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CHALLENGES IN MISSIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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1. Introduction

Missions as a discipline has changed dramatically in the last hundred years, especially for the evangelicals and Pentecostals. In the early 20th century, while missiologists themselves such as Roland Allen and Alice Luce were making inroads into missiological thinking, missionaries frequently had to transverse very difficult terrain and go great distances in order to go to their place of ministry. Further, the prominent role was the work of the pioneer going to countries or provinces where the gospel had not been preached before. From the mid-20th century toward the end of the 20th century, missiologists such as David Hesselgrave, Melvin Hodges, Donald McGavran, and Morris Williams (especially for the US AG) emphasized the developing partnership with the local 'indigenous' churches and the role of church planting. The emphasis was on the development of the church in various cultural areas and then 'partnering' with them and their members to evangelize the lost. From the end of the 20th century to the present another shift has taken place. This movement was noted by David Bosch as a 'shifting paradigm.' This essay presupposes this shift and focuses on the challenges found in missions in the future.

There are several aspects of this paradigm shift that I would like to highlight here; some will be described at length later in this essay. First, there are very few countries in the world that do not have some form of an 'indigenous' church. As such, the current missionary is not reaching a nation or people typically as a traditional pioneer, but rather reaching a town or area that does not have a church (or more typically that type of church). This move is from the 'pioneering' role to the 'facilitating' role as

the primary role of contemporary missions agencies.[1] Second, as such, the nature of partnerships with the national church, both within the nation of labor and in other fields of work has changed as the national churches have not only come of age, but they have also surpassed the traditional missionary sending countries in numbers of Christians (e.g. Jenkins 2002; Yung 27) and prominent theological perspectives.[2] Third, the natural developments of modernization have further changed the missiological landscape. Travel, communications, and affluence are dramatically different in many countries of the world than was the case just 50 years ago. As such, missionaries find themselves less then a day's travel from home (to return home at will), able to communicate quickly by telephone or internet, and able to buy food and other items that they are familiar with comparative ease. Thus, creating a very different mentality with the modern missionaries (including Asian missionaries—Pickard 43) , who do not have to really leave home the way the missions pioneers did—taking their coffin with them, and saying final 'goodbyes' before setting off for the field. Further, it is not uncommon to have missionaries shift fields multiple times during their missionary career, something that was less prominent in the past (although with notable exceptions—e.g. C.T. Studd). Fourth, and related to the third, the social dynamics of this globalization and somewhat related urbanization have impacted the 'missions fields' themselves. Some of the dynamics of which will be discussed below. Fifth, the rise of the mega-churches and the related functions of these churches (such as short-term missions trips) have likewise changed the face of contemporary missions. The impact of which while prominent is still on the rise. Sixth, the contemporary missiological emphasis to look into options on how to be a 'missionary' in a non-traditional missionary context, such as in a restricted access nation (RAN), and using non-traditional methods, such as business (e.g. a Great Commission Company). Seventh, with the prominent rise of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity (e.g. Guthrie 139-45), there are natural issues that will develop in its wake (one which will be discussed below). These and other factors such as the role of social concern in a holistic

[1] Note that this is not to say that all have embraced this change. Some agencies have pulled their missionaries from 'reached' areas to focus on 'unreached' (pioneer) areas (e.g. Shibley 175-9), while other agencies still use the pioneer rhetoric while functionally espousing a 'facilitating' role. This is also a problem when in the missions field the 'facilitating' model is in place, yet the prominent model presupposed by the supporters and fund raising is the 'pioneering' model.

[2] This is most notably seen in the non-Western Anglican bishops leading and succeeding in opposing Western Bishops in Lambeth in 1998 on the issue of homosexuality—e.g. Jenkins 2006; Yung 26-8.

gospel (e.g. Yung 29, 31-2) have a major impact on the current missions scene. The challenges of missions in the 21st century are thereby different from just a hundred or even fifty years ago.

It is not the purpose of this essay to make an exhaustive list of challenges that missions work finds itself in, rather I intend to highlight and discuss some of these challenges especially in reference to East Asia. My wife, an Indonesian Chinese and I previously worked in US home missions with International students in North America for four years, thereafter with our family we lived and worked in a RAN for 11 years; since then our family has been living in the Philippines. It is from this background that I will reflect on this topic and outline some key challenges that I have noticed over the last several years.

