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THE STA^{synthetic Triangular Approach} IN ISLAMIC STUDIES AND MINISTRIES: A Missiological Attempt to Understand Muslims through the Concept of “Ordinariness”

Caleb Chul Soo Kim

NEED FOR MORE THAN CLASSICAL APPROACHES

Conventionally, classical approaches in Islamic studies are characterized by research methods that focus on the developments of Islamic ideologies and Muslim relations with the non-Islamic world in history.¹ Most of the traditional works on Islam in academia tend to discuss Islam’s religious ideologies or issues in Islamic history, including complex problems at present that are usually critical to political relations between the Muslim and non-Muslim (mostly Western) worlds. These studies, however, do not seem interested in delving into one important aspect of Islamic phenomena, that is, Muslims’ ordinary life experiences. While providing helpful information and stimulating insights into many complicated issues in the Islamic world, they are usually not much concerned with the dimension of ordinary Muslim life.

1. For example, in Western academia, the discipline of Islamic studies has had its primary interest in such areas as the historical development of Islam, particularly in the life of Muhammad, Christian-Muslim relations in history, Christian apologetics, Islamic theology and law, Islamic politics and resurgence, and the like (e.g., Bernard Lewis, 1993; Clinton Bennett, 1998; Montgomery Watt, 1961, 1985; Hugh Goddard, 2000; Ignaz Goldziher, 1981; Kemal Karpat, 2001; John Voll, 1994, Kenneth Cragg, 1985; John Esposito, 1988, 1999, to list a few). While these are very important studies that help to understand the Islamic world overall, their focus lies mainly on historical events, theological issues, political relations, and sociological implications, thus scarcely presenting cultural experiences lived by ordinary Muslims. However, it is not that there was no attempt to research Muslims’ ordinary life in Western scholarship. Though not many, there are outstanding works by non-Islamicists, which can help to glimpse the cultural and religious life in Islamic societies. Clifford Geertz (1971) is one of them whose anthropological work is of great help in comparing Islamic societies. Musk’s missiological work (1989) is also helpful, although it is focused solely on the Arab world. More recently and a bit differently from the traditional approaches, Clinton Bennett emphasizes a balanced approach between the “faith-sensitivity” approach and other critical studies on religions in general, particularly in the study of Islam (2010: xxii-xxiii).

Then, conventional studies of Islam may well portray Muslims as a people of exclusively religious ideology. Even worse, Muslims are sometimes presented in a reductionist way as violent people in fundamentalist spirit² The classical studies of Islam seem to make few contributions to appropriately comprehending and describing Muslims’ life experiences and how ordinary Muslims understand, view, interpret and live their religion in daily life.

Although there are outstanding descriptions,

2. This is often noticeable particularly among some Christians passionate about sharing the gospel with Muslims.

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analyses, and evaluations of the Islamic religion with its theology, doctrines, politics, economy, and other social issues, they often tend to provide a quite generalized portrayal of Muslim societies rather than presenting details, or what Clifford Geertz calls “thick descriptions” (1973:3-30), of Muslims’ lives. In the classical approach to the Muslim world, what some missiologists call the “people things” or “people factors” (Kraft 2008:39-41) is often missing or overlooked.³ So conventional approaches do not seem to help outsiders grasp what ordinary Muslims experience socially and psychologically, how they experience their religion in daily life, and whether and how they struggle to implement their religious ideologies practically. The conventional methods do not adequately portray the real world in which ordinary Muslims live, nor do they elucidate how Muslims deal with discrepancies between the ordinary dimension of life and the Islamic ideal that all Muslims are supposed to pursue.

Even missiologically, Islam seems to have been studied and discussed without considering the people factors. Christians seem more interested in apologetical approaches to Islamic doctrines and tend to make more efforts to disclose Islam’s incorrect understandings of God and Jesus, and so forth. However, it seems unrealized that doctrines are only a part of Muslims’ concerns, and there are far more issues than doctrines that affect the lives of ordinary Muslims. Hence, this essay is concerned more with the missing part in studying the Muslim world. To examine this practical dimension of Muslim life, a non-conventional type of research methodology seems needed, which will help excavate Muslims’ cultural lives. Hence, the primary interest of this paper has to do with discussing a research methodology that will help understand the “lived experiences” (cf. Sauko 2003:39-73) of ordinary Muslims.

“ORDINARINESS” IN STUDYING RELIGIONS

In this paper, I intentionally use the adjective “ordinary” and the noun “ordinariness” to indicate an aspect of the human condition inherent in human propensity. The noun “ordinariness” refers especially to the human condition that represents a general tendency of the human mind before it is formulated or empowered by any ideology or theology through a deep and long intentional thinking process. Thus, “ordinariness,” as seen in the common inclination of the human mind, is a natural condition; thus, an ordinary person is someone who thinks, acts, and does all common cultural things as a truly human being.⁴ He or she feels awed and frustrated by various life challenges such as sicknesses, death, misfortunes, calamities, and the

3. Kraft emphasizes the importance of the people factors in studying human culture. “Though anthropologists have tended to spend most of their time discussing the structural side of cultural behavior, *it is the personal activity that is the most interesting*” (2008:44, italics are his).

4. Kraft also points out this as he states, “. . . personal activities are *ordinarily* engaged in habitually and in accordance with the customs of the society” (2008:44, italics are mine).

like. The ordinary man or woman feels his/her needs and seeks solutions (or “baraka”) from varied sources of power that are deemed helpful in coping with life challenges.

In this sense, ordinariness is common humanness that makes people truly human. Even highly religious or intellectual people possess the same. It is the state of mind inherent in every human being before being empowered and oriented by any ideology. People’s ideological understanding and knowledge do not eliminate human ordinariness since it is an intrinsic element of humanness. Ordinariness thus always remains within the person’s mind as a common human propensity, notwithstanding any seemingly extraordinary tendency that has been built and developed through external influences. So, it may be labeled as a “pre-ideological human condition” as opposed to an “ideal” or “desirable model.”⁵

Human ordinariness is such that its basic quality can be plain, neutral, and undistinguishable, often passively ready to be influenced or empowered by external ideologies, especially religious ideas. Hence, it is often treated as inferior to the intellectual quality that has been ideologically or theologically equipped.⁶ However, this is a normal state of the human condition, common to all people. Even committed religious leaders are only the people whose ordinariness has been empowered by certain religious doctrines and their willing allegiance. In consequence of religious empowerment, the theologically equipped self has been ushered into a new dimension of its cognition, in which the pursuit of the religious ideal now begins to compete with the pre-ideological ordinary mindset. It is this ordinariness of the human condition that keeps producing “non-orthodox” or “unofficial” elements within “orthodox” religious boundaries despite guidelines that officially established religious institutions already provide.⁷ This aspect of ordinariness in religion makes religious phenomena complex and thus deserves a close examination from

5. The significance of ordinariness was also discussed in the field of Ordinary Language Philosophy advocated by linguistic philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his later time) and his followers. In the early twentieth century, Ordinary Language philosophy arose as a reaction to such philosophical circles as Logical Atomist and Logical Positivists, who believed that the ordinary use of language obstructs “a clear view on reality,” hence the need for the construction of a “non-ordinary language” or “ideal language” that can deliver philosophical concepts. However, some philosophers refuted this view and argued that ordinary language is perfect for serving philosophical problems. For more stories of these philosophical views on the use of language, see <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ord-lang/>. Some caveats against Ordinary Language Philosophy notwithstanding, its philosophical tenet has cast a very helpful insight into the significance of ordinariness in human life in general.

6. Ordinariness is always short of the religious ideal pursued by adherents, and thus it is often regarded as inferior and even sinful. Devout Muslims or serious Sufis would try their best to replace their ordinariness with a profoundly intellectualized religiosity or spirituality. Muslim scholars would focus their teachings on what the Islamic laws require Muslims to carry out every day.

7. In addressing cultural features in the Muslim world, “folk Islam” has been used as a popular term to refer to “non-orthodox” or folk religious elements that reflect ordinariness among Muslims. Folk Islam thus should not be understood as a kind of Islam; rather, it needs to be treated as an idiom to underscore the ordinary aspect of Muslim beliefs and practices. For more details on folk Islam, see Kim (2016:55-58).

diverse research perspectives.

Our next agenda will focus on a research method that can help us know and understand the elements of ordinariness in Muslim life. While conventional Islamic studies are concerned mainly with Islam's religious or ideological contents, the approach I discuss here will discover and explain the elements of ordinariness in Muslim cultures. In other words, it will focus itself on inquiring into how Muslims experience their religion or religious ideologies in everyday life. It investigates how ordinariness operates in an official Islamic system and what religio-cultural features will look like when Islamic orthodoxy meets human ordinariness.

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This is an extremely important inquisition in the academic research for Islamic phenomena. Missionaries working cross-culturally in the Muslim context need to conduct anthropological research into how ordinary minds deal with official religious requirements. The anthropological research will help missionaries understand the cultural worldview of ordinary Muslims, and the anthropological understanding will serve them in figuring out a culturally and humanly relevant method for evangelism. Such an approach will also apply to the realm of discipleship for new converts, which requires a holistic approach. An ethnographic skill is also required to enhance the comprehension of the religio-cultural backgrounds of new converts. It is imperative to comprehend how the person's ordinariness has been operating in their previous religious life and how it will work towards their spiritual growth in Christ. In the following sections, I will apply this principle of ordinariness in the context of Islamic studies (or, more specifically, "Muslim studies).

ORDINARINESS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN ISLAMIC STUDIES

As mentioned earlier, the aspect of "ordinariness in Muslim life has scarcely been studied in classical studies of Islam. Even if we have recourse to ample literature in Islamic studies, it is still very difficult to obtain much information on Muslim experiences of Islam and their cultural psychology in coping with

various life challenges. Conventional approaches to Islamic phenomena do not seem helpful in grasping Muslims' lived experiences and cultural minds. We do need an alternative approach to carry out this task.

The Synthetic Triangular Approach (STA) in Studying Islamic Phenomenon

In this essay, I suggest that Muslim societies and cultures need to be researched with a research methodology that I call the synthetic triangular approach (STA) if we desire to produce as accurate a phenomenological depiction of Muslim life as possible. This approach aims not only to describe but also to understand the cultural experiences of ordinary Muslims. It is an integrative methodology that consists of three important research components: 1) literary research including content analysis and cognitive-philological study on the topic under investigation,⁸ 2) an anthropological study with ethnographic fieldwork in the cultural area with which the topic is concerned, and 3) an interdisciplinary analysis of the data drawn from the previous two areas of research, as shown in Figure 1.

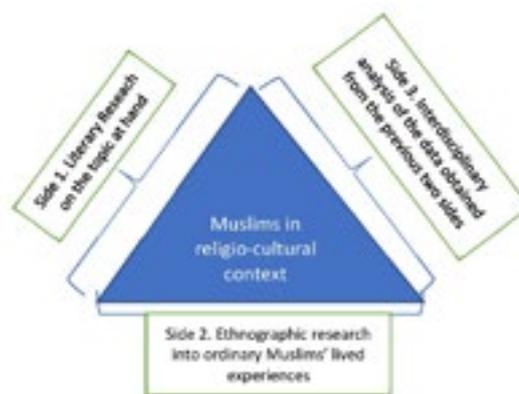


Figure 1. The Synthetic Triangular Approach in Studying Muslim Lives

The research process of the STA will look like the following. When the researcher identifies a research issue or topic in a particular Muslim culture or location, it is recommended that he should begin with a literary investigation relating to the research issue in question at that locality. (The more specific from the beginning, the better.) At this beginning stage, the researcher needs to know what Islamic texts speak about the issue to examine. This literary study includes the examination of Islamic canonical texts (both from the Qur'an and Hadith) and other Islamic traditional or scholarly documents on the topic. In this step, the researcher will be provided with the information of what the Islamic standards require Muslims to think and do concerning the religio-cultural issue under investigation. For the researcher to understand the

⁸. Here I mean by content analysis a data analysis method by which the researcher attempts to comprehend the patterns and latent meanings underlying the content of various materials provided by local religious leaders. Sometimes, religious leaders use their scriptural or traditional terminologies that require some philological studies for outsiders to understand better the historical backgrounds of certain official teachings on the topic.

official Islamic teachings on the topic for the study, he would also want to talk with Islamic leaders (such as local imams) with questions, and answers he obtains can go through a sort of content analysis to clarify the ideal position of the Islamic teachings (e.g., the four schools of Islamic shariah).

The next step is anthropological research, with ethnographic fieldwork, into the religio-cultural issue in question. This step is to understand how ordinary Muslims think and conduct in a particular cultural situation under investigation. An ordinary Muslim may lead their religious life more seriously or less religiously than others. The researcher will grasp how human ordinariness operates in a particular religious context through the research at this stage. Based on an adequate understanding of official Islamic views of a particular issue under investigation, the researcher can delve into how human ordinariness interacts with Islamic ideologies at its practical level. When properly prepared and equipped with a suitable field research method, the researcher will get a clearer understanding of what is going on in the minds of ordinary Muslims. He may come up with many enlightenments about the realities that ordinary people live and experience as "Muslims and ordinary human beings. Perhaps, the researcher will see a Muslim person different from one he has been conceiving of as a religious person of Islam. He will see an ordinary person whose inside is mixed up and filled with myriads of knows, feels, sees, and so forth, which are both religiously Islamic and merely human. Through this kind of research into people's ordinariness, he will encounter a real person, not a religious avatar created by a solely religiously or theologically filled ideology. The missional researcher then finds a way to approach the ordinary person, who was also created in the image of God just as he was.

Before thinking through a relevant approach to that ordinary person under or of Islam, the researcher will need an analytical process. Hence, thirdly, an interdisciplinary analysis should be in place to understand the dynamics between Islamic ideology and human ordinariness. The data drawn from the first two research steps need to be examined to know how Islam is practiced. In this process, the researcher will employ existing theoretical lenses to look into somewhat stratified layers of the ordinary Muslim mind. The findings from this analysis will provide intelligible and contributing explanations to the religio-cultural feature under study. The results of this analysis will be extremely useful to other disciplinary efforts, such as Christian anthropology, missiology, apologetics, and even discipleship. This step can also reveal significant gaps between the ultimate goals pursued by serious Muslims and the extent to which they can fulfill the religious requirements.

These three components in the STA are equally important to describe the cultural features of the Muslims under investigation as accurately as possible.

A fair and sufficient understanding of Muslim cultures will require such a careful study if the researcher desires to avoid biases and stereotypes as much as possible. Even the researcher's interpretation and explanation can become fairer than otherwise because the data collected and used for analysis are based on emic (insiders') views.

Examples of the STA in Studying Muslim Cultures

In this section, let me briefly illustrate a couple of cases in which the synthetic triangular approach was used in studying Muslim cultures. One example is my extensive study of the Muslim concept and experience of "jinn in the Swahili context (Kim 2016). In my research into Swahili Muslims' experiences of the spirit world, I have first studied the Quranic accounts of jinn and the Hadith literature on the same. Then, literary works by Islamic scholars were reviewed as well. The purpose of this first investigation was to grasp the officially recognized Islamic view of jinn among Muslim scholars.

One of the findings from my study using the STA is that both Islamic and pre-Islamic Bantu cosmologies exist side-by-side without any serious conflict in the Swahili mind. Moreover, Swahili Islam as a localism of Islam is a pragmatic religion. The ordinariness has transformed and amalgamated both Islam and Bantu traditions into a particular type of local Islam.

The discoveries from my literary investigation on jinn in Islamic texts provided me with multiple insights into the kind of supernaturalism that both Islamic orthodoxy and pre-Islamic (Bantu) worldview share, particularly in Swahili Islam. In light of the data from studying the literature and from the ethnographic fieldwork, I understood better how Swahili Muslims explain their experiences of jinn. In conducting fieldwork, I also tried to compare Islamic institutional categories with local Swahili uses to detect gaps between Islamic and pre-Islamic assumptions revolving around jinn beliefs and practices in the Swahili context.

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Especially when dealing with spiritual needs, the ordinary mind ceaselessly seeks answers that official Islam cannot provide. The ordinariness borrows, adds, modifies, and synthesizes religious concepts that are deemed helpful to solving their predicaments.

