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Mission Agencies in the 21st Century
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A revolution in world mission was sparked in 1789 when William Carey wrote his *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* and then founded the Baptist Missionary Society four years later. Carey wasn’t the first Protestant to take the gospel beyond the confines of Europe, but his example liberated the church from its focus on local concerns and spawned the growth of a series of denominational and non-denominational mission societies: the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Baptist Missionary Board (1814), the Basel Mission (1815), the Berlin Society (1824), and many others.

We can’t predict the way the wind of the Spirit will blow, because it doesn’t always blow according to a pattern we expect. But since God has worked at various times in various ways, we should be ready for him to do a new thing if he desires, be on the lookout for signs of this taking place, and be actively evaluating our structures and procedures to see how they might best serve God’s kingdom today and tomorrow.

These societies were augmented by a series of “Faith Mission” societies after Hudson Taylor started the China Inland Mission in 1865. Though some of the early societies have passed out of existence, been absorbed into other agencies, or changed names, the way mission has been done—with most missionaries serving in conjunction with one agency that has been responsible for recruiting, sending, and receiving—has remained fairly consistent for more than 200 years.

That God has honored this method is clear due to the growth of the worldwide church during what Latourette called the “Great Century” that followed Carey and the greater growth witnessed during what Sunquist calls “The Unexpected Christian Century.” While it may seem premature to question the long-term viability of what appears to be a tried-and-true approach to mission, we must remember that Jesus was building his church long before the “modern mission movement” began. It may be that global realities of the 21st century will move God to exchange the wineskin we are accustomed to with a new one that seems a bit unfamiliar or perhaps one that we find unrecognizable. We can’t predict the way the wind of the Spirit will blow, because it doesn’t always blow according to a pattern we expect. But since God has worked at various times in various ways, we should be ready for him to do a new thing if he desires, be on the lookout for signs of this taking place, and be actively evaluating our structures and procedures to see how they might best serve God’s kingdom today and tomorrow.

OMF’s means to engage workers from non-traditional sending countries—New Horizons—and contemplates its possible impact on wider structures. The unforeseen information web created by the internet has moved Reinout van Heiningen to consider ways in which it can be effectively used for evangelism and Christian nurture. He further shows how this is being developed in Thailand and that it can be effectively reproduced elsewhere.

A major change impacting mission today is that it is from everywhere to anywhere as workers from the majority world join the task. However, workers from poorer economic situations face an enormous problem of how they can work in more affluent places. Andrea Koldan demonstrates the possibilities that exist for Filipinos to work in a country like Japan and gives reasons for concluding that similar things can be done so that others can effectively serve in cross-cultural mission. If the possibilities of Filipinos swimming upstream in mission is new, the Korean church’s engagement is much better known. However, as many of us remain unaware of the origins of the Korean mission movement, Warren Beattie interacts with two recent books that examine its history and current status.

Our final contribution, from Zi Yu, looks back to the early pioneers who sought to take the gospel to the Tibetan plateau. Whatever the future shape of mission agencies, faithful workers will always be needed to follow our faithful God with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Walter McConnell

Eddie Arthur

Eddie has worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators for over thirty years. He and his wife Sue were part of a translation team in Ivory Coast and Eddie has been involved in a number of leadership and training roles in Africa and the UK. He was also seconded to Global Connections, the UK network for Churches and mission agencies. Eddie is a part time consultant and pursuing a PhD in Theology and Religious Studies at Leeds Trinity University. He blogs regularly on missiology and Bible translation at www.kouya.net.

The Future of Mission Agencies

1. Introduction

Before proceeding, we need to briefly define what we mean by the term “mission agencies.” Ralph Winter distinguishes between two types of church structure: the settled church structure or modality, and the missional structure or sodality. However, though Winter’s definition is widely used and discussed (see 3.1 below), it is too broad a term for our needs, covering, as it does, a wide range of structures not all of which would be termed mission agencies.

In historical terms, the genesis of mission agencies is often traced back to Carey’s 1792 Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen and the subsequent founding of the Baptist Missionary Society. Carey suggested the establishment of voluntary societies with the purpose of enabling Protestant Christians to serve as missionaries in faraway places. These societies would be governed by independent boards that would take care of the necessary administration and recruitment in the UK. Over two hundred years later, most missionary agencies are still run on broadly similar lines to those suggested by Carey, though with the added complexity which comes from being international organisations with administrative and governance structures in a number of countries.

It is difficult to define agencies in terms of what they do. The primary purpose of the earlier mission agencies was evangelistic, though education and medical work were often part of their remit as well. Latterly, specialist organisations have come into being that focus on areas such as support for the persecuted church, Bible translation, relief and development, and other areas of social action.

Equally, it is difficult to define mission agencies in terms of their relationship to churches. Some, such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, are governed independently of any church or denominational structure. Others, such as Grace Baptist Mission, are quasi-independent, as the missionary arm of a denomination. The Anglican CMS shares many of the characteristics of a mission agency, but is actually a community of the Church of England—a missional and dispersed expression of the Church. Moving a step further, there are also churches and denominations that are involved in overseas mission work without any intervening agency structure.

Practically speaking, within the UK context, the simplest way to identify evangelical agencies is by looking at organisations which self-identify as such through membership in Global Connections, a network of UK agencies, churches, colleges, and support services. This excludes a small number of agencies that have chosen not to join Global Connections, but it does include the vast majority.

Even this definition leaves us with a wide range of organisations to consider. For the purposes of this paper, we will concentrate principally on what Fiedler terms “faith missions”—those which “trace their origins, or the origins of their principles, directly or indirectly back to the China Inland Mission.” This includes most of the larger, well-known agencies such as OMF, AIM, SIM, and Wycliffe. These agencies place missionaries across the world and have links to
many churches and denominations but are not ultimately responsible to any particular church group.

1.1. The historical context

Evangelical missions developed at a time when it was possible to conceive of the world as being divided into the Christian West and the non-Christian rest. The distinction between the two was clear and mission could be distinguished from other forms of Christian service because it involved travelling out of the Christian world into the non-Christian one.

The political world in which the British mission agencies developed was one dominated by Empire. The places to which British agencies were sending missionaries were also very often the same places that became colonies of the British Empire. Though the relationship between the colonial authorities and missionaries was complex, they did, to some extent, become closely entwined, with the government seeing missionaries as part of the strategy for expanding colonial reach. From the point of view of those receiving the missionaries, it could be very difficult to separate out the religious agenda of the missionaries from the political and commercial agenda of their colonial overseers. There was also an inevitable power gap; the missionaries being seen to be backed by the vast wealth and military power of the empire.

Mission agencies developed in an intellectual climate dominated by the Enlightenment and a period of rapid technological development. Agencies tended to be highly pragmatic organisations which rapidly adopted new practices from the business and commercial world in order to further the missionary cause. Over the succeeding 200 years, mission agencies have also been quick to adopt new technologies such as radio, computers, and the internet for the spread of their work. At the same time the separation of the sacred and secular, associated with the Enlightenment, tended to distance missionaries from the people they were serving, as they often failed to appreciate the complex spiritual worldviews of many societies worldwide.

1.2. The situation today

1.2.1 Religion

Over the last fifty years the religious profile of the world has changed dramatically. What Andrew Walls calls the Christian centre of gravity has shifted from the West to Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Philip Jenkins describes this change:

Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. If we want to visualize a “typical” contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian favela.

Comparing trends in Uganda and the United Kingdom gives an indication of the process which is underway. Christianity only took root in Uganda around 150 years ago, yet today 75% of the population would describe themselves as Christian. By contrast, in 2005 a Manchester University study showed that only 50% of British Christian parents succeeded in passing on their faith to their children, whilst a report by Peter Brierly suggests that the membership of Christian denominations in the UK will fall to under 5% by 2040, compared to just under 10% in 2005.

Sanneh sums up the cumulative effect of these two trends:

By 1985 there were over 16,500 conversions a day (in Africa), yielding an annual rate of over 6 million. In the same period some 4,300 people were leaving the Church on a daily basis in Europe and North America.

The different experiences of the church in the West and elsewhere have led to a change in the profile of Christians around the world. In 1800, well over 90% of Christians lived in Europe and North America, whereas in 1990 over 60% lived in Africa, South America, Asia, and the Pacific, with that proportion increasing each year.

Evangelical mission agencies that were originally founded to take the gospel to Asia and Africa now work in a context where there is often a higher proportion of Christians on the “mission fields” than in the traditional sending countries.

There is a growing disparity between the worldviews of the growing world church and that of the mission sending churches. The southern churches tend to be spiritually vibrant, expecting God to intervene in situations where their northern counterparts would look for rational, scientific causes and solutions.

1.2.2 Politics

Since the Second World War, virtually every country that was once part of the British Empire has been granted independence, fundamentally altering the relationship between the UK and its former colonies.

The relationship between missionaries and local Christians has also shifted. It should no longer be assumed that missionaries will be in charge; they have to learn to work under the direction of local Christian leaders.
Christian mission has always been carried out within a given context. However, the impact of globalisation is that there is now no such thing as a purely local context. Every situation in the world is informed by the larger global context.

In the UK, the move away from Empire has been attended by a growth in post-colonial guilt which itself has an impact on mission work. Proselytising mission, which encourages people to change their religious allegiance to Christianity, is no longer seen as appropriate in the contemporary world. Lamin Sanneh recounts the story of a British Methodist missionary who discouraged him from converting from Islam to Christianity. Evangelical theologian Steve Holmes has demonstrated that societal criticisms of mission are having a growing impact on the way in which church congregations perceive mission agencies and their work. Paul Hildreth draws attention to the paradoxical situation in which UK churches are increasingly interested in mission to Muslims, but feel constrained by political correctness as to what they can say.

At the same time, there is active hostility in the wider secular media towards the work of Christian mission. This can be seen in the comments pages of newspapers or in major publications such as Norman Lewis’s The Missionaries.

It is, perhaps, significant that in 2011 a major survey of the beliefs and habits of evangelical Christians in the UK made no reference to overseas mission. Globalisation is the spread of western economic progress and influence throughout the world, in particular through information technology. “It has beneficial potential but also has been the source of a consumer society in the West, a growing gap between rich and poor, ecological destruction, a massive displacement of peoples, and a homogenising force imposing the spirit of Western culture on the cultures of the world.” Christian mission has always been carried out within a given context. However, the impact of globalisation is that there is now no such thing as a purely local context.

1.2.3. Globalisation

Globalisation is the spread of western culture on the cultures of the world. Given the tensions that we have mentioned (the decline in the church in the West, the ambivalence towards mission, and the growing trend of churches that choose not to work with agencies) it would be logical to assume that the number of agencies in the UK would be declining. However, the opposite is actually true. The graph on the next page compares the number of mission agencies that are members of Global Connections with the weekly attendance at Anglican churches in the UK.

1.2.4. Rapid change

We are living in a period of massive change: the world is increasingly urbanised, communication technology is evolving at a rapid rate, while the economic balance of the world is shifting. The population in Europe and Japan is ageing, while in Africa and other parts of Asia the population is growing at an explosive rate. Across the globe, huge numbers of people are moving to avoid conflict or simply to improve their standards of living. One result of these trends is a huge shift in population towards urban centres and away from rural areas. We are living in the midst of these changes today and it is difficult to predict what their impact will be on the future of mission agencies. One thing is clear, however: agencies that wish to respond to these changes will need to be very adaptable.

1.2.5. UK trends

We have noted that the church has grown enormously in recent decades across the globe. However, the growth in the world population more or less matches the growth in the church, such that the number of Christians as a percentage of the world population has hardly changed. Therefore the need for evangelistic mission to reach people who have no opportunity to hear about Jesus is as crucial as it ever was.

However, in the UK at least, there is concern that churches and mission agencies are losing their focus on evangelistic mission. In 1974, the Lausanne Covenant helped evangelicals to recapture the importance of social action as an integral part of mission work. However, in the intervening years, the pendulum appears to have swung in the other direction to such an extent that evangelistic proclamation is being sidelined by concerns for climate change, poverty relief, and justice. In September 2015, Martin Lee of Global Connections wrote: “The evangelical church has lost its desire to help people come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, happy with just social action and doing good.”

At the same time an increasing number of churches and denominations are engaging in mission without the intermediary of mission agencies. Sometimes this simply involves a partnership with a project, church, or diocese in another part of the world, while in some cases churches are directly involved in church planting across the globe.

1.2.5.1. Agency numbers

Given the tensions that we have mentioned (the decline in the church in the West, the ambivalence towards mission, and the growing trend of churches that choose not to work with agencies) it would be logical to assume that the number of agencies in the UK would be declining. However, the opposite is actually true. The graph on the next page compares the number of mission agencies that are members of Global Connections with the weekly attendance at Anglican churches in the UK.

It is possible to argue that the Church of England figures are not entirely representative of the evangelical church in the UK. However, they are broadly illustrative of a trend. Ultimately, there are more and more agencies seeking support from a shrinking constituency. This is not sustainable even in the short to mid-term.

1.2.6. Missionaries today

It would be wrong to assume from the preceding discussion that there is no place for missionaries in the contemporary church. We can identify...
three key roles for missionaries in the world today:

1. Taking the Christian message to people who have not yet heard the message of Christ.
2. Serving the church through technical skills and providing training.
3. Encouraging and teaching the church by virtue of experiences gathered in very different cultural contexts.

However, the majority of these missionaries will not be westerners and they are unlikely to be dependent on Western structures for their work.

1.3. Summary

This introduction has demonstrated that the world in which evangelical mission agencies operate has changed dramatically over the last fifty years or so. David Smith describes the impact of these changes in stark terms:

What is clear by now is that both the concept of mission as a one-way movement from Christendom to the un-evangelised world, and the structures devised at the close of the eighteenth century to facilitate that movement, have been overtaken by historical developments that render them increasingly irrelevant and redundant.

At the same time as agencies confront questions about their purpose and structure, they are faced with the challenge of raising support from a church that is both in decline and apparently less interested in overseas mission work than in previous generations and for whom the focus of mission has often shifted to the UK.

2. Current approaches

In response to these issues, British mission agencies have made some changes to the way in which they operate. These can be broken down into two broad categories: tweaking and reforming.

2.1. Tweaking

Some agencies, in particular the larger ones that are less threatened by the current situation, are responding by improving their managerial processes, sharpening their communications and fund-raising, and adapting their funding models to meet the new challenges. These tweaks are well intentioned and often demonstrate good stewardship. However, they do not reflect the extent to which the operating environment has changed for mission agencies and are unlikely to be successful in the long term.

Paul Hildreth, in his report on mission agencies, referred to this approach as “operating within the model.”

2.2. Reforming

The alternative recommended by Hildreth is to reform the model—for agencies to find ways of deploying their workforce which reflect the current realities of the world. Generally, it is the medium-sized and smaller agencies that are adopting these strategies. They are not only more threatened by the changes in the world, but also have a flexibility to change and adapt which may not be present among some of the larger agencies. The following section illustrates some of the approaches which are being adopted.

2.2.1. Diaspora mission of networks

Typically, mission agencies have built up expertise and experience in working with people from particular languages and cultures. This was done by sending missionaries to the regions where those languages and cultures were indigenous. Today, however, in a very mobile world, people from a wide array of linguistic and cultural backgrounds are found in most major towns and cities in the West. It is suggested that one future role of mission agencies would be to reach these diaspora communities.

There are various aspects to diaspora ministry that we need to note.

The first, and perhaps most obvious, is reaching settled immigrant communities with the Christian gospel. For example, there are missionaries with experience in the Indian Subcontinent who are working with Indian churches and mission groups in cities across the UK. The work they do in Britain is very similar to that which they did in India, except that they do not need to travel half way across the world. There are a number of other communities in the UK which can be reached in this way.

At the same time as agencies confront questions about their purpose and structure, they are faced with the challenge of raising support from a church that is both in decline and apparently less interested in overseas mission work than in previous generations and for whom the focus of mission has often shifted to the UK.
Diaspora ministry is complex and the avenues for involvement are expanding. It is undoubtedly the case that churches in the West will require support and advice as they seek to minister to the growing international communities in their midst. The challenge for mission agencies is to learn how to work alongside churches, supporting but not supplanting them.

and experience of cross-cultural mission agencies could be of use. Reaching these transient communities is strategically important, as the visitors to the West will one day return to their own countries, perhaps taking the gospel to places where expatriate missionaries find it very difficult to work.

Ministry to refugees and asylum seekers in the West is an area of growing interest, possibilities, and concerns. Many churches are concerned for the refugee populations which are moving into their cities, but have no idea how best to serve them. Mission agencies may well be able to provide support and help in this area.

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2.2.2. Mission to the West

As the church grows and develops in the majority world and shrinks in the West, mission is no longer unidirectional. Of particular relevance to us in this context is the flow of missionaries from former mission fields to the UK and other Western nations. A number of mission agencies, for example Latin Link, are sponsoring missionaries to plant churches amongst the indigenous British population. Harvey Kwiyani refers to this phenomenon as “the blessed reflex.”38

It could be argued that there is no need for mission agencies to be involved in this movement. There are many Christians and Christian leaders who are migrating to the West, particularly from Africa, as part of a general economic movement. These communities are planting churches where they settle. There are now many African churches in London and it has been suggested that African church-goers outnumber British ones in the city. However, these African churches have had limited impact on the British population.

2.2.3. Training the church in the home country

Another channel for involvement is training churches in the home country in cross-cultural ministry. Interserve offers a number of courses which aim to train British Christians how to reach out to neighbors who have come from other countries. As the UK, and the West in general, grows more multicultural, it is clear that this sort of training will become increasingly necessary. However, it is obvious that the number of agencies that could potentially offer training far exceeds the number ever likely to be needed within the UK context.

2.2.4. Moving to a consultancy model

Bryan Knell suggests that mission agencies need to encourage churches to take over the role that the agencies once adopted, while agencies themselves become consulting and advisory bodies to support churches in their mission work.39 However, this ignores the practical and administrative services that agencies can offer in supporting workers overseas.

On a more practical, though anecdotal, note, there is very little evidence that churches are using the consultancy services that agencies are already providing.

Another pragmatic issue is the general unwillingness of churches in the UK to engage directly with mission to the unreached overseas. Though there are some honourable exceptions, most churches in Britain who take direct responsibility for mission, or who engage in overseas partnerships, tend to work in East Africa where English can be used and where there is already a significant Christian presence. If agencies are to transfer much of what they do to churches, there needs to be a significant development in the British church’s vision for mission. There is currently no visible sign of this happening.

