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Mission Round Table

The OMF Journal for Reflective Practitioners



The Bad News about the Good News

"Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword." (Hebrews 11:35–37)

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Editor: Walter McConnell walter.mcconnell@omfmail.com
Contributing Editor: Claire McConnell claire.mcconnell@omfmail.com
Editorial Office: int.research@omfmail.com
Graphic Design and Printing: IK Marketing & Productions
Printing: Yung Shung Printrade Pte Ltd

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OMF International (IHQ) Ltd., 2 Cluny Road, Singapore 259570

Editorial

Walter McConnell

The gospel is good news. In fact, it's great news. It is the wonderful story that tells how the God who created the heavens and the earth intervened so that people who had been separated from him by sin could be restored to a living relationship with God by believing that his Son Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice in their place. But though it is good news, the *euangelion* has a dark side. There is bad news in the good news.

The difficult side of the gospel was experienced by the Apostle Paul who, in addition to being imprisoned, beaten, whipped, and shipwrecked, set out on journeys resulting "in dangers from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers" along with "the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor 11:23–28). Clearly, gospel ministry can be a lot tougher than most of us desire. The Bible and church history let us know that many Christian witnesses were killed for their faith. This "bad side" of the gospel is brought to light in Sylvia Yuan's article on William Fleming—the first CIM martyr. The death of Fleming alongside the Miao evangelist Pan Shou-Shan shows that martyrdom could be the end of both foreign and local Christians. And though we might like to find that "the blood of the martyrs" led to a great movement among the Black Miao, Yuan lets us know that the results were somewhat more ambiguous than that.

Not everyone who shares the good news about Jesus faces death, imprisonment, or beatings. Even so, many, as Andy Smith's research indicates, find sharing the gospel to be a scary experience for any number of reasons. Though this is far from good news, Smith thankfully provides ways in which these fears can be conquered and the messenger set free to boldly share the gospel of God's grace with those who need to hear it.

Christians who desire to share the gospel with others frequently pick up tools that they hope will help them do a better job, little knowing that these tools may inadvertently become barriers to its being properly understood or rightly accepted. Karl Dahlfred insightfully addresses the sad reality that many animists will find repeating the "sinner's prayer" a religious work they can add to the other things they do to gain merit. By explaining how and when this tool developed, he shows why many who say the prayer fall away from the faith, and why it may be best for us to leave it out of our toolbox. My article, which analyzes the "honor-shame gospel" that has recently become popular in many circles, aims to identify both positives and limitations to this approach. While it is a good tool to add to our box, its anthropological, biblical, and missiological supports are too weak for it to hold up to reaching any whole society. The gospel and the needs of people are much too broad for any one-sided approach.

The widely held desire to find a method of sharing the gospel or making an appeal that will bring many people into God's kingdom is understandable. It could, however, prove to be a snare that catches us in our enthusiasm. This reminds us that many mission trends—like fashion trends—prove to be little more than fads. And while no one wants to become a fashion police for missiological practice, we need to constantly evaluate whether the strategies and methodologies we have inherited or developed are based on biblical standards that last or were developed for pragmatic or philosophical reasons linked to a historical movement or a personal whim. The development of one missiological approach that grew in popularity throughout the twentieth century is outlined in Neel Roberts' article on A. J. Broomhall, which shows how the subject's experience in China impacted the decisions he and others made once they relocated to other fields—decisions that were to an extent overturned by people who knew only that field and were influenced by other historical and missiological concepts.

That our own ideas can become static that drowns out the biblical vision of making disciples of all people sets the background for Scott Callaham's clarion call to return to the Bible as the ground of all our mission thinking and practice. This desire is set out cogently in our interview with him about the book he co-authored: *World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues*. If we work through the issues we face biblically and theologically, the bad news of the good news will not disappear, but it will certainly change form, as it will stem from the very nature of the gospel rather than the actions of those who proclaim it.



The picture on the cover portrays the martyrdom of many Japanese Christians around the turn of the seventeenth century. Though Jesuit missionaries, led by Francis Xavier, began a work in the country in the 1540s that resulted in a church of perhaps 100,000–300,000, by 1614 Christianity was officially banned by the Tokugawa shogunate. From 1597, several waves of persecution swept over the church resulting in many deaths and forcing the remaining members to disappear underground. The painting recording the death of the Nagasaki martyrs (5 February 1597) was the work of an unknown Japanese in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The Sinner's Prayer in Animistic Cultures:
Problems and Solutions

Karl Dahlfred



Karl Dahlfred has served with OMF in Thailand since 2006. He has taught church history and missions at Bangkok Bible Seminary, assisted in the editing and translation of Thai Christian books at OMF Publishers Thailand, and engaged in church planting efforts in Central Thailand and Bangkok. Since 2017, he has been pursuing a PhD in World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh. Karl and his wife Sun have three children. His blog and list of published works may be found at www.dahlfred.com.

A number of years ago, my wife and I were designated to work with a small-town church in Thailand to do new church planting in a nearby village. Our very first Sunday at that church, a member who lived farther out gathered fifteen people from his village and brought them to church in the back of his pick-up truck. Over the course of two Sundays, an amazing thing happened. Nearly all of these people, who were folk Buddhists with little to no prior knowledge of the gospel, prayed to accept Christ as the pastor met with them after church and explained the gospel to them. Hallelujah! Our new church-planting efforts were off to a spectacular start! The pastor of the church and I began a small group for these new believers out in their village with the hope that this surprising ingathering of new believers would be the nucleus of a new church there. But an odd thing happened. Over the course of the next two months, the numbers of these "new believers" coming to our new small group in the village dwindled to zero. Our faithful church member who had originally brought them to worship in town would drive around the village each Sunday to pick them up to go to church, but he always found more excuses than passengers. What had gone wrong? Had not these people decided to follow Christ? Had they not prayed to receive Christ as Lord and Savior and become born again? The great ingathering that had seemed too good to be true turned out to be just that.

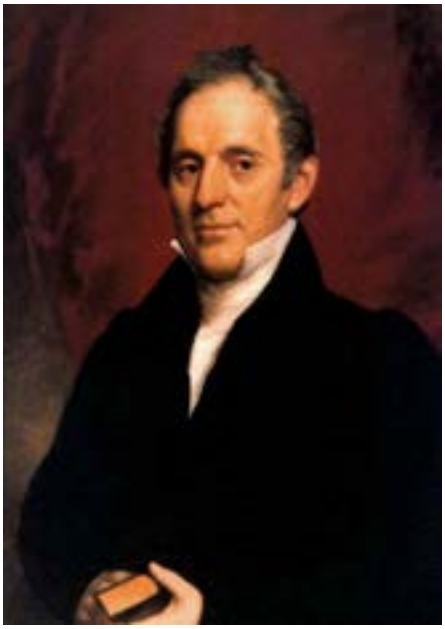
This disappointing experience raised a host of important practical questions in my mind. Why had these people fallen away? Had they really been converted to begin with? Had they been led to faith prematurely? Were the reasons for their quick trip in the front door of the church and out the back door inscrutable, known only to God? Or could we have done something differently? Why did they pray to receive Christ anyway? Were there cultural factors involved? Can people from a completely non-Christian background understand enough of the gospel in just a couple Sundays to truly understand and embrace Christ? How did their animistic and Buddhist background influence their decisions? Did they agree to pray along with the pastor to prevent him from losing face? Was there perhaps something wrong with the way they were led to Christ? Is the practice of leading people to say the "sinner's prayer" the best way to bring people into the kingdom of God? These questions and more set me on a quest to discover why people who seemingly pray to receive Christ often quickly fall away. Is there something that we could do differently to prevent this roller coaster of hopes raised and then dashed?

As I became more familiar with Christianity in Thailand and did more reading, it became clear to me that what I had observed in that small-town church was not unique. The "easy come, easy go" Christianity connected with the sinner's prayer is endemic across much of evangelical Protestantism. But despite the popularity of inviting people to say the sinner's prayer to become a Christian, and the associated practice of inviting people to profess faith in response to an altar call, these evangelistic methods have an amazingly short historical pedigree. The altar call has only been used since the first half of the nineteenth century and the sinner's prayer's prayer since the mid-twentieth century. Both of these methods were developed in the United States, a religious and cultural context far removed from the animistic cultures found in many parts of the world today. As an evangelical missionary concerned about biblically-faithful, culturally-appropriate evangelism, I came to have deep doubts about the validity and effectiveness of both the altar call and the sinner's prayer, especially when used among animistic peoples, such as the Thai folk Buddhists with whom I work.

In this article, I will briefly explore the origin and history of the altar call and the sinner's prayer, reflect on misunderstandings that can occur when used among those with animistic worldviews, and suggest an alternative approach to helping people come to Christ. My personal experience has largely been in the context of Thai folk Buddhists who practice a combination of Theravada Buddhism and various local animistic beliefs. However, animistic cultures around the world share similar worldviews and practices, as does transnational evangelical Protestantism.[1] As such, the conclusions of this article should be broadly applicable to a variety of cultural contexts in diverse parts of the world where evangelical Christians are seeking to share the gospel with people influenced by animism.

The origin of the "sinner's prayer"

Although the altar call and the sinner's prayer are sometimes thought to be traditional forms of evangelism, these methods only originated within the past 200 years or so.[2] Though some people read these modern practices into Bible passages like Acts 2:37–38 and Romans 10:9–10, there is little evidence before the early nineteenth century of evangelists calling people forward at a meeting to publicly profess faith or to bow their heads and repeat a prayer to become Christians. While these methods are often associated with revival evangelism, the great preachers of the eighteenth-century Great Awakenings in the United States and Britain did not use them. Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley are widely acknowledged as successful evangelists who saw many come to Christ, yet these practices were virtually unknown to them. These men preached about law and gospel, urged people to repent and turn to Christ, and counseled inquirers privately, but they left the results to God. They urged individuals to private reflection and prayer rather than immediate public profession of faith and assurance of salvation.[3] Evangelist and Methodist founder John Wesley, for instance, once met with a woman who had two outbursts in one of his evangelistic meetings and was under conviction of sin. After spending some time with her, "he did not seem to be concerned about leaving her to go on to his next port of call, apparently reasoning that if God was really working in the woman's life He could bring it to fruition without Wesley's further assistance."[4] In a similar vein, Congregational evangelist Asahel Nettleton, who saw many revivals during his itinerant ministry throughout the eastern United States in the 1820s, urged listeners to immediate repentance but then finished his meetings without offering them assurance of salvation. He told them to go home quietly, be still, and seek the Lord. They should put their faith in Christ and look for evidences of regeneration in themselves. He often met with inquirers at home meetings the following day, urging them to direct themselves to Christ for salvation and not to concern themselves with how to answer the preacher. At this point, he was concerned to not say too much, lest he talk people into a false hope.[5] Some might wonder if such an approach could be really effective. If an evangelist does not invite people to pray to receive Christ, nor offer them assurance of salvation based on their prayer, how can they be saved? In Nettleton's ministry, however, numerous conversions and changed lives were reported at the churches where he had led revival meetings, and even many years afterward very few of those converted through his ministry had abandoned the faith.[6]



Asahel Nettleton (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons.

Some of the first calls for public professions of faith in revival meetings occurred in 1801 during the Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky, on the American western frontier.[7] The popularization of such calls for immediate, public response, however, came through the work of Charles Finney.[8] Converted in 1821 and ordained for ministry in 1824, Finney led several revivals in western New York State in the 1820s and early 1830s. While the effect of the revivals under Finney brought him fame, his methodology in promoting these revivals brought him severe criticism from some quarters. Like his older contemporary Asahel Nettleton, Finney believed in calling for repentance in evangelistic meetings. Unlike Nettleton, however, Finney increasingly pressured his listeners to indicate repentance through outward physical signs during the meeting. Nettleton stressed the duty of immediate repentance but he was also afraid of emotionalism and self-deception, and would thus send his listeners home to wait upon the Spirit to change their hearts.[9] Finney had no such reservations.



Charles Finney (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons.

Finney's first foray into calling for public response was in Evan Mills, New York in 1824. He asked for people to stand to indicate their acceptance of Christ. He understood the act of remaining seated as an indication of rejection of Christ. It seems that he did not make any provision for those who may have already been Christians. In using such methodology, Finney demonstrated that he considered the physical act to be a sign of spiritual conversion. Although this type of calling for physical response became a hallmark of his ministry, Finney did not consistently use these so-called "new measures" until 1830.[10] Finney was convinced that one does not need to wait for the Holy Spirit to change hearts but rather, salvation was

a matter of changing one's own will. Therefore, he expected results. Finney was convinced that revival was certain if the right methods were used. "A revival is not a miracle" wrote Finney, "nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means."[11] Finney believed that the practice of publicly inviting people to show some physical indication of repentance was the method best suited in the present day to convince people to turn to Christ, and fulfilled the same purpose that baptism had served in the early church.[12] In the minds of many, Finney's "new measures," as they were called, were justified by their fruits. Numbers of conversions were reported in the newspapers and it seemed difficult to argue with results. As for those who questioned his evangelistic methods, Finney denounced them as "cold and dead, and the enemies of revivals."[13] Critics were concerned that the high-pressure emotionalism of Finney's methods led to spurious conversions. John Nevin, a German Reformed minister and contemporary of Finney, argued that Finney's techniques were psychologically manipulative and confused "the outward form with the genuine article."[14] Nevin reasoned that when a preacher expounds the gospel and presses it upon the souls of his listeners, the question before them is, "Will I submit to God?" This is the great struggle, which they must mull over in their minds. However, when the preacher invites his listeners to go forward, the question "Will I go forward?" becomes uppermost in their minds, arresting reflection upon the more important question of submission to God.[15] The concerns of these critics were not unfounded as Finney's associate James Boyle bore witness in an 1834 letter to Finney. When Boyle re-visited places where the two men had preached, he found that most converts from their revival meetings had disappeared into thin air.

> Let us look over the fields where you and others and myself have labored as revival ministers, and what is now their moral state? What was their state within three months after we left them? I have visited and revisited many of these fields, and groaned in spirit to see the sad, frigid, carnal, contentious state into which the churches had fallen--and fallen very soon after our first departure from among them.[16]



George Wesley Bellows (American, 1882–1925), *Billy Sunday*, 1923, ink on paper, lithograph, 12-7/8 × 19 in. Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, acquired by exchange, 26.9.

Nevertheless, despite external criticisms and the sobering observations of his own co-worker, Finney persisted with the same methods. Finney's book, *Lectures on Revivals* (1835), became immensely popular and led to systemic use of the public invitation system across many denominations in the United States during the nineteenth century.[17]

From the 1870s onward, evangelist Dwight L. Moody also regularly employed the invitation system, albeit Moody's approach was kinder and gentler than that of Finney whose high-pressure tactics had startled many. Accompanied by musician Ira Sankey, Moody gave repeated calls to come to Christ as indicated by a move to the front of the meeting hall. Moody and other evangelists began to use "decision cards" to indicate conversion, a practice continued by early twentieth-century evangelist Billy Sunday. Sunday's crusade revivals marked the introduction of entertainment and drama into evangelism, as well as the importance of "recruiting professional organizers and publicists to prepare the venue and the mood of his meetings," an emphasis that influenced the ministry of Billy Graham.[18]

In the post-war period, the sinner's prayer became prominent through the ministries of Billy Graham and Bill Bright, founder of the student ministry Campus Crusade for Christ. Both men not only led people to pray to receive Christ verbally, but also promoted use of such a prayer through their popular booklets, namely Graham's *Steps to Peace with God* and Bright's *The Four Spiritual Laws*. As international evangelicalism spread globally, so did approaches to evangelism that relied heavily on the altar call and the sinner's prayer to gauge conversions.