Another example is the study of “folk Islamic cosmology, as seen in Figure 2. I have adopted and modified Paul Hiebert’s model (1994:194) as I wrote an article with John Travis (Kim and Travis 2008:265-278). Through this chart, I attempted to portray a Muslim cosmology: how ordinary Muslims’ eyes perceive the world around them and how their minds understand and interpret it. However, it should be noted that local (cultural) perceptions are presented by using the official Islamic categories. Terms and categories are still presented in the academic (etic) language rather than local ways. Each term and category wait to be filled with local content.⁹

What is important in the chart is that the area and content for the “low Islam (which would include the concept of “folk Islam) is much larger than that for the “high Islam (or “official Islam). Theological categories of high Islam are usually perceived to belong to the other world, not to this world in which ordinary Muslims live. For this reason, the area of high Islam is usually much smaller than that of low Islam.

Cultural contents of all the categories in low Islam are a product that human ordinariness has projected through whatever categories already given by the official Islamic institution. The ordinary mind usually tends to attach traditional meanings creatively to the existing official structure. As a result, Islamic categories do not necessarily carry the same meanings in Muslim minds. Therefore, cultural meanings created and attached by ordinary Muslims can hardly be detected and brought to light through conventional Islamic studies.

Ethnography allows the student of Islamic studies to immerse themselves into a Muslim life situation to collect data that can hardly be obtainable through conventional approaches to Islam. A scrupulously designed ethnographic work can help excavate the cultural meaning and psychology hidden under human ordinariness. In the overall ethnographic work, however, the researcher should keep both the emic data collection and the etic analysis from being too independently carried out outside the official Islamic categories that are the counterpart of folk categories (which reflect ordinariness).¹⁰ Only through this sequential process, as shown in the STA, can the research grasp what characterizes the local Islam under research and see clearly how Muslims in that particular locality experience the world around them. Then, the researcher will propound an argument or theory as to how official Islam has been experienced

9. Local contents are not presented here due to the space limit.

10. This process will need more explanations. The main point is that the researcher should keep vigilant throughout the ethnographic research process to see how Islamic ideas are counteractively or congruently understood, interpreted, and utilized by ordinary local Muslims.

and incorporated into that cultural context.¹¹

		Personal Beings		Impersonal Forces	
Unseen or Supernatural Realm	Common Beings based on High Islam	Allah, angels (archangels and many others)	Common Forces based on High Islam	God's absolute power and providence (spirit, the Book (the Qur'an))	Other World
	Other Beings in Low Islam	the prophets (in Paradise), dead saints, ancestors, <i>Jinn</i> (the <i>djinn</i>), or the <i>Devil</i> , all other <i>jinn</i> (many with names), etc.	Local Forces in Low Islam	magic, sorcery, astrological forces (power of astrological time and space), divination, <i>baraka</i> , the merit of <i>dhikr</i> , evil eye, evil tongue, curses, talismans, amulets, reading of the Qur'an, drawing of the Qur'anic writings, etc.	This World
Seen or Natural Realm	Social Relations in Low Islam	Muslims (believers and ordinary Muslims), other religious people (Christians, Jews, nonbelievers (Atheists/agnostics), animals, etc.	Natural Science in Low Islam	natural medicines (plants and herbs both from Islamic traditions as in <i>Hikmah</i> and from pre-Islamic local traditions), and other local sciences	

Figure 2. “Framework for the Analyses of Islamic Religious Systems” (Kim and Travis 2008:268)

ORDINARINESS AND DISCIPLESHIP FOR MUSLIM CONVERTS

Witnessing disciple-making ministries in a cross-cultural context, sometimes I find it difficult to resist a negative impression that some of them give. It is the absence of cultural sensitivity. Cultural insensitivity is often caused by indifference to local culture, if not entire ignorance of it. Some cross-cultural workers often overlook or bypass important local cultural values, especially when overloaded by missionary zeal. Seeking a rapid outcome or pursuing extraordinary results all the time may well result in a serious oversight of the importance of ordinariness in the cross-cultural setting.

According to research by one of my former students, any serious mentoring ministry in a cross-cultural context should aim at mutual growth if the mentor truly expects his/her mentee to grow spiritually. Spiritual maturity can be achieved when both mentor and mentee understand one another in terms of cultural beliefs and values.¹² Furthermore, for them to understand each other, both mentor/disciple-maker and mentee/disciple must meet and share at the level of ordinariness, in which people do not need to disguise or pretend.

11. Some excellent pieces of doctoral research have been done in the Islamic studies program that I am currently directing at Africa International University. Among others are Lawrence Oseje (2017), which Langham Foundation published with the book titled African Traditions Meeting Islam (2018), Judy Wang'ombe (2019), and Pauline Mukuria (2021). The researchers used my STA as a fundamental methodological framework, requiring each triangular side to hire a research method(s) suitable to its research question.

12. One of my former students, a Korean missionary involved in a discipleship ministry among university students in Nairobi, did excellent research on mentorship in a cross-cultural context. See Mark Yoon's MTh thesis at Africa International University (2011). Over a decade and a half, he dedicated his life to evangelizing and making disciples at a large university in Nairobi. However, he constantly felt something missing in his ministry. Through a careful study with the STA principle (though his context is not Muslim), he was able to diagnose the missing part and critically analyze the causes of its absence.

At this ordinariness, Jesus Christ met all kinds of people and revealed the Father to them. Although He did not need to grow as we human disciple-makers do, He still came down and stayed at the ordinary level of His disciples and helped them understand the divine truth. To increase the amount of understanding of the long-hidden truth among the disciples who were bound in their cultural upbringings and local worldviews, He always used parables that were comprehensible to anyone in their society when He delivered important messages to people (Mt. 13:34, "In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables."). If one wishes to imitate Jesus' way of making disciples, the attention to human ordinariness should be an important part of his or her discipleship ministry.

I was so ignorant and naive, then, of the epistemological process of the human mind and the power of cultural knowledge, let alone anything about Muslim life. My former theological training was designed to deal primarily with doctrinal issues, and my missionary training for years was not very helpful in understanding the life experiences of the Muslims I was sent to serve.

Hence, I would like to emphasize that true discipleship should be carried out at the level of ordinariness as the latter is the locus of empowerment. Human ordinariness can be empowered either by the Holy Spirit or the enemy. If Christian discipleship aims at empowering the soul with God's word and helping the disciple to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus in every area of life, the discipleship ministry must seek to transform the soul at the level of ordinariness. A profound spirituality shines in ordinary realms of the disciple's life rather than in his or her outer achievements.

To sum, I emphasize that the concept of ordinariness is significant both in evangelism and discipleship ministries among Muslim converts. I hope that the following story may be conducive to a better understanding of this truth.

In the early 1990s, a young Muslim sheikh (I call him H in this paper) came to the Lord through a local church's ministry in which I was involved in a Muslim-dominant town in northern Kenya. It was a shocking event in the town. I was responsible for looking after him after his conversion. In almost every area of his life, including financial issues, he became dependent on my local church and me. Among many

new life challenges that he began to experience after his conversion was a constant attack from his former Muslim spirit world. He was attacked by a jinni sent by his father, a strong Muslim, almost every night. H tried to describe his painful experiences of the malicious jinni, but I had no idea of his spiritual agonies. His odd stories were utterly confusing to me, and I found myself unable to help him spiritually, only to disappoint his expectation that I would be able to rescue him from his spiritual quandary.

Being a brilliant Muslim teacher with an Islamic college education background, H suffered from the jinn's harassment the same way other ordinary Muslims did. Not understanding Muslims' spiritual experiences, I kept telling him to dismiss such superstitious beliefs because he had already become a Christian. At that time, I believed that his odd ideas would disappear rather automatically only if I kept teaching him Christian doctrines.

I was so ignorant and naive, then, of the epistemological process of the human mind and the power of cultural knowledge, let alone anything about Muslim life. My former theological training was designed to deal primarily with doctrinal issues, and my missionary training for years was not very helpful in understanding the life experiences of the Muslims I was sent to serve. The doctrinal dimension in evangelism and discipleship is important since it has much to do with cognitive persuasion. Certainly, the importance of this intellectual aspect in embracing the gospel cannot be emphasized enough. However, the cognitive comprehension of the gospel needs to be taken to the next step, in which people must believe and experience with their heart what they have come to learn and know intellectually. The dimension of experiencing the gospel in the heart has much to do with human ordinariness.

Human ordinariness is full of weakness, vulnerability, and helplessness, but the heartfelt acceptance of and wholehearted commitment to Jesus occurs at this level of ordinariness. Many Muslim converts testify about their experiences of an extraordinary Jesus in various vulnerable situations. They encounter Jesus when they undergo crises in their mundane life. Discipleship ministry needs to be carried out in people's real life. If we wish to help Muslims come to salvation in Jesus and keep growing in the truth after converting to Christ, we need to appreciate that Muslims are a people of ordinariness just like us.

The realization of my ignorance about Muslim experiences led me to pursue a deeper study on Muslim life, more than studying Islam as a religion. After a few years of further training to learn about Muslims' religio-cultural life both in academic class and in the ministry field, I began to help people like H more effectively as a spiritual mentor. Moreover, I also came to see a great need for revision in the discipline of Islamic studies; Muslims' lived experiences should be included in the discipline as a major category of research. It may be called "Muslim studies, a nuanced

label that indicates a methodological difference from classical approaches. The idea of the STA was thus conceived.

Considering all the issues that I have discussed hitherto, my colleagues and I have launched an Islamic studies track for both MA and Ph.D. in 2004 and 2011 respectively at Africa International University in Nairobi, Kenya.¹³ Our programs in Islamic studies aim to have students perform appropriate research based on the STA method to provide more accurate data of the Muslim world and increase the degree of understanding of Muslim life. I pray that both evangelism and discipleship ministry in the Muslim context will be carried out in the spirit of understanding, sympathy, and empathy, based on accurate knowledge of Muslims obtained through scrupulous research using the synthetic triangular approach.

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13. Currently, the program of MA in Intercultural Studies with Islamic Studies emphasis is offered at NEGST (Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) and the program of Ph.D. in Islamic Studies at CSR (Center for the Study of Religions) of ISAR (Institute for the Study for African Realities) respectively at Africa International University.



Caleb Chul Soo Kim
negstkim@gmail.com

Dr. Caleb Kim is a Missionary since 1989 in East Africa. He also serves as a professor and currently, teaching at Africa International University as a professor of Missiological Anthropology and Islamic Studies.

LIVING LIFE TOGETHER – TRIBAL EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP IN CANADA

Clifford Reynolds

It was nearly dark as I walked the dirt track down to Elder Sam's home near the waterfront. He had invited me to come for a visit. Sam and his wife were part of the tribal village of Kitimat near the upper end of a long coastal inlet in northern British Columbia, Canada. My wife and I were part of a team of 6 that were living in the village for about 7 weeks.

Remembering that his wife would be away for the evening, I wondered what we would talk about. As I walked along, I reviewed the things I had been taught about visiting Native men (or First Nations, as they were more often called now). Younger men listened when in the presence of Elders. The Elders among these Tribal people often talked only a little, especially to younger men. Being only 26, I was definitely young compared to his 65 plus years. Not talking a lot when in the presence of an Elder was a sign of respect.

In my home in the USA there usually was a lot of talking and silence in a conversation was a sign that the conversation was not going well. I wondered if I would, without thinking, try to keep the conversation comfortable for me rather than for my new friend. Silently, I asked the Lord to help me keep my mouth shut even if I felt uncomfortable.

Hearing the water lapping against the boat dock as I walked was a friendly sound. As I neared the house, I suddenly remembered that this village had a protocol for announcing your presence at someone's door. After knocking, you were expected to open the door and step in. Just thinking about doing that felt strange but I was glad I remembered.

Opening the gate and walking up to the door, I prayed again and knocked. Stepping through the door after opening it, Sam was sitting across the room. I greeted him with the Tribal language greeting (the only word I knew). He smiled, greeted me, and asked if I would like a coffee and pointed to the cup and canned milk sitting next to the coffee pot. Helping myself. I sat down in the empty chair nearby.

We chatted about a few things and then the silence started. I was uncomfortable very quickly but waited for Sam to open further conversation. Occasionally I would ask about something like the fishing or if the family owned one of the fishing boats moored out his front window. But there was a lot of silence. I stayed for about an hour and a half and then took my leave wondering if this "visit" had been worth it. I had felt very uncomfortable throughout the evening. However, noticing that Sam seemed at ease with our "visit" I gradually became more comfortable as well.

The next day I heard from his daughter that he had had the best visit with me and that I was welcome back anytime. A week later my wife and I received an

invitation to come visit him and his wife. Much to our surprise and pleasure, they brought out several old ceremonial masks that were stored in their home and insisted we examine them.

Thus began over 50 years of ministry among tribal people in North America. This was one of the first experiences of many that God used to teach me that life as a follower of Christ provides all kinds of opportunities to care about others, to personally be uncomfortable so others are comfortable and to enjoy life the way others do, and to do life together. By focusing on loving God, ministry became life and life became ministry.

WOW!! Over 50 years of ministry among the Tribal people in North America. Where has the time gone? My tribal friends and fellow followers of Jesus stretch from the Navajo in SW USA to the Cree, Inuit and Dene' in northern Canada as well as many other tribes in between and beyond. Through them God has taught me much about life and ministry.

Having grown up in a Christian home, gone to a Christian college and a good seminary I started ministry among these people, like many of us do, I suppose, thinking I was ready and OK. I thought of my life as being what I did when home with my wife and children or with family in Oregon where I grew up. When I was in the villages or homes of Native or First Nations people, the Tribal People, that was ministry. My culture, both church and background, were pretty much unexamined. I had the idea that ministry and life were two separate things. I felt guilty if there wasn't a Bible study or some religious program to be involved with. Just visiting people or doing things with my family and other friends didn't seem as important as Bible studies and church programs. Looking around me at many other pastors and missionaries that was what I observed them doing. So, I guess I just fell into the pattern I saw.

There were, however, some people that did not fit that pattern. Their lives and ministry seemed to be all mixed up together and they often seemed to have the most effective relationships with all people whether friends, family or tribal people. Life and ministry were not two separate parts of their life, but all of their ministry was life and their life was ministry. About this time, God began to challenge me from His Word that my life and ministry needed to be measured by His perspective, not mine or someone else's practices. Maybe life is ministry and ministry is life.

One of the passages that God used to challenge me was Matthew 22:34-39. Jesus is asked "What is the great commandment in the Law?" From this passage I began to understand that life and ministry are not

two separate parts of life. Instead, Life is ministry and ministry is life. In fact, I came to understand that my ministry for God must happen out of a specific application of this passage of Scripture. Ministry to Tribal people or any other person will not and cannot happen outside of the application of this passage to our lives. I start this paper here because what I believe God wants me to say later in the paper cannot happen unless we first understand and apply this passage to our lives.

My wife wrote in red at this point, **“This is essential. Don’t miss this point!”**

Let’s take a look at these verses.

Matthew 22: 34 - 39

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

³⁵One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him,

³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

³⁷And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’

³⁸“This is the great and foremost commandment.

³⁹“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’¹

In Matthew 22 Jesus is asked by a Pharisee, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” By “law” the Pharisee was referring to the Mosaic Law, probably the whole Pentateuch. Apparently, one of the ongoing discussions among the Jewish religious leaders and Priests was ‘what are the basic laws of all the commands? What are the smallest number of all the commands that must be known and obeyed? At that time the list of laws on the priestly books besides the Laws given to Moses in the Torah numbered somewhere over 600. Trying to know them all, let alone obey them was nearly impossible. The EBC makes the following statement: The Jews quite commonly drew distinctions among the laws of the Scripture—great and small, light and heavy.² So, to ask this question would not have appeared abnormal. However, we know from the Matthew text that this question was a testing question. The Jewish Religious leaders were expecting or hoping the question might trip Jesus up so He would give a wrong or even heretical answer. They were trying to find a way to get Jesus off the street and out of circulation. If they could find a reason to have him executed, so much the better.

Jesus responded to the question, declaring

1. New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt 22:34–39.

2. D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 464.

³⁷ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’

³⁸ “This is the great and foremost commandment.