2.3. Where does this leave us?

All of these suggestions have been adopted in one way or another by mission agencies in the UK, but all of these approaches have significant problems in common.

In the introduction we noted the unsustainable situation of having an increasing number of mission agencies coupled with a falling church attendance. None of the above approaches addresses this issue; indeed, some of them exacerbate it. If mission agencies are to make the shift from being sending agencies to serving churches as consultancies, then there would be a need for significantly fewer agencies than exist today.

Another issue is that each of these suggestions depends on the church, either as a local congregation or a denomination, taking a particular course of action in order to make use of the services that the agency provides. Anecdotally, there is not a great deal of evidence to suggest that churches are using agencies in this way.

The steps that agencies have taken to meet the changing situation are simply not radical enough. However, Hildreth suggests that agencies are unlikely to adopt truly radical solutions until they experience a greater degree of stress than they do at the moment.40

In the following section, we will explore some of the issues that would need to be addressed for agencies to make radical changes to the way in which they work. A first step is briefly to explore the legitimacy of agencies as separate structures in the first place.
3. Whose problem is it anyway?

3.1. Legitimacy of agencies

Up to this point, we have taken the existence of mission agencies as a given without questioning their validity. However, there are some ambiguities about the nature of agencies which need to be briefly examined before we can proceed any further.

The Lausanne Covenant is positive about the existence of specialist agencies:

“We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other specialist fields.”

As we mentioned in the introduction, Winter rationalises the existence of agencies by suggesting that the church globally and historically has always had two types of structure: the sodalities (the voluntary orders) and modalities (the local congregations or churches).

Winter’s conclusion, however, is not universally accepted. Schnable, for example, argues that Winter’s sociological explanation for church and mission structures has no biblical validity.

Perhaps a more useful approach is one that is adopted by a number of authors who, rather than getting tied up in details of the legitimacy of agencies, seek to deal with them on pragmatic grounds. Thus Neill writes:

Missionary societies as we know them today, are in no sense a necessary part of the existence of the church; they are simply a temporary expedient for the performance of certain functions that could be performed in different ways.

Similarly, Kirk concludes:

Their only theological rationale is in the service they can give to the churches, fulfilling those tasks which the churches see as necessary but which they do not have the resources on a local level to accomplish. Their main objective should be to facilitate co-operation between local churches and across denominational boundaries. They may provide opportunities for fellowship, worship, teaching, evangelism and service, acting as catalysts and giving encouragement, but never trying to be substitutes for the churches.

Scott Sunquist adds: “The concept of voluntary societies, as a parallel structure for mission, was not a theological conviction—it was a practical necessity.”

The role of the agency, then, is to serve as a specialist arm of the church, doing things that the church sees as necessary, but which require a degree of specialisation or international reach which the local church cannot achieve. However, this implies that the agencies need to listen to the churches and to be, in some fashion, directed by them. For various reasons, this has not always happened.

Again, Neill makes a strong point:

It was the failure of the churches to develop a missionary sense that drove certain missionary societies to adopt positions and policies which were unrelated to anything in the New Testament, and then subsequently to attempt to work out a theological rationale for that which in itself is theologically indefensible.

Nevertheless, not all positions and policies adopted by mission agencies are “theologically indefensible.”

Undoubtedly, members of the Church have sometimes unnecessarily succumbed to the entrepreneurial spirit of the age, initiating projects, and founding institutions and organisations which have been detrimental to mission rather than furthering it. On the other hand, where the Church at large is clearly failing to fulfil its mission vocation responsibly and with dedication, initiatives by groups of Christians in obedience to the Gospel seem to be perfectly in order.

However, these occasions when the church fails in its mission vocation should be seen as the exceptions, rather than taken as the norm. Even when agencies perceive that the church is not fulfilling its missional calling, the agency should not simply step into the breach, but should work in dialogue providing both a model and an encouragement for the church.

When a missionary is sent by one of thousands of missions, there is still the need for a local church to be the primary sending body, since mission is the work of the church—the church universal, through a local, particular church.

3.2. Working with home country churches

The contents of this section and the next will inevitably simplify the rather complex situation faced by agencies at the present time. However, one central principle needs to be retained. The future role of mission agencies must be determined in dialogue with the churches to whom the agencies are responsible.

In considering the relationship between mission agency and the church, it is convenient to identify three types of agencies.

• Denominational Agencies, such as the Baptist Missionary Society and the Anglican Church Missionary Society, are linked in some way into a denominational structure which provides (at least in theory) for clear communication and accountability. To some extent, Protestant denominational agencies can be considered as

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homologues to the Catholic Orders which are linked in one way or another with the broader church structure.

- There are also a number of smaller agencies that have close links with a limited number of churches—often those churches which the founder of the agency attended. These agencies, if they are so inclined, are in a position to seek advice and input regarding their future from the churches to which they are accountable.

- However, these two types of agency represent a minority both in terms of the number of agencies as well as the number of missionaries sent from the UK. The faith missions, such as OMF, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Interserve, represent a much more complex situation. These organisations tend to have links with a large number of individual churches, but much weaker links with denominational or inter-church structures. This means that it is very difficult to establish any meaningful communication between churches and the agencies regarding the agencies’ future.

Typically, the board of trustees has been the mechanism by which churches have been able to have an input into the work and future plans of agencies. Over the years, most mission agencies have appointed a number of clergy to their boards, who, although they had no official representative status, could provide advice and guidance from the point of view of their churches. However, over the past few years, British charity legislation has become more complex and boards of trustees have to deal with a complex legal and financial environment. Because of this, there is less time available in board meetings for discussion of mission strategy and agencies are required to include board members from legal, accounting, and other professional backgrounds.

Equally, the fragmentation of British evangelicalism into a number of different “tribes”50 makes it difficult, if not impossible, for agencies to have boards which represent the full spectrum of evangelicalism.

The proliferation of mission agencies is another modern problem at this point. To the insider, the various agencies have different purposes and characters, but to a busy church leader they look very much alike and it is impossible to engage with all of them.

There is, perhaps, a need for a national dialogue which involves leaders from a range of church backgrounds as well as a number of agencies to consider the future shape of mission support and involvement from the UK.

3.3. Working with field churches

On the surface, seeking advice and input from churches on “the field” is simpler than the situation in the “home country.” Whereas agencies may have to relate to multiple churches at home, they will, with a few exceptions, relate to only one or two denominations on the field and they may well have direct organisational links to that denomination.

However, two significant issues may impact the quality of dialogue: the first is the quality of the partnership between mission and church and the second concerns the future direction of the church across the world.

Partnership is a wonderful idea; pity about the practice! Truly equal sharing will remain problematic across the world Church as long as material resources are so unevenly owned. All too often Western Churches and mission agencies use either financial inducements or veiled threats of withdrawal to promote their own concepts of mission and evangelism, church growth, development and social struggle. Sometimes a cloak of respectability is given to Western programmes and strategies by ensuring that indigenous leadership from the Third World has a high profile. Yet the most important decision-making and long-term planning are still done outside the situation.51

This issue of the relationship between agencies and the churches that they have helped to found has been of concern since the days of Henry Venn. However, if agencies are to discover their future role, then they will need to find ways to facilitate honest, open, and unbiased dialogue with their partners in the countries where they work.52

This dialogue needs to take into account the basic change in the nature of the church that we highlighted in the introduction—the fact that the majority of Christians now live in the continents of the South and East, not the Western home of mission agencies.

Hanciles highlights this point: “there can be little doubt that the future of global Christianity is now inextricably bound up with non-Western initiatives and developments. This is supremely applicable to missionary enterprise.”53

In the light of this, Hanciles suggests that there is a need to address a number of issues:

- The preponderance of American/Western concepts which dominate approaches to mission. These include short-term missions (“many of which amount to little more than Christian tourism with a touch of scheduled humanitarianism”) and terms such as “unreached peoples” and “the 10/40 Window” (“both of which reflect Western mapping of the world and ignore the living witness of Christians residing in non-Western contexts”).

- Western missionary action and thinking reflect over-dependence on material resources and confuse quantifiable measures of growth or human development with missionary success.

- There is a need to rethink our understanding of Christian mission, but the current structures may be too entrenched to allow this thinking to take place.

Hanciles concludes his argument thus:

The main problem is that Western missiologists are stuck with definitions, models, and instruments of measurement associated with Western operations and ill-suited for evaluation of new non-Western initiatives. For starters, the term “missionary” is generally linked with “command and go structures” and is typically applied to individuals “sent” by an organisation to a foreign country (usually outside the West). The initiatives, movements, and sheer numbers involved in the non-Western missionary movement are of a scale and magnitude that defy statistical analysis; nor are they
Hanciles’ point is that the shift in the centre of gravity of the church is not just a numerical issue, it is also a conceptual and theological one and mission agencies need to take this into account.

4. Conclusion

British mission agencies face a twin problem: the decline of the church in the UK is undermining their support base (at a time when the number of agencies is still increasing) and their raison d’être is called into question by the growth of the church worldwide.

For the most part, agencies have reacted to their dramatically altered circumstances by effecting limited or incremental changes which do not reflect the Copernican nature of the transformation of the world church.53

If it is the role of agencies to support churches in their mission, and they are not serving churches, then the agencies no longer have a function. If the agencies fail to adapt adequately to a changing situation, then they should close.

Any future plans for agencies should be directed towards them helping to support churches across the world, not towards their own survival. In all likelihood, the number of mission agencies in the UK will start to decline in the next few years. Ideally, this should be done intelligently with an eye to preserving those functions which support the church. The fear is that financial or other pressures will cause agencies to fold without the opportunity to provide for the continuation of that which they do well.

In order to find their role for the future, agencies need to be in dialogue with churches in their sending countries and also with churches in the countries where they work. However, it is likely that churches in different contexts will have very different priorities. One simple example of this relates to the placement of missionaries. The Lausanne Covenant suggests that there are situations in which expatriate missionaries are a hindrance rather than a help to local mission:

A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelised country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church’s growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelised areas.36

The presence of foreign missionaries (and foreign funding) can stifle the growth of the church. Even so, a “sending church” may still wish to send a missionary into that situation. It could be that they “feel a call” to work in a specific country, or it could be they feel that by sending missionaries it will help their congregation to understand the needs of the world. Whatever the reasons, there is a potential clash between the interests of the sending and receiving churches.

Balancing these competing priorities and conceptions will be a major preoccupation for mission agencies in the future. This will not be easy. For the most part, agencies are dependent on churches in the West for their personnel and finances, but as Hanciles has noted, the way in which the new, growing churches of the South conceive of mission can be very different than their Western counterparts. Finding a way to serve the growing Southern church, while not alienating those in the West who provide resources is likely to be extremely difficult. However, agencies must avoid, at all costs, imposing a Western agenda on other churches simply because the West is in possession of more financial resources.

Nevertheless, although this represents a significant challenge, it also opens up the possibility of an important new role for mission agencies: stimulating dialogue between the churches of the West and the rest of the world.

The World Council of Churches emerged from the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference and while evangelicals may suggest that the WCC has lost its way theologically, it is clear that mission is a theme which can serve to draw Christians and churches together. International Denominations, such as the Anglican Community, are able to create links between churches and dioceses around the world. However, mission agencies, with their breadth of church affiliations, are in a position to facilitate much broader dialogue than can be achieved within a denominational structure. This does not suggest recreating a large conference or organisation along the lines of the WCC or the Lausanne Movement; those structures exist already, though it could be argued that they have little effect at a grassroots level.57

However, agencies, with their grassroots contacts, will have a key role in the future in finding ways for exchange, communication, and shared mission between churches in very different parts of the world. MRT

32. William Carey, An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961); http://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/enquiry/enquiry.pdf (accessed 19 January 2017). There were a number of Protestant mission structures which predate Carey, including the SPCK (1690) and the USPG (1701). The Cromwellian parliament in 1649 debated the establishment of a society to support mission in North America. J. Cox, The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700 (London: Routledge, 2009), 8, 13. There were also a number of continental mission structures in existence as Carey acknowledges in his Enquiry. However, Carey provided both a theological rationale and a pragmatic structure which allowed for the flowering of the Protestant mission movement.
10 Jenkins, The Next Christendom, 91.
16 Smith, Against the Stream, 23. See also, Jenkins, The Next Christendom, 107-108.
17 Kirsteen Kim, “Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission (London: Epworth, 2009), 11.
18 Steve Holmes, “A Love I seem to Lose...” Steve Holmes, [37x466]21 Norman Lewis, “Missionary Research 23, no. 4 (October 1999): 163-165. paper presented at the Global Connections field. It is, unfortunately, a fact of economic circumstances, so allow, on the field. It is, unfortunately, a fact of economic necessity that many missionaries have a number of supporting churches from which they receive financial and prayer support. However, agencies should not accept candidates who are not members of a specific church or are not responsible to the leadership of that church. In some senses, the role of the mission agency is an agglomeration of the roles of the missionaries who belong to that agency and it is vitally important that there are clear lines of communication between agencies, their missionaries, and the churches that have commissioned the missionaries for the specific mission work. The second issue is duplication. There are literally hundreds of Christian agencies in the UK, many of which do very similar work in identical situations. This makes it very difficult for churches to know how best to support the work they are doing or to have any meaningful input into it.
50 In an unpublished 2010 paper, Peter Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden, identified seven distinct “tribes” within British Evangelicalism which cut across denominational boundaries.
51 Kirk, What is Mission, 192.
54 Hance, Beyond Christendom, 384.
55 One agency which has undergone major change is the Wycliffe Global Alliance (formerly Wycliffe Bible Translators International). In the 1990s, the various international divisions of Wycliffe Bible Translators, which were subsidiaries of Wycliffe US, became independent churches in their home countries. Wycliffe Organisations were, for the most part, Western agencies which provided finance and personnel for Bible translation around the world. They were mirrored by National Bible Translation Organisations (NBTs); that recruited local staff and received expats and finance from the Wycliffe Organisations worldwide. Over the last twenty years this structure has evolved such that the Wycliffe Global Alliance is now “a dynamic, interdependent community of diverse organizations, networks and movements in various stages of development, drawn together by God as participants in the Bible translation movement”. Kirk Franklin, CEO of the Wycliffe Global Alliance, lists some of the advantages of this transformation, which include: giving a greater voice to various partners in the Global South (balancing the voice of the more mature and influential northern organisations), improved missiological reflection, and the training of leaders for the Bible translation task. Franklin, "A Paradigm for Global Mission Leadership,” 63, http://www.repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/53075/Franklin_Paradigm_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed 13 February 2017).
56 The transformation that the Wycliffe Global Alliance has undergone is a valuable one. Yet there is little evidence that the changes were made in conjunction with or in order to serve the needs of the church. Internally, the Wycliffe Global Alliance is clearly much better structured for the work of Bible translation. However, it is not clear that this new formation will help the constituent organisations support the church in its mission.
Future Proofing OMF

A s Shenk puts it, missions are today in search of mission; agencies and institutions that once did pioneering work at the cutting edges of the Christian mission have too often been left facing in the wrong direction as the battle has moved on. In this situation they face a stark choice: either they engage in a radical re-formation, repositioning themselves to respond to the quite new challenges of the twenty-first century, or they are doomed to rapid and rather sad decline and extinction.1

Introduction

David Smith (and Wilbert Shenk before him) are only some of the voices arguing that the western missionary movement is facing a time of change. Globalization, the shifting center of Christianity, Christendom’s demise in the West, changing patterns of church/mission engagement and other factors, while not necessarily negative, are powerful disruptive forces for the western missionary movement.

OMF Canada is one specific community in that movement, part of the larger OMF International community that celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2015. Being part of something well established does not make the organization immune to disruptive forces. A rich legacy can also make it harder to adjust to rapidly changing environments. “Future proofing” an organization requires a commitment to adaptive learning where leadership is able to “recognize this new reality but also intentionally develop coping mechanisms and skill-sets that will help ensure that they don’t ‘miss the future’.” OMF has to choose whether to engage with these disruptive forces as a threat, or as an opportunity for reflection and perhaps renewal.

Learning in Southern Africa

I took up the role of International Director for Mobilization (IDM) at OMF’s International Headquarters (IHQ) in August 2005 and began to learn as much as I could about the eighteen “homesides” for which I was responsible. I was a young, passionate, and idealistic leader excited to tackle this new role. In late 2005 the OMF Southern Africa (ZA) Council contacted me to say that they had decided to “close down” their operations after more than sixty years. On Saturday, 4 March 2006, the OMF ZA Council met with the six office staff members and two representatives of the field members to discuss the future of OMF ZA. I attended as an observer representing IHQ, and so was the one person in the room without a vote. The discussion was intense and at times emotional but ended with a unanimous decision to “discontinue” the homeside operations. This consensus included the agreement of the office staff, who were effectively terminating their employment.

I have distinct memories of the discussions, and particularly of the emotional terrain over which we travelled. At the beginning of the day, the OMF ZA community was torn between frustration, anger, and grief, with grief increasing as the decision to “discontinue” became increasingly clear. However, with that clarity came a slow lightening of mood. The prospect of a decision, any decision, brought the uncertainty to an end. A “discontinuation” also brought to an end ten years of heroic, but in the end largely futile, effort to save OMF ZA. With the decision made, I sensed...
Real leadership is about moving forward in faith, and it requires both head and heart…. Each of us has unique gifts; we are as different as snowflakes, but to realize and use these gifts, we have to use our courage and move forward with a commitment to true service.”

that many of those in the room were experiencing a new degree of freedom as they looked to their own future which might or might not include an on-going investment in OMF.

In distinct contrast, while I had begun the day as an observer seeking to support this community in its time of crisis, by the end of the day I found myself feeling an intense weight of responsibility. The mandate given to “OMF International” essentially landed on my shoulders as the sole representative of that body and as the International Director responsible for OMF’s engagement with Africa. This involved, not just the call for a process of evaluation and exploration, but also the responsibility for the “administrative structure” that was needed to care for retirees and existing members.

Emotionally, the day was a journey into darkness and doubt for me. As we drove away from the meeting, I found myself weeping. When one of my companions expressed concern, I pointed out that they as South Africans, had just handed the future of OMF in Southern Africa to a white, male, middle-aged Canadian who lived in Singapore.

