

TRANSFORMATIONS WITHIN GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY AND THE WESTERN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

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The demographic shift within global Christianity in recent decades raises many complex questions related to the interaction between global and local dimensions of the faith, religious plurality, entrenched perspectives within the theological curriculum, the religious dimensions of the North-South divide and of the future of Christian mission. The context framing these issues is contemporary globalization. Among the many definitions of globalization, the following provides a useful reference point: “*Increasing global interconnectedness, so that events and developments in one part of the world are affected by, have to take account of, and also influence, in turn, other parts of the world. It also refers to an increasing of a single global whole.*”¹

There are two critical elements central to most theories of globalisation that need to be highlighted. One is the consciousness of the world as a single place, due to the escalating experience of interconnects and interdependence that increasingly characterizes our existence. Second is the compression of time and space made evident through increasing borderlessness (epitomized by electronic connectivity and transmigration), and the shrinking of distance through air travel and advanced telecommunications. Yet, globalization is paradoxically inconceivable without localization; and what I propose to emphasize here is the vital interdependence between the local and the global, since the face of the global is in the local.

Understanding “Shift” in Global Christianity to the South

The nature of this “shift” is now such common knowledge that it would seem superfluous to revisit its core elements. But revisit it we must, in order to clarify its nature and to address critical questions raised by Philip Jenkins’ treatment.² Why is that shift perceived wholly as demographic, and why was what I would term a secular explanation of an intensely religious phenomenon such a crowd pleaser?

Jenkins denounced the widespread neglect of religion within western academia. He pointed to the widespread ignorance in the West of the hugely significant developments in the non-West related to Christianity. He also argued that the new shape of global

¹Richard Tiplady, ed. *One World or Many?: The Impact of Globalisation on Mission*. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003). p.5.

² Philip Jenkins. *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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Christianity forces us to see Christianity in a radical and new perspective. In fact he writes as if he is seeing it for the first time.

So for westerners, paying attention to the non-western aspect of global Christianity would allow them to make some startling discoveries: that Christianity is deeply associated with poverty; that Africa, the imagined principle center of the global faith, is the most wretched continent on the planet; that the majority of southern Christians really are the poor, the hungry, the persecuted, even the de-humanized.

Jenkins queries the notion of western Christianity and its usage. He discusses the limits and shortcomings of empire as a framework for Christian expansion. He makes the point that by surviving the end of the colonial European political powers, southern Christianity demonstrates that there was a great deal more to its successes than the missionary movement. He identifies several key characteristics of southern Christianity which distinguishes it from predominant expressions in the North, including:

- a strong supernatural orientation;
- a deep passionate faith and communal orthodoxy;
- the idea that God intervenes directly, in every day life;
- a preoccupation with prophesy, visions, ecstatic outbursts and healing.

In fact, he says “if there is a single key area of faith and practice that divides Christians, it is this matter of spiritual forces and their effect on the everyday human world.”³

He commends the enduring power and significance of mainline Christianity, yet he tries to explain the success of a very different southern Christianity. Jenkins is among the few scholars of religion that I know, outside of mission studies, who has discussed the fact that the migration movement is going to be a key element in contemporary missionary expansion.

So what problem do I have with his analysis? There are two. The first one is Jenkins’ use of the term “Christendom.” Jenkins actually writes, “Northerners rarely give the South anything like the attention it deserves. And when they do notice it, they tend to project onto it their own familiar realities and desires.”⁴ But then he goes on to ignore his own warning; or you might say, fulfill his own prophesy, and implicitly imprisons the study of this new reality within a western conceptual framework. The use of the term Christendom to define the emerging southern Christianities effectively makes the western historical Christian experience a roadmap for understanding what is, after all, a radically different phenomena unfolding within the non-western world.

Jenkins insists that the new Christendom is no mirror image of the old, but rather a new and developing entity. Again, he completely contradicts his own instincts. So, he talks

³ Ibid. p. 123.

⁴ Ibid. p. 13.

about the emergence of “forces of crusade in the Christian third world.”⁵ He talks about the new Christian world of the South finding unity and common religious beliefs; that Christian-Muslim conflict within the south is analogous to the old conflict in medieval Europe. He talks about a new age of Christian crusades and Muslim *jihads*, reminiscent of the middle ages. He talks about the emergence of a new wave of Christian states in the South. Finally, we’re left with the next Christendom as a metaphor for the next Crusade.

I find this analysis intensely problematic because the Christendom construct holds very little value for what is unfolding in the non-western world. The view that “northern-southern Christianity”, as he calls it, is evolving into a monolithic entity, a unified experience in culture and politics, is absurd. One of the most distinctive aspects of non-western Christianity is its plurality – the plurality of expressions and movements. If you wanted to critique southern Christianities, one of your first stopping points would be its endless divisiveness. As to the nature of southern Christianity, someone receives a vision every day to start their own ministry! As a matter of fact, so intensely occupied are its main leaders and thinkers with crafting spheres of influence, that the last thing on their mind is to form a unified whole.

Maybe Jenkins was thinking of Chiluba (Zambia’s ex-president), when he made this comment. Chiluba’s efforts to create a Christian state in Zambia was not only a failed effort, inspired by questionable motives; it divided the Christian church in that country. You might say the reason he could do that was because Christianity was so divided. He could appeal to one constituency, some level of evangelicals, and gain their support for those kinds of claims. It is almost perverse to depict southern Christianity in terms of Christendom; and it is short-sighted to treat Muslim-Christian tensions in the South, particularly Africa, without attentiveness to the underlying political and socio-economic causes.

I grew up in Sierra Leone. It is a majority Muslim country. Peaceful co-existence is the *defining* element in Sierra Leone, including inter-marriage and attending each others’ festivals. My neighbors were Muslims. I went to school with Muslims. The notion of crusade never came up. If you speak about Nigeria, then the analysis goes beyond Muslim-Christian tensions - there are many other factors at play. Islam has been growing as fast in Africa as almost anywhere else. It is a major presence. The last thing African Christians and African Muslims are thinking about is rising up in a crusade against anyone else.

So, the kinds of assumptions that Jenkins is projecting on these southern movements are completely erroneous. He ends up depicting the new movements as a destructive force, and almost prophesies that it is going to be a major source of future global conflict - the new crusade. Note too that his analysis excludes any reference to the North, which is rather curious given contemporary realities. He sees the conflicts, the crusades and destruction as emerging within this new southern entity.

⁵ Ibid. p. 6

Perhaps a major reason why Jenkins' book was such a best seller among the western reading public has to do with the fact that it seeks to examine non-Western realities using western categories or constructs. This dramatic shift, that has transformed global Christianity and non-western religion, calls for radically new conceptual tools. The old vocabulary, the old framework simply will not do. If you try to apply the terms 'conservative' and 'liberal' to Latin American Christianity, or to African Christianity, it will not take you very far. Further, these days we use the term 'fundamentalist' to describe anyone who is serious about their faith. These old constructs and concepts do not help us. While they may contain seeds of wisdom that may open our eyes, they are ultimately inadequate.

