who did not respond at all.<sup>2</sup> A further case, identified as Group Five (G5) for convenience, consists of a worker previously unknown to me, whose views I had not solicited. He heard about the survey from others and wished to inform me of his experiences.

A number of different issues (i.e. examples of inappropriate use of power or control) were identified by G3. In most cases, more than one issue was identified by each respondent. In addition, two respondents from G2 mentioned similar issues although they did not feel they were victims of power abuse as such.

The issues may be presented in three broad categories: abuse of authority, deficient mentoring, and refusal to consider alternatives. The order in which

they are presented moves broadly from a higher to lower number of cases. I have also noted the different kinds of cases which fall within each category. However, in this preliminary study, I have restricted reporting of the evidence to one significant respondent account in each category.<sup>3</sup>

Detailed examples of each sub-case are available and may be made available to interested enquirers. However, it seems that the nature of the problem is best communicated by means of one noteworthy story in each category. It should also be noted that every case involves a difficulty the worker claimed having with a superior. In a small number of cases issues with coworkers were mentioned, but the reported problem there (i.e. inappropriate use of power) was with the responsible superior, not with the coworker.

## Categories of Inappropriate Use of Power or Control

Considering all the respondents who mentioned issues from Groups



Two through Five, ten reported abuse of authority in some form, eight cited problems with deficient mentoring, while eight noted a (superior's) refusal or unwillingness to consider alternatives.<sup>4</sup>

## Abuse of Authority

Respondents reporting abuse of authority cited the following types of cases (with numbers of reporting respondents in parentheses): Leadership attempted to circumvent or manipulate authority structure (three in G3, two in G4, and G5); Leadership did not consult before making assignments or restricting freedoms (three in G3); Leadership opposed transfer of personnel (three in G3); Leadership regarded efforts to deal with issues as a threat (two in G3 and G5); Leadership refused to specify an alleged problem (one in G3); Leadership refused to confront the person causing problems (two in G3); and Leadership made inadequate provision for existing workers, often replacing them with idealistic newcomers (one in G4).

As suggested above, the abuse of authority lying behind this array of cases may be captured through the lens of one account, that of Respondent 11.<sup>5</sup> His account follows:

Sadly, both my wife and I have felt that we were the victim of inappropriate use of power or control on the part of both our immediate supervisor and . . . our supervisor's supervisor. This occurred in several ways and at several different times. I will not discuss the timeline of these events except where it is important to give a clearer picture.

During a discussion regarding our potential return to the field following the end of our term, it was made clear to me that we would not be assigned to a team leader role. The supervisor said, "If it was just you [speaking to me], there would be no problem, but I foresee problems with [your wife]."

When asked what these problems might be, no definitive answer was given. When pressed further about our desire to begin working on any potential problems immediately, there was again avoidance and vague answers given. No specifics were ever given despite numerous requests, and we were simply told this was something we would need to discuss with member care upon returning stateside. No attempt at resolution on the part of the supervisor was ever made.

In addition to this, in this same meeting, I was informed that if we did return to the

field we would not be permitted to transfer teams. The supervisor would "insist" that we return to his team because he did not feel that he could allow us to transfer while "dysfunction" existed. Again, when asked what he meant by "dysfunction," he would not provide any specifics. The insistence that we return to his team was later passed off merely as a suggestion by our supervisor's supervisor, but that is not how it was presented at the time. It was clearly stated that we would not be permitted to transfer to a different team or area. This later explanation seemed to be an attempt to defuse any complaint that would later be made.

After explaining that we would not be returning to the field following our term and laying out specific grievances against our supervisors, we were asked to put statements in writing. While prayerfully considering our answers, we requested that member care personnel review our statements and help us to state things clearly with wisdom. When the two-day imposed deadline passed, [and] I explained to our supervisor that we were discussing the statements with member care, the following statement was made:

No one is interested in [member care]'s filtered version of what is on your hearts and minds. You have the opportunity to make your voice heard in a very clear way through a carefully considered writing process; but unless you and [your wife] have already changed your positions on the wide-range of grievances you presented to both me and [my wife] (you must say so if that is the case), this is your chance to present your version of what you actually said to me and [my wife] during our face-to-face meetings this week. If important points are missing from your written communication, you should expect to see those points brought to light through our own documentation. If you are "out of line" at any point, it is our job to recognize that and then coach you and [your wife] into a right understanding of our Vision... we are all expected to strive toward in our growth process as full-time [laborers]. As your leadership, we are seeking to understand. We need to hear your voice, not [member care]'s.

Member care personnel responded quickly to this statement with a clarification of their role, and clearly indicated that this statement was out of line and reflected a gross misunderstanding of member care's role.

Throughout this process, our immediate supervisor and our supervisor's supervisor demanded that we discuss our struggles

with no one except them and with member care. This included teammates, other laborers with whom we had a close working and mentoring relationship, our pastors in the United States and family members. This was later slightly withdrawn to allow us to discuss the matters in only the vaguest terms with family and prayer partners in the U.S. and only for the purpose of requesting prayer. Requests for godly counsel from stateside pastors and fellow laborers were not permitted, and refusal to comply with these inappropriate restrictions would be treated as "insubordination." In addition to this, it was clearly stated that all mentoring relationships were subject to the approval of the supervisor. This was viewed as an attempt to silence us while we were on the field, and greatly hindered our ability to seek reconciliation and resolution. We viewed this as an attempt to protect our supervisors from honest criticism and scrutiny from higher field and stateside leadership. This treatment left us feeling alone, isolated from teammates and fellow laborers, and victimized with no potential recourse of action. By the time we were able to freely discuss these matters without fear of retribution, we had returned to the U.S. and criticisms made at this point seem to rarely be taken seriously by field supervisors. In spite of several attempts on our part at reconciliation while we were on the field, no effort seems to have been made on the part of our supervisors to accept any responsibility for their actions nor to make corrections to the areas of grievance nor to seek reconciliation in any way.

I do not wish to alleviate all blame from ourselves, but we feel that, through our communication with member care, we did everything within our ability to resolve this issue and seek reconciliation....We...were treated as enemies and our supervisors played the role of the victim as if they were unfairly criticized. (It was later revealed to us that our supervisors have done this with other personnel in the past and dissension is treated as personal hostility against them.) . . . I feel that this situation could have easily been resolved since the requests that we made . . . were not hard to implement and reflected biblical examples and commands on how believers were to interact with one another as well as communication principles taught from member care personnel.

While this account is presented exclusively from Respondent 11's perspective, it speaks of a culture of control exemplified by the supervisor and his wife. It would seem that this culture of control was enabled by an abuse of authority in which the supervisor's supervisor acquiesced. Unfortunately,

examples provided by other respondents (summarized above) indicate that such abuse of authority is quite common.

## Deficient Mentoring

In contrast to abuse of authority, other respondents reported its virtual absence, seen here as deficient mentoring. Respondents reporting this shortcoming cited the following types of cases (with numbers of reporting respondents in parentheses): Leadership abandoned respondent/s in a challenging or untenable situation (one in G2, four in G3); Leadership required a long-term decision at short notice (one in G3); Leadership miscommunicated expectations but demanded compliance (one in G3); Leadership created false impressions through miscommunication (one in G3); and Leadership gave no feedback (one in G3).

Deficient mentoring is communicated well by Respondent 9's account, which follows:

I served in Sub-Saharan Africa for 2 years . . . I was under the impression that the worker who agreed to mentor me while on the field would do what he agreed to do which was to mentor. When I arrived on the field I encountered a hands-off approach from my mentor. For example, when we first arrived on the field we encountered a lot of poor children coming to our door and asking for hand-outs, money, work, etc. The problem became increasingly worse, as every day, the knocking would start at 5:30 am and go until dark with a constant flow of children, women, etc. coming to our door. I went to my mentor asking for help and expressing curiosity over how to deal with beggar children and he told me that beggar children were a way of life and I had to get used to them. He offered no help or advice. He had been serving overseas for 15+ years. I thought he would've had a plan to deal with beggar children. Also, when we arrived to our assignment we had been in our house for a weekend when he and his family were leaving for the States for a month. I asked him to help me map out a plan for ministry while he was away; he showed up at my house with a list of names and phone numbers of local Christians in the area for me to call. He then left for the States. My first month overseas I was left all alone in rural Africa and we had to figure everything out on our own. Also, every month I had to turn in a summary of what I was doing to reach my people group. I faithfully filled out a form every month but never

received any feedback. I'm still not sure if anyone ever read my reports. I was supposed to meet or SKYPE with my supervisor every 6 months to review how life was on the field and we only had 1 meeting the entire time I was overseas.

I believe these issues could have been resolved with just a little feedback. I came to the field believing that I would be mentored but what I found was a hands-off approach to mission life. As long as I was out of my house during the day and with the people, the worker I was with did not care what I did. I wanted to be mentored and never received any instruction. My wife and I figured things out as we went along but still to this day wish we had received more hands-on instruction when we reached the field.

Although somewhat more extreme than others, this account of negligence is not alone. It exemplifies the experience of several respondents who felt abandoned (or unfairly challenged) on the field.

## Refusal to Consider Alternatives

While inappropriate use of authority could take the forms of abuse or abandonment, supervisors' resistance to other ways of doing things also featured. Respondents reporting a superior's refusal to consider alternatives cited the following types of cases (with numbers of reporting respondents in parentheses): Leadership refused to discuss structure or doing things differently (one in G2, four in G3, one in G4); Leadership implied that a different decision was against God's will (two in G3); and Leadership discouraged open communication (one in G3).

Respondent 24's account effectively describes the problem of sclerotic leadership in the place of her and her husband's assignment:

Three ladies in particular were wives of the team strategy leaders within their cities. They informed me that...I needed to submit to the way we [they] did things in country or find a new team. They were condescending in much of their communication with me and informed me that my ignorance was due to newness on the field. Numerous times, I was told by my mentor and team leader that once I had completed my first term, I would be accepted by the company and others within the teams as an equal but until that time, I needed to sit back and learn. Questioning the system was not ap-

propriate and I always received push back.... Leaders within our teams as well as larger organizational leadership repeated behavior that told first termers their experience and value was not worthy until they had completed the term....Leadership also sent mixed messages such as: telling us we could leave our security challenging location at any time if we sensed God's call for another assignment but then caveated that with "we control your future however, if you leave before we allow you." Within our teams as well, we were not given freedom for most of our decisions, even those affecting our family life. Leadership held numerous meetings regarding their personnel, making decisions about their future, work, trajectory etc., and then we were told after the fact what we would be "doing." We did not ever have [a] voice in these meetings and only heard about them through the grapevine. Again, we were told to accept it as is and when we had proven ourselves, we would have freedom.... There was a clear culture of non-confrontation and passive-aggressive behavior by our supervisors. Those who were quiet and reserved were said to be "humble" and those that questioned the systems were "proudful". Communication face-to-face would reveal one thing and then we would receive emails saying another. There are clear cases of manipulation by superiors who used the "God desires for..." [language] to try and move us toward their intended purposes.