³⁹ “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

To love God first tells us something about what was built into us at creation. God built into the DNA of mankind the freedom and desire to Love God forever. We were created for one primary purpose, to love God with all our heart, mind and soul. Ministry is life and Life is ministry. Jesus’ statement indicates that true life happens only in a proper relationship with God based on Love and obedience. Life is living to please God in every way all the time. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it:

Man’s chief end is to glorify God, (1 Cor. 10:31, Rom. 11:36) and to enjoy him forever. (Ps. 73:25–28)³

Since God created us with that one primary purpose everything about our lives will work correctly only when we are in perfect union with our Creator. Ministry is Life! Life is Ministry!

At creation we were ‘hardwired’, as it were, to love God with all our heart, all our mind and all our soul until . . . Adam and Eve broke the connection. Inherent in “loving Him” is the willingness to obey him. Adam and Eve’s rebellion (and ours with them) messed that up. But God already had a plan to send Jesus to Earth at the exact and appropriate time to die on the cross paying eternally for our rebelliousness. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the penalty required for our rebellious nature (our sin) was paid and we could then be washed clean by His sacrificial blood. God Himself paid the price. As the Holy Spirit moves in those He chooses, they are invited to humbly and brokenly lay themselves at the foot of the cross for Him to remake in His image. (Romans 12:2) When that commitment is made, a new covenant goes into effect and our lives are changed forever. We are in a renewed relationship with God, our Creator, a relationship that He instituted and has pledged to maintain. The first command, the command that Jesus declared to be the first and most important of all commands, the command that began at creation now becomes the first and most important command for each new believer, each follower of Jesus. Loving Him is our first and most important task.

Becoming part of this new covenant (Loving God with all our heart, mind and soul under Jesus’) is a one-time event that cannot be changed. Yet, the working out of that event is a learning process. Living this new life means learning to love God completely and fully every day, every week, every month, etc. God created us with built-in needs that can only be met in a close growing relationship with our Creator. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening enjoying

3. The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs, 3rd edition. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

a friendship that most of us can't imagine. The only place we humans can find joy, peace, forgiveness, and contentment on this earth is in and through this new, loving relationship with Jesus. It takes time and commitment.

We who are followers of the Jesus' way and called to minister to Tribal People (or people anywhere) need to grapple with these words of Jesus. When He declared Loving God to be the greatest and first commandment to obey, He gave us our marching orders for all of life. I still remember the first time I told God I loved Him. I had been convicted by this passage in particular and the whole of Scripture, for that matter, that told me over and over that I needed to tell God that I loved Him. Even though I did love Him, I had a hard time getting the words out. That day became a watershed day for me spiritually as I finally got the words out. With a feeling of hesitation, I just began to talk. "I know I love you God. Please help me to make these words mean even more and easier to say because I do love you". At the time it seemed anti-climactic but those words and that day changed me and has never left my memory. Understanding and giving ourselves wholly to the truth of Jesus' answer in Matthew 22 keeps us focused on the right things. Our priorities are clear when we make our Loving God the most important thing we can be doing. We are keeping the main thing the main thing.

The second command is closely tied to the first ("The second is like it," Jesus said.) As we love God, He begins to make us to be like Jesus. Jesus volunteered to go through the suffering, misunderstanding and death on the Cross because our atonement was more important than His comfort and position in the heavenly Trinity.

³⁹"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'⁴

He loves us so much that He was willing to die for us. As we learn to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind we are changed to be more like Jesus who humbly obeyed God the Father even unto death. Our ability to minister to Tribal People with Jesus love flows from loving God more and more. Caring for others more than ourselves cannot and will not happen unless we follow our Creator's perfect plan to Love Him first. So, the second commandment derives from the first. Being obedient and loving others as much as we love ourselves becomes, then, the normal life for the believer, the new normal.

There are some concepts and illustrations that may help develop these thoughts more fully. I will start with "life". Life is what God gave all humans at creation in the Garden of Eden. Then, for you and I personally, at birth He gives us the opportunity

to eventually join His Kingdom and put into our existence the reality of developing and expressing our love for Him. Jesus in declaring the "first and greatest" commandment reveals that loving God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind is the essential essence of who we are and what we are to do with this earthly life. There is nothing greater or better or more basic to our existence than loving God. When speaking of "ministry" the second command defines the resulting focus or purpose of who we become. Loving God has to be the only reason we have for wanting to exist. Then, loving God will make possible and result in loving others as we love ourselves. The second command emanates or is the natural result of the first command becoming true for your life and my life. You and I cannot humbly, unselfishly love others within our own culture and certainly even less, those from another culture without God's love being built into the very fabric of our being.

A godly life is characterized by generosity, selflessness and kindness. A life focused on others happens because of placing God first. Ministering among Tribal people effectively must begin with understanding and practicing life and ministry the way God created us.

What we do and who we are influences people, often when we have no idea that anything is happening. In one of the Native villages, where we ministered, some of the people would tell us that our family's presence in the village changed the whole attitude there. They would say that there was more caring for one another and that people were visiting one another more than they had been. Some said they could tell that we were praying for them. A life focused on pleasing and showing our love for God impacts people around us.

A godly life is characterized by generosity, selflessness and kindness. A life focused on others happens because of placing God first. Ministering among Tribal people effectively must begin with understanding and practicing life and ministry the way God created us.

In my pilgrimage in this life, I have come to call this or refer to this love and obedience for God and others humans as Life is Ministry and Ministry is Life or Doing life Together. Ministry and Life are one and the same. The normal life God planned for me had to begin with and continue with improving in my ability to love Him with all of my heart, soul and mind. Ministry is life that cares for others and is the natural result or consequence of Loving God with all of my heart soul and mind. Life and ministry are

⁴ New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt 22:39.

not two separate things. They are one and the same. I cannot retire from one or the other. Ministry is not just something I do when I am preaching, teaching or counseling. Ministry is what God put into me at creation and renewed at my salvation. It is who I am. Whether I am talking to my grandchildren, writing, fishing or enjoying a table game with friends, my life is intended by God to always demonstrate His presence, power and love.

Jesus' answer to the question about the greatest commandment shows us the foundation of our existence and what to do first. Our first priority to accomplish as a human and follower of Jesus is to Love God. There is nothing more important nor anything that comes before loving God.

Jesus did not stop there, however. He said that there is a second command that is "like unto" or, in my words, comes from the first. The implication of Jesus' words along with a study of His training methods point out that the second command, to love others as ourselves, is the natural result of first loving God. While we are learning how to Love God with all our heart, soul and mind He is changing us to be able to love other humans the way He loves us.

That is amazing! God wants us to love Him first and foremost but, when we do that, He makes us more like Himself giving us the ability to love others with the same unselfish love Jesus showed while on earth. I am sitting here shaking my head as I try to comprehend what I just wrote. I am only able to love other people in my ministry by focusing on loving God more and more and then He makes me able to love others with His love through me.

But, how do we make this happen? What does it look like?

Is it finding all the rules God put together and spending our lives trying to obey them? Adding new rules to the old rules to make certain we "do it right". The Israelites did that until they had hundreds more rules than God gave. Jesus made it quite clear that those rules were a hindrance to living life, not a help. More rules will not be a help when it comes to understanding cultural differences and how to help other people come to Love God and love others.

Is it doing whatever we want believing that God will somehow get us to the right place and overlook or forgive our failures along the way? How do we know what doing life together with tribal people will look like? If nothing changes in our lives than how are people of other cultures see the quality-of-life changes that draw others to our Saviour.

The best answer that I know to what this looks like is found in Philippians 2, verses 5-8. These verses have been my most studied and most thought about verses in the Bible. From this passage I have begun to understand what God said he would be doing in my life if I make Him my priority.

⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also

in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁵

Years ago, I took a course in language acquisition taught by Tom and Betty Sue Brewster*. (Actually, I took parts of the course 2 times before signing up for the full course. Maybe I am a slow learner.) The course name at that time was LAMP or Language Acquisition Made Practical. There were three words Tom and Betty Sue used to describe an effective cross-cultural ministry. The first time I heard those three words I never forgot them. Those words simply but clearly describe Jesus' disciple training while outlining the most effective approach to building relationships as ministry.

When one enters into a new culture and language the first word, LEARNER, will determine how quickly and easily a person will become a part of that community or just an observer. To be a learner, one has to observe, ask appropriate questions at the appropriate time and be willing to make mistakes.

I call the overall ministry "Living or Doing Life Together". If *Ministry is life and Life is Ministry then we Live Life Together* to get to know God better. The three parts or words that outline *Living Life Together* are *Learner, Servant* and *Storyteller*. We saw earlier that God created us to love Him and in loving Him to make it possible for Him to love others through us. These three words, Learner, Servant and Storyteller, describe, I believe, how to *Live Life Together* as *ministry* and they also provide a way to evaluate how we are doing at Living life together.

When one enters into a new culture and language the first word, LEARNER, will determine how quickly and easily a person will become a part of that community or just an observer. To be a learner, one has to observe, ask appropriate questions at the appropriate time and be willing to make mistakes. I have learned most of my life lessons by mistakes and failures. Anyone who learns a new language knows failure intimately. Words, meanings, connotations . . .

⁵. New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Php 2:5-8.

these are tricky and not easily mastered. Willingness to make mistakes tells those around us that we are human just like them. We are not the one who knows it all. Nothing removes tension like an "Oops! I was wrong about that. Sorry." Or, "Hey Bobby, I saw you do. . .(whatever). I don't know how to do that. Would you show me how?"

Most Tribal people teach one another by doing, not telling. Children learn by watching parents, grandparents or uncles and then are given to opportunity to do it themselves. When we ask to be shown how to do something in another culture, we are submitting ourselves to be learners in the way they learn. We open ourselves to do things their way not ours. To learn in another culture also means that we need to put aside our own cultural ways and expectations about learning including our pride.

One other characteristic of a Learner is that they expect to observe ways that the Holy Spirit is at work convicting and changing lives. Ministry is not about what we are doing but about what God started before we arrived and what He continues to do even after we have moved away.

My wife and I were learning some of the Cree Language as we moved into a new culture and village. The word for grandmother and the word for pig were somewhat similar. My wife greeted one of the elderly ladies where we were visiting and suddenly everyone was laughing. Embarrassed and confused, my wife looked around puzzled and was even more embarrassed as one of our new friends explained that she had just called the older lady a pig. "What is the right word," she asked? "Kokum" they replied. She repeated it several times and, turning, greeted the lady appropriately creating another friendly laugh around the room. Some people still remember that story and Nancy never forgot to use the right word after that. She also told that story on herself which helped build a strong relationship with many people.

Someone may think I am unfair to tell the above story on my wife. You should know that Nancy was so well loved and respected in that community that when she passed into Glory several years later, the people asked for her to be buried there. Apparently, she is the only non-native buried in that cemetery.

Nancy's 'kokum' story points out two more characteristics of a learner, that of openness and respect. A Learner is someone who is open to being wrong and one who respects the people and culture enough to ask for help. A learner also practices listening more than talking. The Apostle Paul showed

some of these characteristics in Athens as he observed all the idols and some of the worship practices in that city. When asked to speak, he used that information plus his knowledge of some of the Greek poets to relate the Gospel to the people at the Athenian Areopagus in a way that helped some of them chose to become Jesus followers.

One other characteristic of a Learner is that they expect to observe ways that the Holy Spirit is at work convicting and changing lives. Ministry is not about what we are doing but about what God started before we arrived and what He continues to do even after we have moved away. Observing the things God is doing and pointing them out is a powerful way to make God the center of attention. If God is a part of your every day conversation some people will begin, by the Holy Spirit's nudging, to look for the ways God is at work and wonder if God cares about them too.

The second word of this triad is Servant. When a believer is a learner and a servant people around take notice rather quickly. The sin nature of man moves us away from caring about or being a slave to others. As Believers God moves us toward doing things that are out of our way and often uncomfortable in order to help someone else.

There are two, key Greek words for servant used most often in the New Testament. One, 'doulos', is often translated 'slave' and frequently translated bond-servant. It carries the usual concept of a person owned by and submissive to their owner; one who serves their master. A slave is not their own boss. They must obey. The New Testament usage adds to this concept of 'ownership' the characteristic of 'trust. As slaves of the God of Creation we develop to be slaves that can be trusted to carry out the wishes of the Master.

The second word, 'diakonos' has a wider usage and is usually translated 'servant' or 'minister'. You can deduce from these two translations that this word carries with it more responsibility and concern for the job and the people. A servant is often someone who is in charge or has other slaves they are responsible for. Sometimes the context would tell us that this person is more of a hired helper than a slave. They minister to the needs of others. They care about the welfare of others, often to the detriment of their own personal needs. The word 'deacon' comes from this Greek word.

The Biblical uses of these two words, become apparent that a servant is humble and the other focused. Making others comfortable and cared for at the Servant's own expense is an essential character quality of a servant. The will of our God and the needs of the people to whom we are called to minister take precedence over our own immediate needs. A servant's heart when ministering cross-culturally or even among your own people will open many doors, especially when combined with a humble within learner's attitude.

For many years I supervised teams of college students who lived in tribal communities for the summer. The

purpose of these teams was to build relationships with the young people and all the people they could in that community. The team members were Believers and often didn't know each other before being assigned together. Most teams got along very well with each other and with the people in the community. One summer we had a team of two guys in a smaller community that had often been more difficult to get to know people. This summer one of the team members (Let's call him Abe.) had been in this community and in this area before. His teammate (Let's call him Bob.) was getting along quite well and building good friendships both in the Community office and among the teens. However, Abe, who had been in the community before, was complaining of losing things and having things stolen. As I looked into the matter, I discovered that Abe had a serious problem with pride and was sure he knew the answer to everything. Bob, on the other hand was humble and approachable enjoying the people and doing the things the community young people were doing. The young people in that community caught on quickly that Abe didn't really want to be there and didn't want to become friends. While Abe looked like he was doing things right, his bad attitude was clearly visible to the young people in that village. So, they treated him as an outsider. In their culture outsiders were fair game for abuse including stealing from. Bob never lost a thing all summer and was given gifts when he left. Abe's attitude made him, literally, a loser. We tried to talk to Abe but he left at the end of the summer still thinking that everyone else was wrong and he was right.

Throughout the Scripture God declares that pride, self-centeredness, a haughty spirit, et cetera will lead to destruction, separation from one another and ultimately separation from God. Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus thought that His life and home with the Father and Holy Spirit was less important than the human need for redemption and salvation. He chose suffering and death so that we who follow Him might have life forever with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Earlier, when He washed the disciples' feet, he told them that he was setting an example for them to follow. Many of these men ended up in cultures far different than their own. Jesus demonstrated how to be humble servants to others. Suffering, persecution and even death are life and ministry. Life is ministry and Ministry is life.

Several years ago, my wife and I had the privilege to volunteer at the Haggai Institute in Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. We were there for all together about one and a half years. Christian leaders from all over the world come there for training in evangelism. The people and the training are top notch. As volunteers, our job was to keep the facilities in tip top 5-star rating shape. We cleaned toilets, swept and mopped floors, painted what needed painting, built or repaired when that was needed and anything else that needed doing. The volunteers were mostly from Canada, USA, and

Australia. Several times while we were there the students would come to us, sometimes with tears in their eyes, as they declared that, before watching the volunteers, they had never understood what Jesus washing the disciples' feet meant. They had never imagined that Caucasians and others from North America would willingly and joyfully serve them in the way we were serving.

A Learner notices what God is doing and tries to fit into the community in the lives of people in whom God is already working. A Servant demonstrates God's humble patience, kindness and personal concern for the people and community among whom they live.

The Bible is the Big Story of creation and God's interaction with the people of creation. In fact, the people of creation are the reason for creation to happen. We learn this through reading the Big Story, the Bible. The Big Story is made up of a multitude of smaller stories, each necessary for completing the Big Story. God Himself designed the Big Story, chose the authors, directed the authors and protected from error the telling of His Story, the Bible. He not only chose those who would tell the smaller parts of the Big Story but He chose those who would act out the events of those stories. Many times, the actors and the storytellers were the same individual. Since God is the originator of this Big Story, that makes Him the key teller of The Story. God is a storyteller telling His story.

When Jesus, God's Son came to earth, He made stories or parables as His key communication tool to teach the disciples and the multitudes that followed him. Jesus exposed truth through the stories he told. He also hid the truth from those who wouldn't understand through the type of stories He told. Jesus is a storyteller telling His story.

