

MISSION FRONTIERS

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Take a look at *The Future of the Global Church* starting on p. 15

Translating Familial Biblical Terms, p. 26

CAN SHORT-TERM TEAMS

FOSTER LONG-TERM

CHURCH-PLANTING?





NEW FROM PATRICK JOHNSTONE

The Future of the Global Church *History, Trends, and Possibilities*

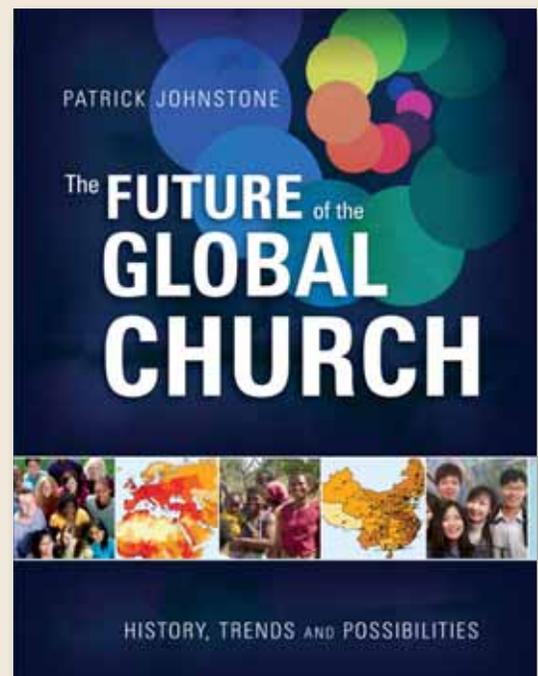
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Patrick Johnstone is well known and respected as researcher and author of the first six editions of *Operation World*. Patrick and his wife, Robyn, serve as pastors-at-large to the WEC missionaries in Europe.

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Cover photo: Steve Sims

- 4 **Editorial Comment**
RICK WOOD
- 14 **Marginalia**
DAVE DATEMA
- 15 **Are you Ready for *The Future of the Global Church?***
DARRELL DORR
- 24 **A Few Thoughts and Proposals Regarding Insider Movements**
PAUL MCKAUGHAN
- 26 **Translation of Familial Language in the Bible**
RICK BROWN, ANDREA GRAY
AND LEITH GRAY
- 31 **Raising Local Resources**
GLENN SCHWARTZ
- 34 **Further Reflections**
GREG PARSONS

CAN SHORT-TERM TEAMS FOSTER LONG-TERM CHURCH-PLANTING?



- 6 **Can Short-Term Teams Foster Church-Planting Movements?**
The Greatest Blessing Is to Train Others to Start Churches
WILLIAM SMITH
- 10 **Short-Term Trips, Bible Storying and Church-Planting**
DOUG BENDER AND STEVE SIMS
- 21 **Kingdom Come!**
The Ina People Catch the Vision for a Church-Planting Movement
STEVE SMITH

Editorial Comment



Learning from the Mission Field How to Plant Churches

Rick Wood, Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

Short-term missions are legendary for their pitfalls and problems. We have spoken numerous times in *MF* about our concerns and the damage that many short-term mission efforts have done. Poorly prepared teams of people going on poorly-planned and -coordinated expeditions at exorbitant cost to sensitive mission fields have often been the norm rather than the exception.

But many thoughtful leaders have sought to overcome these problems and have developed the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions. Every church or mission group should study these guidelines and learn from them before sending out their next short-term mission team. Go to www.soe.org for more information. Another helpful part of the preparation for short-term team members is to have them go through the *Perspectives* course before they leave? Go to www.perspectives.org for more information. Online study is also available.

Instead of going over the failures of short-term missions one more time, we decided to provide some inspirational and strategically significant stories of short-term mission teams that are making a long-term impact on the expansion of the Church in previously unreached people groups. What we present here are not evangelicals on a vacation but examples of well-trained short-term volunteers fitting into highly-focused and well-executed long-term strategies in pursuit of ongoing Church Planting Movements (CPM). This is the complete opposite of amateurism in missions. In fact, there is plenty that all of us can learn from the experience of Curtis Sergeant and the church planting strategies that he has employed in literally transforming the people group with

which he worked. We highlight his story in our lead article starting on page 6.

Learning From the Field

How is it that by most accounts the Church is not growing in the West, but in numerous places, like where Curtis Sergeant served, there are rapidly growing Church Planting Movements that are transforming entire peoples or regions? What have they learned that we need to apply? Will the church in the West continue to stagnate and decline in its influence on the surrounding culture, or will we learn the lessons from the mission field of how churches can grow and multiply? The future of the West may depend on it.

Knowledge vs. Obedience

Does God care more about how much we know or about how much we obey what we know? In the West we are prone to think that the acquisition of knowledge of Scripture is equivalent to maturity in Christ. We spend our time listening to sermons, going to Bible studies and even attending Bible school and seminary—all in the pursuit of knowledge. After gaining all of this knowledge, how much of it is actually applied in obedience? It is not what we know but what we obey what we know that will change our lives and transform the lives of others.

Only a small percentage of church members obey Jesus by regularly sharing their faith or discipling others, even fewer plant new churches. Yet in Church Planting Movements the focus is on immediate obedience that leads to growing maturity. As soon as someone comes to faith in Jesus, he is taught how to share his testimony and the gospel and he obeys what he has learned by doing it. He develops a lifestyle of sharing his faith

regularly at every opportunity. When these new disciples do lead someone to Christ, they are immediately taught how to disciple them and start new churches. Whatever they learn they obediently apply by teaching it to others. At the very start of their relationship with Christ the DNA of obedience-based maturity is established and then passed on to others in succeeding generations of disciples. The expectation is that every believer has the potential to be a soul winner, disciple-maker and church planter. That expectation leads to multi-generational discipleship and church planting. We cannot leave the job of building God's kingdom to just the professionals.

When I was a child, my father told me that the best way to learn is to teach others. All too often, in the West, only the pastor and a few others actually learn by teaching. The rest of us are passive listeners who seldom remember, much less apply, what we hear in church. As a result, new believers are trained to sit and listen, and are often discouraged from getting involved in ministry because "they do not know enough yet." Right away they are taught to be passive in their faith and leave the work of ministry to the paid professionals. Is it any wonder that the Church in the West has stagnated? All of us must become doers of the Word and not just hearers.

Accountability

At the heart of every Church Planting Movement is loving accountability to obey what they are taught. At every stage of a believer's development, accountability keeps them moving forward toward active involvement in ministry and maturity in Christ. Some have expressed concern that with the rapid growth of churches characteristic of CPMs that sound doctrine will be lost. However, just

the opposite is true because of the accountability that is built into the process of CPM multiplication. Because of the close accountable relationship between the discipler and the ones that he trains, deviations from sound doctrine can be caught early before unbiblical beliefs become engrained and are spread to others.

What kind of accountability is there in our current church structure? Virtually none. Because of the lack of accountable discipleship taking place in today's churches, believers can easily get off track in what they believe without anyone stepping in to correct them.

George Barna stated in 2009 that only 19% of self-proclaimed born-again Christians had a biblical worldview based on the acceptance of foundational beliefs such as absolute truth, the accuracy of the Bible, the literal existence of Satan, salvation by grace alone, the sinless nature of Jesus and God as the all-powerful Creator.¹ Unless we want both stagnant growth and a lack of sound doctrine, something is wrong with our model! We must change the way we do church in the

West. Does it make sense to spread our current patterns of doing church to every tribe and tongue? For more information on the best practices in Church Planting Movements, see the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*, which we have excerpted starting on page 21.

The Great Translation Debate

On page 26 we feature a landmark article regarding the standards for translating divine familial terms such as Father, Son etc., written by Rick Brown and other Bible translation colleagues. There has been a great deal of controversy regarding this topic with translators being accused of changing the meaning of the original text to bypass theological objections of Muslims and others. In fact, translators are avoiding a wrong meaning, namely, biological procreation. Such a meaning is inconsistent with the Hebrew and Greek words used and it is contrary to the nature of God's fatherhood and Jesus' sonship. Bible translation agencies have taken the only responsible position that they can by their commitment to translate the original meaning of the Hebrew

and Greek as accurately as possible. I urge the critics of the translators to choose to believe the best about their brothers and sisters in the Lord who have taken on this difficult translation assignment. They deserve our appreciation for the tremendous sacrifices they have made to do this work. They also deserve our maximum efforts to understand the process of translation and the difficult choices involved in overcoming language barriers. Please study this article carefully.

Starting 2012 on a Strong Note

Although we did not meet our goal of 1500 gifts of \$180 in 2011, we did receive gifts that were equal to 455 of these gifts. Please help us start 2012 strong with your gift of any amount. If you would like to receive an email notice when *MF* is available on our website and when other opportunities for involvement arise, please go to www.missionfrontiers.org/ email to give us your email address. f

¹ Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years, March 6, 2009, The Barna Group of Ventura, CA, www.barna.org

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CAN SHORT-TERM TEAMS

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MOVEMENTS?



The Greatest Blessing Is to Train Others to Start Churches

WILLIAM SMITH

As the overcrowded and under-maintained bus slowed to pick up a passenger on the rural Asian road, an older woman stepped out of the bushes. The bus struck her and knocked her 20 feet, killing her instantly. A small boy and girl, probably her grandchildren, fell on her body weeping. Curtis Sergeant, a strategy coordinator for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, witnessed this from the back of the bus. He was with a national friend and they were about five hours into their ten-hour journey across the province that was to be his new mission field.

Sergeant was pained, but having spent years in less developed countries, had seen such accidents before. But what happened in the next few minutes shook him and caused him to grieve in his heart.

It wasn't even that the bus driver spit on the body and cursed the grandmother for denting his bus. Sergeant, too far back to be able to exit to offer assistance, said to his companion, "You have to tell the bus driver to stop." "Why?" the friend puzzled. "Because those children there are all alone, and someone needs to do something to help them." Then his companion spoke the truth about the people in this mission field that caused even this veteran missionary to question God's wisdom in sending him



*William Y. Smith is the missions columnist for **Good News, Etc.**, a San Diego Christian publication. He has been on several short-term missions trips. He is a graduate of Auburn University. He and his wife live in Escondido, California. They are the parents of three grown children and grandparents of one new granddaughter.*

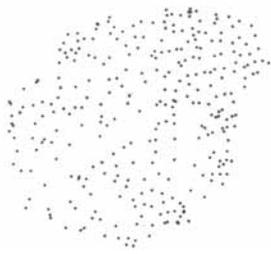
there. "Everyone on this bus has enough troubles of their own." So the bus rumbled down the road.

Anger welled up inside him. "Lord, why did you send me to this place of heartless, evil people?" And the answer, spoken to his heart, came back: "That's why I sent you. The people have no hope, no purpose, nothing to give. I sent you so that they would." Sergeant sighs as he tells the story today, "People's hearts were hopeless."

This incident took place in 1991. For the next five years, Sergeant worked strategically in this province, and saw his efforts wonderfully blessed by God as a great church planting movement began in this area. A Church-Planting Movement is sometimes defined as "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment."¹ Even though this was a restricted-access country, much was brought together by God in the province to cause exponential growth of churches over the next several years. An important factor was the structure of the local churches themselves that facilitated multiplication. Sergeant and others who would join him in this movement also intentionally and tactically used short-term mission teams to kindle the fire.

How fast and momentous was the growth of this church-planting movement? To grasp the enormity of the task, picture a population the size of New York City, or if you'd rather, Kentucky plus Oregon. What happened over a few years was that a significant, Holy Spirit-powered, church-planting movement caught fire. It was kindled to an important degree by short-term missionaries. Sergeant looked around five years after God used him to begin the work, saw that he was no longer needed

MAP A



MAP B



there, and went on to his next calling. That was far from the end of the story, however.

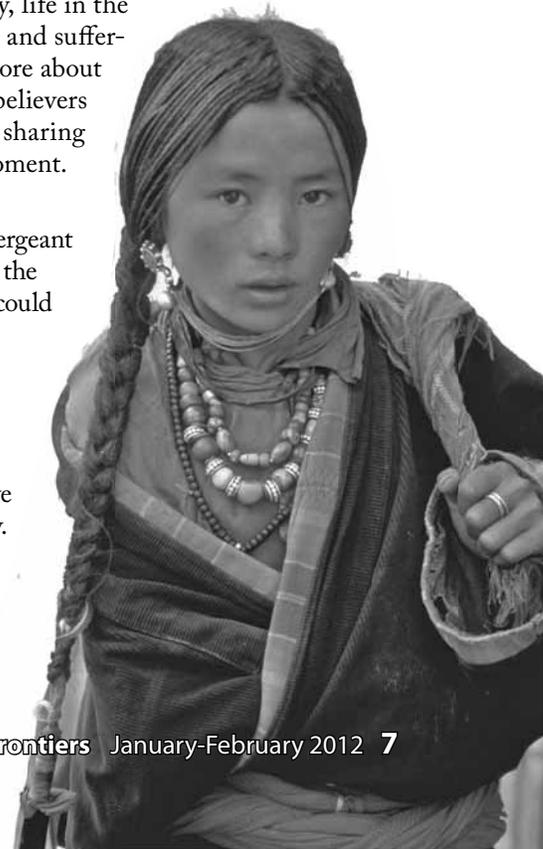
According to David Garrison in his book, *Church Planting Movements*, Sergeant began with only three house churches numbering 85 members. To his knowledge, although there were a few government-sanctioned churches that they avoided, there were no other followers of Jesus in the province. The first year, six churches were planted. The next year, they started 17, then 50. Sergeant remained until 1996. By the time he left, the province had about 8,000 followers of Jesus. God's blessing on the national church's growth had taken them to every county in the province, all five ethnic groups, and were beginning to saturate the entire province. The rest of the team from the Southern Baptist IMB was gone by 1998. By that time, there were 550 house churches, numbering more than 55,000 believers in the province. Map A shows the growth between 1993 and 1998. Each dot represents a church. By 2001, it is estimated that there were 900 churches with nearly 100,000 believers worshipping in them. By 2005, as seen in Map B, one might wonder if there was any area left without a church within walking distance. This all took place in a country that if not closed to the gospel, certainly had a government that was hostile to non-sanctioned churches.

What factors and actions led to that growth, and to the further exponential growth continuing to this day? Sergeant lists several:

- **Short-Term Volunteers:** Because the province and its people groups included so few Christians, an important church-planting tactic was to use short-term missionaries recruited from other countries. Although they did not speak the predominant language of the province, they were able to speak a shared language with many people in the county seats. These short-term missionaries came from several different countries. They appeared as if they were from the same general ethnic group as the population, and so did not draw attention to themselves because of their low profile.
- **A Person of Peace:** First, they would seek out a person of peace in each new community. That person

may or may not have been a believer initially, but could help facilitate a house church. The first church then began with an emphasis on discipleship. Then Sergeant would connect with leaders and tie them into a network of other house churches.

- **The Significant Advantage of Short-Term Missionaries:** There was no temptation to develop dependence on outsiders, because they knew the visitors wouldn't be there that long. "After all, Paul was essentially a short-term missionary," Sergeant reminds us. "Except for longer stays in Corinth and Ephesus, he was not ministering anywhere very long."
- **Training the Trainers:** Sergeant led the short-termers to spend much of their time training nationals who would in turn train others. The nationals would be trained in a central location. When they left to return to their own town or a new village, they would then train others. The locals absorbed the training, sponge-like, because they knew from the beginning that it was their own individual and community responsibility to obey Christ's commands and impart those to others. Picture the urgency on the faces of the national believers as they responded to the training. Sergeant shares how training, leadership and spiritual growth are all tied in together. "The heavenly economy is different from the earthly economy. As I am faithful in leading others, He will reveal more of himself to me. It's all based on giving, not on protecting what I have. Keeping people from leading is the last thing you want to do. Everyone is a contributor, not just a consumer. Prayer, Bible study, life in the Body, persecution and suffering." We'll talk more about exactly how new believers were prepared for sharing their faith in a moment.
- **Start with Accountability:** Sergeant is often asked how the church's theology could remain solid with such fast growth. He asserts that it has to do with the way the churches function. They have dual accountability. Every time the members get together they



are asked two questions: (1). Did you apply what you learned? (2). To whom have you passed this teaching, and how have they applied it? According to Sergeant, this keeps them tied to the Lord and accountable. Scripture is the authority, and there is a twin focus on right belief and right behavior in daily life. Both orthodoxy and orthopraxy (from the Greek “orthopraxia”, meaning correct action/activity) are important, whereas in more traditional churches we have become a bit skittish at questioning other believers about their conduct. “In movements that are this active, you don’t have to worry about orthodoxy, because it’s being constantly tested.” The network itself has very high accountability. The individuals are accountable to their local church. The church is then accountable to the district, which is accountable to the county leadership, which is further accountable at the province level.

