

Partnership Issues in Asian Mission

Issue 24 Editor: Jonathan Ingleby

This edition of Encounters re-presents the papers read and discussed at a conference held at Redcliffe College in April of this year (2008). The title of the conference *Growing Asian Mission Movements: Issues and Models for Partnership* speaks for itself.

Pride of place goes to Dr Patrick Fung's magisterial presentation on the contemporary situation in China, *China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities* (Article 1). As General Director of OMF International and a regular visitor to China, Dr Fung knows what he is talking about! As I said in my Conference response the lecture was a wonderful mixture of statistical analysis and personal experience.

The overall theme of the conference was 'partnership'. Robin Thomson looked at this from a South Asian perspective (Article 2) and Kang San Tang took as his starting point the spectacular growth of missions from East Asia and the implications for partnership with the West (Article 3). Patrick Fung provided some practical models of partnership in the Asian context and drew some theological and practical conclusions (Article 4) and Mark Oxbrow responded to the whole concept of partnership drawing on his own valuable experience in this field (Article 5). Jonathan Ingleby's response to the Conference – largely a plea for yet more research and reflection – is also included (Article 6).

As a fascinating additional contribution to the overall Asian complexion of this edition there is an article on Shusaku Endo's *Silence*, one of the most challenging books for the ethics of mission ever written (Article 7).

With a useful selection of book reviews, I think I can safely recommend this edition of Encounters to you.

Jonathan



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- [Article 1](#): **China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities - The Redcliffe Lecture in World Christianity, 2008.**
(Dr Patrick Fung, 7507 words)
 - [Article 2](#): **Asian Mission Movements from South Asian Contexts.**
(Robin Thomson, 3031 words)
 - [Article 3](#): **Who is in the Driver's Seat? A critique of mission partnership models between Western missions and East Asian mission movements.**
(Dr Kang-San Tan, 3060 words)
 - [Article 4](#): **Mission Asia: Practical Models in Mission Partnership - a summary.**
(Dr Patrick Fung, 2083 words)
 - [Article 5](#): **Mission in Partnership: A Response.**
(Mark Oxbrow, 722 words)

- **[Article 6](#): Reflections on a Conference: Putting partnership at the top of the agenda.**
(Dr Jonathan Ingleby, 640 words)
- **[Article 7](#): A Dilemma for Obedience: An analysis of Japanese Christian Ethics in Silence by Shusaku Endo.**
(Rev Shuma Iwai, 3431 words)
- **[Book Review 1](#): Just Walk With Me: A True Story of Inner-City Youth Work.**
(by Jude Simpson and e:merge; Authentic Media)
- **[Book Review 2](#): The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time by Tom Sine.**
(by Tom Sine; Inter-Varsity Press, USA)

Go to the Encounters website at www.redcliffe.org/encounters to read what others are thinking on the Discussion Board. Use the Voice your comments form to add to the debate.

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China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities

The Redcliffe Lecture in World Christianity, 2008



Author: Dr Patrick Fung, General Director of OMF International.

An unexpected challenge – a devastating snow storm

With high hopes for the Beijing Olympics, China started 2008 facing the worst winter weather in more than 50 years. Snow and ice had crushed houses, brought down power lines and crippled transportation across a wide swath of 10 provinces in central China. Hundreds of thousands became homeless. Millions were affected.

Culture joined forces with climate to compound the suffering. The Lunar New Year season witnesses the greatest migration of people on earth every year. This year, an estimated 10% of China's population, i.e. 120 million people headed home for the Lunar New Year. Worst hit were the Min Gong – migrant workers – millions of them from the poorer western provinces, employed in the eastern and southern seaboard factories producing 'Made in China' goods for the business markets around the world. With train services unpredictable due to atrocious weather and millions on the move, railway stations became crushing masses of humanity.

During this time, as many as 800,000 travellers jammed around Guangzhou (Canton) railway station. They could not make it home for the Lunar New Year family get-together, but their factory dormitories were closed for the holidays. Wen Jiabao, 'The People's Premier', visited the worst hit areas, urging calm, patience and hope, while calling on local leaders and factory owners to do all they could to alleviate the suffering.

What characterizes China is people, masses of people.

The study of Chinese people has always been challenging. Even though early researchers were aware that China had a large number of different tribes and peoples, there was generally no systematic approach to gather biographical data in the early 20th century. Some of the most influential research was a survey published by John Kuhn, a well known China Inland Mission missionary, who documented 100 tribes in the Yunnan Province in 1944.

Everywhere we kept finding tribes, many of whom we had never heard of, until our hearts were thrilled. On December 23 we tabulated the one-hundredth tribe! One hundred tribes in Yunnan! And two-thirds of these had never had a gospel witness.

In 1953, over 400 minority groups submitted to the Chinese government for recognition, of which 260 came from Yunnan Province alone. Since then many revisions have been carried out. In 1976, the State Council of the People's Republic confirmed 55 officially recognized minorities, comprising nearly 10% of China's population. Some of the largest minority groups include the Zhuang (18m) [1], Hui (10m), Tibetans (5m), Yi (8m), Uygur (9m). [2]

An unexpected joy - printing of 50 million Bibles

For many years, one of the greatest needs of the church in China was the supply of Bibles, the Word of God. Older believers still keep hand-copied Bibles which were very common in the 60s and 70s. However, Amity Press based in Nanjing celebrated recently the printing of

50 millions Bibles in China so far. The Amity Press, located in a 85,000 square- metre factory, in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, caters to the mainland's growing thirst for Christianity. It was only in 1988 that Amity began its first full year of production with half a million Bibles printed. By 2009 it will supply an estimated 25% of the world's new Bibles- and most will be for domestic use. Amity is a partnership between a Chinese Christian charity and the United Bible Societies (UBS). Of the 50 million Bibles Amity has printed so far, 80% of them, Chinese-language editions, are sold through official churches within the mainland for as little as 10 Yuan (Chinese dollar) a Bible. [3] Though a non-religious or non-church organization, Amity has done something remarkable for Christians in China. The factory, with a 600-strong workforce of mostly non-Christian locals, is printing Bible in 90 languages, ranging from Slovakian to a broad variety of African dialects as well as 7 Chinese minority languages, including Lagu, Miao, and Yi. [4]

The Director General of China State Administration for Religious Affairs, Minister Ye Xiaowen, made the announcement on Dec 8 2007 in Nanjing that "Bibles printed by the Amity Printing Company (APC) will be provided to participants in the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing." [5]

With so many Chinese Bibles printed, one may wonder where are all these Bibles going? There are 55,000 state-registered Protestant churches in China and at least 4 times as many house churches. The number of Christians in China is estimated to be between 50 million to 100 million. Certainly, the church in China is alive and growing.

The Chinese Christian Council is also preparing for the Olympics. It has commissioned a special edition of the gospel of Mark with Han Duan's picture on the cover in preparation for the 2008 Olympics. She is a member of China's Women's National Football team and is a Christian.

Turning back the clock- the arrival of the first Protestant missionary in China

The 2008 Olympic Games are scheduled to begin precisely at 8:08pm on August 8, 2008. The Number "8" theme is of course chosen with special intent. It is a number symbolizing hope and prosperity in the Chinese culture. A big digital clock has been placed at the Tiananman Square showing the count down to the start of the games.

If we turn back our clock 200 hundred years, Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, arrived in Canton on September 8 1807. As a matter of fact, the East India Company refused Robert Morrison passage on any of their ships bound for China or accommodation upon arrival, fearing that he would interfere with their unconscionable opium trade. Morrison set out on his mission of love, knowing full well he could not succeed alone. "Do you really expect that you can make an impression on the great Chinese empire?" a U.S. shipping agent asked him. "No, Sir. I expect God will," he said. As a trailblazer, Morrison spearheaded landmark work that others would benefit from and build on. He not only compiled the first Chinese-English dictionary but during his first 12 years in China, with the help of local scholars, Morrison also translated and published the first complete edition of the Bible in Chinese. [6] This was no small undertaking: no one had undertaken such an effort since the time Nestorian monks first came to China with the gospel 1200 years earlier.

While the overseas Chinese churches commemorated the 200th anniversary of Morrison's arrival in China with excitement and celebration, the official church in China did not demonstrate the same enthusiasm. A special symposium, entitled, "Symposium on the Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church." was held in Shanghai in November 2006, ahead of the Robert Morrison 200th year anniversary celebration. The conference was organized by the CCC/ TSPM. Participants included church historians, scholars, university professors and research specialists, altogether 150. It is important to pay attention to the speech by the President of the Chinese Christian Council, Rev. Cao Shengjie, who presided

over the closing ceremony. He emphasized again the importance of the three self principles, i.e. self-supporting, self-management and self-propagation. He commented that when Christianity first entered China, missionaries advocated that the Christian faith should replace or transform the Chinese culture. As a result, the Chinese church ideology and theology struck a "discordant note" with the Chinese society. He stressed that the Chinese church should take root in the Chinese culture and re-construct its own theological system.

Several important papers were presented at the conference. The strongest criticism of the early missionaries to China was the close connection between missionaries and companies that were involved in the opium trade. [7] Even looking at some of the early missionaries who were involved in medical work, including Dr. Peter Parker, the first medical missionary to China in the past 200 years, we see many were also key interpreters and negotiators for foreign governments in negotiating treaties with Chinese counterpart. This was partly because of their excellent language acquisition. Though most missionaries in those days vigorously criticized the opium traffic, very few however seemed serious enough to challenge the right of the British to compel China to open her doors. China was forced to give special privileges to missionaries obtained by force of arms of foreign nations. The opium trade, the opium war, the unequal treaties, particularly the treaty of Nanjing in 1842, made it harder for many Chinese to appreciate the love of Christ that had motivated many of these trailblazers including Morrison's perseverance and sacrifice.

The challenge of the Olympics

"One World, One dream" is the theme of this year's Beijing Olympic games. China certainly hopes that the Olympics will be a catalyst to continue its surge as an economic and global power. China is certainly going to show the world that she can do it.

To mark the seriousness of preparation for the Beijing Olympics, a panel of 13 specialists from the China Meteorological Administration, the Beijing emergency commission office, and other relevant units convened on October 19 last year to review the analysis of the potential meteorological disasters and hazards during the Beijing Olympic Games. The report included a study on the potential sources of weather-related disasters and hazards during the Games, an evaluation of these potential hazards and an analysis of the city's ability to withstand and control those hazards. According to the report, seven types of weather-related hazards may affect the Olympics: rainstorms, high temperatures, hail, high winds, dense fog, thunder and lightning, and haze. [8]

Determined not to let anything spoil the event, organizers of the 2008 Summer Olympics said that they will take control over the most unpredictable element of all -- the weather. While China's Olympic athletes are getting ready to compete on the fields, its meteorologists are working on the skies, attempting the difficult feat of making sure it doesn't rain on the Aug. 8 opening ceremonies. "Our team is trained. Our preparations are complete," declared Wang Jianjie, a spokeswoman from the Beijing Meteorological Bureau, addressing a news conference at the headquarters of the Beijing organizing committee in January this year. [9]

The Chinese are among the world's leaders in what is called "weather modification," but they have more experience creating rain than preventing it. In fact, the techniques are virtually the same. Cloud-seeding is a relatively well-known practice that involves shooting various substances into clouds, such as silver iodide, salts and dry ice, that bring on the formation of larger raindrops, triggering a downpour. But Chinese scientists believe they have perfected a technique that reduces the size of the raindrops, delaying the rain until the clouds move on.

Of course, we are reminded by Scripture that an ordinary man, like Elijah, prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land not for three and a half years, not just one day! Again when he prayed, the heavens gave rain. (James 5:16) So who is the ultimate weather modifier? Is it not the creator of the universe?

While China is busily preparing for the Olympics, churches from around the world also seem to be taking this unprecedented opportunity to prepare for outreach during the Olympics. However, there has been unhelpful high-level publicity about plans to evangelize at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Christian mission groups from around the world plan to defy the Chinese ban on foreign missionaries and send thousands of volunteer “evangelists” to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The level of enthusiasm does not necessarily match the depth of wise understanding. The Chinese tradition gives praise to those who are both “Yong”, courageous, and “Zhi”, i.e., Wise. Zealousness without wisdom often causes backfire.

In the past 12 months, the Chinese government have launched a massive expulsion campaign of foreign Christians, encoded Typhoon No 5. The campaign is believed by some to be part of the “anti-infiltration” efforts to prevent foreign Christians from engaging in mission activities. Whether this operation is linked with the Beijing Olympics this year is uncertain. Some of these workers had been serving in China for 15-20 years before they were asked to leave. This is probably the largest expulsion of foreign workers in the past 20 years.

It is important that we continue to pray for Christian professionals who have been serving in China long-term. Many of these are serving humbly in strategic places, making a significant positive impact on society, those who serve among the disabled, those in medical service, in vocational training for the youth, in teaching business ethnics, in poverty relief work, in AIDS prevention, to name but a few. Pray that they may continue to serve without hindrance. Pray also for the local churches. The spirit of the Olympic will give plenty of opportunities for local churches to reach out to the youth through sports. Pray for creative ways to reach out to the society.

Diaspora Chinese scholars and the Third Church

Statistics from 2005 from China’s Ministry of Personnel show that overall barely a quarter of Chinese scholars who have studied abroad returned. By the end of 2005, over 930,000 Chinese scholars had studied abroad with approximately 230,000 returning to China over the last decade. [10] In an effort to attract another 200,000 overseas Chinese scholars to come home in the 2006-2010 period, the Chinese government is making an effort to help these top scholars to lead research in the various fields back in China. [11] Many top universities in the UK provide scholarships for students from China who will eventually take up major positions of leadership in China. [12] The aim of many of these scholarships is to bring future leaders, decision-makers and opinion formers to the UK for a period of postgraduate study at a formative stage in their careers. Of course, we remember that former Chinese leaders like Deng Xiao Ping and Zhou En Lai studied overseas. According to statistics, around 60,000 Chinese students are in the UK at any one time - Over 52,000 of these students are studying at UK Higher Education level, around 6000 at Further Education level and the rest at Independent schools and colleges [13].