Before we consider the results of these evangelistic methods, I want to briefly define "altar call" and "sinner's prayer" so that we are clear on what we are talking about. In some churches today, altar calls are given for a variety of reasons, including re-dedication or financial pledges. What we are talking about in this article, however, is a public invitation to give some outward, physical expression of first-time belief in Christ in the context of a public meeting. The sinner's prayer is not a single prayer with set words; many variations are used today. However, as David Bennett has observed in his book on this topic, a sinner's prayer has three essential elements.

> First, it must be an actual prayer addressed to God or Jesus Christ. Secondly, it must have the assumption clearly stated in the prayer or accompanying material that if it is meant or prayed sincerely it will be inevitably and immediately effective. Thirdly, it must speak of the sinner inviting, accepting, receiving or taking Christ into the sinner's life or heart as an act of the human will. In other words, the initiative in Christian conversion appears to be with the one praying, not with God, thus making it seem more dependent on human decision than upon divine activity. Such prayers may also contain both or one of the following components: a

reference to God's forgiveness, and an expression of repentance. [19]

Does the sinner's prayer "work"?

When people pray a "sinner's prayer", are their "decisions for Christ" an accurate measure of evangelistic success? Does praying such a prayer, raising a hand, or filling out a decision card mean that a person is born again? The first-hand testimony of Finney's associate James Boyle would indicate that it is not necessarily so. Similarly, in *The Altar Call: Its Origins and Present Usage*, David Bennett analyzed claimed numbers of converts for Billy Sunday and Bill Bright, and found the statistics to be greatly exaggerated.[20] Though these men claimed incredible numbers of converts, many of these people never became disciples of Christ.

More recently, in December 2009, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, together with major Thai church denominations, sponsored and promoted the "My Hope Thailand" evangelistic project. They produced an evangelistic TV program that aired several times on Thai national TV just before Christmas, and was distributed on VCD for private home viewing. The program featured testimonies and music videos from Thai pop stars who had become Christians, as well as preaching from Billy and Franklin Graham, dubbed into Thai. As a result of the program and associated church-based events, it was reported that nearly 12,000 people made "decisions for Christ." Many in the Christian community (both in Thailand and abroad) were overjoyed by the number of "new Christians" produced by My Hope. A year later, researchers Dwight Martin and Marten Visser followed up the claimed results of "My Hope Thailand" to see "if the final results were as impressive as the first outcome indicated." They discovered, however, that "there was no correlation whatsoever between the number of baptisms in a church and whether or not it had participated in this national campaign." For all the time and money poured into the My Hope evangelistic campaign, it didn't seem to make much of a difference in how many people became baptized church members. Martin and Visser concluded that the "evangelistic campaign might have [had] some effect, but no more than the activities it replace[d]."[21]

It is common for churches and parachurch organizations to talk about the number of people going forward for an altar call as if all those who go forward are converted. Yet, it is acknowledged that some people go forward for rededication, some out of curiosity, and some for no discernible reason.[22] The varied reasons for going forward are then apparently ignored in reporting by groups such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which believes that 2% of those going forward become Christians during the sermon, 48% in a counseling session, and 50% during follow-up.[23] This inconsistency calls into question what people are responding to and whether we are deceiving ourselves and mission supporters by reporting so-called "decisions" as if they are new Christians. Might we do better to adopt the older terminology of Nettleton and others, saying instead that a person has been "hopefully converted", reserving our confidence until after they have shown some fruit and been baptized?

While criticisms of the altar call and sinner's prayer are frequently rebuffed by citing the number of reported conversions, there are many indications that these methods don't produce as many born again believers as many believe they do. Exaggerated numbers of converts give the impression that altar call evangelism and getting people to pray to receive Christ are much more effective, and therefore justified, than they really are.

Though the sinner's prayer is designed to help people become Christians, in many cases it has the opposite effect of confirming people in a fundamentally animistic worldview.

But why are these methods often ineffective? Why don't people who made "decisions" become disciples? Surely there are multiple factors, regardless of cultural context. Animistic cultures, however, present special factors for consideration. In the Americas and Europe, there is broad, superficial familiarity with Christianity. In Western cultures, a high value is placed on individualism, freedom of choice, scientific rationalism, and the division between secular and sacred spheres of life. In Western societies, the influence of Christianity is quickly fading, yet even secular people are often aware of basic Christian concepts such as monotheism, heaven, hell, sin, judgement, and forgiveness. Granted, their understanding of these concepts is frequently fragmentary and confused, but nonetheless, they are present and such familiarity is often assumed by Western Christians sharing the gospel. However, the cultural values and background religious knowledge of Western societies cannot be assumed in animistic societies or in nations where the majority of people formally adhere to a non-Christian religion.[24] So what happens when a problematic evangelistic method developed in one cultural context is imported, largely unchanged, into an animistic society with different values and assumptions?

When animists encounter the sinner's prayer

Though the sinner's prayer is designed to help people become Christians, in many cases it has the opposite effect of confirming people in a fundamentally animistic worldview. In order to understand how this could happen, we need to understand animism. In *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, missiologist Gailyn Van Rheenen defines animism as "the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power."[25] In other words, animism is the using of religious rituals and ceremonies to manipulate the spirit world into doing what the animist wants it to do, whether that be warding off evil or inviting blessing. There are both pure animists and folk animists, the later of which often identify with a

major world religion such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity while retaining additional beliefs that may or may not be consistent with their professed religious affiliation. Thai Buddhism, for example, is often a mix of "pure" Buddhism and local animistic beliefs in spirits, omens, relics, sacred objects, fortune telling, astrology, sorcery, and so on. This mix of spirit beliefs and Buddhism forms an important part of the worldview and belief system of most Thai people, and it is this understanding of spiritual reality that Thai people bring to the table when they come to an evangelistic rally or hear a gospel presentation.

Unlike genuine Christianity, animism is not a heart religion in which it is important that you really believe something from the depth of your being. Animism is not about devotion or love for a particular deity or spirit. Animism is not about conforming your life to some external moral standard which has come down from heaven. Animism does not require you to change your life or to repent of your sins. All it requires is the performance of some religious rituals in order to cause the spiritual powers that be to bring about the desired blessings in your life. It is all about external things that you do in order to get what you want. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is about a change in allegiance from self to God. It is a change of priorities from our own priorities to God's priorities. It is about God's plan for what my life should be like, not about using religious ceremonies to manipulate God into helping me accomplish my own ideas of what a happy life should be like. Animism at its core is pragmatic and utilitarian. Whatever gets the job done to help me achieve my idea of the good life is what I'll do. Though animism is sometimes mitigated or modified by beliefs and practices from other worldviews—be that a major world religion or secular scientific humanism—an animistic approach to life still provides a functional framework for approaching life decisions in animistic cultures, a reality that needs to be kept in mind by anyone sharing the gospel with those influenced by it.

With the realities of animism in mind, what are the potential pitfalls of asking an animist to respond to an altar call or to pray the sinner's prayer? Why might animists with limited exposure to the Christian faith agree to pray to receive Christ? And why does the sinner's prayer, as commonly practiced, fail to bring about understanding and conversion among many animistic believers?

Unlike genuine Christianity, animism is not a heart religion in which it is important that you really believe something from the depth of your being.

1. The sinner's prayer is just another religious ritual that might help you get what you want

For animists hearing an invitation to say the sinner's prayer, it is not improbable that their reasoning, conscious or unconscious, often goes something like this: "That trip to the spirit medium didn't solve my problem, and the astrologer didn't give much help either. I tried wearing the sacred relic that my aunt gave to me but haven't seen anything change. Getting a magic tattoo might be expensive. Perhaps this Christian ceremony will help. What's to lose? Why not say this prayer that the Christian teacher seems so eager to have me pray? There might be something to this foreign religion after all. I can try out this foreign Jesus religion for a while and see if it really has the amazing power that the Christians are claiming. If it works, great. But, if Jesus doesn't work, I'll just move on and try something else. Nothing lost, nothing gained."

2. The sinner's prayer is viewed as a magical incantation

In animism, it is often not important to understand the actual words said in a prayer or spell since the power of the prayer is in the sacredness of the words themselves, not in understanding them. Chanting at Thai Buddhist temples, for example, is in the ancient language of Pali that the common person does not understand. However, as long as they hear the monks chanting or say the words themselves, merit is gained. So, when asked to say the sinner's prayer, an animist may think that the words of the sinner's prayer itself are powerful magical words that will bring about blessings. What the words mean are largely secondary and inconsequential. Going through the motions is all that matters. Christian evangelists, however, often fail to recognize this worldview assumption, and take it for granted that people who pray to receive Christ have understood what they have prayed and thus reassure the new convert that if they sincerely or genuinely meant what they said, then they are saved. Yet it is entirely possible to be sincere and genuine in one's prayers without having a clue as to what the words just prayed actually mean. Yet to genuinely receive Christ, one must have a true understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ, at least on a basic level.

3. The words in the sinner's prayer are automatically redefined by the listener to fit their animistic worldview

Christian evangelists often use words like "God", "sin", "heaven", "hell", and "eternal life" with the assumption that their listeners will pour into those words the same meaning that the Christian is pouring into them. But when the listeners are coming from a radically different worldview and belief system, that is a poor assumption. Although the words of the sinner's prayer indicate—in the mind of the evangelist—commitment to Christ, an animist hears and interprets those words based on what he has been taught at home, at school, and at the local shrine or temple. The thinking might go something like this: "There could be some kind of god out there, and maybe he can help me. Sure, I am a sinner, who isn't? I want to go to heaven (regardless of whether it really exists or is just a happy life on this earth). I don't want to go to hell, if there is such a place. At the very least, maybe this Jesus can help lessen the suffering in my life, which is hell on earth. I can invite Jesus to be my Savior to deliver me

from my problems and difficulties; I've asked all sorts of other spirits to help me, so why not this one?" Some evangelists do a better job of explaining the gospel and anticipating misunderstandings than others, and some animists have had longer exposure to biblical truths and categories than others. But when evangelism only goes skin deep, it leaves all the misunderstandings of the gospel untouched and any conversion that happens is superficial. Building a sufficient understanding of Christ and the gospel normally takes a lot more time than a twenty-minute gospel presentation or a couple of Sundays attending church.

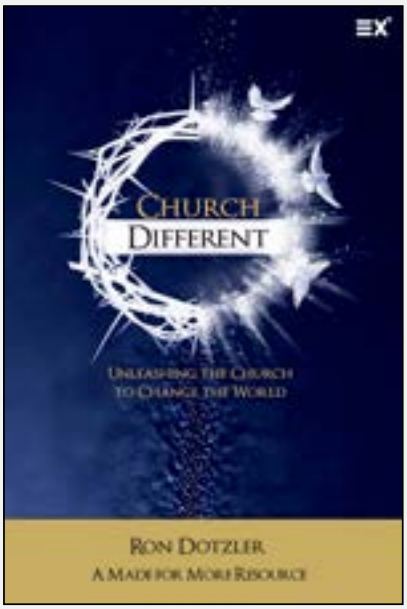
Solutions: If not the sinner's prayer, then what?

If you've read this far in the article, it should come as no surprise that I am not in favor of giving altar calls or leading people in the sinner's prayer. "But," you may ask, "if we don't do those things, how are we supposed to lead people to Christ? What's the alternative?" In the final section of this article, I would like to conclude with some suggestions on how we can help people understand the person and work of Christ and embrace him as Lord and Savior without relying on altar calls or assuring them that if they've said a certain prayer, then they are saved. And since the church grew and expanded for more than 1800 years before these methods became popular, there are a lot of precedents to draw from, both historical and contemporary.

Many Bible readers will be aware that in the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul and others often promptly baptized new converts, many of whom were Jews or God-fearing Gentiles who already had a foundation in the Scriptures. But as the gospel spread far beyond the reach of Judaism in the post-apostolic era of the early church, a prolonged catechesis process came to be required prior to baptism. Those who were interested in joining the church were brought to the church leaders by a sponsor, who was a current church member. If accepted to begin the catechesis process, these inquirers became catechumens. As a catechumen, a person was expected not only to hear the Word but to obey the Word in Christian living. To be accepted for the next, more intensive, phase of catechesis the person had to demonstrate both right understanding and right living of the faith and be verified by the testimony of others. At the end of the entire process, catechumens were baptized and allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. The whole process could take months or years but was seen as necessary for converts coming from a completely non-Christian background.[26] And the church grew. Churches in majority non-Christian cultures today might do well to emulate the approach of the post-apostolic church in bringing people into the Christian community.

Understanding that leads to true faith takes time, a reality acknowledged by the early church and also by many evangelists and ministers today. Tissa Weerasingha, a pastor working among folk Buddhists in Sri Lanka, has observed that conversion often takes place in stages. The initial stage is turning away from idols, but it is only regular exposure to the Word of God and the wooing of the Holy Spirit that can bring a person from a folk-religionist background to a real knowledge of the forgiveness of Christ. In Weerasingha's experience, it is impossible for people to make "instant decisions" for Christ. Such decisions "often mean nothing to them because at the initial stages they have no comprehension of the real implications of the gospel."[27]

The alternative to using altar calls and inviting people to pray after us to receive Christ is to read the Bible with



Church Different: Unleashing the Church to Change the World

By Ron Dotzler. N.p.: Exponential Resources, 2019. ISBN 978-1794387782. 212pp.

Reviewed by Andy Smith

When Ron Dotzler, an American pastor, realized that his church was failing to connect with unbelievers he sought to understand why. He concluded that the congregation had no social influence, and he knew that lack of social influence usually means lack of spiritual impact. To connect with the surrounding culture, he needed to learn to do church differently.

Formerly, Dotzler led faith-based outreaches that sought to convince people of the truth of Christianity. He testifies, "I tried to *faith* people to Jesus…. My lack of success came from attempting to *convince* people with the truth" (Nook, 29).

After his awakening, he began planning outreaches in which the church showed its love for those around them. He also trained members with "appropriate hope-filled language" (Nook, 64). Those outreaches led to opportunities to serve people in practical ways that opened doors for sharing spiritual truths. By first developing their social influence they began to make a spiritual impact.

Doing church differently means expecting the Bible to "give us a *bigger heart*, not a *bigger head*" (Nook, 75). Dotzler urges church leaders to lead their congregations in becoming people of love who are "always ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within us" (Nook, 24). By so doing, they can expect God to use them in leading people to faith.

I found this book easy to read, stimulating, and, at times, convicting. The author's struggles in evangelism are similar to ones I face. The solution that the Spirit gave him should help many church planters and leaders be more faithful and fruitful in their witness.

them, invite them into the fellowship of the church and broader Christian community, and to wait for the Holy Spirit to change their hearts. It is often difficult to know how and when the Holy Spirit is working in a person's heart (John 3:8). That's why we need to wait for true faith to express itself in due time. When people profess faith prematurely at the prompting of an eager evangelist, before they have been born again, it is much more difficult for them to ask questions and express doubts that would be normal for someone who has not professed faith. If we truly trust the Holy Spirit to work in his time and his way, and if we believe that it is his power of transformation (and not our ability to persuade) that births true faith in a person, then we can share the gospel with people, study the Word with them, and urge them to repent and trust in Christ without feeling like we need to get them to say a particular prayer. If the Holy Spirit is changing someone's heart, it will be impossible to hide that change. The person will want to express their newfound faith and to grow as a follower of Christ. When that faith shows itself, it should be baptism, not the sinner's prayer, that constitutes a public declaration this person now belongs to Christ.