- **Duckling Discipleship:** Another question that Sergeant often hears is, “What about leadership, with so few people formally trained, or even having been Christians very long?” His answer might cause a smile. “When you see a family of ducks crossing the road, only the first duckling is following the mother. The rest are following the duckling in front of them.” Sergeant explains. “None of us has achieved the full measure of the stature of Christ. Every one is mature enough to be a leader of another duckling. Follow me as I follow Christ.” That’s a lot of responsibility on new believers, but they seem up for it. “Each of us, including a brand new follower, is ready and responsible to lead others to Christ. Everything we receive, we have an obligation to pass on to others.”

The churches tended to be small. Seldom did a house church grow much larger than 30 members before it spun off a sister church. This splitting accomplished two beneficial results: it avoided attracting government attention, and it caused faster growth. A good summary of the structure of these house churches is to look at the acronym Sergeant developed, POUCH churches.

The POUCH Church

Is this a one-place, one-time kind of miracle by God for which we ought to sit back in wonder and praise Him? Or is it a wonderful miracle, plus a basket of lessons for us to apply? Dan Hitzhusen, International Vice President of the mission organization e3 Partners, offers a view into how short

Participative Bible Study and Worship
Obedience to God’s Word as the mark of success for every believer and church
Unpaid and multiple church leaders
Cell groups of believers meeting in
Homes or storefronts³

term mission groups have learned from this and continued the POUCH church idea. He says that short-term missionaries can be very effective in coming alongside nationals in church planting. While recognizing that sometimes poorly planned team efforts can do more harm than good, he lists several ways they can help when done right:

Short-term teams can open doors for nationals. Their very novelty can create interest. Some short-term missionaries explain, “We’re just the bait! Once the door is open, the nationals walk right in.”

Short-term teams can be used by nationals to plow up difficult ground with prayer. More than one short-term mission team has spent their time prayer-walking through unreached or difficult areas. Nationals are encouraged by the fact that someone would come from so far away to show love for their country. And God answers their prayers.

They can use their God-given gifts and talents. They can be used in evangelism, storytelling (even through translators), and sports ministries.

They can train. Perhaps most significantly for the province that experienced such wonderful growth, they can be a source of training for nationals. Although it was a country essentially closed to missions, Christian visitors were able to move in and out to help train the trainers. In the first year, four teams of 4–10 members came ten times. They trained nationals to plant 11 churches, strategically placed in different counties, in the first year. Was it really the trained nationals who were doing the work year after year? Hitzhusen offers a striking piece of evidence. Commenting on how inconspicuously Curtis Sergeant worked during his years there, he says, “When he left, probably only about 20 people in the province even knew his name!”

They can model POUCH Groups.

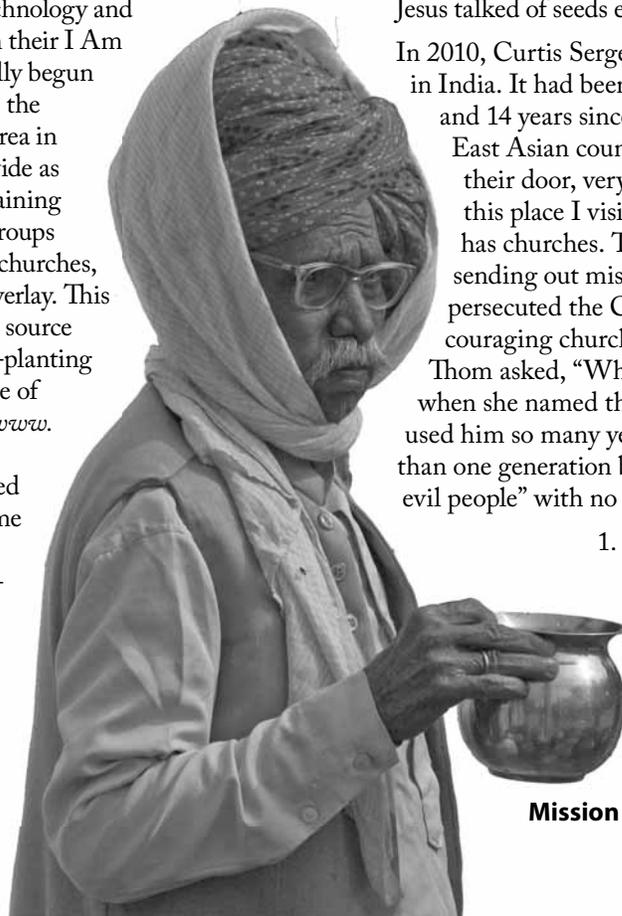
Believers (sometimes joined by seekers) can take part in these groups at home, and then become comfortable with the concept and the accountability involved as they help in church-planting. Ideally, each believer is involved in two groups: the one in which he or she is a participant, and a new one that he or she is starting. In a church-planting movement, much the same thing happens.

Sounds good, but in the fast-growing church-planting movement in Sergeant’s province, what really happened at ground level? How quickly were new believers expected to share their faith and even plant

churches? Immediately! As soon as someone came to Christ, Sergeant or one of his team members would say the following: “It is a great blessing to lead someone else to Christ. It is an even greater blessing to start a church. It is the greatest blessing to train others to start churches. I want you to have the greatest blessing, but let’s start with great blessing.” Then together, they would make a list of 100 friends and begin to role-play sharing the Gospel with five friends. Then they would pray and go and share with their five friends right away. After that new believer came to Christ, he or she would repeat the same phrases. Many wouldn’t really know how to plant a church yet, but they would learn over time as one duckling follows the other. One disciples another who may be only one step behind.

So then, could this be replicated? The evidence of growth like this in other areas that apply these strategies gives a resounding, Yes! Sergeant, now the Vice-President for Global Strategies with e3 Partners, has worked with the same system in other countries with results that evidence God’s blessing. E3 Partners has taken much of this, and worked with short-term teams to come alongside church planters in many other countries. In India, a mission called Light India has begun, whose purpose is to see thousands of new churches started in every state of India using this strategy. Curtis Sergeant has stated that heaven’s economy is different from the world’s economy. How about this: The average cost to train and provide materials to start each new church in Light India is only \$13.

E3 Partners has also combined the experience of POUCH churches with modern technology and media experience through their I Am Second ministry. Originally begun as an evangelistic effort in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Texas area in 2008, it has gone world-wide as both an outreach and a training resource. I Am Second Groups are a version of POUCH churches, and include an Internet overlay. This resource has been a useful source of training for the church-planting movement. The visible face of the ministry is a website www.iamsecond.com, which has striking and unusual filmed testimonies by people, some well-known, others more like your next-door neighbor. Bethany Hamilton, subject of the film *Soul Surfer*, shares her faith.



St. Louis Rams quarterback Sam Bradford is on it, as is Texas Ranger Josh Hamilton talking about his recovery from addiction. Others discuss how God has rescued them from a myriad of conditions, from abuse to war. The site offers opportunities for seekers or strugglers to call, chat or email for help. People are attracted by the testimonies, and invited to consider giving their lives to the Lord. It is a great tool to use to lead seekers to Christ in urban areas that have Internet connections.

At other locations on the site are invitations to begin or join an I Am Second group, patterned on the POUCH church idea. Deeper in the website are also Bible studies, with questions that are used in the groups and new churches. Training materials are also available on this one site, which are now being used worldwide. All of this comes together for the purpose of being a resource to believers, trainers and new church plants. Call it an online site to spark an offline movement.

You’ve probably heard the story of the little boy whose father wanted to teach him the power of multiplication. The man asked his son whether he would have more money if he received \$1.00 a day for 30 days, or a penny the first day, two pennies the next, and so forth, each day receiving double the day before. It seemed to the little boy that the addition of \$1.00 every day would yield him more than starting with just a penny and doubling that daily. The real answer, to his astonishment, is that doubling the penny daily would yield a haul on the last day of over \$10 million. People are much more than pennies, but God’s economy is also one of multiplication rather than simple addition. And Jesus talked of seeds each multiplying “a hundred-fold.”

In 2010, Curtis Sergeant was visiting his friend Thom in India. It had been 19 years since the bus incident, and 14 years since Sergeant left the province of that East Asian country. A Christian woman came to their door, very excited. “I’ve got to tell you about this place I visited. It was amazing! Every village has churches. The worship is phenomenal. They’re sending out missionaries! The government formerly persecuted the Christians, and now they are encouraging churches because the crime rate is down.” Thom asked, “Where is this place?” Sergeant smiled when she named the same province in which God had used him so many years back—the province that less than one generation before had been, a place of “heartless, evil people” with no hope in their hearts.^f

1. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004) pg. 21.
2. Garrison, pg 60–61.
3. Garrison, pg 62.

SHORT-TERM TRIPS

BIBLE STORYING &

CHURCH-PLANTING

Some details, names and locations have been changed for the protection of those involved.

DOUG BENDER AND STEVE SIMS

I (Doug) had trekked to a handful of countries on short-term mission trips in the past. These trips focused on various humanitarian efforts or maybe the occasional Vacation Bible School, but never had I thought about using short-term mission trips to do church-planting. Church-planting was for really gifted people, for the Rick Warrens and the Andy Stanleys of the world. Keenly aware of my own lack of talent and charisma compared to these men, I became convinced that church-planting was never going to be my calling.

I reasoned that if church-planting in one's native country, using native tools and the mother tongue, was only for the truly gifted, then doing it among strange or even hostile peoples was surely for even greater giants, the saints and the martyrs. This was my conviction until I met a nine-year-old shoeless boy in Ethiopia.

A Shoeless Boy Trained to Be a Church Planter

Our small team walked down a small path that wound from the street to the front of an indigenous home. The tattered door hung from the clay walls. A thatched roof



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Photo credit: Steve Sims

packed tightly over the sun baked walls guarded us from the night. We sat down on wooden planks and a hay mattress fashioned into a bed. The earthen walls and the black skin of our hosts blended into one indistinguishable backdrop on this dark African night. One small candle burnt low as the smell of late-night coffee and roasted home-grown grains swept in from the backroom.

Our voices and the voices of our two coworkers and interpreters were the only ones with a language we could understand. The rest blurred into a happy chatter occasioned by the laughter and cries of small children.

A boy approached one of our interpreters. "He wants to tell you a story," the interpreter relayed to us. We agreed. The boy proceeded to perfectly recite a story from the Gospel of Mark. The room was filled by four missionar-



Steve Sims is Director of Oral Communication Strategies at e3 Partners. He has served at e3 Partners since 1995 and has led church-planting short-term trips and initiatives in Ukraine, Ethiopia and most recently Panama. For those interested in contacting Steve, he can be reached at steve.sims@e3partners.org

ies, three pastors, a village elder and a half dozen other adults. But the boy never blinked in his telling of the story in front of this “impressive” audience. The story spoke of a man terrorized by demons who was healed through his encounter with Jesus. After telling the story, the boy walked all of us through a set of questions his father had taught him to ask whenever he had a group willing to listen.

“What do you like about the story?” the boy asked. “What do you not like or find confusing?”

He continued to ask us questions. He asked what we learned about mankind and what we learned about God through the story. He challenged us to apply it in our lives and to think about to whom we could pass the story. The boy probed us for answers and pushed us to share our thoughts.

We talked and learned together as brothers and sisters. That small thatched hut transformed into a holy sanctuary where together we learned from a story told to us by a nine-year-old boy. He was doing what he was trained to do. He didn’t know he was teaching. He didn’t know he was spiritually edifying or instructing. He was just sharing what he thought was the greatest story he had ever heard, the story of God.

The local village elder took the boy’s questions as a chance to share what he had learned from the story. He was a recent convert from Islam and was eager to learn more of the stories himself. A hush fell over the indigenous home because when a village elder speaks everybody listens. The man began to repeat a portion of the story he heard from the boy. But the boy grew uncomfortable. We didn’t know the language but we could tell there was something wrong. The boy’s youthful impatience bubbled over until he finally interrupted the elder. Shock and laughter blew through the crowd.

I asked what had happened. It turns out the elder had misremembered a point in the boy’s story and while his comments were by no means unorthodox, they betrayed he did not know the boy’s story as well as he thought he did. The boy’s father had taught him that God’s stories were the most important stories on earth and that when you tell one of God’s stories you must not let anyone change it. The boy was not willing to let even an elder change the story he told.

The elder joined in on the laughter and thanked the boy for his correction. In that one moment, the boy was more than a boy. He was a brother helping another brother to better follow Jesus. It just so happened that at that

moment his brother was the village elder and he was a skinny shoeless boy who knew one of God’s stories.

The boy learned this story, as he did dozens of others, from his father. His father learned it from a neighboring village elder. That elder had learned it from an Ethiopian Christian trained to plant churches using Chronological Bible Storying among his native people. The boy was using the same methods and stories that his father was using to plant churches. While the boy’s current audience happened to be all believers in Jesus, he continued to do what he did in any context: share the stories of God’s Word. To our amazement standing in front of us, was a nine-year-old boy who was trained to be a church planter.

Partners Working Together to Train Oral Church Planters

In early 2006, the Oral Communication Strategy team at e3 Partners began looking for a place to test and implement an oral church-planting strategy. Ethiopia was soon chosen and a partner church found. The church had conditions tied to the funding. They wanted the project to focus on the most resistant Muslim

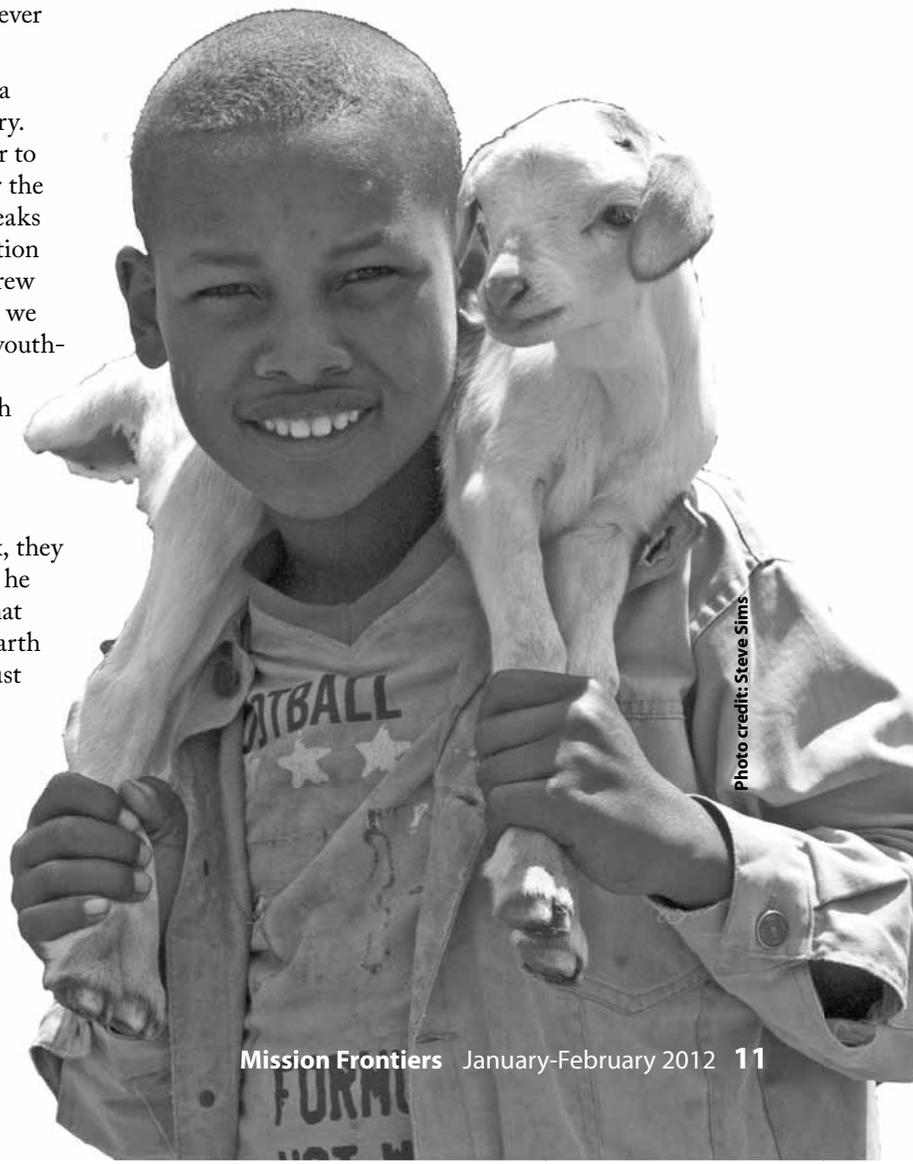


Photo credit: Steve Sims

people group we could find. The Ulai people boasted of a mere handful of Christian converts. They were known for their militant hostility towards Christianity, specifically in the recent killing of several missionaries and converts. Thus the Ulai seemed to qualify and were later chosen as the intended people group for this oral church-planting project.