By now you have figured out that the third characteristic of an effective Tribal Ministry is being a storyteller. Telling stories is a natural, non-threatening way to communicate. Among the tribal people of North America stories were the normal way for Uncles, Fathers and Grandfathers to train children and to keep alive the rules and traditions among the tribe. Most of us learn well from stories, especially stories about other people and their situations.

Several years ago, I developed a series of stories about missionaries and early First Nations Believers in Canada. I told the stories of men and women whose lives demonstrated the spirit of Learners, Servants and Storytellers over and over again. Their life among the people was their ministry. Sadly, those Heroes of the Faith are mostly unknown today. The public media seems to purposely ignore what those Faithful one's accomplished. Even in Canadian history their names and contributions are rarely mentioned.

As this series progressed, I was often asked if I had a new story that week. Sometimes, in the telling of a particular person's story, spontaneous clapping would breakout as the hearers would appreciate and

connect with the heart of the person I was describing. The stories of real people, people of faith, had a greater emotional impact than my teaching. My wife often told me that I had started to lose my audience as I was teaching until I brought in a story to illustrate what God's Word was saying. Being a storyteller is an essential part of taking the Good News of Jesus to Tribal people.

Stories from history and other people's lives will also demonstrate or illustrate God at work. Stories about Heroes of Faith such as the Canadian missionaries as well as the First Nations Christian leaders and pastors are examples.

A Storyteller must tell stories that are true or reflect truth. The place to begin is telling stories from the Bible. The Bible is intended by the God who never lies, the ultimate teacher, to show us Himself. Through the Bible we see illustrations of how to love and obey Him. His story teaches us how to live lives that honor and glorify our Creator God.

Stories from history and other people's lives will also demonstrate or illustrate God at work. Stories about Heroes of Faith such as the Canadian missionaries as well as the First Nations Christian leaders and pastors are examples. As I mentioned earlier, recent stories about God moments, events or circumstances that show God at work help us all to remember that God is still at work today.

Ministering among tribal people is not complicated or hard when starting with Jesus' words in Matthew. Loving Him with everything in us and loving others with His love that flows out from us combined with the attitude of Jesus Paul's description in Philippians 2 is always a winner. Not everyone responds to the Gospel, but opportunities abound to demonstrate Jesus' love over and over. Live life among people while doing life together with them as a learner, servant and storyteller telling His story. Only God knows which time or what event will result in a new life dedicated to loving and glorifying God?

One of the most effective missionaries I have read about was a single young man who was inept at many things, especially things that the Tribal people he lived among could do. The children were much more capable than he was. Starting a fire, getting food from the land, making a bow with arrows, etc. were totally outside of his ability. He was willing to help others and willing to learn. He submitted to learning from those people in the ways they taught their children. He put aside his own cultural ways of learning. Books and lectures were not part of those people's lives. At

times he sat with the children learning with them. He easily laughed at his own clumsiness and mistakes but kept trying. In the evenings and at other appropriate times he began to tell stories from the Bible. Starting at the beginning of Genesis he gradually worked through the whole of the Bible. The people loved him and enjoyed listening to his stories. In fact, they began asking their own questions about his stories wanting to learn about this one called God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Eventually, many in the village turned to Jesus and began learning how to follow His ways.

Such is the way and result of living the Gospel in front of all the people whom God brings into your path. Life is ministry. Ministry is life. Loving God first makes doing life together possible and fulfilling.



Cliff Reynolds
reynolds@naim.ca

Cliff Reynolds has been in cross-cultural ministry among tribal people in Canada (and around North America) for over 50 years. He is a staff member of North America Indigenous Ministries. He has a BA and MDiv in Christian Education along with numerous courses in anthropology, cross-cultural communication and counselling. He has developed non-formal education for tribal people as well as doing church planting among Cree/ Saulteaux people on the Canadian prairies. He has 4 married sons and 15 grandchildren. Originally from Oregon in the USA, Cliff, with his wife, Cheryl, do life as ministry out of their home near Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada.

FROM THE NEED FOR BLOOD TO THE NEED FOR VULNERABLE MISSION: REACHING TRIBAL PEOPLE

Jim Harries

INTRODUCTION

Outsiders undermining the foundations indigenous or tribal peoples live by, without solid alternatives in place, is a real danger that Boaventura Santos points to in his book, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. He calls a destructive cutting away of indigenous knowledge epistemicide.¹ This article considers how a missionary to tribal people can best respond to, or anticipate and avert, dangers of epistemicide.

For some, the appropriate response to the danger of epistemicide is to build a wall around tribal communities, to keep foreigners out. The latter was revealed to be the policy with respect to the people of North Sentinel Island, leading to many presumably considering John Chau a fool to have even attempted to reach them with the Gospel.² Yet apparently, given their aggressive stance to any intruders into their world, the inhabitants of the island, may not be peaceful amongst themselves. If they represent a norm for pagan people, then leaving tribal communities 'untouched' is leaving them in the grip of fear and violence. Some epistemicide seems to be called for.

Thus we have a puzzle. Left alone, tribal people's ways of life may be far from idyllic. Leaving them alone may not be much different from ignoring the pleas of a woman who is constantly being beaten by a violent husband. Should one intervene? Add to that, Jesus' command to take his word to 'all nations' (Matthew 28:19). The question I raise is: In the light of today's ongoing accumulation of stories about inappropriate paternalism by Western people vis-à-vis those considered 'primitive', how should one intervene?

LESSONS DRAWN FROM 'VULNERABLE' EXPERIENCE WITH TRIBAL PEOPLES

The context for my initial learning regarding this question was my term as a missionary to the Kaonde tribe in a rural part of Zambia from 1988 to 1991.³ I learned at least four things:

1. The ways of thinking of my Zambian colleagues was vastly different from mine, as someone born

and raised in the UK to a 'white' family. This is true despite implicit and sometimes explicit efforts of mission publicity and public media to persuade to the contrary.

2. Amazingly, many of my missionary colleagues who ran into outcomes of such different ways of thinking on a daily basis, rarely seemed to take the trouble to explore its roots.
3. African people were responding to economic pressures. Often this was very simple: agree with and comply with Western ways, and you prosper. Disagree or confront, and you are side-lined.
4. While indigenous people's day-to-day discourse had a lot of overlap with discourses going on in the UK, they were not identical. Learning the language helped me to realise that key Western expectations, such as the need for efficiency, were absent. (This often continues to be striking to me. My own mind quickly runs to seeking ways in which a task can be performed more efficiently. This requirement hardly seems to trouble those we could call tribal people.)⁴

When doors subsequently closed to my return to Zambia with the same mission, I instead followed a lead to a particular village in Kenya in 1993, where I have lived to date. Given the experience I've described above, I was convicted that whatever ministry I was to engage in, should not build on access I had to resources from outside, and should be conducted entirely, as far as was possible, using indigenous languages. This stand initiated what could almost be described as a 'battle' with members of the local tribe. They saw me as a potential source of the globally valuable language of English, and a link to donors in the wealthy West. I sought to value knowledge of their languages (and traditions, beliefs, cultures, etc. that to them in a sense are of little value), and at all costs to not act as a means for them to become materially wealthy. The form of the 'battle', was endless meetings that were often many hours long, seen by local colleagues as forums at which to try to wring money out of, and sense into, their British friend. The last such meeting I experienced was about 17 years later in 2010, after which time I stopped having formal meetings.

I have been enabled, by God's grace, to begin to share the lessons I learned with others. We call the practice of using only local languages and resources in ministry with indigenous people 'vulnerable mission'.

1. Santos, Boaventura de Sousa, 2016, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. London: Routledge and Francis Group.

2. <https://www.newsweek.com/missionary-killed-arrows-isolated-tribe-island-body-christianity-john-allen-1229537>

3. Fictional accounts of this time, and my more recent missionary-learning, is recorded in these two books: Harries, Jim, 2018, *African Heartbeat: and a vulnerable fool*. London: Apostolos Publishing Limited, and Harries, Jim, 2019, *To Africa in Love*, London: Apostolos Publishing Limited.

4. For more on this see Reynolds. (Reynolds, Thomas E., 2008, *Vulnerable Communion: a theology of disability and hospitality*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press.) In Anglophone African countries known to me, indigenous people freely refer to themselves as being members of 'tribes' when using English.

It is vulnerable, because it leaves a foreign missionary very dependent on local people, languages, and resources, and liable to be pushed and pulled back and forth by the sway of the indigenous. It leaves a missionary vulnerable to injury – without outside money, one’s ministry success depends on local whim. Using indigenous languages, the outsider always seems to be the ignorant one. The question then arises; what is the value of a foreign missionary? This question forces a missionary to search their heart, be willing to be belittled, and seek God’s guidance. We share the message of vulnerable mission through the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission—a global alliance of missionary and development workers wanting to share good news with tribal (and other) people without dominating them.⁵

One hopes that by offering new insights to tribal people in a way that they are able to understand (using their own language) and are free to reject (without losing financial incentives) will result in an intelligent and selective adoption of what is new in a way that brings transformation, rather than an epistemicidal undermining of people’s original ways of life that leaves them hanging. If the insights offered are not understandable, the ‘vulnerable’ missionary goes back to the drawing board and prayer room.

TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE

Many missionaries and development workers seek to help tribal people to transform their ways of life by a means that is empowering. This kind of transformation often proves elusive. Interventions into peoples lives from the outside can, I suggest, easily get caught up in issues that compromise their long-term best interests. A particular ideology that I consider can bring about unhealthy epistemicide (destruction of local knowledge) is that of secular modern liberalism. Modern liberals tend to presuppose certain pre-existing qualities. This arises from liberalism’s contemporary requirement for ‘religious neutrality’. Dominant Western liberal worldviews these days operate on the basis that there is a universal to all of mankind, which we can call secularism. In addition, they see a more poorly defined category rooted in a kind of psychological weakness of humans, called ‘religion’. Secularists find religion, or to be more precise religions, to be problematic, thus preferably religion should be a ‘private’ affair. Secularists insist that these religious affairs should be inconsequential to dominant aspects of people’s social-economic life. Modern liberals therefore seek to at all costs avoid crediting any one ‘religion’ with singular positive transformative power, lest that religion come to be seen as strategic, something that would undermine their ideology. As an analogy, we could say if liberalism represents thought and action, and religion represents food, then liberals simply assume all people to be well-fed, needing no particular dietary attention.

5. vulnerablemission.org

Another way to understand the attitude of liberals to religious affairs is by pointing to an assumption by liberals, that all people are culturally equivalent to Europeans of around 1800. In my interpretation, Ibram Kendi articulates how Western scholars, once having through becoming secular let-go of an immediate and constant need for the Grace of God for all, interpreted the absence of the kind of Christian history Europe had gone through in Africa, to genetic inferiority.⁶ By 1800, the massive historical impact of the Gospel on European people had begun to be taken for granted. Some scholars searched for ways of life independent of the church—a trend that has continued. This results in a ‘blinking out’ of Christianity’s historical and positive transforming impact on people’s lives. Wise approaches to working with tribal people need to see through these deceptions. This requires Westerners to undo certain mainstream presuppositions.

For the purposes of this article, I present a simplified four-stage transformative process of social⁷ movement from the pre-historic, to the primitive, to the free-thinking, to the modern. This is illustrated in Table 1 below that draws strongly on the work of René Girard.⁸ In practice, some of each earlier stage remain extant in subsequent time periods, but the focus changes.

Prehistoric People

In the prehistoric time period, emotions such as anger and the belief that ‘my’ problems were resolved by killing another, held wide sway.⁹

Primitive People

These are those who took advantage of the fact that the use of focused murder, that we could call sacrifice, was enabling of social order and could save a community from violence. Girard suggests,

I think religion starts with sacrifice. ... Sacrifice is the lightning rod for the community’s violence, because it mobilizes the whole community against a fake enemy, who is not a member of the community, thus preventing people in the community from killing each other.¹⁰

This was sometimes translated into rituals, such as animal sacrifice accompanied by invocations.¹¹ These

6. Kendi, Ibram X., 2018, ‘Black Doctoral Studies: the radically anti-racist idea of Molefi Kete Asante,’ *Journal of Black Studies*, 2018, 49(6)m 542-558, 552.

7. The wider implications of the term social arising especially from its deep roots in modernity result in its carrying some meanings and contextual impacts that are unhelpful for our purposes. For example, a common, but according to Reynolds false assumption, is that society is made up of autonomous individuals. (Reynolds, Thomas E., 2008, *Vulnerable Communion: a Theology of Disability and Hospitality*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 83.)

8. <https://iep.utm.edu/girard/>

9. Michael Hardin discusses the destructive violence that is associated with ‘pre-religious’ human communities. (Hardin, Michael, (ed.), 2015, *Reading the Bible with Rene Girard, Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, (Foreword by Scott Cowdell,) Lancaster: JDL Press, 32.)

10. Hardin *Reading*, 43.

11. A detailed graphic articulation of traditional sacrificial rituals as practiced by the Nuer tribe of Sudan, who are related to the

rituals extended the pacifying impact of human killing through imitating its emotional impact—a kind of ritual deception convincing people that their enemy had been done away with. This assumes that a public display of murder, re-enacted on an animal, could result in some of the same cleansing effects that people experienced when a troublesome (real or supposed) person/group was done away with. Controlled sacrificial rituals and the absence of the need to kill allowed other options and enabled humankind to begin to develop civilisation.

Free-thinking People

People in this category draw their strength on their faith in the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross for them. Genuine faith-based focus on the death of Christ, the innocent victim who was God, does away with or at least seriously reduces, the need for others to suffer on their behalf.

Modern People

These people substitute for the blood of Christ, supposedly scientific secular alternatives such as psychological and sociological comprehensions. This becomes a means of assuaging their innate schadenfreude, or desire to see others suffer on their behalf.

Table 1. A Simplified outline of a four-stage Transformative Process¹²

Time-periods	Pre-historical	Primitive	Free-thinking	Modern
Culture	Before written records, gratification sought through killing.	The discovery of the practice of sacrifice, the beginning of civilisation.	Pre-1800 Europe, faith in Christ assuaged the need for live sacrifice.	Contemporary Europe, rationalisation of murderous instincts.
Causation of evil	Other people not liking us, resolved through murder.	Controlled killing and blood sacrifice pacifies emotions.	Consistent power for cleansing of the blood of Christ leads to perception of physical causation.	Fine tuning of physical causation on the basis of <i>efficiency</i> . ¹³
Dominant ideology	Murder	Sacrifice	Religion (i.e., Christianity) ¹⁴	Efficiency

Luo of Kenya that are the main focus of this article, is given by Evans-Pritchard in his book on Nuer religion. (Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1956, *Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 197-230.)

12. My construction of this four-stage development draws strongly on the work of French scholar Rene Girard. I have found Girard's articulations to closely match my own experiences in African context. (See for example: Girard, René, 2001, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. (Translated by James G. Williams) Maryknoll: Orbis.)

13. Reynolds considers the need for 'efficiency' to be epitomizing the illegitimate means of disconfirming non-modern people (Reynolds *Vulnerable* 44, 61, 89.)

14. Some parallels between the impact of so-called world religions such as Hinduism and Christianity with respect to their bringing freedom from sacrificial thinking, are discussed in Palaver, Wolfgang & Schenk, Richard, (eds.) 2018, *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Tribal People

For our purposes, we can consider tribal people to have already shifted from the pre-historical to the primitive. Because of its aversion to religion, contemporary secular understanding wants to view them as having gone directly from primitivity rooted in sacrifice, to modernity and efficiency. Given that mission history has often been entangled with colonialism and secularism, many Western missionaries have in effect also sought to fast-track tribal people to modernity. Tribal peoples have been given a "modern" perception of Christianity as being a helpful but not essential 'add-on' to smooth progress. Western secularism sees the Gospel as something one can choose to accept or reject as a facilitator for adopting modernity, rather than realizing its role in providing the foundation for modernity. Secularism sees education as prior to rather than dependent on the Gospel. This is despite the fact that historically, education was a product of the Gospel, which is essential for thriving.

Contemporary missionaries should, I suggest, be wise to the false allure of modernity and seek to be more constrained to Biblical directives. This is, effectively, to seek to provide freedom, release, and empowerment to people, without necessarily directing them towards efficiency and modernity.