In Building the Bridge as You Walk on It, Quinn comments on the importance of courage in leadership, quoting one of his respondents. “Real leadership is about moving forward in faith, and it requires both head and heart…. Each of us has unique gifts; we are as different as snowflakes, but to realize and use these gifts, we have to use our courage and move forward with a commitment to true service.”3 That day of discussion with the OMF ZA leadership stands out for me as a day of great courage, not least because the leadership’s “commitment to true service” was to choose to die. In Quinn’s words, “It [entering the fundamental state of leadership] means being so focused on achieving the desired outcome that we are always willing to accept that it may be necessary for us to go in order for the outcome to emerge. This means we are truly focused on the collective good.”4 The ZA leadership had truly “walked naked into the land of uncertainty.”5 I had the great privilege to join them on this journey.

The Plenary Counsel captured this courageous decision in a statement which began, “With great sadness, but believing it to be God’s clear direction, we propose that the current OMF (Southern Africa) operation be discontinued.”6 It is important to note that the decision was intentionally described as a “discontinuation” rather than “closing down”. This reflected the entire group’s conviction that the church in Africa still had a role to play amongst East Asians, and their hope that OMF would be part of that involvement. The commitment to the mission hadn’t changed, but OMF ZA was no longer deemed to be effective in accomplishing that mission.

The statement gives the reason for the discontinuation as OMF Southern Africa no longer being able to “adequately serve God’s purposes in Africa today.” Although the statement includes a strong commitment to reaching East Asia’s peoples, the core reasons for discontinuation related to the center’s lack of relevance and effectiveness in the African context. OMF has taken pride for many years in its commitment to language and culture training in its field ministries; too often this concern for effective cross-cultural ministry has not been applied as rigorously in the “homeside” context.

Finally, the statement gave a mandate to OMF International to “evaluate and explore” God’s future purposes for OMF in Africa “without the constraints of the existing structures.” This paragraph was carefully worded to express a hope for the future and to ensure that someone was responsible to take that effort forward. However, it also reflects the strong feeling that the “existing structures” had become part of the problem.

Eldon Porter described this challenge well in his influential article “What Does the Future of the Traditional Mission Agency Look Like.”7

There is a growing realization that an agency’s primary value-add for the local church is shifting away from the services offered through the sending office, toward the services offered on the field or ministry context. Historically, each agency has managed its own sending functions (mobilization, promotion, screening, selection, training, the financial services of receiving donations and transferring funds to the field, church and donor relations, and member care).

These services consume upwards of ninety percent of an agency’s administrative dollar and large numbers of personnel. Maintaining these structures is the financial challenge many agencies are facing. It isn’t that these services are no longer needed, but rather that many of these services can be done by the local church, outsourced, or done in partnership with other agencies at a significantly lower cost. The day when an agency needed a large sending office building and the related office staff is a thing of the past.8

This dependence on outmoded and unsustainable structures, was a significant factor in the decision to discontinue the OMF ZA operations. The decision was not just economic, but also reflected a deep concern for leader care. As one Council member put it, “We can’t afford to destroy another leader’s health by asking them to continue like this.”9

In hindsight, my unexpected role in Southern Africa turned out to be a precious gift for me as a developing leader. OMF Southern Africa became my “skunk works”, a place where I could experiment with new methods and models of partnership and mobilization.9

There was nothing particularly advanced or secret about the work around OMF ZA between 2006 and 2013, but I was given a high degree of autonomy and the opportunity to experiment and try new methods in that context. In part, this was simply because Southern Africa was far
away, and “off the radar” for most of our leaders based in East Asia. There was also a degree of sympathy for me having to deal with a difficult situation. The most common question I faced in the early years, was why we continued to be involved at all. It was easy (and partly true) to joke that I loved visiting South Africa, thereby deflecting the question in order to continue staying under the radar. In fact, my engagement with Southern Africa provided a safe “workshop” in which to explore questions about sustainability, meaningful partnerships, and critical contextualization.

I am grateful for the support I received from Dr. Patrick Fung, OMF’s General Director and my direct supervisor. I made sure that he was aware of the on-going work being done (or not done in the early years), and he was largely supportive of the evaluation and exploration. Organizationally, I looked to him to protect this “skunk works” and give me time, both to learn valuable lessons and also to bring OMF ZA to a point of either renewal or healthy closure.

In the first three years after the “discontinuation”, we worked hard to let the old OMF Southern Africa model die. This was painful, particularly for the existing faithful donor and praying constituency, the OMF retirees, and the twenty or so current South African field members. The office building was closed and a small office set up in the home of one staff member who continued to manage basic administration half-time, replacing the six full-time personnel that had been working in the office. An accountant volunteered to manage the books, working with the administrator and with some support from the international systems.

Instead of “the office” sending out prayer letters, members had to do so themselves or find a volunteer who would handle it. The bi-monthly prayer newsletter was discontinued, until a volunteer came forward to put something together and send it out electronically, without postage costs. Instead of someone from the office meeting members at the airport when they arrived home, helping to arrange housing, and setting up deputation meetings, the members had to do these things themselves with the help of their sending churches. This transition was difficult, but it also resulted in greater involvement from sending churches, more responsibility being taken by the members themselves, and reduced expectations of the organization from both sides. Many of the younger missionaries had already moved in this direction, with strong sending church partnerships. When OMF ZA began slowly to send new missionaries again, this model became the norm.

In Managing Transitions, William Bridges describes the three stages of every transition: (1) Ending, Losing, Letting Go; (2) The Neutral Zone; and (3) The New Beginning. “Because transition is a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world, we can say that transition starts with an ending and finishes with a beginning.” This is certainly true of OMF ZA between 2006 and 2013 when the community went through a very significant transition. In the early years of that transition, it was important to communicate the new reality, while at the same time acknowledging the losses, particularly for long-term members of the OMF ZA community, whether they were donors, prayer supporters, or members. This was a huge challenge, particularly for someone like me who was relatively new to the community and based in Singapore, geographically distant from virtually all of those involved. Looking back, much more could have been done to ease the transition at that first stage.

As the transition moved into “The Neutral Zone”, it was important to resist the temptation to “make something happen.” In the early years, there was no shortage of suggestions for new initiatives, opportunities that I found it difficult to resist as someone passionate about mobilization. However, in the day-long meeting that led to the “discontinuation”, the group had spoken a number of times of the need to let OMF ZA die, so that something new could grow. We honored that discussion by committing to wait for at least three years before taking any initiatives in mobilization, while choosing to see this as useful time in the context of the evaluation and exploration mandate. “The neutral zone is not the wasted time of meaningless waiting and confusion that it sometimes seems to be. It is a time when reorientation and re-definition must take place, and people need to understand that. It is the winter during which the spring’s new growth is taking shape under the earth.”

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that focuses on East Asians outside of their historic, geographical context. These “field” centers have been served for many years by eighteen OMF “homesides”, nine in East Asia and nine in the “West”, including North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Resources including missionaries, finances, and prayer have come from the homesides to support field ministries. Centers have a director, staff, and physical infrastructure, and are almost all legally registered in their national context. They are supported by donors, who give to the center directly, or who give to specific missionaries sent out through the center and from whose donations the center takes a service fee. This structure is common to many mission agencies that trace their roots back to the nineteenth century, and reflects a Christendom model of missions in which the agencies’ role was primarily to facilitate the movement of resources from the Christian west to the pagan “rest”.

Christendom’s division of the world and its peoples into two great blocs – here a culture shaped by the Gospel; there a realm of ignorance and darkness (a categorization that continues to inform the Western mind in various secularised reworkings) – has increasingly seemed to be implausible and unbelievable… These questions become increasingly urgent in the light of the findings of Wilbert Shenk that the study of the missionary movement since the 1920s leaves the impression that “an ageing movement, increasingly unable to adapt to the times” has found its basic structures and assumptions rendered irrelevant and that with the end of the modern period in world history has also come the end of modern missions.12

The center structure and the tensions related to it in today’s world form the backdrop for the development of New Horizons.

**The Origins of New Horizons**

New Horizons does not represent OMF’s first engagement with countries where OMF does not have a sending office. OMF connections in Latin America go back to the mid-1990s when Alex Smith and Jim Morris spoke at a missions conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Over the next few years, a number of couples were sent to OMF Thailand through Avante, an indigenous Brazilian mission agency. OMF US was also involved in discussions with Latin American mission leaders at various times in the 1990s and early 2000s. OMF centers in Europe have routinely sought to facilitate the mission interest of individual applicants from nearby nations, wherever that was possible. In Asia, the Mekong center (minority peoples in and around north Thailand) has had an Indian couple working with their team for many years, partially supported by Singaporean churches. However, New Horizons is unique as the first organization-wide structure formed specifically to facilitate these kinds of engagements.

In 2007 two of OMF’s International Directors visited Brazil to meet with an existing partner church and indigenous agency and explore further partnership possibilities. Over the next few years, a number of OMF leaders joined COMIBAM (the Latin American mission movement network) meetings, met with key Latin American leaders, and joined conferences in South America. OMF had already been involved with Latin America for about twenty years, but primarily within the existing structures and policies, although with some creative solutions even then. In face-to-face meetings with Latin American leaders, and with international leaders who had more experience than OMF in Latin America, we were able to review and evaluate our approach to the “global south” or “majority world”.

OMF International relates closely to majority world mission movements in the East Asian context including Korea and the Philippines but has arguably been slow to connect with similar movements in other parts of the majority world, including Africa and Latin America. However, this was changing in the early 2000s, driven by our growing awareness of these global movements, and the increasing numbers of Latin American, African, and Eastern Europeans showing up in East Asia. The internet also stimulated increased awareness of mission interest from the majority world, as traditional OMF centers received growing numbers of inquiries about mission from countries like Nigeria and Pakistan. Many of these were uninformed inquiries or genuine requests for paid employment, but not all could be so easily dismissed. OMF leaders began to ask how we could respond to credible requests from contexts where we had no organizational presence. In some cases, a nearby OMF center could reply and develop the relationship. This model worked relatively well in Europe where distances are not great. In other cases, it was possible to refer the credible inquirer to a partner agency. However, these solutions all had limitations. The question arose if OMF should be establishing additional “homeside” centers in some of these new locations.

The rise of the majority world church and related mission movements has been identified by Porter as one of two key factors along with globalization, which is driving change for mission agencies.13 This is not simply because agencies need to retool to take
advantage of a new recruitment stream from the majority world missionary movement, but because these missionaries are coming from churches with experiences of God and his mission which the western mission movement both needs and finds challenging. In *The New Shape of World Christianity*, Mark Noll argues persuasively for careful reflection on the complexity and diversity of the global church.

In a word, today’s Christian situation is marked by multiplicity because of how deeply the Christian message, fully indigenized in the local languages, has become part of local cultures. The new shape of world Christianity offers a mosaic of many, many varieties of local belief and practice. Immigration, the modern media, global trade and the ease of contemporary travel have stirred this mixture. In many places it is possible to find traces—or more—of American influence. But the multiplicity goes far beyond what any one influence can explain, except the adaptability of the Christian faith itself.\(^{14}\)

Eddie Arthur sees this as both an opportunity and a danger.

The different experiences of the Church in the West and elsewhere have led to a change in the profile of Christians around the world…. Evangelical mission agencies that were founded to take the gospel to Asia and Africa now live in a context where there is often a higher proportion of Christians on the “mission fields” than in the traditional sending countries. There is a growing disparity between the worldview of the growing world church and that of the mission sending churches. The southern churches tend to be spiritually vibrant, expecting God to intervene in situations, where their northern counterparts would look for rational, scientific causes and solutions.\(^ {15}\)

The impact of the global church’s perspectives, experiences, and worldview is being increasingly felt through the expansion of global mission movements. Noll acknowledges that the growing reality of missionary service defined as Christian believers going from everyone to everywhere… by early in the twenty-first century, the rising reality on the missionary horizon was the presence of non-Western missionaries increasingly active in all regions of the world.\(^ {16}\)

This was certainly true for East Asia, where OMF is focused. Although the organization’s initial and appropriate response was a desire to see more Latin American and African missionaries join OMF to help us reach East Asia’s peoples, our interaction with Latin American and African mission movements seasoned that motivation with a growing awareness of the ways in which God will use these movements to enrich OMF’s understanding and practice of mission.

One very practical implication of this recognition was the decision not to open traditional OMF homesides in contexts like Latin America and Africa, but instead to invest in partnerships with existing indigenous mission movements. This was a significant strategic decision which went against the common practices of many of the other international agencies. However, the decision was deeply influenced by the voices of Latin American leaders with whom we met. Both from the platform and in private meetings, these leaders told stories of the struggle to partner well with international agencies that set up organizational units in their contexts. One leader shared the story of the elephant and the ant trying to dance together. He said, “No matter how well intentioned the elephant, the ant almost always ends up being stepped on.” Others spoke passionately about struggling with policies, structures, and processes which were presented as “international” but felt very western to Latin American.

The Latin American mission leaders’ desire for truly mutual partnership was also reflected in our interactions with African leaders. At the Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI) meeting in 2006, the president of the World Evangelical Alliance in Africa expressed his openness to partnership with OMF. He came from an ethnically Chinese church in Mauritius that had been planted by a former CIM missionary from Australia, and was particularly interested in OMF’s help to respond to the influx of Chinese to Africa. However, in expressing his welcome he gently, but quite firmly asked that we collaborate with existing African communities, cooperating on new initiatives, and avoiding parachuting in resources or selling western methodologies. His invitation was, “Come live with us so that we can learn together.”

These experiences led us to avoid setting up “OMF Brazil” or “OMF East Africa”. Instead, we committed ourselves to building relationships with existing African and Latin American mission movements, looking for partners who shared our values and whose vision and mission overlapped with us sufficiently that we could effectively work together towards OMF’s vision and mission. In many ways, it would have been much easier to just set up an OMF organizational unit. It would have been faster and more “efficient” perhaps, measured in terms of immediate strategic outcomes, but doing so would have reduced our ability to learn and grow through partnerships. It would also have been costlier in the long-run as the cost of maintaining traditional OMF structures in a new context began to add up. Eventually, resources and personnel from the local context would have been necessary, potentially removing those resources from the indigenous mission movements—the elephant unintentionally stepping on the ant. We were told stories of key “national” leaders being drawn away from indigenous movements, attracted by the higher salaries, more resources, greater opportunities for advancement, or higher prestige that are available through “international” agencies.

Instead of replicating OMF sending centers in these new contexts, New Horizons developed as an atypical OMF center. From within OMF, it had the appearance of a traditional “homeside” with an Executive Director, Candidate Coordinator, Finance Manager, and a physical location at the International Headquarters in Singapore. Rather than being connected with a particular national context, it was identified as focusing “beyond established OMF communities.” Like any OMF center, over time Vision and Mission statements were developed that helped to explain New Horizons in familiar OMF terms.
being just the first of the challenges. Instead, the New Horizons team worked to:

1. understand the partner agency’s existing processes;
2. provide translation (organizationally and in some cases linguistically as well) into OMF compliant forms and processes;
3. and identify gaps between the two partners and address those (e.g., High Altitude medical form required by an OMF Field but not by the Chilean partner agency).

In all of this, the New Horizons team worked to develop the relationship between the partner agency and the “field” team, with the goal that in time much of this translation work might no longer be necessary. Building trust was an essential priority, first by listening and understanding each other and then by developing ways to accommodate. In many ways, New Horizons functioned as a door through which OMF ministry teams and indigenous mission agencies could connect. New Horizons work was to make the respective sides of the door appear familiar enough to each party to encourage engagement, while at the same time managing the relationships every time the door was used in one way or another. This applied not just to personnel but the flow of finances and of mobilization information.

**Some Reflections on OMF as an Organization**

In order to understand the development of New Horizons, particularly with respect to the change process, it would be helpful to reflect on OMF as an organization. We briefly discussed the structure of OMF at the beginning of this paper, but now need to take a more analytical view.

I was introduced to Ichak Adizes’s life cycles of an organization during a series of Organizational Leaders Workshop training sessions run by OMF between 2007 and 2009. Adizes developed a theory of organizational lifecycles that explains “why organizations grow, age, and die, and what to do about it. [The theory] describes and analyzes the usual path organizations take as they grow and the optimal path they should take to avoid the typical problems of growing and aging.”

I have used Adizes’ model in both the agency and church contexts and found it a helpful tool in clarifying understanding of the challenge for those communities. Graphically, the life cycle can be illustrated as in Figure 1.

OMF is a complex organization and it is difficult to position it accurately on the lifecycle as one entity. At any given time, there are parts of the organization in many of the lifecycle stages. However, as we worked through the changes involved in the development of New Horizons, it was with the feeling that OMF as a corporate entity was displaying some of the characteristics of Aristocracy. Between 2010 and 2015, the organization went through a major strategic review and subsequent restructuring that has brought the promise of renewal to many aspects of the organization. Through engagement with the majority world church and mission movements, New Horizons seemed to be one possible source of renewal and return to the vitality of a “Prime” organization. However, to achieve that it needed space to develop and grow, something not natural to many organizations in Aristocracy where new ideas and entrepreneurial effort are often limited. Aristocratic organizations have strong systems and
procedures but do not find change easy. They are wise and experienced, but not nimble. Without a renewed vision and entrepreneurial energy, they can easily slide into Recrimination and Bureaucracy.


Virtually all successful organizations on earth go through a very similar life cycle. They begin with a network-like structure, sort of like a solar system with a sun, planets, moons and even satellites. Founders are at the center. Others are at various nodes working on different initiatives. Action is opportunity seeking and risk taking, all guided by a vision that people buy into. Energized individuals move quickly and with agility.

Over time, a successful organization evolves through a series of stages... into an enterprise that is structured as a hierarchy and is driven by well-known managerial processes: planning, budgeting, job defining, staffing, measuring, problem solving. With a well-structured hierarchy and with managerial processes that are driven with skill, this more mature organization can produce incredibly reliable and efficient results on a weekly, quarterly, and annual basis.19

Building on this, Kotter goes on to propose a “dual operating systems” model, in which established organizations renew the capacity for growth through a networking structure with some of the characteristics of a new start-up, but running parallel and loosely interconnected to the hierarchical system.

The hierarchy part of the dual operating system differs from almost every other hierarchy today in one very important way. Much of the work ordinarily assigned to it that demands innovation, agility, difficult change, and big strategic initiatives executed quickly... has been shifted over to the network part. That leaves the hierarchy less encumbered and better able to perform what it is designed for: doing today’s job well, making incremental changes to further improve efficiency, and handling those strategic initiatives that help a company deal with predictable adjustments.20

Kotter argues persuasively that the very strengths of the hierarchical structure become limitations for effective innovation in a rapidly changing world, but he is careful to recognize the value of the hierarchical structure and the importance of maintaining its vitality. Organizations that discard or devalue these structures and processes will simply find themselves rebuilding them in the future around the next round of innovation. Ellen Livingood makes the same point in her Catalyst training program with the illustration of the city developing a magnetic levitation train system, while maintaining the existing public rail system.21 The maglev system is a critical new innovation but it cannot immediately replace the existing public transportation infrastructure and probably never will replace it completely.