The initiative was to last two years. Every six months a small team of Americans would travel to Ethiopia for three weeks to teach a small group of national believers a series of stories from the Bible. Along the way, they would also instruct these national partners in how to use these stories to start story groups. Evangelism, discipleship and church-planting would all happen simultaneously in these groups. Muslims would be introduced to the gospel through stories that range from the Old and New Testaments. They would begin living out and passing on these stories even before they became believers. And when many of them did become believers, they continued meeting and passing on those stories as a new church. After implementing this strategy in their native people group, these national believers would also be responsible for passing on what they learn to teams of other believers from around the country commissioned to do the same.

Steve Sims, with e3 Partners Ministry, was tasked with leading the project, particularly as it pertained to the biannual trainings. Various national partners and denominations helped identify the trainees. StoryRunners, an arm of Campus Crusade for Christ, partnered to provide the experience and expertise in chronological storytelling. I joined under e3 Partners Ministry just prior to the first training trip and focused on following up with the trainees in between their twice-a-year training sessions.

After the initial training, the national team found their way back to their native peoples and began implement-

ing what they were trained to do. Scant reports filtered back to us, but the true status of things was largely unknown when the American team ventured back to Ethiopia to do the second training six months later.

As we gathered back together, we attempted to assess the progress of the initiative and soon discovered that over the previous months at least three churches or story groups had been started and several more were underway. We were shocked. Based on their experience with similarly

difficult people groups, the national denomination we had partnered with warned that it would take several years before we saw the first new church, but we were now getting reports of three within the first six months.

Impressed and eager to validate the initial reports, I was sent out three months later to confirm what our national coworkers had told us. As it turned out, their initial reports were wrong. They reported that they had started three story groups. As I traveled with our national partners along the countryside, visiting home after home, village after village, I discovered ten different story groups, a mark that our national partners thought would take ten years to accomplish.

School Teacher Transforms Village with the Stories of God's Word

One village seemed particularly striking. Up until recently, only one family in this village was Christian. The school teacher for the local elementary school had become a believer years ago and resided in this village to provide his native people with education. At various times, he had attempted to share the gospel with his neighbors but was fiercely repelled. Missionaries also came to this village but were all chased out with rocks. Still looking for a way to share the gospel with his people, the man heard about a storytelling training that Markos, one of our trainees, had conducted in a nearby village. With his interest sparked, he attended the last meeting and witnessed the trainees orally reciting numerous Bible stories. None of them could read, but now all of them were trained to be Christian leaders teaching the stories of God's Word.

The man was impressed. He loved what he saw and wanted to bring the stories back to his village. Markos



Photo credit: Steve Sims

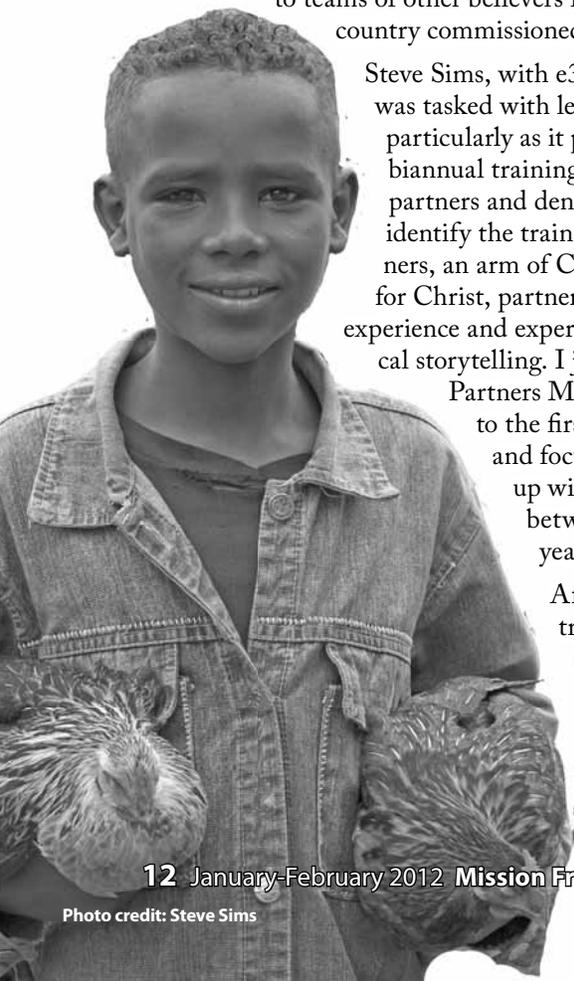


Photo credit: Steve Sims

WOMEN, PREVIOUSLY ILL-EQUIPPED TO PREACH OR EVEN READ FROM THE BIBLE, NOW BOLDLY SHARED GOD'S STORIES EVERYDAY AT THE WELLS, THE MARKETPLACES AND IN THEIR HOMES. OLD MEN, TOO OLD TO HAVE EXPERIENCED THE COMING OF EDUCATION TO THEIR PEOPLE, NOW FOUND AN AVENUE TO BOLDLY TEACH AND SPREAD THEIR NEW FOUND FAITH EVEN THOUGH THEY COULD NOT SIGN THEIR OWN NAMES.

agreed to train him, and the man began spreading the stories throughout his village. Remarkably, he met no resistance. He even started classes where children of Muslim families could come and learn the stories and begin telling them to their families.

On one of my trips there, I visited this man's village. On arriving there, everyone came out to meet us, Muslims and Christians alike. We sat in a large circle as I asked questions. The village began explaining what was occurring with the arrival of these stories. A man stood up and said, "I am Muslim. But these people [the Christians] are good people. We love their stories. We send our children to them to learn the stories. If they need anything, materials or food, we will provide what they need."

Stunned by this Muslim man's offer, I asked Markos why the man would offer material support to a group this village once persecuted. Markos responded, "When we carried God's Word in our hands with Bibles, this village threw rocks at us. Now we carry it in our hearts through these stories, and they welcome us and send us their children. They love the stories of God's Word."

It turns out, that these Muslim people were not opposed to God's Word, just the way in which it had been presented. Now it was finally in a language and in a form that they understood. And they loved it. And they soon began loving the God and Savior who wrote the stories.

The Stories Spread Throughout the Region

In just six months, that one Christian family led seven other families to Christ and started the village's first church bringing healing to a divided community. This story repeated itself dozens of times over the next several years. Young teenagers started a singing group that put the stories of the Bible to native music and traveled the countryside spreading their message. Women, previously ill-equipped to preach or even read from the Bible, now boldly shared God's stories everyday at the wells, the marketplaces and in their homes. Old men, too old to have experienced the coming of education to their people, now found an avenue to boldly teach and spread their new found faith even though they could not sign their own names. Poor

illiterate farmers, considered by most ineligible for Christian leadership because of their inability to read the Bible, now began using Bible stories to start churches in unreached Muslim villages. Village elders, once unable to communicate the truth of God found in Jesus, now boldly taught God's stories in the local mosques. The movement quickly grew beyond our ability to track. We are hoping these simple methods could result in a true Church-planting Movement and are currently in the process of assessing whether this is actually the case.

And what about back home? American churches who thought reaching the unreached was a job only for the professional missionaries found an avenue to meaningfully engage and reach one of the most unreached and hostile people groups of Ethiopia. e3 Partners continued to help mobilize short-term teams to strategically use their time and presence to start churches in unreached areas that resulted in the genuine expansion of the Kingdom. And yes, even I learned that church-planting is not just for the Rick Warrens. It's for nine-year-old boys, for churches and people like you willing to venture on a strategic short-term mission trip. f

e3 Partners Ministry: an organization dedicated to equipping God's people to evangelize the lost and establish new churches using short-term mission trips and church partnerships in collaboration with national partners.

StoryRunners: an arm of Campus Crusade for Christ aimed at providing access to God's Word through story to the least-reached peoples of the world.

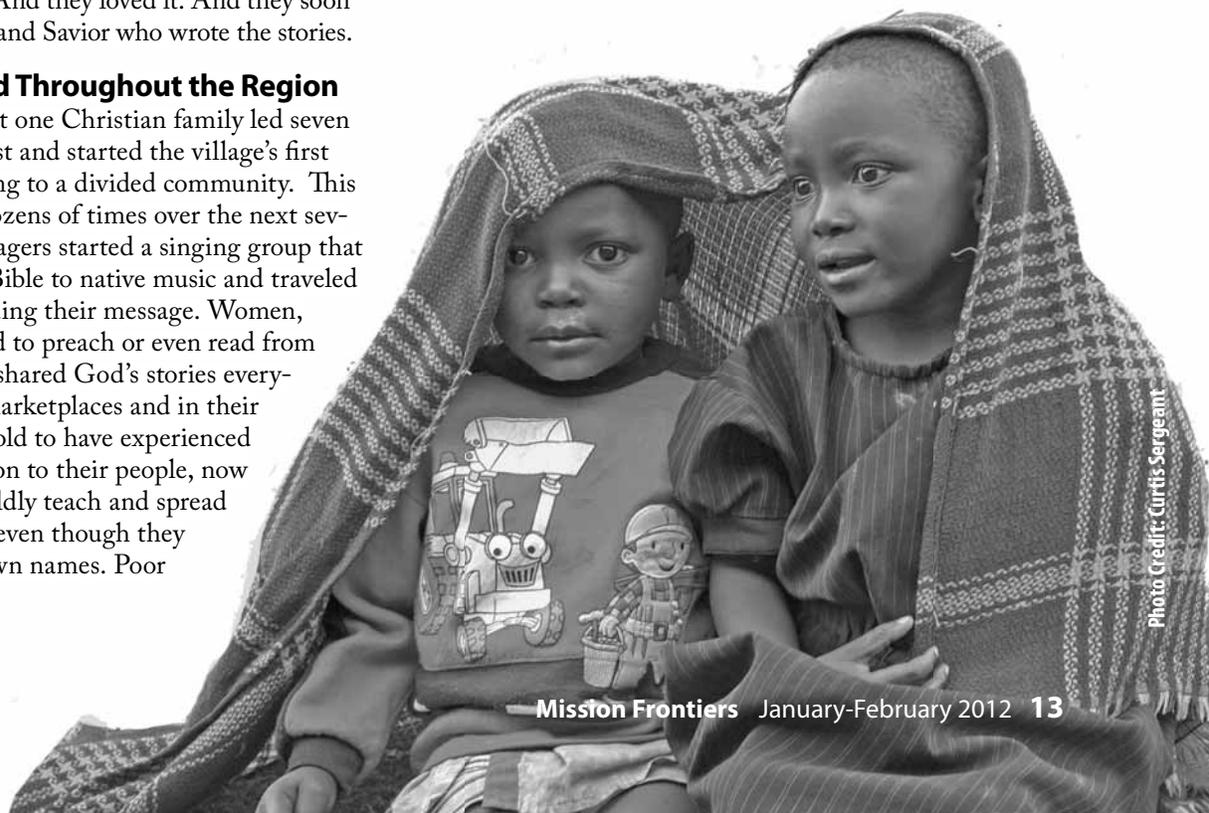


Photo Credit: Curtis Sargeant



“In Praise of Short-term Missions”

Dave Datema, General Director, Frontier Mission Fellowship

Well, I'm pretty sure the title for this column has never before appeared in the pages of *MF*. While troubles remain in the theory and practice of short-term missions (STMs), this issue shows that there is much to be thankful for in this incredible movement. It is always easier to criticize than encourage, to fear the problems than believe in the potential, or to control rather than unleash. So here are aspects of short-term missions for which we can truly be thankful. Please accept my apologies for speaking only of the American experience. We have much to learn about STMs in other contexts.

First, short-term missions are invaluable in mobilizing every-day believers. A tagline for the broader STM movement could easily be “just one look, that's all it took.” There is undoubtedly no other single tool that has done more to introduce average believers to other cultures and contexts. Each year, more than 1.5 million U.S. believers travel abroad on short-term trips. We can rejoice that so many believers are being exposed to a world their parents and grandparents never saw. Surely many of these people feel God calling them to long-term mission involvement while on a short-term jaunt. Not only do STMs open their eyes to the needs of the world in general, they also give them a first-hand experience of some aspect of mission work, not to mention the personal discipleship that may occur. This parallels the growth in mission involvement that occurred in the early twentieth century when those returning from the World Wars founded structures to meet the needs they had seen while away from home.

Second, STMs are invaluable in mobilizing every-day churches, putting the missions piece front and center of church consciousness. This is really just a corporate application of the first point. For missionaries and agencies who often feel like they are knocking on the back doors of churches trying to get in, this is a great turn of events, an unforeseen coup. Many churches have gone from “zero to sixty” in a matter of months with regard to mission interest and involvement, solely because of one short-term trip. STMs, at least those done in partnership with a mission agency, help connect churches and agencies, which is crucial for the survival of those agencies. Another part of this is the impact STMs have on those studying for the ministry. One study showed that 51 percent of all MDiv students reported STM involvement¹, an encouraging fact when you consider the dearth of mission studies mandatory for future ministers. Having pastors with STM experience is a significant factor, since pastors are a major piece of a church's mission commitment.

Third, STMs can bring innovation to mission strategy. With new eyes come new ideas. Even when the new eyes aren't those of an “expert”, there remains much to be said for what happens when those from different backgrounds apply their skill-set to the mission context. Medical mission is a good example. Begun as an effort to care for missionaries, medical specialists soon saw the many needs around them in the local population and created ministries for them not originally envisioned. “Business as Mission” (BAM) is a more recent example. In some ways, the same thing has happened among business people that happened

with medical people many years ago—lay people (not pastors or Bible teachers) went overseas and simply applied their training and skill-sets to a new situation. It would be interesting to know the percentage of mission innovations that have started just this way. STMs foster this important interaction between a lay person's occupation and the mission context. Such cross-disciplinary pollenization is the seedbed for innovation.

Finally, STMs are a good rebuke to us mission “professionals” that we are not in charge and that God often smiles on ideas that we might find laughable. Who could have anticipated what God would do with five stones and a sling or what Jesus might do with five loaves and two fish? When Jesus told Peter to throw the net on the right side of the boat after they had been fishing all night, I imagine that even the most novice fisherman wouldn't have been impressed with Jesus' suggestion. One would expect far more expert advice than that. And yet that simple act, which had undoubtedly been tried many times during the whole night-long excursion, broke the nets. Because the catch was so unusual for such a simple act, John recognized something was going on here that went beyond skill-set and expertise. It dawned on him and he said, “It is the Lord.” (John 21:7). We may think we know what methodology is needed to be expert fishermen. But we must always keep our eyes open for the unusual, the too simple or the amateurish. It just might be the Lord. ^f

1. Priest, Robert J. and Priest, Joseph Paul, “They See Everything, and Understand Nothing? – Short-Term Mission and Service Learning” in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXVI, no. 1, January 2008.