The lack of a strong Gospel focus in outreach to tribal peoples has resulted in massive levels of epistemicide, creation of unhealthy dependency, and enormous destabilisation of impacted communities. This is like taking primitive people to a fast-moving river, that lies between them and the modern, without a bridge or a boat. Because they don't have the foundational background to understand why the modern world functions as it does, they end up imitating rather than appropriating modernity. For example, tribal people are introduced to science before they have any basis to perceive it or hooks to hang it on. Such basis or hooks would depend on the Gospel undermining traditional epistemology that is rooted in the shedding of blood.

The False Allure of Modernity

Contemporary missionaries should, I suggest, be wise to the false allure of modernity and seek to be more constrained to Biblical directives. This is, effectively, to seek to provide freedom, release, and empowerment to people, without necessarily directing them towards efficiency and modernity. A major reason for defocusing on modernity is due to difficulties inherent

in transition. I suggest that equating Christianity with civilisation and commerce, for which Livingstone was renowned,¹⁵ was an error arising from the failure to perceive the necessity of the four-stage transitions I articulate above. Christ should be presented for who he is, not as a harbinger of modernity.

There is much Biblical evidence for the transformation from murder (prehistoric) to sacrifice (primitive). For example:

1. The very early story of Cain and Abel depicts an understanding in which the categories were fluid, leading Cain to murder his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). Later in the same chapter we find a depiction of the beginning of civilisation; Cain's founding the first city ('ir,) arose as a result of God's prohibition of murder (Genesis 4:15, 17).
2. God's role in frustrating Joseph's brothers culminated in their intended murder victim becoming their saviour (Genesis 37:18; Genesis 50:20), portending Jesus' redeeming act on the cross (1 Peter 1:18-20).
3. The frustration of Saul's effort at dealing summarily with David was rooted in his son Jonathan's 'illogical' love for the one who was to usurp his own rightful throne (1 Samuel 19:1-2).

Historically intermingled with the above events, we find an advocacy for, and then later depreciation of, the practice of animal sacrifice in the Bible. Leviticus clearly advocates for sacrifice (Leviticus 1-7). Later the prophets questioned its value and necessity (e.g., Hosea 6:6). The Exile provides a context for belief when sacrifice in the Temple of Jerusalem was no longer possible. Progressive revelation of the Scripture brings more and more of God's grace to light. Increasingly, God advocates for forgiveness/mercy/love instead of sacrifice (Hosea 6:6). This concept has origins in 1 Samuel 15:22, and is re-iterated in Matthew 9:13, where it becomes a foundation for Jesus' own ministry. New Testament revelation brings this to a completion in the crucifixion of Christ as ultimate sacrificial victim. The stories of the Gospels repeatedly illustrate ways in which the powers that be at the time, brought trumped up charges against the innocent Jesus, culminating in a slaughter motivated by an angry mob. The reduction of anger and related negative emotional energy¹⁶ associated with the murder of Jesus is candidly illustrated by its effectiveness in ending a long-running feud between Pilate and Herod (Luke 23:12). It takes Christ's resurrection, however, to enlighten and convince his disciples regarding the inappropriateness of sacrifice, ushering humankind into a new era, that of Anno Domini, 'the year of the Lord,' enabling the reign of

15. Conradie, Sas, 2013, 'David Livingstone's Vision Revisited – Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation in the 21st Century,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 37(2), 118-130.

16. I use the term 'emotion', in the absence of English terminology that more accurately describes comprehensions that I find in parts of Africa. In the latter comprehensions, emotion is a kind of force, as some native English speakers consider a spirit or spirits. I assume this may be universal to other tribal people.

Christ in people's hearts. It is my understanding, and this is supported by various authors like Girard,¹⁷ Mangalwadi,¹⁸ and even Max Weber,¹⁹ that freedom from the understanding that the appropriate response to one's own suffering must be the suffering of another, underlies the empowerment that enabled modernity, with all its assumed and real benefits.

Tribal peoples have been given a "modern" perception of Christianity as being a helpful but not essential 'add-on' to smooth progress.

Modernity seems to work somewhat well for European peoples. Sharing it with others is proving much more problematic. My more intimate knowledge is of African contexts. In these contexts, so-called modernity (sometimes known as afro-modernity²⁰) has often come hand in hand with unhealthy dependency, what we might call 'dummification' of local people, and various vices. Dummification, as I understand it, arises when people's innate understanding is overtaken by their being over-exposed (especially through financial subsidy) to a fast pace of real-world developments. Keeping up then requires imitation, rote learning, plagiarism, and deception (presenting oneself as having an understanding that is absent, so as to benefit from modernity economically and in other ways).²¹ This kind of culturally 'leaving-people-behind' stokes fires of racism, aggravated by 19th century comprehension of genetics.²² Hence my suggestion in this article is that contemporary mission should concentrate on promoting free-thinking i.e., religion (Christianity), and de-emphasise modernisation and its accompanying "efficiency." (See Table 1 above where I depict efficiency as the dominant ideology of modernity.)

CHRISTIAN MISSION AS SOURCE OF FREEDOM

Using Biblical language we can say that freedom comes through release from the bonds of sin, through accepting the completed work of Christ on the cross (Galatians 5:1). In other words, freedom comes from a knowledge of God's grace which transforms someone's life-orientation from that of a heart of

17. Girard, René, 2001, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, (Translated by James G. Williams) Maryknoll: Orbis.

18. Mangalwadi, Vishal, 2011, *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilisation*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.

19. Weber, Max, 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

20. Comaroff, Jean and Comaroff, John L., 2004, 'Notes on Afro-modernity and the Neo World Order: an afterword.' 329-347 In: Weiss, Brad, (ed.) 2004, *Producing African Futures: Ritual and Reproduction in a Neo Liberal Age*. London: Boston: Brill.

21. Makokha, Rt. Rev. Dr. Byrum, personal communication, August 10th 2005.

22. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gregor-Mendel>

stone to one of “a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). This could be a transformation from the desire for murder, witch-hunting, revenge, and scapegoating, to one of love, forgiveness, patience, and, to take advantage of Paul’s list in Galatians: “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). The vulnerable approach to mission that I present here, is one which predominantly concentrates on advocacy for these things, and leaves people to make their own choices regarding moves towards modernity, or otherwise.

Freedom from the Need to Destroy

Below are some examples of pre-Christian traditions from which many Luo and other people in Kenya have been set free. The major freedom I refer to is freedom from the need to seek to destroy something or someone else in order for ‘me’ to grow:

- I am reminded of a Kenyan, who once shared with me, that his people were horrified when missionaries told them not to steal. At the time, that was like telling them to ‘be poor’! Their economy was one of ‘beating the Jones’s’, by rustling away their cattle. Cattle translate into wives, so children, so in due course soldiers (warriors), so more cattle, wives, land, and food. It took time, my Kenyan friend intimated, for people to learn that they might prosper even more if they stopped stealing than if they continued to steal.
- The Luo people of Kenya have a tradition called *teru buru*. Literally, this means ‘take the ashes.’ While the term is sometimes applied in other ways now, the original *teru buru* was very serious. It was a search for victims to slaughter in notional revenge for the recent death (however caused) of an old man of the village. Young men would dress extravagantly in warrior garb, then move towards neighbours searching for victims to kill.
- Should a woman walk out on her husband then come back later she could not be welcomed back without blood first being shed on her behalf.²³ A sheep had to be slaughtered, to ‘absorb’ the anger of affronted people, who could be dead or alive, before she could be permitted to settle back home. Nowadays when such an issue arises, a church is consulted and prayers (*lemo*) might be arranged for her, without anything being killed in order for the woman to be forgiven.
- African kings once held the power of life and death over their subjects, at times killing droves of people in order to ritually solve a problem or anticipated problem.²⁴ Kings were under pressure themselves, their failure to perform could result

in a crowd initiating the murder of the king.²⁵ Much of the role of those kings has been usurped by pastors who are guided by the Christian Scriptures and thus are much more merciful. The pastors’ ways of solving problems are understood in the modern West, as they share the same Scriptural origin.

- Even now deaths rarely occur without rampant suspicions regarding a responsible witch. Once identified, traditionally, ritual means are sought to take revenge, involving the shedding of animal or even human blood. Nowadays, with the influence of the Gospel, this situation often goes no further than rampant gossip.

These examples illustrate that in contemporary times the above kinds of murderous orientations are displaced by the power of the Gospel. Faith that Jesus’ death is enough to cleanse all of us, itself diminishes hunger for blood in contemporary relations.²⁶ Instead of a sinner (perhaps an adulterer or thief caught red handed) being of necessity annihilated on the spot, a leaf can be taken from Jesus’ book (John 8:1-11) and the person can instead be exorcised.

Freedom from Evil Practices

Exorcism is a widely loved practice in many Christian circles known to me. It locates a person’s evil orientation into an untoward spirit, often identified as being of an ancestor, which can be removed in the name of Jesus. Such removal is often dramatic, involving attention from a lot of people, loud noise, gesticulation, the possessed person writhing on the ground, and so on. The attention itself, one must suspect, is therapeutic.

The kind of possessed people who used to wield massive influence over whole communities (known as *jobilo*) now often find themselves constrained to small groups calling themselves *roho churches* (from the Arabic, *ruach* (روح), spirit). Such groups known to me, believe in Jesus and in the Bible – thus subjecting their prophets to consistent pressure for their activities to be brought in line with Christ’s words and the Old Testament prophetic tradition.

In another example of how the Gospel delivers people from evil practices, the traditional view of a need for healing is that illness comes from social friction and the pressure of tense (‘hot’) relationships. Hence the Swahili term for healing, *ponya*, means ‘to cool’. Such healing once required making one’s enemies suffer. Among the Luo people of Kenya, a son who had slept with his father’s wife was required to drink water used to wash his father’s private parts in order to

23. Mboya, Paul, 1983 (1938), *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd., 21.

24. Simonse, Simon, 2017, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism and the Scapegoat King in Southeastern Sudan*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 42.

25. Simonse *Kings*, 369-396.

26. Scripture teaches that “without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). “Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 6:23).

acquire healing.²⁷ Nowadays 'mere' exorcism is widely considered sufficient for someone to be forgiven.

I will not here go into detail on the way the grace of God works in peoples' lives, except to say that joy and thankfulness for what God is doing can translate into an aversion for sin that offends God. Forgiven people internally motivated by gratefulness may lead much more effectively transformed lives than those on whom laws are imposed from the outside.

A girl of marriageable age would once have been dragged kicking and screaming to her suitor by his brothers, an event that often resulted in serious fights with her kin. Nowadays parents who as a result of their faith in Christ have had a change of heart,²⁸ accept that a girl can go willingly, without affront to their investment into her as parents.

Making an incision in order to remove objects passed to someone through evil eye, has become only one of a larger crowd of potential curative techniques. The availability of candles, variously coloured cloth, and other means such as occasionally more dramatic flame thrower displays (enabled through having paraffin that someone can spit over a candle) can substitute for bodily incisions. Whereas feared intense envy once strictly limited accumulation of material things by African people, the Gospel has heralded a new age, in which one could say in brief; that fear of God reduces fear of envy. This has contributed to advances in people's material existence, resulting in availability of means for use in healing rituals that did not used to be there.

Land and boundary disputes remain major flashpoints in rural living. In the past their severity was such, and life expectancy was such, that the living of different families was invariably separated by bush (i.e., areas of uncultivated uninhabited ground). Nowadays, when families often live cheek to jowl, many in my experience offer verbal testimony to having forgiven someone even for moving a boundary marker put down by the elders.²⁹ I assume that faith in God consistently being given credit for this new attitude to boundary disputes, demonstrates a genuine change of heart towards forgiveness rather than insisting on one's land-rights.

CONCLUSION

My major point here is that positive impacts can arise from the Gospel, with little or no need for modernity. Therefore, drawing on modernity and its epistemicidal impacts to undergird Bible teachings is not a necessity. In fact, it can be a handicap, e.g., requiring expensive clothing to appear modern might necessitate income that has to be begged, borrowed, or stolen. Modernity

27. Mboya, Paul, 1983 (1938), *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd, 20.

28. Ezekiel 36:26: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

29. I am often not able to verify whether the verbal testimony given is the end of the matter, or whether some kind of revenge or retribution is also sought.

can be a drawback to the spread of the Gospel. When godly people's 'thriving' is interpreted in modern terms, this implies they should possess vehicles, live in permanent buildings (rather than houses made from mud), have a good knowledge of English that can be very expensive to acquire, and so forth. These things being prerequisites can limit the spread of the Gospel.

I want to finish by discussing how I advocate for missionaries to avoid being proponents of modernity. The prescription I offer is simple, in a sense, yet difficult at the same time. It is not by making specific rules for missionaries, for example that they should not own a computer or eat ice cream (things associated with modernity). My prescription advocates for missionary vulnerability within a local context in two important ways: 1. They should use (entirely) indigenous languages in interaction with the tribal people they are reaching. 2. They should contribute no more to ongoing projects or crises (e.g., health, hunger) than would another relatively poor person in the community who is not related to a sufferer. To these I could add, they should put themselves on a course of trying to communicate with people by imitating the way they communicate with each other. That is, a major part of the aim of a missionary when sharing from the Bible ought to be to do so in the same way as local Christians share Biblical truths.

Allow me to elaborate a little on how to share from the Bible, from personal experience. I find this an ongoing challenge. I believe also rightly so, as helpful Biblical interpretation should not be an outcome of a method, but intervention of God's Holy Spirit, an intervention which is facilitated by many aspects of a preacher's way of life, such as having a contrite heart. I add the suggestion, that it is immersion in local ways of life, both physically but also mentally in one's thought processes, while meditating on Scripture, that results in the most helpful interpretation of the Bible for teaching and preaching. I consider this more important than 'techniques' of Bible study, as can be advocated in teaching manuals.³⁰

Following vulnerable mission practices of not boosting ministry using outside resources or languages, precludes the need to decide which of a selection of projects should be prioritised. Deciding to provide help for one type of project and not another otherwise tends to be a means of controlling a community. The choice of what to help them with, and thereby this means for a missionary to exert power, is done away with by the decision to not provide externally-sourced financial support. Use of indigenous languages bypasses nearly all of today's global modernising initiatives. Use of and comprehension of indigenous tongues, as employed in context, is key to enabling a

30. I consider that learning interpretive approaches, such as for example advocated for by Fee and Stuart, while helpful, should be secondary to meditative exposure to the lived-contexts of the people with whom one will be sharing. (Fee, Gordon D., and Stuart, Douglas, 1993, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (second edition). Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.)

foreign missionary to take indigenous Christians as their models for 'how to minister the Gospel' in that context. The slow pace of impact inherent to denying oneself foreign resources and use of English, helps to minimise blunders that would arise from moving too fast as a result of thinking one knows answers to people's issues.

Vulnerable missionaries should concentrate on freeing tribal people from the bonds of sin, rather than being conduits for the intrusion of modernity into their lives. Much mileage to this end can be achieved by substituting the blood of Christ for traditional sacrifice and enmity. Achieving this through an understanding and proximity to a people can only occur as a result of vulnerability to them.

Slowing one's pace and instead of being the answer to people's problems being a part of searching for meaning through them, contributes to a general vulnerability. Good language acumen will further assist this. Thus a missionary can be enabled, in part at least, to transfer their social and emotional allegiance from their own national colleagues to tribal people.

Doing this results in a wonderful context of open communication and mutual support, a channel along which Christian encouragement and witness can flow freely.

Vulnerable missionaries should concentrate on freeing tribal people from the bonds of sin, rather than being conduits for the intrusion of modernity into their lives. Much mileage to this end can be achieved by substituting the blood of Christ for traditional sacrifice and enmity. Achieving this through an understanding and proximity to a people can only occur as a result of vulnerability to them.³¹ Some missionaries to tribal people, and more than now, should prioritise advocating for freedom from sin over fruits of modernity.

31. A point repeatedly emphasized by Reynolds (*Vulnerable*).



Jim Harries
jimoharries@gmail.com

Jim Harries (b. 1964) earned a PhD in theology in 2007 (University of Birmingham, UK). He has served, primarily in Bible teaching, in East Africa, since 1988. He uses the Luo and Swahili languages in his teaching, that is oriented especially to indigenously founded and run churches. Jim chairs the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission, and is adjunct faculty at the William Carey International University. His latest book (2021) explores the impact of antiracism in the West on Africa.