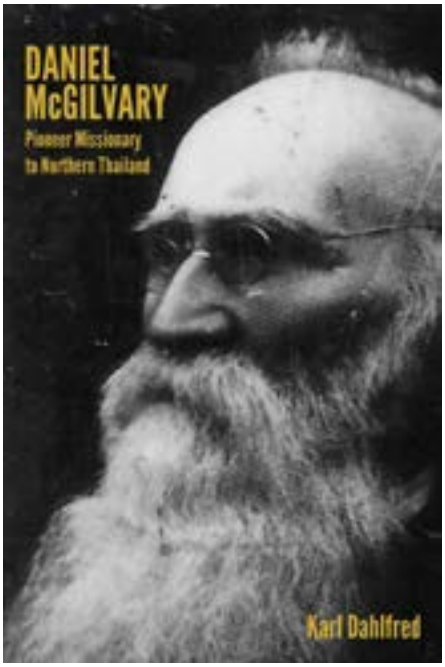
What can we do, however, if we are in a ministry context where it is common for possibly unconverted people to attend our church or fellowship group, having "prayed the prayer" and been declared to be Christians? Thai pastor Wan Petchsongkram once gave some practical advice on this matter. In a series of *Lectures on Buddhism* for Thai-speaking Christians, Petchsongkram stated:

> Out of all the people who become Christians in 1 year, about 80% of those disappear. Have you seen this? People who become Christians and then disappear. We need to understand why this is so. I feel like this is a real problem for Christians in Thailand. When Thai people become Christians, they do so with certain reasons and because of certain factors and they remain Christians because of those reasons and factors so long as those reasons and factors still apply. But when those reasons are no longer there, they stop being Christians. Because of this, when they are still Christians and we know they are Christians because these reasons are still in effect, you should jump on the opportunity to teach them, no holds barred. If you don't hurry up and teach them while these other reasons are still in play, then when those reasons are gone, they will stop being Christians.[28]

In other words, many Thai folk Buddhists (and other types of animists) make professions of faith in Christ not because they are convinced of the truth of the gospel, want forgiveness of sin, or have had their hearts regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They make professions of faith because they are hoping that becoming a Christian will fix or solve their currently unsolvable problem. The way to help these unconverted "Christians" is not to analyze whether they truly meant it when they prayed to receive Christ and urge them to do it again and to really mean it this time. Rather, as long as they are in church and willing to listen, we should take advantage of the opportunity to teach the Word of God and to love them, in hope that they will be truly converted. Evangelistic methods in the areas where we work are not going to change overnight so we need to make the best of non-ideal situations.

But let's say that you and the people in your church have seen the problems associated with giving altar calls and urging people to pray to receive Christ. Does the alternative that I have outlined above really work? Lest some think that the idea of people being saved without the sinner's prayer is merely theoretical, and the weight of all of church history prior to 1800 is not enough, I want to give two brief examples of conversion without the sinner's prayer, one modern and one historical.

Nearly twenty years ago, a young university student showed up at the door of our church in central Thailand asking to be discipled. Before I met him, he had been seeking out the answers to his pressing questions about life. During that time, he started studying English with some missionaries and attended a Christian camp (which he didn't particularly like, at the time). He never said the sinner's prayer with anyone nor did he respond to an altar call. But as he was walking down the street one day, he realized that all that he had learned about God was true. God switched on the lights and this man has been following hard after the Lord ever since.



Many years earlier, in 1869, a former Buddhist abbot by the name of Nan Inta was studying the Bible and the Westminster Shorter Catechism with missionary Daniel McGilvary in Northern Thailand. He was constantly comparing the claims of the gospel and the claims of his folk Buddhist faith, mulling them over in his mind. After McGilvary's prediction of an eclipse seriously shook his inherited animistic belief that eclipses were caused by a monster eating the sun, he realized that what McGilvary had been teaching from the Bible was true as well. Nan Inta's account of his conversion, as recorded by McGilvary, was that after the eclipse, when he was "walking in the fields and pondering the subject, it all became very plain to him. His doubts all vanished." The following morning, he came to see McGilvary and declared "It's true!"[29] And that's how the first person in Northern Thailand came to Christ. When the Holy Spirit changes a person and creates true faith in Christ in them, that faith cannot and will not be hidden.

If we do not wait for the Holy Spirit to form faith in a person in his own time, the results can be disastrous. Not only do some people become nominal church goers, subsequently harming churches with unregenerate, ungodly behavior, but many more melt back into society thinking that they have tried Christianity and found it wanting. They have effectively been inoculated against the gospel by receiving a weakened, dead form of Christianity, yet thinking that they had the real thing. A lack of testimony about the gospel becomes a

negative testimony about the gospel. This happened with a woman whom my wife and I knew in Central Thailand. We chatted with her regularly at her street-side food stall, sometimes talking about the gospel, though she did not seem overly interested in spiritual matters. But once when we were out of town, a church member called and told us that our vendor friend and her mother had prayed to receive Christ. Praise the Lord! Right? When we returned home and my wife began visiting this woman and her mother to study the Bible, it was like pulling teeth. She had little to no interest in learning about God. Studying the Bible was a hassle. She attended church a handful of times and then stopped coming, and stopped meeting with my wife. We still saw her at her food stall, but conversations about anything Christian were extremely strained. Eventually we heard through the grapevine that this woman was telling other people at the local market that she had been a Christian but there was nothing to it. Instead of being a witness for the gospel, she was now a witness against the gospel.

I am sure that the majority of Christians who give altar calls and lead people to say the sinner's prayer are genuinely trying to help them. I don't fault anyone's motives or their love for Christ. But as servants of Christ and gospel messengers, don't we owe it to our Lord to seek the best possible way to honor him and to guide people to Christ? Should we not seek out the "best practices" in evangelism, and not content ourselves with what is popular and familiar to us?

There is no denying that an altar call and a sinner's prayer have been the part of the conversion experience of many people who are truly born again and walking with the Lord, both today and in the past. I imagine that number includes some who are reading this article, as well. But if there had not been an altar call or no one encouraged you to pray after them, would you have still come to faith? The Bible says that all those whom God has predestined for salvation will surely come to Christ (John 6:37–39; Rom 8:28–30). All those who belong to Christ will surely come to him, if not through the altar call and sinner's prayer, then certainly some other way. God is much bigger than a particular methodology.

Nonetheless, using a particular method just because it "works" sometimes is not sufficient reason to continue using it. Giving altar calls and assuring people that they are Christians because they have said a particular prayer often causes more confusion than clarity, especially when our listeners' exposure to the gospel has been very brief. It takes a long time for people, especially those from animistic cultures, to understand the true nature of the gospel and to come to a point when they can truly put their faith in Christ. We are not saved by how much we know. Even so, there is a certain amount of knowledge about God, the world, and self that needs to be in place for someone to truly trust in Christ as Savior and Lord.

The Bible assures us that all whom God the Father has chosen for salvation will surely come to Jesus (John 6:37), with or without someone leading them in a sinner's prayer. Choosing to not give altar calls or lead people in the sinner's prayer is not barring the way to salvation for people. It is honoring God by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in his time and his way in bringing people to faith as we share the Word, pray, and love those who do not yet know Christ.
MRT

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[1] For a detailed history of twentieth century evangelicalism, see Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott*, A History of Evangelicalism (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013). For more on animism, see Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena: William Carey, 2013).

[2] The altar call and the sinner's prayer are different but related evangelistic methods; yet for the sake of brevity, I will focus on the sinner's prayer in this article. For detailed histories of these evangelistic methods, see David Bennett, *The Altar Call: Its Origins and Present Usage* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000); *The Sinner's Prayer: Its Origins and Dangers* (Capalaba, QLD: Even Before, 2011).

[3] Bennett, *Altar Call*, 21–22. There is one recorded instance of George Whitfield calling people to profess faith publicly in a meeting but this was not his regular practice. See Thomas Kidd, "A Brief History of the Altar Call," The Gospel Coalition, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/a-brief-history-of-the-altar-call/ (accessed 16 January 2020).

[4] Bennett, *Altar Call*, 9.

[5] Bennet Tyler and Andrew Bonar, *Asahel Nettleton: Life and Labours* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 118–20, 135, 145–47, 164, 171, 243, 256, 300–309.

[6] Tyler and Bonar, *Asahel Nettleton*, 316–17, 323–24. It was claimed that 25,000 people came to faith over the course of Nettleton's ministry. David Bennett, *The Altar Call: Its Origins and Present Usage* (Brisbane: Camp Hill, 2000), 165.

[7] Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 171.

[8] For a detailed account of Finney's theology and evangelistic methods, see Karl Dahlfred, *Theology Drives Methodology: Conversion in the Theology of Charles Finney and John Nevin* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013).

[9] Tyler and Bonar, *Asahel Nettleton*, 118–19.

[10] Tyler and Bonar, *Asahel Nettleton*, 106–7.

[11] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Virginia Beach, VA: CBN University Press, 1978), 4. Cf. David Aikman, *Billy Graham: His Life and Influence*, Kindle ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 19.

[12] "The Church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose. The Gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called on to be baptized. It held the precise place that the anxious seat does now, as a public manifestation of a determination to be a Christian." Finney, *Lectures*, 282.

[13] Tyler and Bonar, *Asahel Nettleton*, 340.

[14] D. G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 91–4.

[15] John Williamson Nevin, *The Anxious Bench (Second Edition), Antichrist, and the Sermon Catholic Unity*, reprint ed. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 35–9.

[16] James Boyle to Charles Finney, 25 December 1834, Finney Papers, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, cited in James Johnson, "The Life of Charles Grandison Finney" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1959), 400.

[17] Bennett, *Altar Call*, 112.

[18] Aikman, *Billy Graham*, 21.

[19] For a more detailed definition and samples of the sinner's prayer, see chapter 1 in Bennett, *Sinner's Prayer*, Kindle Locations 135–368.

[20] Bennett, *The Altar Call* (Australian edition), 165–72.

[21] Dwight Martin and Marten Visser, "Sense and Nonsense of Large-Scale Evangelism," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (April 2012): 136–7. Also available online at https://missionexus.org/sense-and-nonsense-of-large-scale-evangelism/ (accessed 30 January 2020).

[22] Bennett, *Altar Call*, 169.

[23] Bennett, *Altar Call*, 195.

[24] It is said that approximately 40% of the world's population hold worldviews influenced by animism, but this may be a low estimate considering the fact that animism is often concealed underneath other religious identities. Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ*, 25.

[25] Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ*, 20.

[26] J. I. Packer and Gary Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), Kindle Locations 984–1058.

[27] Tissa Weerasingha, "Karma and Christ: Opening Our Eyes to the Buddhist World," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 10, no. 3 (July 1993): 103–4.

[28] Wan Petchsongkram, Lectures on Buddhism given at the (OMF) Lopburi Learning Centre, Lopburi, Thailand, 2009, author's translation. Cf. Karl Dahlfred, "Moving Beyond Felt Needs," Gleanings from the Field, 16 December 2009, https://www.dahlfred.com/blogs/gleanings-from-the-field/290-moving-beyond-felt-needs (accessed 16 January 2020).

[29] Daniel McGilvary, *A Half Century among the Siamese and the Lao: An Autobiography*, ed. Cornelius Beach Bradley (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912), 98.

Culture, the Bible, and the "Honor-Shame" Gospel

Walter McConnell



Walter directs OMF International's Mission Research Department. An American, he has previously served in Taiwan as a church planter and theological educator, taught Old Testament at Singapore Bible College where he also directed the Ichthus Centre for Biblical and Theological Research, and served as pastor at the Belfast Chinese Christian Church.

When I was about 45 years of age, I began to experience a life-changing reality. Up to that time, I had excellent vision. But something happened—middle age, some call it—and, along with a lot of other things, my eyes stopped working as well as they had previously. After a long period of heavy reading, I found that my eyes refused to see the words on the page. My experience—which I recently discovered is a form of visual migraine—made the page look pixelated so that it was reduced to chunks of paper that I couldn't focus on and fragments of words that I couldn't read. And though a good sleep made things a fair bit better, I was forced to join the legions of people who put on reading glasses every time they pick up a book, and eventually came to the point of needing glasses all the time so that life doesn't pass me by in a blur.

What is true for many of us when it comes to the way our eyes work is also true when we leave our own culture and enter a different one. In our new setting, things look different. At times, they may seem a bit fuzzy or disjointed. Frequently, especially when we are physically tired, mentally overworked, stressed out, or spiritually depressed, the things going on around us can be extremely difficult to understand. Perhaps we need more prayer. Perhaps we just need a bit more sleep. Or maybe we need a new pair of glasses, a new way of seeing our adopted culture.

One new set of glasses frequently prescribed today is designed to bring the issues of honor and shame into sharp focus, particularly as they relate to understanding certain cultures. Before we turn our sights to this prescription, we should note that the concept of wearing "cultural glasses" is not new. However, to understand the concept as it developed historically and is used today we need a brief overview of the history of anthropology. Anthropologists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries regularly described culture as something that all humanity shared, but that people's experience of it progressed through different stages—from savagery to barbarism to civilization. The stage a society had reached could be seen from their technical and other abilities. By the late 1800s, this approach was often stated as an evolutionary process wherein a society that reached a particular stage would progress to the next.[1] While this was often a broad-brush approach for scholars to describe culture through detailing a general overview of human history, the views at times promoted racist ideologies that depicted some groups as naturally more intelligent or culturally developed than others.

The theories describing sociocultural evolution were shattered at the turn of the twentieth century by Franz Boas (1858–1942) who was convinced that the social laws frequently promulgated were not based upon empirical evidence. Though born in Germany and trained as a physicist, Boas is considered the father of American anthropology as, after spending years researching Northwest American Indian culture, he helped to found the American Anthropological Association and taught the subject at Columbia University where he trained scholars like Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Boas was a firm believer in cultural relativism—the concept that all cultures are intrinsically equal. Rather than evaluating one society against another as had previously been the norm, he believed that each needed to be assessed on its own terms. The idea of culture thus shifted from something to which people *attain* to something that people *do*—their behaviors, symbols, ideas, and patterns. To recognize what is happening in a culture, one must wear *Kulturbrille*—"cultural glasses". Boas saw this as a metaphor for how everyone looks at the world through lenses ground by their socialization in the culture in which they were brought up. Due to the cultural glasses we wear—whether or not

we are aware that we wear them—we see the world differently and cannot help doing so.[2] As a result, if we find ourselves without the right pair of culture glasses, we are fated to see our adopted cultures like a pixelated image that bears some resemblance to reality and yet remains indistinct.

Missionaries have always taught that the best evangelists will be people from the receiving culture. They are the ones who wear cultural glasses with the right prescription that enables them to best know their own people and speak to them in a way they understand.

While it is important for anthropologists and businessmen to understand culture in order to do their work, it is even more important for those whose aim it is to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ so that people can come to have a living relationship with him. The Bible is clear that the gospel often comes across as foolishness or a stumbling block (1 Cor 1:23). This is true whether we are thinking about first-century Gentiles and Jews or people of the present age. When it comes to people responding appropriately to the gospel, this barrier is formidable enough that we do our utmost not to put anything else in people's way. The story that there is one true God who created the heavens and the earth, who at a certain point in history became a man, was killed as a criminal on a cross, was buried for three days, and then rose from the dead so that everyone who believes in him can be reconciled to God and receive eternal life is a high enough hurdle that many find it strange if not repulsive. Hearers do not need messengers who add to the offense. Rather, they need messengers who know the gospel and know how to communicate it appropriately in the given cultural setting.

It is for this reason that missionaries have always taught that the best evangelists will be people from the receiving culture. They are the ones who wear cultural glasses with the right prescription that enables them to best know their own people and speak to them in a way they understand. But what about the rest of us? How do we as cross-cultural workers get to know the people and the cultures that we serve? How do we proclaim the gospel in a way that will make sense to their cultures? Is there one gospel presentation that is suitable for all? Or do we need to change the content or presentation of the gospel depending upon the culture we are engaging?