2. Globalization and Urbanization

As noted over 15 years ago in *Megatrends 2000,*[3] John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene highlighted the developing role of globalization and urbanization. Numerous other works have further emphasized this aspect in respect to missions (e.g. Escobar; Guthrie 157-66; Thomas 369-72; Woodberry 318). Today over 50 percent of the world's populations live in urban areas. (Nüesch-Olver 373) Urbanization can be seen in that one could fly from Beijing, to Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Los Angeles, or Manila, and eat at McDonalds, have a coffee at Starbucks, or even buy the latest U2 album from any of these places. Yet in these same cities, it is not uncommon to find multiple languages spoken from people from many nations. However, English can be used in the airports, and even while shopping at many places.[4] Coke and Coke Light (although called Diet Coke in some countries) can be consumed. The internet, satellite television, and other forms of communication has created a 'second oral culture' (Ong 135-8), but one that is universal. Through CNN, BBC World, or DW (Deutsche Welle), news from around the world can be immediately brought into our homes in real time. This globalization has brought both great

[3] Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990, 118-53; Early discussions about the developments that lead to issues of globalization and related issues were foreseen by Alvin Toffler (1970; 1980).

[4] This is the main reason why some missions agency have their missionaries learn English, both so they can communicate with fellow missionaries from other countries (from a different language group) and in order to travel and learn the language of the place of work (note that most language schools are geared for a English-local language set up).

opportunities and serious problems in its wake.

Whereas there has been a 'uniformity' that has developed globally through the urbanization of the world, there has conversely developed a growing distance between the cities and the rural areas. This disparity has exacerbated the divide between the wealthy and the poor. It is not uncommon to have the average farmers working for an annual wage that is considered to be a bimonthly wage at a low-level factory job of the cities. This has fed into a major influx from rural areas into the cities. For instance, in China, some watchers (e.g. Naisbitt 1996, 164-6; Sun) estimate that there was at least 100 million people of the 1.2 billion population by 1996 that had left the farms for the cities in search of employment (a much higher figure is true today). Which has an impact on both the farms with its loss of farming personnel and the cities with this massive influx of unskilled labor (with are large percentage as functionally illiterate); creating a situation of overwhelming unemployment (estimated to be about 268 million in China by 2000—Naisbitt 1996, 165; See also Sun). The issues of massive unemployment and poverty have further complications in missions. Certain cities (e.g. Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore) are both wealthy and expensive to live in, so missionaries from other Asian countries will find themselves dealing with budgets far beyond their home countries' norm in order to work in these places. (Pickard 49) So the disparity is not just within a country, but also among neighboring countries and within the Asia Pacific region.

This disparity is not just a separation between the 'haves and have nots.' It has become a divide of cultural proportions. It is not uncommon to have the urban dwellers to have more in common with urbanites from other countries than the farmers in their own country. For instance, an educated business person in Kunming, China or Bangkok, Thailand may be able to converse in some English (due to travels and internet) and will be versed in technology, automobiles, etc., speaks the national or at least the provincial language, and is used to the 'fast' pace of life, while the farmer in their own province may live in a village without water or electricity, nor have one car in that village, and the spare time of the farmer is spent talking, eating and dancing together with other villagers while speaking their local dialect. So in such cases, the urban believer finds himself/herself having to operate in a 'cross-cultural' capacity in presenting the gospel in ways not usually recognized, perhaps as big a chasm to cross as ministers/ missionaries from other countries.