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1520 James M Wood Blvd, #303, Los Angeles, CA 90015, USA
www.asiamissions.net | www.ewcmrd.org
voice/fax: +1 626 577 5564 | email: missionsadvance@gmail.com

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MYTHS THAT PREPARE THE HEART OF THE TRIBAL PEOPLE FOR THE GOSPEL

Peter D. Bangcong

INTRODUCTION

It is intriguing to hear the stories and legends of many tribal places in both Philippines and Thailand which prepared the hearts of the tribal people to be receptive and responsive to the gospel of our Lord Jesus. When the missionaries arrived in these places and preached the Word of God to the people, the truth penetrated their hearts and they turned from animism to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their hope of their salvation and Lord and Savior.

I believe that when the Lord Jesus declared His Great Commandment and Great Commission to His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), right at that moment, He had already prepared the tribal people all over the world, through their myths and cultures. So that when the disciples arrived, the locals would respond positively to their teachings.

In this paper I would like to present just three (out of many) particular tribal people groups who, through their myths, accepted the missionaries and listened to their teachings and then received the Word of God as not from the missionaries but from God Himself.

MYTH OF THE LOST BOOK OF LIGHT

Red Karen Tribe, Thailand

A long time ago, the spirit gave the book of light ("Lithisopha") to the first Red Karen man with the instruction to read it because it contains all the truth. The book of light was made from a dried skin of an animal and was rolled up. The Red Karen man was illiterate and when he unrolled it he couldn't read it because the writing was like the scratches of the chicken. He rolled it back and put the book of light in a secure place under the grass roofing of his hut. After many weeks and a lot of rain, some of the drops from the leaks in the grass roofing fell on the book of light and it became damp and the mold grew all around it. The next day the Red Karen man dried it outside under the heat of the sun on top of a tree stump, and after that he went to his farm. Early in the evening he went home and went directly to where he left the book of light to take it but it wasn't there anymore, and it was lost.

The Red Karen man was bothered and started to search and search because he couldn't afford to lose that precious book of light but he could not find it. He then asked the pig "Where is the book of light?". The pig answered "I ate it this morning and I pooped it already and the dog ate it." The Red Karen man then asked the dog "Where is the book of light?" The dog

answered, "I ate it and I pooped it, and the chicken ate it." The Red Karen man asked the chicken but the chicken couldn't answer the man's inquiry. (The chicken is a dumb bird in the Red Karen culture) so the Red Karen man caught the chicken and killed it and searched for the book of light in every part of the chicken's body even to the bone marrow but he couldn't find the lost Book of light. Since then, in the Red Karen culture, every time they make a big decision the old man in the clan will do divination and offer a chicken to the spirits. He then calls the spirits to reveal to him the truth. The diviner then removes the leg bone of both feet of the chicken and compares their length. If one leg bone is longer than the other leg bone, it means "no". If both leg bones are equal it means "yes". Example, if a man asks for another man's daughter for marriage, the older man in the clan will do divination and offer a chicken to the spirit and ask the spirit whether or not the inquirer is the right man for their daughter or not. The diviner then removes both bones of the leg of the chicken and compares their length. If they are exactly the same length it means 'yes' and if they are not equal it means that man is not chosen by the spirits to be the husband. The Red Karen people do this divination because they lost their book of light which tells them all the truth they want to know.

The Introduction of the Bible

One day, when a missionary arrived in the Red Karen village, he joined a community meeting and asked permission to speak to all of them. The chieftain and other leaders allowed him to speak. Using the interpreter, he said: "I would like to ask permission from all of you to allow me to live with you in the village to study your language and your culture, because I want to teach this book to you. (The missionary held in his hand the Bible and raised it to let everyone see it.) This book is not an ordinary book. In it is written the Word of God who created heaven and earth, who created you also. You don't know Him but He is with us and He wants you to know Him through His book. In it He let all the truth be written. Before there was paper or ink a portion of this book had been written. It was engraved on a piece of stone, then later when ink was discovered it was transferred and written on a piece of the dried skin of an animal and then when papers and printing press were invented it was printed in the papers and formed into a book like this, but the truth that is written in it did not come from men but from God."

The people accepted the missionary to their village. After the missionary was able to speak the Red Karen

language, he started to teach the Bible to the Red Karen people, the first group who listened being the elderly people. The missionary was surprised that these old people were willing to listen to the teaching of the Word of God because in their culture, the older they become, no one can talk to them about God because they believe that they are gods already and when they die their living children will worship them. The elderly people then told the missionary the myth of the lost book of light. When the elderly people heard the strange missionary speak about the Bible at that community meeting, the elderly people remembered the myth of the lost book of light, and they concluded that the missionary had carried the exact copy of their lost book of light. The missionary taught them the Bible chronologically; from Genesis to the ascension of Christ when the church was established. Indeed the Lord prepared the hearts of the Red Karen people through their myth of the lost book of light so that in due time His church was established among the Red Karen tribe.

MYTH OF THE BIBLE IN ILONGOT TRIBE

Nueva Ecija, Philippines

The Ilongot people live in the Sierra Madre Mountain 1,915 meters above sea level located in the Northeastern part of the Philippines. Their population (during 1990 survey) was 50,017 people but this number did not increase because of their headhunting practices where they killed each other. Every summer when certain grass pollen is dried and is borne in the air and invisibly enters into their nostrils and makes them sneeze, it is the sign, for the Ilongot tribe, that the spirits want them to go headhunting. When the flowers of the fire tree are blooming that is the right time for them to do their head hunting activities. When they are sneezing and they do not go on a head-hunting trip, the spirits will be angry with them and then give them sicknesses and plagues in their village and the people will die, especially the children. Their favorite victims are the lowlanders, and if there are no lowlanders they will go to the village of their fellow Ilongot who have been in dispute with them before. Prior to their headhunting trip, they will do a ritual. They offer a pig and call the spirits to possess them and help them be successful in their headhunting trip. They perform the warrior's dance and after the ritual they go to headhunting trip. These headhunters will sit at the trailside or at the roadside waiting for their victims. They are armed with Second World War guns (taken from the Japanese soldiers who were their victims) and big machetes used to chop the heads off their victims. They will shoot their victim and chop the head off and cut some parts of the body of the victim and bring them home and give the parts of their victim to their sons to practice cutting the human flesh so that when they grow into men they will not be afraid to cut their human victim. The more heads they chop the more prestige and respect they get

from their fellow Ilongots. Head hunting is a noble practice in that culture. A man who never experiences killing somebody and slicing the head off the victim is considered as weak and the Ilongot people don't give their daughters to him in marriage because he is weak and can't support his family.

One day, a lowlander was killed and beheaded, and his legs and arms were cut and taken leaving only the victim's body. The relatives of the victim reported the incident to the police. The policemen were not willing to do the arresting of the suspects who were the Ilongot men so they turned it over to the military. It did not take long for the military, who had a mapping operation in one of the Ilongot villages near the location where the incident of the decapitated lowlander happened, to arrest all the suspects. Two New Tribes Mission missionaries, (Florentino Santos and Marvin Graves) asked permission of the commanding officer of that operation if they could go with them also. They had a real burden from the Lord in their heart to start a pioneering church among the Ilongot tribes and to go with the military was a good opportunity for them to meet the people of that tribe. The Ilongot people are wily and have a good espionage system. They were able to know the presence of the military before they arrived in their village. The Ilongot men camouflaged themselves and hid, encircled around the village, with their machetes and guns ready to engage the military. They left in their village only the old people, the women, and their children. When the military arrived at the (Kapitaen) village the men were not in the village, and the commander in charge of the operation was furious because they could not arrest their suspects. They stayed overnight in that village waiting for the men to come home but they did not.

Early the next morning the commander of that operation informed the two missionaries that when he fired a signal shot they should drop to the ground because the military would massacre all the children, the older people and the women who were in the village. The commander believed that this would be an example to the Ilongot and would stop them going headhunting again. The two missionaries pleaded with the commander not to do their plan because it wouldn't change the headhunting culture, as only the Gospel could change the hearts of the Ilongot people. The commander was persuaded and left the two missionaries in the village. As soon as the military left, the Ilongot men came out from the bush where they were hiding with camouflage and guns. They had been watching and observing the movement of the soldiers and were ready to shoot the military. The fierce looking head hunters surrounded the two missionaries ready to kill them.

One of the missionaries had his black covered Bible tucked under his armpit, Tanitan, one of those headhunter chiefs, who was a professional champion in head hunting and had chopped off the heads of more than 10 people, and was highly respected by

the Ilongot, remembered his dream many months before. He saw in his dream that a man who wore pants and clothes (not a G-string like them) and had a black book tucked under his armpit came to their village and taught the people the truth and according to his dream the Ilongot people had to listen to the man. Tanitan concluded that this missionary was the man in the dream. He announced to all that these two outsiders were to be respected. No one could touch them. Tanitan explained to the people about his dream. With this announcement the younger men who were eager to add to their victim count were disappointed. but they did not touch the missionaries. Tanitan allowed the missionaries to stay in his house and provided them food and helped the missionaries to learn their language and culture. And finally Tanitan became the first believer of the Lord Jesus. He became an active helper of the missionaries preaching the gospel in every village. Sometimes he walked many days from one village to another. Many Ilongot people became Bible believing Christians and now (2015) there are 40 Ilongot churches located in many places in the Sierra Madre Mountain. The headhunting activities are no longer practiced. Those former headhunters became elders of their churches, and evangelists to their fellow Ilongots and to the lowlanders. They witnessed and told of the goodness of God in their lives. The people in the low land were all surprised that these former head hunters whom they feared are now preachers of the Bible.

In the year 2013, Florentino Santos, one of the two missionaries who pioneered the gospel in Ilongot died. He translated the old and new testament of the Ilongot language Bible. He also translated many gospel songs and much Christian literature for the church. Marvin Graves is still alive and still active in New Tribes Mission ministry. In 2011, I was invited to speak during their Ilongot believers' annual conference, and I met the elders of the churches who were formerly professional headhunters. I listened to their testimonies and they said: "Before I was not afraid to kill but I was afraid to die. But now I am with Christ, I am not afraid to die but I am afraid to kill." Indeed God is gracious. God, through myth, prepared the facilitation of the gospel to the Ilongot people. Praised be His name.

SUBANEN TRIBE MYTH ABOUT THE BIBLE

Zamboanga, Philippines

According to the Subanen belief, Bathala, the high God is the one who created all things in heaven and on earth, but after he finished his creation, he became indifferent and had no more concern and became unreachable to the people. But, before He left the world alone, he called a conference of all people groups. Visayan, Tagalog, Ilocano and other ethnic groups sent their representatives to this conference with Bathala. The Subanen tribe sent representatives to that conference and their representatives mingled

merrily with all other representatives without shyness or low self-image.

The conference with Bathala took a few days and at the end of the conference, Bathala handed to each representative a black covered book and instructed them to read it always because in this black book was written all the truth that would help them not to be ignorant about many things. Then Bathala told them to wait for the person who would come to their village and interpret for them the meanings of the contents of the black book.

At the end of the conference all representatives went back to their respective tribes. The Subanen representative went back to his tribe excitedly eager to report everything that happened at the conference with the Highest God (Bathala) but what most excited him was what Bathala had given them, the black book of wisdom that would help his people become intellectual. He brought the black book (the Word of Bathala) and tucked it under his armpit. On his way back to their tribe, he had a call of nature and needed to go to the toilet but no toilet was available so he needed to relieve himself in the bush. He put the black book in the middle of the two branches to keep it from falling to the ground while he relieved himself in the bushes. When he finished his toilet business, he went back to where he placed the black book, and to his discouragement the black book was not there anymore. It was gone! Then he heard a deer laughing. When he looked at it, he saw the black book was in the horns of the deer that looked like branches of the bush. The deer laughed to taunt the Subanen representative because the branches where he placed the black book of Bathala were the horns of the mature deer.

The deer run away with the black book in its horns, and the man could no longer find it. He went back to his village very discouraged. The leaders and the fellow Subanen blamed him for the loss of the black book. Since then, the Subanen people have had a very low image of themselves because they are ignorant and they do not have the source of wisdom, that black book from Bathala. Their only hope was the person who Bathala told them would come to interpret the black book.

In 1997 a missionary couple arrived and lived in their village to study their language and culture and promised to teach them the Bible when the couple were able to communicate with them in their heart language. The people were elated and encouraged to hear it and waited until the missionary taught them the Bible in the chronological way and they understood it. They found out that they were also part of the story of the black book from Bathala. The Subanen people believed the message and interpretation of the black book by the missionary. Churches have been planted and now the Subanen churches is bringing the good news to other villages through their local missionaries.

PALAWANO TRIBE “MYTH OF A WHITE MAN WITH THE BLACK BOOK”

Palawan Island, Philippines

Before the arrival of Missionaries to the Palawano Tribe, there was a myth that had been passed down throughout the tribe’s generations. This myth states that there will be a white man with a black book, who will come to their tribe. The tribe is advised, by the myth, to listen to that man because he will teach the truth from the black book. In 1954 the first missionary, Fred Sanstrom along with his wife, arrived and lived with the Palawano people in Tabon, Quezon, Palawan. The Palawano people were impressed by the way these missionaries showed them real love. The missionaries would share with others, their last supply of food. They would even give up their blankets even though they suffered in the cold weather. One day, as Sanstrom was reading from his Bible, that happened to have a black cover, the Palawano people saw him and remembered the myth about this black book. The elders of the tribe believed that this missionary, Sanstrom, would be the one from their traditional myth: of a white man with the black book.

It is crucial for pioneering missionaries to be careful of what they teach initially. Despite the fact that God has prepared the target people’s hearts to listen to His word, the urgency to quickly tell the Gospel can cause misunderstandings between them and the missionaries.

The missionary, despite his limited capability in speaking the Palawano language and his limited knowledge of the culture, started preaching the Gospel. Like any other evangelist, he told them directly about the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He then invited the Palawano people who wanted to receive the Lord Jesus to raise their hands and be baptized. All the people from that village and some other villages raised their hands and obeyed God through water baptism.

There were hundreds of men and women baptized by Sanstrom. The people obeyed and followed his instructions. They stopped chewing beetle nut, they stopped smoking, they started going to church religiously, etcetera. Sixty-five churches were established in that area during the era when Fred Sanstrom was the missionary.

After Sanstrom left, a new batch of missionaries arrived. They discovered that the so-called “believers” of the tribe had not understood the Gospel correctly, but instead, were just following what the “white man with the black book” instructed them to do. In

their misunderstanding, the Palawano elders told the children to avoid the river, downstream from where they were baptized, because it was where their sins washed away. When asked about their assurance of salvation, they answered with the facts that they had stopped smoking and chewing beetle nuts. They also responded that they faithfully went to church and gave few centavos to the offering box every week; thus they were assured of their salvation. Now, these sixty-five churches are weak spiritually. The new batches of missionaries are in the process of re-teaching the believers a right doctrine. It is hard to do so, because the first believers, from Sanstrom’s era, always refer to what they understood from the teaching of the “white man with the black book”.

The inaccuracy of the Palawano Tribe’s doctrine stems not from incorrect teaching by Fred Sanstrom, but from miscommunication and a lack of foundational teaching. The miscommunication resulted from Sanstrom’s minimal knowledge of the language and culture. There was also no foundational teaching presented, that was about Christ, from the Old Testament. The Palawano misunderstood Sanstrom’s teachings, and instead of receiving the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they received the “white man with the black book” and obeyed faithfully what he told them to do. It is crucial for pioneering missionaries to be careful of what they teach initially. Despite the fact that God has prepared the target people’s hearts to listen to His word, the urgency to quickly tell the Gospel can cause misunderstandings between them and the missionaries. Although the people are ready to listen, if they perceive an inaccurate doctrine about the Gospel and believe that version, their belief will still be in vain.

CONCLUSION

One of the many authenticated miracles is the changed life of people after they encountered the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. Wild Head hunters became tamed and their lives have been marked with love; low image Subanen people have now become bold in preaching the Gospel to many people. Their perspective of themselves has been changed and they see themselves the way the Lord Jesus sees them. Red Karen people who were restless in searching for the lost book of light are now finding peace in Christ and have stopped worshipping the spirits.