Recently, a flood of books focusing on the topic of honor and shame has been published to help us consider whether our cultural glasses obscure our understanding of the people with whom we work and to encourage us to find new ways of communicating the gospel that will make more sense to our hearers. Though the concepts are found in a wider number of books, our focus is on a few that have impacted missiological discussion in recent years, ranging from a simple introduction of the concepts to a doctoral dissertation that applies them to one specific ethnic group. They are: Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, and Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face*.[3]

The concept that unites all of these books is that "Most of the world thinks and lives according to the cultural values of honor and shame. … For this reason, we must use an 'honor-shame missiology'—a biblically rooted approach to Christian ministry among the nations that proclaims and mediates God's honor for the shamed."[4] As these authors see it, the cultural glasses that missionaries need to wear should be ground according to an "honor-shame" prescription and the gospel that we preach should resonate with honor-shame concepts.[5] In this paper, I will briefly reflect on this approach, then attempt to evaluate their suggestions for communicating the gospel to see whether their prescription is correct or whether it needs a second opinion.

Overall reflections

One of the most helpful aspects of the approach is its insistence that missionaries from one culture must take the receiving culture seriously. While this idea in no way departs from historical mission literature or practice (though at times it is explained as though it is a revolutionary approach), it reinforces a concept that is essential for proper cross-cultural communication in general and of the gospel in particular. Anyone working in mission who has not grasped the concept that people from other cultures may not relate to reality the way people do in one's home country needs to sit up and pay attention. Whether or not the authors are correct that most people in the world are from "honor-shame cultures", it is undeniable that if we are to impact the world with the gospel we must relate to people in a way that they understand, using terms and concepts that they understand. And the responsibility to make sure our listeners understand the gospel falls upon us. If they understand life in honor-shame terms, we should do our best to explain the gospel and Christian truth in this way.

These books are also helpful in the way they call our attention to people who, for whatever reasons, live with deep-seated shame. Shame is often thought to be the result of societal or family pressures on a person who is not acting or performing in line with expectations. But as Priest says, "While it is true that shame arises out of, and is in large part caused by, the disapproval of significant others, the source of the shame is our own thoughts about our selves. … What elicits shame is the acceptance of the negative evaluation of others as the correct one."[6] Shame exerts such pressure that many feel they are being squeezed in a vice. Who will relieve the pressure? Who will set them free to operate as honorable members of their families and cultures? Many of the lessons found in these books will prepare us to identify such people and societies. Some of the lessons will help us develop skills necessary to address these needs and show our listeners how Jesus addresses their condition and provides a way to escape shame, a way to gain honor.

Another positive is that the authors are aware that their approach "is not a magical key to unlock the door of ministry success."[7] However, as their acknowledgement that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to gospel proclamation and church ministry plays a minor role in sustained argumentation promoting honor-shame ministry, it is hoped that readers will not miss this brief though important admission. The fact that some who have discovered the honor-shame gospel have reported that it has transformed their approach to ministry has triggered others to warn against the conclusion that any "silver bullet" exists

that can greatly increase one's success in leading people to Christ.

The authors are similarly aware that the terminology they use is somewhat inexact due to the diverse nature of humankind and cultures.[8] As Georges says, "Although guilt, shame, and fear are three distinct cultural outlooks, no culture can be completely characterized by only one. These three dynamics interplay and overlap in all societies."[9] I believe that this is perhaps the most important statement in the whole of Georges's little book. Sadly, the concept isn't developed as it deserves and many readers will miss it, as instead of demonstrating that every individual and every culture exhibits a combination of all of these characteristics (and more) and should be addressed in terms that are needed at a given time in their lives, the major emphasis of the book is on honor-shame to the exclusion of the other characteristics.

Concerns about an honor-shame approach to the gospel

One of the major problems I find with this approach has to do with definition. Just what are guilt and shame and how do they relate to each other? Are these really the main cultural distinctives that drive people in their responses? In some cases, guilt and shame are described as if they are polar opposites so that someone can be placed along a guilt-shame continuum as if the more shame a person felt, the less guilt he would feel. For example, Duane Elmer provides a graphic illustrating this (Fig. 1) and asks his readers to place themselves, their parents, church, and others on the continuum.[10]

unaware of it). I don't have to feel one or the other or some combination of both. Similarly, I could be so hardened in my heart (whether by deep-rooted evil or abject destitution) that I feel neither guilt nor shame even though I did something that was universally recognized as being wrong. Erecting a strict dichotomy between guilt and shame fails to be true to logic or experience.

Shame, Guilt, Fear Triangle[12]

A more multifaceted approach can be found in the trichotomy between guilt, shame, and fear described in *The 3D Gospel* (see Fig. 2). Adding *fear* to the motivations for action gives a broader perspective on human reactions to stimuli and recognizes that people's emotional responses to their own and other's actions usually blend several motivations. Even so, the book admits that this illustration "simplifies complexities into categories for the sake of clarity" as every culture possesses aspects of each of these three types.[13] In reality, every culture and every person is driven by a far greater number of motivating factors for responding to the world, to their own actions, and their own feeling about themselves. In addition to shame, fear, and guilt, one could be motivated to action due to the physical needs of air, food, water, and warmth. One could also be moved by other emotions such as love, hatred, anger, annoyance, grief, depression, tiredness, and many more. Any of these could be the prime reason for a person from any culture to act in a certain way at a particular time. But in most cases a person's responses will likely come from a combination of needs, drives, and emotions that are constantly shifting. Though the shame-guilt-fear triangle is an improvement over a binary distinction between guilt and shame, life motivations

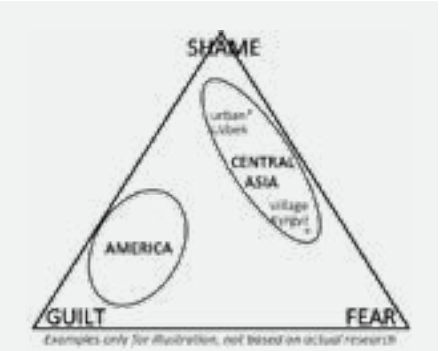


Fig. 2 Shame, Guilt, Fear Triangle

cannot be boiled down to two or three and if it is acknowledged that all humans exhibit honor-shame, guilt-innocence, and fear-power characteristics (to which I believe should be added many more), it may be that all the props are knocked out from under the suggestion that all human cultures can be divided into two or three categories as well as the explanation of which cultures exhibit which general characteristics. This is acknowledged by Ian Buruma in the "Foreword" of a recent edition of Ruth Benedict's, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*—the book that is regularly regarded as creating the categories of shame culture and guilt culture.[14] "One might disagree … with the premise of classical cultural anthropology … that such a thing as 'national character' exists. It is not a fashionable notion these days. Pseudoscientific theories of race and nation have tainted any idea of 'essentializing' collective characteristics. Theorists now prefer to stress 'hybridity' or the multicultural aspects of nations rather than think in terms of monocultural identities."[15] Stephen Pattison takes this further when he says that "Benedict's work has been extensively criticized, partly because of its basic understanding and definition of shame, and particularly because it is not easy to identify cultures that can be categorized exclusively as

Fig. 1 Guilt/shame continuum

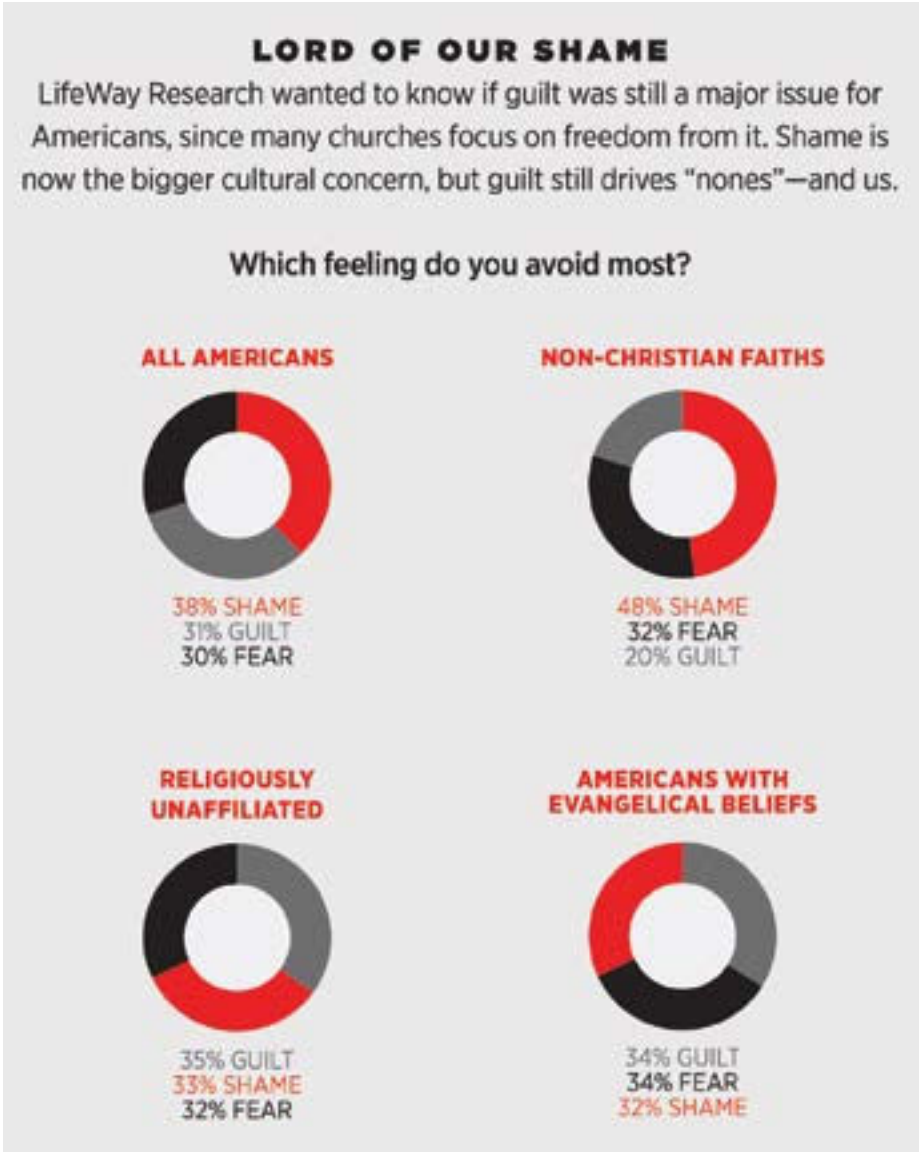


What is lost in this graphic is that people don't fall somewhere between feelings of guilt *or* shame. Rather, they often feel both at the same time.[11] I can feel high (or low) guilt *and* high (or low) shame simultaneously. I can feel guilty that I broke the law by stealing something and ashamed that I have let my family down by my actions (even if they are

are not so simply explained as is done by drawing an oval somewhere on the inside of a triangle. The approach founders in its simplistic understanding of culture and its reduction of major human motivations to two or three.

This leads to another concern that I have. If basic human motivations

shame or guilt cultures…. Nonetheless, her fundamental distinction between shame and guilt culture has continued to generate interest and research."[16] And even though many consider it a *passé* approach, it is the continuing interest in Benedict's anthropological notion that is on display in these books.



One example will highlight the difficulty of classifying cultures in this way. A poll conducted by LifeWay Research from 27 September to 1 October 2016 asked 1,000 Americans: "Which of these feelings do you seek to avoid the most? Shame Guilt Fear." While America is regularly classified as a guilt culture, contrary to what we might expect, the overall response was Shame – 38%; Guilt – 31%; Fear – 30%.[17] A graphic from *Christianity Today* about the research indicates that when compared to all Americans and religious and non-religious groups, evangelicals were about the most "balanced" when it comes to their avoidance of particular feelings.[18] Would anyone categorize America as a shame-guilt-fear culture? Yet this is apparently what the research reveals.

This recent research aside, the books under review here maintain a general understanding that honor-shame cultures are mainly found in Africa, South America, Asia, and the Middle East. It is also accepted that many of the people who live in these areas adhere to the major non-Christian religions.[19] The authors rightly seek ways to communicate the gospel with people from these backgrounds in a manner that they can understand. By focusing on aspects of shame that burden them and honor that they desire, one may be able to show how Christ can set them free and make them acceptable. Even so, it is not readily apparent why the need for an honor-shame gospel is emphasized so much more than a gospel that speaks to the peoples' religious background. While it is certain that religion and culture can be tightly intertwined, it has long been recognized that the adherents to the historic great religions are frequently more resistant to the gospel than people in nearby cultures who do not follow those religions. For instance, a comparison between the followers of the great religions and animistic people living in the same parts of the world show that animists have turned to Christ in far greater numbers.[20] This has happened without animists being given a specifically honor-shame (or power-fear) gospel. Could it be that religion could be as large as or a greater factor than culture in one's receptiveness to the gospel?

This may be illustrated by the phenomenal church growth in Africa and Latin America during the past century.[21] Throughout much of this period, little was said about the need of an honor-shame gospel. Even so, the demographic changes in the Christian world were astounding. According to Philip Jenkins, the transformation has been so thorough that "If we want to visualize a 'typical' contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*."[22] "Southern Christendom" was clearly exploding in numbers before anyone was articulating the need to preach an honor-shame gospel. Whether it would have advanced at a faster rate with a different gospel is impossible to assess. Even so, this growth among supposedly honor-shame people raises questions about the need for a change in our gospel presentation.

Much more could be said to evaluate different aspects of the methods proposed in these books. We must, however, move on to consider what an honor-shame gospel might look like and whether the glasses needed to see it might need to be reground.

The honor-shame gospel

Examining the gospel message promoted by these books is of supreme importance. This is not because there is any reason to think that they promote a gospel that Paul would consider "another gospel" and that those who preach it should be accursed (Gal 1:9). Rather, it is to examine whether their explanation about how to bring the gospel to and disciple people from different cultures does what they say it does. We have already noted that the sharp focus this approach places on honor and shame cultures can be simplistic and reductionistic. Even so, it correctly reminds us that "Making disciples … involves more than just repacking evangelistic presentations. The channels through which we proclaim the gospel must also be adapted to the cultural context."[23] Whenever we share the gospel in another culture, we need to remember that just because a particular tool is popular or has (in some sense) proven successful in one country or culture (or time) does not mean that it will be the right method to

use everywhere. At the same time, we should acknowledge that no one method of evangelism will be universally effective when trying to reach people within the culture in which it was devised. Some people's hearts will be unreceptive no matter what approach we use, and unless the Holy Spirit enlightens their spiritual eyes they will never see the truth.

It is clear that the way we communicate the gospel matters. As Georges believes Western missionaries are frequently guilty of sharing the gospel in a way that emphasizes guilt, he reminds his readers that "For cross-cultural workers, a truncated gospel hinders spirituality, theology, relationships, and ministry."[24] One cannot agree more. But it must be added that this is equally true of one who only preaches a guilt-innocence gospel and one who only preaches a shame-honor gospel. The gospel is much broader than any particular approach. When it comes to form of presentation, Georges and Baker find that "Many Christians … know of no other option than to continue repeating the guilt-oriented explanation of the gospel."[25] I would agree that anyone who can only preach such a gospel needs to learn to communicate more of its wholeness and could learn a lot from the honor-shame explanation as it can help them hone their skills for sharing God's truth with a wider group of people and in a more complete manner.

Even so, there is a sense in which every time we share the gospel our content is necessarily truncated. This is because it is not possible to preach the "whole gospel" in one presentation as it includes what Jesus calls "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20) and what Paul refers to as "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).[26] It is clear that few people respond positively to the gospel the first time they hear it. And even if they "accept" the message, it will take them some time before they really understand what it is all about. I will never forget hearing Robert Erion—the former OMF Field Director of Thailand and later an International Director—explain that many Thai people who "accept Jesus" and submit to baptism will spend several years attending church before they come to realize, "Oh, that's what it's all about." A similar reality was disclosed when my wife asked a group of missionary ladies how long it took them from the first time they heard the gospel until they believed. Most of them took many years even though they had grown up in Christian families and in cultures where there were plenty of churches. How can we expect that one gospel presentation, of whatever form we use, will be enough for people who have never heard of Jesus before and who live in societies where little Christian witness is available?