Globalization has also brought out the issue of identity. Many have noticed that with the 'globalization,', there has been a similar rise of ethnic

or national identity (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990, 118-53). This can readily be seen in the French language question in Quebec and the splintering of the former Yugoslavia. In Asia, this ethnic (and/or religious) issue can be readily seen in Fiji, Sri Lanka, Ambon, and Timor, yet it is pervasive in the reinstitution of local dialects, customs, and self-designations. In many cases, this has developed into forms of 'fundamentalism' which are found in Hinduism in India, in Islam throughout Asia, and other religious and cultural ideological positions. The impact of globalization, urbanization and raising self-identity has and will continue to play a major role in the role of missions in this century. For instance, among the Hui Muslims in China, they commonly believe that if they become Christian then they will lose their Hui cultural heritage, in other words, their identity. So their identity plays an important role in their reception to the gospel in their context. (Gladney 1996; 1998)

3. The Changing Face of (Macro-)Partnerships

In the second missiological period from the mid-20th century to the end that century, the goal tended to be the development of 'partnerships' with either local churches or local believers (the difference tending to be based on denominational polity and missiological philosophy). However, the contemporary growth of missions from the majority world has created different dynamics than previously. First, it is not unusual to find missionaries from multiple nations but from the same denominational background working in the same field. Yet, in spite of doctrinal agreement, due to having a more congressionalist model (in certain denominational groups – i.e., A/G) without a central international headquarters, the missiological differences tend to separate and disperse efforts, so there is no concerted work. So, it is not uncommon to find multiple missionaries from the same denominational background from various countries working in the same city, but without cooperation or fellowship. Further along the same lines, when one group espouses the Indigenous Church Principle (ala Melvin Hodges), what should their response be when other missionaries 'dis-indigenize' the church, especially coming from the same denominational background? (Carter 1998, 75)

Second, with the raise of independent missionaries from mega-churches (some being independent churches) the emphasis tends to be on 'networking.' The usage of this term has caused confusion, since a clearly developed typology of 'networking' has not been utilized. This term meaning anything from 'networking' for referrals, and having a personal contact

(not necessarily friendship) to detailed partnership and full disclosure. This is especially a concern in a RAN where security issues are important.

Third, related to this is that there has been rhetorical statements about the possibility of Asians reaching Asians. Whereas there are some times this can be true, basically Asians like non-Asians have the same difficulties in working cross-culturally (the M1, M2, M3 model ala Ralph Winter). Further, some Asians are not received in certain recipient countries in the same ways as Western missionaries. (see Pickard 47; Wisley, 163) On the other hand, in some Asian RANs, Asians can do things that Westerns can not because of the ability to 'blend in.' This means that not only must we be mindful that any particular sending country or group will not be able to meet all the needs, neither will any sending nation, church or culture be able to reach all segments of all societies.

Fourth, probably the most difficult subject in developing these multi-lateral partnerships is the role of money. It is not uncommon to have monies solicited from wealthier nations for the support of missionaries from a second nation going to a third (called by some the 'internationalization of mission'—Woodberry 326). Whereas in and of itself this may not be a problem, however, the sending church although perhaps incapable of fully supporting the missionary must be an active part. The tendency is that church people have a stronger commitment to pray and go themselves if they also give. The real problem is the improper use of money which leads to foreign dependence by the national church and believers (e.g. Pickard 49; Roembke 167-186; Thapa and Knoble). Further, besides the issue of foreign dependence which has been shown to cause problems,[5] there is the issue of their witness since there can be a perception by the local non-Christian community that a person converts for money not because of other reasons (Thapa and Knoble 485).[6]

Fifth, with new missions agencies developing, from countries to mega-churches, there is a tendency to 'hear from the Lord ourselves.' Previous missiological mistakes and the history or contemporary situation are not taken into account. As such, there develops a frustration on the part of the veteran groups, either through the new groups not listening and repeating mistakes independently thereby wasting funds, energy etc. or the new groups 'doing their own thing' and causing veteran missions members to

[5] Note for example the 1966 forced pull-out of the missionaries from Burma, those Burmese ministers who were paid from foreign sources tended to seek other employment, whereas those who were self-supporting continued to work and the church has grown; (see Oo).