No powers in this world can change the heart of these people; not education, military operation, or any system of government. Only the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus that was brought by the faithful servants of God who endured hardship risking their lives in going to the heart of the extreme dangers, can do this. As they obeyed the guidance of the Holy Spirit they experienced the power of God working in the midst of darkness and they realized that God had been working in the tribal people way back even before they arrived; preparing the hearts of the people

through their myths to make it easier for them to hear the gospel.

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED/ SOURCES

- Khun Na - Villager
- Khun So - Red Karen Village official
- Khun Miya - spirit doctor, Red Karen Tribe
- Khun Phee - Villager
- Khun Phrea -owner of elephants in Huaysuthaw, Maehongson, Thailand
- Rev. Jessie Magallanes - Former missionary in Palawano Tribe
- Selin Magallanes - Born Palawano tribe wife of Rev. Jessie Magallanes
- Miss Clara Esteban - former missionary in Palawan
- Sources: SIL translator
- Renee Padrelanan - Pioneered Subanen Church planter missionary
- Al Dungo - Subanen Tribe missionary
- Florentino Santos - 1st Ilongot Missionary
- Lucinda Santos, Lydia Santos, and Kulit Santos, (Daughters of Florentino Santos)
- Ex - Mayor Jerry Pasigian, Ilongot Tribe
- Roman Pasigian - village's Chieftain, Ilongot Tribe



Peter D. Bangcong
pbangcong@yahoo.com

Rev. Peter D. Bangcong is a BSEE graduate from MLQU, Manila Philippines. He trained under New Tribes Mission Philippines and has a MA in Intercultural from Biola University. He spent 8 years in church planting in Mindanao, Philippines, 20 years in Thailand among the Red Karen tribe. He was also a professor at the Messiah College.

Present Ministry: Church Planting Director of New Tribes Mission; Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustee of NTM Phil.; Involve in Teaching and training new NTM Missionaries; Conducted Seminars and teaching pastors and missionaries in the field



MULTIPLYING MISSION MOBILIZATION MOVEMENTS

Ryan Shaw

Several years ago, while driving near my home in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the Lord spoke through what some call the “inner, audible” voice of God. It came with authority, stunning me, accompanied with peace. *I am changing the face of global mission.* I discerned God intended to change the basic expression of the mission movement and understanding of mission mobilization, aligning them with His scriptural standards. I became aware this would mean a change in the fundamental expression of Christianity, resulting in shifts in mission and mobilization. Over the last decade this direction has been confirmed by ministry leaders and missiologists alike.¹

The statement was staggering, with layers of meaning, relating to the who, what and how of global mission itself, while broadening the global Church’s understanding of mission mobilization. The Lord wants His people in step with the Spirit, advancing in mission and mobilization through the progressive revelation of Jesus. History reveals as the world and society changes, the expression of the Church adapts as well.² This is also true in the understanding of the mission of that adapting Church, and how she engages in mobilization. We are in such a time right now where God is helping us move from the common, yet limiting, understanding of mobilization as primarily recruiting individual workers, to God’s big-picture, comprehensive, holistic intent for mission mobilization as calling the global Church to her core identity.

Yet what exactly do we mobilize the global Church to do? In a global mission landscape full of often random activities and divergent focal points, it is necessary to bring biblical and missiological emphasis. Moving beyond good ideas and hit and miss activities, embracing His direction in what the global Church is mobilized to do in mission.

We start with some questions. Are there specific biblical, Spirit-led means of advancing the Kingdom? Are there particular strategies God is seeking to employ to produce the great harvest? Does the Spirit have a progressive plan or is God somehow piecing together all the random efforts? The answer is yes, God has particular strategies, set forth in the New Testament and confirmed by the Spirit throughout

history.

THE SPIRIT’S FOUR POINT STRATEGY TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

Many years ago, mission practitioner Roland Allen affirmed, “Far from being an indifferent or secondary matter, the ministry strategy used in cross-cultural work is of the utmost importance.”³ Not from the perspective of implementing a “formula,” guaranteeing fruitful results, but embracing biblical principles the Holy Spirit emphasizes and the Word of God advocates. Strategy of itself does not produce fruit, yet strategic models aligning with principles of the Kingdom produce great fruit. Many don’t like the concept of methods as it is thought these somehow limit the Spirit. In fact, quite the opposite. The Spirit used means and strategies (not rigid formulas) throughout the New Testament and mission history, progressing the Church in global mission. We need a return to biblical models of how and why the New Testament Church proved so successful in mission in the first century.

Let’s see a quick overview of the four-point progressive strategy of the Holy Spirit and then jump right into strategic point one. These concepts are steeped in scriptural foundation.

1. It is the will of God to multiply millions of individual local ministries across denominations, church networks and organizations emphasizing the Great Commission, putting it at the center of their local fellowships, mobilizing and equipping every disciple in their roles.
2. The Holy Spirit wants to scatter at least 20 percent of these disciples from every local ministry (mostly lay leaders and lay people) to near and distant culture unreached peoples, geographically near and far to that local ministry.
3. What is it this exponentially large number of Jesus’ laborers are doing among unreached peoples? Multiplying thousands of reproducing church planting movements (CPMs) within neighborhoods, villages, towns, apartment buildings, in areas the Spirit guides them. They take the Church to the people, not expecting the people to come to them.
4. Through the witness of these exponentially increased simple, reproducing churches planted, “people movements to Christ” are ignited across the many webs of relationships – family,

1. The concept of God bringing changes in mission has been the subject of many important books over the last few decades including *Missions in the Third Millennium* by Stan Guthrie; *Changing the Mind of Missions* by William Dyrness; *Transforming Mission* by David J. Bosch; *Changing Frontiers of Mission* by Wilbert R. Shenk; *Mission in the 21st Century* by Andrew Walls; *The New Faces of Christianity* by Philip Jenkins; *World Christian Encyclopedia* by Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo.

2. Paul Pierson, *The Dynamics of Christian Mission: History Through A Missiological Perspective* (Pasadena: WCIU Press, 2009), 135.

3. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 6.

neighborhood, work colleagues, universities—culminating in every subculture of every unreached people group globally hearing the word of Jesus, millions coming to saving faith and discipleship.

Each of the four builds on one another, unfolding progressively. We cannot proceed to points two, three, and four without seeing the foundation of point one firmly in place, which is why mission mobilization needs emphasis across the global Church right now. Point two progresses to point three and so on. We best understand God's big picture intent when considering the widespread multiplication of these strategies across every people group globally, not in pockets here or there.

STAGES OF MISSION MOBILIZATION MOVEMENTS

It is important to analyze the global Church's progression in mobilization emphasis in history. We looked in detail at the overall historical development of mission and mobilization in part 3 of this book.

Mobilization from the Outside

For now, it will suffice to point out mission mobilization over the last fifty to sixty years has consisted primarily in effective mission education courses and mission conferences being offered to those already having some kind of interest in global mission. We call this "mobilization from the outside." This is a first stage in developing a widespread or localized Mission Mobilization Movement. These tools are a significant part of any mobilization effort. A small percentage of participants becoming engaged in a meaningful way in global mission as a result. Research reveals, however, a large majority involved in mission education courses, conferences or experiencing a traveling group promoting mission, never get involved in their assigned roles in the Great Commission.⁴

An observable problem arises in these situations. A believer has participated and been inspired in some way about global mission. They want to continue to grow. But how and where? Sometimes there are further steps through "mobilization from the outside." At some point, however, that person returns to their own local ministry where the leadership isn't necessarily engaged with these same interests. No one from their local ministry experienced what they did. The enthusiasm they had is often squelched within the local ministry because others don't yet share the mission vision. Their vision for the nations is dulled because there was no ongoing mission fuel at the local ministry level. They had to go outside the local

4. Research gleaned through the author's research in 2002 among campus ministry leaders, mission leaders and church leaders. This research was compiled into the author's book *Waking the Giant: The Resurging Student Mission Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2006).

ministry to be envisioned for mission.

How much better for these and other mission mobilization tools to be experienced within the life of local fellowships instead of needing to go outside the local ministry. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with an outside mission education course or conference. These have a tremendous place in the overall mission mobilization process. The point is making sure the primary context for mission mobilization is within the local ministry itself, where the group is together growing in being educated, inspired, and activated. This foundation is then supplemented, developed further, through mission conferences and education/ envisioning courses.

Mobilization from the Inside

I suggest there are two further stages of Mission Mobilization Movements. The second is, "mobilization from the inside." This is when a growing mission emphasis takes root within an existing local ministry. Where that ministry is developing wholehearted disciples understanding their redemption as including partnering with Jesus toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The ministry is geared toward every disciple grasping the Great Commission, internalizing it. They may offer mission education courses and other tools, but in the context of the local ministry, not going outside to gain mission clarity. These ministries are aligning with the core identity of the Church considered in chapters eight and nine. I am confident the Spirit is seeking local ministries and overarching ministry structures to progress from reliance on "mobilization from the outside" to prioritizing "mobilization from the inside," while utilizing outside tools as supplements.

Many years ago, mission practitioner Roland Allen affirmed, "Far from being an indifferent or secondary matter, the ministry strategy used in cross-cultural work is of the utmost importance."⁵ Not from the perspective of implementing a "formula," guaranteeing fruitful results, but embracing biblical principles the Holy Spirit emphasizes and the Word of God advocates.

Campus ministries during the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) of the late 1800s and early 1900s were of this sort. They had large student mission conferences happening every three years. Yet the individual campus fellowships did not wait for that next exciting conference to engage their

5. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 6.

fellow students with Jesus' heart for the nations. Regular activities within the life of their fellowships included Bible studies looking at the theme of global redemption in the Bible. Prayer groups seeking God for the raising up of laborers and for the unreached themselves were also a mainstay. Information distribution and awareness of what was happening in global mission, including mission strategy, were the norm. This is a reason that movement saw such large numbers of message bearers scattered out. They engaged in "mobilization from the inside," not relying only on "mobilization from the outside."

Mobilization Fruitfulness

This leads to the third stage of Mission Mobilization Movements, the "mobilization fruitfulness" stage. As individual local ministries and church network/denominational structures multiply mission mobilization movements, the numbers of believers identifying and engaging in their assigned roles in global mission exponentially grows. That means growing waves of intercession for the nations, giving to the unreached, mobilizing others to become engaged, advocating for specific niche Great Commission focal points, and reaching out to unreached peoples in the home community. And finally, yes, increased responding to the Spirit's call to become message bearers, both among near culture peoples geographically near and distant culture peoples geographically farther away. We want to progress, as the global Church, from individual local ministries giving lip service to global mission, to those ministries set on fire with wholehearted devotion to Jesus which inevitably overflows into passion for His global heartbeat. This process requires "mobilization from the inside."

WHAT ARE MISSION MOBILIZATION MOVEMENTS?

Having established "mobilization from the inside" appears most strategic, we now consider what this practically looks like. There is presently a low standard of responsibility in local ministries to mobilize and equip believers. When looking around the world, grappling with the large number of unreached people groups remaining in the world (over 5,000) and relatively small number of professional "missionaries" serving around the world (430,000 full-time workers),⁶ we must conclude our concept of mission mobilization has been too thin, needing change, giving way to a comprehensive viewpoint. It is time for a shift, a new paradigm in our local ministry settings.

Over the last decade, I have been asking the Lord a question, searching Scripture and church/mission history for answers. Just as we may be familiar in mission strategy with "saturation church planting,"⁷

6. Missionary Statistics - <http://missionaryportal.webflow.io/stats>.

7. <https://ocresearch.info/sites/default/files/DAWNpercent202.0.pdf>.

is there a corresponding concept of "saturation mission mobilization"? I have come to believe there is. I am convinced part of the answer is working toward the multiplication of Mission Mobilization Movements (MMMs) across every level of the body of Christ in every nation. Every disciple, every local ministry, denomination/ church network, national evangelical alliance and mission association has a role and responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus' heart longs for a mobilization movement prioritizing the Great Commission within the life of every local ministry as intended. This concept is not mere theory but a recognition of evident facts.

My friend Tshepang Basupi, a Botswanan mobilizer now living in South Africa, tells his story.

In 2016, whilst busy doing mobilization in Botswana we were not getting the needed results. A few people who were mobilized were eventually unable to go because their churches were unwilling and unable to send them. The main issue we later discovered was the lack of vision and understanding of the Church's role in God's global mission. The Church in Africa is growing and has such a huge potential to be a major player in global missions. But why is it that only a handful of Africans are taking the gospel to the unreached. According to Operation World, there are over 182 million evangelicals in Africa today.⁸ However, less than 50,000 message bearers have been sent from Africa, which is even less than 0.01 percent of the evangelicals in Africa. In August 2016 I joined 1400+ other young leaders from over 140 countries for the Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering in Jakarta, Indonesia. During the Gathering, I listened to Dr. David Lim share a bit of his journey of mobilizing tent makers. He shared about the Filipino believers being sent into China and all across the Middle East and the vision of the Filipino church to mobilize 200,000 message bearers. As he was speaking, the Lord spoke to me. "Can you trust me for one million missionaries (message bearers) from Africa?" I was stunned? One million? This was a huge challenge to my faith and all that I have ever known and imagined.⁹

How does God intend to mobilize one million African message bearers (and many more from other parts of the world)? Tshepang highlighted a significant hindrance. Local ministries lacking vision and understanding of God's global mission and His intent for them to be actively involved, even if

8. <http://www.operationworld.org/africa/owtext.html>.

9. Tshepang Basupi, "Can You Believe Me For 1 Million Missionaries From Africa" Abandoned Times Article - <https://www.globalmmi.net/can-you-believe-me-for-1-million-missionaries-from-africa>.

they never leave their hometown. How can this be realized? Through multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements across the body of Christ.

Over the last decade, I have been asking the Lord a question, searching Scripture and church/ mission history for answers. Just as we may be familiar in mission strategy with “saturation church planting,”¹⁰ is there a corresponding concept of “saturation mission mobilization”?

Mission Mobilization Movements can be defined as any entity (whether a local ministry, denominational, organizational, or church network structure or national evangelical or mission association) where the Spirit of God is emphasizing the message, vision, and strategies of the Great Commission, as a natural overflow of wholehearted, abandonment to Jesus, activating every member in assigned Great Commission roles, spreading mission mobilization in a contagious way to other local ministries.

Characteristics of “Movements”

A professor and mentor of mine at Fuller Seminary, Dr. Bobby Clinton, has studied movements for many years. Not only Christian movements, but secular movements, religious movements, historical movements, social movements—looking for common principles. His conclusion is that movements have similar characteristics, no matter their type. Clinton defines a movement as a “groundswell of people committed to a person or ideals and characterized by the following important commitments” with five common commitments made on the part of those involved:

1. Commitment to personal involvement
2. Commitment to persuade others to join
3. Commitment to the beliefs and ideals of the movement
4. Commitment to participate in a non-bureaucratic, cell-group organization
5. Commitment to endure opposition and misunderstanding.¹¹

We can apply these five commitments as we seek to multiply Mission Mobilization Movements as well. The World Christian movement, started in the book of Acts, had each of these five. Those exalting Jesus are part of a movement with committed roots. It is difficult

¹⁰. <https://ocresearch.info/sites/default/files/DAWNpercent202.0.pdf>.

¹¹. Clinton, *Clinton's Biblical Leadership Commentary*, 535.

to claim to be committed believers yet withhold ourselves from the global Christian movement as a whole. The most effective Mission Mobilization Movements have been, and will be, among those who buy into these five characteristics with zeal and sacrifice. Mission mobilization movements are based on the fundamental principle that God is interested in not only mobilizing individuals but mobilizing and equipping entire local ministries. As many of the world's cultures are communal in worldview, it is necessary to mobilize them as “communities.”¹²

Individual Local Ministries as Mission Mobilization Movements

I first met Mirna Santa Cruz in Asuncion, Paraguay. I was sharing during a workshop for a COMIBAM conference for the Southern Cone region of South America. She excitedly told me about her student ministry called Red de Universitarios y Profesionales Cristianos and her passion to infuse Great Commission emphasis within the life of its fellowship. We began a friendship that day and many years later Mirna has seen that student ministry implement the core principles of a mission mobilization movement, producing great fruit in those students and professionals. Influencing them in their core identity as God's multiplying, reproducing, missionary people. Local ministries of this sort provide teaching, discipleship and fellowship which builds up every member toward spiritual maturity, preparing them to embody their role(s) in the Great Commission. They make deliberate plans to integrate mission vision into the life of that fellowship. The ministry becomes an incubator for growth in mission awareness, understanding, education and local implementation. The ministry becomes fueled by the conviction they all are responsible before God for becoming involved, in some divine assignment, with local and global mission to the unreached. Admittedly, this can sound unrealistic because we have generally given such a low priority to the Great Commission in our local ministries.