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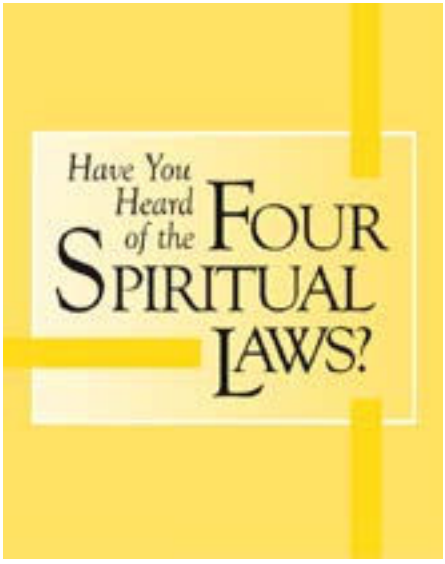
The good news of Jesus Christ needs to be explained over and over in a variety of ways to people who have different needs and interests and attention spans. This is illustrated by Andy Smith's little book *Meaningful Evangelism* that introduces nine different ways to share the gospel with people with differing needs.[27] I call his approach the 9D gospel as it recognizes the need to share the good news with people who long for life, have lost their dignity, treasure intellect, value justice, pursue legalism, wrestle with pain, seek power, love harmonious relationships, or are in touch with the spirit world. As is clear from a paper he published in this journal, he would probably add to this list the need to share the gospel with people who seek blessing.[28] And while we can learn important lessons from an honor-shame approach, we shouldn't stop there because important lessons can be learned from many other approaches.[29]



This introduces one of my major concerns with the honor-shame gospel. In spite of the frequent acknowledgements that all cultures contain aspects of honor-shame, guilt-innocence, and fear-power, the window is barely opened for anything beyond an honor-shame presentation. As Georges and Baker say, "People very well may benefit from an articulation of the gospel in terms of guilt and innocence, but for many people, that does not reach to the deepest lostness and alienation they experience." And in spite of saying that "Proclaiming biblical salvation in honor-shame terms is not over or against other gospel explanations but contributes to a fuller explanation of God's multifaceted saving work,"[30] the presentation comes across much more as a choice of this-or-that than a both-and, much less an all-of-the-above. This is particularly seen in the persistent complaint that Western approaches to the gospel focus exclusively on guilt. In many ways, this comes across as a theological and missiological strawman that is easy to knock down even though it may not represent reality and is, in many cases, far from it.

Let me give an example of what I mean. One of the most common "Western" gospel presentations is "The Four Spiritual Laws," devised by Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, now Cru.[31] While many have pointed out flaws in the Four Laws, it is difficult to fault it for being a *wholly* guilt-innocence presentation.[32] While sin features strongly, guilt never raises its head, and forgiveness is only mentioned in one prayer and as one of the things that happens when a person receives Christ.[33] The closest I can find to a focus on guilt in the Four Laws is in the part that says, "man is continually trying to reach God and the abundant

life through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion—but he inevitably fails."[34] Actually, depending on what criteria one is looking for, it could reasonably be argued that the presentation is honor-centered as it expresses the desire that people be restored to relationship with God. As the first point proclaims: "God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life." The other laws follow on to explain that since sin separates people from God so that they can't experience the wonderful plan he has for them, God provides a way for them to experience his love through Jesus Christ. When someone receives Jesus as Savior and Lord they can experience God's love and plan for their life. As it is likely that a high percentage of missionaries from the United States and other countries where Campus Crusade/Cru has worked for the past six decades have learned and used this tool, it is not convincing to hear that all they know is a guilt-innocence gospel or operate out of "a strictly legal framework."[35]

A very similar assessment could be made of another popular evangelistic tool commonly used by Western Christians—"The Romans Road to Salvation." This method uses a number of verses from Romans to guide people through a gospel message. Exactly which verses are used vary according to the version of the approach used.[36] If the Romans Road can be faulted for being a guilt-innocence approach, it is only in a form that uses verses that speak of justification for believers and condemnation for sinners. This, however, is not an essential part of the presentation (though arguably an essential part of the gospel) which often is completed with themes that could be associated with honor from Rom 8:1 and 6:3 that say that there is no condemnation for those in Christ and that eternal life is God's free gift.

The point here is not to say that missionaries should use either of these approaches but simply to indicate that the common refrain that Western Christians only know a guilt-innocence gospel is overplayed. When two of the most commonly used gospel tools today place no particular focus on guilt, the argument that this is all Western missionaries know vanishes in a puff of smoke. The same is true when one considers the importance of the role played by the theological concepts of adoption, covenant, the bride of Christ, and the family of God in the Western church. While those who cannot get off the topic of guilt when they share the gospel should seek relief from their tunnel vision, it may not be a malady suffered by the majority of theological-seminary or Bible-college trained missionaries. The same is true about the follow-up argument that Western missionaries need to learn an honor-shame gospel. Many are already aware that the gospel must be communicated in different ways with different people at different times. What is needed is for every gospel messenger to understand the essence of the good news and the language and culture of the people they are interacting with so that they will be able to communicate the message as clearly as possible so that their hearers actually understand what is said and how it relates to them.

The good news of Jesus Christ needs to be explained over and over in a variety of ways to people who have different needs and interests and attention spans.

Some of the works discussed here explain the gospel in terms of "status reversal and group incorporation."[37] According to Mischke, "Honor-status reversal is when a person, family, or people have whatever degree of esteem, respect, privilege, power, or authority before a community turned the other way around."[38] It is so important for him that his favorite gospel approach is to tell the story of the Prodigal Son. There is no doubt that reversal of fortune is an important biblical and theological theme. It is clearly one of the things that happen when a person believes in Jesus. However, it does not follow that "the theological reality of status reversal must eventually be shaped into a reproducible evangelistic method."[39] If this were so, every theological benefit that we receive in Christ should become part of our evangelistic method, else we would need a clear means of discerning which benefits should and which shouldn't be included.

Could we, should we, devise "a reproducible evangelistic method" that included all the theological concepts associated with salvation? If so, we would have to say something about grace, mercy, forgiveness, sin, judgment, release from judgment, righteousness, holiness, redemption, justification, sanctification, glorification, reconciliation, union (with God and the church), and much more. Each of the biblical themes named here is arguably more important than status reversal and should, therefore, have a higher claim to be included in a gospel presentation. Practically, there is no way we could address all of these themes every time we shared the good news of Jesus. This is one of the reasons why I earlier said that every gospel presentation is by necessity truncated. The gospel is so expansive that there is just too much to cover. And for this reason we need to return to the various themes over and over again, viewing them from many different angles to help our listeners understand both the broad contours of God's plan of salvation and the way it impacts them personally and in their familial, cultural, and religious contexts.

It is good to show how the Bible highlights a reversal of status or reversal of fortune in someone's life when they come into contact with Jesus. When we respond to the gospel, we move from a position of shame to one of honor. The gospel takes us from being "not a people" and unites us with others as the people of God. This is a wonderful reality both theologically and practically. Even so, it shouldn't be our only message as it isn't the Bible's only message. And though the greatest honor and deepest sense of belonging comes when a person accepts the gospel of Jesus Christ, in many cases it also causes him to lose status and group belonging in his original culture. Georges recognizes this as he writes: "In collectivistic cultures, conversion to Christianity may shame one's biological family and neighboring community. Many unreached peoples do not reject Christianity for theological reasons but because of social and cultural forces that disgrace one's family."[40] In other words, a reversal of status in a positive direction may entail a reversal of status in a negative direction. We should not, however, think that people

reject the Christian message simply because of social and/or cultural forces. While personal, cultural, religious, and other factors may be involved, rejection of God's offer of reconciliation through Jesus Christ is fundamentally a theological issue as it impacts their thinking about and relationship with God.

Even so, the encouragement to seek group conversions is well placed no matter what culture one is dealing with.[41] Sharing Bible stories, more in-depth studies, or sermons with whole families or other groups of people are excellent practices that help maintain group solidarity. One could attempt to meet with family or village elders to explain what it might mean for someone to become a follower of Jesus. The importance of how conversion is viewed in the eyes of the larger population was impressed upon me when visiting rural farmers in Thailand who, during an evangelistic visit, asked what was to them a vital question: "If we become Christians, what will happen to us after we die?" This was not an invitation to discuss eschatology and the resurrection life. Rather, it was a desire to understand the very down-to-earth practicality of what would happen to their fleshly remains after death. Would their bodies be respected in the sight of the community or not? To this couple, communal belonging was important for issues pertaining to life and the end of one's life. Understanding culture well enough to grasp the intent of questions like this makes a huge difference when it comes to providing an answer that will make sense to the questioner and lead them along the path to salvation.

Conclusion

So, do cultural distinctions require a change in the content of our gospel message? Do we need a 3D or 9D (or 10D?) gospel? Well yes, and no. We cannot be so simplistic in our preaching of the good news of Jesus that we adopt a one-size-fits-all approach and only use one tool at the expense of all others. As we face a world in need, the honor-shame approach should be seen as adding another tool to our box rather than replacing all the tools we had. Let me return to my eye glasses metaphor. When I first started wearing reading glasses, I found that they helped clarify things that were very close to me so that I could read and thread needles and do other close-up things. However, when I looked at objects that were farther away through the glasses they became dreadfully distorted. I had to develop the habit of looking through the glasses for things that are near and looking over the glasses for things that are far. And as my reading glasses both helped and hindered my sight, the same can be said for wearing honor-shame lenses. They bring some things into a wonderful new focus and, at the same time, cause other things to go blurry. Perhaps what we need is variable-focus cultural lenses that allow us to see what is close, what is far, and what is in between through one piece of glass. But as people, like myself, who wear variable-focus lenses can testify, they require continual minor adjustments so that one can focus on the desired object. And since individuals and societies we encounter have different needs at different times, perhaps we need to make continual minor adjustments as we share the good news of Jesus so that it will be true to God's word and understandable to our listeners. **MRT**

We cannot be so simplistic in our preaching of the good news of Jesus that we adopt a one-size-fits-all approach and only use one tool at the expense of all others.

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[1] Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 414–15.

[2] While it is true that the only people who can really understand a culture are those who are brought up in it, it can also be argued that "Our *Kulturbrille* allow us to make sense of the culture we inhabit, but these same glasses can blind us to things outsiders pick up immediately." Martin Lindström, *Small Data: The Tiny Clues that Uncover Huge Trends* (New York: St. Martin's, 2016), 11. Benedict similarly states, "Japanese who write about Japan passes over really crucial things which are as familiar to him and as invisible as the air he breathes. So do Americans when they write about America." Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), 7.

[3] Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*, revised (n.p.: Time, 2016), Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in our Multicultural World* (Scottsdale, AZ: Mission ONE, 2015), and Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame*, Evangelical Missiological Society Dissertation Series (Pasadena: WCIU, 2012). *The 3D Gospel* is the most basic presentation of this theme. Most of its contents is repeated in *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*. Since *Saving God's Face* is Wu's PhD dissertation, it covers many issues at a much deeper level but leaves others unexplored. Readers may also wish to consult Jackson Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization* (Pasadena, William Carey, 2015) and *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul's Message and Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019).

[4] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 13.

[5] So Jackson Wu says that the early chapters of his book "attempt to help the reader see the world through a distinct pair of 'cultural' glasses. Reading Scripture with a new cultural lens can be humbling, confirming, and correcting." *Saving God's Face*, xii. The need for proper lenses resounds throughout his book.

[6] Robert J. Priest, "Shame," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker and Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 870–1.

[7] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 30; cf. 164; Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 70.

[8] Thus Georges and Baker write that terms such as "*Western, honor-shame cultures* and *Majority World* … along with others such as *individualistic* and *collectivistic*, or *shame-based* and *guilt-based*, are rather imprecise and broad, but they are convenient and widespread terms that help clarify complex realities." Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 29. Italics original.

[9] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 15. Werner Mischke similarly acknowledges that his examination of guilt-based and shame-based cultures are "broad generalizations" *and* that "All cultures, all societies are affected by shame and guilt, as well as fear." Mischke, *The Global Gospel,* 41. He further adds "that communicating the gospel of Christ in such a way that the message includes both the removal of our guilt—and the covering of our shame—comprises a more 'global' gospel." *The Global Gospel*, 65. Italics original. See also, Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 35. Wu admits that "Since shame is highly related to morality, it is not entirely accurate to sharply distinguish guilt and shame, particularly in human experience." *Saving God's Face*, 165.

The different understandings that scholars have of the interplay between guilt and shame are astounding. For instance, one psychologist distinguishes them in this way: "Although many people use these two words interchangeably, from a psychological perspective, they actually refer to different experiences. Guilt and shame sometimes go hand in hand; the same action may give rise to feelings of both shame and guilt, where the former reflects how we feel about ourselves and the latter involves an awareness that our actions have injured someone else. In other words, shame relates to self, guilt to others." Joseph Burgo, "The Difference between Guilt and Shame," *Psychology Today*, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shame/201305/the-difference-between-guilt-and-shame (accessed 17 February 2020). Note how this contrasts greatly with the view of a professor of theology and apologetics at an evangelical university. "Though Guilt and Shame are twins, born in the garden, only moments apart, they aren't identical. Guilt is usually tied to an event: I

did something bad. Shame is tied to a person: I *am* bad. Guilt is the wound. Shame is the scar. Guilt is isolated to the individual. Shame is contagious." Dan DeWitt, "The Difference between Guilt and Shame," The Gospel Coalition, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/difference-between-guilt-shame/ (accessed 17 February 2020).

[10] Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping out and Fitting in Around the World* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 180. It should be noted that Elmer begins his chapter, "Guilt and Shame," by saying: "In my attempt to clarify and simplify, I run a danger of becoming simplistic and losing accuracy. Guilt and shame are two of the more difficult concepts to explain without getting mired in unnecessary detail." *Cross-Cultural Connections*, 171.

[11] This is recognized by Wu, *Saving God's Face*, 149.

[12] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 16. The note accompanying this diagram that it is "only for illustration, not based on actual research" should alert the reader that they should not read too much into it. Timothy Tennent fluctuates between describing the guilt-shame dichotomy and the guilt-shame-fear trichotomy. Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 77–101.

[13] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 16. As the attempt to provide clarity distracts readers from the reality that life and culture are unfathomably complex, I'm afraid this attempt remains unsuccessful.

[14] Though she does propose these categories, Benedict recognizes that the Japanese are a very complex people who express both shame and guilt characteristics. "They are terribly concerned about what other people will think of their behavior, and they are also overcome by guilt when other people know nothing of their misstep." Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 2–3.

[15] Ian Buruma, "Foreword to the Mariner Books Edition," in Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Mariner, 2005), ix. Further down the page he reports, "I have had my doubts about cultural interpretations of political affairs and expressed skepticism in the past about the distinction, made famous by Ruth Benedict, between shame cultures and guilt cultures. The risk of cultural analysis is that it assumes a world that is both too static and too uniform." See also Young Gweon You, who writes that "it is dangerous to define one culture as shame-based and another as guilt-based, for we may see both characteristics in one culture. It is a matter of which is more dominant, and shame and guilt must not be defined in a hierarchical way." You, "Shame and Guilt Mechanisms in East Asian Culture," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 57.

[16] Stephen Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 54. For another important critique of Benedict, see Marilyn Ivy, "Benedict's Shame," *Cabinet* 31 (Fall 2008), http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/31/ivy.php (accessed 6 February 2020). For a Christian counsellor's response, see David W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 119–26 and his broader discussion of anxiety, shame, and guilt, 111–43.

[17] Bob Smietana, "Americans Want to Avoid Shame, Make their Loved ones Proud," LifeWay Research (23 May 2017), https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/05/23/americans-want-to-avoid-shame-make-their-loved-ones-proud/ (accessed 6 February 2020).