A mission scholar from OMF coined the term “*Majong*” theology to describe the recent phenomena of the Chinese diaspora movement. In response to the developments in quantum mechanics Einstein complained that God does not play dice- the universe’s physical functioning is not based on chance. Neither is its missiological functioning. “God is “washing” or shuffling the mahjoing tiles.”, he said. Mahjong is the classic Chinese game similar to a combination of playing cards and dominoes, in which the tiles are shuffled or washed after each game. From this, we derived the term *mahjong theology* to advocate diaspora ministry. In God’s sovereignty, God is “washing” the pack, and “shuffling” people from various ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds all over the planet. Just as God “shuffled” Rahab and Ruth into the community of faith at different points in history, so now He is shuffling the Chinese across the world. In Acts 17:26-27 we are told that God made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth and He determined the times set for

them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” So He still does this today as He did then.

Although it would be difficult to verify, it is estimated that nearly 10% of the Chinese scholars returning to China from the UK have become Christians. [14] One of the greatest challenges for these Christians as they return home is integrating back into the society with a new identity, their identity as followers of Christ. A clash of values would become obvious. Many of these “Hai-Gui” need support and encouragement to grow in their faith. Often the “Hai-Gui” do not fit well into the TSPM church or the House Church. Therefore, the phenomena of the “Third Church” has emerged over the years.

The Back to Jerusalem Movement

The BTJ movement is not a recent one. The original idea of taking the gospel “back to Jerusalem” was given to at least five different Chinese Christian groups or individuals during the 1940s. Mark Ma, Simon Zhao and Mecca Zhao were prominent pioneers. In 1942 Mark Ma was called by the Lord to go to Xinjiang to preach the gospel to the Muslims there. The next year the Back to Jerusalem band was formed with the goal of preaching Christ to the outlying areas of China such as Xinjiang and Tibet but also beyond - to the 7 countries of Afghanistan, Iran, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Palestine. Several Chinese Christians got as far as Xinjiang but by 1950 all activity stopped. Some were imprisoned. For nearly 50 years, the vision seemed to have died. But in 1995 Simon Zhao shared with house-church Christians in Henan his vision - and BTJ started up again on an even bigger scale.

In the past few years, the BTJ movement was actively promoted in the West and through a number of significant publications, including the popular book “The Heavenly Man.” In 2003, there was the claim that a minimum of 100,000 Chinese missionaries will be trained and sent out over the next few years as a tithe of the house-church movement. This vision has generated a lot of excitement among Western churches and even huge donations in supporting this work. However, it is becoming apparent that the view that 100,000 missionaries are being trained for cross-cultural work is far from the real situation.

It is encouraging to note that church networks in several regions, including those in the South West and in the North-East have been actively involved in training workers for cross-cultural work. One South-West network has sent out 150 cross-cultural workers to serve among different peoples in China. Churches in one major coastal city are also actively involved in cross-cultural work particularly in the North East among the Chaoxian people. The number of cross-cultural workers being trained throughout China, though unverifiable, is probably in the range of hundreds not thousands. One North-East house church network has sent more than 10 workers to Outer Mongolia. Business platforms have also been used as a means of evangelism by some house-churches. While churches in the past have been focusing on training evangelists and church planters, now more churches are aware of the need for equipping believers, particularly the young people, for cross-cultural work. Curriculum are being developed and increasingly training materials are being prepared.

The other major need is the setting up of mission structure. Ralph Winter has claimed that one of the biggest failure of missionaries in the past 200 years is not church planting, but mission planting. The Chinese church will certainly be giving priority to cross-cultural work first to places within China and then in the future to places beyond China. There have been individual examples of missionaries sent out from China to the Middle East in the past few years, but attrition rate has been high because of lack of training and preparation and mission structures. Also, role models are very important. This is an area where God’s people from outside China can play a role through sharing of experiences in cross-cultural mission work.

The dilemma continues

Many house-church Christians in China still find it difficult to register with the government or to attend the government-organized "Three-Self" church. Some official churches label house-churches as "cults" while others would quietly assist them. The divisions can still be very sharp. Older believers still bear the memory of persecution during the Mao era. However, for many younger believers in both the "Three-Self" churches and the house churches, the antagonism between them seems less intense. A large proportion of the younger generation did not have first hand experience of the persecutions during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

A young believer from Shandong wrote the following to FEBC recently which reflected some of the dilemmas facing those younger believers:

"I was born into a Christian family. I like both the "Three-Self" church and the house-church. Each of these has a different form, resulting from the national religious policy, and has different historical backgrounds. Each has its strengths, and the Lord allows them to co-exist in our country. When the Three-Self church found out my standpoint towards the house-churches, their attitude changed. The church began to reject me. I face attacks from my own church-rumors, gossip, insults and lies. The same situation has happened in the house-church and they have rejected me as being a member of the "Three Self" church." [15]

However, there are signs that new approaches are emerging to tackle the divide between the house church and the TSPM. The Chinese government issued new religious regulations in 2005 which might make it possible for house-churches to legally register with the government and not under the umbrella of the TSPM. These new regulations are yet to be tested but certainly bring hope to the situation. The Chinese government may be warming to the idea that Christianity can bring a positive role in building a "harmonious society."

One encouraging development in recent months has been a greater collaboration amongst China's urban house churches. One example was an all-night prayer meeting on New Year's Eve participated by several Beijing urban house church networks. The theme was "Revival for China and in Beijing". Many of these house-church leaders have no political motives and have openly dialogued with the authorities in an attempt to alleviate their concerns.

No one can deny the tremendous growth in the Church in China. There is still a broad controversy regarding the total number of Christians in China today. According to some studies, in 1876, there were just about 13,000 Protestant Christian and in 1920 the number has grown to 367,000. In 1980 the estimation was that there were about 2 million Christians. By 2007, the official figure revealed a total of 17 million Christians in China. However, the general estimation is that there are about 70-100 million Christians in China today. [16]

1985	125,000
1988	250,000
1989	400,000
1991	640,000
1995	900,000

Just one example: According to the Religious Affairs Bureau of Jiangsu Province, the number of Christians in the province increased to 900,000 in 1995. In Beijing alone, there is an estimation of about 1 million believers.

The Amity News Service, which is the spokesman of the China Christian Council published the following more conservative figures in January 2008 on the number of Christians in China: [17]

	Number of Christians	Churches/Meeting Points	Ordained Ministers	Lay Workers
Total	18,017,750	32,000 churches 16,000 meeting points	2,600 (2,000 male) (600 female)	

While we rejoice in the numerical growth of the church in China, we need to be aware that this growth is not evenly spread among different people groups in China. The main growth occurs among the Han people in China. Many of the minority people groups including the Tibetans, Ughurs, Kazaks, Zhuangs and Yis, still have very little Christian presence.

Most of the local fellowship groups are able to meet freely without hindrance in recent years particularly in coastal cities. However, those in minority areas like Xinjiang, Tibet and some remote areas still face strict monitoring and restrictions.

It is estimated that there are approximately 6,000-10,000 fellowship groups in Beijing. Shanghai, one of China's most populated city, has approximately 400,000 believers. [18] Many of these believers in big cities are intellectuals that belong to the emerging middle and upper classes.

It has been encouraging to see the signs not only of numerical growth but also spiritual growth particularly the passion to reach out to the minority peoples. While great animosity occurred in the past between the Han and some of the minority peoples, it is encouraging to know some of the house-churches are starting outreach activities among the minority peoples. One particular network organizes short-term teams to bring young people to serve in the North-West during summer. Another group reached out to the Chaoxian people in the North-East. Another group worked among the minorities in the Yunnan province for 1-2 years.

Reaching out to scholars

There also seems to be a growing interest in Christianity among scholars and intellectuals in China. Reports after 1989 showed that as many as 10 percent of students on Chinese college campuses were Christian, but there is no way of verifying this figure independently. One university that actually polled its students anonymously was People's University, in the north of Beijing, Normally known as "Ren-Da" in contrast to "Bei-Da", i.e. Beijing University. A survey done in Renda, randomly selected, revealed a total of 3.6% of those surveyed admitted they were Christians, and some 60% of the polled group said they were interested in Christianity. Only 5% of those who expressed interest attributed this to contact with a church. [19] More than half, according to the survey, had acquired that interest through reading, lectures, and elective courses. Overall, many of the students thought it no longer a problem to be known as a Christian on campus. When asked why was there a growing interest in Christianity, the common answer was, "With globalization and post-modernity, we cannot find a clear value system and clear definitions and judgment. In this case, Christianity sets up an absolute value system [for us to think about]."

Some Chinese scholars have taken up a different approach to "Christianity" out of which the term "Cultural Christians" has been coined for a number of years. Many of these "Cultural Christian" scholars show interest in exploring recent Western Christian thought, taking into account China's historical and contemporary cultural context. As one Singapore Chinese

scholar put it, “[the aim] is to build a foundation for Christian intellectual cultural space, so that values systems of the “sacred” may have its own cultural capital.” [20]

There has been a lot of debate surrounding whether “Cultural Christians” are “Christian believers”. Some would have preferred to use the term “MCSC”, which means, “mainland Chinese studying Christianity”. Certainly, some of these cultural Christians profess faith in Christ. Yet, the majority of them do not identify themselves with any church or denomination and dislike being categorized as “mainstream Protestant” or “evangelical”.

It is appropriate to remember Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9, “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

Indeed, we are challenged to become “all things to all men so that by all possible means we might save some,” whether our contacts are farmers, peasants, migrants (min-gong), scholars or intellectuals.

One of the best national sellers in recent years in China was the book, “*A friendly dialogue between an atheist and a Christian*” co-authored by Luis Paulau and Zhao Qizheng. [21] As many already know, Louis Palau is a reputable evangelist with a global ministry. Zhao is a Chinese scientist, scholar and atheist. *A Friendly Dialogue* is an open and frank exchange on issues of faith, culture, history and politics.

We should continue to pray for Christian scholars who are able to dialogue with other scholars. We are called to love the Lord with all our minds, with all our hearts and strength. Perhaps post-modernity has forced many Christians to de-emphasize the importance of the mind in our faith. Reaching out to Chinese intellectuals and scholars demands our engagement at an intellectual level as a starting point.

The power of urbanization

One of the greatest challenges for churches in China today is the need of the “Min-Gong”, the migrant workers. It is estimated that there are 120 million “min-gong” in China today including some who are Christians. According to the 5th China’s National Census studies, along with the “min-gong”, the overall number of migrant children reached 19 million. [22] It is also estimated that every year nearly 20 million people in China migrate to cities from villages in rural areas.

What is it that characterizes the min-gong in China? Firstly, they have changed their main job from farming to urban work. Secondly, they still belong to the peasant category according to the government records, normally recognized as the lower social class. Thirdly, normally they are not employers but employees. Often their rights are abused by lucrative employers in urban cities. Fourthly, as they are considered rural people, this people group is often marginalized in the urban cities. Many young people leave rural churches and yet are unable to settle in urban churches because of work demands, cultural shock and other factors. Many rural churches describe their church situation as “huang-liang” meaning “desperate” as only the “old and the weak” remain. [23] Prior to 1980, church growth in China mainly occurred in the rural areas. However, since 1990, the urban church grew rapidly with the increasing urbanization in China. In 1949, the urban to rural population ratio was 1 to 9 (10.6% to 89.4%). In 1970, it was 1 to 5 (17.4 to 82.6%). In 1980, it was 1 to 4 (19.4 to 80.6%) and since 1985, it was 1 to 2 (36.6 to 76.3%). [23]

Many urban churches are grappling with the issue of how to reach out to these migrant workers. To most, reaching out to the “min-gong” is cross-cultural ministry because of the vast differences in cultural backgrounds and social situations. One of the positive outcomes of the urban migration is increasing partnership between Christian businessmen and churches. Factories in urban settings create job opportunities and as well as opportunities to reach out to these young people. Partnerships also seem to develop between rural churches and urban churches. Some of the rural churches are taking proactive steps in sending their own pastors as “missionaries” to cities to reach out to the migrant workers. The opportunity of urban mission becomes tremendous.

Rapid urbanization and globalization have forced many church leaders in China to re-thinking ministry strategies. For the past 30 years, training of Christian leaders in China has by-and-large been focusing on evangelism, church planting and equipping of the Word. Little has been taught on mission or missiology. However, this scene is changing. More churches are beginning to think seriously of mission. They want to know more about sending structures, how to support missionaries, how to teach mission in Sunday schools etc. The concept of mission is also evolving.

One researcher described the 7 trends of mission ministry in China:

- from rural to urban
- from coastal to the inlands
- from reaching the grass-roots to reaching multiple social class
- from direct evangelism approach to integrative approach
- from receiving to giving
- from within the country to overseas ministry
- from territorialism to partnership

One of the potential contributions of the global church to the church in China is to facilitate indigenous mission movements. It is important to plant churches but it is even more important to plant missions.” [25] We need to facilitate what is truly indigenous and yet a biblical movement. The church in China is ready to take the step of faith. It is looking for role models, the integration of the word, deeds and character.

It is also important not to forget the many Christian students in universities in big cities. The early history of the Christian student movement in China is a glorious chapter generally unknown today. [26] The China Inter-Varsity Fellowship was founded in 1945. 168 young students from many universities and colleges met for a historic conference in August 1945 on the hills outside Chongqing. There was a unanimous agreement to form a permanent Christian student organization in China. A constitution was drawn up with a standing committee of 7 students and 7 senior advisors. A monthly bulletin was published. This conference marked the beginning of a revival among students in China. [27] Two years later, this became the largest Christian student movement in the world before it was closed down in the early 1950s.

Waking from the sleep

Napoleon once said, “Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world.” In recent years, China has constantly been in the world news. It is also a country with growing economic strength. The label “Made in China” is not to be sneered at any more. Many of the latest IT gadgets including the I-phone are assembled in China. According to various reports, China has the 2nd largest number of billionaires after the United States. The total number of millionaires in China account for 3.3% of the whole population. [28] It is now the

world's 3rd largest importer after US and Germany. It is expected to be the world's largest economy if growth continues at its current rate. 33 million Chinese traveled overseas in the year 2007 alone compared to just 30,000 Chinese who travelled overseas at the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 60s. China has increased its participation in international organizations like the UN, ASEAN, APEC etc, brokered the negotiations in the 6-party talks with N. KR and will host the Olympics in 2008, the Expo in 2010 and many more major events in future. There have also been some encouraging signs in tackling poverty in the country. According to the Asian Development Bank and the UN report recently, 1 in 3 live in poverty in the rural areas in China in 1980 compared to 1 in 10 in 1990. [29] This is a significant improvement.