What we're looking at calls for new missiological perspectives. It calls for multi-disciplinary exploration of new contexts. It calls for missionaries, practitioners, leaders, to examine how we conscientize those in our constituency to what is going on in the South. You get a very different perspective when you talk to someone who has spent any amount of time in Latin America or Africa. They may not be academic experts or top scholars in the world, but their take will be radically different than that of anyone who lives in the West and tries to understand what is going on. One of the best resources for the church in the North, for theological schools in the North, is to give ear to such missionaries and leaders, those who have been there for extended periods of time, as Jenkins apparently never has.

Implications for Mission

Broadly speaking, these transformations have profound implications, not only for the study of Christianity as a world religion, but also in more concrete terms, for the future of the Christian missionary enterprise. Here too, it is important that we evaluate non-western Christianity *in their own right*, not simply as recent products or extensions of Western missionary-initiated churches. Phrases like "younger churches" or "emerging churches," or "new churches" often reflect this prejudice that we see them simply as new creations emerging out of earlier efforts. Certainly, you cannot explain what is going on in the South today without recourse to the western missionary movement. But we need to be clear that, while the dynamics and structure for this emerging non-western missionary movement are shaped by globalization and the recent shift in global Christianity's center of gravity, the essential elements that constitute this missionary movement and shape its outlook were present long before the shift itself.

This is not to deny that the shift is largely attributable to the stimulus and seeds sown by the western missionary movement. At the same time, it is crucial for us to note, that the forms of Christianity which now prevail in the non-western world, are largely shaped by contextual factors – by contextual expectations, priorities and preoccupations. Contrary to the popular evangelical conception, the phenomena of growth of Christianity in the non-western world owe a lot more to indigenous initiatives than to western missionary agencies.

More Africans have heard the Gospel from other Africans. African Christianity began to experience spectacular growth *after* the colonization, and well after the heyday of European missionary dominance. Africans tend to read or hear the Bible very differently from the way Europeans often intend. The indispensability to local agency often subverts foreign or missionary controls.

Developments in Korea over the last two decades are also a good example. The burgeoning of Korean Christianity occurred in the period immediately leading to and after that country hosted the summer Olympics in 1988. The Korean international missionary force has exploded in number from around 500 in the mid-1980s to about 19,000 according to the most recent assessment. Such is the vitality of Korean Christianity that Korean seminaries produce some 10,000 graduates each year – only half of whom can be employed by the churches. A few days ago I asked a Korean expert in our school what happens to the rest, and he said they go out as missionaries, or they seek ministries abroad.

Despite the existence of a thoroughly western theological training and education, the expansion of non-western Christianity has seen the emergence of new expressions of Christian faith, as well as new theological insights. You might remember that the notion of contextuality, or contextualization, was introduced by the Taiwanese theologian Shoki Coe in the late 1970s. In a recent article Wilbert Shenk argued that theology in the West had long lost its missionary direction, and the movement to develop contextual theology could only emerge within the non-western context, where its very existence and engagement is missionary.⁶ That is partly because it exists as a minority or persecuted faith, it is always conscious of its missionary responsibility – the kinds of things that a Christendom mentality precisely undermines or stifles. In contrast, many American Christians today find themselves walking in the assumption that they live in a Christian country.

In fact, this explosive growth in the non-western world has also created an identity crisis within many major denominations. If Nigeria has the most Anglicans, what does that say about what an Anglican identity is? By 1994, over half of all Mennonites were to be found outside Europe and North America. Africa alone, according to Shenk's assessment, which dates back to 1999, has roughly 38%. In his book *By Faith They Went Out*, he makes the suggestion that a massive redefinition in Mennonite identity is called for. So you see that what is happening has profound implications for the future of the church, for our own self understanding, for our understanding of global Christianity, but also because it points to the fact that non-western initiatives, non-western missionary movements are shaping the contemporary world order. This now takes the form, predominantly, of a South to North movement.

What will the future of the Christian encounter and engagement with the wider

⁶ Wilbert R. Shenk, "Contextual Theology: The Last Frontier," in *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*, ed. Lamin O. Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 191-212, p. 193.

context be, given that it is predominantly now the faith of the poor and the powerless? What will the future be, given that the new centers of global Christianity lack the resources to duplicate the sophisticated machinery and structures associated with western initiatives? How will these new experiences and missionary initiatives frame missiological reflection?

These and other questions cannot be answered without giving detailed attention to contemporary migration movements – the way this movement is interacting with the shift itself. The point is: South to North migration coincides with the shift. For that very reason, it forms a taproot of the non-western missionary movement in which Africans play a significant role. For that reason, it implicates the West as a new frontier of global Christian expansion. It is precisely because of the claim of being Christian for so long that the West is now one of the most challenging mission fields in the world. If you want to put it simply: there are so many distortions of the faith, that many people are immunized to the real thing, or, they assume that they have it already. So out of the South is emerging a new movement.

Estimates of the percentage of international migration which takes the form of South-to-North flows vary from 10 percent to 40 percent. In fact, a significant proportion of international migration takes place *within* the South; though some of this South to South movement ends up in the North. In other words, South to South migration is a step in the process that leads to movement to someplace in the North.

Britain's biggest church, attracting 4000 worshipers every Sunday, is headed by Matthew Ashimolowo. He is now embarking on plans to build the largest church in the country, in terms of seating capacity. The largest church in Europe is headed by Apostle Sunday Adelaja. It is in Kiev, Ukraine. The church is predominately Ukrainian. Adelaja is Nigerian.

We need to pay attention to this new immigrant movement in order to begin to see the new shape of global Christianity and its missionary potential. But we also need to pay attention to this missionary movement as missionary thinkers and leaders and executives in the North, because the conversation has now shifted to partnerships, and networks and collaborative endeavors. We will be very limited, even defunct, if we do not realize that already, within our own backyard, we have huge resources that we can use as we begin to rethink mission in the 21st century.

Global Christianity - Being Called, Being Sent

Christianity is the most global faith because it is the ultimate local religion. You might say it is the ultimate tribal religion. It is the most translatable faith. The world that our forbears, especially European forbears, imagined at the beginning of the western missionary movement, and well into the 20th century – that world has changed. It is no longer a world where mission is the prerogative and preserve of a particular people. There was a time when that was true, and thanks be to God that those for whom it was true, took that mandate seriously, and often paid tremendous sacrifices to live up to that mandate.