In many ways, New Horizons has become a “maglev” possibility for OMF, exploring a new way of engaging with mission partners that builds on, but doesn’t replicate, the existing system. While it is tempting to suggest that New Horizons was intentionally designed by organizational leadership as a parallel network structure, it’s probably more accurate to say that leadership responded to a need and opportunity and then built the network organically. In all of this God’s hand was clearly evident, particularly in the provision of key personnel at critical moments:

- Koyuki from Japan whose vision of an “enlarged tent” led her to accept a personnel role;
- Jim who came out of retirement to manage New Horizons finances from South Africa;
- Guido who built partnerships across the capitals of Europe;
- and many others.

Leadership was a key factor in the early development of New Horizons. Kotter makes the point that

the organization’s top management plays a crucial role in starting and maintaining the network. The... executive committee must launch it, explicitly bless it, support it, and ensure that it and the hierarchy stay aligned. The hierarchy’s leadership team must serve as role models for their subordinates in interacting with the network. I have found that none of this requires much C-suite time. But these actions by senior executives clearly signal that the network is not in any way a rogue operation. It is not an informal organization. It is not just a small engagement exercise which makes those who participate feel good.22

In the early days of the development of New Horizons, it was very important to keep OMF’s senior leadership team well informed about developments in Africa and Latin America. Travel costs were significant to engage effectively in what were still largely new continents for OMF, and these decisions were scrutinized carefully. However, the senior leadership team was supportive of the new initiative, including, and perhaps most crucially, OMF’s General Director.

Although the senior leadership were engaged with the New Horizons developments, many other leaders did not see it as particularly relevant to their areas of ministry, in part because it involved distant contexts with little prospect of immediate resources being made available. It was important to identify key stakeholders and pay attention to their influence on the new initiative. Work was done on this in 2007 using Lewin’s Force Field analysis, based on training given at an OMF Organizational Leaders Workshop.23 Kurt Lewin’s tool is widely used to identify stakeholders and their direction and degree of influence in a change process. Lewin’s analysis tool allowed OMF leadership to identify and address concerns that arose within the OMF community, as well as to maximize supportive factors for the change process. Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate how the supportive and restraining factors and stakeholders were envisioned fairly early in the change process. These evaluations obviously changed as time went on.

Perhaps the most serious challenge to the New Horizons initiative was rather more ambiguous but had the potential to derail the whole change process. As New Horizons became more established and the stories of OMF

Future Proofing OMF

Jon Fuller
leaders’ engagement in Latin America and Africa began to circulate, questions began to be asked about whether New Horizons was going beyond the Fellowship’s focus on East Asians. Part of this was a natural reaction by those for whom OMF’s focus was wrongly understood as being geographically “East Asia”, rather than “East Asians”. Some therefore struggled to understand why OMF would do anything in Africa or Latin America. The growth of the “diaspora” movement in OMF helped to address this misconception as the Fellowship became more intentional about focusing on East Asians wherever they were as long as there was a strategic need. Some OMF stakeholders could see the value of engaging with mission movements in Latin America or Africa if they resulted in new personnel for their ministry, but raised concerns about the cost, time, and effort involved given the potential limited return. This was a valid concern, which the New Horizons team needed to consider from the perspective of available resources and sustainability, but it reflected a truncated grasp of the value of engaging with these church and mission movements in order to learn from that conversation. It also reflected a Christendom missiology that only saw East Asia as a mission field and everywhere else only as a potential source of resources for our work in that field.

Recognizing that the surfacing of these concerns represented both a challenge and an opportunity, New Horizons was brought to the International Executive Council (IEC)—the highest management body of the Fellowship at the time—for their review and approval as a formal organizational entity. The presentation responded to the concerns about OMF’s East Asian focus by articulating three key, but easily overlooked, truths about East Asia’s peoples today:

• East Asia’s peoples are no longer only in East Asia.
• East Asia’s church has a growing vision for the whole world.
• The global church has a growing interest in reaching East Asians.25

In 2012, the IEC agreed to the formal establishment of “New Horizons” as a non-traditional sending center that would be responsible for sending partnerships with communities beyond the reasonable reach of our existing centers.

Conclusion

The discontinuation of OMF Southern Africa and the formation of New Horizons illustrate the significant challenges facing OMF as it engages with both the traditional western mission movements, and the growing majority world mission movements. The implications of these challenges for the Fellowship are being worked out on a daily basis by our leaders in conversations, prayer, and dreams about the future. Let me close this paper with an “endvisioning” exercise, expressing what OMF Canada might look like ten years from now. I share this, not as a prediction of the future but to stimulate the reader’s own reflections on how to envision OMF responding to the challenges of the coming years. The ultimate “future proofing” strategy is a passionate commitment to walk in obedience to the One who knows the future, but listening to God does not preclude engaging with what is happening in the world around us. OMF leaders must be like the men of Issachar who “understood the times” (1 Chronicles 12:32). John Stott called this the challenge of “double listening”. Let me close with his prophetic challenge more than twenty years ago.

OMF Canada in 2027: Endvisioning Exercise

The dining room was buzzing with conversation in at least three languages (English, Mandarin, and Cree) that I could pick out. I waved to Joe and Sarah who had just returned from their first term in a large Asian city. They were staying in the Guest Home for a few days to sort out the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, before heading up to North Bay where they would spend their Home Assignment. They were chatting away in Mandarin with Hong and Dai who were in Toronto on a visa run. Joe and Sarah had brought some gifts from Dai’s family. Hong and Joe were comparing notes on life in the Canadian “north”, with stories from the northern community where Hong and Dai were working with a Canadian mission team. I was very grateful for the partnership with these mission agencies, and with local churches in Winnipeg and Vancouver where we had placed East Asian missionaries reaching out to the First Nations urban poor.
I remembered why I’d come upstairs, but before I could find George, Jane caught my eye. She was anxious to remind me that I’d agreed to speak at the “Engaging East Asia” three-day weekend coming up. I assured her that I was looking forward to being with the fifteen who had signed up for the long weekend of interaction and activities focused on East Asian culture, worldview, spirituality, and of course food. Jane was excited that twelve of the fifteen had already completed their on-line training modules, and after the Engaging course, would be ready for their interviews. Three couples were planning to join OMF as members, while the other nine were professionals headed to jobs in East Asia. Jane felt that at least half of those were committed to long-term mission engagement, and would be great additions to our teams in Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The “Marketplace Coordinators” in those countries had done a great job of extending a welcome to these professionals as they considered work and mission. I would be having lunch on Monday with pastors from six of the group’s churches, who would also be joining us for interviews.

As I headed off to find George, Jane called out that they were expecting thirty-five inquirers on the “drop in” night of the Engage course and looked forward to good interaction between those attending the course and the inquirers interested in finding out more about East Asia. Hong and Dai were going to share their experiences as missionaries from East Asia serving in Canada.

Jane grinned, and added that two of the “inquirers” were a mother and daughter who were working on a school project on Christianity in Japan. The mother had searched the internet on the topic and OMF’s website had been one of the top search returns. She’d been amazed at the helpful information available, and at the quick response when she’d sent an inquiry to the website. They were attending the “drop in” night to meet with two couples who were headed to Japan long term with OMF.

I finally found George in the kitchen where he was helping his wife Mabel with the last of the dishes. I hated to disturb them, but needed to check with George if they had room the following week for four mission agency leaders to stay overnight. The mission agency leaders were getting together to review plans for our Thai joint mobilization event. Reflecting back to 2017 when OMF had eighty unused visas for Thailand, I was enormously encouraged that all of those visas were in use. It had taken a lot of trust and hard work to replicate the church planting partnerships we had on the field, through church mobilization partnerships here in Canada. However, today we had over fifty Canadian missionaries (including professionals) serving in Thailand through OMF visas, sent by six or seven different agencies and church associations.

George checked his datagit, flicking through the pages with a series of quick blinks. I was still getting used to the new neural interface, but very glad to be free of keyboards. Having found his calendar, George assured me that there was room for the agency leaders, although he took the opportunity to remind me that we were close to full capacity with managing the flow of Canadians heading out to East Asia and East Asians coming to Canada. I smiled as I walked away, grateful for George and Mabel’s ability to cater to the needs of such a diverse community.

Breakfasts were interesting with corn flakes and noodles served side by side.

My datagit tickled the interface behind my ear and I managed to blink correctly and accept the call. It was Mark calling to confirm that he had just picked up Bishop Ho Meng from the airport and was taking him straight to a meeting with a group of East Asian church leaders. Bishop Ho Meng was getting quite elderly, but still enjoyed meeting with Canadian pastors and educators. We were always glad to have him in Canada to speak on behalf of the East Asian church. Canadians wanted to hear from East Asian leaders directly, and rightly so. Thinking back to my last Asian visit, I rejoiced at how the OMF field and homeside teams were pretty well integrated. The majority of them were led by Asian leaders, although anyone could lead the teams, depending on their experience and gifting.

I hung up the datagit with a flick of my chin, and headed back downstairs to the office. Although OMF Canada now had nearly two hundred affiliates (sixty-five members and close to one hundred and twenty professionals), the office suite was surprisingly small. I settled into my chair amongst the set of hot desks in the office, and thought back ten years.

I was extremely grateful for the small but gifted team of finance, administration, and personnel leaders who worked with our partners to ensure that we had world-class
The Human Tidal Wave: Global Migration, Megacities, Multiculturalism, Pluralism, Diaspora Missiology


Reviewed by Andy Smith

Global migration, marked by urbanization, is rapidly impacting the peoples, cultures, societies, and nations of the world. And as this strategic and urgent book demonstrates, it provides us with wonderful opportunities to make disciples. Toward this end, Brian Seim's chapter helps us see that the complex, diverse, impersonal, and task-oriented life of cities forces new urban residents to adapt and become dual-culture people in order to survive. To reach them, Seim urges that churches exhibit spiritual character and cultural flexibility by providing practical care and addressing the tough issues of the neighborhood.

In a chapter explaining how migration produces multiculturalism, Thomas Alan Harvey explains how “cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual diversity” can silence the church by promoting “peace, justice, and harmony through recognition of difference, dignity, and mutual tolerance” (116, 118). He challenges us, as suffering servants, to combat the evils thus promoted and make disciples of a multitude of ethnicities who, by becoming one in Christ, willingly join together in local churches communities.

Steven Ybarrola urges us to see new migrants “as a bridge between the two communities” (142) since they have become transnationals with multi-local identities (143) who will likely be more effective at reaching the peoples of the society to which their parents migrated.

We are cautioned that the last major result of migration—pluralism—“tends to classify individual identity in light of an assumed greater and more foundational national identity” (116) that enables a diverse population to live together peacefully so that all can gain access to basic goods. Although the church desires that people live in peace with their basic needs met, we refuse to bow to pluralism since Christ challenges all existing “social and religious hierarchies and categories” (128) and offers a new and living way to experience “peacefully so that all can gain access to basic goods. Although the church desires that people live in peace with their basic needs met, we refuse to bow to pluralism since Christ challenges all existing “social and religious hierarchies and categories” (128) and offers a new and living way to experience peaceful coexistence.”

As it views the complex results of migration, the book challenges us to respond to new opportunities. Diaspora ministries are thus added to traditional mission work. The mission field is no longer only over there. It is there, and here, and constantly moving. Enoch Wan and Sadiri Joy Tira specifically encourage us “to recognize the immense potential of ministering to diaspora and ministering through diaspora” (157) as that may provide a link to populations who are beyond the reach of traditional missions.

This is a book that will help anyone who ministers where migration is taking place—and that includes most of us—to think deeply about the mobile world in which we live, pray intelligently, and act accordingly so that multicultural churches will emerge as the good news of Jesus impacts people both far and wide.
Arguably, nothing that has changed our world more in the last thirty years than the internet. The internet has turned our existence upside down. It has revolutionized communications to the extent that it is now our preferred medium of everyday communication. In almost everything we do, we use the internet.

Just think back to the time “back in the stone age” when a phone call, letter, or knock on the door was required to communicate with someone. Then you would have to wait for a reply to your letter or leave a message on someone’s answering machine if they weren’t home when you called.

Think back to the time when you had to go to a shop if you wanted to buy something. You had to depend on the salesman for advice; you had to visit several places to compare prices. And in the end you had to pay cash before walking out of the shop with your product.

Think back to the time when you had to go to a library to read books to find answers to your questions. If you wanted to travel you had to buy a travel guide for the particular country you were going to visit. Those were the days of waiting for the morning paper to hit your front porch so you could get your daily dose of news and weather. It was the time when you actually had to visit or call a bank in order to check your account balance. You had to wait in a long line on Friday afternoon to get cash or deposit your paycheck. In those days you had to go to a shop to rent a video and you had to look in the newspaper for advertisements if you needed another job. Do you still remember that you had to sit physically at a table with other people to play a game?

The internet has indeed changed our lives. The changes in social communication are of particular significance. Although analog tools still have their place in some contexts, new technologies continue to gain ground every day, transforming our communication practices and creating new possibilities—particularly among younger people. Communication barriers have largely been removed by the internet. Online, the conventional constraints of space and time disappear amid the dizzyingly wide range of communicative possibilities.

The internet has become embedded in every aspect of our day-to-day lives, changing the way we interact with others. Out of all the myriad communication opportunities that the internet has opened up, I will highlight the emergence of social media and the way they have intricately melded with our daily lives. Social media have changed our personal spaces, altering the way we interact with our loved ones, friends, and people we have never met; they have forced us to rethink even basic daily processes like studying and shopping; they have affected the economy by nurturing the business startup culture and electronic commerce; they have even given us new ways to start broad-based political movements.

The internet has clearly impacted all levels of education by providing unbounded possibilities for learning. Students can work interactively with one another, unrestricted by physical or time constraints. Today, you can use the internet to access libraries, encyclopedias, art galleries, news archives, and other information sources from anywhere in the world.
The internet revolution is not just technological; it also drives changes at a personal level and throughout the structure of society. The internet makes it possible for an unlimited number of people to communicate with one another freely and easily.

### Some statistics

As we look into the topic of how the internet will impact the future of mission, it is important to first of all consider some statistics with regard to the access and use of the internet in the world, and specifically East Asia where most of OMF's work is based. Figure 1 shows the worldwide growth of internet users from 2000 to 2016. Figure 2 shows the number of users divided among the different regions of the world as of December 2016.

As it is impossible to examine the statistics of every country, I have picked a few to show internet penetration and behavior on the internet.

### Southeast Asia

Based on the We Are Social latest report released in February 2017, Southeast Asia has a total population of 644.1 million people. More than half of the population (339.2 million) in the region now have access to the internet and 305.9 million are active social media users. This number is growing rapidly. Since January 2016, the number of internet users grew by 80 million (31%) and the registered active social media accounts grew by 72 million (31%).

The report by We Are Social noted that mobile internet use appears to be driving much of this growth, although mobile internet penetration hasn’t quite hit the halfway point yet. The current pace of growth suggests that we’ll likely pass that milestone in the next few months though, with most new internet users in the region now mobile-first, and often mobile-only.

The report also noted that Facebook now has the greatest number of monthly active users in the region (305.9 million), with 89% of them accessing Facebook via mobile devices and 50% of them using Facebook daily. For Myanmar, the report highlighted that although barely one-quarter of the population are using social media, usage has skyrocketed. For example, Facebook recorded 14 million users since the restrictions on Facebook were lifted in the country and more than 6 million of them were new users in the previous 12 months—84% year-on-year growth!

An article in *Tech in Asia* that examined the changing landscape in 2015 also highlighted the following about young Facebook users:

- Despite media click-bait suggesting that young people are leaving Facebook “in their droves,” the data suggest that Facebook remains hugely popular with Millennial audiences. More than 70% of the platform’s users in the region are under 30 years of age, and...more than 63 million users under the age of 20 used Facebook in the past 30 days.

### China

The latest figures reported by We Are Social for China are:

- **Active Internet Users**: 688 million (out of a population of 1,379 million)
- **Active Social Media Users**: 653 million active users (penetration rate of 47%)
Southeast Asia has a total population of 644.1 million people. More than half of the population (339.2 million) in the region now have access to the internet and 305.9 million are active social media users.

- Active Mobile Social Media Users: 577 million (penetration of 42%).

A report by We Are Social in 2015 noted that roughly 100,000 people in China started using the internet per day (more than one every second) over the preceding year with a growing number of mobile-only internet users, especially in rural areas. It added that internet usage wasn’t evenly distributed—a marked difference remained between urban and rural usage rates—almost two-thirds of China’s urban population used the internet every month, while only three in ten of the rural population did so. The report also noted that:

At 1 hour and 43 minutes per day, social media accounts for just under half of all the time that people spend online in China. The country’s 787 million social media users spend 23% longer using social media than they do watching TV each day, although it’s worth noting that much of this time overlaps, with many TV viewers engaging in ‘second-screen’ social media use at the same time.

Japan

The latest statistics indicate that LINE is still the top social platform in Japan, with national penetration surpassing half of the population in 2016; LINE reports that it has 64 million monthly active users in Japan. According to a btrax report in 2015:

Japan has a very high internet penetration, at 86 percent—they are the fourth largest internet population in the world after China, USA, and India. Mobile penetration is 122 percent, which means on average, people own more than one mobile device. In terms of social media use, there are almost as many account accesses via mobile (22M) as the total number of active social media accounts, which is over 90% of all social media usage. This means that the majority of people who use social media use it on mobile as well as desktop.

Figure 3, from the same report, shows the most popular social networks in Japan.

According to a 2015 study by eMarketer, half of all social network users in Japan use Twitter, and 26 million people were expected to be on the social media network in Japan in 2015, representing 20.5 percent of the Japanese population. Twitter usage was expected to continue to rise in Japan, with a predicted 30.1 million users in 2018.

An article published by btrax in Jan 2016 cites reasons as to why Twitter was able to take off in Japan.

- Anonymity: Privacy is important in Japan, and Twitter allows users to use fake names. Twitter serves as a platform for Japanese users to express emotion anonymously.

- 140 Characters: In Japanese, you can say almost double what you can say in English with 140 characters.

- Mobile: Twitter began to catch on in Japan as early as 2007 when it was gaining popularity in the States. Japanese feature phones at the time already had internet capability and there were various feature phone clients designed for Twitter.

An earlier btrax article reported the following on Facebook in Japan.