...People who come into our company with clear leadership qualities, spiritual giftings, and experience are usually squelched quickly, put in the furthest recesses of the closet, and told to learn humility. In my experience, these types did not fit the typical "m" [missionary] model and were not part of the "good-ol' boys club" culture of our company. We saw 3 families we knew personally quit either during or after their first term because of this.

Before leaving Respondent 24, it is of interest that she and her husband returned, despite the disdain their suggestions apparently received the first time. She found the contrast instructive: "The clearest picture of this was when we came back to the field for [a] second term. We were in fact treated very differently and respected." Sadly, it would seem that the difference in attitude was solely a product of their seniority, not because they now had good ideas to offer. Following other respondents' comments, it seems that a refusal to consider newcomers' suggestions, regardless of their merit, is fairly widespread.

## Respondents' Suggestions for Improvement

Rather than end the research on a negative note, questions sent to the respondents included an opportunity for positive recommendations. Several from Group Three (and all the respondents in Group Four) specifically explained how situations they experienced could have been handled better. In some cases these explanations imply positive principles which could be followed in the future.

Respondent 11 lamented the lack of grace or respect he (and his wife) had been shown. This suggests the need to caution against (and test for) such negative attitudes on the part of supervisors. Respondent 12 objected to a constantly changing vision enforced

Interestingly, the three respondents from Group Four had the most constructive suggestions for improvement, possibly because each one had a good deal of field experience. Speaking for himself, one admitted he was "pretty strong minded and sometimes people take things the wrong way." This indicates the mark of a true leader; the ability to admit one's weaknesses. The second, a couple, were happy to note that after their home office disagreed with their unorthodox methodology, that same home office put this methodology into practice with other missionaries, sent to another location. This case indicates a willingness to learn from the positive experience of folks doing things differently. Third, a woman and her husband remained in

group of respondents seeks to operate professionally, and has an established system of member care. Unfortunately, power plays emerge compellingly from this phenomenological survey, despite the existence of apparently sound organizational structures and policies. It is thus worth asking whether these findings resonate in any way with others.

When I presented my preliminary findings at an EMS regional meeting in March 2015, it was interesting to note that the 40-odd people in attendance found the research helpful. In fact, two attendees (both women), later told me they had (separately) borne the brunt of power plays on the mission field. Unfortunately, in both cases this led to the termination of their assignments, an outcome neither of them wanted.

That outcome raises a key missiological issue, the improvidence of preventable missionary attrition.<sup>7</sup> Following research on this phenomenon, Donovan and Myers emphasize how often missionaries leaving the field for unsatisfactory reasons (other than health or family problems) cited discontent with leadership. Specifically, they report: "Some of the stated reasons for dissatisfaction were the leaders' lack of human resource management skills, not giving staff opportunity to be heard, and treating new workers 'like pawns.' Some complained of feeling dehumanized or undervalued. Many mentioned not being consulted in areas which directly concerned them and/or their families" (Donovan & Myers 1997, p. 59). Since such leadership deficiencies are linked to the loss of valuable missionaries from the field, the need to attend to them seems obvious. However, as McKaughan laments, "rather than evaluate and admit our organizational guilt or ineptness, we mission leaders abdicate our responsibility and too easily write off the individual as somehow not having measured up—another casualty of missionary attrition. Individuals become the problem, not the management or system which has misused them" (McKaughan 1997, p. 20). Reflecting McKaughan's observations, it seems there has not been any ongoing, high-priority effort to address

## Some complained of feeling

dehumanized or undervalued. Many mentioned not being consulted in areas which directly concerned them and/or their families.

on him as superiors changed. A solution could entail providing a consistent channel, available to workers, to confirm approaches they should follow, regardless of the whims of ever-changing immediate supervisors. Respondent 20 noted that people were automatically chosen as leaders if they were passionate about the work and had been on location the longest. Unfortunately, true leaders of people were not chosen. This indicates the importance of appointing the right kind of person to personnel oversight. In a similar vein, Respondent 24 spoke of longevity and evangelistic success as leadership criteria rather than selection on the basis of divine gifting. This meant that similar people were chosen by wrongly-gifted leaders, thus "re-creating cookie cutter leaders who act exactly like them." Finally, Respondent 25 spoke of the "top-down" nature of leadership selection, which suggests the need to determine potential leaders' grass-roots support beforehand.

what had been an extremely abusive situation (described as a "personality cult"), following the departure of the leading offender. They then "raised wages to minimum..., formed a board, put the ministry on legal footing, and tried to find all the wounded people to try to bring healing." This provides a very positive example of the victims acting in a Christ-like manner, negating their own interests in favor of Kingdom concerns. In sum, these three cases demonstrate the importance of choosing leaders who admit their shortcomings, seriously consider other ways of doing things, and act sacrificially.

## Reflections Emerging from the Research

The respondents' suggestions are not radical innovations. Positive recommendations like these are noted repeatedly in literature on missionary member care.<sup>6</sup> It also appears that the organization which appointed the main



systemic leadership deficiencies (which would include power plays), although evidence in the literature suggests they contribute to unnecessary missionary attrition.

Missiologically speaking, such attrition should be a matter of concern. However, if we seek to do missions biblically, there is a more important objection to power plays, whether they cause missionary (and ministry) attrition or not. Quite simply, Jesus condemned them. This emerges prominently in Mark 10:35-45 (and the parallel passage of Matt 20:20-28), where ten disciples object to the attempt by James and John to sit at Jesus' right and left in his glory. In response, Jesus informs all twelve disciples they are not to be like the "rulers of the Gentiles," who "lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them" (vs. 42).<sup>8</sup> Instead, they are to exercise servant leadership, with Jesus himself providing the prime example, having come "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (vs. 45). I doubt whether the disciples relished being likened to despised Gentiles, but the Lord certainly made his point. Leadership in Jesus' community was to be characterized by sacrificial servanthood, not throwing one's weight around in the manner of Gentile overlords.

It would seem that the condemned Gentile way of doing things would include the kind of power plays we have been examining. The phrases "lord it over them" and "exercise authority over them" in verse 42 translate the words κατακυριεύουσιν and κατεξουσιάζουσιν. As Foerster helpfully elucidates, the former "means the exercise of dominion against someone, i.e., to one's own advantage," and he goes on to note its use in 1 Pet 5:3, where elders "are not to exercise their power for themselves and therewith against those entrusted to them" (Foerster 1965, p. 1098). In a similar vein, the latter word (κατεξουσιάζουσιν) probably "implies the tendency towards compulsion or oppression which is immanent in all earthly power" (Foerster 1964, p. 575). Taken together, these terms would exclude a selfish exercise of power in

the Christian community which dominates, compels or oppresses, and takes advantage of others.

It would seem then that a consideration of power plays in evangelical missionary circles has merit. If for no other reason, we should attend to them because the biblical Jesus, our Lord, urges us to do so. And as the evidence suggests, power plays are alive and well in the 21st century. It might thus be helpful to begin by attempting a clarification of the issue by means of deeper analysis and more research.

### Further Research Recommendations

Further research could help scrutinize the issues discussed in this preliminary study and provide insights on ways they may be constructively addressed. Specifically, it seems advisable to approach supervisors on problems they have encountered with newcomers or subordinates. This would help counter a potential one-sidedness in the current study.<sup>9</sup> The preliminary survey essentially gave subordinates the opportunity to speak out about problems they had encountered with their supervisors, but did not give supervisors any opportunity to comment.<sup>10</sup> Such follow-up research should also include a questionnaire which could reflect (if not betray) inappropriate attitudes toward power and control on the part of such supervisors, should these exist. It might also test whether organizational structures and policies are up to the task of detecting them.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, the extent to which respondents identified abuse of power suggests that it is present in a significant minority of cases. If this applies more broadly, it probably reflects a cultural phenomenon within evangelical Christianity (as maintained by Noll). Changing institutional structures is unlikely to influence deep-seated cultural attitudes and approaches.<sup>12</sup> However, beginning a conversation on the subject, which this paper aims to do, can help by making the problem visible.<sup>13</sup> If more and more evangelical believers admit to the existence of inappropriate attitudes toward power and control in our midst,

and begin discussing them, there may be better prospects for dealing with the issue. And surely missiologists are as well placed as any to lead the way!

### Endnotes

1. This reflects the perspective of the respondents. No attempt was made in this preliminary research exercise to "hear the other side" (i.e. to consult the alleged perpetrators). As noted below, that would be a subject for follow-up research.

2. It must be understood that statistical comparisons in a qualitative research context, with typically small sample sizes, do not imply levels of accuracy or margins of error which prevail in the field of quantitative research.

3. I have lightly edited each account, correcting a few points of spelling and punctuation, but no more.

4. The total number of identified issues is higher than the total number of respondents reporting problems because most noted more than a single issue, as mentioned above. There is thus some overlap where abuse of power experienced by any one individual (or couple) would fall into more than one broad category and/or into more than one type of abuse within a category.

5. Numerical identifiers given to respondents simply follow the order in which replies were received.

6. Such literature includes: Taylor, W.D. (ed.) 1997 *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, Pasadena: William Carey Library; Foyle, M.F. 2001 *Honourably Wounded: Stress among Christian Workers*, 2nd edn, Grand Rapids: Monarch; O'Donnell, K. (ed.) 2002 *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices From Around the World*, Pasadena: William Carey Library; and Booth, J.F. 2006 *Long Distance Missionary Supervision*, D. Min. project, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

7. I did not set out to explore this important matter in my research (although it emerged explicitly from Respondent 11 and Respondent 24's accounts): The main group of respondents had set assignments and so would return to the US anyway. I thus felt that asking a question which linked power plays to missionaries not going back to the field would unnecessarily complicate the preliminary survey.

8. The Scripture quotations in this paragraph are taken from the English Standard Version.

9. An individual attending my March 2015

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# Faith Missions and Financial Malaise: A Case Study of the Belgian Gospel Mission

Dr. Aaldert Prins

## 1. Introduction

The modern praise song 'Jehova Jireh', summarizes well the staunch faith of the faith missions: "My God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory."<sup>1</sup> But ... what if God seems to cease to supply all one's needs? Not exceptionally, but for a prolonged time. Will one still acclaim in these circumstances that God's grace is sufficient?

The Belgian Gospel Mission (BGM) saw most of its needs supplied by supporters from the outset in 1918 until about 1930. Then the Mission, nicknamed by some as 'The Dollar Mission', was confronted with financial needs that no longer were fully met. As the financial shortage turned out to be chronic, heated internal debates were held on what it meant to be a faith mission in these circumstances. Therefore, The Belgian Gospel Mission is a good case study of how a faith mission wrestled to translate its iden-

ecclesiastical offices.<sup>2</sup> As most faith missions were international, they were potentially inter-cultural.<sup>3</sup> Financially, the innovation was that these missions were not backed by denominations. Their budget depended on many small donors and a few wealthy benefactors.<sup>4</sup>

To its converts, used to the system of a priest that was paid by the government, the BGM defined this system as follows:

We take the liberty to declare once more that the work of the Belgian Gospel Mission is a work of faith. That means that there

meant there was no financial security, neither for projects nor for salaries. As we shall see, this meant that BGMers eventually only received a percentage of their pay because of prolonged times of financial malaise.