It is amazing to me that some 2000 years ago, John in Revelation, standing at the beginning, would see the end. That on that day when we praise and worship and acknowledge this great plan of salvation and redemption, it will be people of every tongue and tribe and nation. We are in a moment – I think this is one of the critical moments in the history of Christianity – we’re in a moment where yes, we can say we have people of every tongue and tribe and nation, acknowledging the faith. But where we seem to stop short is making the missionary reflect fully that reality. And when it does, Christianity, our witness and impact is going to be such as nobody has dreamed of because it will no longer be the responsibility of one tribe; it will be people of every tribe and nation. This is what Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako captured when he observed that by becoming a non-Western religion “Christianity has also become a true world faith”.⁷ If it has now become a more truly world religion, imagine what the future might be if this truly world religion is allowed to live up to its truly missionary capacity. That’s the vision that, I think, we ought to capture in our day and time.

The western missionary movement was shaped by a number of significant factors and influences, reflecting the environment out of which it emerged, reflecting the socio-political and economic landscape that gave it life and meaning. Two of those elements were the empire and the Enlightenment.

Empire and Mission

With regards to empire, we cannot get away from the fact that the western missionary movement coincided with the colonial expansion of Western Europe. We have to admit that the current global presence of Christianity would be inconceivable without empire, or colonial expansion. Would the western missionary movement have achieved its extent and have had the impact it did without western colonial expansion? Unlikely. So at this point, one might be forgiven for thinking, within the parameters of recent historical experience, that missionary enterprise (intentional Christian witness linked to the spread of the Gospel and the extension of God’s kingdom) is well nigh inconceivable without political and economic dominance.

We must remember that the word “mission” emerged out of this colonial experience or project. It was first used by the Jesuits, as they aligned themselves with the colonial expansion of Spain and Portugal. Protestant missions walked the same road, with a few exceptions, like the Anabaptists. Their efforts were solidly aligned with empire. In fact, Jon Bonk notes in his book *Missions and Money*, the massive economic power and material superiority of the West (in relation to the parts of the world typically designated “mission fields”) has been a crucial factor in the strategies and impact that have

⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 265.

characterized the western missionary enterprise in the last 200 years.⁸

This global expansion of Christianity was driven first from Britain. The fact that Britain was the world economic superpower at the time had a lot to do with the thrust and focus of missions. By the end of the first World War, Britain's eminence in missions was being superseded by American dominance precisely because America *also* succeeded Britain as the world's superpower. So the link between empire and mission, between economic and political dominance and global missionary preeminence has been preserved for 200 years. Actually there has been an intimate association between missionary expansion and imperial dominance for 450 years or more. That is the legacy we have, and that is the legacy which shapes much of our thinking, at least subconsciously.

If this is the way it has always been, then global Christianity today is in serious trouble. Because the shift we're talking about has seen the emergence of global Christianity as a predominantly non-western faith, predominantly the faith of the poor, the absolutely poor, and the powerless. If empire is necessary for mission, we are in serious trouble. But of course what this means is that there is something not quite right with this link, historically. As a matter of fact, historically the impact of missions had very little to do with empire itself. Empire made missions possible, but the vision, the focus and impact of missions had very little to do with empire. As a matter of fact, there is a sense in which the missionary project bankrupted Christendom, because there was no way you could export Christendom, and the missionary project exposed that. The real successes of the western missionary project came after the collapse of empire, after the colonization. Specifically in East Europe empire has not functioned well for missions. The mass conversions of the people the Romans described as barbarians took place after the collapse of the Roman Empire. So we need to bear this in mind as we reflect on the current challenges.

Enlightenment Impact on Mission

The second element to consider is the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment did generate a new focus on human ability and enterprise. This influence applied to Christian mission. The Enlightenment forced a new spirit of pragmatism that would pervade Christian thinking and transform the missionary enterprise. Quite simply, the Enlightenment changed thinking about missions so significantly that we often miss out on how we did it.

Remember that by the time of Carey, what most people did was pray for the salvation of the heathen. There are many reasons why the Reformers did not engage in foreign missions as we know it today. One reason was that they thought the Holy Spirit had done the work, and that the salvation of the world was the purview of the Holy Spirit. Under the impact of the Enlightenment, that thinking changed drastically. It was simply not enough to pray for the salvation of the heathen or to assume that mission was the responsibility of

⁸ Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money*. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 4.

the Holy Spirit. These were no longer credible postures in an age of tremendous human enterprise, in an age when science and technology were transforming human existence. Out of this was born what we typically refer to as the modern missionary movement. It stemmed from this new emphasis on human ability and the use of human means.

Among other things, of course, the emphasis in this orientation would lead to the birth of a plethora of voluntary societies and associations and provided a new framework for Christian mission. This emphasis on human initiative, on human ingenuity, on human skill – not to mention the full deployment of resources, including the latest technologies for propagation of the gospel – remains a major hallmark of the western missionary enterprise to this day. The basic cause for the formation of mission societies, which came from William Carey, was based on his proposal about the obligation of Christians to use all means for the conversion of the heathens. Carey got this idea not from Scripture, not from reflections on the church, but by observing the commercial trading companies of his day. And so was spawned the missionary society, which passed on the voluntary principle that would have a massive, transformative impact on world missions. Enlightenment optimism, Enlightenment emphasis on human enterprise, would all be tapped by this new movement to tremendous effect.

But we ought also to realize that the new program, with all its business like pragmatism, the voluntary principle and the missionary model that emerged out of it, had grave shortcomings. For one thing, it led to the emergence of exclusive ecclesiastical territories. In the words of David Bosch, “Mission was the road from the institutional church to the church that still had to be instituted.”⁹ Another shortcoming was a new and profound emphasis on statistics and record collecting. Missions, or the advance of the Gospel, became a numbers game. You measure success – again, a major Enlightenment preoccupation – by counting tangible things, such as numbers of baptisms, confessions, communions, new outposts and so on – at least to get the funding. Also out of this thinking, mission emerged as a one-directional movement. Western missionary enterprise would proceed under the assumption that the missionary traffic would move in one direction only: from the West to the rest. This has spawned one of those legacies that typically haunt our partnership initiatives because we are left with the particular legacy that one partner does all the giving, and the other, frankly, does all the receiving.

Finally, this new pragmatic model that was influenced by Enlightenment created what I think is the most profound flaw in the western missionary enterprise, which is a church-mission dichotomy. The emergence of the missionary voluntary society was in many ways a historical necessity. One reason why Protestant missions were so slow off the ground, compared to Roman Catholic missions, was because the Protestant movement that

⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 332.

emerged had no ready-made instrument for missions.¹⁰ The Roman Catholic Church had its orders that would simply function as a missionary agency; Protestants had nothing. Something needed to be invented. So there is a sense in which the missionary society was a historical necessity. But in the long run, the proliferation of missionary societies and agencies subverted the biblical concept of the missionary nature of the church. Because the missionary society emerged *outside* the church; it carried the mission of the church without very much input or interaction with the rest of the church. In fact, in many denominations, the local congregations have been reduced to an utterly passive role in mission. They see themselves as support providers. If they can turn up on missions Sunday, and make an apple crisp contribution, their commitment to missions is fulfilled for that year. This dichotomy between church and mission has become so entrenched, that you are hard pressed to meet Christians who think of missions as a function of the church, not for an elite cadre or of a specific group which sees that as their main calling and preoccupation.