However, China is also facing some major sociological challenges. First the income gap between urban and rural populations has reached a critical level. It has been reported by the Asian Development Bank that China's Gini index, an indicator of income gap, rose from 0.41 in 1993 to 0.47 in 2004. [30] There is also great disparity of income between coastal and inland areas. Shanghai's GDP per capita is about 10 times that of Guizhou, one of the poorest provinces. (56733 RMB versus 5750RMB) [31] In what he described as an "epoch-making" move, Wen Jiabao, the Prime Minister, promised 339 billion yuan (more than 33 billion euros) over five years to improve the situation of 800 million peasants, i.e. 66% of China's population, and to curb social unrest. [32] In recent decades, the country's economic development has always focused on the cities; depopulated areas have been much neglected.

The Leaders becoming younger

The China Communist Party 17th Congress was held in Beijing in October last year. President Hu Jin Tao proposed the theory of "Scientific Concepts of Development" and was adopted as an integral part of CCP constitution. Some of the key words in the documents include, "socialist morality, clean economy, people orientated sustainable peaceful development". [33] Hu stressed that it was necessary to scientifically analyze the opportunities and challenges that China was facing in economic globalization, and the scientific concept of development should be implemented in the process of "industrialization, urbanization, marketization and internationalization". His earlier focus on "building a harmonious society" was not included into the constitution. Chinese President Hu Jintao said that the country must earnestly implement the scientific concept of development if it wants to attain various development goals set for the 11th Five-Year Plan period (2006- 2010). [34]

One major change in the Communist Party is the educational background of the party members who have been elevated to the top tier of government. The Party top leaders have been mainly engineers so far. However, it is no longer the case. Of the 10 new members of the Politburo (Politburo Standing Committee), only two are engineers; the rest have diverse backgrounds in economics, management, history and law. The two top leaders, Mr. Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang studied politics and economics respectively. Of the 20 provincial leaders appointed, only 1 was an engineer. [35] Another significant change is that the new generation of provincial leaders promoted by President Hu is on average five years younger than the existing provisional leadership, and many of them studied economics, management, history and law. Nearly 200,000 officials have been "shifted around" and promotion preference has been given to younger officials with experience dealing with poverty and rural development issues. [36]

A new social class

There is also a new social class rising in China, of nearly 150 million made up of CEOs of private enterprises, intellectuals who have chosen their own professions, e.g. lawyers,

doctors, accountants, managers etc. They represent capital worth of 100 trillion dollars and are 1/3 of China's tax base. The former President began to bring their influential segment into the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) with his "3 Represents" theory, i.e. the development of advanced productive force, orientation of an advanced culture, fundamental interest of the majority of the people. The "Three Represents" campaign is designed to ensure that the communist party extends its membership to private entrepreneurs.

With the rising of a rich middle class and private entrepreneurs in China, we also see a tremendous increase in the number of NGOs in China. It is difficult to estimate the number of local and foreign NGOs in China as there were no official records up to a few years ago. However, some estimate that there could be up to 1 million NGOs including those run by Christians. I was able to visit a nursing home run by local Christians in a mega-city. The need to care for the marginalized and the elderly is recognized. One Christian leader of a church from a coastal city shared with me the "A-F" vision of the church in reaching out to others: A (home for the aging), B(book ministry), C(church ministry- discipleship), D(drug rehabilitation), E(Direct Evangelism), and F(Family and marriage counseling). This shows a more integrated approach to ministry. While churches in the past were more inward looking, churches in China today are actively seeking ways to have a more holistic approach in ministry. Also, there are at least 120 registered Christian book stores in China today. Let us continue to pray for the Christians who can be "salt" and "light" in the society, impacting people and communities around them.

China and beyond- moving away from the centre

The word "China" means the Middle Kingdom. Certainly with the rising economic power, China once again is gaining the world's attention. The study of the Chinese language has become one of the most popular subjects in many universities in the West. Many Christians have high hopes for China- that the Chinese church will play an important role in the world's mission movements. While this paper has been focusing on China so far, it is apt that the title of the paper is "China and Beyond: trends, challenges and mission movements."

Some scholars such as Philip Jenkins and others emphasize a shift of power from Western churches to those south of the equator. [37] In contrast, Professor Andrew Walls, "a historian ahead of his time," [38] insightfully highlighted the concept of polycentrism: the riches of a hundred places learning from each other. He believes that there is no one single centre of Christianity or one single centre of missionary activity. He said, "One necessitates the other."

To quote Professor Walls further, "But the southern Christian lands do not constitute a new Christendom. Few of them have become homogeneous Christian states. Christian faith is now more diffused than at any previous time in its history; not only in the sense that it is more geographically, ethnically, and culturally widespread than ever before, but in the sense that it is diffused *within* more communities. It forces revision of concepts, images, attitudes, and methods that arose from the presence of a Christendom that no longer exists." [39]

The best seller in 2005, "The World is Flat" by Thomas Friedman highlighted the power of globalization. "The huge advances in interconnectivity that began in the 90s now allow unprecedented human interaction spanning nationalities, languages and time zones." [40] Globalization has certainly allowed a special window of opportunity for serious partnership in the kingdom business. "Interconnectivity" will become important in the future of missionary movements.

While we rejoice in the growing church movement in China and the strength of the China church, we should not forget the Lord is doing a far greater thing than in China alone.

Much study has been done on the Asian Missionary Movement. Research by Dr. Bong Ring Ro, a well known Korean missiologist, back in 1990 revealed a growing Asian Missionary

Movement. The number of Asian missionaries rose from 1000 in 1972 to 21,000 in 1990. Other reports suggested that Asian missionaries reached 67,000 in 2000. [41] Hong Kong sent out 376 missionaries in 2006 with 53% in cross-cultural work. [42] South Korea has sent out a total of 14,000 missionaries serving in 180 countries. [43] [44] Therefore the China missionary movement is only part of God's redemptive plan. Yet we are living in an exciting period of history as we see this plan unfold. We wait prayerfully and expectantly. We also participate and partner with others actively. We are called to serve alongside our Chinese brothers and sisters.

The church in China will continue to grow. Partnership with the world-wide church of Christ will be the key to seeing a vibrant missionary movement among different peoples. There is much to learn from the church in China particularly on suffering. Yet the global church of Jesus Christ also has much to share with the Chinese church: our experience in cross-cultural ministry, mission structures as well as equipping and training of cross-cultural workers. True indigenization is only meaningful when peoples from different tribes, tongues and nations, are serving together with mutual respect and a common purpose, that is, to be ambassadors for Christ. The potential for China as a sending nation in global mission is tremendous.

Coming full circle

The publishing of a small booklet, "*China: Its spiritual Need and Claim*", in 1865 marked the beginning of a significant mission movement in China, that is, the vision and commitment to bring the gospel to the inlands of China. Hudson Taylor, having just spent 7 years in China, felt the burden to challenge Christians in the West to pray for China and to bring the good news to the Chinese people particularly those in the inlands. He wrote his booklet with detail information on the spiritual needs of the Chinese people in the different provinces. No one could imagine the effect that this one man could bring. Lautorette, one of the most reputable historians in church history, commented on Hudson Taylor, "This one man [Hudson Taylor], frail in body and of no unusual intellectual powers, called into being a mission which, consecrated to one great task, the giving of the Faith to all Chinese who had never heard it, was to bear witness to the Gospel in every inland province in China.

Hudson Taylor wrote,

It is a solemn but truthful thought that our every act in this present life - and our every omission too - has a direct and important bearing both on our own future welfare, and on that of others. In His name, and with earnest prayer for His blessing, this paper is penned:..The writer feels deeply that, as the Lord's steward he is bound bring the facts contained in this paper before the hearts and consciences of the Lords people. He believes, too, that these facts must produce some fruit in the heart of each Christian reader. The legitimate fruit will undoubtedly be - not vain words of empty sympathy, but - effectual fervent prayer, and strenuous self-denying effort for the salvation of the Chinese....The average population of the at least 7 provinces is 29 million and the average number of Christian workers only 13.

Beloved brothers and sisters, we cannot but believe that the contemplation of the solemn facts we have laid before you has awakened in each one the heart-felt prayer: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do, that Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done in China? [45]

Today, we see a growing thriving church in China. Yet, the work is not finished yet. We pray that there will be an indigenous, mature and vibrant church movement in China reaching out

to others, those who are both near and far. Undoubtedly, the facts we have heard today should not result in just vain words of empty sympathy, but rather effectual, fervent prayer and self-denial for His Kingdom. I pray that each will ask the question, "What wilt Thou have me to do, that Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done in China?"

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Notes

- [1] The Zhuang are China's largest minority. The Zhuang are animists and ancestor worshippers. In 2002 scholars claimed to have discovered the birthplace of Buluotuo, the very first Zhuang. This has resulted in a revival of Zhuang culture and a renewed interest in ancient Zhuang religious texts.
- [2] Paul Hattaway, *Operation China*, Carlisle: Piquant, 2000.
- [3] South China Morning Post- Post Magazine Nov 25 2007. p. 28.
- [4] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003.
- [5] United Bible Society Newsletter 466, Dec 13, 2007.
- [6] "A Call to Christian Professionals"- MSI regular bulletin, Issue 48, 2007.
- [7] Report on the "Symposium of the Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church" Jan 5 2007 www.chinesechristianchurch.org Chinese edition.
- [8] <http://en.beijing2008.cn/news/dynamics/headlines/n214181771.shtml>
- [9] -
- [10] XinHua News Agency January 5 2007.
- [11] Just in the year 2003, the total number of students and scholars studying abroad is 117,300, among which 3,002 people are state-funded, 5,144 employer-funded and 109,200 self-funded. In the same year, a total number of 20,100 students and scholars returned from overseas studying, among which 2,638 are state funded, 4,292 employer-funded and 13,200 self-funded. As for the geographic distribution of the overseas Chinese students and scholars, the statistics for destination in 2003 is as follows: 10.5% to Asia, 1.8% to Africa, 49.8% to Europe, 15.4% to North America and Latin America, and 22.5% to Oceania. Among those who have returned in 2003, 25.1% are from Asia, 0.2% from Africa, 42.7% from Europe, 22.7% from North America and Latin America, and 9.3% from Oceania. As for those who are still studying abroad, 22% are in Asia, 0.6% in Africa, 28.1% in Europe, 36.4% in North America and Latin America, and 12.9% in Oceania. (from China's Ministry of Education, http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/international_2.htm).
- [12] Oxford University produced 24 British Prime Minister thus far. The China-Oxford Scholarship Fund *China Scholars Newsletter* Sept 2005.
- [13] UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office/ China Scholarship Council: May 2007 Press Release http://www.uk.cn/bj/aboutnew_index.asp?menu_id=337&artid=2454
- [14] Paul Pruitt, A paper "Why we must engage in Chinese diaspora ministry?", 2007.
- [15] FEBC newsletter 2007.
- [16] <http://www.ccim.org/node/630>
- [17] Amity News Service, January 24, 2008.
- [18] Tony Lambert, *China's Christian Millions*, p.268.
- [19] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003.
- [20] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, p.250.
- [21] For more information on the book, http://www.palau.org/media/press/friendly_dialogue_press_release
- [22] Nov 2007 "ChurchChina"
- [23] Nov 2007 "ChurchChina"
- [24] China's Statistical Year Book 1992.
- [25] Ralph Winter, who taught and researched in mission for 35 years, made the comment that "the most serious mistake in all of Protestant mission history is the failure of Western missions to create mission structures in the mission field. "The Challenge for Koreans and Americans Together", a lecture delivered by Ralph Winter, Seoul, November 2005.
- [26] This exciting story was chronicled by David Adeney in his book *Chinese Christian Students Face the Revolution* (out of print).
- [27] Leslie Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965, p.124.
- [28] http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-12/31/content_6361786.htm See also http://www.bcg.com/about_bcg/news.jsp
- [29] Speech by Wen Jiabao, Vice Premier at the opening ceremony of the International Conference on China's Poverty Reduction Strategy, May 2000.
- [30] Normally a Gini coefficient of 0.4 is considered to be an important mark beyond which there is a serious risk of instability for the country. The Gini coefficient is a [measure of statistical dispersion](#) most prominently used as a [measure of inequality of income distribution](#) or [inequality of wealth distribution](#).
- [31] National Bureau of Statistics of China.
- [32] Speech given by Wen Jiabao at the National People's Congress in June 2006.

- [33] China's Daily, Feb 25, 2008.
- [34] People's Daily Online March 6 2008.
- [35] Arthur Kroeber, "China Insight- Analysis by Dragonomics Research and Advisory"- 25 Oct 2007 No 45.
- [36] Arthur Kroeber, "The durable Communist Party", *China Economic Quarterly* Q1 2007.
- [37] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom- The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [38] In Christianity Today, February 2007.
- [39] Andrew Walls, "The Old Age of the Missionary Movement" first published in *International Review of Mission* 77 (January 1987): 26-32.
- [40] Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005.
- [41] Tan Kang San, a case study of OMF International's involvements with Asian Missionary Movements: implications for mobilizing the Asian Church. 2000.
- [42] Reports from the Hong Kong Association of Christian Missions, 2006.
- [43] Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World- 21st century edition*, Gerrards Cross: WEC International, 2001.
- [44] Timothy Kiho Park, Luce Colloquium of Korean Christianity, "Korean Christian World Mission: The Missionary Movement of the Korean Church." Nov. 17, 2006.
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Asian mission movements from South Asian contexts



Author: Robin Thomson served for many years as a Christian educator and leader in India. He is currently associated with South Asian Concern.

Cross-cultural mission is part of the DNA of South Asian churches. George Melel arrived in Germany in 1977, sent from India by the *Divya Jyothi Mission India*, based in Kerala. When he first arrived, people asked him 'Who invited you here as a missionary?' He replied 'Who invited Bartholomew Ziegenbalg or William Carey to come to India as missionaries?' 19 years later, he is still there, working with people of all ethnic backgrounds. Mission happens because you are sent out by the call of the Holy Spirit and the prayer and recognition of the church (Acts 13.1-4).

It's exactly 120 years since the foundation (in 1888) of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, the first mission movement in the modern Indian church. The Indian Missionary society (1903) and the National Missionary Society (1905) were both founded just over 100 years ago, by the same person, Bishop V S Azariah. He was inspired to start the IMS by the missionary vision of Christians in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. In the 1920s Sadhu Sunder Singh is believed to have died while evangelising in Tibet.

The first 50 years of the 20th century focussed on the large scale people movements, the independence struggle and efforts for church union. After the colonial era, and the partition of India, there was a flourishing of Indian missions from the mid 1960s, with groups like the Indian Evangelical Mission, the Friends Missionary Prayer Band, Operation Mobilisation and a number of Pentecostal and independent groups. Today the India Missions Association represents 210 Indian mission organisations, agencies and Church groups and about 40,000 Christian workers within India and beyond.