## 2. The Origin of the Belgian Gospel Mission

The Belgian Gospel Mission, renamed the Belgian Evangelical Mission in the 1960s, is a rather late exponent of the faith mission movement. Most of these organizations were established in North America between 1880 and World War I.<sup>6</sup> It emerged from the British and Allied Soldiers Evangelistic Campaign (BASEC), a specialized faith mission, which focused on Belgian soldiers, combining humanitarian aid with literature evangelism.<sup>7</sup> BASEC (1915-1918) was founded by Americans Ralph Norton (1868-1934) and Edith Fox Norton (1881-1936).

Inspired by the results of their efforts, and on request of many of their befriended Belgian soldiers, the Nortons decided to continue their missionary initiative amongst Belgians after the Armistice of 11 November 1918. The organization was renamed the Belgian Gospel Mission. As a regular faith mission it has played an important role in the growth of Belgian Protestantism in the Twentieth Century.

John Winston, Sr. provides us with an interesting self-picture of the mission, clearly defining it as a faith mission: "We feel that we have been called to Belgium by God to bring a message, an essential part of which is the Pre-Millennial Coming of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit filling the believer for victory in life and power in service; and we do not feel that it would be right to abandon any of our posts to an organization which does not preach these elements of the Gospel." This combination of holiness teaching and Dispensationalism can also be found with Africa Inland Mission and other faith missions.<sup>8</sup>

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**For Hudson Taylor and his epigones,**  
consequences of depending on God to supply funding  
for the budget also included refusal to go into debt.

...

tity into actual practice at the times of prolonged financial need.

Before we delve into this case study, it is good to define what is meant by a *faith mission*. The concept of a faith mission was developed by Hudson Taylor, who founded with his wife Maria the China Inland Mission in 1865. This new type of missions had its roots in the holiness movement, focused on unreached areas and nations, had an individual concept of unity, gave educational qualifications secondary value, initially gave women an equal status to men, were driven by a premillennial eschatology, used a dual baptism policy, had a Calvinist communion theology and held an undeveloped view on

is no person or committee anywhere in the world guaranteeing even the smallest amount of money for our work. The Mission workers are in the same position. They know this and they have accepted that the Mission does not guarantee them any money. This gives us the candor to impress the needs of our work on all its friends in as far as they are children of God. We add to this that the majority of those whose gifts have made the work possible came from 'common', even poor people who can only give small amounts. And the Mission is very grateful for these faithful givers of small amounts.<sup>5</sup>

For Hudson Taylor and his epigones, consequences of depending on God to supply funding for the budget also included the refusal to go into debt. This



### 3. Financial Malaise

#### 3.1 Introduction.

In the early years, the BGM raised money seemingly easy. This facilitated a vast expansion of the Mission's activities. In September 1919 the first local church was founded in Brussels. Six years later already thirty so-called preaching stations in eight of the nine Belgian provinces had been planted.<sup>9</sup> In retrospect we can detect several elements that contribute to the fact why the BGM did not follow the pattern of most faith missions, a financial struggle to survive in their early years.

Research in the late 1920s revealed that during World War I and a few years thereafter, donations to missions in the US had increased distinctively, but temporarily.<sup>10</sup> This is exactly the moment BASEC and BGM were founded. An additional element for BASEC was the international sympathy for Belgium during World War I. As a small country, Belgium not only suffered under war crimes by the German Army, but also managed to halt the advance of the aggressor. By doing so, it frustrated the (modified) Schlieffen Plan, a strategy to defeat France quickly.<sup>11</sup>

In September 1930, the Belgian Gospel Mission experienced liquidity problems for the first time in its history. Ralph Norton shared this bad news with the workers, asking them to pray. He added that he was not sure whether the salaries for the second half of that month could be paid. Until then, the faith mission principle of paying salaries only if and to the extent in which sufficient financial means were available, had remained theoretical. But from now on the workers were no longer sure whether they would be paid in full, partially or even not at all.

The financial situation was always looked at from a spiritual angle, which was typical for faith missions. In the first decade of the Mission's existence, finances were considered as a Divine confirmation of their plans. The financial shortage now was seen as a reminder of their total dependency on God.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time the BGM tried to identify the elements which caused

the regression of donations from the USA to the mission. In 1937, BGM co-director Odilon Vansteenberghé identified four reasons: people were living above their means, denominationalism was rising, economic prospects were bleak, and the church was becoming increasingly secularized.<sup>13</sup>

If we consider Vansteenberghé's first reason, he refers to the major shift that had taken place in American values and society. Many consumers, including evangelicals, started to buy luxury products on installment.<sup>14</sup> This, of course, affected the family budget, resulting in less money being available to donate to missions.

The second reason seems to refer to the "incorporation of the Protestant denominations," a post-World War I development which meant that denominations adapted the ideas of corporate mentality from the secular economy.<sup>15</sup> The result was that quite a few indepen-

most evangelicals for this very reason left these denominations, this did not play a major role in the downward trend of donations.

I want to highlight seven other more fundamental reasons for the structural deficit the BGM was struggling with since 1930. Five of them were directly related to the Mission itself. The other two were external factors.

#### 3.2 Mission related causes.

**3.2.1 Ralph Norton as main fundraiser.** From the start the Belgian Gospel Mission was heavily dependent for its income on the fundraising by its founders and directors. Like Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody, Ralph Norton displayed good fundraising skills and the "ability to make easy friends with business leaders."<sup>17</sup>

The drawback of this was that local believers saw no need to donate generously to the mission as it seemed to have

### Ralph Norton's death in 1934

meant the mission not only lost its director but also its principal fundraiser.

dent mission agencies now were under the control of denominations. The downside of this centralization was an increase in overhead costs. From every dollar donated to missions, a growing percentage now was needed to finance the administrative machinery.

By describing the economic prospects as bleak, Vansteenberghé refers to the recession of 1937-38. Looking back, this recession now can be described as the third-worst recession of the Twentieth Century.<sup>16</sup>

As this meant a sharp rise in unemployment, it is likely the mission was affected and some of its supporters were forced to end their donations in order to make ends meet.

The final reason brought up by Vansteenberghé refers to the advancing modernism in several Protestant denominations in the US. However, as

easy access to money from the US. This dependency on the Nortons becomes unpleasantly clear when a proposed trip was cancelled in 1923 because of the Nortons' many responsibilities in Belgium. As a result, donations dropped to a third of the usual, and the growth of their work was in jeopardy.<sup>18</sup>

Ralph Norton's death in 1934 meant the mission not only lost its director, but also its principal fundraiser. On top of this his wife Edith, who took over her husband's roles, died rather unexpectedly only two years later. After their deaths the BGM had only a temporary upturn in American donations.<sup>19</sup>

The new co-directors, John C. Winston and Odilon Vansteenberghé did not have the network or the skills to be as effective fundraisers as Ralph Norton. This meant that deputation trips by US missionaries on leave became

quite important to raise funds in North America. The mission also started to make more publicity for their work in other foreign countries, such as the UK, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

**3.2.2 Fundraising techniques.** Next to the fact that the BGM depended heavily on the Nortons for raising money, the BGM missed out on the shift in the funding of faith missions in the US, where William Leach's recommendation to combine charitable and commercial fundraising methods became the trend.<sup>20</sup>

The China Inland Mission was a pioneer in this combined funding of their activities by selling books and brochures with stories from the mission field and paid subscriptions to China's millions. When the Sudan Interior Mission followed Leach's suggestion, which can be described as the Americanization

not only cheap, but because of their dispensational conviction that one was living on the brink of the rapture, also the wisest option as stewards of the entrusted donations. The Mission, however, was faced first of all with the scarcity of houses consequent upon the war. One of the consequences was a shortage of houses to be rented.<sup>24</sup> On top of this, many owners refused to rent their properties to Protestants. In other cases rental contracts were terminated once owners realized that their tenants were Protestants.<sup>25</sup> This was the case, for example, in Antwerp, Bruges, Liège and Soignies.<sup>26</sup> Therefore the mission was forced to purchase quite a few buildings for the meetings that it was holding in a growing number of places in the country.

But even purchasing a building was not easy. In Bruges the seller, Mr Van der Abeele, was put under pressure to

even a month, before our Blessed Lord comes back, is that not worthwhile? For of what value is the wealth of the Lord's children when he comes and it is all left behind?"<sup>29</sup>

**3.2.4 A Waning Interest.** As of 1915 the Nortons not only wrote about their mission amongst Belgian soldiers during World War I, they also described the horrors of the warfare and were not only missionaries, but also war correspondents. Their articles were not only published regularly in the *Sunday School Times*, with eighty thousand readers, but every now and then other magazines also published some of their stories. As Americans were fascinated by the heroic fight of 'poor little Belgium' against the mighty German Army, the couple was able to not only arouse the interest of many, but also to convince them to donate for this cause. When their mission amongst Belgian soldiers was immediately after the war transformed to a general faith mission, targeting the entire Belgian population, quite a few supporters kept donating regularly.

Around 1930 the BGM admitted it was confronted with a waning interest in 'poor little Belgium'. This became apparent in the fact that the aging (and dying) group of supporters was insufficiently supplemented with new donors.<sup>30</sup> The Nortons were asked frequently by their fellow Americans why they should support missionary activity in a prosperous country.<sup>31</sup> The political discussion between the two countries, whether the material aid of the US to Belgium during the war was a donation or not, may also have had a negative impact on the perception by the supporters.<sup>32</sup> This may have tempered in due course the enthusiasm to connect with the BGM financially and in prayers.

### 3.3 External Factors

#### 3.3.1 Mainly Support from Small Congregations.

To finance current and new activities of the Mission, the Nortons regularly travelled to the US to convince the Christians there of the necessity of evangelism in Belgium, a Roman

## The Nortons were asked frequently

by their fellow Americans why they should support missionary activity in a prosperous country.

of fundraising methods, this caused friction with other missions, who undoubtedly saw this as a factor of their decreasing income.<sup>21</sup>

The BGM, on the other hand, primarily published free pamphlets with stories gathered by pastors and evangelists. Although no explicit financial needs were communicated in these publications, readers were challenged to not only pray, but also donate generously.