The Crisis of Western Missions

This leads us to the current crisis of mission. Long before the progressive de-Christianization of the West became commonplace, there was a widespread acknowledgment among western missiologists that the traditional western missionary project was caught up in a crisis. There are many reasons for this crisis. Perhaps no other single event inflicted more damage on western, notably American, missionary confidence than the closing of China. The expulsion of all foreign missionaries when the Communists came to power in 1949 was an event that remains such a huge stain on the missionary heritage. Of course, the chief reason for the official Chinese animosity was the long-standing and deep-rooted conviction that western missionaries were ideological agents of an imperial power. And the propensity for American and other western missionary agents and agencies to employ military language to describe their activities did very little to allay these suspicions.

The China debacle was swiftly followed by the more widespread anti-mission, or anti-missionary attitude which accompanied decolonization and the rise of nationalism throughout the non-western world. In the wake of political independence, western missionaries became prime targets for criticism by non-western intellectuals and elites, who condemned western missionary complicity with colonialism. The methods, attitudes of superiority, structures of dependence, which had long characterized western missions, came to haunt the missionary projects in a very, very significant way.

Yet, the criticism came not only from non-western Christians. Christians and other movements in the West also became very vocal in their criticism of the western missionary enterprise. In many ex-colonies, particularly those where Christians were in the minority, missionaries were now denied visas, and refused re-entry, or visas were not renewed for

¹⁰ Cf. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Three Centuries of Advance: A.D. 1500-A.D. 1800*, 3rd ed., vol. III, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 25-29.

those already in the country. Relations between missionary societies and so-called younger churches in the non-West also became considerably strained, as the latter increasingly asserted their independence. So by the 1970s, a call for a moratorium on missions for a period of 10 to 20 years heightened tensions further. The crisis was developing into a storm. Charges also abounded from anthropologists, western journalists, political radicals, that European and American missionaries had aided the economic and political imperialism of their respective nations.¹¹

This anti-missionary storm has had a very complicated, but hugely negative, impact on western missionary efforts. Pervasive guilt, still evidenced to this day, has descended on the western Christians and churches, particularly in Europe. Lesslie Newbigin had this to say: “It’s no exaggeration to say that for the general public, at least in England, the reigning stereotype of the foreign missionary is of an arrogant intruder who talks but does not listen, a destroyer of precious cultures, a stooge of the imperialists.”¹² In fact, he goes on to give the example of clergymen in Birmingham, who regarded foreign missions as “the theological form of racism.” So there was a widespread paralysis in many parts of the western world about missions. Still today we have those well-meaning Christians who are deeply ambivalent about the whole notion of the missionary enterprise. Here in the USA it is difficult to say how much of an impact this robust criticism of the missionary enterprise, or of the historical western missionary project, has had on American thinking. Often I get the impression that there is an indifference, that there is no sense that we need to learn from the historical experience.

Here too we have had prominent, respected missionary thinkers who have criticized, not in a destructive sense, but given a healthy critique of the western missionary movement. Jon Bonk is an example, Ron Sider is another. Both of these leaders have pointed to the insidious problems created by the wealth gap within the American mission enterprise. They have pointed to the profound barriers posed to effective missions by the fact that the vast majority of western missionaries enjoy considerable economic and material superiority in the context in which they choose to serve. Interestingly, as it turns out, 78% of North American Protestant missionaries choose to serve in Africa, Latin America or Oceania – precisely the poorest areas of the world. Those Americans who go out as missionaries are not known to be wealthy like Bill Gates. There is a sense in which they come from the margins of their own society. But out in the non-western world, they are kings and queens; they can have 3-story houses and maids. Sadly, the problems enshrined in the massive economic disparity continue to be enacted daily around the world by youthful, short-term missionaries.

¹¹ Cf. Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: the Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 13.

¹² Lesslie Newbigin. *A Word in Season: Perspective on Christian World Missions*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), p. 177.

It seems to me that among American evangelicals there is a curious obliviousness, or indifference, to the negative impact that traditional methods and assumptions have had. This indifference is not about being blind; it's an unwillingness to learn about the mistakes of the past. It is an unwillingness to learn about the limitations or shortcomings of associating missions with empire, for instance. It is about the limitations and defects that naturally arise when you associate Christianity exclusively with a particular tradition, culture and its values. It is troubling to note the persistent and widespread assumption that the projection of American power is compatible with the spread of the Gospel. I get this a lot in my interactions with young American students. It is naïve to think that the antipathies evoked around the world by the projection of American power will not cast a shadow on well-meaning missionary engagement.

For reasons of unwillingness, shortsightedness or otherwise, even in this country there has been a serious decline in missionary interest, certainly within most mainline Protestant denominations. The impact of secularism is still an issue here, such as the erosion of church membership, Christianity's loss of altitude. Throughout the western world, the massive growth of other world religions, like Islam, and the sharp rise of religious plurality due to immigration in the West, have contributed to a possible angst in the pews about the uniqueness of the Christian message, about the missionary program. And at the very least, it has contributed to much theological confusion over the nature of mission and the demands of the Gospel.

A pervasive guilt complex has become somewhat of a feature of the contemporary missionary enterprise. I have strong reservations about this guilt complex in relation to missions. The western missionary endeavor, admittedly, is not without defects or failures. Certainly in my view, it was pervaded by an unacceptable paternalism, and with some validity, non-western Christians are now particularly sensitive to western dominance and control, and view western values with deep suspicion. But this guilt complex is questionable for a number of reasons. It seems to me that it is terribly inconsistent to applaud the growth and vibrancy of non-western Christianities, and at the same time express profound regret for the missionary movement that contributed to its emergence. Also, self-indulgent contrition about the western missionary enterprise implicitly devalues the non-western experience to which it is irrevocably linked. There is a third aspect, where the debate about globalization perpetuates the widespread notion that the West is both the problem and the solution. The view being that since the western missionary movement caused all these problems overseas; such problems will therefore be solved if the western missionary movement pulls back, so runs the logic. In the first place, the problem with such thinking is that it makes huge unwarranted assumptions about the western missionary movement. It was powerful, but it wasn't *that* powerful – not to the point that non-western Christians were mere passive, inactive elements for whom everything was done. So therefore to correct the wrongs, the real actors in the drama simply need to change their own activities. Admittedly, that's not

going to have much of an impact on western Christianity. There are elements of the western missionary movement that need our attention, that need urgent review and rethinking, but this is not about pulling back. This is about a new understanding about what it means to be the body of Christ. This about a new understanding of what being global means. This is about a new understanding of drawing from the pictures painted in Scripture, pictures like that found in Revelation 7:9.