IMA (Indian Missions Association - founded in 1977) is "the national federation of missions in India, which assists Missions and Churches in the proclamation of the Good news and in making disciples of Jesus Christ among all peoples, languages, and geographical areas through members who partner to share resources, research, and training by their effective accountability and care of their personnel."

Its website (<http://www.imaindia.org>) has a list as long as your arm of programmes, working groups, structures and issues. It represents the growth, complexity and maturity of the missionary movement in India. And it is only a part of the evangelistic and church planting movements taking place at this time.

Each of the other South Asian countries has its own history of the development of cross-cultural mission, along the same lines as India, though they are less widespread and complex. There is the same mixture of inter-denominational, denominational, local church and individual initiatives. There is also the same progression:

1. The emphasis on outreach to people within the country, from the same background and then from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. St Andrews Church in Lahore, for example, had the 'St Andrews Sending Fellowship' in the 1970s, bringing together young graduates with a vision for mission, who are now leaders in mission organisations both within Pakistan and outside.

2. The impulse to follow the diaspora movements to other countries. In the early 1970s, for example, Vivienne Stacey, a Bible teacher with Interserve in Pakistan, began visiting the Gulf to minister to the Pakistani Diaspora Christians there, with the vision to strengthen their discipleship and equip them for outreach to their host communities.

As South Asians settled in the UK, attempts were made to minister to Christians and reach out to others. Some were initiated by mission agencies - for example Wilfred Paul was invited

by Interserve to come from India to work in Bolton, and GI Ebenezer came from India to work with Tamil people, in partnership with Indian Evangelical Mission. Some were members of Christian families who had migrated for work, or came independently, like Pastor Massey, who started the Oxford Asian Christian Fellowship. Others were themselves converts in the UK, like Kuldip Rajo, who worked with Clive Thorne, an ex-OMer, to start the Southampton Asian Christian Outreach (now Lighthouse International Christian Church).

The civil strife in Sri Lanka has sent hundreds of thousands round the world, including Christians who have either been part of the migration or have joined it for ministry. Nepalis have always migrated in large numbers, both to neighbouring countries and beyond. There are said to be over 100,000 in the USA, with the prospect of another 65,000 visas allocated for those displaced from Bhutan. Civil strife continues to be a powerful factor in migration and mission.

3. Sending missionaries to other countries to reach out to the local population. This was relatively simple between some South Asian countries, for example India, Nepal and Bhutan, but more difficult or impossible between others, for political reasons.

Going further afield was problematic, primarily for economic reasons, either because it was relatively too expensive, or because of foreign exchange constraints. Tentmaking was one possibility. In the 1990s a few Indian and Pakistani tentmakers were working in some Central Asian countries where business opportunities were available. The other avenue was through partnership with an international organisation. Indian Evangelical Mission had partnership agreements with OMF, Interserve and other organisations to send workers to Fiji, Thailand, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Opportunities and challenges today

Today, with the explosion of opportunities for professionals, as well as the growing economic prosperity of South Asia, there are South Asians everywhere, and opportunities for mission within any population.

Looking at mission in and from South Asia, there are 3 directions to keep constantly in mind

- **To** South Asia: reaching the unreached there
Working with churches and missions in S Asia
Working with diaspora South Asians who are reaching back to their 'home' people
- **To** the diaspora: reaching unreached South Asians there (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and others)
- **From** South Asia and the Diaspora to the rest of the world

When South Asian Concern began we had a vision called 100/100/100. This stood for 100 new workers to South Asia; 100 new tentmakers working within the countries; 100 going to work in other countries. This was in large part fulfilled – though not in exactly the way we had expected.

The opportunities are unlimited. The challenges are the same as they have always been: economic imbalances, distortions from the colonial period, different styles of leadership and management, cultural differences. In 1993 Dr L.N. Tluanga and I (both working at that time with Interserve India), were asked to write papers on this topic for the 1994 United Conference of Interserve. The issues we listed are all relevant today. Dr Tluanga's suggestions for moving forward are also familiar:

1. *The goal must be clear*
2. *We must do it step by step*
3. *We must count the cost*
4. *It is an on-going process*
5. *We start by evaluating our resources*
6. *We need to pray together and give together)*

What are some of the key tensions - or creative opportunities – in the South Asian context?

Here are a couple of examples:

(a) *Finding the balance between the corporate organisational structures* that have been very effectively used by Western churches and missions (and by others - look at the structures set up by India Missions Association) *and the more relational family type structures* used by many South Asians.

Many of the South Asian Christian fellowships in the UK have links with North India and Pakistan, where their members originate, and they are keen to use these, both to strengthen the churches and to reach out. So they each have their 'family' mission structure and activity, some with officially registered trust/charity status, others informal. The style is family based and entrepreneurial. For example, a woman who came to the Lord in the UK has given land back in her home village, where there are no Christians, to build a church.

'Mainstream' churches and mission organisations are looking to recruit South Asians to go and work in South Asia, but sometimes find it difficult, even with the younger generation, who have grown up in the more corporate, multi-cultural environment.

Perhaps it is easier to see the need for this when seeking to work in a third culture or country.

(b) *The diversity of cultures between South Asian communities.* The 'Jewels in His Crown' conference, for example, which brings together ministries among South Asians in the UK, is very much a cross-cultural enterprise, not just between Asian and non-Asian, but between Asians. This also makes corporate activities and partnerships harder, but also, in many ways, more relevant.

How do we respond? This is a re-phrasing of the suggestions made by Dr L.N. Tluanga and discussed in the 1994 conference.

1. We need to clarify the goal of partnership

Our goal is to work together to reach the unreached. It is not partnership for its own sake. It is not just exchange of personnel, though that is valuable. It is recognising that we can and must work together and share resources in order to be more effective in reaching out. Churches from different cultures, geographical, economic and spiritual backgrounds have different resources to contribute.

George Melel, William Carey, and Bartholomew Ziegenbalg would need to qualify their answer to the question '*who invited you?*'. They were sent by the Holy Spirit, but would recognise the importance of relating to the local churches and other Christians, if they existed where they were going. (Ziegenbalg's mission was a classic example of partnership – a German sent by the king of Denmark through an English mission society to India).

2. We need to confront the obstacles to partnership

These are primarily economic and socio-political, linked to the colonial past and the current unequal structures of our globalised world. In a word, they are linked to power and inequality.

We need to acknowledge and face them with a regained Biblical perspective: one world, created and redeemed by the One God, needing to hear the message of redemption and transformation through his church. Mission is not just from 'here' to 'there'. It is in all directions. This is all the more relevant and possible in our age of large-scale diaspora movements, which have re-written geography and added to the complexity and richness of our task. We all have the privilege and responsibility not only to engage in this ourselves but to encourage, challenge and facilitate each other.

*Authentic partnership is actually between two crippled partners - **the blind and the lame** - who cannot go on a journey unless the lame person provides eyes for the blind and the blind person provides legs for the lame. Most partnership is not worked out by sitting and talking about it. It is worked out by setting out on the journey. [1]*

The apostle Paul showed himself fully aware both of this biblical mandate and the complexities of fulfilling it. We see him going as a pioneer himself, encouraging the new churches to be involved, picking up a multi-cultural team from the new churches, maintaining good communication with the sending churches, recognising economic issues by taking finance where it was needed, and inviting the church in Rome to finance and support his proposed mission to Spain. [2]

3. We need to commit ourselves to work together for the long haul.

This includes

- showing mutual respect
- looking for ways to share, facilitate and make connections
- giving space and freedom: don't always offer to help or intervene
- accepting different styles of working and management
- building multi-cultural leadership
- talking openly and frequently to each other (use the appropriate style of communication – is it email? phone? letter? face to face meeting? a combination?)
- recognising that situations are constantly changing and developing, as cultures change

Relationships are the key, as each situation may demand a different approach. And relationships take time and effort for trust to develop.

Conclusion: is it worth it?

Is it worth going beyond our own structures and cultures to spend the time and effort to understand and work with people of other backgrounds? Don't we have enough to do already? There will be misunderstanding and tensions. We will have to spend time to sort these out. We will have to say "sorry", not once but many times. Is it worth the effort? Why not work separately in our own cultural and social groups?

Robert Warren describes the questions when a new leadership structure was introduced in the growing church of which he was minister:

"Will this make for twice the strength, or double the hassle? Our early experience would suggest that it will do both." [3]

Partnership will involve us in extra effort, extra cost. But it will double or triple our effectiveness in mission. We need to make conscious attempts to change our thinking and attitudes, our terminology and expectations. If we think it is complex, that is how the world has become today. Our inter-twining relationships can either become bureaucratic and choke us, or they can be rich and creative, enabling us to do what we never expected before.

We all need to rethink and restructure ourselves and our organisations, so that we can enter fully into God's multi-coloured plan.

Showing Christ as Universal Lord

We live in a world which has become a marketplace of ideas and values. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Marxism, materialism - and many others - compete for the hearts and minds of the whole world. The multinationals have spread the Gospel of Coca Cola to the corners of the planet. Petrodollars have helped to export and establish Islam from West to East - in Regent's Park, Hong Kong or Meenakshipuram. Each of these faiths and ideologies wants to be seen as the universal faith.

We have discovered the truth in Christ, or rather we have been discovered by Him. We know that He is the Way for all people. But for many, Christ is a Western figure, for Westerners; as Buddha, Krishna and others are for their own people. They will acknowledge Him as universal Lord only when they see Him incarnated and brought to them by men and women from all races and cultures.

*It is beginning to happen today, on a world-wide scale - a fulfilment of God's plan to demonstrate His "multi-coloured wisdom" to the whole universe through the church (Eph 3.9f). If this means anything it surely means that God intends the gospel not only to be **received** by people of every colour and race and tribe and language, but also to be **carried** by them. This will be a demonstration of the universal lordship of Christ.*

Appendix: some practical possibilities

1 strategic partnerships

These bring together individuals or groups who are seeking to reach a particular place or people. They agree to focus together on evangelism and church planting among that people or in that place, and to share resources for this. This kind of partnership is also described as a "Vertical Partnership". ("Horizontal Partnerships" bring together people in the same speciality - e.g. literature or radio or medical work - spread over a variety of places). These strategic partnerships are very powerful and effective. But they require effort and the will to work together and face the problems of relationships, structures and policy on the ground.

2 sharing personnel through secondments, joint projects or exchanges

Kachhwa Transformation Ministries, working in wholistic ministry in a large rural area in North India, is inviting other organisations and churches to join with them to take responsibility for a part of the area. They will share infrastructure, orientation, training and other key resources, but will have freedom to start and care for the churches in their part of the area.

3 cross-financing

- a mission in the UK provides finance to a group of missions in India to send missionaries to a third country.

- using business to generate finance for evangelistic work:

4 prayer networking

For example, encouraging prayer conferences for world mission. In the early 1980s Love Maharashtra organised some prayer conferences, in partnership with Interserve and other groups. They helped to give people a broader vision and resulted in sending missionaries.

"Adopt-a-People" is a powerful way for a local church to be involved effectively and strategically in world mission - in partnership with others. In India this is called "Serve-a-People". (Details from the India Missions Association). It provides information about unreached groups and about churches, agencies and individuals that are seeking to reach them. A local church or fellowship commits itself to pray specifically for the needs of that

group; to find out about the Christian workers there and encourage them; to seek to send workers from their church. They commit themselves to serve the people of that group through prayer, giving, sending or going.

5 creative training

Facilitate exchanges of personnel for training. Send missionaries to another country or culture for training. Japanese students came to India in the 1960s in order to prepare for cross-cultural mission in India and other countries. If this is done creatively, it can be a powerful way to facilitate partnership in all directions – the opposite of the usual "brain drain" to more affluent countries.

6 build missionary movements, not just churches

Encourage churches to reach out from the earliest possible opportunity. This will naturally follow the stages mentioned in Acts, beginning from home. But be prepared for surprises and willing to "leap-frog" to people of different cultures or further away, if this is appropriate and God's Spirit guides in that way.

Send personnel to another country to be a catalyst for joint mission. For example, the Brazilian Baptist church sent a worker to India to work with Baptist churches there to get involved together in mission to unreached groups.

7 develop multi-cultural leadership

There is a definite place for mono-cultural groups with their own leadership. It is much simpler and can be effective. But for cross-cultural ministry there is a lot to be gained by working consciously at multi-cultural leadership. It is a part of our message.

8 encourage team ministry

Encourage team ministry - take people with you for evangelism and ministry. This is the most practical way to begin. Consciously ask yourself whom you can involve with you in this way. The Ministry Fund of Interserve could be a source of extra funds to cover expenses for this.

This also needs to be encouraged by mission leadership:

- for our own sakes, because this is a Biblical pattern.
- as a way of working more effectively. Try to place people in teams rather than alone.

Encourage them to link up with other workers in the same place. The arrangement can be formalised by secondment, if appropriate. For example, EFICOR workers co-operate closely with other missions in Bihar and Orissa.

Footnotes

[1] Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, quoted by Stanley Davies, 'Can We Work Together?' in *The World Christian*, St John's Extension Studies, Nottingham, 1991, p 89. This is a useful summary of the issues of partnership.

[2] Luis Bush, *Funding Two Thirds World Missions*, Paternoster, 1990 has a sensitive discussion on the potential and pitfalls of money in developing partnerships.

[3] Robert Warren, *In the Crucible*, Highland Books, 1989, p 211.

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Who is in the Driver's Seat?

A critique of mission partnership models between Western missions and East Asian mission movements



Author: Kang-San Tan, Head of Mission Studies, Redcliffe College, Gloucester.

The church in East Asia is growing at a phenomenal pace, both in spiritual vitality and missionary enthusiasm. For example, The Korea World Missions Association (KWMA) claimed that there were 14,086 Korean missionaries in 180 countries in 2006 (about 19,000 according to non-official counts). [1] India and the United States of America represent the two largest contributors to Protestant cross cultural missionaries. The Indian Missions Association represents more than 200 mission agencies working throughout India and beyond. However, some Western mission groups still operate without much reference to these growing indigenous mission movements from Korea, India, Philippines, Singapore and China. When partnerships are formed, non-Western members are commonly invited to join some elite club to perpetuate the mission goals and boundaries set by existing structures. Unless both parties explore new models of genuine partnership, many of our mission endeavours may lead to duplication, wasting of resources, reinventing the wheel, and repeating the past mistakes of colonialism and imperialism. Past Western paternalism still exerts its control due to the fact that the power associated with mission paradigms, leadership patterns, structures, economics and technology is still located in the hands of Western churches and agencies. Lest we think the problem of control and power is primarily a "Western problem", we will see that newer sending mission structures from Asia are also repeating the same mistakes.