Only two books were published which had to be purchased: Philip Howard Sr.'s *A New Invasion of Belgium* (1924), and Edith Norton's biography of her husband, *Ralph Norton and The Belgian Gospel Mission* (1935).<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, in Belgium colporteurs did sell Bibles, brochures and the BGM periodical, *Onze Hoop/Notre Espérance*.<sup>23</sup>

**3.2.3 The Purchase of Buildings.** The Nortons initially planned to rent as many suitable rooms as possible to be used as mission halls. This was

withdraw his offer, so the BGM decided to move swiftly. When they were at the notary office to sign the documents of sale, some people arrived with the aim of preventing the sale by offering a higher amount. Van der Abeele declined the higher offer and sold to the BGM anyway.<sup>27</sup>

Purchasing instead of renting buildings had, of course, a large impact on the expenses of the Mission. As a consequence, in 1924 there were insufficient means to build headquarters in Brussels.<sup>28</sup> Unsurprisingly supporters in the United States criticized the policy of purchasing buildings as soon as some money was available. This demonstrates that Americans simply could not imagine the practical situations a persecuted Protestant minority faced in a roman-Catholic country. To counter the criticism Edith Norton appealed to eschatology: "If we have possession of our own property, with full liberty to preach the Gospel for one year, or

Catholic country. They spoke at conferences and churches, some of which were large, but most were small.<sup>33</sup>

The donations of these smaller churches only barely covered their travelling expenses. In spite of this, Ralph Norton remained optimistic. He was convinced that these visits would generate more income in the long term if these churches were to include the Belgian Gospel Mission in their annual budgets.<sup>34</sup> This optimism was unfounded and proved false in the course of time.

**3.3.2 An Explosive Growth of (Faith) Missions.** A final cause for the financial malaise of the BGM was that in the second and third decades of the twentieth century there was an explosive growth of faith missions.<sup>35</sup> How extensive this growth was is difficult to say, as the information on these organizations and other evangelical parachurch organizations is very spotty. This is caused by the fact that they are by nature decentralized and dynamic.<sup>36</sup> The fact is that local churches and individual believers were snowed under with requests for support, which they could not all fund. Apparently the BGM was informed by a substantial number of supporters that they had decided to shift their donations to other missions.<sup>37</sup>

**3.3.3. The Great Depression.** On top of this all came the Great Depression which hit the US in the autumn of 1929 and soon evolved in a worldwide economic crisis. Ralph Norton interpreted the decrease of foreign donations as a message from God to the local believers in the BGM churches and stations to take up their financial responsibility. As a matter of fact, donations from within Belgium did rise as the Mission communicated the negative developments of overseas donations.<sup>38</sup> As this rise did not compensate the entire decrease of foreign income, the BGM was forced to take measures, as faith missions lived by the principle of not going into debt.

## 4. Measures

The first measures on the side of the expenses were taken by the Mission in 1930. A logical and first step was

a call for cost cutting. Free materials should be used up locally before new materials were ordered. Secondly, the sale of books, leaflets and magazines in Belgium should be encouraged, because the BGM made a profit from them.

Thirdly, the workers were instructed to make their local congregations aware of the financial situation. A special collection, in all congregations for the work in general, was seen as a practical way of encouraging people to give in accordance with their means.<sup>39</sup> It was also felt that the people who attended regularly—membership did not exist as yet—should be made aware of the costs of having a local church. The idea was that this would prompt local congregations to give more through the weekly collections, and that that would enable them to finance themselves, including the pastor's salary.

Up until then the BGM had been very reluctant to teach believers about tithing, out of fear of putting people

not only repeated his instruction to cut costs, but also ordered to have a freeze on salaries and not to accept any new workers except in very special cases.<sup>43</sup> This meant a slowdown in the growth of the BGM activities, as illustrated by the withdrawal of the permission to look for a meeting hall in Hemiksem.<sup>44</sup> Just before this trip, on 27 February 1931, the Belgian Gospel Mission had held its first day of collective fasting and prayer. Church members who were "advanced the furthest" had been invited too.<sup>45</sup>

Further, the financial need was announced in the BGM magazines, mainly distributed in Belgium, *Notre Espérance* and *Onze Hoop* (1931). This was against the pure faith mission principle, but not an uncommon practice among faith missions. Because of the pressing need, Ralph Norton believed that God wanted him to explicitly ask for money.<sup>46</sup>

When a year later the situation had deteriorated even further, it was decided

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**When things got even worse as the value of the dollar fell, it was decided after some deliberation not to limit existing activities or to cut support for the Mission's Bible Schools.**

■ ■ ■

off.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, the same advice, to set the example in tithing, was also given to pastors in the US who were confronted with the effects of the financial crisis on the revenues of their churches.<sup>41</sup> It is not known if the BGM leadership was aware of this.

The Mission's change of direction bore some fruit. In some places the amounts that were received through the weekly collections doubled in a few months' time. The total income from the offerings increased by 30% from BEF 225,385.55 in 1931 to BEF 293,719.02 in 1933. Yet in 1934 the total dropped to BEF 284,278.30.<sup>42</sup>

In 1931 Ralph Norton noticed during a trip to the US that due to the ongoing crisis his work was resulting in even less support than before. He then

to follow the national trend and to cut salaries by 10%.<sup>47</sup> When things got even worse as the value of the dollar fell, it was decided, after some deliberation, not to limit existing activities or to cut support for the Mission's Bible Schools, but to tell four workers to look for a job elsewhere.<sup>48</sup>

In 1936, the BGM again pointed out in an article, which was published in *Notre Espérance* and in *Onze Hoop*, that because of the current serious lack of money, BGMers were only receiving 50-70% of their salaries in some instances.<sup>49</sup> Only by this sacrifice the BGM was able to maintain its existing level of activities.<sup>50</sup> Vansteenbergh expressed his awareness of the hardship this was causing as this partial payment came on top of the fact that by now



salaries had been cut by 40%.<sup>51</sup> This measure was in line with the holiness background of the Mission's founders. As not every worker had its roots in this movement, it is doubtful whether all workers would have chosen this option if they had had the choice.

Although donations from within Belgium rose again from 1937, costs were rising too. This meant that revenues from within Belgium never covered more than one-fifth of the costs.<sup>52</sup> As a result ministry costs were cut back by halving the kitchen staff and reducing the number of secretaries from five to three.<sup>53</sup>

In September 1938 the situation was so difficult that a donor was asked for

sphere. Therefore, the consolements and proposed solutions also were often related to spiritual aspects. After cutting salaries for the first time in 1932, Ralph Norton took comfort in the fact that the China Inland Mission did not see its income go down and with the thought that "what God is doing for them He is able to do for us, if we walk in fellowship with Him."<sup>58</sup>

A flaw in this reasoning is that it could easily lead to the conclusion that if revenues remained insufficient, this would be a sign that the BGMers were insufficiently committed to God, either as an organization or individually. Moreover, his picture of the CIM's

paid first, and the remainder was used to pay salaries as much as possible.<sup>62</sup>

The redundancy of four workers a year later led to a lively discussion about the organization's identity as a faith mission. For example, Dutch-American missionary Abraham van Puffelen considered this an expression of a lack of faith. He also felt that it was high time to "examine ourselves and the Mission to see if there are reasons in the Mission itself for the lack of funds. ... We will confess our personal sins as well as the sins of the Mission."<sup>63</sup> John Winston Sr., the right-hand man of the Nortons, responded by saying that God was showing His will by not providing the means that were needed to continue with the current amount of workers.<sup>64</sup> It was suggested that all workers, men and women, would need to do some individual and collective soul-searching to find out whether there were any unconfessed sins that were preventing God from answering their prayers for funds.<sup>65</sup>

Years later, on the brink of World War II, Winston Sr., who was by now co-director of the mission, wrote to BGMer Miner Stearns: "It seems like a lack of faith and we have to face the fact of diminishing income from America in recent months and realize that in these desperate times in which we live, it may continue until we find out from the Lord what can be done about it."<sup>66</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

The financial policy of the Belgian Gospel Mission was a combination of an unexpected (by the Mission) situation on the mission field, holding on to principles of the holiness movement and the preponderant expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. On top of this the mission did not, unlike most faith missions, experience financial hardship in the first years of its existence.

The fact that prayers for money were answered one after another, more and more buildings could be purchased, and activities could be set up in almost the entire country, was interpreted as a divine sign the BGM was on the right track. Conversely when the required money did not come in any more, this was seen as a sign that some (hidden)

## The financial regression and the related measures led to an identity crisis within the mission. The mission looked for the causes of the financial malaise in the spiritual sphere.

permission to use his donation to pay wages rather than for the purpose he had indicated.<sup>54</sup> By contrast, when the BGM buildings in Hasselt and Tongeren were sold the very same year, the full amount of the sale was put into the building fund rather than being used to pay workers' salaries.<sup>55</sup> Somehow the mission could not or would not ask from itself the same flexibility as the above-mentioned donor.

The financial situation did not improve in 1939, and as Winston Sr. and Vansteenbergh were determined not to cut down on BGM activities, the workers' remuneration suffered once more, including their own.<sup>56</sup> It was only when the Mission was completely cut off from support from abroad that BGMers were allowed to become—temporarily—a bivocational pastor or evangelist.<sup>57</sup>

## 5. Identity Crisis

The financial regression and the related measures led to an identity crisis within the mission. As we have seen, the mission looked for the causes of the financial malaise in the spiritual

financial situation was distorted. CIM had seen a marked drop in middle range donations, but this had been compensated by a number of very large donations.<sup>59</sup> What is more, CIM obtained its incomes not only from donations but also, as already referred to, from the sale of a never-ending stream of publications.

The Personnel Committee countered Ralph Norton—and rightly so—by pointing out that the China Inland Mission had twenty full-time fundraisers in the US and the UK, and the Belgian Gospel Mission not even one.<sup>60</sup> As mentioned before, the only fundraising by the BGM took place in the form of speaking engagements of workers on furlough and of the Nortons' trips.

When BGMer Jan Monsma asked whether salaries that were not fully paid out would be paid at a later stage, he was told that some faith missions did do this, but that the BGM had not made any decisions about this. John Winston Sr added that Ralph Norton might ask the BGMers' opinion at the next workers' meeting.<sup>61</sup> Until then the guidance had been that general expenses were

sins were hindering God from answering the prayers as he did before.

Although it is a healthy reflex for a mission organization to look for spiritual causes when prayers are not answered, the BGM cramped in putting too much attention on the divine side and too little on the human side of the situation. As a result, accusing fellow workers falsely became a serious threat for mutual relations. The resignation of at least one worker, Van Puffelen, can be related to this.<sup>67</sup>

If more attention had been paid to known human causes, and research was done of possible other causes for the downward trend in donations, the financial gap probably would have been less. But as there were multiple causes for the financial development in the 1930s, the mission still had to make tough decisions to meet the budget.

The policy to only pay out worker's wages partially in times of financial difficulties in order to continue with all evangelistic activities might have been defensible as a temporary solution. The BGM stood by this policy for years, which led to bitter poverty for many workers, especially as supplementing the income with a second job only was tolerated in the exceptional circumstances of World War II.