Facebook has 22 million users in Japan as of January 2015. Initially, Facebook had trouble gaining traction because users had to provide their real names to register. However, in recent years, Japan began to warm to Facebook. The latest statistics show that Japan has around 25 million active Facebook users, which is almost 20% of the population.

Forecast

As we noted before, the recent finding of a 2016 report is that more than half of the world’s population now uses the internet. What’s more, the growth of internet use continues to accelerate around the world, with global user numbers up by more than 80% in the past five years. It is expected that this growth will continue in the coming years.

Internet ministry in Thailand

In Thailand more than 38 million people still live in a sub-district without a church or single Christian. With less than 0.7% Christians the question is how the gospel will spread through the country, until the last person has had a chance to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. OMF Thailand’s mission is to glorify God by the urgent evangelization of Thailand. The question that we asked is how this can happen as soon as possible. With a slow growing church and fewer missionaries wanting to come long term we need to find ways to reach the unreached with the gospel.

Fig. 3 Overall ranking of the most popular social media networks and messaging apps in Japan for all ages. The results are based on a survey published in 2014. The sample size was 1500 and between 13 to 69 years old.
My family lives in a small rural village in the northeast. Our village can only be reached by a dirt road. The closest 7-11 shop is more than a twenty-kilometer drive. I was very surprised though that, after coming back from a short home assignment at the beginning of 2013, my phone said that I had a 4G internet connection. This is something that most people in Europe still have no access to.

Putting all the above together, it is clear that there’s huge potential for internet ministry in Thailand. With over 66 million people who don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior there’s a huge target audience. Internet ministry further supports all the evangelism and church planting efforts carried out by OMF Thailand, other mission agencies, and the Thai church. The reach goes beyond the borders of the country, as this ministry can be a help to Thai churches and diaspora ministry globally.

Jesus.net has a lot of experience and resources available that can be used in setting up internet ministry in Thailand. They are willing to help us set up an internet ministry in Thailand and help us to grow the ministry in the future. Partnering with Jesus.net will help us to lower the cost of development and also to be a blessing to other partners as internet ministry in Thailand grows and new things are developed.

To develop an effective ministry we will follow the four stepping stones from Jesus.net: Access, Know, Grow, and Share.

1. ACCESS: Building bridges to people who need the gospel

In this phase, we focus on making connections to where people are in their lives. Often this is based on the things they search for in Google. Searches reveal the felt needs of people (such as: Does anyone love me? Who cares about me and my life? Does anyone know who I am? What is the secret to a good life?), life questions (such as: What is life all about? Why am I on earth? Why is there evil in the world?), worries/doubts/fears (such as: I am lonely. I want to die. I lost my job, so now what?). By connecting to people’s felt needs and their questions or worries about life, we have opportunities to recognize their need, show interest and understanding while offering them a broader perspective with hope in finding answers. In doing so, we try to bridge between the felt need and some element of faith in God through Jesus.

Digital strategy for ACCESS in Thailand:

**Landing pages:**

Very few Thai “seekers” search on Google for words like “God” or “Jesus,” simply because they have never heard about God or Jesus. Therefore we need to connect with “seekers” through landing pages.

A landing page is a focused stand-alone web page with a single objective and very specific call to action. A landing page is like a bridge, connecting people from different points (paths) into a main website. Landing pages have proved to be relevant connections to users and are often more mobile friendly. It is important to make sure that landing pages are kept simple, using short sentences and simple words.

**Facebook pages**

With over 32 million social media users in Thailand, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube will play an important part in connecting with our audience. One or more Facebook pages should be developed (preferably with the same name as a website). By using some money to promote this page people will start “liking” the page and interaction will start. Facebook pages that lead to the main website should be updated daily with one or more posts. These posts can be links to videos, challenging questions, links to courses, Bible verse, pictures, etc.

The current Prakhampee page can also be used to draw attention to the website. With 85,000 likes it will be a good start to make the website known. With a similar Twitter account we hope to reach a large audience. A YouTube channel with the same name will be created to post video clips, testimonies, etc.

2. KNOW: Presenting the gospel and inviting a response

In this phase, we share the gospel and offer an opportunity to respond to it. We share God’s love for people and his desire to be in a relationship with them. Additionally, we help people get to know Jesus through an online course in which participants are offered content and a personal e-coach to explore who Jesus is. During this phase, we also offer people the opportunity to respond to the gospel message by saying a prayer, sending in their questions and thoughts, or signing up for an online course or other resource. In this phase, we also encourage the new believers to take further steps to GROW in their faith.

Digital strategy for KNOW in Thailand:

The main page of the website will focus on getting to know God and Jesus. Work on the website is close to completion (www.knowgod.in.th). The text of some existing tracts will be put on the website as well (if copyright allows) so that the gospel will be presented from different angles. A few other videos will need to be translated into Thai for those who look around at the website but are not ready to start a course.

3. GROW: Encouraging new Christians to strengthen their faith

In this phase, we assist (new) Christians to deepen their relationship with God through Jesus, encouraging and equipping them to apply their faith in everyday life. We do this by offering a growing number of online courses, tools and resources on various topics (bible-reading, prayer, dealing with finances, principles for a healthy marriage/counseling, etc.). During this growth process, we encourage the visitors and participants to take a next step and share their faith.

Digital strategy for GROW in Thailand:

Most of the courses and content will focus on helping Christians grow in
their faith. This can be done through courses with a coach as well as courses without coaching. Jesus.net offers CODEX as a platform for the courses. Courses with a coach that will be available include:

- Bible courses currently available at kwamjing.net. This course has fifteen lessons and can be put into CODEX.
- “Why Jesus?” This course is available and will be translated, including a one-minute video. The “Why Jesus?” course is all about knowing for oneself the truth about the person Jesus Christ. It introduces his birth, his wondrous miracles, and the profound teachings about the facts of his life, death, and eternity. It also helps people understand the way to life through him.
- “Living in Christ.” This course is available in English and will be translated. The aim of this course is to help people know what it means to live as a Christian. It consists of four lessons based on verses from the Gospel of John and other books of the Bible.
- Bible course for teenagers. We will try to work with CEF to develop an online course for teenagers to come to know God and to grow in faith.

Courses available without an e-coach include:

- Basic Christian Living. A series of twelve video lessons to help people grow in their Christian life. These videos are available through FFPThailand and will be available on the website.
- Discipleship series developed by CBN. An ongoing series of ten-minute lessons on questions about God, the Bible, the Christian life, etc.
- A Bible correspondence course developed by Voice of Peace.

Some courses that need to be developed are:

- A course on the marital roles of husband and wife.
- A course on raising children as Christian parents.
- A course on using and lending money as a Christian.
- A course about different Thai or Buddhist ceremonies and festivals and what part Christians can or cannot play in these.
- A course on the prosperity gospel and its dangers.

Biblword.net is an English blog that serves to answer many questions that both believers and non-believers have. We will create a copy of this website in Thai (www.prakhampee.net), so there is no need to develop a new website. Articles from the blog that are relevant for Thai Christians and non-Christians will be translated into Thai and published. The same articles can be posted on the evangelistic website and the prakhampee.net website. The Bible.net website also has some devotional and videos that will be translated. The website www.prakhampee.net is close to being launched as well.

4. SHARE: Mobilizing Christians to share their faith

In this phase, we assist and equip visitors to share their faith in God and lead others to Christ. They can share what they have experienced and learned in their relationship with him and help others step-by-step to follow Jesus. This sharing will result in opportunities for contact with other searchers who will be introduced to ACCESS to hear the gospel through the initiative of believers.

We encourage people to share their faith and story with other people. Life stories are important, especially for Thai people who still “believe” that Christianity is a foreign religion. Resources for sharing their faith through a personal story will be provided in several ways:

- Video testimony: FFPThailand has produced a good number of four- to five-minute testimonies from Thai people. These videos will be made available at the website.
- Written testimonies: Several Thai people will be approached to write their testimonies in a very short form. These testimonies will be published at the website.
- Testimonies of students: E-coaches will approach people who have finished courses to write a short impression or testimony to be posted on the website.
- Training to give testimony: MyStory. me, a part of jesus.net, has a course for people to tell their own testimony and to film it with their cellphone or tablet. The course will have to be translated into Thai. These new testimonies will be published at YouTube and shared at the Facebook page and Twitter.

Offline Follow-up: Connecting inquirers to local churches

In all of the phases described above, we offer ways to connect offline to a local body of Christians—a local church—that offers an Alpha-course or some other form of offline connection with believers. This is because we believe the local church is the place where people can really grow spiritually. Most of the time, this transition from online to offline connection takes place in the KNOW or GROW phase. Each of the ministry partners works to provide a quality follow-up network for searchers and (new) believers in their respective language or geographical location.

Other ways to use the internet in reaching out in Thailand:

Periscope

Periscope is a live video streaming app for iOS and Android. Periscope users have the option to tweet out a link to their Live Stream. They can also choose whether or not to make their video public or viewable to only certain users.

Periscope gives a new dimension to internet ministry in Thailand. When there are enough followers on Twitter, live Bible studies could be broadcasted to the followers. This brings another kind of interaction with the audience. Since Periscope is not yet widely known in Thailand it will probably take a few years before this tool can be used effectively.

City Campaign

In the future, city-wide campaigns could be held throughout Thailand so that local churches can cooperate together to
reach their city. Websites can be made specific for each city and billboards can be rented, with participating churches contributing to the cost. These outreach efforts help the churches to unify. Ideas include outreach at different places, concerts, flashmobs, etc. The idea will need to be developed.

E-Coach

In the whole process of introducing people to the gospel, an e-coach plays a vital role, helping them understand the gospel, grow in faith, and share their faith. An e-coach listens to people, comes alongside to help them find answers to their questions, helps them take (their first) steps in getting to know Jesus Christ and prays for them.

Missions and the Internet Challenges

While many things are currently being done in internet ministry, most of it is done in the name of a particular church. One of the big challenges in making an internet ministry effective is to enlist the cooperation of various churches and other organizations. Internet ministry that only focuses on the growth of a local church is often not effective because the internet goes beyond the local community. It should be used to build God's Kingdom.

Another challenge for internet outreach comes when websites and social media platforms are blocked. Where this is the case, more creativity is needed to reach people with the gospel. When developing strategies for outreach, it is good to keep a number of things in mind:

• In internet ministry, a target group can be reached globally. This is particularly true when people from a particular country have migrated to another country where they can be reached in a very straightforward manner through the internet.

• More people around the world have started using VPNs.

• Whereas websites can be blocked, apps cannot be. Apps that explain the gospel and apps that help people share the gospel with others can play an important part in evangelization through the internet.

In doing research and talking to people who are involved in internet evangelism it was hard to get a lot of information on the digital strategies that they use. Extended research is needed to find the right ways to reach certain places via the internet.

Other challenges that continually impact internet ministry include:

• Technology change: Every year new smartphones are introduced, bringing new possibilities in user experience. To exploit the functions of the devices effectively, those involved in internet ministry need to keep up to date with changes and new possibilities that these may bring.

• Software change: Software is continually developed. The challenge of being up to date is huge. A website or app is never a finished task!

• Hypes and trends: New platforms and ways of communicating is being developed continually. In order to effectively reach a target audience, we need to be aware of the hypes and trends and changes in online behavior and act accordingly.

Testimonies

A couple of weeks ago I received a message via a response form at one of our websites:

“I am living in a season of addiction, disobedience, and serious sins. I’ve tried to repent and turn away but I find myself failing all the time. I know that I cannot fully surrender to God yet. Is there still hope for me? Will God still receive me and wait for me?”

When this conversation started I tried to help the person to not only understand God’s character, but also discover what was really going on. This conversation is still continuing and there are some serious issues in this person’s life. Steps are now being taken that I pray God will use to set the man free from addiction and restore him. In the last e-mail I received the person shared that he had been struggling for a long time, but didn’t dare to share it with someone he knew. He wanted to stay anonymous and the internet gave him that opportunity. Now, a couple of weeks later, he has started to share with his church leaders and he’s also facing the consequences for his lifestyle.

People’s lives are being changed through the internet all over the world. The team in India received this message last week. “Hello :) I am Hindu and I want to come in Christianity so how is this possible? – Gaurav”

Below are some more testimonies that I received from our jesus.net partners all over the world:

• Mr. Yee shared with us that his whole family turned to Christ through the website. Another seeker told us how she got to know our website a year ago when he visited his sister in Japan.

• “Hello, KnowingGod-team. I’m fine, thank God. God is putting in my mind something that reduces my anxiety when we are afraid of everyone around us die and feel alone in the world. I go to church every week and pray to God every day. Thank you for caring about me. A big hug and be with God. Do not forget me.” (Mary, Brazil)

• “Since I started the courses in this blessed site, I have learned great things. Uplifting! My contact with the Lord God has greatly improved and my relationship with Him has only made me grow a lot spiritually.” (Fabio)

Conclusion

A Great Need

The masses of unsaved millions are gathering on the internet. The peoples of all nations are converging, with open hearts seeking the knowledge of truth. There are also millions of Christians traveling the cyber highway, seeking encouragement, friendship, and discipleship. There is also evil there, which the church must counter with the light of God’s truth and presence.

A Great Mandate

The Lord’s Great Commission to the church is to evangelize by proclaiming the gospel to the world. As it was Christ’s purpose in coming to seek and save those who were lost, so must the church seek every way possible to follow Christ’s command and bring
A Great Opportunity

Never has there been such availability and ease with such a form of mass communication. Web pages, which can convey any message of our choosing, cost almost nothing to create, and can be launched from anyone’s bedroom. Hundreds of millions of people are spending time every day on social networks. E-mail to any person on the Web is global, instant, and free. Through the internet, hundreds of millions of people we couldn’t reach before have come within reach. 

May God give us wisdom as we consider what role the internet should play for us as we work to complete the unfinished task. MRT

What the Buddha Taught


“Still a classic”

The value of a text such as this lies in its ability to act as a useful frame of reference for the reader to further their understanding of a subject, particularly across a range of contexts. Walpola Rahula’s work, first published over fifty years ago, provides a succinct description of core Buddhist teachings, largely from the Theravada tradition, which provide a set of conceptual “hooks” on which to explore contextual expressions of Buddhism in other times and places. Interestingly, the book itself was written against a backdrop of the emerging socio-political arrangements post-World War II, when an interest in Eastern and Buddhist teachings were growing alongside pacifist and anti-nuclear movements, and communist, anti-communist, and non-aligned movements—themes explored in the book’s final chapter. In his preface, the author clarifies his purpose: to present to the general reader an accurate account of what the Buddha taught, mainly by faithfully representing the actual words of the Buddha as found in original texts. After a brief account of the life of the Buddha, the following four chapters explain each of the four noble truths, with two further chapters on the doctrine of “non-self” and meditation. The approach of focusing on the Buddha’s teaching differentiates the text from books on Buddhist practice, which necessarily are more rooted in specific contextual expressions of Buddhism. What Walpola Rahula achieves here is to communicate Buddhism as a different way of seeing and interpreting the world, as well as providing a framework through which to better understand the different contextual expressions of Buddhism found across the world. My Burmese-language copy was given to me by an erudite monk in a monastery in rural Myanmar who said it had been one of the main texts through which he himself had gained a deeper understanding of Buddhism, despite his own immersion in traditional Buddhist teachings in his own monastery. Because of the difficulties in rendering some words and concepts into English, sometimes reading this book in the language of the context you are in can also be profitable, especially if the context is one where Buddhism is a majority religion. Then, terms are often rendered in a local language which itself may be more able to express the meaning of Pali terms than English. In summary, this is a good read in English, and an even better read in the Southeast Asian languages of Buddhist majority countries.

1 Internet Live Stats, http://www.internettlivestats.com/internet-users/#trend (accessed 16 February 2017). The values for 2013 and 2016 are based on estimates for 1 July 2016. An internet user is defined as an individual who can access the internet at home, via any device type and connection.
Swimming Upstream

On Saturday afternoons a group of fifteen Filipino women meet in the sanctuary of a small Japanese evangelical church in the centre of Tokyo. The small fellowship planted by two Filipino missionaries has already planted another small church composed mostly of other Filipino women in another residential area in western Tokyo. One of the missionaries grew up dreaming she would one day become like the OMF missionary who served in her home church. She approached OMF in the past to talk about serving in Japan but was discouraged by the cost and time it would take before she could follow God’s call. Later, she took the route of partnering with an elderly pastor of the small and ageing Japanese church in Tokyo. She challenged a friend to go with her and together these two women set forth five years ago after being commissioned by their home churches, going in faith that God would provide what they needed.

1. The changing face of mission

We now live in the “Great Century of World Christianity,” writes Allan Yeh. Mission is no longer from the West to the rest but from everyone to everywhere, polycentric and polydirectional rather than unidirectional.¹ With vibrant missionary zeal and a deepening appreciation of mission as Missio Dei, majority world churches, lower income churches in high income countries, diaspora churches, and churches everywhere are being empowered to take on the task of mission because they see God leading and inviting them to be part of what he is already doing everywhere and anywhere.

Paradigms are shifting with the result that changes are testing and stretching the structures of older mission agencies that were built, modeled, and developed based on an understanding that mission comes from the West to the rest, from higher income countries to lower income countries, from the privileged to the less privileged, and from the developed to the underdeveloped. Mission movements from majority world countries are challenging how we go and send in mission. As a Fellowship that seeks to see East Asia’s peoples reaching out to their own people and others in mission, we need to ask ourselves whether the structures and processes that we have hinder the mobilization of workers from lower income nations to serve with OMF.

One missionary shared that it has been more than thirty years since the last Filipino couple came to serve in Japan with OMF though the Philippine Home Council has had no lack of inquiries from those who felt called to serve the Japanese. Over the last ten years, a few have joined as short-term workers but, beyond this, enquirers and applicants face a steep climb that ends mostly with a concrete wall.

2. From low income to high income

It’s no surprise that the biggest challenge faced by anyone from the Philippines joining OMF is finance. It’s the same challenge faced by anyone from a lower income nation who hopes to serve with OMF and many other mission organizations. With global economies slowing down, this challenge isn’t confined to lower income sending nations—traditionally higher income nations with shrinking churches and changing church culture also find it difficult to sustain support for the

Andrea Roldan

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¹ With a different emphasis on “Missio Dei,” which implies a more relational and omnipresent God's mission to all people.
“overseas missionaries” they have, much less send new ones.