The term Asian Mission Movements (AMMs) refers to various Asian churches, mission structures, indigenous mission organizations, and alliances that seek to spread the gospel cross culturally, both within and beyond national boundaries. AMMs do not necessarily comprise a centralised or organised network but consist of many local communities - churches and indigenous groups engaged in cross cultural witness. In reflecting on the AMMs, there are at least two caveats. First, the danger of Asian ethnocentrism, which claims that this is the Asia Pacific's Century, and that leadership in mission belongs to the Asian church. The reality is that Christ's mission is the concern of the whole church from all six continents. The AMMs need the contribution from a broader, international, and missiological community, recognising that there is much that newer missions can learn from "Older Sending Nations". Second, one needs to be careful of the tendency to generalise Asian missionary movements as a single stream, thus overlooking the unique stages and distinct characteristics of each national missionary movement. The issues faced by the more established Korean, Filipino and Chinese missionary movements may differ greatly from issues faced by the emerging Malaysian, Thai and Japanese movements.

The terms "West" and "Western Mission" refer mainly to mission bodies that share their origins to 19th century Protestant mission from Europe and North America. Although every generalisation can be faulted, I trust there are certain common issues faced, models developed, and concerns which have arisen from the AMMs which we may reflect on together. This article is a critique of Western mission that still operates in the outmoded paradigm of control. It explores possible changes in mission partnerships through case illustrations where national players are given an active rather than peripheral role.

Challenges Facing Asian Mission Movements

The Asian Mission Congress I (AMC I) was held in Seoul, Korea in 1990. One thousand three hundred and two participants from 50 nations gathered in Asia for the first time to consider the challenge of missions. Asian Mission Congress II (AMC II) was held in Pattaya, Thailand with 390 participants from 15 nations who gathered to review and follow up on issues facing Asian mission. David Pickard, a former General Director of OMF International presented a paper on “Challenges Facing Asian Missions” at AMC II, and highlighted a number of issues facing the AMMs. [2] I have built on his listing and added additional challenges:

- The need to mobilise the local church for long term missions
- Lack of role models of effective career missionaries
- Need of more examples of responsible, sending churches
- Inadequate sending structures (candidate screening, missionary preparation, field leadership, member care). In particular, member care is still lacking when compared to the level of care provided by International Missions.
- Lack of Asian missionary trainers
- Lack of community based training centres
- Need to develop creative ways in mission among restricted contexts
- Need for field research on Asian missions (strengths, weaknesses, problems faced etc.)

The above list informs us that there are still “gaps” in the growing Asian mission movements which will respond to meaningful mission partnerships. Implicitly, the list sets out a case against newer Asian Mission Movements which prefer to do mission without partnering with older sending structures from the West. Nevertheless, if partnership means mission policies and strategies are formulated predominantly through Western eyes and ears, then the primary participants in such partnerships are going to be limited to AMMs who are willing to share a similar ethos. The vast majority of newer Asian churches may no longer be interested in partnering with Western agencies that “use” Asians as some exotic displays to fulfil their own agendas. It could be said that tokenism can be a far worse mistake than peaceful co-existence in mission partnership. From the perspective of newer Mission movements, it will be better to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes than to buy into certain structures and paradigms of missions whereby inherent weaknesses are imposed externally?

Defining the Partnership Problem: Who is in the driver’s seat?

Partnership is a relationship entered into because of the different strengths the partners have. For example, Western partners may contribute mission expertise and funding resources while the Asian partners contribute local field knowledge, passion and growing missionary force. However, both parties face the problem of operating with old paradigms of mission thinking. Notably, this happens when Western agencies refuse to give up control, or when Asian churches merely look to Western partners for financial assistance. A core ideal in any effective partnership is the concept of “equality and mutuality”. While both Western and Asian partners agree on this biblical and strategic ideal, when it comes to working it out in practice, Western-Asian partnerships are fraught with numerous difficulties. As traditional Western partners and emerging Asian missionary churches are negotiating their respective

roles, most partnership models neglect the crucial role and views of a third party: namely the national church and indigenous mission movements.

To simplify our evaluation of this complex problem, we limit our discussion on mission partnership to three parties in mission:

- a) Traditional Western mission agencies (denominational and interdenominational missions)
- b) Newer sending mission agencies from Asia (denominational and interdenominational missions)
- c) Indigenous and national church mission movements. Samuel Escobar describes these movements as “another missionary force” and “missionary from below” that do not appear in mission records drawn up by specialists or theoreticians of missions. [3]

In most countries, we assume that there is now a mature national leadership whose views and counsels must be part of partnership models. Unfortunately, there are still mission models that allow leaders to strategise and make plans outside the contexts of the people and cultures they seek to serve. The indigenous missiological principle argues that good partnership models must promote the self-governing of churches and mission projects in such a manner that ownership and future direction are firmly in the hands of national leaderships. Foreign partners must seek to serve the interests of emerging local churches, not their own interests.

Incarnation as a Partnership Model: Some Reflections on Power and Spirituality in the light of Philippians 2:5-11

It is easy to talk about partnership in mission, but why are there so few exemplary models of mission partnerships? More than an issue of strategy, perhaps the answer has to do with how one handles power. This article would like to suggest that promising new models of partnership between established Western agencies and newer emerging mission movements can only be undertaken when all parties are willing to adopt ‘**Downward Spiral Spirituality**’; where each party adopts four basic approaches as they work together:

1. Issue of ATTITUDE: “Have this mind among yourselves” (v. 5)

Thou would perhaps be ashamed to imitate a lowly man;

Then at least, imitate the lowly God

(St. Augustine)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich; yet for your sake he became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

For Adam and Eve, the issue was to become like God. Sin entered into the Garden of Eden due to the existence of Satan. For Israel during the First Century in Palestine, the older brother’s difficulty in celebrating the younger brother’s new found role had to do with the former’s self-introspection in finding his place in the family. In

the same way today the real issue is not about who is in the driver's seat, rather it is about the *attitudes* of whoever it is that is given that role of driving the mission agenda. New partnership attitudes can lead to sacrificial ways that result in newer mission movements benefiting from the expertise of older mission structures.

2. Issue of *SURRENDERING RIGHTS*: "Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (v6)

Equality with God is something which Christ already possessed. Before our Lord was born in the likeness of man, he already pre-existed in the form of eternal Divine Being. The statement does not tell us how Christ refused equality with God, or how he achieved equality as a reward, but how he used it.

Over against the standard picture of oriental despots who understood their position as something to be used for their own advantage, Jesus understood his position to mean self-negation, the vocation described in vv. 7-8... The pre-existent Son regarded equality with God not as excusing him from the task of redemptive suffering and death, but actually as uniquely qualifying him for that vocation. [4] As long as Western agencies and foreign Asian partners are unwilling to abandon self-interest and refuse to adopt the incarnational model of Christ, partnership will remain a nice slogan around mission conferences and conceptual papers.

3. Issue of *IDENTIFICATION*: "But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (v.7)

Biblical scholars such as Joachim Jeremias find many echoes of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 in the phrase "taking the form of a Servant" (Phil 2: 7), indeed this may be a direct reference to the Servant of Isaiah 52:12. Peter O' Brien argues that, "it seems best, on balance to understand the expression ('taking on the form of a servant') against the background of slavery in contemporary society. O' Brien argues that slavery pointed to the extreme deprivations of one's rights; even giving up those rights relating to one's own life and person." [5] Each partner must come to the table of fellowship on the premise that he or she must give up their rights for the interests of God's kingdom. Identification refocuses each partner's attention to the local communities, rather than the interests of the sending churches or foreign mission partners.

4. Issue of *THE CRUCIFIED LIFE*: "Being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (v.8)

Paul saw Christ's death on the cross as the ultimate act of self-humiliation, for on the cross Christ took our sin and the wrath of God upon himself. Christ freely chose to become mortal man and became a model for missionaries who are genuinely seeking to walk in the ways of the cross. Therefore, genuine partnership will only work if each party is willing to live out the self-less life of servanthood. Sometimes, the process of working with emerging Asian mission movements stalls because it touches on uncomfortable mission lifestyles and use of money. Foreign mission partners are

used to certain ways of doing mission and partnership with local or Asian Christians reveals that there are other models of mission that require sacrifices and living at the economic level of the poor.

Case Illustrations of Partnership Models in Asia

- A significant means of partnership is in the area of mission training. Notable Mission Training centres in East Asia are: Global Ministry Training Centre (GMTC) in Korea, the Outreach Training Institute (OTI) in India, and the Asian Cross-Cultural Training Institute (ACTI) in Singapore. [6] Nevertheless, there is still a lack of cross cultural mission training centres that offer full time and residential training. Some mission leaders from Asia may even assert, 'We don't need more Western evangelists. Rather, we need more theologians and missionary trainers'. The leadership of these training centres must be under national leadership, but foreign partners can be part of the team, contributing specialties in the areas of missiology, religious studies or historical studies.
- Establishing indigenous mission organizations is another needed model in Asia. Western and International mission agencies can assist in establishing indigenous missions in Asia. The danger comes when foreign groups, consciously or unconsciously, attempt to produce replicas that may not be suitable for newer missions. Instead, foreign partners need to realize that there are now mature indigenous leaders in each of these countries. Therefore, partnerships could be formed between foreign partners and the leadership of national Christians in countries such as Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam rather than simply between foreign partners. Field strategies should no longer be determined without adequate input from national leaderships. The Mekong area is an example of a place where hundreds of foreign mission agencies have planted their foreign flags in the region. Why can't these foreign agencies talk to one another, and listen to mature national leaders as to how they can best serve God in Mekong? The question of who is in the driver's seat is a pertinent one!
- Japan is an economically rich nation with fewer than 1% Christian population. There are still many small towns of 200,000 people without a significant Christian presence. The old paradigm is to send foreign missionaries to Japan, with the foreign partners planning field placements and bearing the cost of mission support. There are now models where local Japanese churches or denominations identify a mission outreach, and then request missionary help to form a structure where there is a nucleus of local believers working under national leadership. A committee of the *inter-church association* is established to oversee the planting of a church in a particular area. The committee provides the finance for a meeting place and the Japanese evangelist's salary; the non-Japanese mission agency may send foreign mission partners and provide for the salaries of these foreign workers. [7]
- In the Philippines, a few foreign mission agencies have partnered to establish the *Alliance of Bible Christian Communities of the Philippines (ABCCOP)*. This partnership has progressed from being a mission initiated and directed organization, to a self-governing body. Today, the four expatriate missions relate to one another as partners and serve under the national leadership of ABCCOP. There are regular meetings of the respective directors to coordinate ministry, plan and strategize together. No foreign mission agency makes major field decisions without consultation and interaction to some degree with partners and contributors from the national church leadership.
- The Philippine Missions Association presents a case of partnership of mission bodies at a national level. In a way similar to the practice of the Indian Missions Association, the

Philippine Missions Association serves as a valuable resource for “outside” mission bodies.

Although many International and Western based mission agencies are aware of these national mission networks, very few have benefited from close dialogues with them because the International Directors are based overseas and have very little time to develop genuine friendships with these national mission leaders. Instead, we find that the Philippine Missions Associations developed strategic partnerships with similar sister associations in Indonesia and Korea. [8]

Diffusion of Roles, New Problems and Possibilities

Partnership is not just something we need to give lip service to but must be tested by the fruits of partnership, nurtured in mutual respect and carried through in selfless service for the Lord's work. There is a great danger that Western mission agencies and more established Asian missionary churches from Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore 'adopt' national workers or national churches, seeking to do mission out of position of power, and therefore neglecting the crucial principle of incarnational partnership in missions. Past charges directed against Western missions - exporting foreign ways of Church life - are now rightly directed toward some new mission ventures within Asia. Past criticisms that mission agencies do not genuinely partner with local churches are now seeping into many megachurches from wealthier Asian countries which seek to control mission fields from the home base, where decision makers have no understanding of local cultures, and where the church merely do mission through short term visits. Eventually these newer churches are expected to duplicate foreign Christianity exported from Korea, Singapore or Malaysia - just as they once received foreign models from Britain or America. Partnership remains a buzzword in mission circles, but we should revisit this issue with courage and critique, and ask the question: who is in the driver seat? Should it be foreign mission bodies from the West? Should it be new growing churches from Asia? Should it not be the indigenous churches locally? Clearly, a theological answer to the question as to who should be in the driver's seat is to look to God on the throne! If He is really on the throne, then strategically, it should NOT be foreign powers firmly setting the agendas of missions. A better scenario would be to encourage national churches to learn to drive, with good support from more experienced drivers. Ultimately God is the driver and in this new era of mission, we can celebrate mission from all six continents where neither West nor East drives the agendas but a new team of drivers from both East and West, rich and poor, career missionaries and migrant witnesses, creatively chart new directions in mission models. Sometimes we must allow others to drive, and be willing to mix up various roles and rules in order to find new routes and discover new sceneries. For such possibilities, changing drivers, rotating drivers and allowing back seat drivers are all good practices, where diffusion of roles can be a good start and provide new surprises along the way.

Notes

[1] Julie Ma, "The growth of Christianity in Asia and its impact on mission," *Encounters Mission Ezine*, 16 (Feb) 2007, 1-7. See Mark Oxbrow and Emma Garrow, *Emerging Mission*, CMS/IEM/ISPCK, 2005.

[2] David Pickard, "Challenges facing Asian mission," in Castillo, Met, ed. *World Missions: The Asian Challenge* (Manila: AMC, 1991), pp.41-50.

[3] Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), pp. 15-16.

[4] N.T. Wright, "harpagmous and the meaning of Philippians 2:5-11," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37:2 (1986), pp. 321-52.

[5] Peter T. O'Brien, *Commentary on Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 220.

[6] See Miguel Alvarez, 'Missionary Training: A Discipline,' in JAM 2/1 (2000), pp. 91-102, and David Harley, *Preparing to Serve: Training for cross cultural Mission* (William Carey Library, 1995).

[7] See a series of articles on "Church-to-Church Partnership" in James Kraakevik and Dotsey Welliver, *Partners in the Gospel* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 2005), pp. 59-90.