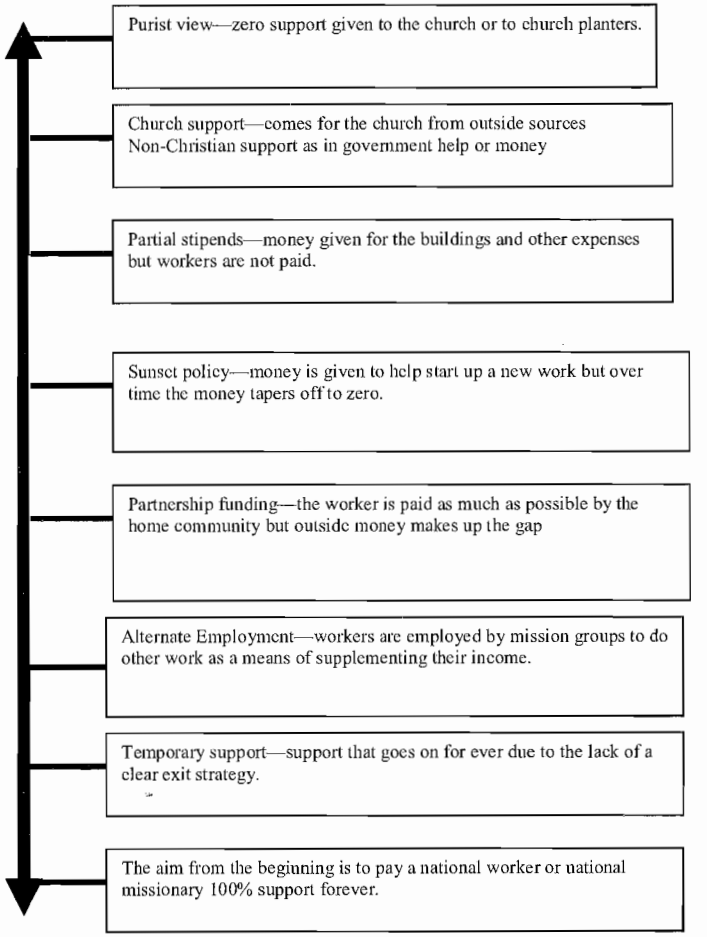
[6] More on the problem of money in concrete situations see below.

be expelled (e.g. a member of a new group who went track bombing in a RAN causing a member of a veteran group to be deported); thus, the problem of neither partnering by learning missiological history or by partnering today with others.

Part of the difficulty in understanding the dynamic of 'partnership' is that the term 'indigenous' has had a variety of definitions.[7] By implication, the definition of this term will likewise vary the actual understanding when a missionary uses the term 'partner.'

[7] See figure 1; This table was developed in a seminar that I attended in Chiangmai, Thailand on Oct. 3-7, 2005 with Alan Johnson on the topic of Advanced Missiology. The participants were able to identify a typology of 8 levels concerning the definition of 'indigeneity' especially in regards to money.

Fig 1: From the Self-supporting 'Indigenous' model to the National Worker 'Indigenous' model



4. Local Partnerships

Frequently, the older agencies have a mentality of seeing the 'national church' as either a child or an adolescent. (Pickard 50) However, it is increasingly the case that the national leadership is not just 'called' but is also highly educated and more than capable. From the national leadership perspective, there is a tendency that what a minister in his or her sending country would not preach or teach at their home because they were not qualified in an area, they feel free to preach or teach on the 'missions field' since it does not have to be same quality (this is implied and not stated). Furthermore, David Livermore has noted that "more than half of the national pastors were frustrated that the North American pastors talked about successful American churches with little awareness of many far bigger churches elsewhere." (461) Demonstrating both a lack of awareness of their own inadequacies for the task and an implied superiority. Likewise, these teachers assume since they are teaching the Bible they do not have to deal with other cultural elements such as the need for relationships and illustrations to clarify and legitimize what is taught. (Livermore 458-66) The problem is that the national churches and the ministers have 'grown up' while the visiting ministers still operate as if they are 'children.' More often than not, this problem does not necessarily stem from the missionaries or agencies themselves, but rather with the short-term personnel who come to teach in bible institutes, colleges or seminaries or to preach in seminars, conferences or churches. On the flip side, it is likewise not uncommon for certain ministers to become highly regarded in a country of ministry, only to have little if not negative notoriety in their home country.