A reviewer of my paper perceptively questioned whether the American public who responded to this survey were using the same definitions of guilt, shame, and fear as the researchers. More generally, the same question should be leveled at all who treat the English word "shame" as though it is equivalent to the Chinese "羞耻" the biblical terms "בּשֶׁת" or "αἰσχύνη" or similar terms found in other modern or ancient languages. (Similarly for "guilt", "fear", and other words.) Though there may be some degree of semantic overlap between the terms, we cannot assume that modern or ancient words occurring in different languages are equivalent in meaning. Even in one language a broad semantic range may exist for one term.

[18] "Lord of our Shame," *Christianity Today* (July/August 2017): 16.

[19] Though Georges and Baker say that these are "Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism," it is probably better to consider Taoism (or *daojiao*) and Buddhism, as practiced by many, to be aspects of Chinese folk religion. For an introduction to "Chinese Popular Religion," see Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 388–422.

[20] It might be argued that many animists have turned to Christ because theirs is a fear-power culture rather than a shame-honor culture. Arguments to this effect must take into account the reality that many people who follow the great religions are basically animists at heart and in practice.

[21] See Scott W. Sunquist's excellent study of the growth of the church in the twentieth century: *The Unexpected Christian Century: The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900–2000* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

[22] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 2.

[23] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 60. It is curious that not long before making this remark, Georges essentially repackaged "The Four Spiritual Laws" for three different cultures (56–7).

[24] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 13.

[25] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 163. The idea is stated in a more nuanced fashion by Jackson Wu who writes: "Many who are more accustomed to a law-based presentation of salvation could benefit from hearing a message about the restoration of God's glory and the removal of human shame." *Saving God's Face*, 9.

[26] Perhaps we should distinguish between big-G and little-g senses of the gospel. Big-G gospel could be seen as the good news of Jesus Christ that moves people from the "kingdom of darkness" to the "kingdom of light" so that they become members of God's family and kingdom. The little-g gospel is the more inclusive good news of Jesus Christ that explains how we should live as members of God's kingdom, explains the wideness of God's love, grace, and so much more, and that we learn through life-long discipleship. The big-G gospel answers the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The little-g gospel answers the question, "How then shall I live?"

[27] Andy Smith, *Meaningful Evangelism: Choosing Words that Connect* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2011).

[28] Andy Smith, "Presenting the Good News as a Blessing," *Mission Round Table* 14, no. 2 (May–August 2019): 33–9, https://https://omf.org/blog/2019/08/19/presenting-the-good-news-as-a-blessing-a-case-study-among-filipino-folk-catholics/ (accessed 6 February 2020).

[29] For an examination of ways to communicate the gospel with people who hold to a number of different worldviews, see David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 193–285. Among a number of motivations for accepting the gospel that spring from various cultural patterns, Hesselgrave mentions guilt and shame cultures as (briefly) described by Benedict, though he instantly shows that her explanations have been rejected and replaced by others. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 591–2.

[30] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 163.

[31] Bill Bright, "The Four Spiritual Laws," https://crustore.org/downloads/4laws.pdf (accessed 6 February 2020).

[32] Contrary to Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 56–7, Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, 57–9, and Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 82. Wu, in *Saving God's Face*, acknowledges that the use of "laws" in "The Four Spiritual Laws" pertain more to natural laws than legal laws. Even so, he sees it and other common tools as reiterating "the human problem in traditional, Western legal terms, 'Everyone is guilty before God.'" *Saving God's Face*, 19–20. Quote from 20.

Sam Wunderli unites law and shame so that the purported shame cultures are driven by law. As he sees it, in a proper biblical worldview, "The doctrine of creation, which opposes human concepts of an eternal regulating law, such as *Dharma* or *Tao*, occurs as the most basic issue. Not a law, but a personal God is in charge of the universe. We are answerable to Him." Wunderli, "The Significance of Shame and Guilt-Oriented Consciences for Cross-Cultural Ministry" (MA thesis, Columbia Biblical Seminary, 1990), 185.

[33] See Bill Bright, "Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws" (Peachtree City, GA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 2007), 10, 13. The minor place of forgiveness in the Four Laws along with the placement of Jesus upon the throne of one's life calls into question Mischke's critique that says the "Content entirely based on 'laws' or 'principles' from Scripture" and that there is "No mention of a King or 'gospel of the kingdom'." *The Global Gospel*, 58. Mischke apparently fails to grasp the close connection between "legal" and "regal". Some of the other things that Mischke says are left out of the Four Laws could not be expected to be found in a tool that is this simple and are similarly missing from his own telling of the story of the Prodigal Son. *The Global Gospel*, 221–2.

[34] Bright, "The Four Spiritual Laws," 5.

[35] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 163.

[36] The verses often include Rom 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9–10; and 10:13. Other verses that could be included are Rom 3:10; 5:1, 12; 6:3; 8:1, 38–39, and undoubtedly others. They are arranged by topic for presentation.

[37] See Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 167–77. Cf. Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, 181–204. This is related to the theme that Bible scholars refer to as "reversal of fortune." A biblical example that shows how fortune can be reversed from good to bad and bad to good is Joseph's reversal from favored son to slave, from head steward of a house to prisoner, from prisoner to high-ranking official. Another example is the reverse of expectations between Haman and Mordechai and the Jews in Esther.

[38] Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, 181.

[39] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 171.

[40] Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, 70. Cf. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 186.

[41] Group conversions, mass conversions, or people movements have always been looked on with a measure of suspicion by many and triumph by others. Charles Peterson, who ministered to the Lisu in China from 1931 and was present when many from that tribe turned to Christ *en masse*, took a realistic view, knowing full well that such movements produced both tares and wheat. As he wrote: "Mass movements always bring a certain amount of anxiety, because many who profess to be 'followers of God' do not know what it is to have a living faith in the Lord." Even so, he was happy to work with those who had made professions and help them understand what the faith actually entails. Charles B. Peterson, "Mass Movements among the Lisu," *China's Millions*, British ed. (November 1950), 122.

William Fleming—"Gospel Shark": The First CIM Martyr

Sylvia Yuan



Sylvia is a researcher and mobiliser with OMF New Zealand. Her PhD research has focused on Kiwi missionaries in China and the CIM/OMF transition from China to East Asia. She has run a history column in *ChurchChina* since 2011. This article is an abridged version of the Chinese article that was published in *ChurchChina* in December 2019, https://www.churchchina.org/archives/191211.html.

Introduction

Throughout the history of the church in China, missionaries, as symbols of the Western world, frequently suffered as scapegoats as a result of different powers pursuing competing agendas. What was true for others was true for Hudson Taylor who, from the time he landed in Shanghai on 1 March 1854, had to face both natural disasters and perils at the hands of man. From the beginning, danger was one of the key motifs found in the records of missionaries of the China Inland Mission. The frequent itinerant evangelistic trips taken by Taylor and his colleagues to the inland parts of China, where they ate and slept among grassroots people in remote and backward places, increased the risk factors they faced far beyond their counterparts who remained in the Treaty Ports. Even so, from the sailing of the Lammermuir party the mission had experienced no deaths from violence and it could truly be said that "the losses from the ordinary causes have been considerably below the usual average."[1] It was not until 1898 that the first member of the Mission met with violent death. Few studies of CIM's first martyr have been made. In part, this is because it was soon overshadowed by the tragedy of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, and in part, it is because most mission historians relied on the British edition of *China's Millions* which contained only a sketchy record of this Australian member. In order to bring this historical incident into a more comprehensive light, this study has made use of British, Australian, and Chinese sources.[2]

William S. Fleming (明鑒光) —"Gospel Shark"[3]

William Small Fleming was born on 25 September 1867, a native of Broughty Ferry, Scotland. At the age of 17, he started working as a sailor. About five or six years later, he settled in Australia. According to the "In Memoriam" notice of *Our Herald* (YMCA's organ), Willie became a "spiritual son" of the Adelaide YMCA through attending the Theatre Royal services. Though with limited education in his early days, he pursued "both mental and spiritual knowledge" through "private devotion and public fellowship." His years on sea and land gave him valuable experience in relating to his peers. Later, he and his Christian friends started Sunday open-air services amongst the workers of Happy Valley Waterworks, a work that bore some "splendid" fruit. Over the years he developed "a power of speech which, if simple and rugged, was always forcible and impressive." Once he felt the call to foreign missions, he threw himself "heart and soul" into the City Mission's outreach to the Chinese.[4]

About a year after completing his seafaring career, Fleming became one of the first five students in the Rev. W. L. Morton's Training Home, Belair Lodge. After persevering through the three years course with good progress, he was accepted by the Australasian Council of the CIM on 10 October 1894. Setting sail from Sydney on 10 January 1895 aboard the Catterthun, Fleming reported that he was "cheerfully working his own passage" to China. About forty days later he arrived in Shanghai where he was given a new name—明鑒光 (Ming Jian Guang)—and began to learn the challenging new language.

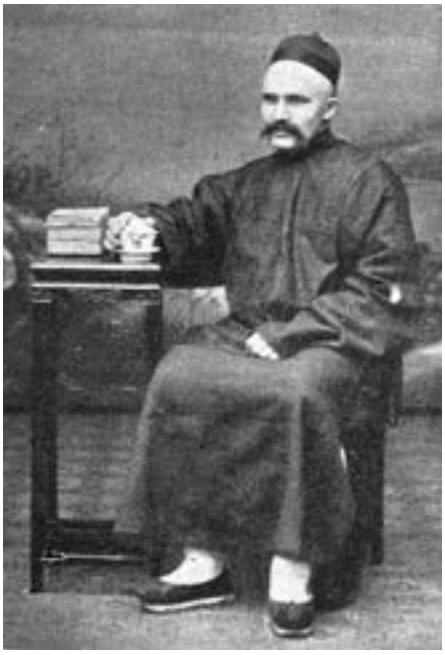
Fleming worked briefly at the West Gate of Gan-king (安慶) before being assigned to Tuh-shan (獨山) in Kwei-chau (貴州). At the end of 1896, he wrote to friends at home reporting on his first book-selling journey. On returning to Tuh-shan after spending four weeks on the road, they found their Chinese friends mourning for them because a report had been circulated that they and their coolies had been thrown in the river.[5] Though it was only a rumour, it proved strangely prophetic as Fleming and his Miao helper were to be killed beside a river two years later.

On 6 September 1898, Fleming left the capital city of the province, Kwei-yang (貴陽), for a preaching itineracy. On his way, he met H. E. Bolton's servant and learnt that Mr. Bolton (卜庸德) was unwell at Pang-hai (旁海). Fleming went immediately and found Bolton so weak that he advised his coming to the capital city at once. The mission's doctor ordered Bolton to take a couple of months' absolute rest. Thomas Windsor (文藻), the CIM missionary in charge in Kwei-yang, wrote to tell Fleming to lock up the mission station at Pang-hai as he was much needed back in the capital city.[6]

Pang-hai was a small market town about five days' journey by foot from the capital city, divided by a river that separates the Chinese who live on one side from the Miao who live on the other. At the time, work among the Miao had only just begun.

While he was there, Fleming wrote one of his last letters to a friend in Adelaide.

> 27th Sep – In looking up the date just now I was reminded that my birthday was on Sunday, and this is Tuesday. Does your birthday ever pass without your knowing it? Alas, alas! I am growing old: Thirty-one last Sunday. During the past week I hoped to do some study, but one thing after another has come in, and I have not been able to open a book. I was a fortnight on the road before I came on here. I travelled by what is called the horse-road. As a rule no travellers go that way, as the road is so hilly, and there is another track running parallel … about 30 miles off. The scenery was charming, just like bonnie Scotland. I found that Romanism is well to the front along that road. Many of the people took me for a priest, but when they knew I was not their manner towards me changed very considerably for the better.
>
> I trust you are enjoying much of the Lord's goodness in all your work for Him. "Go, labour on, spend and be spent," there is joy in doing the Father's will. I hope you are having souls for your hire. Get a hunger for souls. A man once called me a "gospel shark," because I talked to him respecting his soul. It would be a grand thing for the Church of God if all its members were "gospel sharks"! O Lord our God, lay upon thy servants the burden of souls.[7]



William S. Fleming. *China's Millions*, British ed. (January 1899): 6.

The first Miao Christian: Pan Shou-Shan (潘壽山)[8]

Pan Shou-Shan, a Black Miao (黑苗),[9] was a mason by trade. Around 1880, he and his wife moved to Kwei-Yang where they heard the gospel at the CIM station, responded to it, and were baptised by James Broumton (巴子成). Fifteen years later, Samuel R. Clarke (陳– –) engaged Pan as teacher when commencing work among Miao tribes. Together they compiled a primer and dictionary as a learning tool for the Black Miao language. Although Miao people had no written language, they had many legends in verse, which Pan had learned as a boy. He thus recited them to Clarke so that they could be recorded.

In August 1896, another CIM couple, Fred and Ellen Webb (洪– –), planned to set up a mission station among the Black Miao. They managed to rent a half of a house (which only had three walls) at the Miao settlement near the Pang-hai market. Though the Han Chinese objected to the Webbs' presence and tried to persuade them to leave, they stayed on. For his part in helping the foreigners settle in the Miao village, Pan was "cordially hated" by the Chinese. In the following year, the Webbs were compelled to leave due to ill health. At that point, Bolton took charge of the Station and started a school to teach Miao boys to learn both Chinese and Miao languages. Another Miao—Pan Si-yin (潘思印)—who had accepted the gospel became the headmaster of the school. The work of both Teacher Pan and Evangelist Pan is recorded in one of Bolton's letters.

> The people come in on Sundays for the preaching, evidently liking to hear Mr. P'an speak in Miao … In the evening Mr. P'an spoke from Matt. vii., using Dr. Wilson's pictures of the 'broad and narrow ways.' The room was crowded, and the people listened to Mr. P'an speaking in Miao, with rapt attention.
>
> During the last four days we have had a festival in the village. From early morning till 10.30 or 11 p.m. the chapel has been filled, and preaching has gone on all day. The evening service is a sight to behold; the place packed inside, and as many people outside. Both Mr. P'an and the teacher have preached splendidly, taking the meeting in turns. Every Sunday we have a room packed with men and children; it is wonderful how well they behave; these people are certainly nice to live among in many ways.[10]

When Fleming arrived at Pang-hai in October 1898, Evangelist Pan remained a faithful associate. When the two of them went on a sixteen-day journey, they found that the countryside was in a very unsettled state due to robbers pillaging multiple villages. When they returned, the villages had been burned down and the villagers had all fled—the Chinese to walled cities and the Miao to the mountains. Even Mrs. Pan returned to her family home, taking her two children with her.

The murder scene[11]

In late October, the local county magistrate Liu (劉) arrived at Pang-hai to



Pan Shou-Shan. *China's Millions*, British ed. (August 1899): 121.

inspect the aftermath of the pillaging and left quietly. Several days later, a military official came to Pang-hai and a few of his soldiers damaged the properties at the mission house. One official knocked on the door, demanding that he be admitted to search for firearms. Initially, Fleming turned down the request, but eventually let them in after taking Evangelist Pan's advice. He tried to pay a visit to the military general according to the Chinese etiquette but was rudely turned down.