Development Projects

What are development projects? As traditional missionary models have declined, as there has been this decline in career missionaries provided by churches, educated at great expense in seminaries, and sent out by agencies at even greater expense, there has been a shift within many missionary agencies. Of course, the shift is also linked to radical changes on the ground. Westerners with badly needed skills or professions were typically the only ones allowed to stay, after western missionaries were either kicked out or denied re-entry. So a trend emerged in which missionaries would be sent out under cover of some expertise, such as medicine, engineering, education, and so on. Before you knew it, development became a euphemism for mission in many circles. Of course it was always tricky, because often this meant sending out missionaries out not only undercover, but under false cover. In more than one occasion this required visa violation in the name of the Gospel.

Now, my intention is not to condemn development projects *per se*, or to suggest there is no need for these kinds of enterprise, although in reality, often what the church embarks on as development projects are more efficiently undertaken by other secular agencies. My point is to say that the shift to development projects has largely left unanswered the problems of the western missionary enterprise. Let me read again what Lesslie Newbigin comments on this issue: “Christians in the West who have become embarrassed about sending evangelistic missionaries because this would be a form of cultural imperialistic, are enthusiastic about what is called development, which is precisely the export of western ideas and technologies to societies in Africa and Asia.”¹³ The development project doesn’t necessarily solve the problem within the western missionary enterprise – the problem of dominance, the problems of cultural superiority, the problems inherent in the view of missions as a one-directional activity and so on.

In fact, an article appeared in the January 2000 issue of the *Economist*, that described Christian NGOs as the secular missionaries. It was a wide-ranging critique of NGOs. The article went on to say, “Western NGOs are used to propagate western values in much the same way that Christian missionaries did in the 19th century.”¹⁴ It adds that relying solely on outside resources, they often promote western-defined solutions, which cause social disruptions underground. Furthermore, like western missionaries, they are prone to

¹³ Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, p. 181.

¹⁴ ‘Sins of the Secular Missionaries’, *The Economist* (29 January 2000), 25-27.

be self-perpetuating, refusing to disband or depart when the job is done. What I am saying is that this calls for fresh thinking about our involvement – not a pull-back from development, but a fresh assessment of the assumptions, and certainly the biblical insights that *ought* to inform the missionary enterprise. Development and relief agencies might be a nice transition from older models, but they have left the old assumptions and the old problems largely intact.

Short-term Missions

This is perhaps even more clearly a product of the processes of globalization. Major breakthroughs in communication technologies, the disparities in wealth between North and South, have allowed many mission-minded churches in the North to act as their own mission agency. Out of this has emerged short-term missions. This model typically involves sending groups of young people to third world countries from 1 to 3 months, sometimes even from 6 months to a year. More often than not, the focus is on participation in some kind of development project – like building a well, helping in construction, and so on. Again, it can include evangelistic activities and sharing experiences within the life of the church. In any case, short-term mission is now used as an umbrella term to describe the missionary enterprise that falls short of the career, or the full-period of 2-4 years.

Since the 1970s, the percentage of short-term missionaries has grown phenomenally. In Britain, short term missions have grown from 5% in 1976 to a peak of 30% in the early 1980s, but it appears to have declined since, to more like 15% today. In the USA, however, short-term missions remain on a popular high, and estimates suggest hundreds of thousands go on short-term missions every year.

Many of these efforts are praiseworthy. Some of these are very diligently prepared and thought through, include input from experienced missionaries, and are based on long term partnerships and relationships with other churches. A wholesale condemnation of the practice would be unfair. But this is a model with significant problems in my view. First is the enormous financial outlay usually involved. I know of one particular instance in which each person going on this short term mission of 3 weeks needed to raise up to \$3000, partly because it included an idea where everyone needed to get their own bike. This is a lot of money. But a more widespread problem, is that short term missions often amount to little more than religious tourism. That the travel experience, the opportunity to visit another culture, are often major – if not overriding – aims, and mission in that sense becomes largely a pretext.

But then again, it does not solve the assumptions, the problems that have led to the crisis in the first place. By and large, short-term missions have left completely unchanged the biblical notions of church and mission that have been part of western missionary thinking. Short term missions preserve that one-directional, territorial understanding of missionary engagement, which sees mission as something “out there.” The fact that the

church in many of these target areas or mission fields have more dynamism and spiritual vitality is often overlooked, because the superior economic resources often allow individual Christians to travel, to pursue what they call “missionary vision” and make claims of missionary achievement. All this is often done in a way that ignores or minimizes the long-term witness and arduous contextualized efforts of the local church they’re visiting. When it comes to evangelism, short-term missions often represent what I call “hit and run” evangelism: in for a few days and out.

Career missionaries are even more critical of short-term missions than I am. How much impact can any group of foreign travelers make in 3 weeks or 2 months, given linguistic and other cultural barriers (however “minimized” by the cosmopolitanism of many cities in the south)? Most seasoned missionaries know that it takes time to cultivate the kinds of relationships, understandings, and openness that makes relationships and missionary engagement effective. Marshall Allen suggests that short-term missions is a form of “benevolent colonialism,” because it often has healthy aims and objectives yet ends up imposing what he calls “unneeded good.”¹⁵ Usually the motives are pure. Many young people want to serve in ministry, and career missionary options are becoming not only problematic but in sharp decline.

What determines what we do when we go? Sometimes, but not often, it is realized that short-term missions are of greater benefit to those who travel, to those who go, not the target community. Sometimes this is recognized and short term missionaries can come back with new insights, share experiences, enlarge the vision of their own communities and many missionary leaders tell me that eventually it is these short-termers who end up making a serious commitment to long-term missionary vocation.

But there are many other ways in which this model is problematic – the lack of training, the inadequate strategies involved, all of which impoverish the approach. Again, career missionaries complain that short-term missionaries come in and undo in a few weeks a lot of the good work and relationships they had cultivated over the years.

So what is the correction I have in mind? I’m not here to suggest what short-term missions ought to be like. I am not suggesting a withdrawal from what is called “foreign missions.” Nor do I want to downplay or devalue the historic contribution that American Christianity has made to the global spread of the Gospel. Even now the U.S. provides more missionaries in sheer numbers than any other country; as percentage of the population it’s down in 60th place or so. But in sheer numbers, and that is an important point, because it reflects a deep and enduring missionary consciousness within American Christianity. But if a fresh assessment of the global missionary landscape helps us to abandon outmoded models, then we should do so.