This partnership should not be found only in funding or training, but also in the very decision-making process. The direction needed for future work and the strategies involved must be worked out jointly (note that that tendency is actually for the sending missions agency or the national church to 'call the shots'). (Pickard 50; Thapa and Knoble 484) This partnership should also be in regards to contextualization. A joint operation between the national church and the missionaries (the inside and outside views) are needed to be able to more clearly separate contextualization from the extremes of syncretistism or irrelevance. (Guthrie 101-111; Yung 32-34)

The discussion of the issue related to local partnerships can likewise been seen in what I will call the Colonial, Post-colonial and Contemporary era of missions. In the colonial period, the missionaries while pioneering were also on the side of power and exploitation (although not necessarily true, still perceived this way), and tended to see the national believers as

infants needing much help. Christianity was frequently equated with the powerful, the colonial powers and with money.[8] More recently, many of the older missions agencies find themselves in the 'post-colonial' era where there is an apologetic element to serving in the mission field, but there is still a sense of 'I am doing this for you.' Whereas Christianity is not necessarily seen as on the side of power, there is still as sense that the missionaries are seen as maintaining power, while articulating partnership and even being apologetic, but not listening to the 'true needs' of the field.[9] While, the 'contemporary' missionaries tend to see the local believers as peers, tend to listen (if they have a handle of the language), and tends to be more concerned about the use of money (especially those from North America) since they are afraid that the 'post-colonial' generation has inadvertently created an 'economic colonialism.' (see Livermore 458-66; Thapa and Knoble) Whereas new agencies tend to follow the 'contemporary' model, partially out of lack of funds and needing to maximize efforts and learn from the national leaders, older agencies find a clash of paradigms within their ranks.

One prominent issue has come to the surface concerning partnerships with nationals within some of the RANs. There are governmentally sanctioned churches (usually with theological or practical restrictions) and underground churches. So the question is 'which is the indigenous church to 'partner' with?' For some the official church emphasizes government approval but at the cost of not preaching certain things and not addressing certain issues, whereas the underground church is freer in this regard, but due to the lack of training they tend to be borderline (if not outright) heretical or cultish. Further, the question is whether there can be a true partnership since full-disclosure may not be an option for security reasons. How to maintain a legitimate partnership without sacrificing the safety of the missionaries and their agency, and putting the nationals themselves at risk?

5. The Rise of Short-Term Missions

In recent years, there has been a rise of short-term missions trips, not only from the traditional senders of North America and Europe, but many other nations such as South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia are also

[8] This can still be seen in some circles, although the true 'colonial' period is past (Bonnie Lewis 2004).

[9] The 'post-colonial' mentality therefore tends to overvalue or devalue the Western home countries (Livermore 463-4); Beth Grant follows a similar construction in reference to India (Grant).

participating.[10] As a whole, whereas there has not been a major increase in long-term missionaries, there has been a dramatic increase in short-term missionaries. (Mays 312-4) Issues of training and purpose are correspondingly important. In many cases, the training for the short-term personnel is non-existent or slight. As a legitimate need of short-term missions, the appropriate training—cultural awareness and sensitivity, spiritual guidance, clear articulation of the purpose—is needed.

For the majority of the time, the short-term missions trip is for the person going and not the field itself. This is not to minimize the importance of this trip. However, for most participants the end result of a missions trip is another missions trip. (Mays 312-3) Over the years, I have seen many such short-term missions teams travel to different countries, without working with a local church or missionary, so ending up creating more problems for the work there (e.g. a California church that built a Kingdom Hall in Mexico). Furthermore, David Mays has noted that some estimate an annual pilgrimage from the US of over a million short-term missions trips participants to an order of over 1 billion US dollars. (312) With these issues in mind, short-term trips must be intentional in its purpose. Some legitimate purposes for a short-term missions trip is for 1. seeing the needs first-hand to inspire prayer and giving; 2. to 'test the waters' to see about a long-term calling; 3. to help facilitate the long-term work of missionaries or churches in the areas (such construction teams and disaster relief); and/or 4. to come from an American or affluent context to 'consciencize' them to the majority worlds issues of poverty, hunger and other social issues to inspire action. (Freire; Johns) There are other possible purposes (e.g. discipleship of the youth—Mays 312), but each church, agency and group must prayerfully consider if these maximizes resources for the goal of missions.

Unfortunately, the tendency is not only to use missions support for short-term trips, but to include everything from evangelistic literature, to Sunday school outreaches, and home missions endeavors as part of the 'missions budget.' The effect is that the amount of money for the long-term missionary and related items is diminishing in proportion to short-term trips moneys and monies for home missions.[11]

[10] See Guthrie 85-92; and earlier Kane 371-84; On the trend in Asia see Castillo 99; and Pickard 43, 45.