[8] See Met Castillo, "The Philippine Missions Association: A Case Study," in James Kraakevik and Dotsey Welliver, *Partners in the Gospel* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 2005), pp. 141-150.

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Mission Asia: Practical Models in Mission Partnership

A summary



Author: Dr Patrick Fung, General Director of OMF International.

'Partnership' is a strong New Testament concept, and occurs in a number of contexts. James and John were 'partners' with the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10) and Paul can speak of 'partnership in the gospel' in Philippians 1:5. Biblical models of partnership include:

- Paul's partnership with fellow-workers such as Prisca and Aquila (Romans 16:3) or Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25)
- Partnership with already planted churches (Philippians 1:5, 2 Corinthians 1:7) '...because of our fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now'
- Partnership with sending churches (Acts 13:1-3)
- Partnership in sharing support (Acts 20:34) '...supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions'
- Partnership with the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:9) '...for we are God's fellow-workers'
- Partnership in suffering (2 Corinthians 1:7) '...as you share in our sufferings'.

Luis Bush has defined partnership as 'an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship, and fulfil agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal'. [1]

The danger of this definition is that it refers only to a task-based relationship. The Biblical model speaks first and foremost of a oneness in Christ and is both a horizontal and a vertical relationship.

Practical models in mission partnership

The first model we could consider is the China Inland Mission (CIM) later to become the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF). This started as a British mission and became an international mission focussing on China.

We shall also look at current China ministry models: a multi-agency model; house churches/theological institutions/mission agencies working together; a radio and discipleship ministry; churches in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland; a house-church missions network; Christian professionals, with both foreign and local workers. So that the focus is not entirely on China partnerships in Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines are also considered.

A historical perspective

The history of the CIM is instructive. Hudson Taylor returned to England for the sixth time between January 1887 and October 1888 to recruit 100 workers for China. ('It is not great faith you need, but faith in a great God...God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply' – May 26, 1887). A young Princeton graduate by the name of Frost sailed to England to request consideration of his application to join the CIM. His application was refused but he invited Hudson Taylor to the US in July 1888. Hudson Taylor preached at D. L. Moody's Northfield student conference and at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Funds for eight missionaries were received and on September 25, 1888, 14 new workers known as 'the American Lammermuir Party' left Toronto for China with Hudson Taylor. In 1889, the North America Council was established in Toronto. A partnership had been started.

In due course there were many of these. Partnerships were formed with the Bible Christian Mission of England, the Swedish Mission in China of Stockholm (1887), the German China

Alliance (1890), the Swedish Holiness Union (1890), the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (1890), the Finnish Free Church (1891), the Swedish Alliance Mission (1892). Also 12 men and women went to China with Hudson Taylor from Australia in 1890. The part played by the Scandinavian Alliance Mission is equally instructive. Their stated aim was to:

to concentrate on the evangelisation of China within three years, under Hudson Taylor's leadership while responsible to the church sending them...

In the year 1891, 35 left for China on January 17 and a further 15 on January 29. Twelve left for China on February 14, 1892.

What lessons can be learned from this partnership model? Firstly there was a commonly owned vision i.e. reaching China's millions. Secondly there was an understood term, the "Forward Movement" (which asked the "what next?" question) and a corresponding attempt to explore synergy. Then there was the importance of communication. The danger of moving too quickly without the understanding of those on the ground was understood. The importance of training was also agreed - many from the associate missions were poorly equipped and prepared, and this had to be dealt with. Finally there was an ownership of goals. The initial goal of recruiting 1000 missionaries took some time to reach, but people were prepared to work steadily to achieve it.

Some current partnership models

1. "SERVE"

"Serve" is an example of a multi-agency model. It is a legal entity, registered as a charitable foundation in Hong Kong in 1987. It is not specifically a religious organization, but is known to recruit Christians. In fact it is a **partnership** of 13 agencies, a multi-cultural and multi-agency **fellowship** and a **family**, united by the vision for Christ and for China.

From SERVE's vision and mission statement clear goals have been agreed.

- Sending Christian professionals into China
- Focusing on the inland – Central and Western
- Emphasising on Christian values
- Word based
- Establishing churches
- A mission movement

"Serve" also has a clear process by means of which partnership is built. It is recognised that time is needed together to work through the details of the common vision and mission at different stages of development. There needs to be an external facilitator. Prayer and sharing are vital so that there can be a building of trust and understanding. Members must be consulted and it is important to ask the what NOT question!

Of course there have been and are challenges. In a multi-agency organisation there are bound to be different agendas. Foreign agencies often lack a full understanding of China. Smaller agencies may feel marginalised and it takes commitment when funding projects together.

Finally "Serve" believes that it has an important next step to take and that is partnership with local Christians and not just other mission agencies.

2. Agape Project

This was essentially a partnership between theological institutions (outside China), a mission agency and the house church network. The vision (which now dates back to the late 80s) was to equip house church leaders to be solidly based in the Word, effective in church organisation and have a passion for mission. The strategy was based on itinerant training. The leaders of the partnership – from the mission agency, the church network and from two seminaries in Asia (Chinese) developed a four-year M.Div-level programme, with 30-40 trainees who met quarterly for two weeks. So far about 250 pastors have been trained and some of these have been selected for further training overseas. The project has placed great emphasis on the indigenous principle. Thus:

- House church leaders decide on the selection of trainees
- House church leaders are involved in setting the curriculum
- There is an understood role change for trainers - from trainer to facilitator
- Building trust through long term commitment is a priority
- The long term goal is to hand over leadership to house church leaders

3. “Love China” radio ministry

This has been operating for over 40 years. In the past it was mainly directed to rural areas. It has always been strong in evangelism, but has also developed an “On-The-Air” Seminary. 495,000 letters have been received so far, and every year over 20,000 letters come from China.

Why is there a need for partnership? Partnership enables the ministry to identify some key trends and needs, and to respond to them. Here are some of them:

- The rise of the Urban Church
- Church engagement with social issues: e.g. rising divorce rate, integrity, marginalised groups (min-gong)
- Church leadership training needs more face to face interaction
- Counseling: a counseling service in partnership with Christian professional counselors and a counseling hotline
- Strengthening and equipping, including pastoral visits to graduates of the “On-The-Air Seminary” by a sister organization
- Publishing, especially providing books/ resource materials for church leaders

4. Hong Kong/Mainland Church model of partnership

There is a Biblical model here, the partnership between the church in Antioch and the church in Jerusalem.

There is also a window of opportunity. Ease of travel, available resources, acceptance by the Three Self Patriotic Movement, and the fact that there are 1300 churches in Hong Kong, more than 70% of which are prepared to be involved all contribute to opening this window. Of course there are also challenges.

5. Partnering with Christian Professionals

An example of this would be “To China With Love”. The main purpose is the mobilising of Christian Professionals from overseas. These would come at the invitation of the government and serve among some of the minority peoples. They would address key projects that affect the community to do with such fields as livestock, agriculture, medical services and youth vocational training. The next step is to mobilise Christian professionals from within China. The whole idea of Christian professionals as mission partners tends to raise up questions of esteem. Do we consider one another as equal partners? What does that mean: to be equal partners?

Other partnership models

a) OMF Thailand

Here we can discern three levels of partnership:

Level 1 Partnership: fully integrated into the field structure and ministry, based on shared vision, values and commitment

Level 2 Partnership: shared vision and values, but without commitment to share resources or personnel

Level 3 Partnership: assistance in providing visas, but not part of the ministry

b) OMF Cambodia

The FW publishing house provides another model of partnership. This is an independent not-for-profit organisation, involving a collaboration between churches, Bible colleges and mission organisations. The goal is to publish books by indigenous Christian writers relevant to the needs of church and society. The ministry has produced a number of useful ‘lessons’.

- Ongoing partnership provides the opportunity to review together the original goal of the partnership and adjust appropriately. In this case there was more translation work in the beginning and this was too narrow a focus.
- Continuity is needed when leadership changes.
- It is a better situation when each partner provides the initial funds as well as the missionary personnel to make the ministry happen.

c) “Alliance” Partnership in the Philippines

Started 30 years ago by 4 mission agencies, it focused on training of leaders for missions. It has faces a number of challenges:

- Both focus and structure have gone through stages of change
- Nationalistic sentiment sometimes hinders the work
- Some nationals look too much to expatriate organisations for finance
- Wisdom is still needed to know when to pass on leadership to nationals
- Partner organizations occasionally launch out into new ministries without the others’ knowledge

Partnership Issues and Challenges in Asian Mission

What are the key issues and challenges that emerge from this review of partnership models?
A number of questions arise:

- Will western agencies and missionaries recognize emerging Asian leaders as equal partners and allow them to take on leadership responsibilities?
- Will western agencies be willing to adjust and reorganize their basic structures to be relevant to contemporary Asia and to facilitate the changing roles?
- Can Asian Christian leaders overcome their inferiority complex and avoid a reactionary attitude and pride?
- Will Asian church leaders and missionaries be willing to humbly acknowledge with gratitude the contribution from Western missionaries?
- Can Asian leaders prove themselves to be accountable if funds and resources are entrusted to them?
- Is there a trend moving towards inter-dependence rather than independence? [2]

What are some of the key factors that hinder and promote effective partnership?

By way of summary it would be good to mention some key factors in partnership both on the negative and positive side. These are drawn from a survey of mission partnership in OMF fields. First of all the hindrances:

- × Very little time taken to listen to God's leading
- × Different core and secondary beliefs and values
- × Vision not clear
- × Unspoken values not shared by all in partnership
- × Powerful but often unspoken reasons for partnership
- × Weak infra-structure
- × Too little time to develop relationship
- × Low level of ownership
- × Little communication
- × Failure to review partnership and make adjustment

Then, by way of contrast the factors that help partnership to prosper:

- ✓ Sensitivity to God's leading
- ✓ Same core beliefs as well as important secondary ones
- ✓ Mutual benefit from partnership
- ✓ Clear structure that will accomplish the mission
- ✓ Relationship of trust
- ✓ High level of ownership
- ✓ Clear communication. Nothing is assumed
- ✓ Regular review of partnership and willingness to make adjustment

A final thought: there are many 'partnerships' envisaged in Scripture but one which is mentioned perhaps more than any other is the partnership in suffering!

Notes

[1] L. Bush & L. Lutz, Partnering in Ministry: *The Direction of World Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), p. 46.

[2] Chin do Kham, *Journal of Asian Mission* (2003), pp. 175-190.

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Mission in Partnership

A Response



Author: Mark Oxbrow, managing consultant for the CMS mission network.

The idea of a contextualised gospel and, as a result, an indigenous leadership which is busy at work in its own community – with global consequences, is at the heart of partnership. Paul Gupta of Hindustan Bible Institute puts it this way:

If the gospel is going to find reception globally, it will happen as the church encourages the contextualisation of the message, builds indigenous leadership, and releases them into the communities.

This is not a new idea. What we might call ‘the indigenous principle in partnership’ was clearly enunciated by Billy Graham at the original Lausanne Conference in 1974. Addressing delegates from what was then called the Third World, he said:

As national church leaders you must exercise your birthright and establish new church movements, mission agencies and parachurch agencies that represent indigenous identity.

That was more than thirty years ago but the challenge still remains. Indeed, Phill Butler in his recent book, *Well Connected* (2005), suggests that it is *the* challenge.

What is the church’s greatest challenge today? Lack of money, prayer, people? I’m convinced of one thing: the brokenness in the church, the divisions that abound, and our constant resistance to God’s design of restored relationships and practical unity is our greatest sin.

Can we honestly say to people who are not ‘us’ (our family, our folk, our church, our mission), ‘I rejoice that God is blessing *you*’. Unity is absolutely foundational to our witness. Going right back to the beginning we can overhear the words of Jesus of Nazareth spoken in Jerusalem about 29CE:

I pray that they may be one, Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world may believe that you sent me.

Partnership as practical unity

The New Testament is full of phrases such as ‘partnership in the gospel’, ‘fellow workers with God’, ‘sharing lives in suffering’. But what does partnership as practical unity mean today?

Practical unity requires:

- Mutually agreed *purpose*, a clear *vision* and shared *values*. This could also be described as ‘exploring synergy’. What could we do better together than on our own, so that one plus one equals three rather than two.
- Every partner brings to the table *something valued by all*.
- *Trust* – the depth of trust that only comes from *genuine relationships*. This can only be developed by spending time together.
- The establishment and maintenance of a *level playing field* – in a world which is naturally full of inequalities and power imbalances.
- A lot of *forgiveness* and a lot of *prayer*.

Voluntary missionary movements and imperial mission agencies

It may be that the historical context of today's mission makes partnership even more challenging. Leaders and thinkers such as Roland Allen and Max Warren spent a lifetime of ministry trying to bridge the gap, not least in the thinking of the church, between mission agencies with imperialistic attitudes on the one hand, and the more spontaneous, more indigenous voluntary missionary movements on the other. The key question has always been 'what do we mean by equal partnership?' Also, to what extent have our imperial mission agencies become *post-imperial*?

Emerging Missions Training

One of the ways that partnership can be expressed is through emerging missions training. Faith2Share, a network of mission organisations with a world wide ministry and a focus on 'strengthening indigenous movements for the mission of God' is just one organisation which has seen this need and responded to it. The agenda of their Emerging Missions Training Consultation at Bangalore (2004) eloquently describes the sort of issues that need addressing. These are the key ones, as identified by the Consultation:

- Obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Discernment as a leadership priority
- Having the right people in the right places
- Training and cross-cultural seminars
- Need for mission literature/teaching materials
- Focus on reaching unreached people groups
- Individuals the key to successful outreach
- Pastoral care of mission workers
- Mutual prayer and encouragement

Finally

The challenge of partnership is great. It is not a new challenge but it is a crucial one which must not be avoided. Also, there is much work to be done, not least in supporting the new voluntary, indigenous mission movements which are the hope of the future.

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Reflections on a Conference

Putting partnership at the top of the agenda

Author: Jonathan Ingleby, co-editor of Encounters.

If you have read this far you will realise that this edition of Encounters largely attempts to reproduce the papers given at the conference on Asian mission held recently at Redcliffe College under the auspices of the College, CMS and OMF. I was present at all the sessions (except when there were two going on at the same time!) and was asked to give a brief reflection as part of the final session. I notice that each of my paragraphs makes the same point. I leave the reader to work out what that is!