¹⁵ Marshall Allen, “Mission Tourism?”, *Faith Works* (July-August 2001), 8-10, p. 9.

Openness to Non-Western Mission Initiatives

In many other global aspects, many American Christians, if they are aware of it at all, struggle with the notion that the West, America is now a vast missionary field that must reckon with a missionary outpouring from the non-western world. Many American Christians, if they are aware of it at all, struggle with the notion of being on the margins globally, of existing as a church that is in exile. I want us to remember that being in exile is a very familiar biblical metaphor. It has never precluded the mighty work of God. The notion that Christianity is in exile, or on the margins, can be very uncomfortable if you're used to thinking in Christendom terms, in terms of American power or economic resources, or if you bought into the public rhetoric or political vision which sees the American nation as having a Christian responsibility in the world.

So many struggle with the notion that, far from being objects of the missionary enterprise, non-western churches are now a major force in the spread of the Gospel around the world. Here is what two authors, one of whom is Bill Dyrness at Fuller, have to say: "The door is slowly but steadily swinging shut on North Americans, who are reluctant to recognize that the two-thirds world and its churches now lie at the very center of world missions' influence and initiative. The need now is to come alongside in a spirit of partnership and submission, participating where we can in an enabling and facilitating manner, to help increase the impact of all that God is doing in this era."¹⁶

In my mind, outmoded notions and models of mission continue to undermine an effective missionary enterprise. It is still common to encounter American Christians who associate Christianity with American culture. It is also common to encounter Christians and believers for whom the dichotomy between church at home and mission abroad persists. In fact, it seems to me that many western Christians are actually amazed at the spiritual intensity and vigor that characterizes non-western Christianity. Which tells you that it has taken so many unawares, and it has wrong-footed so many missionary thinkers and leaders. A part of this has to do with secularism as well. Meic Pearce observed in a recent book that "even consciously committed religious believers in western societies live highly secularized lives and do not, in fact, spend nearly as much time in religious devotions or in hedging their actions and decisions with religious criteria and concentrations as does even a very average devout but non-westernized Muslim in an Islamic country."¹⁷

So what of this new non-western missionary movement? What are its critical models, what is its potential impact, what lessons might be learned from it, and what lessons might it learn from the movement before it? I have been studying the non-western missionary movement for several years and I've been amazed at the nature of this

¹⁶ J. F. Engel & W. A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where have we gone wrong?* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 21.

¹⁷ Meic Pearce, *Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage* (London: SPCK, 2004), 42.

movement, the shape it is taking, and the dynamism it reflects, often in the face of considerable odds.

Mission and Migration

The defining element is migration. Migration has always played a critical role in global Christian expansion. Cross-cultural breakthroughs in the book of Acts, the conversion of northern European peoples, even the western missionary movement itself, all were part of significant migration movements. A major reversal of the missionary enterprise is underway now, again, because of the strong link between migration and mission in the history of Christianity. Before 1925, 85% of all international migrants originated from Europe. Since 1960, Europeans are contributing an increasingly small fraction of international migrants. Overwhelmingly the flows have been from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

What this means is that the new direction and dynamism of international migration coincides with the shift. Migrants are moving from the new heart lands of Christianity to the old centers where the faith is experiencing dramatic erosion. This has huge significance because every Christian migrant is a potential missionary; that has always been true, always been part of the nature of Christianity. Where are they coming from? Africa, Latin America and Asia. Africa is not a hard choice to concentrate on here since it is the only aspect of the enterprise I know enough to talk about. As you may know already, the largest church in the world in terms of seating capacity, Winner's Chapel in Nigeria (which seats over 50,000). The fact that Africa and African Christians are prominent in this movement is hardly surprising. Since the 1970s, the volume of African migrants has risen dramatically - escalating conflicts on the continent, brutal regimes, economic collapse have induced massive displacement of peoples. Africa has more refugees than any other continent, and the majority of its migrants are to be found in West Africa. This is significant because a great proportion, if not the majority, of African Christian migrants in North America and Europe are West Africans. Of course, predictably, these south to north movements draw on colonial ties and in many cases on ex-missionary links. And so Europe has shown much earlier the nature of this movement, as the volume of African migrants in Europe has increased from the 1980s. The number of African Christians on that continent are thought to be in excess of 3 million. In Britain, the European country with the longest ties to modern African Christianity, African churches account for up to 3000 congregations.

Perhaps the most spectacular example of an African missionary initiative is that of a young Nigerian pastor, Apostle Sunday Adelaja. He left his home country in 1986, when he was about 20, to study journalism in the former Soviet Union - in Belarus, to be precise. He had converted to Christianity only a year before he left Nigeria. Much later he would describe his move to the former Soviet Union in terms of the divine call which came in the form of an Abrahamic commission, Genesis 12:1: "Leave your country, and go to a land I

will show you.”¹⁸ In Belarus, Adelaja became part of an underground church and embarked on an active Christian ministry, which intensified with the fall of Communism. He survived repeated clashes with KGB officials until his official deportation from Belarus opened the way for a new life and ministry in Kiev, Ukraine. There, in Nov 1993, he started a Bible study group in his apartment with seven people. Within 3 months, and with only 49 members, he registered this new body as a church, which would later adopt the name “Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations.” This name reflected Adelaja’s vision for a missionary church that would send missionaries into all the world, including China, and the Arab countries. This is the nature of the outlook that is now so much a part of an African missionary self-identity and thinking.

In Ukraine, Adelaja had conflicts with government authorities, including several attempted deportations and numerous lawsuits aimed at closing down the church. But over the next 10 years, amidst all these problems and struggles, the church grew spectacularly. By 2002, it had 20,000 members, making it the largest church in Europe. Plans for a 50,000 capacity building are currently underway.¹⁹ But by then, it had established over 200 churches outside Ukraine, in countries of the former Soviet Union, the United States, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Germany and Holland. The church in Kiev boasts numerous ministries, including soup kitchens and a drug rehabilitation centre, and other forms of media production. It is now a significant presence in Kiev, partly because the mayor is among its members. It reports that 1 million Ukrainians have been converted to Christianity as a result of its ministry.