Are You Ready for *The Future of the Global Church?*

DARRELL DORR

Jesus told us, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48 *ESV*). By this standard, 21st-century evangelicals (especially in the West) can expect rigorous accountability when our Master returns. In the past two years our stewardship has been enormously increased by the appearance of three remarkable books that inspire and inform new expressions of wise obedience to Jesus’ commission to make disciples of all nations.

In early 2010 we first were entrusted with the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, edited by a team led by Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, extensively documenting the shifts in global Christianity over the past century. Then in October 2010 we received the latest (seventh) edition of *Operation World*, in which Jason Mandryk and his team have given us country-by-country narratives to help us to pray and act. Now, as we turn the corner into 2012, we have before us *The Future of the Global Church*, Patrick Johnstone’s delightful new book that beautifully complements the *Atlas* and *Operation World* and that pushes us to renewed zeal and creativity.

(Full disclosure: I was part of the editorial team for the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, I was also part of Patrick’s team for the fifth edition of *Operation World* in the early 1990s, and I have long been a vocal advocate of Patrick’s work. So if you’re looking for a dispassionate and detached critique of these books, you’ll need to look elsewhere.)

So, where to begin with *The Future of the Global Church*? The subtitle “History, Trends and Possibilities” gives us our first clue that Patrick utilizes long arcs backward and forward to suggest a variety of possible futures as well as to advocate his own positions and fuel the progress of world evangelization. Patrick is an evangelical optimist who writes “in the face of a prevailing pessimism and creeping universalism.” He combines the synthesizing mind of an analyst with the passionate heart of an evangelist. He liberally sprinkles his text with “Food for Thought” and “Burning Questions” sidebars. His preface declares, “My concern in designing this book is that passion and vision be paramount,” and his introduc-

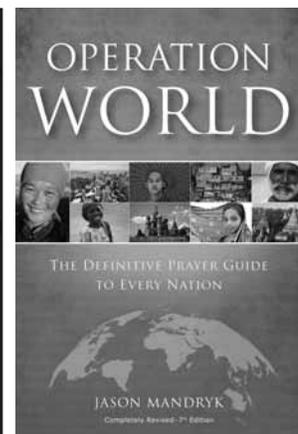
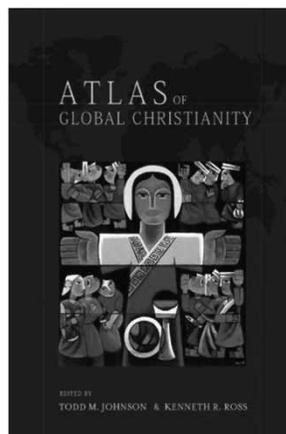
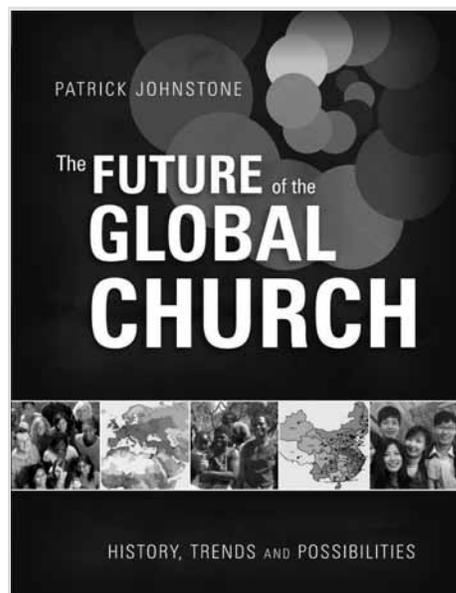
Darrell Dorr is an Associate Editor of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* and a Contributing Editor of *Mission Frontiers*.

tion specifies the users for whom the book is designed:

“Christians passionate about the extension of God’s kingdom,” Christian congregations, disciplers and teachers, mobilizers and missionaries, researchers and academics.

The order in which Patrick lists the intended users points us to some of the comparisons and contrasts between this book, the *Atlas* and *Operation World*. The primary authors of these books enjoy warm and collegial relationships with one another, sharing data and sharpening one another’s perspectives. All three books have been prepared by evangelicals, but the *Atlas* carries a more detached posture directed to researchers and academics of various stripes, whereas *Operation World* and *The Future of the Global Church* carry advocacy postures directed primarily to evangelical activists. *Operation World* is organized primarily around countries and the *Atlas* around world regions, whereas *The Future of the Global Church* gives less emphasis to geography and more to ethnic and cultural blocs of peoples. (More on the latter in a moment.)

Operation World is the least expensive and is dominated by black-and-white text in paperback form, while the *Atlas* carries a much higher price suitable for a full-color, large-format reference book with elaborate maps and diagrams. Formatted in the attractive and useful A4 page



size, *The Future of the Global Church* is priced close to *Operation World*, but, like the *Atlas*, offers a hardback form and extensive use of color for multiple graphics. (Take a look at the four sample pages included in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*.) Whereas the *Atlas* and *Operation World* are the products of editorial teams, *The Future of the Global Church* is, in Patrick's words, "all essentially the work of one person" and is therefore "likely to contain biases and quirks" that will nonetheless refresh and stimulate many readers. All three books are accompanied by electronic media that extend the print products.

The nine chapters of *The Future of the Global Church* follow a clear progression. Three foundational chapters on demography, history and religious streams undergird the next three chapters that focus on Christianity and especially renewalists and evangelicals, and then the final three chapters elaborate evangelical emphases on the unevangelized, missions and "finishing the task." For me (and I suspect for many others) chapter 7 is Patrick's most distinctive and helpful, for it is here that he more fully unpacks the paradigm (he introduced years ago) in which he presents the world's array of people groups within 15 Affinity Blocs and approximately 250 People Clusters; these are not mere categories of convenience, but a genuine attempt both to reflect field realities and to highlight ethnic connections conducive to mission partnerships and missiological creativity. Patrick's commendable emphasis on least-evangelized countries and

least-reached peoples (reflected, in part, by his conclusion on "finishing the task") is counterbalanced by his deep and consistent concern for the re-evangelization of Europe and the strengthening of evangelical foundations in the West.

I have long anticipated *The Future of the Global Church*, and I am buying copies not only for myself but also for friends. I am delighted that Patrick's legacy to the Church now includes not only the first six editions of *Operation World* but also a carefully conceived and beautifully

presented "game plan" for world evangelization that seeks to shift proportionately more energies to the world's least-reached peoples. We have truly inherited an embarrassment of riches, with the accountability to match.^f

The Future of the Global Church, 240 pages, A4 page size (8.3 X 11.7 inches), hardback, \$39.99 retail (\$29.99 discount or \$23.99 for three or more copies). Published in the USA by Biblica and InterVarsity Press, ISBN-13: 978-1-60657-132-3. Electronic

media published by Global Mapping International. See www.thefutureoftheglobalchurch.org and www.missionbooks.org for more information, and see www.thefutureoftheglobalchurch.org/usatour to learn about Patrick Johnstone's January 14-25 tour of five U.S. cities. Also see pages 2, 17-20, and 33 in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*.

CONTENTS		
Preface	v	93
Acknowledgements	vi	94
Introduction	viii	96
Colour codes	x	98
Definitions	xii	100
Abbreviations	xiv	104
1 Demography: Nine Global Challenges	1	106
Population	2	108
Migration	4	110
Urbanization	6	112
Health and disease	8	114
Mexico	8	115
HIV/AIDS	9	118
Climate change	10	
Economy	12	
Energy resources	14	
Politics and freedom	16	
Water resources	18	
Israel/Palestine	18	
2 History: 20 Centuries AD	21	121
1st to 4th Centuries	22	122
5th to 10th Centuries	30	123
11th to 14th Centuries	42	124
15th and 16th Centuries	50	125
17th and 18th Centuries	54	130
19th Century	58	132
20th Century	60	133
3 Religion: The Major Streams	65	134
World religions	66	135
The non-religious	69	136
Communism	71	
Islam	73	
Hinduism	79	
Buddhism	83	
Ethnic and other religions	87	
Sikhism and Baha'i	89	
Judaism	90	
4 Christianity: Six Megablocs	93	139
Global and continental spread	94	140
Freedom to minister	96	142
Global growth and decline	98	146
The Christian megablocs	100	147
Catholics	104	148
Orthodox	106	149
Protestants	108	150
Anglicans	110	151
Independents	112	152
Marginals	114	153
Megabloc denominations	115	154
Overview and the future	118	155
5 Christianity: Renewal Growth	121	156
The need for renewal	122	157
The influence of the Bible	123	158
Renewal movements	124	
Charismatic/pentecostal growth	125	
Renewal growth	130	
Evangelical revivals and awakenings	132	
18th-Century revivals	133	
19th-Century revivals	134	
Prayer and revival	135	
20th-Century revivals	136	
6 Christianity: The Evangelical Explosion	139	161
Who are Evangelicals?	140	162
Global distribution	142	165
Africa's Evangelicals	146	166
Religious conflict	147	167
Asia's Evangelicals	148	168
Religious conflict	149	169
Europe's Evangelicals	150	174
Religious conflict	151	176
Latin America's Evangelicals	152	178
Brazil	153	180
N America's Evangelicals	154	182
China's Evangelicals	155	184
Evangelicals of the Pacific	156	187
Bible translation in PNG	157	188
Evangelicals and the future	158	191
7 The Unevangelized	161	192
Measuring evangelization	162	199
The least evangelized	165	200
Romania/Moldova	166	202
Horn of Africa	167	204
Peoples and languages	168	206
The 15 affinity blocs	169	210
Sub-Saharan African Peoples	174	212
The Fulbe cluster	176	215
Nigeria and Chad	178	216
Arab World	180	219
The Levantine Arab cluster	182	220
East Asian Peoples	184	
The Chinese diaspora	187	
Eurasian Peoples	188	
The Caucasus cluster	191	
Horn of Africa Peoples	192	
The Somali cluster	194	
Malay Peoples	196	
Sumatra	200	
Persian-Median Peoples	202	
The Kurds	204	
South Asian Peoples	206	
India's Chamar caste	210	
Southeast Asian Peoples	212	
Impact of the Vietnam War	215	
Tibetan-Himalayan Peoples	216	
The Tibetan cluster	219	
Turkic Peoples	220	
8 Christian Missions and the Future	225	225
What is a missionary?	226	226
Sending missionaries	227	227
From everywhere—to everywhere	228	228
Mission agencies	234	234
9 Conclusion: An Evangelized World?	237	237
Finishing the task	238	238
Select Bibliography and Databases	240	240
Electronic Editions and Resources	241	241
Note: Notes appear on the concluding page of each chapter.		

Measuring evangelization	161
The least evangelized	162
Romania/Moldova	165
Horn of Africa	166
Peoples and languages	167
The 15 affinity blocs	168
Sub-Saharan African Peoples	169
The Fulbe cluster	174
Nigeria and Chad	176
Arab World	178
The Levantine Arab cluster	180
East Asian Peoples	182
The Chinese diaspora	184
Eurasian Peoples	187
The Caucasus cluster	188
Horn of Africa Peoples	191
The Somali cluster	192
Malay Peoples	194
Sumatra	196
Persian-Median Peoples	200
The Kurds	202
South Asian Peoples	204
India's Chamar caste	206
Southeast Asian Peoples	210
Impact of the Vietnam War	212
Tibetan-Himalayan Peoples	215
The Tibetan cluster	216
Turkic Peoples	219
	220
8 Christian Missions and the Future	225
What is a missionary?	226
Sending missionaries	227
From everywhere—to everywhere	228
Mission agencies	234
9 Conclusion: An Evangelized World?	237
Finishing the task	238
Select Bibliography and Databases	240
Electronic Editions and Resources	241
Note: Notes appear on the concluding page of each chapter.	

African Evangelicals increased over the period 1900–2050, but the greatest growth was between 1960 and 2000, the very period in which the European colonial powers relinquished their empires and Evangelical Christianity became indigenous.

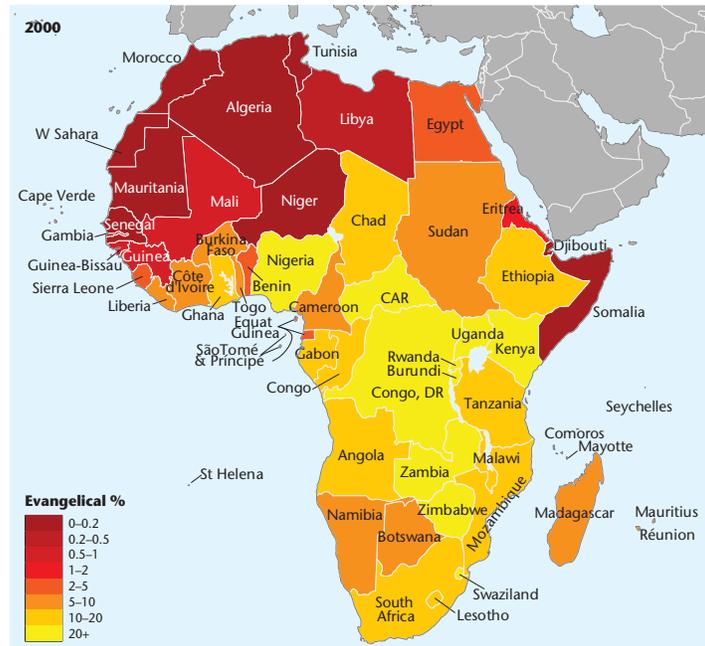
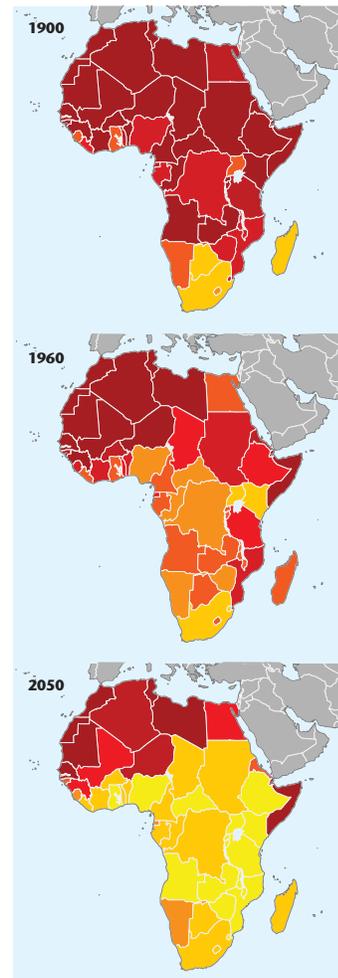


Fig 6.14 Evangelicals in Africa, 1900–2050



The colonial carve-up of Africa in the 19th Century imposed borders with little regard for cultural and political realities, to create today's countries. On the positive side, this provided the opportunity for Christianity to advance in Africa—with a predominance of Protestants (many being Evangelicals) in Anglophone countries and Catholics elsewhere. On the negative side, it led to nepotism, corruption and warfare following independence in the years after 1957.¹² Competing ethnic groups, religions and ideologies were too complex to allow for stability and growth.

Fig 6.15 represents the five UN-designated regions of Africa.