This led several aggrieved families and people leaving the mission and going to work for other denominations or organizations in Belgium or elsewhere. The deliberate choice not to downsize activities, combined with the financial policy to first pay bills and pay out the workers with what was left, led to a prolonged tension within the Mission after World War II, which paralyzed its functioning.

This case study of the Belgian Gospel Mission is a good example how an overly spiritual view of a mission's problems not only fails to solve the issues, but also can paralyze an organization and create deep emotional scars in the lives of missionaries and missionary kids.

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31. Edith F. Norton, "Could the Belgians Support Our Mission?," *Sunday School Times*, 2 February 1929, 64.

32. Reflex Databanken, ed., "Akkoord Voor de Terugbetaling van de Schulden van België Tegenover de Verenigd Staten van Amerika, Ondertekend Te Washington

Continued on page 22

# Harvest Missions vs. Pioneer Missions: Is it time for a change?

Robin Dale Hadaway

## Background and Introduction

I visited Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on a mission trip in April with a team of students from my seminary. Walking up and down the hillsides of the *favelas* (slums), we found the Brazilians warmly receptive to the Gospel. Everyone had time to listen to the Christian message at length. About fifty percent of those we encountered prayed to receive Christ. Since Brazil reports an evangelical population of 22%<sup>1</sup>, were our efforts really missions?

In late April I returned from South Asia where I had visited a team of students ministering in a Hindu majority country. Open proselytizing being forbidden, we shared Christ one-on-one with relative freedom even in several mosques. Christians in this nation compose almost 6% of the inhabitants, while evangelicals number just over 2%.<sup>2</sup> Since many evangelical churches exist there, does this country need cross-cultural witness? Were our efforts true missions?

In July my wife and I led a church leaders' and spouses' conference for 98 Muslim Background Believers (MBB's)

## The Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to address the issue of "Harvest versus Pioneer Missions." "Pioneer Missions" rules supreme and is considered real missions today. Is this correct or is it time for a change?

Ralph Winter, in his book *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years: 1945-1969*, poses an interesting question. What is the mission of missions?<sup>4</sup> Timothy Tennant cautions against defining missions as, "everything the church should be doing, thus robbing the word of any distinction, emphasis or character."<sup>5</sup> Sometimes mission is described too

the receptive. Although Crawley said that in 2001 most mission agencies were pursuing a "both-and" strategy in regard to pioneer and harvest missions,<sup>7</sup> this is not really true today. Most have reassigned their personnel by redeployment or attrition from traditional harvest fields to unreached peoples where the need is believed to be greater. Who is correct?

## Reflection on "The Great Commission" of Jesus to His Disciples

Before addressing the question, I return to the source of the missions mandate, the Great Commission of Jesus to His disciples. Matt. 28:18-20 reads as follows:

*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (NASB).*

All evangelicals agree that missions involves preaching and persuading unbelievers. The question is whether the "mission of missions" is primarily proclaiming the Gospel to unreached peoples in pioneer areas or is it also cultivating believers in harvest situations? Engel and Norton argue for an inclusion of the latter.

The Great Commission is not fulfilled, however, merely by proclaiming the message and exposing an offer to its claims. The convert is to be baptized and taught to observe all that Christ has commanded the church...It appears then that the Great Commission contains three related but distinctly different communication mandates (1) Proclaim the message (2) To persuade the unbeliever (3) To cultivate the believer.<sup>8</sup>

## Sometimes mission is described

too broadly but is there also the danger of defining it too narrowly?

in a limited access country in North Africa. In the early '90's I resided there as a Strategy Coordinator missionary to the Z people, an unreached tribe of 1.5 million persons spread over three N. African nations and 99.9% Muslim. The principal country of this people group reports 3%<sup>3</sup> Christian but less than 0.2% evangelical. My role on this trip was limited to training the leaders of the 100+ house churches from our former work because all missionaries (even the clandestine ones) have either been expelled or had to flee the country. Since we were involved in training believers only, was this truly missions?

broadly but is there also the danger of defining it too narrowly?

Ralph Winter and Donald McGavran, former colleagues at Fuller Theological Seminary, are considered by many as the most influential missiologists of the last half of the 20th Century. Winston Crawley says, "McGavran wanted major effort to concentrate on responsive people where the harvest is ripe but Winter urges concentration on places where the Gospel seed has not yet been sown."<sup>6</sup> Winter views the missions task as primarily a pioneering enterprise where McGavran sees the evangelistic priority as reaping the harvest among



If the third part of the Great Commission consists of “teaching all things,” how long should this activity continue: two years, five years, ten years or longer? Specifically, is this cultivating ministry part of the cross-cultural missionary task or should it be left to second, third and fourth generation national believers? In short, are some cross-cultural workers called to disciple and teach in a harvest field after the initial proclaiming and persuading has concluded? Some missions agencies have taken the position that cross-cultural missionaries should focus on the pioneering missions task and allow national believers and near culture missionaries with the discipling portion of the missions mandate.

Addressing the question of how long is long enough for cross-cultural missionaries to remain in a particular field, David Sills states, “simply because the task seems never ending, that is not a sound, logical argument to stop doing it.”<sup>9</sup>

When one asks the question, “How long should missionaries continue teaching?” the answer should be, “Which missionary?” Those who have been called to disciple, teach, train and equip and mentor should do so until the Lord changes their gifting and calling...Those called to pioneer ministries will always feel understandably frustrated if they are tied down to a ministry that they are not gifted, called, or desiring to do. There are various stages of missions and there are diverse gifts and callings. The biblical commands to both evangelize and teach disciples should not obliterate efforts and arguments to relegate everything after the pioneer stage to a lesser role and value in missions.<sup>10</sup>

Lately, pioneer missions, often called unreached peoples missions, has been the primary kind of outreach deemed appropriate for working in cross-cultural missions. Those who say mission work should be restricted to the Last Frontier<sup>11</sup> base this contention on the relative need to the “lostness” of the people group. I worked in an unreached, limited access country in N. Africa as a missionary for seven years, living inside two years. Certainly there is a greater need in N. Africa than in Brazil or Tanzania, two other countries

where I served. Peter Wagner cautions against making need the only criteria for assigning missionary personnel.

Some have postulated the greatest need on where there are the fewest missionaries in relationship to national believers. This is not necessarily a valid point...the law of the harvest demands that laborers, whether missionaries or nationals, be sent to the harvest field in the greatest number possible as long as each is reaping to his capacity.<sup>12</sup>

When I walked around a large *favela* in Rio de Janeiro in April, everyone we met gave us permission to share the Gospel. They were eager to hear, responsive to the message and many believed. My country of service in N. Africa also warmly welcomed guests (even two months ago with the nation under UN sanctions). Response to the Gospel proceeded more slowly because it was illegal for Muslims to change their religion marked on their

The push to the edge has been well represented by mission writers over the last twenty-five years. Todd Johnson says,<sup>14</sup> “Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims have relatively little contact with Christians. In each case, over 86% of all these religionists do not personally know a Christian.”

Jesus’ teachings also reflect another emphasis: reaping the harvest among the responsive. Matthew 9:37 records the words of our Lord, “Then He said to His disciples, ‘the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’” Another important reaping passage is John 4:34-36 where Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months and then come the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the

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identity cards. Public proclamation being proscribed, witnessing took place in homes, shops and during one-on-one encounters. Whereas a missionary in Brazil can see ten persons accept Christ in a week, the Christian worker would be thrilled to see the same result in a year in a limited access country. What kind of missions then should command the highest priority?

Of course, there is certainly the biblical mandate to reach the last frontier described by Jesus in Acts 1:8, “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (NASB).” Winter’s “hidden peoples” emphasis, later called unreached peoples, demonstrated that mission agencies had neglected about one-third of the world with no access to the Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

fields, that they are white for harvest.” Receptivity missions, popularized by Donald McGavran, emphasizes reaping the harvest while it is ripe. Advocating almost the polar opposite of today’s prevailing missiology, he writes [italics & bold mine],

Since the gospel is to be preached to all creatures, no Christian will doubt that both the receptive and the resistant should hear it. And since gospel acceptors have an inherently higher priority than gospel rejectors, no one should doubt that, **whenever it comes to a choice between reaping the ripe fields or seeding others, the former is commanded by God.** If within any given sector the masses turn indifferent or hostile then efforts to win them should be transferred to other sectors where unbelievers will hear and obey.<sup>15</sup>

Even if all mission agencies possessed sufficient funds, it would be impossible to deploy resources in equal

force around the world. Greg Parsons noted at last year's meeting of the International Society of Frontier Missiology that some prioritization in missions is necessary.<sup>16</sup> Some groups must be targeted at the expense of others. How should this relative ranking be accomplished? When an unreached people group (UPG) exceeds the threshold of 2% evangelicals to the total population, many believe the nationals can internally complete the mission task.

In a recent article, I argue that the 2% threshold is an arbitrary benchmark without a sociological or statistical basis.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps one reason the 2% standard was created was so mission agencies could aim for a somewhat reachable goal in order to "finish the task" among a list of UPG's. Most mission societies have decided that cross-cultural missions should concentrate on pioneer situations beneath the 2% evangelical threshold.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, if an unreached people group (UPG) has no active church planting activity, that people group is called unengaged and unreached (UUUPG). Recently another category has been added: UUUPG's or unengaged, unreached and uncontacted people groups. These are ethnicities that have not yet been contacted by Christian missionaries.<sup>19</sup> Are these categories correct? Ted Esler writes in a recent *EMQ* issue about "engagement" in missions [*italics his, bold mine*],

**The unengaged paradigm is reductionist.** Past definitions of unreached people groups had some sort of a quantitative indicator for being reached. Most often used and quoted is two percent...Is two percent enough to be confident that the gospel message has been adequately absorbed in a culture? Is two percent enough for a people to be considered reached? These are difficult questions to answer. None of us would be satisfied with a church in our own culture that represented only two percent of the population. Yet, when we look at many of the unreached people groups in our world today, a church of two percent in each of them would be nothing short of miraculous. Perhaps that is why it is tempting to make the goal the deployment of workers to the unengaged. **The larger goal (which is already rather reductionist) seems unattainable. Setting a lower goal makes our task easier.**<sup>20</sup>

## The Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP)

The Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP)<sup>21</sup> upon which the people group concept is based, has been a helpful tool in identifying the parts of the ethnological mosaic that have been neglected in missions efforts. I admire Donald McGavran and believe the Homogeneous Unit Principle has great merit and relevance today. The current splintering trend, however, toward division and subdivision to the

in the country who were also less than 2% evangelical (most were under .2% evangelical). As my wife and I shared the gospel and trained the nationals, we found some leaks in the homogeneous unit principle. We discovered that as Muslims came to faith in Christ, their commonality was not in their tribal identity but with other MBB's. Although we concentrated on reaching the Z people, the churches that emerged were (and are) composed of members of a number of Muslim peoples.

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**The Scriptures, in my opinion,**  
present a dual mandate: Missions to the last frontier  
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smallest common denominator represents missions that has "gone to seed." Today's *micro-missions* movement targets smaller and smaller people groups sometimes numbering in the hundreds while ignoring vast populations in the millions because they happen to be above the 2% evangelical or 5% Christian thresholds.