As a Fellowship we have held on resolutely that God’s work done in God’s way will not lack his provision. OMF’s history as a mission contains countless testimonies solidifying our belief in this principle. As a mobilizer, I have seen how the principle admittedly served as a litmus test for those hoping to join OMF—if you are called to serve in mission, surely God will provide. If you do not meet the financial clearances and God does not provide, then perhaps you are not called to serve with OMF. Perhaps God isn’t even calling you to serve in cross-cultural missions.

Serving in various roles in OMF and the Lausanne Movement has allowed me to see what God is doing to move his church amongst majority world peoples to further his kingdom and bring the gospel to those least reached. Watching how my father worked (mobilizing Mbuti people to reach out to other tribes in the Philippines), talking to overseas Filipino workers at airports, wading through waters in Myanmar with a Chin brother to reach a village to share Bible stories, sitting with students and young professionals from house churches in an Asian megacity, stretched and challenged my own values and presuppositions about how God sends people in mission. Does God’s provision come only through his moving others to give? Must our model of mission only be “out of surplus” whereby a network of supporters fund missionaries and going in mission is dependent on the “charity” of others?

My decision to serve in Japan was fueled by a call to pave the way for a growing number of Filipinos hoping to come and serve with OMF in the country, some of whom are young adults I have journeyed with since they were in high school. A Philippine government expenditure survey in 2015 reported that the average Filipino family income in the Philippines is estimated to be around US$500 per month. 3 In contrast, the average Japanese monthly family expenditure is five times more. 4 How then do we facilitate the sending of workers from a lower income nation to a higher income nation like Japan? If we can’t send Filipinos to serve in Japan, does this mean we stop mobilizing for the country? We hope not. But if finance is a hindrance, surely there are ways to address the challenge. Surely God will provide for his work and those he calls; we just need to discern if his provision will be in and through different or new ways.

3. Rethinking Language Learning

One of the biggest financial hurdles for Filipinos hoping to serve with OMF, and more specifically OMF Japan, is the high cost of language and culture learning. A huge chunk of first-term expenses is allocated for this. Many Filipino missionaries who came directly to Japan to serve without dedicating time for language and culture acquisition subsequently lamented their lack of proficiency. Their low language proficiency limits their work amongst Japanese people and ministry has mostly focused on the Filipino diaspora. Amongst Filipinos already serving in and planting churches in Japan, there is a resounding affirmation of the importance of language and culture acquisition and anyone hoping to serve with them is discouraged from following the same path they took—if only for the sake of the next generation within the diaspora churches who can only speak Japanese.

To help reduce the costs as well as offer options that suit other learning styles, alternative tracks of language and culture learning need to be explored. For example, one possible route is for Filipinos to study Japanese at local language schools where learning in a classroom setting would be at least 50% cheaper than the current model of one-to-one classes. One missionary from another agency shared that studying at a local language school can be quite intense. However, hard work paid off and classes helped him, as well as the others I interviewed, to attain a proficiency level that made it possible to work in Japanese companies and serve in Japanese churches.

When I took my language proficiency test, I talked to a number of Filipinos enrolled in a local language school. Two of them shared with me that they came to Japan by saving up around US $10,000 to cover tuition for their two-year language school and living expenses. Their goal is to gain a level of fluency that will allow them to find work and stay in Japan. Scholarships are also provided by some schools and Japanese institutions so that students do not necessarily need to foot their entire bill. Placement of Filipinos in language schools will broaden their network in the country and possibly even open doors for the gospel to be planted and shared with the growing

Filipino English teachers and friends at a Filipino Christmas Dinner
number of language students who come from countries where the gospel is little known.

Whether funding comes from sending churches or through a scholarship, enrollment in a local language school also serves as means to serve in Japan without a religious visa. Not only does a student visa opens doors for Filipinos to be sent in a “cheaper” way, it also makes it possible for workers from other nations to leave their country without a “missionary visa” stamped on their passports.

One track being explored by the OMF Japan Field is for Filipino enquirers and applicants to attain a functional level of Japanese fluency prior to arriving in Japan. Language learning hence becomes part of preparation along with theological or Bible training. Learning a language prior to arriving on the field has generally been generally discouraged because of the possibility of picking up bad habits that will be hard to undo. However, the strategy of requiring a high level of language fluency prior to deployment is already being adopted by Philippine overseas employment agencies. My cousin, who recently started working as a nurse in Germany, studied to attain a required level of fluency in German as part of her pre-departure training. Her employment agency journeyed with her and a few of her friends for at least a year before they left, monitoring their progress. Though I am not sure if their language studies in the Philippines were covered by the agency, I think churches can be challenged to support tuition for language classes in the home country for those they want to commission and send.

Learning Japanese in the Philippines is far cheaper than doing it in Japan. Government agencies such as the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in the Philippines also offer up to 150 hours of free classes for basic Japanese, Mandarin, Arabic, and Spanish language and culture as a means of equipping and encouraging Filipinos to find employment overseas. After reaching a specific level of fluency, whether through language schools in the Philippines or Japan, Filipinos can then take classes focused on language and culture learning specific to the ministries they will be involved in after they arrive on the field.

In addition to a high language requirement and options to undertake language and culture learning through other routes, Filipinos will also be encouraged to come in teams as much as possible so that the cost of language classes can be split between them and shared. There exists a deep regard and respect for OMF missionaries in Japan because of their level of fluency. Finding cheaper ways to address the high cost of language learning does not necessarily mean that we water down the standards. We want Filipinos to minister effectively and with excellence. What we need to do is work out which part of training can only be done well following traditional OMF ways of language and culture learning and then allow other ways or tracks of learning to become an option for subjects that can be facilitated by others at a reduced cost.

4. Widening discussion on tent-making and other ways of sending and going

Once the challenge of language and culture learning costs are addressed we can further widen our discussion to tent-making and other ways of sending and going. Ian Prescott, in a discussion amongst Asian Homestide Leaders in 2016, highlighted that tent-making could be an avenue not just for creative access but also self-support. Tent-making has good biblical precedence, Prescott shared, in that Paul’s tent-making was primarily about self-support and this was also the way missionaries of the early church were funded. Granted that many of those taking paid employment find it difficult to learn the local language and culture, if new workers from developing economies commit time to learning language and culture prior to taking paid-employment, we can hopefully realize the missionary potential of many majority world churches.

There are growing opportunities for tent-making. The tight labor market and shrinking work force in Japan have resulted in more jobs being offered to people from countries like the Philippines. Over the last eight years, the number of foreign workers has doubled and the message from Japan is “send us your construction workers, your
care givers, your store clerks.” When I first arrived in the country, most Filipinos assumed that I was here to teach English and I’ve met quite a number who have come as nurses, caregivers, IT professionals, and students.

At a recent gathering, around two hundred Filipinos from fifteen diaspora churches in Tokyo united to pray and were encouraged to be a blessing and serve as witnesses in Japan. Most of the churches are led by Filipino wives of Japanese men and, apart from a handful of missionaries who have partnered with a Japanese church or are funded by churches they planted, most of the diaspora church leaders and pastors are tentmakers juggling ministry and work. In a neighboring prefecture of Tokyo, a group of friends teaching English put up a roving Filipino restaurant so that they could share the gospel with their students and non-believing friends. One of the leaders reported that discussions about Filipino culture and cuisine allows them to share about their faith in a non-threatening way.

Across East Asia, governments and institutions, including many in Japan, offer scholarships for graduate study. Doors to come as a student and OMF partner should also be opened. Student partners come with enthusiasm and fresh ideas. They can be directed to an OMF ministry or church plant or connected with a Christian student fellowship or ministry and they can develop networks and relationships. Being part of an OMF team or ministry provides them, in return, with community, encouragement, pastoral care, accountability, and perhaps even training to effectively navigate Japanese culture and language in ministry.

Tent-making has already made it possible for believers to work in diaspora areas. The offer of academic scholarships by prefectures and universities makes it possible for Christian students from majority world countries to come.9 There are ways to take hold of the resources and opportunities these bring to mission, especially in terms of equipping and mobilizing gospel bearers to be able to communicate and navigate the culture effectively in places untouched, or less reached, by traditional mission. Exploring tent-making, student partnerships, and other ways of staying and supporting ministry in countries across East Asia will mean rethinking how we mobilize, prepare, and train those coming through these “creative routes.” We can explore ways for Filipinos, for example, to come initially as Associates for language and culture learning and training, after which they can decide whether to come back as full members supported by traditional means, as self-supported tent-makers, or field partners. We must also rethink how we orientate and train those coming through creative routes before they arrive on the field so they can function, understand, and work within OMF culture whilst holding a creative identity and platform. With all the opportunities available, the real challenge is developing responsiveness and implementing structures and processes that facilitate creative sending and going. All this is possible if there is continual openness, dialogue, and trust between both sending and receiving sides across the Fellowship.

5. Partnerships with indigenous mission movements and local churches

Fifteen years ago, a Filipino and his wife moved their whole family from Manila to Tokyo with a vision to reach out to Japanese people. After a meeting with OMF Japan Field leaders, while we were walking back to the train station, he told me he had considered going home many times. Neither his nor his wife’s home churches supported their ministry financially but God’s goodness saw them through. He thoughtfully shared that Filipinos who can come with a mission agency would get the care, encouragement, and support that he had to manage without because he came directly to Japan without an agency.

Coming to Japan has not only opened my eyes to other ways of sending workers from lower income to higher income nations like Japan. It has also opened my eyes to the opportunities to partner with mission movements emerging from majority world nations. Filipinos are now the third largest ethnic minority in Japan and many Filipino Christians are reaching out to their own people and others.

At the aforementioned gathering of Filipino diaspora churches, Rev. Shinagawa, General Secretary of the Japan Evangelical Association, shared that diaspora churches are the fastest growing churches in the country. He added that congregation numbers and current rate of growth means that there may even be more believers within the diaspora churches than in Japanese churches and it is easier for the diaspora and even Japanese people to feel welcome in a diaspora church than in a traditional Japanese church.

The big challenge for diaspora churches, however, is that their second generation mostly speaks Japanese and most of the pastors and church leaders are unable to speak Japanese, let alone disciple in the language. The leader of the Japan Council of Philippine Churches shared with OMF field leaders the need for missionaries to be sent to reach the next generation in Filipino diaspora churches. They have tried planting their youth and children in Japanese churches but this failed. OMF missionaries can come to pioneer work and reach out to the Filipino diaspora’s youth and children,
What kind of missionaries are we hoping to develop amongst those coming from lower income nations? … If we want to see a maturing East Asian church take on the task of mission then we need to permit alternative ways of being, sending, and going in mission that allow East Asians to be rooted in mission as East Asians.

many of whom are half-Japanese and marginalized. They will integrate into the Japanese society and their futures will be part of Japan’s. As a result of dialogue and meetings between OMF and Filipino diaspora leaders, OMFiJapan is now hoping to partner to place Filipino missionaries with these diaspora churches to reach out to their Japanese-speaking family members, youth, and children.

By partnering with, investing in, and journeying with diaspora churches, opportunities are being opened to share our resources and journey with them as they seek to effectively reach out in mission to Japanese people and other diaspora peoples. Our hope is that opportunities will also open up for them to partner with the OMFiJapan Home Council in supporting and sending Japanese missionaries and perhaps eventually sending their own missionaries overseas.11

Placing Filipino OMFiJapan workers to shadow and be mentored by other Filipino cross-cultural workers outside of traditional OMFiJapan circles also exposes them to Filipino ways of living and adjusting to life in high income countries like Japan. They learn what it means to be Filipino within a Japanese context: What are our strengths and weaknesses in a Japanese context? What does it look like to minister as a Filipino cross-cultural worker and what do we bring to the table of mission and church as a Filipino believer? How do we appropriately and effectively reach out to Japanese people as Filipinos? If there is only one model of mission, then what kind of missionaries are we hoping to develop amongst those coming from lower income nations? There is much to be learned theologically and missiologically when working in a multi-cultural and diverse context like OMFiJapan; not exposing Filipinos to other Filipino mission movements and ways of doing and being runs the risk of developing Filipino cross-cultural workers who either take on western ways of living and being or they end up being unable to function in the long term, losing their identity, and feeling they are unable to fit in because of their Filipino-ness. If we want to see a maturing East Asian church take on the task of mission then we need to permit alternative ways of being, sending, and going in mission that allow East Asians to be rooted in mission as East Asians.

6. Great expectations

Since mission is now from everyone to everywhere and “anywhere to anywhere,”12 what role will OMFiJapan play? How is God calling us to be involved in coming alongside maturing East Asian churches, including the diaspora churches planted in the least reached areas? My experience in the last twelve months of living in and serving from Japan has been an exciting time of seeing with fresh eyes all that God is doing in the country and in the region. God continues to call and send people from the majority world to high income nations. They are going and they will continue to go even if it means swimming upstream and my heart is filled with great expectations for all that God will do in mission and I also have great expectations about how we will respond.

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not see it? I am making ways in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” Isaiah 43:19

1 Allan Yeh, Polycentric Missiology: 21st Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 216.
7 Prescott, “Unlocking the Log Jam,” 2.
11 The question, however, then follows: who processes them? To which homeside do diaspora churches belong?
Reflections on the Korean Missionary Movement: A Critical Review of Recent Research

Introduction

The Korean Missionary Movement (KMM) has long exerted a fascination for Christians across the world. Many are curious about its origins, its activities, and its current status. Two important recent publications offer an excellent summary of the state of research. The first book, *Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity*, gives an ecumenical reading of Korean Christianity, in relation to mission, from a range of perspectives—historical, ecclesiological, and missional. Its strength lies in the way it looks at the KMM in relation to many aspects of Korean and Global Christianity over the last century. The second book, *The Korean Missionary Movement. Dynamics and Trends, 1988–2013*, has a tighter interest in Protestant mission and agencies, but ranges widely over a number of connected issues, such as structures, partnerships, and leadership. Its analyses and findings are based on consistent, systematic, qualitative, and statistical research that has been carried out over a period of twenty-five years based on careful definitions rigorously applied to what constitutes a “missionary.” This paper will reflect on how this recent scrutiny of the KMM sheds insight on the contexts of Korean mission and the development of Korean mission agencies.

1. A century of Korean mission

The Edinburgh Conference 2010

Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity forms part of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary series. The flow of time from the first Edinburgh conference in 1910 until the second in 2010 provides a good frame to reflect on missions from Korea as there is a very close overlap between these dates and the history of the KMM. The year 1907 marks a significant date in Korean missions (see below) and Moon’s book looks at Korean mission until 2013.

Using the degree of representation at the two Edinburgh conferences as a measure of the changing face of Korean missions, Wonsuk Ma notes the transition from 1910, when a Korean was present as an observer and the Korean “representative” was from North America, to the 2010 conference, when three amongst the twenty-five leaders of the planning team were Korean. He further notes recent Korean influence in leadership at the 2010 Tokyo conference, the Lausanne Movement, and the World Council of Churches. With Edinburgh 2010 as vantage point, we can assess the significance of the KMM in the shifts that have occurred in mission and world Christianity in these hundred years. In many ways, the Korean church and missionary movement epitomize the kind of changes that have taken place on a global canvas.

Historical phases of the Korean Missionary Movement

Recent statistics about Korean missions since the 1980s are used by Timothy Park as a springboard for discussion about the global impact of the KMM. His point is that “the churches in the world have begun to recognize the dynamic emergence of the Korean church as a missionary church.” This is incontestable, and Park, like Wonsuk Ma, is optimistic about the ongoing role...
of the Korean church.

Park’s summary looks backwards to the early twentieth century as the starting-point of the KMM. He divides the history into three periods of mission: (1) “During the Japanese colonial period 1907–1957”; (2) “After the independence of Korea 1955–1991”; and (3) “Current Period—1980s to the present.” The first period includes the seminal event of the Rev. Lee Ki-Poong being sent to Cheju in 1907, the mission to Siberia (Russia), and missions to Shandong (China). The second period, coming after the Korean War, included important pioneers like the Rev. Samuel I. Kim whose writings are preserved in English for an international audience through the volume New Forces in Missions.

Although these missionary efforts may seem, to the casual observer, of only historical curiosity, they formed an important backdrop to late twentieth century mission. Numerous lessons were learned in the two earlier periods that shaped the more recent phase of mission from the 1980s. Koreans were able to appreciate the difficulties faced by missionaries from a homogenous culture where there were no “predecessors” and where church leaders had not had the opportunity to travel internationally (and hence found it hard to imagine the cross-cultural dimensions of the missional experience) and of the potential contribution that could be made by missionaries from a majority world culture—like Korea—to global mission and evangelism.

The decade of the 1980s

One more historical moment needs to be emphasized at the outset. This is the decade of the 1980s. The 1980s are seen to be significant for a range of factors that opened up Korea to the rest of the world—not least during the Seoul Olympics. During this decade economic, social, and political forces emerged that laid the foundation for Korea to become a more global society.

The missional focus of Korea also changed in this third period. Park identifies three key issues of the time: (1) a shift from mission to Korean immigrants to evangelization of a wider world; (2) the rise of indigenous missions (emergence of native missions); (3) the “symbiotic relationship” between churches and denominations as an important factor in the development of mission.

This decade had a very personal relevance for Ma as he became a missionary at the end of the 1970s, but there are wider reasons, on both a global and Korean canvas, as to why it needs to be viewed as an important decade in the evolution of the KMM. Ma shows that, according to the Atlas of Global Christianity, the second millennium of Christianity saw Europe taking centre stage but that a shift occurred towards the beginning of the third Christian millennium when a more global expression of the church and missions was discernible. He cites statistical data to place this change around the late 1970s and early 1980s.

This notion that there is a period from the 1980s onwards that is significant for “Christianity and its mission in the new global context” is important for understanding the KMM and missionary movements in the global south at the present time. In short, Ma is suggesting that the shift in global Christianity overlaps a key moment of growth and expansion in the KMM—so the KMM can be seen as exemplary in terms of both identity and scale of what has been accomplished in emerging missions since this global shift.

2. Making sense of the Korean Missionary Movement

The Korean Missionary Movement challenges existing paradigms of mission

In a similar way, Kirsteen Kim shows that the significance of the KMM as a movement from the global south affects our understanding of mission on a number of fronts. She realizes that the KMM needs to be assessed on its own terms with its own agenda and not simply in reaction to western issues or in terms of the frame of western mission. For Kim, mission studies as a contemporary discipline has largely been shaped by western people to make sense of their own mission movements and the KMM offers an alternative way of viewing the world.

The KMM allows us, then, to look at missions from a different angle. “Far from seeing missions as a politically incorrect legacy of a colonial past, Korean Christians embrace sending - especially cross-cultural sending as one of the highest expressions of Christian love.” The KMM offers an important strand from the global south to understand the missional dimension of “Christianity as a religion.”