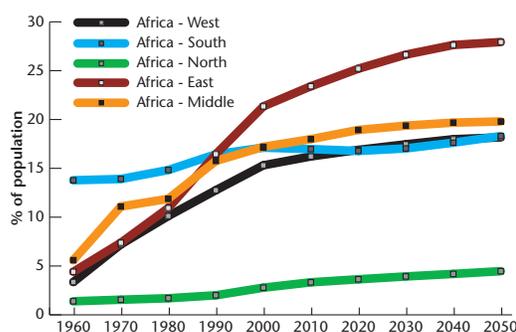


Fig 6.15 Regional evangelical growth in Africa, 1960–2050

North: culturally part of the Muslim Arab world; evangelical growth as a result both of indigenous Berber peoples coming to Christ and of northward migrations

South: the first area to be impacted by Evangelicals, but very little growth since 1960

East: massive growth as a result of revival; limited opposition from the Muslim minority

Centre: strong evangelical missions effort leading to the planting of many different churches, which became the most stable component of societies reduced to chaos by war, economic collapse and political failure

West: slower growth as a result of French colonial and, later, Muslim-majority opposition, though boosted by revivals in Nigeria and Ghana

Food for Thought

We may all be of African descent!¹³

▲ Westerners have been dismissive of the failings of Africa, but how many realize that their own countries were major contributors to these failures?

The colonial powers created unviable states, while post-colonial Cold War politics supported dictators, condoned corruption, promoted unfair trade policies and provided inappropriate aid. Amidst all the chaos, evangelical Christians are growing and could soon become a major source of Christian workers and missionaries to the world.

CONTINENTAL SPREAD

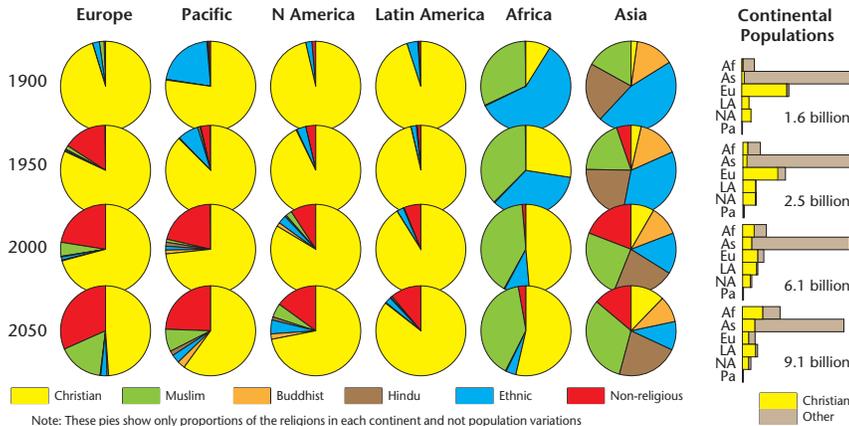


Fig 4.3 Likely growth and decline of religions per continent, 1900–2050

The pie charts in Fig 4.3 show the Christian component of the population of each continent in relation to the other five major religious streams, vertically over time and horizontally in comparison with the other continents. The bar charts compare the continental populations.

Europe

A “Christian” continent in 1900. Are we witnessing the death of Europe’s civilization?

A high degree of nominalism, increasing secularization and growing influence of liberal theology, and disillusion and cynicism following two world wars led to massive decline in church attendance. Increasing pluralism (as a result of immigration and experimentation with new religious ideas), growth of Islam at a time when the Church was discouraged and divided, and rejection of absolutes in society under the banner of “tolerance” resulted in marginalization of Christianity. By 2050, Christians will make up less than 50% of the ageing population, with most being nominal in their adherence.

The Pacific

By 1900, much of the indigenous population was Christian or rapidly becoming so. European settlers in Australia and New Zealand had a Christian majority, but followed Europe into spiritual decline and cynical secularism, albeit more slowly. Asian settlers since 1990 are often more overtly religious—Muslim, Buddhist and also Christian.

N America

The first amendment to the US Constitution ensured the separation of Church and State and created a flourishing free market for religious faith and its propagation worldwide: patterns and methods of US Christianity were then exported globally and adopted even by opponents of Christianity. In 1900, N America was almost entirely Christian,

with a Protestant majority. The 1950s in the USA were characterized by vigorous church life and the immigration of people of other faiths. A growing secularism in the media and public life then contrasted with the strong commitment to faith in US society—these trends are likely to be maintained in the 21st Century, when they will impact the world.

Latin America

By 1900, there was little challenge to the dominance of Catholicism in Latin America: much of the indigenous population was effectually unevangelized, though nominally Catholic, and there was a lot of traditionalism and syncretism. In 1900, Protestants did not regard the continent as a mission field; consequently small numbers. N American missions changed this, with a rapid growth in the number of Protestants after 1970. The advent of Pentecostalism (both indigenous and imported) after 1906 proved astonishingly successful. Secularism has been less evident than in Europe. Losses from Catholicism to Evangelicals stimulated the development of Charismatic theology and worship within Catholicism.

Africa

Only in the 19th Century did most of Africa become open to travel—and the Gospel. Ethiopia, however, had already been Christian for nearly 2,000 years. In 1900, the majority of N Africans were Muslim while sub-Saharan Africa followed traditional religions. Colonial regimes strongly promoted their national brands of Christianity up to the 1960s. The real growth of Christianity came in the chaotic 40 years

that followed the colonial rush to independence. Africa was unique in being the first continent to become Christian-majority in barely a single century.

Asia

Asia is the birthplace of all the major world religions: it is still the most religiously-diverse continent, and the only one on which Christianity does not have the most adherents. Islam and Christianity are the religions in the ascendancy, with the latter outgrowing the former (though from a smaller population base). Asia’s huge population and growing economic influence make it a key arena for future Christian ministry: Asian input into every aspect of Christian philosophy, theology and practice is likely to become pivotal by the middle of the 21st Century.

Burning Question for Today

Nearly all of the major world religions have become global in their influence as a result of migration and also of unashamedly winning converts. Many Christians have become embarrassed even to use the word “mission”, let alone actually to proclaim the amazing Good News, for fear of causing offence.

▲ How does your own life and that of your local fellowship compare with the challenging words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:16? *For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith...*

AN EVANGELIZED WORLD?

Affinity Bloc	People Cluster	Main Religion	# People Groups	Total pop (mil)	Emigrant %	Christian %	
Persian-Median	Luri-Bakhtiari	Muslim	6	5.2	1.7	0.001	
Persian-Median	Baloch	Muslim	17	8.9	4.2	0.002	
Horn of Africa	Beja	Muslim	4	2.2	0.4	0.003	
Persian-Median	Aimaq	Muslim	2	1.6	0.0	0.004	
Arab World	Berber, Saharan	Muslim	14	0.9	0.0	0.006	
Persian-Median	Talysh	Muslim	7	0.6	0.4	0.006	
Turkic	Turkmen	Muslim	14	7.7	3.3	0.007	
Sub-Sah African	Kanuri-Saharan	Muslim	25	8.8	4.1	0.007	
Turkic	Azerbaijani	Muslim	24	25.4	4.6	0.008	
Malay	Musi of Sumatra	Muslim	5	1.4	1.0	0.008	
Arab World	Arab, Hassaniya	Muslim	10	7.3	3.0	0.010	
Malay	Lampung	Muslim	9	5.5	0.0	0.010	
S Asian	Maldivian	Muslim	2	0.3	0.0	0.011	
Turkic	Uighur	Muslim	18	15.5	0.8	0.011	
Arab World	Berber, Shawiya	Muslim	4	2.1	10.7	0.011	
Arab World	Tuareg	Muslim	14	2.8	22.6	0.011	
Turkic	Kyrgyz	Muslim	11	4.2	6.9	0.018	
Malay	Minangkabau	Muslim	7	8.0	0.0	0.018	
Sub-Sah African	Soninke	Muslim	13	1.8	10.1	0.018	
Persian-Median	Nuristani	Muslim	10	0.1	0.0	0.019	
Sub-Sah African	Nubian	Muslim	7	2.2	0.0	0.019	
Arab World	Arab, Yemeni	Muslim	17	21.5	3.6	0.022	
Malay	Madura (Java)	Muslim	3	12.8	0.2	0.022	
S Asian	Kashmiri	Muslim	17	6.2	2.0	0.026	
Malay	Melayu (Sumatra)	Muslim	5	1.2	0.0	0.028	
Persian-Median	Tajik	Muslim	30	15.1	1.8	0.039	
Arab World	Berber, Riff	Muslim	5	4.0	3.1	0.039	
Sub-Sah African	Guera-Naba	Muslim	4	0.5	0.0	0.040	
Arab World	Berber, Shilha	Muslim	6	8.8	2.9	0.041	
Arab World	Arab, Shuwa	Muslim	7	2.3	6.0	0.049	
Persian-Median	Parsee	Ethnic	8	0.2	61.9	0.054	
Malay	Aceh of Sumatra	Muslim	5	4.2	0.0	0.063	
Persian-Median	Kurd	Muslim	44	24.6	6.7	0.067	
Turkic	Uzbek	Muslim	21	27.7	4.5	0.083	
Turkic	Kazakh	Muslim	29	13.5	7.6	0.085	
Sub-Sah African	Malinke-Jula	Muslim	9	1.0	2.6	0.111	
Arab World	Arab, Libyan	Muslim	4	6.3	0.3	0.114	
Persian-Median	Pashtun	Muslim	26	35.0	2.6	0.128	
Sub-Sah African	Hausa	Muslim	17	39.8	4.1	0.132	
Tibetan-Himalayan	Burmese	Buddhist	18	31.8	0.7	0.139	
Sub-Sah African	Songhai	Muslim	21	7.0	5.2	0.146	
S Asian	Urdu Muslim	Muslim	32	93.8	1.7	0.151	
Sub-Sah African	Susu	Muslim	5	1.3	0.7	0.172	
Tibetan-Himalayan	Bhutanese	Buddhist	19	0.6	0.0	0.180	
Arab World	Arab, Maghreb	Muslim	32	55.2	8.5	0.194	
Horn of Africa	Somali	Muslim	28	12.2	11.5	0.225	
Malay	Ogan of Sumatra	Muslim	3	0.5	0.0	0.231	
S Asian	Sindhi	Muslim	17	24.2	1.1	0.234	
Sub-Sah African	Atlantic-Wolof	Muslim	8	5.2	2.3	0.262	
Tibetan-Himalayan	Tibetan	Buddhist	79	8.0	1.1	0.319	
Total			742	577	3.8		
Total <5% Christian		108	2,203	2,152	3.3		
		clusters					
					Persecution	Moderate	Severe

Fig 9.3 The 50 least evangelized people clusters

Fig 9.2 presents a different list of countries: those that have the smallest percentages of known *evangelical* Christians excluding those listed in the first table. Again, Muslim countries predominate, but most of these also have a significant Orthodox or Catholic *indigenous population*. What is striking about this second list is the number of Catholic and Orthodox countries in Europe. There is debate about whether such Christian-majority countries can be considered unevangelized. Many Evangelicals have good grounds for saying that they are, for in some of them Evangelicals face particular discrimination and harassment—note where the colours for persecution differ between the last two columns.

Finishing the task

In Matthew 24:14 and, also, 28:18, Jesus spoke of testifying to and making disciples of all the peoples of the world. The word used in most English translations is “nations”. Today, we understand by “nation” a country or territory with a recognized government. NT Greek uses the word *ethne*, from where we derive our English word “ethnic”. So, I conclude this book with a list of the least evangelized ethnic clusters of peoples. There are some 12,000 people groups in the world (or 16,000 if we include S Asia’s castes), which I have categorized into affinity blocs and people clusters. Fig 9.3 lists the 50 least evangelized clusters. If I also included all 108 clusters that are less than 5% Christian, the number of people groups concerned would be more than 2,200, with a total population of nearly 2.2 billion. (It is not yet possible to give totals for Evangelicals, as a worldwide assessment has yet to be completed; but it should be said that, among these tiny numbers of Christians, a large proportion are evangelical believers.)

Concerning the columns: the first gives the *affinity bloc* to which each cluster belongs. Twenty-nine of the clusters are in Asia, 11 are in Africa and 10 in the Arab World straddle both of those continents.

The second lists the *people clusters*. Almost all of them have significant migrant communities elsewhere.

The third gives the *principal religion* of each cluster. In all but four cases

Sumatra—the largest unevangelized island on earth

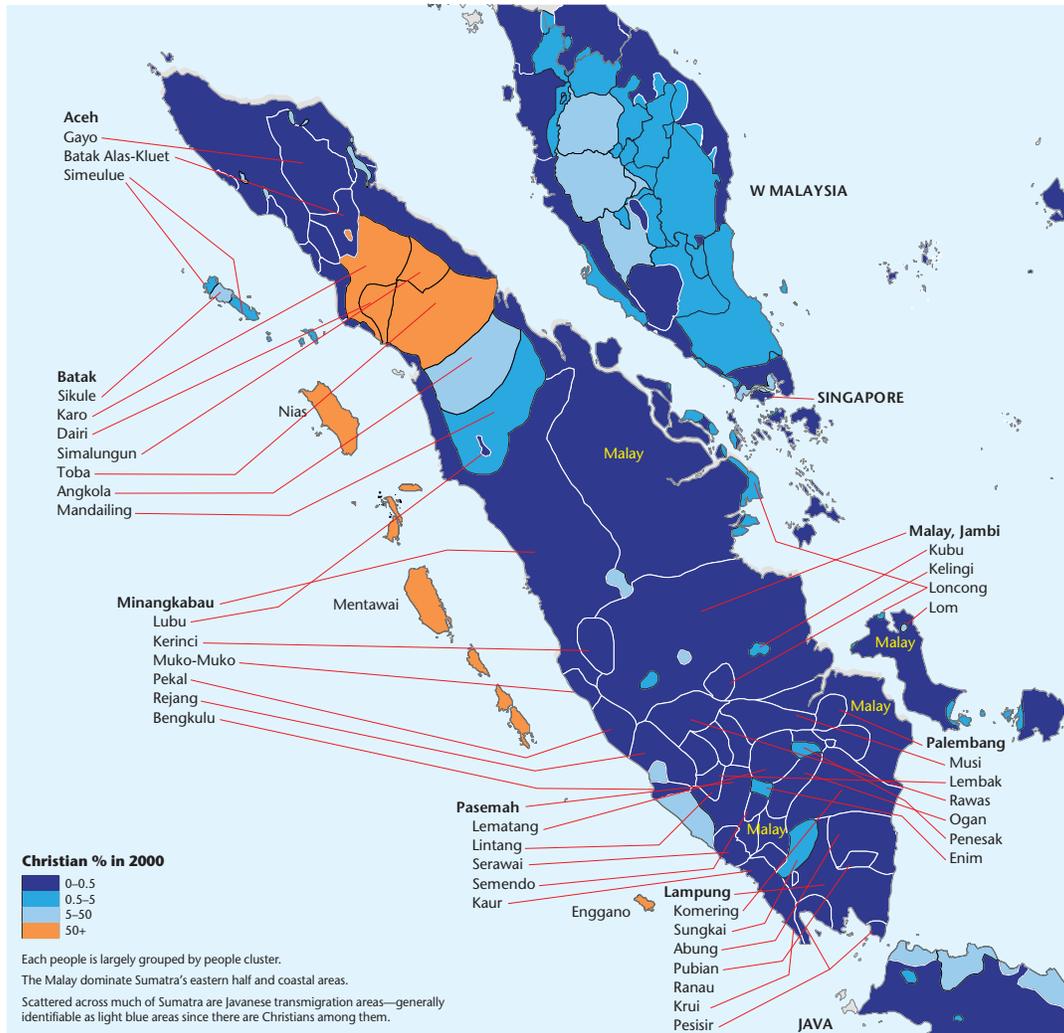


Fig 7.54 The peoples/languages of Sumatra and their evangelization

At 473,000 km² Sumatra is the world's sixth-largest island, but in terms of population it is third, with nearly 50 million people.²⁷ It has some 52 indigenous people groups in eight people clusters, nearly all of which are represented on the map above, which is coloured according to the percentage of each people group that is Christian. The contrasts are striking.

The Christianized areas stand out clearly. Here, Christians constitute some 10–12% of the population, and they are in a majority among most of the Batak peoples and the peoples on the chain of islands off Sumatra's west coast. Among the Angkola and Mandailing Batak there has been a more limited response to the Good News, and there was a limited people movement among the Muslim Serawai in 1965 that did not develop. Several small tribal forest peoples, such as the Kubu and Lulu, still practise their ethnic religions, but have heard little of the Gospel.