After prayer and discussion, Fleming decided to return to the capital city on 4 November with the two Miao teachers. About ten miles from Pang-hai, they stopped for lunch at Tsung-ngan-chiang (重安江),[12] a market town where the main roads meet. After resting for an hour, they boarded a big ferry boat and crossed the river, continuing their journey in the following order: (1) Fleming on a mule, (2) a coolie carrying their load, (3) Teacher Pan, and (4) Evangelist Pan. After about a quarter of a mile's journey, they were overtaken by four men, who had followed them all the morning. One of them, who carried a cavalry sword, attacked the Evangelist, "despatching him quickly." When he saw the Evangelist fall, Fleming got off his mule and exclaimed, "This is not right." In response, the assassin slashed him across the shoulder. As Teacher Pan, who later recounted the story, started to run for his life, the last thing he saw was Fleming attempting to grasp the sword which had struck him. Pan then fled up a nearby hill, with two men in pursuit. Crawling through heavy undergrowth, he eventually was able to get to the village where Evangelist Pan's wife lived and informed her of what had happened. Leaving the village, he took seven days to return to the provincial capital via a circuitous route of small trails and ditches. As the surviving witness, his recounting of the details of Fleming's last days refuted attempts by the Chinese mandarins to explain things away. In the end it could be said that "The affair seems to have been a deliberately planned cold-blooded murder, connived at by the officials."[13]

The witness of the burier

When the news reached Kwei-yang, another Scotsman, James R. Adam (黨居仁), who happened to be visiting the city, travelled to Tsung-ngan-chiang with an official delegation in order to investigate the case. The results of Adam's findings painted an even more cold-blooded and hair-raising picture than the one given by Teacher Pan.[14]

From the time the village at Pang-hai was pillaged, the people of Tsung-ngan-chiang resolved to kill the foreigner. On 2 November, about thirteen people went to Pang-hai intending to take Fleming's life but were stopped by the military official stationed there so they returned home to wait. By the time Fleming set foot in Tsung-ngan-chiang he was already reckoned "a doomed man". No one in the town would sell rice to his party and the best they could do was to buy some thin noodles. While Fleming was eating, his future murderer, Hsü Wu-chin (許五斤), "was coolly sharpening the knife," which was given by a militia leader who feared that Hsü's wooden club was not strong enough to kill. At the time, the presence of the knife did not raise instant alarms as it was customary for travellers to carry knives in this region.

All of the townspeople knew what was going to happen. Some twenty of them crossed the river in the same boat as Fleming, all of whom were ready to give a hand in murdering him if needed. Some two hundred people witnessed the murder from the town side of the river. Even if any of the crowd had given Fleming a hint of the danger ahead, there might have been little chance of escape. During the protracted struggle the people ran along the riverside to obtain a full view of what was taking place on the opposite side as if it was a play. In this sense the whole village was witness to the crime and, to a great extent, culpable.

Fleming was said to be "a fine specimen of manhood", or "as strong as a horse" according to the doctor who examined him in Adelaide. The Chinese were often struck with his physique so that some of them used to ask him whether he could lift a horse. His strength allowed Fleming to hold Hsü firmly in his embrace during the fearful struggle, until Hsü pulled out a little knife which was hidden in his leggings and struck Fleming with it. A little later, Fleming got Hsü down on the ground and sat upon him when another man (T'ien Hsiong-t'ing, 田香亭) jumped in and wounded him in the abdomen with an iron spike. Fleming fell over and was brutally killed. Both his and the clothes of the Evangelist were taken and the bodies left on the public road for three days, and were only put into cheap coffins just before the arrival of the investigating delegation. The first thing that Adam did after he came on the scene was to ask that the bodies be put into proper coffins. Knowing well that the Chinese despised the Miao, Adam made a point to the officials that Evangelist Pan's coffin must also be exchanged for a good one.

Adam "found the people in Pang-hai, Chinese and Miao, on both sides of the river, very friendly, all expressing great sorrow at what had happened."[15] They seemed pleased to hear that the mission station would be retained and repented of having anything to do with the murder of Pan and Fleming. When he asked the crowd why they had killed Fleming, no one dared to answer. He told them that if they killed one, ten would come in his place; if they killed ten, a hundred would take their place. Some said, "They were all saying that the foreigner was importing arms and ammunition among the Miao, but when they searched his luggage, and ransacked his house, they found no arms, nothing but good books; he was certainly a good man and it was a mistake to kill him."[16]

At some point, Adam visited Mrs. Pan who was living in her mother's home, far up in the mountains. Understandably, she was shaken by the event, and was afraid that the murderers would find and kill the remaining members of the family. Even so, she was brave enough to say "It is God's will; so must be well."[17]

In February 1899, Adam returned to Pang-hai. The remains of Fleming and Pan were buried on 22 February in a plot



A group of Black Miao at Pang-hai. *China's Millions*, British ed. (February 1907): 28.

provided by the Chinese official. Dozens of Miao inquirers who attended the occasion lent their hands to help Adam. Over the next few days, he travelled to many Miao villages where he always received a warm welcome. He bought a piece of land for the building of a mission house and left Teacher Pan—who was now the only baptized Miao in those parts—in charge of the work.

Seeking justice?

Though not requested by the CIM, Mr. Litten, the British Consul, went from Chong-king (重慶) to Kwei-yang in January 1899 to convince the provincial governors that the culprits must be brought to justice. As this was an international affair, the outcome of the case was entirely out of the hands of mission leadership. In the end, Hsü and T'ien were executed, several civil and military officials were degraded in rank, members of the gentry were deprived of their degrees, and a lump sum was offered as an indemnity claim. Hudson Taylor wrote to CIM's General Secretary, Walter B. Sloan, in London, asking his help to decline this financial consolation.

> We hear that the Consul here had kindly thought to help Mr. Fleming's parents by claiming for them £2,500 … (Could you) use your influence with them not to accept this money as … the effect on the Chinese will be bad; in the Kucheng massacres the CMS refused all blood-money. To the Chinese it will seem as if the parents were quite satisfied to sell their son. It is a pity to encourage the idea that the lives of missionaries can be paid for.[18]

The same response would come forth from CIM leadership after the death of many missionaries and their family members at the hands of the Boxers in the following year. Indemnities cannot pay for the life of one who has laid down his life in the same way their Lord laid his down.

Colleagues' recollections

Fleming's tragic death was a big blow to the small missionary community in Kwei-yang. According to Windsor, although Fleming had only lived with them just over a year, they had much "happy profitable fellowship".[19] They looked eagerly for his return whenever he went traveling, and were delighted to hear him say upon his return, "It is so nice to be at home again," and "It is such a treat to see those children." The colleagues admired him "both as a man and a Christian."[20] Windsor went on to write:

> He lived near his Master, and made it his business to serve Him. In one thing he was conspicuously like his Master, viz., in his unselfish disposition. He was happy working for others, and it was his greatest joy to give others pleasure. He had the heart and enthusiasm of a true missionary, and loved to be at work.…
>
> We believe our brother's death will mean the opening of the door of Life to these poor 'Miao' people. It is the wrenching away of the last bolt from the door which is shutting them out from hearing of Christ the Saviour. As one brother remarked: 'Perhaps he did more missionary work in the last few seconds of his life than all the years before.'"[21]

H. E. Bolton, who had been relieved by Fleming at Pang-hai, revealed his survivor's guilt when he wrote:

> The murderers were not seeking for our brother, but for me. The Lord hid me in Kwei-yang sick, and so I am allowed to serve Him yet a little longer; but He honoured our beloved brother, and allowed him to be killed. His large heart, merry laugh, and willingness to be spent for others, won for him the affection and love of many.… his itineration map … will give you an idea of the amount of work which our beloved fellow-worker was permitted to do in the short three-and-half year of labour …[22]

The Chong-king correspondent of *The North China Daily News* wrote:

> Murders of foreigners by frenzied mobs we are, if I may say so, used to; but it is something new to us to hear of such a cold-blooded and successful attempt as this… Mr. Fleming could have saved himself, but he courageously went to the rescue of the evangelist, thereby meeting his death. Such heroism is deserving of the highest honour. Surely with such men in the Mission field the day cannot be far off when China will be persuaded to put off the old and put on the new.[23]

In June 1899, when the Secretary of the CIM Australasian Council, C. F. Whitridge, mentioned Fleming's martyrdom at the Melbourne Annual Meeting, his remarks, despite the sorrow, were full of hope that the falling of this seed into the ground would result in a great harvest.

> But just as really as, when Stephen was being stoned to death, our Lord Jesus Christ was there—the most interested spectator—waiting to receive the spirit of His first martyr, so was He present at Panghai to receive the spirit of the first C.I.M. martyr. For Mr. Fleming, so blessedly ready for the translation and yearning to see the face of the King, there can be no sorrow.… The Lord never sells the lives of His servants too cheaply. Cannot we expect that, as the result of these lives laid down, there shall spring forth an abundant harvest to the glory of God?[24]

What happened to the Miao people?[25]

Several of Fleming's colleagues and the Australian Secretary to CIM expressed their expectation that Fleming's martyrdom would result in fruit. Were their hopes fulfilled? From the perspective of 120 years of church history, our response is at best an ambivalent yes and no.

Let's look at the "no" part first. After the martyrdom of Fleming and Pan, the Black Miao showed great interest in the gospel. While many visited the Pang-hai station as inquirers, the mission struggled to send workers there. This was partially because the Boxer Rebellion (1900) made it necessary for foreign missionaries to pull out of the interior of China. In the year that rebellion began, Miao Christians and inquirers in the vicinity of Pang-hai were persecuted after being proclaimed guilty of committing another round of robbery and pillaging in a neighbouring town, Kai-li (凱里). In the aftermath of this attack, about thirty people were beheaded and several hundreds were fined and forced to recant. It was the Chinese officials' method of suppressing both Miao people and Christianity.

As in the time when Fleming was murdered, Teacher Pan was the one who bore witness of the injustice and asked Adam and Clarke to investigate the case. And even though the Provincial Governor was eventually convinced that the Chinese magistrates

and Miao headmen were responsible for a miscarriage of justice, it was quite impossible to overturn their pronouncements.

Reoccurring martyrdom and persecution caused the infant church among the Black Miao much fear. Fourteen years later, another Australian missionary couple, Maurice and Stella Hutton (胡致中), described the apathetic or even hostile reception they received at a Black Miao village: "Some of the men began to curse my men for leading us to their village. They did not want the foreigner nor his gospel, for some years earlier, they said, all those who had anything to do with the Gospel Hall were killed."[26] After another twenty-three years had passed, the Huttons could still observe the fear. "To this day many are afraid to have anything to do with the gospel for fear of the threats which officials still make of repeating this same treatment of Christians."[27]

Half of a century later, at the beginning of the "New China", there were only about a hundred baptized converts among the 500,000 Black Miao (0.02 percent).[28] Seventy years later, there are about 7,000 believers among 3,000,000 Black Miao (less than 0.5 percent).[29] The Black Miao are clearly a people in great need of the gospel and there are, at present, few Christian workers committed to their spiritual wellbeing.

Let us now look at the "Yes" side of the equation. Adam, the Scotsman who buried Fleming and Pan in 1898 and made a further investigation of the grievance in Kai-Li in 1901, had a very successful ministry among a different Miao tribe—the Big Flowery Miao (大花苗)—in the nearby Prefecture of An-shun (安顺). When Adam was translating the Bible into the Miao language, some local Miao villagers thought that he was the "Miao King" spoken of in a legend that said he would bring back the Miao language. As his work developed, many Miao people came to the Lord. Altogether, Adam had baptised 6,449 Miao converts and there were 5,590 Miao communicants at the time of his death.[30] Even the Miao in the neighbouring Province of Yunnan (雲南) came to inquire about the gospel of Jesus. To save them from travelling such a long distance, Adam wrote to Samuel Pollard (柏格理) of the United Methodist Church Mission, to introduce these Miao people to him. That was the beginning of the great ministry at Stone-Gate (石門坎, Shimenkan) of east Yunnan.[31]

In the year 1915, Windsor, Adam, and Pollard rested from their work within a period of two months. Clarke died the following year. Despite the heavy loss of these experienced workers, Miao churches continued to grow in both Yunnan and Guizhou provinces. About one century later, as much as 80 percent of the 400,000 Big Flowery Miao are Christian.[32] In comparison to the growth of the church among the Big Flowery Miao, the lack of growth among the Black Miao church around Pang-hai is even more heart-wrenching.

Hindsight and reflection

Fleming was the first CIM martyr. A reoccurring theme in accounts of his death is of the "thankful testimony" to his life lived for God and of the "the good hand of God upon us" that is known in spite of one man's death.[33] Throughout the thirty-three years up until that dreadful winter afternoon in November 1898, "there has not been a moment, day or night, when some members of the Mission have not been travelling by land, or river, or ocean; and that from the commencement of the work we have always been at the mercy of evil men, urged on by the devil, except as God has restrained them from bloodshed".[34]

Secretary Whitridge of the Australasian Council made a particular reference to the safety of single woman workers in the 1899 Annual Meeting: "Those who express themselves so strongly in opposition to women being sent to China, because of the perils to which they are exposed, should specially note how God has kept our sisters from all harm."[35] Little did anyone know that eighteen months later, fifty-eight CIM workers and twenty-one of their children would suffer violent death during the Boxer Rebellion.

The traditional and primary focus of CIM work had been among the Han Chinese—the ethnic majority in China. As the work unfolded and the mission coverage expanded, missionaries came into contact with various ethnic minorities. Due to limited resources, permission to work among minority people often followed the persistent pleading of individual missionaries to mission leadership (such as in the cases of J. O. Fraser and J. R. Adam). Over the last 120 years, church growth in China has primarily occurred among the Han Chinese. Maybe, instead of encountering minority groups in a random manner, deliberate attempts should be made to allocate resources so that different ethnic groups can be reached. Han Chinese Christians can similarly be encouraged to reach out to their minority neighbours.



A group of Flowery Miao believers at Anshunfu. Mrs. Adam is in the front row. *China's Millions*, British ed. (December 1912): 184.

The fate of the Black Miao after the murder of Fleming and the blessing of the Big Flowery Miao who saw Adam as the king from their legends, is like a missionary version of the movie "Sliding Doors". One cannot help asking "What if?" What if Fleming escaped from the murder attempt and became the resident missionary at Pang-hai? What if early Black Miao believers had been sheltered from further persecution and had more space and time to grow in their faith? No one has the answer. But what we do know is that the CIM never abandoned its Pang-hai mission house and continued assigning workers there to labour among the Black Miao despite hostile reactions from them and from the Han. It is also reasonable to conjecture that the investigation and burning experience that Adam had to go through, would have been imprinted on his missional heart, inspiring and driving him to work diligently among the Miao in An-shun. And how can we be inspired and encouraged today through our discovery of Fleming's heritage? One could do no better than joining him as a twenty-first century "gospel shark" who is willing to "spend and be spent" for the cause of Christ. **MRT**

One could do no better than joining Fleming as a twenty-first century "gospel shark" who is willing to "spend and be spent" for the cause of Christ.