## Managerial Missiology

This *managerial missiology*<sup>22</sup> has led to some humorous incidents. One researcher with a large missions agency told me he received an overseas call from a pastor who was searching for a UPG on the field. The pastor and an associate had selected an unreached people group, adopted them, and journeyed to Africa to find "their people." After spending time in the country, the pastor called the mission agency's home office, saying, "the people group was on the unreached list but I can't find them." They had departed without checking with anyone either in the home office or overseas. They were wandering around the country, searching in vain.

Unfortunately, even in the most pristine unreached fields, the situation is not always as it seems. When I worked in N. Africa with the Z people there were many other Muslim tribes

Over 100 churches resulted. There is nothing more rewarding than working in a country with few Christians and watching the first believers from an unreached people group come to faith. For seven years I enjoyed this unique kind of ministry. Although the country observes a form of Islamic fundamentalism, our family felt perfectly safe and welcome. In addition, I supervised Christian workers in 10 other Middle East and N. African countries. I have nothing but respect for this kind of missions. However, another type of evangelistic effort is equally valuable.

The Scriptures, in my opinion, present a dual mandate: Missions to the last frontier as well as harvest missions. Receptivity missions recognizes the waxing and waning of interest in the Gospel among nations, peoples, and individuals. A young person of twenty is more approachable, generally speaking, than a senior adult of seventy. Some societies are more responsive than others. Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist peoples, tightly bound to their cultures, are generally more impervious to the Gospel than tribalists. Interestingly, the post-Christian nations of Western Europe tend to be resistant as well. On the other hand, societies in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa

have been generally more responsive. McGavran says that where populations are warmly responsive it is sinful just to "hang on."<sup>23</sup>

Reapers should be sent in in greater numbers to reap the harvest before it is lost. Current missiology often removes reapers from the field when they are just beginning to bear fruit above the 2% evangelical threshold, placing these laborers in new fields to start the sowing process from scratch. Evangelicals in Brazil have more than doubled in the last ten years. What would have happened if mission agencies had increased personnel in these harvest fields rather than reassigned these workers to the last frontier? Perhaps the response might have been even greater. McGavran continues [bold italics mine]:

*That receptivity should determine effective evangelistic methods is obvious...* Unless Christian leaders in all six continents are on the lookout for changes in receptivity of homogenous units within the general population and are prepared to seek and

groups should be prioritized over the resistant groups."<sup>25</sup>

Another reason we should concentrate on the receptive is because of our limited vision. As temporal human beings we suffer from generational tunnel vision. God, on the other hand, takes the long view. We see only our generation and note the places Christianity tends to be strong and where other religions are weak. We unconsciously assume Christian peoples and nations currently will remain that way even if we do little among them in the way of evangelism and missions. God's viewpoint is different. The Lord sees the vast areas in the Middle East and North Africa that were once Christian but now are dominated by Islam. Even though we are evangelicals we often fail to grasp the significance that each new child is born into this world a lost sinner. There is no place on earth where people are "born Christian." Yes, I understand the problem of cultural distance<sup>26</sup> and Gospel access. The place

Stony fields must be plowed before they are sown. No one should conclude that if receptivity is low, the church should withdraw evangelistic efforts. **Correct policy is to occupy fields of low receptivity lightly. The harvest will ripen some day.** Their populations are made up of men and women for whom Christ died. While they continue in their rebellious and resistant state, they should be given the opportunity to hear the gospel in as courteous a way as possible. **But they should not be heavily occupied, lest, fearing that they will be swamped by Christians, they become even more resistant.** They should not be bothered and badgered... Resistant lands should be held lightly. While holding them lightly Christian leaders should perfect organizational arrangements so that when these lands turn responsive, missionary resources can be sent in quickly... **Reinforcing receptive areas is the only mode of mission by which resistant populations that become receptive may be led to responsible membership in ongoing churches.**<sup>27</sup>

I experienced this phenomenon when living inside the limited access Muslim country of the Z people. The government was very suspicious of Western humanitarian groups because they believed missionaries hid within these organizations. As more relief groups arrived the problem was compounded. The government became even more resistant as these organizations brought many foreigners with them. Their high profile caused problems for all Christians in country. I found the "Gideon Principle" works best when ministering in closed countries. In Judges chapter 7, the Lord reduces Gideon's forces from 22,000 down to 300. One missionary can often be as effective as a team of ten due to the security problems brought on by too many Christian workers in a resistant society. When I returned to this country in July all of the expatriate, national and near-culture missionaries had departed.

How are the receptive won to Christ? The way forward is through discipleship. Zane Pratt, David Sills and Jeff Walters write [bold and italics mine],

*...there is one and only one imperative in the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, and that is to make disciples.* Making disciples necessarily involves proclaiming the gospel and calling for a

## Why is reaping the harvest

in receptive societies perhaps a more important priority than attempting to sow in resistant places?

bring persons and groups belonging to these units into the fold, they will not even discern what needs to be done... **An essential task is to discern receptivity and—when this is seen—to adjust methods, institutions and personnel until the receptive are becoming Christians...**<sup>24</sup>

Why is reaping the harvest in receptive societies perhaps a more important priority than attempting to sow in resistant places? The reason is that God's Spirit moves across the world sovereignly without consulting our strategic plans for engaging people groups. Certainly we should probe each ethnicity for receptivity and to proclaim outpost witnesses but we also should concentrate our efforts where the harvest is ripe. Mike Morris says, "McGavran believed that missionaries should be sent to unreached people groups but he believed responsive

where I served in N. Africa was like that. We must bring in the harvest, however, in the receptive societies on earth or those places will become as resistant as N. Africa.

The first portions of the Great Commission's command us to go everywhere to preach to the lost and persuade them to become believers in Christ. Since we cannot go everywhere in equal force, logic demands, in my opinion, that greater attention be given to placing personnel in the harvest fields. What about unreached peoples? They should not be forgotten. McGavran says {bold mine},

Recognition of variations in receptivity is offensive to some missiologists because they fear that, if they accept it, they will be forced to abandon resistant fields. Abandonment is not called for. Fields must be sown.



response, as there is no other way to become a disciple. This priority is confirmed by the references in Luke and Acts to proclaiming the good news and Jesus' witnesses. Those disciples, in turn, will obey all Jesus commanded, including loving their neighbors as themselves. ***Prioritizing making disciples and then teaching those disciples to obey everything Jesus commanded will thus preserve the imperative of advancing the gospel...***<sup>28</sup>

What is the relationship between harvest missions (receptivity missions) and the "teaching all things" commandment in the last part of the Great Commission? Should not the latter also be accomplished among unreached peoples? Absolutely. However, the "teaching all things" seems to be linked more to the harvest fields for the following reasons. When there is reaping in a harvest field, by definition there is an abundance of fruit. In a pioneer field, at least in the beginning, there is less cultivating of believers because there are fewer of them. Harvest fields are deceptive. When one looks out over

Christianity in sub-Saharan Eastern and Southern Africa, although a "mile wide," is in many places an "inch deep" and runs the risk of a rapid dissipation without an active missionary presence. Evangelical Eastern European Christianity is but a generation old and has not taken sufficient root to survive a missionary force reduction. Latin American evangelicals are relatively weak even in the "stronger" countries such as Mexico and Brazil. Many of the large evangelical denominations in the Americas have calcified into traditional, legalistic entities that reproduce slowly and with difficulty.... Brazilians are responsive to the Gospel, but with the rapid population growth, all denominations are falling behind even as record baptisms and new outreach groups {mission church plants} are recorded... Therefore, ***what is the missionary role in our historic fields? This writer believes that a vibrant missionary force is needed in our historic mission areas to act as catalysts to bring new methods, train national partners, and assist with strategy in order to increase the harvest in the receptive areas*** [bold & italics mine].<sup>29</sup>

National believers certainly can and should train their own people no matter how small the national church.

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## Have we really fulfilled the

Great Commission when a 2% threshold of evangelicals has been reached and the cross-cultural worker moves on?

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a sea of believers' faces, we assume each is growing in grace. Without active discipleship this rarely happens. Have we really fulfilled the Great Commission when a 2% threshold of evangelicals has been reached and the cross-cultural worker moves on? Birthing an infant takes nine months whereas raising the child to maturity requires eighteen years of sacrificial parenting.

Some say that once national believers have been raised up in a country, the "teaching all things" can and should be handed over to them. I wrote a few years ago,

***What about withdrawing or reducing force from the historic missions areas of the world?*** In this writer's opinion, the work in even the "strong" places has weaknesses that would lead it to become much weaker with the reduction of our missionary force.

However, increasingly overseas secular governments require credentialed professors to teach in Christian Bible schools, colleges and seminaries. National believers desire missionaries to fulfill the third portion of the Great Commission. It is the mission boards, not the nationals, who generally oppose deploying large numbers of missionaries to engage in this kind of work.

To discover the scriptural basis for working in all parts of the world it is necessary to return to a discussion of Acts 1:8 [bold mine]. The passage says, "but you shall be My witnesses **both** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, **and** even to the remotest part of the earth (NASB)." The translation of the term "both" sounds odd to the English ear. In English grammar "both" usually links two ideas. In this passage

four places are joined together. The New American Standard and the King James Version include the term "both" in the verse. The translation of the text, however, turns on the meaning of the particle "te." In Greek grammar *te* is usually rendered by the English word "both" when the particle stands alone. The NIV follows this interpretation. Normally the Greek word *kai* simply means "and." However, when *te* is followed by *kai* within a sentence the words can take on the meaning of, "... not only...but also."<sup>30</sup>

The Phillips translation renders the words *te* and *kai* in this manner, giving the passage the following translation [bold mine]: "*but you shall be My witnesses, **not only** in Jerusalem, **but also** in Judea, **not only** in Judea **but also** in Samaria, **not only** in Samaria, **but also** in the remotest part of the earth.*" The implication of this construction is that one does not start at home base (Jerusalem), finish the task there, go on to Judea and finish there, continue to Samaria and complete the work there and then go to the ends of the earth. The implication of the Phillips translation is that Jesus' command was to evangelize the earth *simultaneously*. Why? It is because the work of evangelism is never completely finished. It is reasonable to conclude that there is a mandate in the Scriptures to evangelize unreached peoples and reap the harvest in the entire world simultaneously, although not in equal force.

## Conclusion

In 21st Century missions should mission agencies labor only in pioneer areas, the harvest fields, or attempt to strike a balance between the two? Is it time for a change from the overwhelming emphasis on unreached peoples, unengaged ethnicities and uncontacted homogeneous units? Truly these days the harvest fields are neglected. Should not there be cross-cultural mission workers in the receptive areas to encourage the church, equip national believers, publicize and promote world Christianity to the ends of the earth so all can be reached?