Unevangelized peoples constitute the majority in Sumatra. Islam took root first in Aceh about 800 years ago and has

since spread gradually across Sumatra and then to much of the rest of Indonesia. It has become more deeply embedded in Sumatra than in any other part of the country. Christian missionaries have been largely confined to the non-Muslim areas of the island, and there has never been a strong witness to its Muslim peoples. There are very few believers.

Burning Question for Today

The history of Aceh is one of centuries of conflict with Dutch and British colonial powers and, since 1949, the Indonesian army (in which many Christian Batak serve)—all seeking control of its strategic position and abundant natural resources. This made the Aceh people hostile to Christianity.

▲ How can people with such a background be evangelized and discipled?

KINGDOM COME

THE INA PEOPLE CATCH THE VISION FOR A CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENT



This article is excerpted from Chapter 1 of *T4T A Discipleship Re-Revolution* by Steve Smith and Ying Kai and used by permission of WIGTake Resources.

STEVE SMITH

“I’ve finished my CPM plan. What do I do next?” At the dawn of the 21st century, God began to unfold an amazing story of kingdom advance in a densely populated corner of Asia. Ying and Grace Kai were laboring in an urban sprawl of crowded factories packed with 10,000 to 100,000 workers, a mad mix of highly educated college grads and barely literate villagers who had migrated into the factories.

Within weeks of arriving, Ying began to see results we could scarcely have imagined. God was orchestrating an incredibly explosive movement in the Kais’ part of the country.

For years our organization has trained missionaries and church leaders how to cooperate with God to experience church-planting movements (CPMs)—the Spirit-empowered rapid multiplication of disciples and churches generation by generation. At the end of the training each participant develops a CPM Plan. Their plans begin with God’s vision for a movement, but majors on the practical ministry steps they will need to take to move toward that lofty vision.

Over the years, we have seen missionaries and church leaders make great progress and breakthroughs in the

ministry to which God has called them. Yet in all our years of training, we had yet to see a missionary or church leader fully reach the vision and goals set out in his CPM plan. The purpose of the vision is that it is so God-sized that it guides the missionary and his partners for many years to come. That end-vision drives them to attempt things in faith they never would otherwise have attempted.

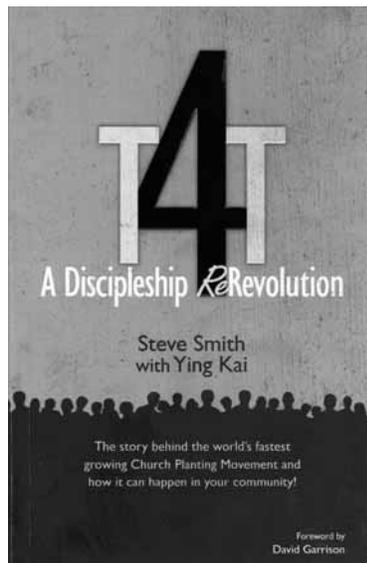
Three months into his CPM plan, Ying called the regional leader for our mission organization.

He said, “Bill, I have finished my CPM plan. What do I do next?” Once Bill picked his jaw up off the floor, he responded, “Ying, just keep going!” Ying’s CPM plan called for a goal of 200 churches in his end-vision. Ying reached his goal in just three months!

That made all of us turn our heads and pay attention. As the months flew by, the hundreds became thousands of new churches, most of them meeting in homes, restaurants, parks and factories. Tens of thousands of people were coming to faith and passing this faith on to others in an Acts-like explosion of discipleship.

The movement grew every day. Ying and Grace kept meticulous records as the many emerging leaders in the various networks of the CPM reported to them each month. These numbers were logged in faithfully and then recorded in the most conservative manner (discounting for possible discrepancies).

Today the movement might best be described as a sort of super church-planting movement. It has become so large



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that it is impossible to track all that is going on. But it is clear that an entire Asian region has been saturated with the kingdom of God, and the ripples of its effect are now touching people groups in other countries and continents.

As believers were faithfully following Jesus as obedient disciples and passing on the gospel and discipleship to others they led to faith, a discipleship revolution emerged. Ying called it Training for Trainers (T4T) because he expected every disciple to train others.

The CPM that has emerged in Ying's ministry has challenged common discipleship and church-planting expectations of today. It harks back to the original discipleship revolution. As a return to the original revolution, it is a RE-revolution! Simultaneously with the Kais' super CPM, another work of God was unfolding, this one in our own ministry.

3.5 Years!

Our work among the remote people group we call the "Ina"¹ was finally taking off. In this oppressive Asian country, we had labored for five years to get to this point. The Ina were the poorest people group in the country, most of them uneducated and illiterate, and days away from most population centers. Five thousand of their villages dotted the haze-covered emerald mountains as far as the eye could see.

We were desperate for a movement of God's kingdom to break loose among this animistic people entrenched in their fear of demonic powers, but even accessing them was difficult.

I had tried sneaking into Ina villages to share the gospel. With my coat collar pulled up, hat pulled down and sunglasses on, I would slip in at dusk and out at dawn. My team and I would share in homes privately about the gospel as we sipped murky tea and ate bee larvae. Then shortly after we departed, the police would raid the village and crush the work. We felt so helpless. "Father," I prayed, "even if they believe, how will they ever have a chance to grow in faith before they are crushed?" Through repeated readings of Matthew 10, Luke 10 and the book of Acts God led us to a different strategy. If people who looked like the Ina—other Asians—could discreetly enter the Ina villages to share the gospel and disciple them, perhaps the authorities would not notice for a while. And if these new Ina believers could then pass on this witness, discipleship and church-planting to new villages themselves, then perhaps they could go places we and our other Asian partners couldn't. And if the kingdom expectation of each new obedient disciple becoming a witness and each church becoming a church-planting church could catch on, there was a hope that the movement could sprout up as a mustard tree in each place until nothing could stop it.

So we mobilized and trained Asian partners who trekked into the remote mountain homeland of the Ina people. Many of these partners were arrested, thrown into jail and beaten, but they also were able to share the gospel, disciple new believers and plant churches among the Ina.

In two short years, they planted the first churches among the Ina that launched into a kingdom movement! The outside Asian partners had started a few churches, but what was most thrilling was that the discipleship revolution was catching on among the Ina themselves. The *majority* of the new churches were being started by new Ina believers anxious to spread their love for the King to other villages. I was thrilled. Yet, there was something troubling my soul. "Lord, this is not enough! We have only reached 80 villages. There are still more than 4,900 villages yet to be touched by the gospel! Don't let us become satisfied with the good and miss what it will take to see all 5,000 villages reached!"

I sat in a small room in a secret location with 12 new Ina leaders and three foreign partners. These Ina leaders rode buses on perilous mountain roads to represent the 80 new churches at our first leadership training. As the week went by, we gave them some basic leadership training to take back to the churches they represented. We discussed many topics in that secret room that week – marriage, discipleship, leading well, loving well, enduring persecution, understanding the Bible, etc. But most of all we discussed the kingdom revolution that has spread from country to country, from people group to people group since the time of Acts. It was God's time for the Ina to be reached and for them to take their place in God's relentless plan of spreading His kingdom to every people group.

Although these brothers and sisters had been so faithful in starting new churches, 80 churches weren't enough! These 12 leaders needed a bigger vision, a vision that would drive them to all 5,000 villages and beyond to other people groups and nations.

I had that vision.

My Asian partners had that vision.

But did the Ina churches have that revolutionary vision?

I spent many hours teaching the group about church-planting movements. About how God could use them to reach the whole people group and beyond. About how every obedient believer could become a witness and discipler of others. About how every church could start churches. About how new generations of disciples and churches could begin every few weeks or months. But still it wasn't sinking in.

One morning, I cast the vision once more for how a church-planting movement could expand to all 5,000 villages. As

the morning progressed, and confusion continued, I almost gave up. In exasperation, I told the group:

It's lunchtime, and I have to leave for an appointment. Over the lunch break, I want you to come up with a plan for *how 80 churches can reach 5,000 villages in five years or less!* When I come back, I am going to ask you what you are thinking.

I could see the nervousness in their eyes, but I didn't know what else to do. I walked out the door and left them with each other—and the Holy Spirit.

Two hours later, I returned to the training room and was amazed at the visibly different atmosphere in the room. They were jubilant! The 12 Ina leaders were beaming with excitement.

As I looked around the room, my eyes rested on the white board where they had written these numbers:

80, 160, 320, 640, 1,280, 2,560, 5,120

One of the Ina leaders approached me jumping up and down with excitement. He was the spokesman for the lunch work group. "Brother Steve, you'll never believe what we discovered! *[Continued jumping.]* As you know, we represent 80 Ina churches. *[Jumping.]* We can easily go back and train each of our 80 churches to start a new church in six months or less. In six months, before the harvest season, we'll have 160 churches!" *[him jumping. me feigning ignorance.]*

"That's not all! We can train all 80 new churches to start a new church in six months or less. And before the planting season six months later, we'll have 320 churches! *[Jumping higher; me feigning shock – though real shock is beginning to set in]* That's not all, every six months we can help the new churches to repeat the pattern so that every six months we double in number from 320 to 640 *[pointing to the numbers]* to 1,280 to 2,560 and finally to 5,120!"

Now all the Ina in the room were jumping up and down, smiles on their faces. It was beginning to occur to me that the Spirit had finally opened their minds to understand church-planting movements and their part in them. Hope welled up in my heart that the Ina could indeed be reached in my lifetime. They really were grasping the idea that every new believer could be trained and expected to live out a lifestyle of witnessing and training other new believers.

I thought the presenter had finished, but he had one more thing to share. In large writing he drew on the board a number and exclaimed in a loud voice: "Brother Steve, we are going to be finished in 3.5 years!"

Now I knew that the vision of God's kingdom coming had caught on. Their spiritual DNA was becoming the kingdom DNA. They

understood it. They owned it. "Spirit of God!" I prayed, "Empower them to fulfill this vision!" These Ina leaders became trainers who trained other believers who trained other new believers who kept repeating this generation by generation.

The movement came to life. Though the Ina fell short of their goal to reach all 5,000 villages in 3.5 years, they began diligently moving toward that vision. Over the next three years the number of Ina churches more than doubled to 176. In the years since, the movement has hit many bumps and overcome many roadblocks, but today the Ina continue to plant new churches and recently sent out their first long-term international missionaries. What had begun as the vision of a foreign missionary was now being pursued by hundreds of Ina believers, prompting my missionary supervisor to say: "Steve, this sounds like the book of Acts!"

Indeed, it did. It was truly "God's kingdom come." It was a return to the original discipleship revolution—a re-revolution.

Enter and Discover

The spiritual principles that God is teaching us from the Kais' T4T movement and our own CPM experience among the Ina are now informing and enhancing the work of many other CPM missionaries and church leaders around the world. The King has many deep principles and practices to teach us from these church-planting movements—these discipleship re-revolutions—that can be applied in your own community. Ying and I invite you to enter these pages and discover what those principles and practices are.^f

1. The name Ina is a pseudonym I use in this book for the previously unreached people group with which we worked in a limited-access nation. For security reasons, many real names will be changed in this book.



A Few Thoughts and Proposals Regarding **Insider Movements**

PAUL MCKAUGHAN

The Existential Reality

Our evangelical community across the world is debating, as we should, the limits and connections between cultural identity and faith in Christ. This is especially intense in those cultures where religion plays a dominant role in framing one's identity. In almost every mission focused on unreached people I have found a healthy and intense dialogue going on concerning what it means to be a follower of Jesus within these cultures, where the Holy Spirit is drawing people to Himself in historically unprecedented numbers. New communities of those who follow Christ and honor God's Word are adopting many new forms. And many of us seem to feel compelled to define what obedience looks like for others who accept the Lordship of Jesus.

As evangelical missionaries, we once insisted that following Christ required a complete break with one's culture because it was steeped in an un-redeemable "heathen" religious system. In some places followers of Jesus were even required to take new westernized Biblical names, while we seemed unaware of the degree to which our own Biblical understanding was compromised by extra-Biblical and cultural accretions.

As a result, many of the Christian churches we helped birth around the world are seen by locals as the embodiment of foreign and western culture. In their view, Christianity is an expression of a corrupt western "modernity" that seeks to subvert what they see as morally superior in their own national/religious identity. This perception obscures the truths of God's grace.

Thus many of Christ's followers (missionaries and locals) are questioning the necessity of leaving the dominant culture, and even its religious expression, to follow Christ.

In these ongoing discussions the debate is often heated and the tensions quite fierce.

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The Challenge

Missionaries and nationals on both sides of this question are appealing to those of us outside their reality for theological legitimization, and in the West we seem quite ready, even anxious, to try to arbitrate a dispute that is not really ours. Rather than bringing peace, we are stoking the flames of strife and division in their world.

My Personal Reflections

People frequently ask me what my theological position is on the "insider movements," or the use of "dynamic equivalents" in Bible translation. Several reflections have led me to hold lightly my positions on these issues. You may consider this a good old fashioned cop-out, and you may be right, but here are my reflections.

System Thinking and Sin

Years ago I was introduced to "systems thinking." My "personal system" is the circle I draw around things I influence or control. The inference for a dispersive person like me is that I shouldn't waste time and energy worrying about the things outside that circle, but carefully manage the things in my personal and corporate system.

As I have gotten older, I have recognized that I don't draw the circle; rather, I recognize and accept it. It is the Holy Spirit who—through God's Word, brothers and sisters in Christ and even circumstances—creates the boundaries around the system He entrusts to my stewardship.

When I ignore those boundaries—and get involved with things outside my system that I feel necessitate my urgent intervention, or that I am sure absolutely require my astounding and unique gifts—disaster is not far behind. I have come to recognize that my presumptive boundary-jumping really comes from my dual sins of pride and unbelief.

My prideful nature tells me that God speaks more clearly to me—or, at the very least, I understand Him more clearly—than my brother or sister. My sin of unbelief leads me to doubt that the Almighty can get His point across to those who may lack my dedication, intellect or training,

even though He has also called them to be a part of His family and His Spirit also resides within them.

Pride and unbelief exercise a strong magnetic attraction to draw my attention away from my own system and calling. My presumptive intervention in the systems of others takes away from what God wants to do through me in my own system, and also interferes with what He desires to do within the “system” I illicitly invaded.

Good Theology and Obedience are Contextual

The best theology comes through interaction with the Scripture in a specific context. Because God seeks worshippers among all peoples, additional peoples are always searching the Scriptures to understand how God’s Word speaks to their culture, identity and worldview.

Throughout church history and across diverse cultures, the Holy Spirit seems to have applied varying facets of His comprehensive revelation about God, man and redemption. Obedience to God’s Word rather than mere knowledge is what counts with the Creator, obedience which is always specific and concrete.

Recognizing My Limitations

My father, now with the Lord, was a wonderfully wise and godly minister of the gospel. When I left home to prepare for the ministry, he gave me some awesome advice: “Son, when you see great and godly men arrayed on opposite sides of any major biblical truth, don’t think you are going to resolve that issue.”

In terms of the “systems thinking” mentioned above, he was saying “Paul, you should study and come to your biblical theological positions, but leave those outside your system to the Holy Spirit.”

I have found that my father’s admonition was good advice. Still, pride and unbelief tend to lead me to dogmatic conclusions that I feel compelled to apply to those outside my system. I am often unwilling to grant to others the grace that our Father seems to extend to me.

Conclusion

I have never worked nor lived in a Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu culture. There are sincere, knowledgeable and biblically obedient brothers and sisters on each side of this issue, and at various points on the continuum. They are sincerely attempting to follow the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit’s leading in these matters. They all seek to extend Christ’s reign in their cultures and countries. I must trust the Holy Spirit to guide them. God has not placed these issues within my system. I must be a peacemaker rather than a partisan in this conflict.