[11] May 306-10; Wisley 162; Woodberry 329; Note that in one brochure that is on my desk which is emphasizing the need to support US home missions, it states that the US is the 3rd most 'unreached' country in the world. Is that accurate? I wonder what those from Indonesia would say about that. Further, what is their definition of 'unreached?

One of the problematic issues related to what was stated above, is the tendency for these short-term teams to stem from mega-churches or independent churches. While in and of itself this is not a problem, there is the issue that unless purposeful, these teams are not tied to those on the ground or are tied to 'networked' missionaries. Unfortunately, many missionaries who are 'networked' are more gifted in 'networking' than church planting, discipling or other typical missionary activities. It does bring up the areas of effectiveness. How can an independent church be able to 'legitimatize' the ministry of a missionary or a national without being a part of an agency? Further, there is a need for appropriate training and setting realistic expectations with teams from these groups. (Woodberry 328) This training should include an appreciation for the 'long-term' mentality of the missionaries and churches where they work. The natural bent is to emphasize the 'short-term' mentality which equates with quick results and instant numbers, but this can be counter-productive or very detrimental in the field of labor (especially in a RAN).

6. Focus on Restricted Access Nations

In recent years, there has been a rise of emphasis of missions work in RANs (also called Creative Access Nations—CANs). Whereas this has typically been discussed in terms of 'finishing the task' or the last frontier, there is also a 'mystique' in focusing on some of these countries (e.g. China). As such, some of these nations probably have more missionaries (although under different guises) than in any other time in history, including the colonial period. RANs provide both the importance of trying to go to the 'uttermost parts of the earth' and a different set of issues than found by missionaries in other countries.

One key area is the usage of money within the work of a RAN. There have been several times that I have found out that in the RAN in which I lived, money was given to the 'church.' Unfortunately, there was no cultural sensitivity or wisdom in its distribution. In one case, a 'pastor' solicited funds from 3 ex-pats (i.e. missionaries) saying that they needed to raise 50 percent from outside sources to build their church (a local policy), only to have all 3 each give the entire amount requested (totally 150 percent). Or for a well-meaning group, knowing that Bibles were purchasable within the country, gave a underground pastor a huge amount of money (more than he had seen in his whole life) to buy Bibles, only to have he and his family flee with the money to another part of the country to live off the money and have a ministry. Or of a Chinese worker at an orphanage who with ex-pat

contacts was raising money for each orphan, however, it was known to those close to the situation that each orphan had 4-5 supporters and the money went to two personal houses (note also that the Chinese who knew too much were fired). Whereas there is little doubt that there needs to be financial help for these churches, accountability and cultural appropriateness likewise needs to be emphasized. (see Thapa and Knoble)

With the rise of RANs as missions fields, the role of tentmaking has equally grown in prominence. (e.g. Gibson; Yamamori) Whereas as traditionally the emphasis was on the role of medical services or teaching English, various other venues such as teaching other subjects, professionals of various types, and other humanitarian efforts are increasing, (Pickard 46) and is becoming increasingly possible from within an Asian context. (Castillo 98; Donahue 76-7; Pickard 43, 46-7) Whereas tentmaking is a viable method of world evangelism, there are several potential pitfalls that need to be avoided like not having time, cultural awareness or language ability to 'witness' to local people, or having no support or fellowship network. (see Gibson 63-79)

The role of business or developing a 'Great Commission' company is currently a major topic in working within a RAN (Rundle and Steffen; Silvoso), although not a new one (the Moravians for one used this model previously—Danker). There is little doubt that using business to provide an inroad into a RAN has a strong potential; it should also be noted that there are also some strong issues that need to be addressed up front. First, most RAN governments watch the companies carefully and note taxes and revenues, as such the tendency to get a 'business visa' without the work involved will frequently lead to canceled visas or strong surveillance. Second, the need to appropriately balance a business with the Lord's work is not easy since the tendency is to either run the business without much ministry or to focus on the ministry and causing an integrity if not a visa issue. One possible way to deal with this is to have a team working together, at least one focusing on the business while others focusing on the ministry; so both can be emphasized. A third possible problem is that if the missionary is with a sending agency, some agencies use financial approvals as a means of guiding and guarding the agency's philosophy and accountability. If the business makes a profit, then it is possible that the missionary can self-fund projects without agency input. A fourth difficultly is that depending on the country and the local situation, a large sum of money may be needed upfront in order to officially start the company. So unless this capital is initially secured, then the potential of this avenue to enter a RAN is limited if not impossible.