I am not a Calvinist but I believe in

the sovereignty of God. The Lord works among some peoples and nations and not as strongly among others. I do not know why but that's how it is. I am not a Pentecostal but I believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. For unknown reasons God pours out His Spirit and moves mightily in some places but not as much in others. I do not know why but that's how it is.

There is a famous story of Charles Spurgeon being asked how he could reconcile the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of man in regard to repentance. Spurgeon is reported to have replied, "I do not try to reconcile friends."<sup>31</sup> In the same way harvest missions and pioneer missions are old friends who do not need to be reconciled. Although the Apostles preached to the lost, they also cultivated converts. This is exemplified by Paul's two-year teaching stint in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). The Apostle joined in both kinds of missions. We should as well. Both are needed.

As a missionary with my organization, I helped create the current imbalance. I went to the last frontier and enjoyed my work immensely. However, I worked in the harvest mission fields as well and loved it. I feel both kinds of missions are important and neither should be neglected. There are unreached peoples and responsive populations in South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and North Africa. May God give the thousands of mission agencies in the world a broad vision for developing a full-orbed strategy to prioritize the gathering of the harvest while charging into the last frontier and discipling the believers in both.

## Recommendations

1. Eliminate the two percent evangelical and five percent thresholds for categorizing unreached peoples, raising the threshold back to 10 or 20 percent.<sup>32</sup>

2. Determine the places that are most receptive to the Gospel and send new missionaries (expatriate and national) there in greater force.

3. Continue the advance to reach the last frontier.

4. Increase the "teaching all things" aspect of the Great Commission by sending trainers, disciplers and professors to teach in churches and seminaries.

5. I would recommend deploying missionaries overseas in the following proportions for all mission societies.

- a. 40% Harvest fields
- b. 40% Unreached Peoples
- c. 15% Training and Theological Education
- d. 5% Administration (Finance, Logistics, Personnel)

## Endnotes

1. Andrea Madambashi, "Evangelical Population Explodes in Brazil as Catholic Church Shows Signs of Decline," (*The Christian Post*, July 1, 2012), p. 1. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/evangelical-population-explodes-in-brazil-as-catholic-church-shows-signs-of-decline-77470/>

2. Operation World India. <http://www.operationworld.org/india>.

3. UNDP North Africa Overview, 20 June 2012.

4. Ralph W. Winter, *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years: 1945-1969*. (Pasadena: Wm. Carey Library, 1970), 99.

5. Timothy C. Tennant, *Invitation to World Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 54.

6. Winston Crawley, *World Christianity: 1970-2000*, (Pasadena: Wm. Carey Library, 2001), 75

7. Crawley, *Ibid*.

8. James F. Engel & Wilbert Norton, *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* (Grand Rapids: Zonder-van, 1975). 44.

9. M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010). 40.

10. *Ibid*. 45.

11. Zane Pratt, David Sills, & Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 30-31 write, "The Last Frontier is another term often heard in missions strategy. The IMB defines it as an 'unreached people for which the majority of its members have little or no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This represents 1.65 billion people in the world'."

12. C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missions Strategy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 32.

13. John D. Robb, *Focus! The Power of People Group Thinking*, (Monrovia, CA: MARC Press, 1994), 2.

14. In Greg H. Parsons, "Will the Earth Hear His Voice?" Paper presented at 9-24-14 ISFM meeting, 7.

15. Donald M. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 178, 183.

16. Parsons, *Ibid*. 13.

17. Robin Dale Hadaway, "A Course Correction in Missions: Rethinking the Two-Percent Threshold," (*The Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Vol. 57, No. 1) 24. <http://www.swbts.edu/swjt/>. On pages 22-23, I write, "Patrick Johnstone, the editor of *Operation World*, Luis Bush of the Joshua Project of the AD 2000 Movement, and some others decided that the twenty-percent figure [previous unreached threshold] was too high. They determined a much lower threshold was appropriate for measuring relative 'reachedness' (David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020) 108). Johnstone writes [italics & bold mine]; 'The original Joshua Project editorial committee selected the criteria less than 2% evangelical Christian and less than 5% adherents. **While these percentage figures are somewhat arbitrary, there are some who suggest that the percentage of a population needed to be influenced to impact the whole group is 2%** (Patrick Johnstone, quoted in Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 109)'. "

18. Timothy Tennant, in *Invitation to World Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010. 364) writes, "The Joshua Project defines an unreached people group by what is known as the "five percent rule." The basic idea is that if the number of Christians within a people group is 5 percent or less, then it is considered unreached...However, the Joshua Project also insists that there must be a least 2 percent or more Christians who are identifiably "evangelical" within the 5 percent if the group is to be considered reached." Tennant (366) points out that the IMB, my former missions agency, counts this differently. "The IMB of the Southern Baptist Church defines an unreached people group by using only the second part of the Joshua Project's criteria, namely, a group is considered unreached if less than 2 percent of the population is evangelical Christian."

19. Zane Pratt, M. David Sills & Jeff K. Walters say in *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2014, 30) UUUPG's "refers to the unreached, unengaged, and uncontacted people groups. Uncontacted peoples are those hidden, hostile or isolated people groups with whom no contact has ever been made for Gospel advance."

20. Ted Esler, "The Unengaged: An Engaging Strategy...Or Not?" (*Evangelical*

Continued on page 23

# The Intercultural Mind: Connecting Culture, Cognition and Global Living

Joseph Shaules. Boston: Intercultural Press, 2015. Print.

**Reviewed by Fred Lewis.** After 20 years in 3 countries, Fred served at the US Center for World Mission, and currently is the Training Coordinator for WorldView in Portland, OR.

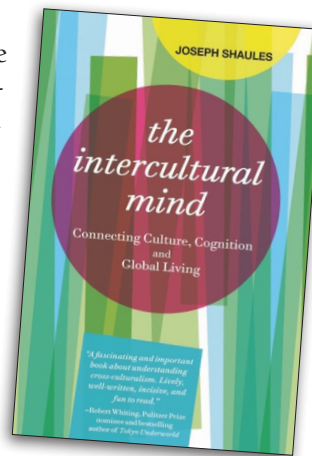
If you think that cultural differences among peoples are superficial or of marginal importance, then you should definitely read *The Intercultural Mind*, by Joseph Shaules. You'll be amazed to learn how deep cultural differences go—all the way down to the architecture of our brains.

Joseph Shaules, PhD, is an American, fluent in Japanese, and has worked in intercultural education for over 25 years in Mexico, Europe, and Japan. The cross-cultural stories he tells about himself and others have the ring of authenticity, of someone who understands what it feels like to live cross-culturally for long periods of time.

My one quibble is the word intercultural in the title, by which the author really means cross-cultural—working in

evidence to convince the skeptical that cultural differences are real and deep, and can help academics keep up to date on developments in cognitive neuroscience as they relate to understanding culture.

As reviewed by Shaules, recent empirical research indicates that people of different cultures not only have different assumptions, values and beliefs, but their brains are physically different as a result of growing up in different cultures. Our life experiences—which are all cultural—configure and reconfigure the physical shape of our brains as we go through life.



**Particularly pertinent** are the author's observations and comments that connect globalization, deep culture and the intuitive mind.

two cultures at the same time. I understand intercultural to refer to working in three or more cultures at the same time. Despite having intercultural in the title, the author does not address the greater complexity of working in three cultures simultaneously. Also, the author does not intend to connect the intercultural mind to missions.

Nevertheless, *The Intercultural Mind* will be helpful and useful to those involved in training programs for missionaries, missions pastors, and academics in the fields of intercultural studies, cultural anthropology, sociology, and cross-cultural psychology. It provides

Many readers will be acquainted with Geert Hofstede's metaphor of culture as software, as something that is merely added to our assumed unchanging cognitive hardware. In reality, according to the latest research, if culture is like computer software then it can change the literal physical construction of a hard drive, and change the literal physical circuitry of memory modules as your brain functions. As Shaules states, "the brain not only acquires new information from the environment, but also changes in terms of physical structure—anatomical changes—and functional organization" in response to that new information

(92). These physical changes influence our perception of the world, thinking patterns and concept of identity.

Those are the physical underpinnings of what the author calls the intuitive mind and deep culture. Deep culture refers to "...patterns of habit and meaning that are internalized in the unconscious mind, and that we rely on

when we communicate and interact with others" (31). Much of what we do, feel and think in our home culture is automatic, a product of informal, largely unnoticed learning that begins before birth. Our manner of living seems natural, the way everybody does it, until we encounter people who live some other way, and the implicit knowledge we've always relied on fails

to guide us.

Particularly pertinent are the author's observations and comments that connect globalization, deep culture and the intuitive mind. While agreeing that more and more people have more in common than ever before, at least at the level of pop culture, the author insists that cultural difference is alive and well, underneath surface similarities.

Chapter 10 on "The Language-Culture Connection" is a gem. Why bother to learn another language when you can work through an interpreter? Or, why interact with "unpredictable biological data systems (aka human beings)" when you can get "limitless information from electronic devices?" Because communication and real understanding grow out of shared experiences communicated through heart languages that are specific to particular situations, and thus culture.

Although *The Intercultural Mind* does not speak directly to any missions-related topics, it does offer up-to-date information on the cultural part of intercultural studies, providing research-based empirical information on the deep influence culture has on all of us.



# Christian Mission & Economic Systems:

## A Critical Survey of the Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Economies

Cheong, John and Eloise Meneses, eds. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015

**Reviewed by: Elizabeth C. Parsons**, former missionary to Southern Africa and Lecturer on Religion, Culture, and Development at Boston University School of Theology.

John Cheong and Eloise Meneses's new collection of essays is a compassionate, courageous contribution to the field of Missiology and beyond. While the foreword by Jonathan J. Bonk acknowledges risks in evangelicals doing theological analyses of economic systems (xi), the varied essays that follow confirm it as a risk worth taking. Using a range of approaches, including linguistic interpretation, narrative, and case studies, the contributors make the same central argument: Christian missionaries must think critically and flexibly about economic systems or risk doing more harm than good.

The writers are Christian scholars-practitioners with deep cross-cultural experience, and their insights illustrate

programs, solid data and elegant theories notwithstanding (149-178). Similarly, aid and development interventions founded on contentions that individual autonomy and rights-based approaches are universally-held values may empower some. But this work challenges such notions by revealing strengths embedded in traditional and collective cultures (113-147).

The book's courageous quality comes from its contributors' willingness to critique prevailing assumptions, particularly ideas that intertwine certain aspects of American culture with Christianity.