Although individual local ministries prioritizing the Great Commission tend to be an afterthought, they are meant to be on the forefront of our hearts, ministry plans, and strategies. Ministries that prioritize cross-cultural mission are God's primary strategy in mobilizing and equipping His people for the Great Commission.¹³ As we look back through the history of the Church and mission, we find the most impact coming through entire ministries taking this calling seriously by envisioning and empowering their members. Today is no different. The global Church has made tremendous strides over the years in developing proven mission mobilization tools serving

¹². This is the premise of Charles Mellis' landmark book, *Committed Communities: Fresh Streams for World Missions*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

¹³. *Handbook for Great Commission Ministries*, 23, published by IGNITE Media. This Handbook is designed to serve local ministries seeking to implement tools and principles to mobilize and equip their own members.

local ministries (churches, youth groups, campus ministry fellowships, Bible schools).

Local ministries as Mission Mobilization Movements align with Jesus' Great Commission through committing to the following action points:¹⁴

1. Cultivating abandoned devotion for Jesus among disciples under their influence
2. Implementing four core components for mobilizing and equipping their members
3. Developing and executing a sending strategy from their members to near culture and distant culture unreached/ unengaged people groups.

In addition, they hold the following three purposes:

1. Educating every disciple with a passionate understanding of God's heart in the Great Commission
2. Inspiring every disciple with a vision of ordering their lives around the fulfillment of the Great Commission, even if they never leave their hometown
3. Activating every disciple in their God-given role(s) in the Great Commission.¹⁵

Instead of taking a one-by-one mobilizing approach, it is important for local ministries to prioritize mobilizing the whole of their ministry to grasp the Kingdom's outworking among every ethnic people group. This includes not merely periodically mentioning cross-cultural mission, but making it an integral part of their ministry's focal points on an ongoing basis. Instead of Jesus' global commission being sidelined as a department or committee, it is meant to grab the imaginations of every believer in that ministry. This does not mean every member will become a cross-cultural message bearer, yet it does mean they will understand and value global, cross-cultural mission, identifying and becoming activated in their role(s) in the Great Commission.

Four Core Mobilization Tools

A primary way a local ministry influences its members is through the implementation of four core mobilizing tools used by God throughout history in awakening His people for the nations. They are not new or trendy but help the global Church return with faithfulness to the basics of faith and discipleship. These four can be implemented and reproduced in any local church, campus ministry fellowship and Bible School in any part of the world. They are simple, user-friendly tools. Local ministries using these tools with perseverance, over time, will see fruitfulness in mobilization as a result of their implementation. Most believers possessing Jesus' heart for mission have been influenced by one or more of these four tools

14. *Handbook for Great Commission Ministries*, 23, 37 ff.

15. Learn more about these six roles in the Great Commission in the GMMI Handbook for Great Commission Ministries, available through IGNITE Media, 115-123.

throughout history.

1. Small group Bible studies within a ministry encountering God's mission heart and passion from Genesis to Revelation.
2. A committed prayer ministry that engages the whole local ministry body in intercession for abandoned devotion in His global Church and harvest among the unreached and unengaged.
3. Monthly or quarterly meetings within the life of the local ministry providing crucial information about aspects and nuances of the Great Commission most believers never hear about.
4. Making faith-filled, Spirit-led commitments to be scattered with one's family and job for long-term ministry among near and distant culture unreached and unengaged people groups.

Denominations/ Church Networks as Mission Mobilization Movements

Let's progress beyond one local ministry as a mission mobilization movement. What might it look like for a whole denomination, church network or campus ministry organization within a particular nation to multiply individual local churches and fellowships within their ministry structures to prioritize local and global mission? Such efforts become Mission Mobilization Movements across a wider spectrum than one individual local ministry. They are self-sustained, self-reproducing mobilization initiatives utilizing a step-by-step strategy enabling a saturation style mobilization emphasis within denominational, church network and organizational structures.¹⁶ For example, a particular denomination/ church network may have 100 local churches in a certain nation. Is it possible to see core principles of mobilization implemented within the life of every one of these 100 local churches? This is what we are referring to.

Randy Mitchell, international director of One World Mission, affirms the concept of mobilization movements: "We believe it is possible to see mobilization occurring within churches, denominations, associations, networks and even nations as movements."¹⁷ He goes on to reveal, "This means we can speak of them being fully mobilized or not at all or somewhere along a continuum of mobilization. A church, church network, denomination, people or even nation can be mobilized by degree. If a people can be mobilized or not mobilized we should be able to speak of them being partially mobilized and that percentage could through the right combination of efforts be increased."¹⁸

Take the body of Christ in Myanmar, for example. Operation World cites 8.98 percent of the total

16. Learn more about a step by step strategy for multiplying mission mobilization movements utilized by GMMI through the GMMI Facilitation Manual, available through IGNITE Media.

17. Unpublished paper by Randy Mitchell titled Presentation For the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

18. Randy Mitchell Unpublished Paper.

population are Christians.¹⁹ This is one of the highest percentage of followers of Jesus in any South East Asian nation. What happens if that population of believers is mobilized to internalize Jesus' Great Commission emphasis within the life of their fellowships. Some of them voluntarily crossing ethnic barriers in their own nation, relocating with family and jobs. How can this be realized? Through multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements within their churches and ministry network structures that mobilize and equip.

Or consider South Sudan (gaining independence as recently as 2011). Operation World records that 62.3 percent of the total population are Christians.²⁰ What is strategically exciting is while their official national language is English, the entire population also speaks fluent Arabic, having been part of Sudan for generations. This means South Sudan has a large number of Arabic speaking believers and local churches strategically placed to influence the Horn of Africa and all of North Africa, overcoming the significant hurdle of learning one of the world's most difficult languages.²¹ Yet right now South Sudan churches have little worldview of Jesus' Great Commission plan. What is needed? Multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements within their local ministries and ministry structures.

Utilizing a strategic plan, senior leaders appoint others within their particular ministry structures to be trained to multiply mission mobilization emphasis within the grassroots local ministries in a particular district, area or region. These appointed leaders are released across an area of oversight within the ministry structure to in turn train and overall advise local ministry leaders to implement core principles of mission mobilization movements.²² Many, if not most, denominational/ organizational structures have leadership positions such as "Mission Director," "Evangelism Director" or the like in their structures. I have observed many leaders having these titles yet with little clarity as to how to mobilize local ministries in their denominational/ network structures for the Great Commission. Empowering such leaders is a significant way forward.

My friend Jimmy Fundar was in this category when I first met him. He was appointed by the Federation of Southern Baptist Conventions in the Philippines as their "National Missions Mobilizer." Yet he was unclear on what exactly this meant or how to go about his role. As were the denominational leaders overseeing him. Around that time, he learned of a

GMMI Mobilizer Equipping School and thought this might be an opportunity to learn to do his role. He is now implementing core principles of Mission Mobilization Movements systematically across the 1,200 local churches of the Federation of Southern Baptist Conventions in the Philippines.

CONCLUSION

Multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements is a key strategy the Lord appears to be encouraging across the earth. It is a significant foundation purpose of God to create an environment within local ministries all over the world that operate as incubator's for developing mission understanding and vision. Not in a periodic way, nor from the periphery, but having the global heartbeat of God genuinely at the center of the life of every fellowship. Learn more about this topic and many more related to mission mobilization by reading my newly released book *Rethinking Global Mobilization*, available on Amazon.com, and by visiting the Global Mission Mobilization Initiative website (www.globalmmi.net). There you will find many tools and resources to help multiply mission mobilization movements in your denomination or ministry structure.

Author's Note – This article has been adapted from the author's new book called **Rethinking Global Mobilization: Calling the Church to Her Core Identity. The book seeks to lay foundations of a Biblical missiology of mobilization while providing a practical framework to mobilize and equip the global Church in mobilization. The publisher, IGNITE Media, has given permission for portions of the book used in this article. Order copies at Amazon.com and find more info about the book at RethinkingMobilization.com*



Ryan Shaw
rshaw@globalmmi.net

Ryan Shaw is International Lead Facilitator of Global Mission Mobilization Initiative (GMMI), a resourcing ministry equipping the Church for mission mobilization through tools, teaching, training and strategies. A fourth-generation message bearer, Ryan graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA) with a Master's in Intercultural Studies. He has traveled in a mobilization capacity to over 65 nations and lives with his family in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where GMMI has its International Base and Global Mobilization Institute.

19. Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 7th Edition (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 610.

20. Operation World Webpage – South Sudan - <https://operationworld.org/locations/south-sudan/>.

21. Arabic is the sixth hardest language to learn for English speakers according to this article - <https://www.jumpspeak.com/blog/hardest-languages-to-learn>.

22. In GMMI circles, we call these Mobilization Coordinators. They serve to mobilize their ministry structures with a vision for global mission using a proven step by step strategy. For more info on these leaders and how GMMI serves them, please click here - <https://www.globalmmi.net/movements/mobilization-coordinators>.

A MINISTRY REPORT OF CHURCHES IN PAKISTAN

Pervaiz Sultan

INTRODUCTION

The present Christian Communities in Pakistan are directly or indirectly a product of the Western Missionary Movement of the 19th and 20th Centuries. Majority of them came with a humble socio-economic background but with the passage of time, there have been developments in their social standing. Presently Christians are confidently earning their living and practicing their faith sharing the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of folk religious practices and the challenges of Modern trends of consumerism etc. Pakistani society works in the backdrop of feudal landlordship which maintains the status quo of big land owners in the rural areas who also influence the socio-political scene of the country. This has kept the country on traditional lines. There have been constitutional and legislative developments to keep the socio-religious strata of the country conservative to suit the use of religion in politics. Churches all over Pakistan have grown in their spiritual and physical existence to serve the communities around in regular and extra ordinary times with their limited means and resources.

DIFFICULTIES AND SUCCESSES OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES IN PAKISTAN

To run pastoral and social ministries successfully according to the gospel values requires a good theological understanding of the issues involved. Many Christian Pastors and lay people who are running Christian ministries of different kinds are not fully aware of the issues and theological discourse needed. Many follow a rather traditional theological conviction for mission and evangelism which has its strength but does not address the more important issues fully. Forced and under age marriages is one example in this regard and Inter-faith dialogue to move forward is another. Evangelical and biblical understandings of the followed and adopted discourses are missing in many areas of ministry involvements.

Many ministries are run as a family enterprise, this keeps people of ability and potential off and creates barrier among the evangelists and communities.

Christian ministries including that of compassion and education have been understood and received with various reactions at different times and places. Within the community many act as recipients and do not play any part to progress and develop physically and mentally, and outside the community they are interpreted as means of evangelism. It is important that ministries are run voluntarily for the upliftment

of people from all walks of life.

The level of successes of Christian ministries is high because of the legacy and good name of the Church. Opportunities of trainings are there and many Christian workers are coming up as able and committed community workers.

EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

Covid-19 has affected Christian ministries in Pakistan as elsewhere. This has raised at first instance, the challenge to stand by the affected, and secondly move forward along with the challenge of the virus over two years. In times of lockdowns, there was a need to make sure that poor people who work on daily wages do not go hungry. Many churches including theological schools and seminaries reached out with daily use commodities to help people which was much appreciated at all levels. Covid-19 has affected the mobility, and coming together of groups which was the common point for ministries to run their programs. Overseas and national funding was affected. Christians have realized the value of fellowship, time and life in the context of Covid-19 which has added to their spirituality to serve humans and worship God.

PRAYER REQUESTS: PLEASE PRAY FOR CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN

1. For the safety of many who suffer for their religious beliefs
2. For the unity among cultural traits of grouping for personal gains of reputation and name.
3. For Covid-19 cases and its development that alert people to stay safe. Still many people do not take seriously the risk of getting the virus. Pray for pastors and evangelists who are open to the risk of getting the virus as they engage with people in groups and for Christian Youth for greater confidence to meet the challenges of the pandemic.



*Pervaiz Sultan,
pervaizsultan35@yahoo.com*

Rev. Dr. Pervaiz Sultan, Coordinator Postgraduate Program and Dean of Research, Lahore College of Theology, Lahore, Pakistan

REPORT FROM GLOBAL HOPE INC.



Global Hope Inc. is a non-profit humanitarian and development organization committed to building a global community to share hope with the suffering and needy children. We partner with individuals, corporations, and groups in bringing hope to people in crisis through education, child partnership, relief, medical assistance, skills training, and other sustainable efforts.

We build Villages of Hope. Through building Villages of Hope, we accomplish more than just relief, rehabilitation, or development; we make changes.

Global Hope Inc. is a mission clothed in an NGO's image to attain a truly wholistic fruits among the suffering. We perceived the traditional missionaries are no longer effective as time passed and decided to wear the clothes of NGO to spread Jesus' love that we had also felt. It's an opportunity for us to be absorbed in the area where hope is needed. Especially, we are certain that we could be anywhere we want to be to achieve our vision despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

GHI is providing various educational welfare services to children who are suffering from poverty like orphans, and children with single parents. It has a mentorship program that operates in nine countries and it is helping the children's holistic development.

This global leaders' training via mentoring is named HopeLine 2000. We provide educational expenses, after-school classes, and talent development opportunities to children who can't receive regular education due to poverty, which we called as intellectual mentoring. Also, we provide regular consultation and home visit for building self-esteem, seminars, and educational support for parental care, which we call as emotional mentoring. We also provide social mentoring which are opportunities for cultural and artistic experiences via art, music and physical activities, and community activities. Lastly, we aim for the improvement of living conditions and physical development via regular nutritional and growth condition checks under physical mentoring.

Global Hope Inc. is working in 11 countries which includes Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam, India, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Global Hope Inc. Myanmar is supporting the education of Myanmar's 70% children. The 'Myanmar's 70% Campaign' will provide an opportunity and environment of education for the children. We also operate the Hope Line 2000 project and are currently running boarding schools.

In 2013 due to super typhoon, the Philippines suffered 12,000 deaths and 11,400,000 typhoon survivors. We started emergency relief activities such as providing emergency kits, clothing, and school supplies. We

also constructed school buildings and provided consultation for PTSD.

Global Hope Inc's India branch is operating the HopeLine 2000 program, coaching centers, and scholarship programs to help families and communities become independent. Global Hope Inc's Central Asia Headquarters in Kyrgyzstan operates HopeLine 2000 program, education & culture program, and local development programs to build villages of hope.

Global Hope Inc. the headquarter in Seoul, with the support of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea, operates social integration programs and early adaptation programs for migrant refugees from the Middle East and operates projects through MOA or MOUs with governments, local NGOs, and related agencies abroad.

In Myanmar GHI is working with the Ministry of Education and has established itself as an important educational institution in the community through a network with town leaders while operating educational development projects through MOUs with local NGOs and partnerships with boarding schools in the region.

The Vietnam branch is registered as an 'INGO' and conducts various activities throughout Ho Chi Minh City, including Korean education through MOUs with academies such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE) and Van Hien University (VHU), as well as scholarships and educational support to help blind children thru welfare MOUs with local social welfare centers.

Global Hope Inc. Kyrgyzstan branch registered a local subsidiary to provide specialized education for low-income children and adolescents in the region to discover and utilize their talents and operates a cultural center to provide specialized programs. Global Hope Inc. Philippines branch is also registered as a local corporation with Pangasinan province NGO, and has signed MOA with various cities to steadily operate vocational technology training for low-income residents.

In addition, Global Hope Inc. is seeking sustainable development in developing countries through the support of KOICA, an ODA organization of the Korean government, and fulfills its responsibility as an NGO through joint social welfare fundraising and corporate sponsorship. As such, Global Hope Inc. is working with various organizations in the community in a total of 11 branches in the world to support global leaders.

* <https://www.facebook.com/GlobalHope.org/>