It took hundreds of years for the early followers of Christ to develop the theological formulations we now accept as normative. It has taken generations for us in the West to discover the weaknesses of our former mission patterns. So years—even generations—may pass before we see the full fruit of these various efforts to follow Christ more contextually and completely. I must exercise patience and not make precipitous value judgments as to the right or wrong conclusions of my brothers and sisters.

Such patience is definitely not natural for me; I come from a rather ego-centric culture and generation that tends to believe that history really starts with us.

The world of the Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist follower of Christ is outside my system, experience and calling. I have never lived or worked in those regions of the world, nor have I faced the tensions and pressures my new brothers and sisters in Christ face every day. Thus I feel called to practice several disciplines amid the tensions to which I have alluded.

My Proposed Steps of Obedience

1. I will hold my own positions on these important issues tentatively and share them carefully and in a spirit of love.
2. I will leave the judgment as to who the true followers of Christ are to Him. It is He alone who calls and imparts life according to His will and purpose.
3. I will grant my brothers and sisters time for their views to mature and their practices to be further shaped by the Holy Spirit’s leading as they pursue a growing understanding of biblical truth and obedience in their context.
4. I will actively seek to promote peace among followers of Christ as they seek to be faithful followers of Jesus as Lord under the authority of His Word, accepting that my brothers and sisters may practice obedience in very different ways.
5. I will oppose those here or in the field who promote strife and division within Christ’s Body.

A Final Thought

In my pilgrimage the Holy Spirit has made me much more aware of my theological compromises with my own culture. I often fail to see the degree to which I allow my own culture to shape my understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. I thus aim to be more discerning and obedient as I follow Christ and obey God’s Word within my own culture, and as I interact with those who have experienced His grace in very different cultural/religious settings.^f

TRANSLATING FAMILIAL BIBLICAL TERMS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE



THIS ARTICLE IS AN ABRIDGEMENT OF “A NEW LOOK AT TRANSLATING FAMILIAL BIBLICAL TERMS,” FORTHCOMING IN THE *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FRONTIER MISSIOLOGY* 28:3 (2011).

RICK BROWN, ANDREA GRAY AND LEITH GRAY¹

A well-educated non-Christian woman was reading the Gospel of Luke for the first time. She came to Luke 2:48, where Mary says to Jesus, “Son,...Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you” (ESV). The woman said, “I can’t accept this! We know that Jesus was born from a virgin and did not have a human father!” She protested strongly that Joseph could not have been Jesus’ biological father, and she cited this statement in Luke as “proof that the Bible has been corrupted and is unreliable,” meaning the translation was corrupt. What could have been the cause of her misunderstanding?

The Difference between Biological and Social Familial Terms

The problem for this woman was that the word used for father in the Bible translation that she was reading is biological in meaning. It is not normally used for non-biological fathers, such as stepfathers and adoptive fathers. Thus it implied that Joseph had sired Jesus by having sex with Mary. The word was equivalent in meaning to the English words *biological father*, *genitor*, and *procreator*, rather than to *social father*, *pater*, or *paterfamilias*. The biological father is the one who begets the children. The social father is the one who raises the children as their father, looks after them, and has authority over them.

In a typical family, the same man is both the social and biological father, i.e., he is a parenting father, meaning he is the provider of both paternal DNA and paternal nurturing to the same child. In some cases, however, the social father of a child is not the biological father. An

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adopted child, for example, has an adoptive father and a birth father. These categories are shown in table 1.

It is crucial to note that social father and biological father are overlapping categories, and a parenting father is in both categories. So a man can be described as a child’s social father without implying that he is the child’s biological father as well, even if most social fathers are also the biological fathers of the children they raise. In Luke 2:48–49, both Joseph and God are called in Greek Jesus’ *patēr*, “social father.” Since neither one passed DNA to Jesus, the paternal relationship was not only social but also non-biological.

As shown in table 1, the English word *father* is broad in meaning and not necessarily biological, since one can be a father to someone without having sired him or her. In some languages, however, the word commonly used for a paternal family member is limited in meaning to biological father, so it is not used of a stepfather or adoptive father. In the translation read by the woman above, the word used to translate *patēr*, “social father,” actually meant biological father; this implied that Joseph had sired Jesus and hence that Mary was not a virgin when she conceived him. It was not an accurate translation.

A similar distinction exists between *social son*, which signifies a filial social relationship to a father, and *biological son*, which signifies a filial biological relationship to the source of one’s paternal genes. Again, in a typical situation the same person has both relationships; a parented son receives his DNA and paternal nurturing from the same man. In some situations, however, this is not the case; Jesus received paternal nurture from Joseph but did not receive DNA from him. These categories are shown in table 2.

The English word *son* covers all three categories, but in some languages the word commonly used for a male

the Hebrew or Greek word for a social father or son using a word for a biological father or son in the target language unless the relationship is truly biological. This is especially the case with regard to the Father-Son relation, which was generated non-biologically, without procreation. Translating Father and Son with biological terms has caused readers to think the text claims that Jesus is the offspring of God procreating with Mary, and this has caused Muslim readers to reject such translations as corrupt and even blasphemous.

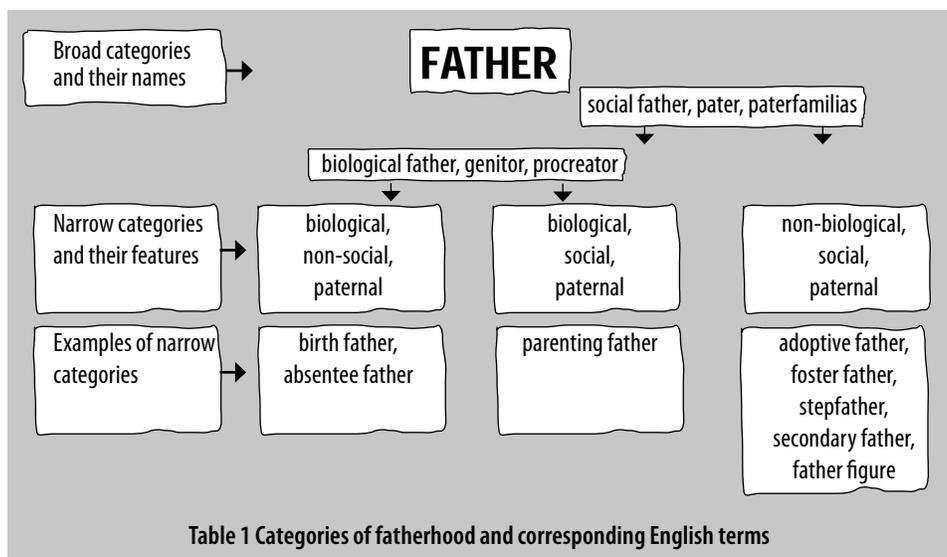


Table 1 Categories of fatherhood and corresponding English terms

child of the family is limited in meaning to biological offspring. Such a word does not accurately describe Jesus' relationship to Joseph.

Biblical Greek and Hebrew have one set of terms signifying social familial relationships, similar to English *father* and *son*, but with broader application, and a second set for biological familial relations, like English *procreator* and *offspring*.² In a nurturing biological family both sets of terms apply to the same people. A stepson, however, is not called a biological son, and a disowned biological son is no longer a social son.

It is important to realize that to express divine familial relationships, the Bible uses the Greek and Hebrew social familial terms, not the biological ones. It presents the essence of God's fatherhood of us in his paternal care for us as his loved ones rather than in siring us as his biological offspring.

While in Hebrew and Greek the social familial terms are the ones commonly used to refer to members of one's family, in some languages the biological terms are most commonly used. Other languages, like Arabic and various Turkic languages, lack a set of social familial terms, and neither adoption nor step relations are recognized, so to convey a non-procreated familial relationship one must use a phrase, such as *like a father to me*, or use a term for *paterfamilias* (head of family). When translating the Bible into such languages, it would be inaccurate to translate

Problems with Mixing Up Biological and Social Familial Terms

It is the task of Bible translators to communicate "the meaning of the original text...as exactly as possible...including the informational content, feelings, and attitudes of the original text" by re-expressing it "in forms that are consistent with normal usage in the receptor language."³ It might seem astounding, therefore, that Bible translations would ever use expressions that misrepresent the divine relations by implying they arose from sexual procreation. However, this has happened in the history of Bible translation for two reasons. One is that translators have historically preferred word-for-word translations of key biblical terms. Some translators are under pressure to do so even if it misrepresents the meaning, as it can when the target language requires the use of a phrase to express a non-biological familial relation. Another reason is that

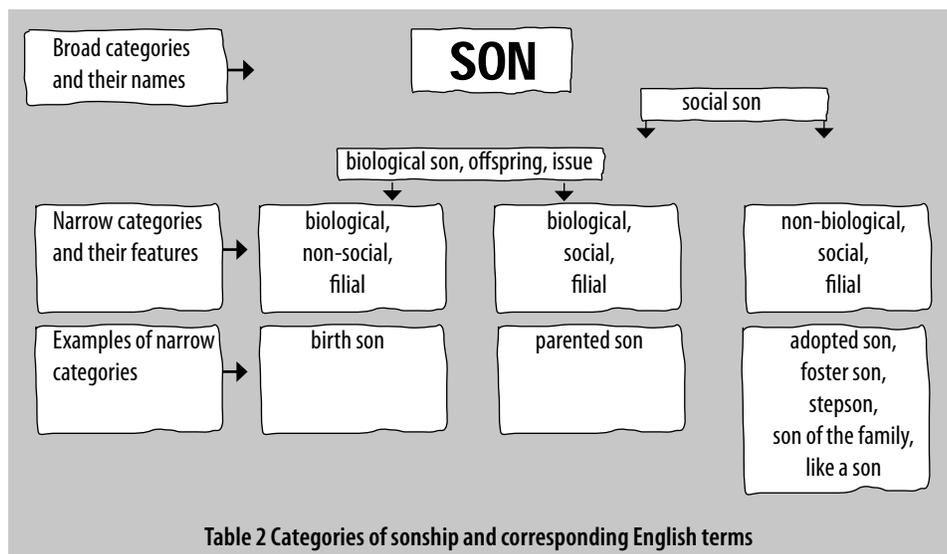


Table 2 Categories of sonship and corresponding English terms

some translators simply used the most common words in the target language for all familial relationships, even if those words were biological in meaning and a different, specialized term was required to express the social or non-biological relationships in the family of God.

The reality is that there are usually semantic mismatches between the words in any two languages, especially if they are from different language families and different cultures, and translators often have to use phrases in the target language to express the intended meaning of a single term in the Greek or Hebrew text. Not understanding this, some well-intentioned Christians have insisted that the Bible translators in other countries produce word-for-word translations of familial terms because they mistakenly assume that every language describes familial relations in the broad sense expressed by the common English, Hebrew and Greek familial terms. But that is not the case, and the common, single-word terms used for family members in some languages are strictly biological and are inappropriate for describing the family of God. The problem is that these translations end up attributing a biological meaning to the fatherhood of God, implying he reproduced the Son, the angels or even the spirits of people through sexual activity. This meaning was not communicated by the original-language expressions, and it conflicts with the intended meaning of the text.

This mistake results in readers understanding the Lord's Prayer to say "Our Begetter, who is in heaven," and understanding Jesus to be "God's (procreated) offspring." The "longing of creation" (Rom 8:19) is understood to be "for the revealing of God's biological children." *Such wordings are inaccurate because they add a procreative meaning that was absent from the original, and they sideline the important interpersonal relationships that were expressed in the original text.* Readers from polytheistic religions readily accept that gods procreate with goddesses and with women, and they assume the phrase *Offspring of God* signifies a procreated origin. Readers in many Muslim language groups understand *Offspring of God* in a similar way, namely that it means God had sexual relations with a woman; unlike polytheists, however, they reject this possibility and consider the phrase to be a blasphemous corruption of the Bible that insults God by attributing carnality to him. They fear that even saying such a phrase will incur the wrath of God. These misunderstandings disappear, however, when translators express the divine familial relationships in ways that do not imply sexual activity on the part of God. Muslim readers and listeners can then focus on the message without being preoccupied with the fear of attributing carnality to God, and when they do, they recognize that

the deity and mission of Christ is evident throughout the Gospels. This highlights the fact that translators are not trying to remove original meanings from the translation that might offend the audience. On the contrary, their concern is to avoid incorrect meanings that fail to communicate the informational content, feelings and attitudes of the original inspired text.

Some Possible Translations for Father and Son of God

If translators wish to avoid those mistakes and express the divine familial relations in non-biological terms, then what expressions can they use?

1. Obviously, in languages that have single words for social fathers and sons, if phrases like *our Father* and *sons of God* are understood as signifying God in his caring, paternal relationship to us as his loved ones, without implying a claim that God produced our bodies or spirits by having sex with females (as even Mormons claim), then these expressions are to be preferred.
2. In some languages where the commonly used kinship terms are biological, there are also social familial terms similar in meaning to *paterfamilias* and *loved ones* (meaning one's beloved family), and Christians use these to describe God's paternal relationship to us and our filial relationship to him.
3. Where such terms are not available, it is sometimes possible to say something like *our God in heaven, who is like a procreator to us, and we are like offspring to God.* On the other hand, a phrase like *God's loved ones* may be better at conveying the loving nature of the relationship.
4. To describe the Father-Son relationship, some languages add a word that helps block the biological meaning of the words, using phrases equivalent to *Offspring sent from God* or *Spiritual Offspring of God.*
5. Some languages have terms for a favorite son, only son, firstborn son, or ruling-heir (who is usually the firstborn), and people use these for the Father-Son relationship, as in *God's Loved One and God's Only One.* The Greek New Testament uses terms for Jesus equivalent to all four of these, but it also has a term for social son, *huios*, that is used more often. Unfortunately many languages lack a term equivalent in meaning to *huios*.

Translators ask people from the intended audience, both believers and others, to read or listen to passages of Scripture in which these alternative wordings have been used; then they ask them questions to find out what they understood these phrases to mean in context. Based on this feedback from the community and feedback from other stakeholders, the translation team

and the local editorial committee, with the help of an outside translation consultant, decide which translation is best. There may be several cycles to this testing phase until the best solution is found.

Using the Paratext

The authoritative text of Scripture is the one God communicated to us in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The task of translators is to enable readers to understand the message that God communicated via this original text. Because of differences in language and context, to communicate God's message in another language requires both text and paratext. The paratext can effectively define the biblical meaning of an expression used in the translated text as long as that expression does not already mean something contrary to biblical meaning.

The paratext consists of any introductory articles, footnotes, glossary entries and parenthetical notes in the text that the translators wrote as an integral part of the translation to explain terms, unfamiliar concepts and essential background information. So even if translators find a way to express divine fatherhood and sonship in the text, it is also important to fill out the meaning of the expression in the paratext. In a non-print Scripture product, the paratext consists primarily of introductions to sections of text. So what should be included in the paratextual explanation of *Son of God*?

Components of the Meaning of Son of God

Church history and contemporary scholarship emphasize two components of meaning of the term *Son of God*:

- Ontological (as the eternal Son he is consubstantial with the Father and eternally generated from him in a non-procreative way; Heb 1:3); and
- Mediatorial (as Son of God he is sent by the Father to mediate God's rule, grace and salvation to his people, to impart sonship to them, and to be their Savior and Advocate).

Bible scholars suggest that the mediatorial meaning is the most prominent in many contexts of Scripture, but they also recognize that the Bible uses the phrase with six additional components of meaning: familial/relational, incarnational, revelational, instrumental, ethical and representational. All these can be explained to readers in the paratext, usually in a mini-article, in the glossary, and in footnotes. While the mini-article goes into depth of meaning, the explanatory notes remind the audience that the phrase "Son of God" does not mean God's procreated offspring but means that he is the eternal Word of God (ontological and revelational), who entered the womb of Mary (incarnational) and was born as the Messiah (mediatorial), and relates to God as Son to his Father (familial).