**Particularly pertinent** are the author's observations and comments that connect globalization, deep culture and the intuitive mind.

how such encounters have changed them. This approach allows a sense of compassion to permeate the work. As the authors explore crucial elements of lived reality they expose gaping holes in the theoretical literature often used to educate those interested in addressing a variety of global concerns. For instance, an economics text supporting free-market principles would be unlikely to discuss relational power disparities among people in "developing" countries and those in the West. But this work illustrates how constraints of extreme poverty affect what can happen with the most well-intentioned projects and

The story of what it means to be both American and Christian too often conflates free markets, modern progress, and divine blessedness into a narrative that Meneses in her essay calls "the gospel of capitalism" (2). By identifying narrative elements available in disparate faith and cultural traditions (43-85, 179-210) and employing counter interpretations of well-known Scriptures (13-16, 38-39, 135-142) the authors press particularly American readers to become more aware of the forces shaping contemporary attitudes regarding what constitutes an appropriate society, even what constitutes something worthy of reverence and

worship.

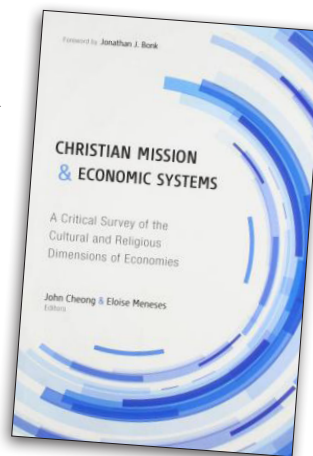
It might seem that Christian missionaries, equipped with plenty of stories about money and worship as well as knowledge of an incarnate God, would be prepared to offer compelling counters to narratives such as the gospel of capitalism. But the introduction by American Society of Missiology President Robert J. Priest explains why many missionaries have not taken advantage of Christianity's inherent strengths on this matter. Much mission training, he observes, has

tended to focus on intellectual belief as being the crux of the matter, relegating other human motivators—especially those involving material existence and money matters—to territory only glanced at in passing (xxi-xxv).

There is truth in this observation and it also should be remembered that the context of mission activity has changed drastically in the last several decades. In particular, much of what Christian missionaries did for centuries by way of health care, education, and defense of the poor has been taken over by professional workers in governments and non-profit organizations. The preponderance of such institutions have their own intellectual focal points that allow only passing glances at certain elements of everyday life as well. And a good argument could be made that the crux of the matter in such contemporary settings concerns belief in the tenets of a secular development industry.

This circumstance presents an opening for Christian educators to help service-minded students hone their abilities at prophetic critique. In this

Continued on page 23



presentation asked me if supervisors had been consulted and I admitted that they had not, this pointing to the need for further research.

10. In July 2015, I shared the findings of my preliminary research with a missionary couple having supervisory responsibilities. They were interested to hear what I found and said one area where difficulties could be encountered with newcomers was younger folks' determination to minister in groups—or not minister at all. Newcomers' apparent desire to conduct missions work collectively rather than individually could thus be included in follow-up research, if it can be arranged.

11. During May and June 2015, I began exploring ways in which I could conduct further research. A contact agreed to forward a follow-up survey along these lines to a group of denominational pastors residing in a large eastern region of North America, but by the time of writing, I had received no responses.

12. Dipple alludes to the cultural nature of the problem when he notes an apparent "reticence on the part of many training institutions to include conflict resolution skills in the curriculum, possibly because of a lingering idea amongst Christians that conflict is inherently bad and that failure is inevitable once conflict arises" (Dipple 1997, p. 221).

13. Crouch (2013) provides a useful contribution to such a conversation. As he notes in an introduction, "we need far more deeply Christian, deeply honest conversations about power than any one book can offer" (Crouch 2013, p. 11).

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## Faith Mission and Financial Malaise continued from page 19

Op 18 Augustus 1925," s d, accessed 25 March 2014, [http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/index.reflex?page=traiverd&c=detail\\_get&d=detail&docid=7103](http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/index.reflex?page=traiverd&c=detail_get&d=detail&docid=7103).

33. "General Workers Letter," 6 May 1930, August 1930.

34. Ibid., 8 August 1933.

35. Klay and Lunn, "American Evangelicalism and the National Economy, 1870-1997," 27; Austin, "No Solicitation: The China Inland Mission and Money," 233.

36. Klay and Lunn, "American Evangelicalism and the National Economy, 1870-1997," 35.

37. "Een ernstige mededeeling aan Gods kinderen in en buiten België. Een stroom van gebeden en gaven noodig om voort te kunnen gaan," 2.

38. "General Workers Letter," 6 May 1930, August 1930.

39. "Executive Committee Minutes,"

30 September 1930, 866, ABEM.

40. Generosity was presented as a means and result of spiritual growth. "General Workers Letter," 11 October 1930.

41. Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty's Dollar*, 120.

42. As the exchange rate of the US Dollar to the Belgian Franc dropped by a fluctuating 18 to 40% it is not expedient to convert the offerings to US Dollars. Lybrand, Ross Brothers, and Montgomery, "Report and Accounts of La Mission Evangélique Belge, Brussels," 7 April 1933, 14 May 1934, 5 June 1935, 877, ABEM; "Recettes Pour Le Fonds Général," n.d., 877, ABEM.

43. J C Winston Sr to M B Stearns, 14 March 1931, 266, ABEM.

44. J C Winston Sr to B Hilberinck, 14 March 1931, 137, ABEM.

45. "General Workers Letter," 17 February 1931

46. "CAEC Minutes," 11 October 1934, 875, ABEM.

47. The national trend mainly affected laborers. Emmanuel Gerard, "De democratie gedroomd, begrensd en ondermijnd. 1918 - 1939," in *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België*, vol. 2 (Tielt: Lannoo, 2006), 1044.

48. "Personnel Committee Minutes," 14 July 1933, 877, ABEM.

49. "Voor onze Belgische geloovigen," *Onze Hoop*, 1 January 1936, 12 (1) edition, sec. Uit den Arbeid, 3.

50. "Prayer Letter USA," 6 June, 855, ABEM.

51. Over the course of six years, salaries had been cut by 40%. It appears that Rowland Bingham had criticized the BGM for the salaries it paid. Winston Sr countered this by saying that although salaries were higher than the average wages of Belgian laborers, they were "considerably below the salaries paid to certain other Protestant pastors here in Brussels. ... It should also be understood that we do not pay husbands and wives separately. In the case of married workers, the husband alone receives an allowance." Contrary to general faith mission practice, this had always been the BGM's approach and therefore does not point at a diminishing role for women within the BGM during that time. Similarly, the

fact that after the war American candidate couples were obliged to raise sufficient support for both husband and wife does not mean that women were given more responsibilities within the organization. It was simply motivated by financial concerns. O Vansteenbergh to Carolyn Stephans, 9 December 1936, 337, ABEM; J C Winston Sr to R V Bingham, 27 April 1939, 465, ABEM.

52. "CAEC Minutes," 31 January 1936, 875, ABEM.

53. "Report from the Business Committee," 18 January 1938, 875, ABEM.

54. The donor in question agreed. "CAEC Minutes," 12 February 1937, 875, ABEM.

55. "CAEC Minutes," 23 September 1938, 875, ABEM.

56. O Vansteenbergh to J G Williams, 29 Augustus 1939, 332, ABEM.

57. Prins, "The History of the Belgian Gospel Mission from 1918 to 1962," 230.

58. R C Norton to H Bolomey, 10 June 1932, 20, ABEM.

59. Austin, "No Solicitation: The China Inland Mission and Money," 232.

60. "Personnel Committee Minutes," 7 October 1932, 877, ABEM.

61. Monsma left some time later, to become an evangelist at Jeruël Church in Rotterdam (NL). The reported reason for his departure was his dissatisfaction about not being allowed to become station leader in Antwerp. In the light of his query about finances it is possible that he had financial reasons as well. "Executive Committee Minutes," 7 January 1933, 866, ABEM; J Monsma to J C Winston, September 8, 1932, 208, Archives BEM; J C Winston to J Monsma, 15 September 1932, 208, ABEM.

62. After World War II this principle became the subject of fierce internal discussions. J C Winston to W Georges, June 29, 1936, 131, ABEM; Prins, "The History of the Belgian Gospel Mission from 1918 to 1962," 344ff.

63. "CAEC Minutes," 5 December 1932, 875, ABEM.

64. This is a negative application of CIM's principle that "God's work done in God's way will not lack God's supply." Winston applied it negatively by arguing that if God does not want a work to be done, he will withhold the

funds. OMF International, ed., "History of OFM International," s.d., accessed 25 March 2014, [http://www.omf.org/omf/cambodia/about\\_omf/history\\_of\\_omf\\_international](http://www.omf.org/omf/cambodia/about_omf/history_of_omf_international).

65. "CAEC Minutes," 5 December 1932, 875, ABEM.

66. J C Winston to M B Stearns, 11 August 1940, 266, Archives BEM.

67. Prins, "The History of the Belgian Gospel Mission from 1918 to 1962," 176.

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#### Harvest Missions vs. Pioneer Missions continued from page 19

*Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2, April 2015)136.

21. Donald McGavran defines HUP as, "Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers" in *Understanding Church Growth*, Revised Edition, 1980, 62. A further discussion appears in Timothy Tennant's *Invitation to World Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 363-364. Tennant says, "The HU [Homogeneous Unit] principle states that people tend to share the gospel with people who are part of their own group. There is a natural tendency to not cross cultural boundaries with the gospel, as well as to resist receiving the gospel from the other side of a cultural barrier."

22. James F. Engel & William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 69, quote Samuel Escobar's definition of Managerial Missions "to refer to an unduly pragmatic endeavor 'to reduce reality to an understandable picture, and then to project missionary action in response to a problem that has been described in quantitative form'. Once evangelism has been conceptualized into presentation of propositional truth, it is a logical deduction to declare a person (or even a people group) as 'reached' or 'evangelized' once they have heard."

23. McGavran, Revised ed., 1980. 264-265.

24. Ibid. 192.

25. John Michael Morris, "McGavran on McGavran: What Did He Really Teach?" Unpublished paper soon to be published in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 2015, 8.

26. For a discussion on cultural distance and why cross-cultural missionaries are need-

ed, see Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, Revised Edition, 1980, 64. See also the quote from Todd Johnson on page 5 of this paper.

27. McGavran, Ibid., 261-262.

28. Zane Pratt, M. David Sills & Jeff K. Walters, 257-258.

29. Robin Dale Hadaway, "Balancing the Biblical Perspective: A Missiological Analysis," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions*, 2 (Spring 2003):111-112.

30. Eugene Van Ness Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament*, (New York: Pearson Publishers, 1966), 320.

31. Timothy George and David Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), p. 274.

32. Robin Dale Hadaway, "A Course Correction in Missions: Rethinking the Two Percent Threshold," (*Southwestern Journal of Theology*, vol. 57, no. 1, Fall 2014).23-24, 28. <http://www.swbts.edu/swjt/>

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#### Christian Mission & Economic Systems continued from page 21

reviewer's experience, for instance, most seminary students arrive with scant knowledge of or interest in systemic aspects of money matters. So learning key concepts from unfamiliar disciplines in the experiential ways exhibited in this edited volume stands a very good chance of seizing students' interests as well as their passions. This, in turn, should have benefits far beyond activities traditionally associated with Christian missions.