My first response is to say how helpful it was to have Patrick's clear and insightful account of the situation in China, a masterful mixture of appropriate statistics, historical and theological analysis, and incidents and illustrations from his own experience. (I am referring here to Dr Patrick Fung's Redcliffe Lecture, China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities – see Article 1 in this edition.) It was the combination of elements that I found particularly helpful. Statistics alone can be boring or misleading. Historical and theological analyses are necessary but are wonderfully enlivened and validated by a contributor who can speak from relevant and recent personal experience.

With regard to the general topic of the consultation – the partnership between the growing Asian missionary movements and the churches and mission agencies in the West – I notice that one of our stated purposes was to share 'positive models and stories' and we have done this. But I do also think that this conference may have prompted us to realise that we are basically short on research and reflection – the patient, careful scholarly examination of key topics such as partnership. Of course, our speakers have set us on our way, but partnership throws up many issues: the continuing role of ethnic particularity in our planning, the challenge of multicultural teams, the need for better conflict resolution, a better understanding of the impact of economic globalisation and so on. The briefing notes ask us about the possibility of 'an annual gathering or ongoing network', suggesting that this might be necessary. But that is my point. Further study needs to be facilitated, it needs ongoing commitment and effort, and perhaps we are not ready for that.

I wonder whether we have been a little triumphalistic, as we evangelicals are inclined to be. It was certainly encouraging to hear about the growth of Asian missions and the various models of partnership, but have we sufficiently emphasised the difficulties? Issues of power differences, economic disparities, cultural pride, historical accidents, theological misunderstandings are going to make the way ahead far from easy. Overall there may be a dangerous lack of specificity.

We need to ask 'where do we go from here'? It is the same question that Jesus asked his disciples: 'How shall we describe the kingdom of God?' What does the Bible teach? If Jew and Gentile can work together, why not us? What does 'the one new person' of Ephesians 2 look like? It has often struck me that 'partnership in the gospel' is to a large extent what the Apostle Paul's letters are all about. He realised how difficult it would be for Jew and Gentile to fellowship together and he built his mission strategy on the hope that there would be churches where that 'the people of God' could truly be identified as one body, the body of Christ. Is that what we are aiming for?

My final reflection is that this has been a 'firstfruits' conference. The firstfruits of the harvest were worth having in themselves; they provided something tangible and edible, but at the same time they were only the beginning. They were not supposed to be the whole harvest;

there was a promise of more to come. This conference has been a good beginning...but we await a greater harvest.

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A Dilemma for Obedience

An analysis of Japanese Christian Ethics in *Silence* by Shusaku Endo

Author: Rev. Shuma Iwai is currently a Ph.D. student in Intercultural Studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, USA. He has served for many years in ministry in Japan and the United States.

1. Introduction

Freedom of religion had been assured since World War II in Japan. This entails that people have rights to select their own religion without any political pressure and that their faith and practices should be esteemed. It is indeed true that they are liberated from any religious restriction. There are, however, still some limitations or challenges Christians experience in the Japanese context today due to the challenging, customs, and practices of Shinto or Buddhism. Japanese Christians are sometimes forced to follow such traditions which may lead to disobey God.

Silence, written by Shusaku Endo, [1] illustrates a dilemma of the last Catholic priest, Rodrigues, to Japan during the Edo period. [2] He is urged to choose either obedience to governmental regulation, thereby apostatizing from his faith but saving his Japanese Christian fellows. Or to disobedience to that commandment and in doing so to be killed. This paper will deal with his ultimate decision as one example of many impasses Japanese Christians experience. It is significant to examine Rodrigues' conflict because it will lead us to the point of how Christians in Japan need to respond in order to understand what it really means to obey and glorify God in difficult circumstances. This paper will discuss the following questions: (1) What are the significant Christian issues between human authority and God, in *Silence* by Shusaku Endo? (2) What is true living God to Christians in Japan?

The paper will first outline the historical background of the *Edo* period and the setting in *Silence*, and sketch the overview of that literature. An analysis of the Rodrigues' predicament will then follow. After examining his conflict, applications to modern Japanese Christianity will be investigated from the point of biblical teaching.

2. Historical background

A. Christianity in Japan

Francis Xavier, the first Roman Catholic priest from the Jesuit, came to Japan and delivered the gospel in 1549. Despite difficulty in communicating and bringing Christianity, the Western thought, the seed of Christianity began to spread over Japan. Many of the Japanese people believed in Christianity after Xavier's coming. [3] Nevertheless, the Japanese government was afraid that the Roman Catholic power would affect its political situation negatively. Hideyoshi Toyotomi, [4] the most powerful leader in Japan during the last quarter of the fifteenth century, considered Christianity "as a kind of potential spiritual force for speeding up the unification process." [5] As a result, he promulgated anti-Christian edicts.

After the union of the nation of Japan by Ieyasu Tokugawa [6] in 1603, persecution erupted more rigorously. Christians and priests were tortured and threatened to deny their faith, if not, they were killed. [7] Tokugawa decided to exile all priests in 1614. In spite of this proclamation, it is reported that forty-seven priests remained in Japan. [8] Since Japanese Christians were not able to practice their beliefs in public, they continued to keep their belief personal and practiced worship in secret. These people were known as crypto-Christians. [9]

In addition, Tokugawa started national seclusion [10] in order to control the nation's stability, as well as to avoid Christian impact in 1639.

B. Overview of *Silence*

The setting of *Silence* is in the early seventeenth century, when the rejection of Christianity was very stringent. The main character is Sebastian Rodrigues, a young Jesuit, from Portugal. The story starts when Rodrigues hears the news that his mentor, Christovao Ferreira, who inspired Rodrigues to spread the gospel, apostatizes his faith under severe torture in Japan. Being unable to believe the information, Rodrigues makes a decision to travel to Japan to confirm this impossible report. [11] Garrpe and Sebastian meet a Japanese man, Kichijirō, [12] in Macao while they are still heading to Japan. Kichijirō becomes a guide for the two priests.

The three finally arrive in Japan. Rodrigues sees the reality of terrible persecution against Christians. Christians were urged to reject Christianity; otherwise, they would be murdered. The government uses an approach, called *fumie*, [13] to determine whether they are Christians or not and to promote disloyalty toward God. The governor of Chikugo [14] thought that the most effective method to eradicate Christianity was to subvert Christians and priests' faith.

Rodrigues was arrested by the Japanese government on account of the treachery of Kichijirō for three hundred pieces of silver. Rodrigues sees Ferreira being turned into a *bonze*, [15] wearing traditional clothes of a Buddhist bonze, and having a wife under the persecution. Rodrigues was then urged to stamp on *fumie*. He had to choose either to keep his faith, which would cause his fellow Japanese Christians to suffer under torture, or to deny his faith in his Father in order to free his Christian companions. After enduring severe anguish, he eventually performs *fumie*. The narrative ends with Rodrigues' completely different person. Like Ferreira, he was forced to live in a Buddhist temple, wear the bonze clothing and marry and have children.

3. Analysis of Rodrigues' dilemma

A. Rodrigues' Vacillation

Rodrigues' dilemma can be tracked with the expression of his image of Jesus Christ in the text. It is his usual custom to think about Christ as he images of Christ in the entire writing. At the beginning, he lifts his faith up and has no doubt of encouraging the Japanese people to convert to Christianity. For him, Christ is "the most beautiful and powerful being to be praised and glorified" in his life at that moment. [16] This face was rooted in his education and training in his childhood and as a seminary student. He has brought his Western Christian values to Japan.

While Rodrigues is preaching and sharing the gospel with the Japanese citizens, he imagined himself to be reflecting by describing Christ with a pure picture:

From childhood I have clasped that face to my breast just like the person who romantically idealizes the countenance of one he loves. While I was still a student,...his beautiful face would rise up in my heart. [17]

However, as Rodrigues confronts the awful reality of martyred Japanese Christians and the atrocious tactics by the government. Against his will, his attitude toward justice and faith gradually erodes away. One day, he went to the pond. In the water, he saw the face of

Jesus. What he saw was a face that was “tired,...heavy with mud and with stubble; it was thin and dirty...” [18] Rodrigues himself is physically, spiritually, and extremely tired under the severe proclamation of anti-Christianity by the government. His mind continues to waver to seek the ultimate answer of an apostate or a martyr. His Christian values and convictions regarding Christianity have gradually been distorted. To some degree, his pure decisive belief brought from his home has been transformed to the sadness of lost faith. Thus, this transformed picture of Christ’s face depicts this personal transformation. This is his turning point where his image of Christ becomes not one that is perfectly beautiful.

After having been arrested, Rodrigues becomes mentally unstable. He sometimes tries to bolster his faith and by imaging Christ’s face watching him gently. [19] On the other hand, at one point, he visualizes Jesus as an “ugly face...crowned with thorns and the thin, outstretched arms.” [20] His churning mind is identified with his images of Christ. From his experience, he learns Christianity is not been lived in the way people in its country. He first realizes there is another value and image of Jesus in a different culture and struggles with this disparity. His evolving representation of Christ illustrates his transforming worldview. Elimination of Christianity and its harmful image are unconsciously and gradually insinuated into his mind.

B. Silence of God

Rodrigues asserts that God never speaks to him even when he himself experiences extreme torture or when he witnesses the horrible scenes of suffering in his Christian circles. He continues to pray and ask God to guide him. Even in prison, he prays to God, “Lord, why are you silent? Why are you always silent....?” [21]

When Rodrigues is guided to another prison, he observes from the boat a village that used to be a Christian village. He perceives the cruel scene of that village; it has been burned and destroyed and all its residents have been expelled. He is so disconsolate and questions God, “Why have you abandoned us so completely? ...Even when the people are cast out of their homes, have you not given them courage? Have you just remained silent...?” [22]

In one instance, Rodrigues is forced to witness the torment of three Christians, who have denied their faith. But they have not been forgiven because Garrpe, a priest company of Rodrigues, has not relinquished his loyalty to the Father. They have no way of being saved from being thrown into the sea and their hands and feet are tied. Garrpe himself dies as a result of trying to rescue his friends. Having seen this event, Rodrigues passionately asks the Lord. “You are silent. Even in this moment are you silent?” [23] All through this, Rodrigues has been suffering and seeking God’s voice, guidance, or consolation, which he never hears until the moment he is finally urged to step on fumie.

Rodrigues entreats God to answer him immediately. He can not withstand his harsh suffering and witness of the torture of his Christian friends. This silence to him means that the Lord will not take any action to rescue the anguished Christians. Instead of seeing His victory, he only receives “the awful silence of God.” [24]

C. Fumie

After the long and painful maltreatment, Inoue, the governor of Chikugo, places Rodrigues in the most appalling condition. He has Rodrigues suffer continually. He demands that Rodrigues deny his faith. The alternative is that his Christian companies would also suffer [25] in front of him. Rodrigues’ mind oscillates between the two options. Should he renounce his commitment to Christ even if it means that he would deny his faith? [26] Or should he give his body only to the Lord? The destiny of his Christian friends depended upon his decision, which makes him undergo the grimmest agony.

Facing the ultimate decision, Ferreira and a Japanese interpreter tempts Rodrigo to trample on fumie, saying “now you are going to perform the most painful act of love that has ever been performed.” [27] They suggest Rodrigues that to stamp on fumie is just a formality. Rodrigues pondered Christ’s face, which he has done thousands of times. He raises his feet above the picture of Jesus and at the same time he feels a heavy pain. He finally hears Jesus’ voice:

Trample! Trample! I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. Trample!
It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share
men’s pain that I carried my cross. [28]

He ends up with performing fumie. There was some motivation behind his action of fumie. He has seen the suffering of Christians before his eyes and heard their groans, along with Ferreira’s allurements to disobey God.

4. Applications of the biblical principles

A. Biblical Principles

In the first commandment of the Decalogue, God declared that “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). This is “the foundation for all morality.” [29] In the case of *Silence*, Rodrigues ultimately does not worship the transcendent God, but the human god. He conforms himself to the secular authority that decrees anti-Christ. Is his decision correct in terms of biblical principles? It is not biblical to bend the knee before an oppressive government, an emblematic human god. It is only God that has the supreme authority. [30] God created this world and ordained the governments. There is no supreme existence above Him.

Like Rodrigues, ancient people experienced similar situations to follow either God or a human god. For example, Naaman (2 Ki.5: 18-19) had to bow down to a pagan idol, the god of Rimmon, in order to do his duty to his human king. Naaman asked the Lord to forgive his behavior, and He, as Elisha, answered, “Go in peace.” Does this entail God forgave Naaman? It can be superficially understood that Elisha gave Naaman permission to bow down to an idol for a formality. Leithart explains that “Elisha gives permission to continue to fulfill this part of his service to the king of Aram” because God is gentle to handle conflicts and “tricky moral and political circumstances.” [31]

However, Slotki insists the counter perspective on God’s response to Naaman. Slotki points out the words, “Go in peace,” do not connote that Elisha approved Naaman’s pardon because these words mean “nothing more than ‘good-bye’”. [32] It demonstrates that Elisha entrusted Naaman to consider how he should act.

Another model dealing with authorities over the Lord and human king is in the Book of Daniel (Da.3). King Nebuchadnezzar commanded three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to worship the gold statue made by the King. They resisted deferring his fiat, for they knew there is only God they could trust and obey. As a consequence, they were thrown into the blazing furnace. The result, however, was that not only were they saved from the fire but also the king was converted. If these men had not trusted in God, but had placed a more emphasis upon the human king, they would have disobeyed the God and would not have directed the king as well as his citizens to convert to Christianity. Their decision was a model of the complete submission to the Father.

Returning to Rodrigues’ example, the key aspect of his selection is not performance of fumie itself, but the essence of its meaning. Stepping on fumie demonstrates a submission to

human authority, and denies his faith. This was seen as the complete negation, profanation, and desecration toward the Almighty God.

God's authority should be above anything else. [33] The law of human kings cannot be identified with the law of God if the former possesses some evil elements that the latter does not teach. In other words, if the human laws contrast God's law, nations need to disobey their human magistrates. [34] "[T]he basic premise of civil government and, therefore, law, must be based on God's Law as given in the Bible." [35] The submission to the human government is proper only within the law of God. [36] The true law is only God's law (Rom. 8:7; I Cor.7:19). [37]

Another biblical principle is the second demand in the Decalogue: "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them..." (Ex.20:4). Conducting fumie is a sign of infidelity to the loyalty to a human authority since the Japanese government proclaimed to identify Christians and compelled them to deny their obedience to God.