What explains this success? Unlike other churches, this is a predominantly Ukrainian church. When he got to Ukraine, as part of the Soviet culture, Adelaja encountered what you might describe as a massive spiritual vacuum. There was an untapped hunger for truth, you might say. When he started his ministry, it soon became clear to him that he wasn’t going to have much of an impact with traditional methods. God opened his eyes that the people he should target his ministry at were those in the margins of society: the drug addicts, the prostitutes, the poor, the wretched and so on. In the history of Christianity, this has often been a winning formula. I know we are familiar with missionary structures that reflect movement from areas of economic dominance to areas of poverty, and that also has met with successes. But throughout the history of Christianity, mission has often reflected those on the margins reaching out to those on the margins. This non-western missionary enterprise is largely characterized by this outlook and initiative. And if you read his testimony or stories of this church, you will begin to understand the growth, because he was targeting gang members; he was targeting those who no longer had a stake in wider society; he was targeting those who had been the dispossessed, including at least one major mafia

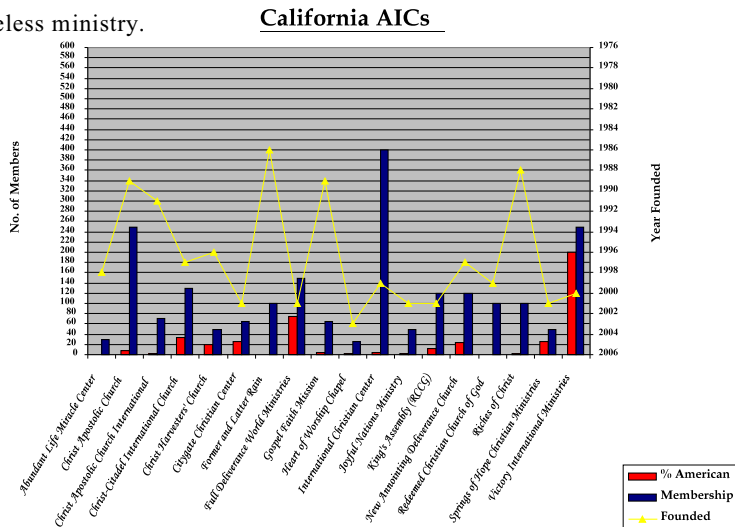
¹⁸ Cf. Sunday Adelaja, “Go to a Land that I will show you”, in C. Peter Wagner & Joseph Thomson (gen. eds.), *Out of Africa*. (Ventura: California. Regal Books), 37-55.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 52-53; see also the church’s website, <http://www.godembassy.org/en/embassy.php>

leader. That explains something, that tells us something about the context in which we're finding ourselves.

In the USA the number of African immigrants has been rising steadily. In sheer numbers, more Africans are landing annually in this country now than at any other time in its history, including during the slave trade. In fact, one scholar suggests that Black Africa will likely be the last source of new Americans.²⁰ By the way, the vast majority of African immigrants come from English and French-speaking West Africa, with Nigerians in the majority. Various estimates suggest they are closely followed by Egyptians and Ethiopians, in terms of numbers.

Two kinds of initiatives characterize the movement in this country, namely informal, individual initiatives and church-centered, or formal, initiatives. A good example of individual initiatives is the International Christian Center in Los Angeles. Pastor Oladipo Kalejaiye studied law, obtained a Ph.D in international law from the University of Hamburg, and came to USA in 1996. He started a house fellowship in 1999, and this church now has 400 members strong. They recently bought a \$1.8 million property, again in the city of Hawthorne in Los Angeles, the plans include a sports centre, a gym, after-school programs and a homeless ministry.



The above chart shows the nature of non-Western mission initiatives in America. This data is confined to the churches in California. Let me tell you how to read it: the yellow lines tell you when the churches are started. So if you look at International Christian Centre,

²⁰ Joel Millman, *The Other Americans: How Immigrants Renew our Country, our Economy, and our Values* (New York: Viking, 1997), pp. 179, 192.

it was only recently started in 1999, and the red shows you the number of Americans in the congregation, whether black or Anglo-American. So you can see for now, it's a very mixed picture, but the cross-cultural outreach is minimal. I can tell you this is one thing that is exercising the minds of most pastors; they're thinking very urgently and seriously about ways of impacting society beyond the African constituency. You can see that reaching Americans has nothing to do with how old the church is. Often it's a function of area, and most of these are based in downtown and low-income areas, and often also a function of the particular pastor's own dynamism and ministry focus.

An example of former ministries would be Church of Pentecost, Ghana, headed by Apostle Michael Ntumy. Founded in 1937 by an illiterate Ghanaian pastor, it has since emerged as one of the African-initiated churches, and has now grown into a cosmopolitan, very sophisticated outfit. In 2004, I attended a major Church of Pentecost international missions conference held in Ghana that drew members from all over the world. This church has missions in 45 countries. At the conference I attended, most of the speeches were translated simultaneously into French. The first Church of Pentecost assembly in America was established in 1979. Currently there are 70 churches (or assemblies) in the USA. One of the data records shows that they had 506 converts in 2004. Total U.S. membership is over 9,000, and of course, worldwide – not including Ghana – they have over 1700 churches, including countries in Europe. Total membership worldwide, just adults, is over 800,000. This is a church that started as a very small break from the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria about 70 years ago.

The church of Pentecost is highly structured, where everything is directed from a specific centre. They send missionaries to specific places in the world. There is one instance where they had a vision that God was pointing them to Australia, they identified the missionary, got him a visa, sent him to Australia to spy the land. He stayed there for six months, and three years later they had seven churches in Australia. The main church in Sidney, at last count, had about 160 members (including both locals and missionaries).

Methods and Strategies of Non-Western Missions

Many questions about the assumptions, models and so on that will characterize this movement will not be answered for some time. But as you can see, in terms of the scriptural mandate, it varies. The Great Commission is still there somewhere, but individuals have been called through very different scriptural texts. Sunday Adelaja's was Genesis 12:1. Apostle Ntumy, when I interviewed him, said the key missionary text for him was Acts 16:9, which he got in a vision. Acts 16:9 was actually used in the earlier stages of the western missionary enterprise, particularly in the early 18th century. In fact, it influenced early missionary efforts in this country - 'come over and help us'.

There are some distinctive elements of non-western, south-to-north missionary movements – distinctive compared to the earlier movement. First, of course, the notion of

Christendom, a political religion or territorial faith is completely absent from this movement. Indeed, it is the experience of colonial subjugation, rather than colonial domination or cultural superiority which shapes attitudes within the movement. Relative poverty and political powerlessness rule out structures of dominance or control. If you want to see the three self mission principle in operation without all the controversy and struggles that accompanied the western missionary movement, take a look at any of these churches. The director of missions [in Apostle Ntummy's church] was telling me that in Italy, where they have a number of churches, the view toward Africans is very negative. Africans are seen as clingers, much the same way as we, at least in California, tend to see Mexicans. A church led by Africans would not draw Italians, so the strategy in Italy is to hand over to an Italian as soon as possible. That's a major approach in many of these churches. Of course, there immediately are turnovers to self-control. They are also self-supporting, self-propagating. And the irony is that many of them, because they are based in the West, quickly have the kinds of resources that allow them to send money in the opposite direction, rather than waiting for support from home. Multidirectional in scope and direction, the whole world is conceived as a mission field. Nigerians are happy to go to Kenya, and Kenyans are happy to return the favor. South Africans will go to Guinea, and Guineans are happy to return the favor. There is no sense that we are the sending area, we are the church, the mission is out there. It is multi-directional and every single one of them would affirm this aspect of the Great Commission, that it is into *all* the world.