In her final synthesis, Kim notes a number of important dynamics that relate to mission movements from Korea but would also be important for...
mission movements in Asia as a whole. These include the general shift in the postcolonial period away from Europe and the West and the intensification of the polycentric character of mission. She further highlights the influence of patterns of migration, and the push and pull of political and economic factors.\(^{29}\)

In terms of theological underpinnings, Kim shows that individual movements may well have different theological slants: for Korea, she highlights the role of pneumatology (across the theological spectrum) in terms of the dynamism of mission, and the connections to material prosperity (as a form of blessing) and how the politics of a divided peninsula have created different approaches to theology. She rightly underlines the uniquely Korean rendering of the motif of self-sacrifice.\(^{21}\)

The many points of overlap between Kim’s analysis and the reflections made by Wonsuk Ma in his concluding article around these contextual dimensions, suggest that the uniqueness of the Korean setting has made a real impact on Korean Christianity and the Korean missionary movement.\(^{22}\)

3. Researching the Korean Missionary Movement

Twenty-five years of research and its fruits

Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity sets the KMM against the backdrop of Global and Korean Christianity. In The Korean Missionary Movement: Dynamics and Trends, 1988–2013, Steve Moon helps us to see the realities of mission as experienced by the players—Korean missionaries, churches, and mission agencies—viewed over a twenty-five year period.\(^{23}\)

Steve Sang-Cheol Moon is well-placed to undertake this kind of research. In Korea, he is the Director of the Korean Research Institute of Missions (KRIM),\(^{24}\) which is the research wing of the Global Missionary Fellowship (GMF) and has links to the Global Missionary Training Centre (GMTC). The fact that he and his colleague David Tae Woong Lee (the former principal of GMTC) are connected to the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission allows a two-way dialogue and conduit of ideas, resources, and people from Korea to a global audience and vice-versa.\(^{25}\)

In the preface, Moon offers an explanation of the contours which frame the research undertaken by KRIM, an offering that provides an excellent overview of important themes in the KMM. He presents a focus on Protestant Korean missions with a history going back to 1907 (xvi);\(^{26}\) he hints at the significance of the 1980s and the Seoul Olympics in 1988—indicating factors of travel, availability of travel documents, and attitudes to foreign currency (xvii); and he further notes the rise and influence of major mission conventions from 1988 onwards (xviii). In terms of the practicalities of Korean missions, he notes a focus on “efforts to strategize and systematize” (and is aware of the influence of the West, especially North America).\(^{27}\)

He shows too that in practical and economic terms, the experiences and the resources of the “church growth” outlook of the 1970s acted as a major springboard for Korean missions. In terms of an ethos that would encourage mission, he suggests that the “conservative theological orientation” of churches and the attitude of sacrificial giving characterizes contemporary Korean Christianity (xx). In a nutshell, Moon offers the reader an informed grasp of the world of the KMM from 1988 to 2013.

At the opening of this book, Moon graciously and firmly locates himself as a successor to Martin Nelson and his research interests and outputs in the 1970s. The latter includes the 1979 directory of Korean missionaries and similar works up to 1989 (xvii).\(^{28}\) The research of KRIM furthered this work with its production of biennial reports from 1990 to 2008 and since then annual reports (xviii). Part of the importance of the work of KRIM lies in this steady continuous work over the last 25–30 years. The other important feature of their research has been their definition of a missionary—that it represents a person from Korea with an established agency (not from other countries); it does not include pastors from diaspora churches; it does not include those who work with migrant churches. These specific criteria have been consistently applied for twenty-five years (xviii). In the statistical synthesis, Moon shows that there have been just over 20,000 Korean missionaries using KRIM’s categories up to 2013.\(^{29}\)

Following this historical and theoretical frame, he highlights a few key areas that need further scrutiny: mission member care and financial needs (practical); and leadership development and partnerships in mission (strategic).\(^{30}\)

The glocalisation of the KMM: a movement between the global and the local

In his introductory comments, Moon helps set the scene for our examination of the KMM and offers some pointers of the need for change. As most Korean missionaries were working globally, there was a tendency to follow global and western patterns. This overseas focus resulted in Koreans being “constrained to adopt western policies for organizing their field ministries” (xxi). He concludes with reflections on how mission can be done in a more Korean way, with a distinctive plea for the need to develop a greater capacity to self-theologize.\(^{31}\)

In asking the question of how Korea can develop in respect to “self-theologizing”, Moon gives a personal response:

“My own understanding is that self-missiologizing means to do missiology with both the local and the global interdependently in view, not independently. In Korea the level of self-theologizing, a foundation for self-missiologizing is not at all satisfactory. Without a good foundation in self-theologizing and self-missiologizing a missionary movement can fall into activism, repeating the trials and errors of the past. Integration of what we have learned through experience into the accumulated missiological knowledge seems to be a core answer to this question.

Moon is clearly interested in shaping the ethos of the KMM through KRIM’s research, and it is from this lens or starting-point that the research seeks to shed light on the past with an eye on what is to come. He is especially open to understanding the interplay of the global and local forces that shape Korean mission and building from this for a more globally aware movement in the future. In discussions on the “glocalisation of Korean missions,” he makes the following observation:
Now as a leading force in global mission, Korean missions need formal criteria and a new mindset. The nature of missions is innately both local and global, and therefore both localization and globalization must be acknowledged.32

Reviewing the barriers to glocalisation (from the limitations of “the local”) research suggests the need to move beyond the homogenous and monocultural contexts of Korea which can lead to an ethnocentric outlook. Conversely, considering the challenges of globalization (in the sense of “adapting to global standards”), research indicates that the glocalisation of mission needs to address cross-cultural understandings as well as areas like leadership, mission structures, and the Korean church itself. Missionaries themselves were acutely aware of the need to invest in people and education, not just buildings and facilities.35

The capacity to move between the global and local is essential in modern missions.

With the support of the Korean church, mission agencies must enable glocalisation by consciously and intentionally seeking to develop experts who have both knowledge and mission experience. Mission agencies and mission associations should also take the initiative in building international partnerships.34

Moon rightly concludes that applied glocalisation needs more attention and research while it remains an important foundation of mission in the third millennium for the KMM.

4. Implications for Korean mission agencies and churches

The implications of research for Korean mission agencies and churches

The KMM has impacted both church and mission agencies. The symbiotic relationship between Korean mission agencies and Korean churches is pursued in two central chapters in the book which look at the KMM around 2000–2003.35 Statistically, it was a time of growth. In the period from 1989 (when KRIM’s records started) to 2013, the number of missionaries from Korea went from 1178 to 20,083; in the same period the number of agencies increased from 92 to 166; and the countries in which Korean missionaries worked increased from 72 to 171.36 This shows the scale of the movement and the scope of the issues that have been faced in the last three decades.37

Mission agencies and churches need to consider the following areas: partnership, structures, and the care of missionaries.38 In terms of partnership, Moon notes how this plays out and how it affects leaders and leadership training.

That Korean mission agencies and missionaries will work with mission agencies from different national backgrounds is inevitable, but knowing one’s partners and partnering organizations well before working with them is important. … Korean mission agencies who belong to international mission agencies need to remember their cultural identity as they grow as leaders in a multicultural setting. They need to seek to represent the reality of Korean churches, mission agencies and missionaries well.39

Groups, mission agencies, and churches need to be aware of the context in other countries and yet need to find ways to connect locally without losing sight of their unique contribution as Koreans.

Research seems to indicate that despite their global status, Korean mission agencies need to pay more attention to basic infrastructure both at home and abroad and to invest in this. Churches, for obvious reasons, can be more interested in giving resources to buildings and infrastructure on the mission field, but need to be challenged to invest in the KMM and to find a better equilibrium. Moon fears that Korean mission agencies are starting to “lag behind” in this respect, despite their scale and length of historical involvement.40

This means that Korean churches need to find new ways to develop “moral support” (my term) for Korean missions. This includes member care, but it also means the need to find ways to be creative in terms of the infrastructure and financing of mission. In a technological age, Moon is concerned that even areas like IT need attention and investment; he suggests that Koreans may want to develop partnerships with other Asian countries like India and Singapore. He really wants the churches in Korea to recognize this need and to invest in IT.31

Korean churches supporting the KMM need to do two things: firstly, “pursue a globalization of its missionary movement overcoming parochialism for the sake of world evangelization in this global age;” and, secondly, shift their focus towards “quality” not just “quantity.” These shifts will need to affect areas like member care, the support structures of mission, and “the encouragement of mission innovation” through research and partnerships.32

To do this, churches need to grow in the area of a “global mindset” as well. Mission stems from the beliefs of local Christians and their commitment to God’s global world.

Although mission agencies are on the front line, the initiative and dynamics of mission belongs to local churches. The level of commitment of the Korean churches determines the degree of maturity of Korean missions. Missions is about the lifestyle of Christians and is an expression of faith shared within a community. Korean churches need to embrace globalism.43

Moon critiques the phenomenon of churches (often mega-churches) that engage in direct sending, by showing that in “bypassing mission agencies” and their expertise, there is a danger of constantly failing to understand contextual realities in target countries and, worse, their actions raise the “spectre of a new mode of imperialism in missions.”44 This is not just an issue in Korea. Certainly those of us living in Europe and other East Asian countries face similar tensions.

The implications of research for leadership in Korean mission

At the heart of many of the above issues, lies a challenge for leadership training. Although it is possible
to emphasise Korean identity in indigenous mission agencies, they have some inherent tensions as they are often centred around a single “entrepreneurial” leader.45

An alternative is offered by international mission agencies that are sensitive to local diversity:

For their part, international mission agencies need to adapt to the new organizational soil of Korea. A uniform structure that fails to reflect the diversity of cultural contexts is no longer competitive in the ever-diversifying world... Instead of working as a branch of a huge international conglomerate, international mission agencies need to consider implementing a horizontal partnership model. Decision making needs to reflect the cultural characteristics of each sending country.46

Moon recognizes that “cross-cultural understanding for cross-cultural leadership” is essential and that Korean churches need to play a role in this, not just the mission agencies. He wants to draw on and develop the unique character of Korean identity without losing sight of the global context.47 He expresses the need to “learn from being Korean and ... from the accumulated global experience of missions.”

**5. Whither the Korean Missionary Movement?**

Both books at the heart of this study *Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity* and *The Korean Missionary Movement* make observations about the current status of the KMM as we move into the twenty-first century.

**Towards a plateau**

Just before 2013 (the end of his stated period of research), Moon suggests that there has been a kind of “plateau” effect in the KMM—he uses the word “stagnation”, though in a simply descriptive sense.48 This leads Moon to consider measured expectations for the future in terms of growth. Noting what could be called a proportional relationship between church revival and mission activity, he highlights the need for greater realism and even wonders whether “extravagant emphasis on numbers has had the negative effect of inhibiting growth” and suggests instead the need “to set and promote realistic goals of missionary recruitment in light of the current level of church growth.”49

Given that the KMM is experiencing a time of slowing down, in the spirit of “reculer pour mieux sauter,”50 he ponders what lessons can be observed from the existing phenomenon of Korean mission. As he frames the idea of improvement, he cites six areas for “growth” in a qualitative sense:

1. leadership development
2. infrastructure development
3. strategy for field ministries
4. crisis management
5. care of missionary families
6. preparation for missionary retirement

We have seen that these themes have formed an important part of the dialogue around Korean mission in relation to the glocalisation of Korean missions and the development of a more innovative and creative approach. Moon is equally interested in the wider dimensions of member care for Asian cultures, extended to include children, the family, and stages of the “mission life-cycle.” Finally, he notes the place of research in going beyond blinkered thinking and “problem-solving” to a more nuanced approach, recognizing that this period of slowing down can be accompanied by “a corresponding maturation in reflection on mission” that can enhance the future quality of the KMM.51

**Into the third millennium**

In terms of understanding where the KMM is heading in the changing global context, Wonsuk Ma correctly recognizes that in the third Christian millennium the world continues to change rapidly. In this new “post” world—Ma suggests post-Christendom, post-colonialism, and post-modernism as markers—we could now add “post-truth”. According to the BBC, we are indeed in a new phase of human experience that has been ushered in from the 1980s.52 In this new world order, Ma suggests that the shift to the global south will mean that Christianity will be experienced by the majority of Christians as a religion of the poor. However, the impact of the church in the “west” or the “north” will continue to be felt because of its economic resources and intellectual heritage.53

Ma does not shrink from explaining why the Korean church and missionary movement has looked to the “west” (or “global north”).

The West was seen as ‘Christian’, civilised, rich, benevolent, and willing to help, while persecutions came from either among our own (including the Joseon dynasty and Communist North) or a close neighbour (that is Japan). Korean Christianity consequently looks extremely western, in its theology, orientation and behaviour.54

Like Moon, Ma notes the links between the growth and maturity of the KMM.
in the late 1970s and 1980s onwards and the nation’s status on the global stage. He is also conscious that the slowing down of the church in Korea and its composition will impact mission in the near future. On the other hand, Ma realizes that the phenomenon of the Korean church from the 1980s onwards, as exemplified by megachurch models and approaches to Christian life, have had a real impact, especially elsewhere in Asia and in Africa.

This has been seen in the way in which Korean churches have played a key role in encouraging churches in neighbouring countries.

Ma concludes that the growth of Korean Christianity, the resulting mission movement, and the theological climate (with its unique blend of responses to economic and spiritual hardships) have ushered in a new era, but he notes the important interplay between these factors and this era of global Christianity.

What is significant for the Korean church is the birth of an intentional, substantial and sustained missionary movement….Its growth and missionary development almost exactly coincides with the decisive shift of the shift of global Christianity.

For Ma, the KMM predates (slightly) the rise of Asian Christianity and so Korea was able to exercise influence in a number of Asian spheres and in “leading other nations, especially from the global south, in evangelism, church growth, and mission. Its location in Asia has been therefore critical, for the continent has the highest population in the world but the lowest evangelisation rate.”

The review of the mission movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a re-assessment of issues such as the way in which the transmission of the Christian faith was bound up with flows from Europe and North America to other parts of the world and the role of power in that experience.

Power, incarnation, and powerlessness: concluding theological reflections

Addressing the relevance of mission from Korea to global debates on mission in the third millennium (since the 1980s), Ma reflects on how mission was seen in the second Christian millennium to be “a task only churches/nations with power can perform” and that this took place in a certain direction which reflected “the perceived unidirectional nature of mission” that was essentially “from the West to the ‘Rest’.” This is a false vision of mission. “This notion of mission that requires power is foreign to the life and teachings of Jesus and also to mission practices found in early records (Acts).” Rather “the kenotic life is the core of incarnation and is also the basis of Christian discipleship.”

Moon made a strikingly similar observation on mission itself, contrasting mission from the emerging nations to mission from the powerful global north:

The soft power of Christian love, in contrast, is unconditional, altruistic, non-numerical and immeasurable—but it transforms the world fundamentally. Only compassion for specific people motivates mission. Korean missionaries, especially mission leaders, need to check their actual worldviews and, as needed, change them to harness missional soft power.

Moon continues, with a very striking quote (noted by Bill Taylor in his Foreword) which sums up a view of mission as mediated through missionaries in mission agencies, which seems to me to show a similar perception about the true nature of mission from the fruits of sustained research.

Short termism, obsession with visible results and exporting prosperity myths are a few expressions of secular worldviews. Only the practice of incarnational mission can bring about changes at a deep level. There is a growing awareness of incarnational humility among mission communities and practitioners from Korea.

So, the KMM can offer an alternative vision; it can be the exemplar of a new paradigm from the global south. “Thus, a radical reappraisal of mission is called for…The mission leadership of the Korean church includes a pivotal role to facilitate the global church, both of the South and the North, to run this process.”

Ma is mindful, however, that mission in the third millennium needs to be an interplay between the newer missionary movements of the global south, in conjunction with those of the global north.

As the world church comes to a common table…the South…can bring its underrating [sic] of mission from their reading of the scripture and engagements with its contexts. The North can bring its long history of mission and its critical reflection of it.

Such a move away from power is one that Ma sees the Korean church uniquely equipped to address and it can help to offer a different vision of mission in the third millennium.

We began our reflections with the century between 1910 and 2010, bounded by the two Edinburgh conferences. A recent book Polycentric Missiology reviews the four major conferences that took place in that centenary year of 2010 (including the one in Edinburgh itself) and one in Latin America in 2012. Its thesis is that these conferences show a shift of mission over a century from the single centre of “the West to the rest” to a more polycentric character “from everyone to everywhere.”

Korean missions epitomize this shift. The two recent publications on the KMM show they are researching and reflecting on how the KMM needs to grow and develop in this new global era.

As Moon clarifies, the experience of facing the challenges of global mission will be the inspiration for change, both
for the KMM and the Korean church:

By addressing these developmental issues well, the Korean missionary movement will signal that it is overcoming the inevitable weaknesses and limitations of an emerging missionary movement. To complement or offset one’s vulnerability through learning and conscious effort is a Christian attitude. It also displays a global mindset. The Korean church is becoming global through global missions.footnote}

3 Moon also focuses on a recent twenty-five year period, but he looks back to 1907 as well. See page 277.
7 Park gives overlapping dates without a full explanation of his rationale for this.
9 David Cho, New Forces in Missions: The Official Report of the Asian Mission Association (Seoul: East-West Centre for Missions Research and Development, 1976), 123-124. Video footage exists [recently rediscovered] of Samuel Kim and Chan Choe’s ordination service. This is titled, “This Great Calling – Korea, 1953.” This was drawn to my attention by Dr. Son Chang Nam, the former Korean National Director of OMF International.
10 Ma shows the global significance of the shift of centre of gravity of Christianity in this decade. Moon’s book also stresses the importance of the 1960s (especially 1988 which was the date of the Seoul Olympics).
11 Moon suggests that these included “ease of travel, availability of passports, more access to foreign money.” Moon, The Korean Missionary Movement, xvii.
14 The exact dates he uses “from 923 until 11 Moon suggests that these included “ease of travel, availability of passports, more access to foreign money.” Moon, The Korean Missionary Movement, xvii.
16 Ma gives the example of Sarang Church, Seoul’s discipleship strategy as a model that was widely used in Korea and beyond—even the author and his wife attended a week long seminar on this for Korean churches in the South of Korea in the 1990s at Hosanna Church, Pusan. See p. 370.
20 Ma, “Global Leadership.” 370-372. There are some aspects of this discussion that need further clarification given the interest in the growing economic development of Korea, but there is an underlying awareness that emerging missions can and should model the true nature of Christian mission.
21 Both quotes are from Moon, The Korean Missionary Movement, 110. Also see the “Foreword”.
A Description of CIM Missionary Workers to the Tibetan Highlands Prior to 1950
Zi Yu

Introduction

The Tibetan Highlands, also known as the Tibetan Plateau, are located in Central Asia, encompassing “all of the Tibet Autonomous Region and much of Qinghai province and extends into western Sichuan province and southern Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang.” Since the mid-nineteenth century, attempts were made to evangelize Tibetans living in the Tibetan Highlands. Leafing through the Directory of Protestant Missions in China, we find that by the early 1900s both the China Inland Mission (1897) and the Seventh-Day Adventists (1919) had set up mission stations in the Sino-Tibetan border region to reach out to Tibetans in Tatsienlu (now Kangding), a major commercial center where Tibetan wool was traded for Chinese brick tea. The Disciples of Christ Foreign Christian Missionary Society, in 1916, stationed six couples in Batang, a Tibetan-majority town in westernmost Sichuan close to the border of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. William S. Martin also described some key individuals of missionary organizations engaged in this effort before 1950. While these missionary workers made significant contributions to the economic, social, and cultural developments in the Tibetan Highlands, no detailed record or overview on their lives and work are yet available.