Rodrigues serves the human magistrates, which are sinful in terms of God's law. After suffering, Rodrigues does not see God in the heaven, but he rather considers and cares to free his Japanese Christians who are under torment in front of him. Applying the first two commandments in the Decalogue to Rodrigues' fumie, he should not have conformed himself to governmental rule because it contradicts God's law. Obedience should be only to the Almighty God. He should have first believed in the Lord, and through that, he should have thought about what and how he was to respond to human power.

B. God's Authority

Human authority is "the objective correlate of freedom." [38] Humans have a sinful nature and have been created by God. They sometimes commit sin and establish their own laws, which is not according to inside God's commands. Political authority is the authority of man's will over themselves. [39] When political might and power surpass the limitations of liberty established by God, it entails disobedience to Him. In other words, their law turns out to be a tyrannical government. [40] Tyranny is defined as "ruling without the sanction of God." [41] Tyrannical government does not have an absolute power because tyranny means they contradict God's regulation. The power "to tyrannise over the people and to destroy them is not a power from God." [42] All power is God's power (Ps.62:11; Ps.68:35; 1 Ch.29:11). [43] The Creator has given "no absolute and unlimited power a king above the law." [44] All human authority resides "within the framework of God's will." [45] In *Silence*, the Japanese government goes beyond the boundaries set by the Lord because they promulgate anti-Christian dogma and coerce their citizens to obey human magistrate. Rodrigues steps on fumie and submits himself to human power, which he should not have done as a Christian.

C. The Continuity of the Bible

It is God alone who rules over human authorities. It should be noted that God's law is always supreme and that He continuously teaches the same principles. God reminds us that there are no other gods before Him in Exodus 20:3. Jesus teaches, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (Mt.4:10).

For the Second Commandment, God says, "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Ex. 20:4). In the New Testament, Jesus says, "No servant can serve two masters" (Lk. 16:13). The norms of the Bible are always in accordance with the law of the Lord. God's teaching from the Old Testament ethics is the foundation "principle running through the moral teaching of the whole Bible." [46]

More importantly, God's moral teachings in the Old Testament have not been abrogated; rather, they are reinforced by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. [47] Moral laws given by God continue to "function as one of Scripture's formal teachers on what is right and wrong in conduct." [48] It is Jesus Christ that ends and fulfills the goal of the law (Rom.10:4). [49] In this regard, the biblical principles can be and should be applied to today's contexts.

When human magistrates compel Christians to submit themselves to a tyrannical government, Christians need to act on the biblical norms, not human principles. Ethics refers to "how we ought to think," [50] and we must behave biblically in the light of God's law.

D. Missiological Implications

How are Christians supposed to respond to tyrannical rule? When they are urged to follow despotic authority or laws, they may wisely ignore them. The term, "wisely," means that they do not revolt against tyrannical government. They can flee it (Ex.12; Mt.12). They should not rebel against unjust human authority. [51] Based on Rutherford's support, Schaeffer insists that "since tyranny is satanic,...to resist civic tyranny is to honor God." [52] Another response to immoral magistrates is that Christians disobey commands or laws that disagree with God's principles. Again, as Christians, they ought not to "actively work to overcome oppression." [53] They simply must not follow tyrannical regulation.

In addition to these two responses, Geisler argues that Christians need to accept its punishment as Peter wrote in his letter to believers (1 Pe.4:12-13) because they decline to take its immoral authority. [54] In short, being challenged to respond to a tyrannical government, they should profoundly judge whether it is within God's boundaries or not to answer with (1), disobedience to unjust rules; (2), its avoidance; and/or (3), acceptance of penalty.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined Rodrigues' fumble in *Silence* as a case of dilemma to obey human authority that indicates to disobey God. Rodrigues was in that he had to make a choice either to refuse the fiat, deny the Christian faith, or to bow down to tyrannical ruling that promulgates anti-Christ. Like Rodrigues, Christians sometimes encounter situations where they have to make the right decision.

The key answer to the questions proposed at the beginning are apparent. What are the significant Christian issues between human authority and God, in *Silence* by Shusaku Endo? What is true living God to Christians in Japan? The most essential Christian values are the biblical principles. Since the Creator has the absolute authority, His law is the ultimate rule of life. Christians should determine if human authority is aligned with the edict of God, and if it is comparable with His framework. The true living God is the Father who can save His people (Acts 4:12). He is the only one they can trust. When they are challenged to respond to ethics that are inconsistent with God's rule, they should obey God, not men (Acts 5:29). In other words, Christians must not obey human kings when those kings do not biblically follow God, but they should obey only King of kings, Lord of lords, Jesus Christ.

Notes

[1] *Silence* was written by Shusaku Endo (1923-1996) in 1969. It is a story dealing with Japanese Christianity and priests from Portuguese during the seventeenth century. It is grounded on the real historical background and true existent priests during the early nineteenth century in Japan. See Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (New York: Tappan Publishing Company, 1980).

Shusaku Endo is a Catholic novelist in Japan. He was baptized at the age of 11. His literature mainly deals with Christian issues.

[2] The Edo period is from 1603 through 1867.

[3] At the peak, there were approximately 300,000 Christians in Japan in 1614. Johannes Laures, *The Catholic Church in Japan: A Short History* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 178.

[4] Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1536-1598) received the title of *kampaku*, Regent, in 1585. He could not obtain the position of Shogun due to his humble social background. Richard Henry Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 76.

[5] Douglas J. Hall, "Rethinking Christ," *Interpretation* 33 (July 1979), 258.

[6] Ieyasu Tokugawa (1543-1616) obtained the title of *shōgun* from the emperor in 1603. Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan*, 105.

[7] It is estimated that between five and six thousand Christians were martyred during the period of 1614-1637. See Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan*, 104.

[8] There were "27 Jesuits, 7 Franciscans, 7 Dominicans, 1 Augustinian, and 5 secular clerics." See C.R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan: 1549-1650* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1951), 327.

[9] Crypto-Christians were called *kakure kirishitan* in Japanese.

[10] National seclusion continued until 1853 when the Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Japan and asked to open its gate to foreign countries. However, during this period, Japan maintained trade with the Netherlands. This country was selected because the Japanese government understood the Dutch would not force their Christian faith to the people in Japan.

[11] Juan de Santa Marta, Francis Garpe, and Sebastian Rodrigues traveled to Japan. Marta could not continue his journey because of sickness. Only the other two arrived in Japan.

[12] Kichijirō was a Christian fisherman. He participated in the Shimabara Rebellion, an uprising of Japanese peasants, from 1637 through 1638. Most of the participants were Christians, and they claimed the economic and political oppression. Kichijirō barely escaped punishment and made his way to Macao on a Portuguese ship. He desired to return to his country when he met Rodrigues and Garrpe. For further information on the Simabara Rebellion, see Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan*, 105.

[13] *Fumie* literally means to step on a picture. It indicates trampling on the image of Jesus Christ or Mary in bronze in this context.

[14] Chikugo is located in Kyūsyū in Japan today.

[15] Bonze is a Buddhist monk.

[16] Hitoshi Sano, "Transformation of Father Rodrigues in Shusaku Endo's *Silence*," *Christianity and Literature* 48, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 172.

[17] Endo, *Silence*, 44.

[18] *Ibid.*, 67.

[19] *Ibid.*, 161.

[20] *Ibid.*, 170.

[21] *Ibid.*, 92.

[22] *Ibid.*, 96.

[23] *Ibid.*, 133.

[24] Hall, "Rethinking Christ," 261.

[25] One of the tortures is called "ana-tsurushi," hanging in the pit. "The victim was tightly bound around the body...and then hung downwards from a gallows into a pit which usually contained excreta and other filth... In order to give the blood some vent, the forehead was lightly slashed." See Endo, *Silence*, xi-xii.

[26] Junko Endo, "Reflections on Shusaku Endo and *Silence*," *Christianity and Literature* 48, no.2 (Winter 1999): 146.

[27] Endo, *Silence*, 170.

[28] *Ibid.*, 171.

[29] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House/Academic and Professional Books, 1983), 85.

[30] John M Frame, *Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons, and Problems* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988), 10.

[31] Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 195.

- [32] Israel W. Slotki, *Kings: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, Soncino Books of the Bible, ed. Abraham Cohen (London: The Soncino Press, 1964), 194.
- [33] Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983), 100.
- [34] Frame, *Medical Ethics*, 10-11.
- [35] Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, 100.
- [36] Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 242; Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, 100.
- [37] Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 309; John Murray explains the characteristics of law itself. For further studies, see John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1957), 184-186.
- [38] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 122; Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30.
- [39] O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 31.
- [40] Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, 100.
- [41] Ibid.
- [42] Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or the Law and the Prince* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 102.
- [43] Ibid.
- [44] Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or the Law and the Prince*, 101.
- [45] Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 238.
- [46] Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 29.
- [47] Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 311.
- [48] Ibid., 312.
- [49] Ibid., 314.
- [50] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 186.
- [51] Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 247.
- [52] Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, 101.
- [53] Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 247.
- [54] Ibid., 247, 252-253.

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Just Walk with Me

A True Story of Inner-City Youth Work

by Jude Simpson and e:merge



Author: Amanda Pink, Undergraduate Student at Redcliffe College.

Set in Inner City Bradford, and providing insight into the difficulties and struggles of the young people who live there, *Just Walk With Me* introduces and explores the work of Christian Youth project e:merge. It tracks one year through the eyes of two members of staff, alternating between the diary entries of Niki, the young and pretty, self-confessed 'happy-clappy', newly appointed youth worker, and insights from Yan, a South African ex-policeman and co-founder and director of the project who has lived and worked in the area for twelve years.

In style the book is easy to read; in content it is challenging and emotionally engaging. It covers a wide range of tricky issues involved in such a ministry – including how to build trust up with people who have lived only with untrustworthy and insecure relationships; how to set behavioural boundaries without becoming just another set of authoritarian rule makers; coping with the sacrifice of moving (along with your family) into a 'difficult' area; whether to work as part of a church or as a separate organisation; and so on. As someone interested in such a ministry I found these accounts extremely valuable food for thought.

I have read too many books tracking Christian mission, from which I come away thinking, "Wow, that sounds really impressive...if only I could be someone like that and do something like that!" And though I may come away with a particular high regard for that person or organisation or work, the main result is that mission becomes something more removed from me in my mind – something that super-holy people who know all the answers do – not people, like me, who have questions and struggle. *Just Walk With Me* is not one of those books. It is impossible not to be drawn into engaging with the issues and situations that it presents because it honestly presents real people, struggling with real life. Its writers talk openly about mistakes they have made, questions they have and don't know the answer to, but equally how they have grown and what they have found helpful.

For those who may not be actively involved in such a ministry but are still part of the body of Christ, *Just Walk With Me* humbly invites its readers to question their prejudices and to grow in understanding about the life of the people that they work with. In Niki's words:

"Life here is not glamorous. Sometimes when people talk or write about 'difficult' young people they glamorise it... They make the young people into really articulate, sort of, genius gangsters who have decided to drop out of society and are making their own heroic way through life, joyriding Mercedes around council estates. The reality's not like that... For some of [the young people here], [life's] a long hard slog they can only just about manage. For many of them it's bleak, shabby and grim."

Some of the questions asked in this book are difficult. And I didn't always agree with the solutions or suggestions that its writers had offered. But if nothing else, it broke my heart for people that God is broken-hearted for, and that, in my mind, can only be a good thing.

Buy *Just Walk With Me: A True Story of Inner-City Youth Work* from [St Andrew's Bookshop](http://www.standrewsbookshop.co.uk).

Author: Jude Simpson and e:merge

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The New Conspirators

Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time

by Tom Sine



Author: Rob Hay, Co-editor of Encounters and Director of Research and Partnership Development, Redcliffe College.

For everyone who has tried to get his or her mind around what “emerging church” is, this book will help. It won’t give you all the answers, it won’t give you a robust theological survey and it is not by any means exhaustive, but it does not claim to be any of those things. Instead it sets out to “show the Spirit of God working largely through the vision, creativity and initiative of a new generation”. Sine is well placed for this task. His book *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy*, published in 1981, was one of the catalysts for the Boomer generation doing the same thing. Whilst recognising the impact those initiatives had he acknowledges that the world has changed dramatically in that period and therefore new initiatives are needed to respond to that new world!

Here, in his inimitable way, Sine manages to give the reader glimpses of what is happening in the various emerging church streams, which he describes as emerging, missional, mosaic and monastic (although he cautions that the groups he categorises in this fashion are not necessarily happy with his labels!). He then unpacks some of the changes in the world and the challenges that they offer to us as church and as individual Christians.

He approaches this large task with what he calls five conversations (in reality sections each with several chapters):

Taking the New Conspirators Seriously

This chapter introduces various individuals and initiatives from around the world, with a significant focus on UK, Australia, New Zealand and the US. This is exciting and revealing but leaves you feeling you have dipped your toe in an ocean and three months at sea might give you some clue as to what is really out there.

Taking the Culture Seriously

This section is on globalisation, as are the following two. This first one looks at globalisation as the context of our life today and specifically looks at the obvious challenges of terrorism, diversity and identity before moving on to the more subtle challenge of consumerism and asks how to avoid conformity and offer a constructive critique.

Taking the Future of God Seriously

Here Sine sets out an alternative way forward, a vision of the kingdom as something that each and every one of us who own the name Christian should engage in building; a globalised kingdom and not just a globalised world.

Taking Turbulent Times Seriously

He tells us to expect crises and disasters and challenges us, the global church, to be proactively planning and preparing for such events. He warns too that whereas traditionally it was the developing world and the poor who were most affected by such events, with globalisation this will begin to affect the middle class and indeed the rich too. Much of these

sections are very USA orientated (despite this being a UK-market edition) but there are fascinating challenges set out for the future of mission and mission funding in particular that are equally if not more urgently true for the UK.

Taking Our Imaginations Seriously

In this final section Sine does what he does best – convinces you that these are not insurmountable issues, or things too big to be challenged. He goes back to the emerging church scene and finds examples of how Christians are doing what he has just been saying needs doing. In chapters entitled Reimagining... whole-life stewardship, whole-life community, and whole-life mission, he is impassioned, exciting and inspiring as he challenges the reader to do something really, really small!

For those of us who read *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy* ten years after it came out and felt the things it said were great but out of date, this is another opportunity, another challenge to do something. But it is also a heart-warming, eye-opening peek at what God is about in our world today.

Buy *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time* from [St Andrew's Bookshop](#).

Author: Tom Sine
Publisher: Paternoster Press
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