7. The Marginalizing of the Christian Perspective

The tendency in modern literature and philosophy is to minimize the 'lostness' of humanity. Sin is no longer something to oppose, rather it is a syndrome to empathize with. (Mays 304-6; Woodberry 326-7) This is most notably seen with the rise of discussions concerning pluralism and the world religions.[12] This is especially true for the Western world, but within the Postmodern fragmentation and the demise of Christendom, Asia has found itself as willing vessels to imbibe the Postmodern framework with its multiplicity of perspectives and realities (or truths). (Paul Lewis 2000; 2002)

Related to the issue of the marginalizing of the Christian perspective is the search for relevancy.[13] The relevancy of the missionary model as well as the message is utmost in the minds of the current missionary. Whereas issues of contextualization are ongoing in debates and diverse in responses, the issues related to relevancy are in many ways harder to define and broader in responses. However, as an observation there seems to be a confusion (at least from the Western missionaries) merging effectiveness with efficiency. As such, I would likewise suggest that there is a tendency to equate relevancy with productivity. The problem is that productivity within a missionary enterprise tends to quantify people; perhaps feeding into the marginalization in the dehumanizing element of the search of relevancy. This is likewise seen in the current trend for some churches to evaluate missionaries by having forms filled and periodically submitted; frequently setting high standards, unrealistic expectations and unfair comparisons based upon their own or other fields 'results.' (e.g. comparing work in a RAN with those of a Catholic 'free' country) (Mays 310-2)

8. Animism and Pentecostalism

I would like to suggest that one of the major issues in the next decade will be the problem of people from an 'animist' background that become believers. Previously such new believers were guided in discipleship and training to understand the Christian worldview and perspective, typically with an emphasis on Evangelical standards of Bible training, appropriate education etc. However, with the development of the 'third wave' theology,

[12] From a more moderate Pentecostal perspective see Yong; while on a more conservative Pentecostal perspective see Carpenter 119-30.

[13] David Bosch varies missiological models with the attempt to be relevant. Bosch 349-510.

which gives greater theological latitude without the traditional biblical/ theological parameters of classical Pentecostal belief, the issue of animist believers becomes astute. A believer from the animist background can now comfortably accept the Christian 'points of contact' while safely maintaining the animist worldview. Further, prominent contemporary Charismatic/third wave beliefs such as 'territorial spirits' and 'generational curses' adapt readily to this animist worldview. As such, these believers find themselves expressing animist perspectives with a Christian and Pentecostal veneer.[14] This form and potential for syncretism will undoubtedly be a major challenge for the near future.

9. Conclusion

Whereas there is little doubt there will be many challenges in missions in this century that have not been discussed here, I have highlighted these as important for their impact and role in contemporary and future missions. The issues related to globalization and urbanization; the changing face of partnerships; the issues related to local partnerships; the rise of short-term missions; the needs of the Restricted Access Nations (RANs); the questions of marginalizing and the relevancy of the Christian message; and the issue of Animism related to Pentecostalism will all be challenges within this new century. While this list was not meant to be exhaustive; it was meant to promote discussion and thinking. Further, as these trends develop it is important for missionaries, missions agencies, churches and leaders intentionally and prayerfully look into these and other similar challenges and plan for the future work to do all we can to win the lost until He returns.[15]

[14] Hinted at by Henry and Ma, but not in these terms.

[15] I would like to thank David Hymes and Eveline Lewis for making comments on earlier form of this manuscript, and for the rest of the faculty of APTS, Alan Johnson and the seminar participants at Chiangmai, Thailand (Oct 3-5, 2005), and my fellow missionaries (especially in the RAN) who have discussed with me these and related issues over the years.

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