Knowing who the missionaries were, where they came from, where they served, and how long they stayed there is the first step to unfold the impact of Christian missionary work in the Tibetan Highlands. Though missionaries from different agencies worked in the Tibetan Highlands, this review only focuses on members of the China Inland Mission (CIM), Established by Hudson Taylor in 1865, CIM reached out to people in rural and inland China. Detailed information on the mission and vision of the CIM is available elsewhere. Between 1865 and 1949 CIM sent 2680 men and women aged eighteen or older to spread the word of God in China.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals who worked with the China Inland Mission among the Tibetans prior to the complete withdrawal of the mission from China in 1952. As this paper is an overview, a discussion of what the workers accomplished and how they carried out their mission is outside of its scope. Future research will be required to examine and report on these important aspects of their lives.

Methodology

Search Strategy

The information for this review comes from computerized searches of the 1875 to 1952 issues of China’s Millions, the monthly magazine published by CIM. Using the Boolean operator “OR”, the keywords “Thibet”, “Thibetan”, “Tibet”, and “Tibetan” were combined in one search request. Two separate searches were performed. The first was conducted in October 2015 and covered articles published between 1875 and 1935. The second was conducted in June 2016 and covered the years from 1936 to 1952. The two searches yielded a total of 733 article pages.

The articles found were then scanned to identify individuals who met at least one of the specified criteria. The scanning process yielded forty-one eligible single or married missionary units engaged in Tibetan work. To ensure the identified individuals were members of CIM, their names were individually checked against the CIM Registry. One member—James Neave—was excluded from this review because his name was not found in the Registry.

A further internet search was conducted to locate literature pertinent to individuals identified through the above-mentioned search strategies. The phrase “China Inland Mission” plus the name of each identified individual were searched and the titles and descriptive text of the first ten results of each search query were reviewed. In addition, CIM publications identified during the database search were scanned for relevant information on the identified missionaries. Additional materials were suggested by my colleague Joyce Wu.

Data Extraction

From early in its history, CIM produced a Registry of all members that recorded sociodemographic details of each missionary, including: (1) name, (2) date of arrival in China, (3) age at arrival, (4) previous occupation, (5) marriage details (spouse’s name, date, and place), and (6) reason for cessation of membership (e.g., death, resignation, or retirement). The names of those engaged in Tibetan work and the relevant information as listed above were extracted from the Registry and supplemented by details from the List of Directors, Members of Councils, Missionaries, and Stations of the China Inland Mission, which included data on the location of mission stations, including the year when they opened.

To analyze their age distribution at the time of arrival in China, missionaries were divided into three age groups: under 25 years old, 25 to 29 years old, and 30 years old or over. Reasons for membership cessation were classified under five categories: resignation, retirement, death, on reserve list, or withdrawal from China (i.e. up to 1952), whichever came first. Previous occupation was grouped into eight categories: religious (e.g., ministers and missionaries), professional (e.g., physicians, engineers, nurses, and teachers), clerical (e.g., clerks), service (e.g., Draper’s assistant, dressmakers, and parlour maids), labourer (e.g., farmers, miners, coopers, carpenters, and builders), and homemaker and others. Furthermore, two additional variables were considered: “years of
service with CIM” (calculated based on difference between the “year of arrival” and the “year leaving membership”); and “age of marriage” (computed as “age of arrival” plus the “difference between the date of arrival in China and date of marriage”).

Unless otherwise stated, all summary statistics were expressed as mean ± standard deviation (SD) or number and percentage. Microsoft Excel 2010 (Microsoft Corporation) was used to perform all calculations.

Findings

The search identified forty-one missionaries—six single women, and thirty-five men among whom twenty seven were married. Most marriages occurred between coworkers and after their arrival in China. One member—Norman John Amos—married a second time after the death of his first wife. Thus, including the spouses, this review covered a total of sixty-nine individuals.

The average age of marriage was 30.0 (SD 3.3) for men and 30.1 (SD 3.9) for women (Table 1). Their mean age of arrival in China was 26.4 (range 19 to 35 years). The majority of the missionaries were 25–29 years old when they arrived in China. Table 2 records the arrivals during each of the ten-year periods from 1880 to 1949. While only three workers arrived in China between 1910 and 1919, seventeen (25% of total) arrived during the period 1930–39, representing a number almost equivalent to that of the previous three decades.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the workers (82%) came from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia; with the largest number coming from the United Kingdom (39.1%). While similar rankings of sending countries were observed among women, the top three sending countries for men were the United Kingdom (42.9%), Australia (17.1%), and the United States (14.3%).

The kinds of previous occupations held before joining CIM varied between men and women. While 28.6% of the men had previously been employed as labourers, 20% percent were involved in religious work before they joined CIM. A full 45% of the women came from professional backgrounds.

Of the sixty-nine workers, 24 (34.8%) served with CIM for at least twenty years and 21.8% (eight men and seven women) served for thirty years or more. The most common reason reported for cessation of membership for both men and women was retirement. Ten workers died while in service, four of whom died during the first seven years of service. The causes of death for these individuals included typhoid (a.k.a. typhoid fever; two people), consumption (a.k.a. tuberculosis), and cholera.

Deaths among those with twenty or more years of service were mainly attributable to cancer (two people), and heart failure/heart trouble (two people).

Discussion

From the CIM Registry and China’s Millions, we have identified sixty-nine missionaries who worked in the Tibetan

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of CIM workers to the Tibetan Highlands (1880–1952)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>All (n = 69)</th>
<th>Male (n = 35)</th>
<th>Female (n = 34)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>26.4 ± 3.5</td>
<td>25.6 ± 2.9</td>
<td>27.1 ± 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25</td>
<td>22 (32.4%)</td>
<td>14 (41.2%)</td>
<td>8 (23.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>34 (50.0%)</td>
<td>16 (47.0%)</td>
<td>18 (52.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or over</td>
<td>12 (17.6%)</td>
<td>4 (11.8%)</td>
<td>8 (23.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>55 (80%)</td>
<td>27 (77.1%)</td>
<td>28 (82.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>27 (39.1%)</td>
<td>15 (42.9%)</td>
<td>12 (35.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>13 (18.8%)</td>
<td>5 (14.3%)</td>
<td>8 (23.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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* Data are presented as the mean ± SD or number (%).
† Information for three members is not available.
Highlands before the CIM completely withdrew from China in 1952. The data showed that nearly 29% of the male workers had previously worked in fields such as farming, digging, mining, and carpentry. It may be that such backgrounds better adapted them to rustic life and the demands of living and working in the harsh and challenging environment of the Tibetan Highlands. Statements by or about missionaries who served in the area support this conclusion. In a tribute to Robert Cunningham, who was promoted to glory after thirty-five years of service, Arthur Taylor stated that Cunningham had been a leading gymnast in United Kingdom and “his magnificent physique enabled him to remain for practically the whole of his missionary career at Tatsienlu, over 8000 feet above sea level.” 12 Walter Jespersen suggested that CIM assigned him to Tatsienlu because of his farming background.13 A preponderance of the male workers came from missionary backgrounds. This can be attributed to the fact that five single male missionaries, originally from Annie R. Taylor’s Tibetan Pioneer Mission (1894–95) and later regrouped into Polhill’s Tibetan Mission Band (1895–96), were officially affiliated with the CIM in March 1896 to continue their Tibetan work.14 That only three people who joined CIM between 1910 and 1919 entered Tibetan ministry could have been influenced by a number of factors including the founding of the Pentecostal Missionary Union by Cecil Polhill in 1909 which might have drawn away some missionaries, and the outbreak of the First World War (1914–18) which severely diminished the mission work force.15 However, the period 1930–39 witnessed a significant increase in CIM missionaries to the Tibetan Highlands, an intake that more than doubled that of the previous decade. The higher than usual number of new recruits might be attributed to the “Forward Movement” initiated in the 1920s. In 1929, D. E. Hoste, the General Director of CIM, issued a call to Europe and America for 200 new workers within a two-year period. Despite internal disorder and external aggression, two hundred and three individuals responded and were sent to China by 31 December 1931.16 Among them, seven were later designated to work in the Tibetan Highlands.17 The ripple effect of the movement could be felt even years later when several hundred new workers were deployed to China between 1930 to 1936.18 It is possible that the thirteen individuals sent during the 1940s followed on this growth.

Language learning is a prerequisite for effective missionary work. Based on available published materials, we were able to confirm that 28 (68%) of the identified individuals fulfilled the language acquisition criteria. While most of the workers were still learning the language when the articles included in this review were written, some had demonstrated their proficiency in the Tibetan language over the years. For example, it was said that Euphemia P. Reid Cunningham learned to speak the Tibetan language so fluently that she could gather Chinese and Tibetan women and children around her.19 Demonstrating their ability in the language, George and Dorothy Bell developed course material for a twenty-five-week Tibetan-language course for new workers in 1950.20 The book Tibetan-English Colloquial Primer: Kham Dialect, which was published by George Kraft in 1991 and has proved to be invaluable in the study of Kham Tibetan, testifies to his fluency in Tibetan.21 While these examples indicate that some missionaries succeeded in learning Tibetan, more evidence is needed to clarify the language acquisition status of the other workers.

Up-to-date research data on CIM work among Tibetans is very limited. This review is based on a search of the China’s Millions, the CIM Registry, and other relevant published materials. The data analysis yielded some basic characteristics of the missionaries to the Tibetan Highlands from around 1880 to 1952. However, because an in-depth study of the workers’ assignments has yet to be completed, this paper could not examine the impact of the work at mission stations on local Tibetan communities. In view of the time constraints and limited resources, this review may have left out some missionaries. Nonetheless, the current review represents a first attempt and the first step to acknowledge the contributions of individual workers to the lives of Tibetans living in the Tibetan Highlands. It is hoped that further work will turn the data into stories to highlight how each worker accomplished his or her mission. A summary of these stories would also bring out the essence of the uniqueness of this period of Tibetan missionary work. This review therefore lays the foundation for future research into understanding how these missionary workers impacted the life of the Tibetans.

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3 Directory of Protestant Missions in China 1921, 113.

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Table 2: Number of missionary workers to Tibetan Highlands, by gender and period

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<td>1940-1949</td>
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Bibliography of early mission work to Tibet


## Appendix: Missionary workers to Tibetan Highlands – Names and specific personal particulars

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<th>Ref. No.</th>
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<td>64</td>
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In a turbulent world spinning through rapid change, this fact-filled and heart-stirring account of God’s redemptive work in an earlier era marked by upheavals of unimaginable proportions is a timely read. Lyall, a veteran CIMer with a solid grasp of the historical and socio-political background of China and the West, tells a dramatic story against the backdrop of important contextual details. After a helpful overview of religious movements in China up to 1865, he recounts the founding of the China Inland Mission and its work until Hudson Taylor’s death in 1905. Acknowledging predictions that the CIM would not survive its founder’s death, Lyall traces the story of the mission’s growth despite formidable barriers and near-impossible situations as a testimony that this was not one man’s dream but the work of the true Founder who calls the nations to himself. Lyall recalls that one of the greatest barriers—the reluctant exodus of all missionaries from China in 1952—prompted CIM leaders to seek God to discern whether the work was to close and how God responded with a resounding “No” and led them to new fields of ministry under the aptly renamed banner of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF). The 1976 edition of the book adds four chapters to the 1965 centennial edition to tell the unfolding story of God’s leading OMIF into wider contexts.

This book will benefit a new generation of missionaries and candidates preparing to join God’s mission and other believers seeking to be challenged by his redemptive work and incredible faithfulness.

Like jigsaw pieces falling into place to reveal a majestic picture, readers will see God’s hand at work to bring salvation through the courageous men and women who followed him against all odds. Along the way critical faith lessons naturally emerge. One spectacular example is the way God continually met the financial needs of a growing mission that never solicits funds, particularly as it faced various crises, including the enforced withdrawal of personnel in 1927 and 1944 due to banditry and war and the reluctant exodus that started in 1951. Other formidable barriers were overcome when God stirred the mission to pray for reinforcements: the Eighteen (1875), the Seventy (1881), the Hundred (1886), the Two Hundred (1929), and a new call for “men of spiritual freshness and power ... fired with a passion for the humanly impossible” (1947). Despite political turmoil, desperate economic situations, natural calamities, crushing losses, and fiery trials, mission could continue only because God was at work. And though they faced intense suffering, believers grew in number and churches developed in faith and maturity. The book’s overriding message is how for more than a century, and in the face of seemingly-impossible situations, Hudson Taylor and those who joined him exhibited a “triumphant faith in a God with whom nothing is impossible.”

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by their agents within Palestine” (173). Smith later argues that “the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee would have provided a later generation of believers scattered across the Empire with direction, encouragement and challenge” (223).

*Seeking a City* concludes by highlighting the place of the church in bringing hope to an urban world. A most crucial question is posed by Smith: “Does the global Christian movement presage the appearance of an alternative model for the human family to that now provided by economic globalization, or is such a prospect completely illusory because, beneath a merely nominal unity, the Christian faith in fact reflects the socio-cultural divisions of the wider world instead of transcending them?” (232).

Hope for an urban world will be found in an *ecclesia* that demonstrates an alternative model for the human family. Smith proposes that it should be characterised as *evangelical*—not in any partisan way but in terms of its *missional* character; *emerging*, in the sense that the *ecclesia* is a “pilgrim community, always on the road and in a continual state of ‘becoming’”; and *catholic*—prepared to work out locally what it means to participate fully in the life of the multicultural church that is a twenty-first century reality.

An earlier version of this review appeared in 2013 in the online forum for the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies, an organization which has subsequently been incorporated into the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology.

Seeking a City with Foundations: Theology for an Urban World

Reviewed by Peter Rowan

Recent years have witnessed an increasing focus on the growth of cities and megacities in the non-Western world. Mind-boggling statistics with accompanying analyses provide us with insights into what an increasingly urbanised world will look like.

Sadly, the Christian community has been slow to respond to what this means for mission. Research conducted by Global Connections suggests that for most mission agencies in the UK a rural paradigm of world-mission still predominates. The GC report concluded that in the UK “it is difficult to find a Christian perspective that really understands and interprets the city and its implications for mission and models for mission.” David Smith’s book, Seeking a City with Foundations, provides foundations and perspectives on the city and what it means to engage with the urban contexts of today in missional and gospel centred ways.

As the title suggests, Smith is attempting to provide a theology for an urban world which should inform our thinking and practice in Christian mission. Setting out his agenda for an urban theology (42–47), Smith notes that “Unfortunately, Christian reflection on the urban challenge has often jumped far too quickly to the practice of mission within the city, and so has lacked adequate research and understanding of the nature of the urban context” (42).

The product of serious engagement with current research on the nature of the urban context, this book is a model of cross-disciplinary dialogue, which Smith himself urges on and invites anyone attempting to do mission in such contexts.

After describing what the modern urban world looks like, the rest of part one is a survey of urban history, all the while probing every context with T. S. Eliot’s question from The Rock: “What is the meaning of this city?” We are taken to diverse urban contexts, including those impacted by the Reformation. In Geneva, Calvin embarked on “a remarkable experiment in urban social transformation,” delivering sermons and theology which identified “clear ethical guidelines for the merchants and bankers in his congregation” (62).

Smith is particularly good at unpacking social and cultural contexts using the works of artists such as Massacio, Munch, Hopper, and Kollwitz. There are also fascinating introductions to the movers and shakers of town and urban planning—individuals whose ideas continue to shape our modern-day cities. And whilst there are plenty of examples of urban nightmares—think of Dubai where “it has been reported that one hundred migrant workers committed suicide in the Emirates in 2006 and, despite severe restrictions on political protest, unrest among indentured labourers has become increasingly visible” (36)—there are also great examples of urban regeneration in places like Curitiha in Brazil and Bogota in Columbia (97).

Towards the end of part one, Smith gives three signs of hope for the urban world of the twenty-first century. His third sign is found in the most unlikely of contexts: Islam. While it may be a widely held assumption in today’s world that “a secular urban model is the only one available to us,” Smith draws our attention to the significance “of cities that are profoundly shaped by an Islamic vision” (99). Certain Islamic groups, e.g., in Egypt, have been effective in creating projects that provide “economic, medical and social support to millions of poor urban dwellers” (101) and these movements “offer an alternative vision of our shared urban future, one which needs to be understood and taken seriously beyond the Islamic world” (101).

Part two concentrates on the biblical and theological foundations for an urban theology. A chapter on the Old Testament includes an excellent treatment of Joshua and the conquest of the land. Smith challenges readers to ask what love in the city should look like. Using the experience of Hosea, Smith considers “what happens to life in the city when a community loses contact with the ultimate source of love, turns sex into a false sacred, and abandons moral and ethical norms beyond a concern for self-interest and self-fulfilment” (135). The urban laments of Jeremiah lead to two central themes of OT hope for the city: the promise of God’s shalom, and the divine purpose for the nations of the world.

A chapter on the New Testament finds Smith debunking the commonly held assumption that Jesus’ ministry had little to do with urban life and urban issues. Although there was indeed an orientation towards the small towns and villages of the Galilean countryside, “the population of those towns and villages consisted of people facing great tensions and distress on account of political and economic decisions taken by rulers far away at the centre of imperial power and implemented Continued on p.47...