The movement is also characterized by an intensely spiritual worldview. In the data I've collected so far, almost all these churches have at least one Friday all-night prayer meeting a month. In some churches, the Friday night meeting attracts even more people than Sunday. Most of them would have at least 40% attending a mid-week Wednesday night meeting. It is also a decidedly church-based initiative, unlike the missionary movement where the voluntary society or mission association emerged alongside the church or as a para-church entity. This is a church-based initiative; it's churches taking initiative in sending and focusing on establishing or growing more churches. It is completely church-centered in its engagement and orientation, exemplifying New Testament patterns and models more closely, including emphasis on spiritual power, deliverance, healing and fasting. House churches and tent-making ministries are often indispensable for visa reasons – one is sometimes referred to as a lay apostolate, meaning that often the pastor has another job – and informal and invisible structures.

It is not all rosy, and I don't want to give you that impression. For instance, the issue of autonomy often causes severe problems. One problem is divisions, in which everybody has a vision and wants to start their own church. Another problem is poor accountability. A pastor sets up shop and has a flourishing ministry - who does he answer to? No one, except presumably to God or the Holy Spirit. As you can imagine, in many contexts, all kinds of temptations can entangle and trip up the leadership. For example,

abuse of money - at least one church I know of ended up in court because of financial issues. But for every one of these problems, what you also have is a flourishing, dedicated, committed missionary project that sees the West as a mission field. I urge us to think of our own missionary engagement and methods in terms of this diversity, in terms of networks and partnerships that would include this new movement. We can sit back and decry the crisis, the drying up of funds and resources and so on, but I believe that in every age the spirit of God provides enough resources for the task that he has called his church to. For us it often means rethinking old habits, opening ourselves, allowing God to open our eyes to new kinds of opportunities and ways of doing business. Always everywhere, we who are called are the ones who are sent. Regardless of what organization you work with or for, the ultimate sending – the ultimate sender – is God.

Discussion: After several questioners addressed the theme of American empire, related missiological questions were: “what is responsible mission leadership, given the picture, the themes, you’ve given. What should our roles look like given the realities we have been discussing? That was followed by the question “what is the role of a group of churches that are historic peace churches, how does peace interface with these trends?” We conclude this article with excerpts from Hanciles’ responses:

Toward a Missiology of Peace

Observing how minimal was Evangelical debate about the implications of empire, Hanciles remarked: There is much ambivalence. I think Americans are quite loathe to associate their own activities with empire, and have no desire to have an empire, when the reality looks very different outside America... here we’re looking at an empire that, in its self-understanding and outlook, is very militaristic. In fact, it sees military superiority as key to its ethos and vision and project. That is interesting. One last point about empire is the assumption affirmed in public rhetoric that you need this military presence to provide peace, defend human rights, and defend freedoms. That is historically unusual. The Cold War was not won through military conquest. The world went into proxy wars as in Cuba and Korea, but the Soviet Empire, the Communist Empire crumbled under its own weight, and the weight of its own internal contradictions. It did not succumb to militarily-imposed solutions.

So from a mission point of view, we need to start this conversation. I cannot believe the naiveté of Christians who think the extension of American power favors mission. We think in terms of Christendom, we think in terms of using resources, we think in terms of the white man’s burden, of our responsibility to spread our way of life. We think in terms of the resources we have as the thing which everybody else desires – and America is not the first nation to think that way. So we need to start that conversation. Empire does not serve mission very well...

I would put myself in a false position if I were to suggest that I can tell western

missionary leaders how they should respond to this. Because I don't think there is one response, one particular way in which we ought to act or react. What I've suggested all along is the need for a rethinking of the assumptions, of the models, of inherited structures, and so on. If our missionary effort would reflect the diversity of the global church, what a missionary effort that would be. So for me, that means a new appreciation of networks, of partnerships, a new understanding of our identity as a body. I firmly believe that in every age God provides the church, that is the global church, with all the resources it needs for mission...

No mass movement in history has ever been led by a foreigner. If you want to understand the nature of western missions, we need to have a very balanced, a very accurate understanding of the missionary role. We don't go there and accomplish things. There's a reason why Paul said "one man sows, another man waters, it is God who gives the increase." We are busy counting souls, trying to make reports that reflect secular notions of success, and maybe that is necessary up to a point. But we have created some very problematic understandings of mission that are the basis of the guilt. It is not guilt that we need, so much as a sense of repentance for past wrong, and a new attitude of reconciliation, a new attitude seeking to work with others – correcting our methods, our sending structures, our assumptions. Guilt in itself points to the same attitude of superiority. That is why it ultimately suggests the West is both the problem and the solution.

We cannot escape the fact that peaceableness has always been one of the key outstanding aspects of the Christian message. It is written into the DNA of Christ's church. It is what we are called to be, in fact, as a primary form of witness.

I made myself a promise that when I came I was going to throw this out as a challenge [to Mennonites]. One of the things we need to begin thinking about seriously in the contemporary context, as part of the missionary challenge, as part of rethinking missionary engagement, is a missiology of peace. What would it look like? Now I understand peace not simply in terms of nonviolence (which is good), not simply an absence of military involvement (which is good), I think of it also in terms of making peace.

There is one element that is key to making peace, and that is always the element of reconciliation. Often in our focus on evangelistic efforts, in simply winning converts or enlarging our church or denomination, we overlook that reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel. It's not only about God reconciling man to himself, it is about reconciliation between the generations; it is about gender reconciliations. When I read Paul's letters in Ephesians and he's talking about the household and the husband and the wife, and so on, I think sometimes we run amok trying to figure out what he says. Is Paul a feminist, is he supporting the role of women? I think we're missing the point. Paul, in a sense, was recognizing that applying the Gospel in a real way to social life required reconciliation on a daily basis – reconciliation between husband and wife, reconciliation between parents and children, between the generations, reconciliation between those who control economic

power and those who don't have it (the employers and laborers, masters and slaves), reconciliation, obviously, between the cultures and the races. We overlook this, and many of our churches reflect the problem. Rather than depicting the testimony that models reconciliation, we are just simply a reflection of the same problems.

So thinking of mission in terms of peaceableness is one of the great challenges we face. Entering into that takes us back to the whole issue of global diversity of the church. It means that the real face of Christianity is an Israeli Christian and a Palestinian Christian walking together in mission – that becomes for me the Gospel living itself out even before a word is spoken.