Preference for the Familial Component of Meaning

Although the concept signified by *Son of God* is rich in meaning, there are advantages to expressing the familial component in the text and explaining the other components in the paratext. This provides for consistency among translations and consistency with church tradition. More importantly, it is primarily the familial component of divine sonship that Christ imparts to believers, and he is the "firstborn among many brothers," all under the paternal care of God as loved ones in his eternal family. This is not easily communicated if the familial component of *Son of God* is not expressed directly in the translated text.

Although Bible scholars agree on the prominence of the mediatorial meaning of the term Son of God in most New Testament contexts, yet because of the advantages of expressing the familial component in the text, it is clearly best to do that and to explain the mediatorial and other components in the paratext. In particular, we believe mediatorial terms like *Christ* or *Messiah* should be used only to translate Greek *Christos* and should not be used to translate words like *Son*.

Clarifying Some Misperceptions

There have been a number of misperceptions about the translation of divine familial expressions, especially in languages spoken by Muslims, and these have been aggravated by the current level of tensions in the world. The explanation above clearly states that this is a linguistic issue, in which translators seek to communicate the social familial meanings of the Greek and Hebrew expressions while avoiding the wrong meaning that God reproduces children through procreation. This is the meaning of accuracy in translation. But it might be helpful to address the misperceptions as well:

Contrary to what some people imagine, the use in translation of non-biological expressions for Father and Son

- is not imposed by outsiders, but is decided by believers in the language community;
- is not limited to languages spoken by Muslims but is a challenge for any language in which the normal kinship terms are biological in meaning and imply procreation;
- is not intended to lead audiences into any particular form of church, whether Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, or "insider";
- does not itself constitute an "insider" translation or even a "Muslim-idiom" translation;
- is not contrary to normal translation principles but seeks to follow them, by using phrases to translate the meaning of Greek and Hebrew terms that lack a semantic counterpart in the target language, and by

- explaining the meaning of the terms in the paratext;
- is not limited to “dynamic” translations but is used in more “literal” ones as well;
- is not contrary to how conservative Biblical scholars interpret the Greek and Hebrew expressions but rather seeks to follow their scholarship;
- is not intended to change or obscure the theological content of Scripture or make it more palatable to the audience, but seeks rather to convey it as accurately as possible;
- does not hinder the audience’s perception of Jesus’ deity but rather facilitates it;
- does not stem from liberal or unorthodox theology on the part of translators or from a liberal view of Scripture, but from interaction with the interpretive and theological tradition of historic Christianity and the results of contemporary conservative scholarship, with the goal of communicating the verbally inspired message of the Bible as fully and accurately as possible.

Various Bible agencies are seeking to explain translation principles and dispel these misperceptions. Wycliffe Bible Translators (USA), for example, includes the following point in its statement of basic translation standards:

In particular regard to the translation of the familial titles of God we affirm fidelity in Scripture translation using terms that accurately express the familial relationship by which God has chosen to describe Himself as Father in relationship to the Son in the original languages.⁴

It is not accurate to use expressions which mean Jesus’ sonship consists of being the offspring of God’s procreation with a woman.

Conclusion

In order to accurately convey divine fatherhood and sonship, translators need to use expressions that are as equivalent in meaning as possible to the Greek and Hebrew terms for social son (*huios and ben*) and social father (*patēr and āb*) and to avoid biological expressions of the form *God’s Offspring or the Procreator of our Lord Jesus Christ*, because these are understood to signify biological relations generated through a sexual act of procreation. In this way translators can enable new audiences to understand the biblical sense in which God is our father and Christ is his son, as well as understand the relationship of Joseph to the boy Jesus.

Ultimately it is comprehension testing that plays the crucial role in the process of translation, because there is no other way to ascertain what a particular wording in the text and paratext actually communicates to the audience or to discover which wordings communicate most clearly and accurately. That is why translators and churches “test the translation as extensively as possible

in the receptor community to ensure that it communicates accurately, clearly and naturally.”⁵ Across the world, this approach to first-time translations has been found repeatedly to offer the best success at enabling new audiences to comprehend the biblical message and to respond in faith, as God enables.^f

1. We gratefully acknowledge the helpful input, feedback, and support we received from many translators and other interested parties, and from Bible scholars such as Prof. Vern Poythress of Westminster Theological Seminary and Roy Ciampa of Gordon-Conwell Seminary.
2. See “A New Look at Translating Familial Biblical Terms,” by Rick Brown, Leith Gray, Andrea Gray. *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 28:3 (2011).
3. Forum of Bible Agencies International, *Basic Principles and Procedures for Bible Translation*, www.forum-intl.org/uploadedFiles/about_ifoba/Translation%20Standards.pdf.
4. See www.wycliffe.org/TranslationStandards.aspx. See also www.wycliffe.net/Missiology/BibleTranslationandMission/tabid/94/Default.aspx?id=2213 and www.missionfrontiers.org/blog/post/bible-translations-for-muslim-readers
5. FOBAI, *Basic Principles*.

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Raising Local Resources

Tithes and Offerings vs Profit and Loss

Glenn Schwartz, Executive Director, World Mission Associates

The problem I am about to describe thankfully does not apply to all mission-established churches. But it is significant enough that I feel it deserves attention because of the negative effects it can have on the work the Church is called to do.

The Church is called to be a place of worship, fellowship, service and discipleship. It is not called to run income-generating businesses which are often created to compensate for low tithes and offerings. Sometimes church-run businesses, including development projects, become an alternative source of income to tithes and offerings. While churches are to run on tithes and offerings, businesses run on profit and loss.

In various parts of Africa, weddings have become big business opportunities where family and friends pay a considerable amount of money to a wedding organizer. Services include rental of the wedding clothes, arranging the location, transportation and reception. The details for the entire wedding are subcontracted to the wedding coordinator. One church I know about in East Africa looked upon this as an opportunity to earn money for their congregation. I learned about them when they asked for overseas funding to help launch their church-run business.

Church-run businesses are by no means limited to wedding services. They include agricultural projects, bakeries, clinics, taxi services or other so-called income-generating projects. Sometimes these projects are as large as a block of apartments (flats) designed to generate income to support a diocese, district or central office of a denomination.

The rationale behind church-owned businesses is that they would be a good investment because it generates local income for the church. If all goes as

planned, it would eventually reduce dependence on overseas funding. However, there seems to be something incompatible with church-owned investments and healthy sustainability. In other words, the churches most committed to owning income-generating businesses are the ones least likely to stand on their own two feet. One might ask what could possibly be wrong with a church-run business. After all, it is generating local income for doing God's work. It looks like an investment, not like charity. In reality, several things happen when churches depend on business income to sustain themselves. Let me mention a few:

First, a church-owned business can dominate the schedule of the church leader who must manage it. Church leaders are to give themselves to prayer and preaching (Acts 6).

Second, it does not follow that church leaders are natural born business managers. They are supposed to be spiritually gifted to impart the Word, seek converts, disciple believers and strategize outreach. When they become preoccupied with the bottom line of a church-run business, especially a questionably-run business, their workload increases significantly.

Third, inadequate income from church-run businesses sometimes leads to the need for subsidy from somewhere else – perhaps even from the church it is meant to support. During the missionary period when there was insufficient income to sustain business-like projects, funds given for evangelization in the sending country sometimes ended up being used to cover the losses of church-run businesses. Lest, you think this is something that only occurred many decades ago, one has only to look at some of the current development projects today to see

how church-run businesses are consuming funds originally intended for church growth and evangelism.

Fourth, income from church-run businesses can have a negative effect on tithes and offerings in local congregations. So long as church members believe that there is potential income from a church-run business, their conclusion can be, "The church does not need my money because they have a business." When that happens, church offerings suffer.

Fifth, sometimes church-run businesses are in competition with church members who are struggling to make a living without the benefit of support from the church or from overseas. For example, when that happens, a church member who runs a bookstore in his or her community may find that his or her biggest competition is another bookstore run by the church which may enjoy free rent and other advantages not available to the church member.

So, what about the church?

There is a place for pastors and church leaders to generate their own personal income just as the Apostle Paul did. But these are not church-owned businesses. They are private individuals with a foot in two vocations – serving the church and earning their own income if the church is too small to pay them a full salary. But the bottom line is that churches should consider getting their income from tithes and offerings of their members, rather than from church-run businesses. f

Glenn Schwartz is author of When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement. It is available on the website of World Mission Associates – www.wmausa.org.

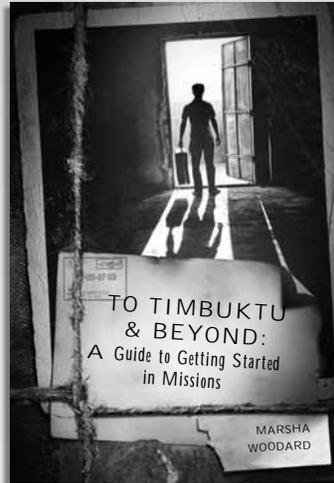
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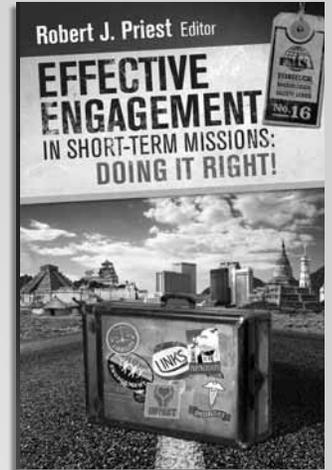


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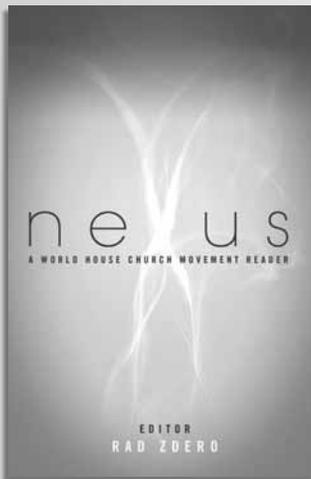
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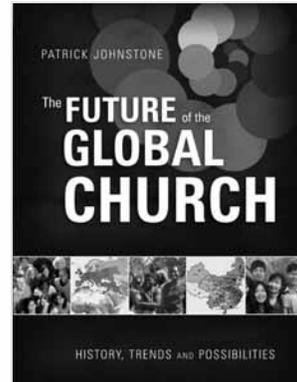
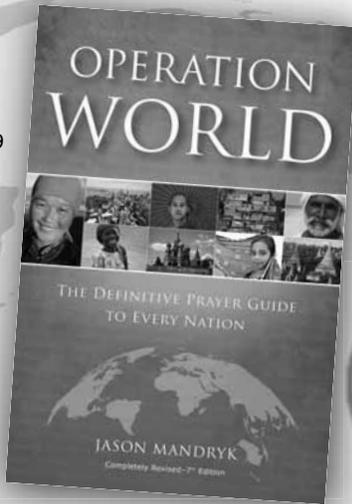
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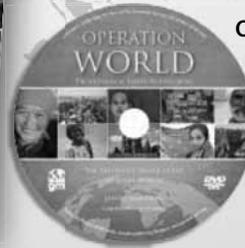
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Further Reflections



Western Christianized Identity

Greg H. Parsons, Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission

When we talk about identity, it is usually in reference to those from other cultures we are trying to reach with the gospel. *How will new believers understand and live out their faith in a situation where there is little or no biblical background?* And, how will friends, family and neighbors view that newfound faith?

We know that anyone who repents and comes to God through Christ is a new creation. They are different. But how that transformation plays out in different cultures is not what we might expect. What they need to do or avoid within their cultural or religious setting is something we must consider carefully.

Donald McGavran used to say that when the gospel is first penetrating a culture, how others within that culture view the new believers is key to future growth. If they feel like “those people” (meaning new believers) are now different or “other,” the gospel will not spread. If, however, they are seen as a valid expression within the culture, the gospel will spread.

Think for a moment about your own identity. What is your cultural background? (I’m speaking mainly to Westerners, but others from around the world where the gospel has been implanted for years can also relate, since many Koreans or Africans south of the Sahara or Latin Americans come from a “Christian” background with Western roots.) Most of us would likely say that we didn’t have to change that much when we came to Christ. Sure, there are those who used to think and act immorally—living out the flesh in all of its fullness. And, yes, it is a major shift for them. But even

then, while they need to leave certain friends to stay away from sinful behavior and temptation, they can normally find believers who are from similar cultural understanding. At least they can find believers like them who speak their language.

Yet for us who didn’t indulge in that level of pre-faith sin, the shift is far subtler, especially if we trusted Christ

when we were young. Researchers tell us most people come to Christ before they are 18, yet most of the time, the shift to being a new creation is difficult to see.

So is the change real? Of course! That six-year-old boy who truly believes is a new creature. Naturally, he will grow and exhibit more fruit of the Spirit as he matures in life and spiritual things.

But now, imagine growing up in a culture where there are no people of faith. Any believers living near you are from a different background and speak a totally different language (or at least use different religious terminology).

Looking at it from our perspective as believers, when someone from a situation like this comes to Christ, what would we expect (or require) them to do differently? Are we sure that any and all of these requirements are derived from clear biblical teaching and not merely our cultural traditions?

Unfortunately, we often add to the Bible from our religious traditions. Those traditions may not be bad or wrong, but that doesn’t mean they are best in

another culture. For example, we might expect that once there are enough new believers, they will have a church building and a full-time paid pastor. If there are already Christians nearby using the same language, we expect they will adopt the Christians’ way of saying things (as

LOOKING AT IT FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE AS BELIEVERS, WHEN SOMEONE FROM THESE GROUPS COMES TO CHRIST, WHAT DO WE EXPECT OR EVEN DEMAND THEY DO DIFFERENTLY? ARE WE SURE THAT ANY AND ALL REQUIREMENTS ARE CLEAR BIBLICAL TEACHING AND NOT MERELY OUR CULTURAL TRADITIONS?

is the case with languages such as Arabic or Urdu, where religious terminology is very different between Muslims and Christians). We might expect them to go to prayer meetings at 5 am, or if they were Hindus, to start eating meat.

Most of us would say that these things are not “required.” Historically, all this and more has been expected of new believers. So I wonder, are we merely putting new forms of legalism on new believers? Are we putting a yoke on them that neither they (nor we) should have to bear, as James said in Acts 15:10?

Why not make a list of the things you do as a part of your faith or church pattern, which are not clear biblical teaching. Remember that doesn’t make it wrong, but it should make us think more carefully as to how our “Christian activities” might be seen when lived out in another situation. f

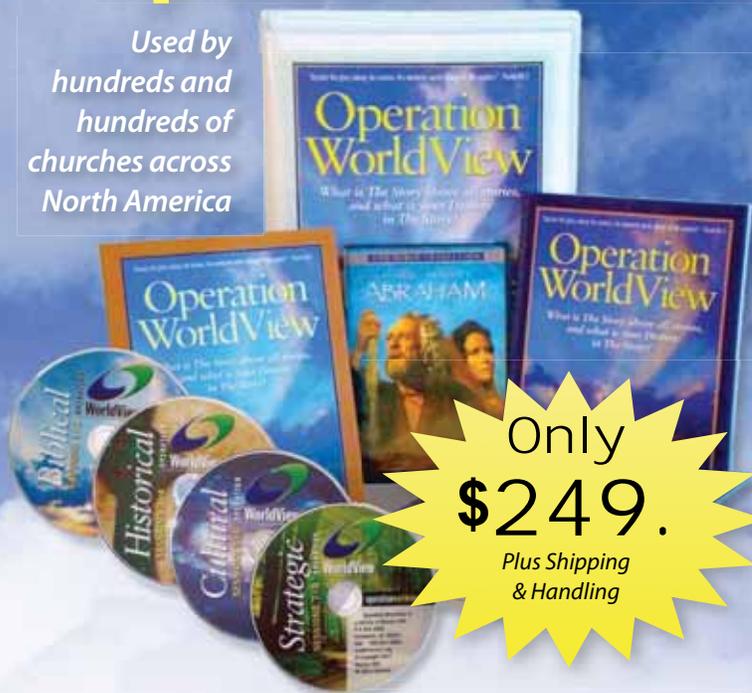
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