[1] At the end of the first decade of CIM's history (1866–76), thirty-two out of thirty-nine workers served for more than four years and twenty-five were still serving with CIM in 1876. By comparison, the CMS's 1874 records show that only fifteen of thirty-four ordained clergymen stayed for more than four years on the field and only eleven of these fifteen remained in China in 1874. Likewise, only seven out of the twenty-one American Baptist missionaries remained on the field for thirty or more years. "Review of the Past Ten Years of the Mission," *China's Millions*, British ed. (July 1876): 158, https://archive.org/details/chinasmillions7576chin (accessed 4 March 2020).
[2] The key Chinese reference consulted in this article is the correspondence between various Chinese officials collected in *Mission-related Cases in the Late Qing Dynasty* (《清末教案》), Vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju [北京: 中华书局], 1998), 795–826.
[3] Compiled from: Phillip Edgar Brotchie, "The Importance of the Contribution of Australians to the Penetration of China by the China Inland Mission in the Period 1888–1953, with Particular Reference to the Work of Australian Women Missionaries" (PhD thesis, Deakin University, 1999), Appendix IV: Biographies of Australian CIM Missionaries who Served in China, No. 199 – William (Willie) Small Fleming; "The First C.I.M. Martyr," *China's Millions*, Australasian ed. (January 1899): 2.
[4] "The First C.I.M. Martyr," 2.
[5] "Extracts from Missionaries' Letters," *China's Millions*, Australasian ed. (January 1897).
[6] Windsor's letter dated 28 September 1898, in "The First C.I.M. Martyr," 2–3.
[7] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming," *China's Millions*, Australasian ed. (February 1899): 1–3.
[8] See S. R. Clarke, "P'an, the Evangelist," *China's Millions*, British ed. (July 1899): 121, http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:217687 (accessed 4 March 2020). Pan's name has been Romanized in several different forms: P'an-ta-ie ("Particulars of Mr. Fleming's Death," *China's Millions*, British ed. [February 1899]: 22); P'an-Ta-yeh ("The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming," *China's Millions*, Australasian ed. [March 1899], 1–2); P'an-sheo-shan (Samuel R. Clarke, *Among the Tribes in South-West China* [London: CIM, 1911], 157, https://archive.org/details/amongtribesinsou00clarrich). According to *Mission-related Cases in the Late Qing Dynasty* (《清末教案》)," his Chinese name was潘壽山. He was also known as潘老喬.
[9] The Black Miao are also known as Heh Miao. The classification of different Miao tribes is often based on their women's dress features. The women of this particular tribe wear dark navy clothes.
[10] Clarke, "P'an, the Evangelist," 121.
[11] "Particulars of Mr. Fleming's Death," 22; "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (February 1899): 1–3.
[12] Also called Ch'ung-ngan-chiang.
[13] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 2.
[14] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 1–2; Clarke, *Among the Tribes in South-West China*, 155–60.
[15] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 1.
[16] Clarke, *Among the Tribes in South-West China*, 159.
[17] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 2.
[18] Hudson Taylor's letter to W. B. Sloan, cited in A. J. Broomhall, *It is not Death to Die!*, Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton and OMF, 1989), 287.
[19] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 2.
[20] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 2.
[21] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 1–3.
[22] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 2.
[23] "The Murder of Mr. W. S. Fleming" (March 1899): 2.
[24] "The Secretary's Report of the Annual Meeting," *China's Millions*, Australasian ed. (July 1899): 2.
[25] J. R. Adam, "Persecution of the Black Miao in Kwei-chau," *China's Millions*, British ed. (January 1902): 11, http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:218313 (accessed 4 March 2020); Clarke, *Among the Tribes in South-West China*, 161–71.
[26] M. H. Hutton, "In Journeyings' among the Miao," *China's Millions*, Australasian ed. (June 1914): 47–8.
[27] M. H. Hutton, "How the Message Came to the Black Miao," British ed. (November 1937): 214.
[28] Ivan Allbutt, "The Black Miao of Kweichow," *China's Millions*, British ed. (October 1950): 106.
[29] Paul Hattaway, *Guizhou: The Precious Province*, The China Chronicles, Vol. 2 (Manchester: Asia Harvest / SPCK, 2018), 60, 236 (Table: People groups in Guizhou).
[30] John Stevenson, "In Memoriam: J. R. Adam and Thomas Windsor," *China's Millions*, British ed. (October 1915), 160, http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:220325 (accessed 4 March 2020).
[31] See Sam Pollard, Henry Smith, and F. J. Dymond, *The Story of the Miao* (London: Henry Hooks, 1919).
[32] Adam worked among both Flowery Miao and Hmong Shua. Around 2 percent of the Hmong Shua are Christian. Hattaway, *Guizhou*, 94 and 236 (Table: People groups in Guizhou).
[33] "In Memoriam—William Small Fleming," *China's Millions*, British ed. (January 1899): 6; "The Secretary's Report of the Annual Meeting," 2.
[34] "In Memoriam—William Small Fleming," 6.
[35] "The Secretary's Report of the Annual Meeting," 2.



Point Me to the Skies: The Amazing Story of Joan Wales

By Ronald Clements. Sevenoaks: Monarch, 2006. ISBN 9780825461576.

This stirring account traces Joan Wales' journey to obey God's call to China and to the Nosu people in Sichuan. Her story intertwines with the gripping narrative of the pioneering work of the small CIM team she joined—which included A. J. and Janet Broomhall and Ruth Dix—to reach the Nosu in the "Great Cold Mountains". Against the backdrop of the Communist revolution, their work in a remote, hostile area is a story of perseverance and trust in the Lord and his faithfulness. Though the team had to leave in less than two years, the story of God's work among the Nosu did not end at that point. Glimpses of this continuing story emerge in the closing chapters that recount Dr. Broomhall's and Joan Wales' reconnection with the Nosu when they visited Sichuan in 1988 and 1991.

A. J. Broomhall: A Missiological Practitioner

Neel Roberts



Neel Roberts graduated from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in 1986. He works in the Mekong Region where he is currently involved in training emerging leaders from various ethnic backgrounds in cross-cultural service.

Why Alfred James Broomhall is important

As a first term missionary in Central Thailand, with a book shelf made of two planks resting on some bricks, my prized reading material was the ever growing collection of *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*.[1] A sad day descended when I finished the final appendix of volume 7 and found myself with literally nothing left to look forward to. My depression lasted but a moment when suddenly I was revived with the novel idea that I could simply start all over with volume 1. The second round was as illuminating as the first was inspiring. Thus, if this article appears somewhat hagiographic it is intentionally so. However, it is not Broomhall's contribution to mission history that I wish to cover here but his role in the formation of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in the dozen years after he was forced to leave China. As one who has spent significant time sitting on committees, I like to think that sometimes committees are useful. I hope to show in this article that A. J. Broomhall proved most useful to the committees he served on.

Biosketch

Alfred James Broomhall was born in Chefoo, China in 1911, the son of Benjamin Charles and Marion Broomhall who were missionaries with the Baptist Missionary Society. From birth, he had close family ties to the CIM. His uncle, Marshall Broomhall was a nephew of James Hudson Taylor and at the time of A. J.'s birth was one of the CIM's most prolific authors.

He attended first Chefoo School, then Monkton Combe School in England, and completed his formal education at the Royal London Hospital.[2] It does not appear that he received any formal biblical or missiological training.

Broomhall entered China as a member of the CIM in 1938 in the midst of the Sino-Japanese War. His intent was to live among the Independent Nosu of Sichuan, though it would take quite some time for that to become a reality. In 1942 he married Janet Churchill and in time they would have four daughters. In the late summer of 1944 they were able to begin to live and work among the Nosu in northern Guizhou Province, thirty miles west of Kopu-Gebu in Weining Prefecture, though they were forced to make a hasty departure on 1 December as a Japanese offensive reached Guizhou.[3] Broomhall's few months there resulted in his first book, *Strong Tower*, which portrays the lives of the Nosu and the embryonic church through the experiences of a faithful Christian leader who was a school teacher by profession.[4]

He renewed his efforts to enter the territory of the Independent Nosu in 1946 with a team to establish a sustained Christian witness among them. While he was only able to live among them from 1947 to 1951 (and spent his last few months under house arrest), his team was able to plant seeds that would remain and bear fruit in coming decades.[5]

A few weeks before his fortieth birthday, with over a decade of China ministry behind him, he participated in the Bournemouth Conference which produced far-reaching decisions that led to the CIM becoming the China Inland Mission Overseas Missionary Fellowship and to engage the unreached peoples of those parts of East Asia which were still open to missionary efforts.

For the next dozen years Broomhall, in his role as a superintendent of the Mangyan work in Mindoro, Philippines, was a regular participant in the Overseas Council of the OMF. Then, in the mid-1960s, his family moved to England where he took up the role of Candidates Secretary while Janet served as Women Candidates Secretary. Upon retiring in 1976, he began to write *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*. This kept him occupied for the

next decade and has proven an inspiration to many thankful readers ever since. In his last years he made two visits to renew his connections with the Nosu and was well remembered and warmly welcomed. He died in Tunbridge Wells, on 11 May 1994.

Broomhall as practicing missiologist

Broomhall had not been out of China long when he was invited to participate in the Bournemouth Conference in southern England where the decisions were made regarding the future direction of the CIM.[6] While he was not quite forty at the Bournemouth Conference, several participants were younger than he. What did they bring from China? Their convictions and their hard-earned lessons. One lesson was the importance of indigenous methods. Arnold Lea, as Acting Deputy Director, wrote an article for the May 1951 *China's Millions* in which he said that,

> The secular press, reporting a gathering of church leaders in Szechwan, quoted the CIM pastor as being the only one able to report total financial independence, while those from other churches were listed as still partially, if not wholly, dependent on foreign funds. At the time of the recent government proclamation there was not a single church started by the CIM that was still drawing financial aid from the mother Mission for the support of a local ministry.

While regretting that not all hospitals and schools were similarly detached from the mission, he concluded by writing, "But we thank God for the guidance given back in 1927, for otherwise the present situation would have badly hit the churches that have been connected with us."[7] The other lesson they learned was that the gospel alone was truly powerful. When missionaries were at their weakest—in fact, while they were being forced to depart from the country—the word of God was bearing fruit. Broomhall wrote the following of his last months in Nosuland when his, his wife's, and his children's lives were at risk just for being there.

> And then conversions began. Officers in the Nationalist army who might have had to face a firing squad came to us for frequent Bible study and prayer, and several of them professed conversion. Some of them I believe were genuine. They found peace and joy, even in the face of what was before them. Then the Chinese colonists, especially the young people, came round more and more and a number of them were converted. They found that Christ was real, and they were ready to suffer as Christians. They did not come in for self-protection, looking for safety in Christ because other safeguards were failing. It was just that something had happened. You had been praying, I know, lots of you. And so had we, very hard. Then some officials in the local government were saved, and our own servants, and latterly, secretly, one or two Communists (when the troops and officials arrived), came very "near the kingdom."[8]

At about the same time in an area where the Nosu work had been long established, Arthur Glasser, who would also be a participant at Bournemouth, had similar experiences.

> It is becoming apparent that this year (1950) is one of rich blessing for the Nosu. In the Taku district over fifty families have burned their idols and turned to the living God. In the Fawo district over one hundred thirty families have likewise received Christ into their hearts and lives. Almost every outstation—and there are over fifty—reports people coming out of heathen darkness into the light and hope of our Lord Jesus Christ. The very pressure of their economic and political circumstances has contributed to force them to think on eternal things.[9]

There was one other issue that emerged in China during the previous decades, namely how CIM members were to interact with other mission agencies and churches. The CIM was not always averse to engaging with national, international, or supra-denominational bodies. In fact, Broomhall's uncle—Marshall Broomhall—was a member of the Commission of the Edinburgh Mission Conference of 1910. The CIM was actively involved in the early stages of the preparations for the Chinese Christian Conference of 1922 and D. E. Hoste seconded the motion for the passage of its statement on doctrinal standards.[10] But within a very short time, as the modernists ramped up their agenda to depart from the fundamentals of the Christian faith, a parting of the ways became inevitable. This moved Hoste, along with many other members of the CIM at that time, to align themselves with the Bible Union of China, a group that united conservative and fundamentalist Christians.[11] The CIM, because of its commitment to work with Christians from many denominations, came to see that it was best to focus on the work of evangelism and discipleship and not engage in the great theological conflicts that were tearing churches apart in the homelands. This was to greatly influence how OMF was to relate to other Christian groups as they sought to establish their presence in the countries of East Asia.

To summarize what the CIM took from China:

1. Using indigenous methods to establish indigenous churches was not simply a noble goal. It was often a matter of life and death, spiritually and physically.

2. Charitable activities and institutions which could not be readily placed under local leadership might become a burden to local Christian communities if a hostile government came into power. Therefore, charity had to be thought through carefully.

3. In order to focus on evangelism it was best to keep an organizational distance from interdenominational and supranational bodies which might end up exhibiting tangential tendencies that would divert the mission from its mission.

This background helps us understand how Broomhall addressed but did not necessarily solve these issues during his years as a superintendent in Mindoro, Philippines or as a



Broomhall's trip to China in 1988 to reconnect with the Nosu.

member of the Overseas Council of CIM/OMF. It must also be remembered that CIM/OMF in the early 1950s did not have a single, strong leader. The Overseas Council minutes from those days make interesting reading precisely because no skillful chairman could have written them out beforehand. Though most of my attention is focused on Broomhall, he was simply one of a number of individuals who left their mark on the mission in those re-formative years.

Indigenous methods

There was a very clear commitment to the use of indigenous methods in the new work OMF was to be engaged with. While the topic was referred to continually at Bournemouth, I share just one quote taken from "Special Prayer Topics Arising": "That work may be commenced on sound indigenous principles so that in the case of evacuation we may leave behind a church which is dependent only on the Lord."[12]

Broomhall was clearly committed to indigenous principles, as demonstrated by his work among the Nosu in the 1940s. However, he was well aware that principles promulgated in Bournemouth or Singapore in following years still needed to be applied in local contexts and that meant someone needed to interpret them. The pattern that had quickly evolved in the OMF was to have all exceptional cases brought to the Headquarters Staff in Singapore for their decision. It seems that their policy was that until/unless there was consensus in the Overseas Council, which met annually, there should not be any change in practices. In this way, the concept of rule of directors by consensus became extremely conservative in practice. Bournemouth was a radical departure from the past. But once ideas like indigenous principles had been agreed upon, a minority (hypothetically, of one individual) which sought to maintain the status quo could always gain its objective by merely not conceding to a new consensus. In this setting, Broomhall sought the ability to make decisions close to the field where the issues arose.

In the minutes of the third session of the 1955 Overseas Council we read that:

> A resolution was submitted by Dr. Broomhall for the consideration of this Council:
>
> "That the practical application of the indigenous principle be related by the Directorate in close consultation with the Superintendents and their Field Councils to the particular conditions on each individual field."[13]

A specific request was then presented:

> The Japan Field Conference sought approval for obtaining by invitation strictly short-time assistance of national Christian workers in the initial stages of pioneer evangelism where no organized church existed, the Mission taking responsibility for travel expenses involved, hospitality, and a suitable gift, this being the action taken by Japanese Christians when inviting the missionary to participate in a spiritual ministry. The principle of adopting such a procedure was also supported by some other Superintendents, although not all would desire to apply the same in practice in their individual field.[14]

After lengthy discussions on the topic the conclusion of the matter was:

> The Council was now faced with what amounted to two questions presented to it by the sub-committee on Indigenous Principles.
>
> 1. What is the official interpretation of the Principles and Practice?
> 2. Are the Principles and Practice capable of various interpretations?
>
> The Chairman replied that in the final analysis the voice of the Directorate must be the official interpretation of the Principles and Practice. There could not possible [sic] be a dual interpretation of the Principles and Practice, else complete confusion would be the inevitable result. The discussion was brought to a conclusion by the Chairman stating that lack of unanimity did not warrant any modification of our indigenous principles or our interpretation of them. It must be left with the Directorate to decide policy within the framework of the Principles and Practice.[15]

Broomhall probably learned how to live and work with people who were set in their ways back in Nosuland. As he persevered with them so he also persevered with the Overseas Council. In 1961, with many of the same people sitting at the table, he submitted the following request.

> Philippines' Conference Recommendation Concerning Evangelism
>
> The following resolution from the Philippines' Field Conference was brought before the Council by Dr. Broomhall:
>
> Because the results that might be expected if a more aggressive program of evangelism were pursued are not being seen; and because the rigidity in the interpretation and application of our indigenous policy, especially with regard to enlisting the aid of national workers, has tended to produce a number of inhibitions on the part of missionaries, restricting hospitality, fellowship, and co-operation with national workers: and because our inability to extend invitations to national evangelists to aid us in our task is creating in the minds of some nationals the impression that we desire to preserve our missionary operations on an exclusively foreign basis; This Conference RECOMMENDS to the Directorate that a reappraisal of our Mission policy in relation to evangelism and national workers be considered, which will enable those responsible for this aspect of our work in the Philippines Field to exercise greater initiative in planning evangelistic campaigns and approaching trained national workers who would be happy to cooperate with us on a temporary basis if we would take more active steps to let them know that we are wholeheartedly interested in them and would welcome their cooperation in these special efforts.[16]

The procedures then took their course, for the "Chairman then asked if this had been fully covered in the Council's recommendation under, A Review of the Mission's Policies and Methods. It was agreed that this had been done."[17] Truly it had been on a previous day, but in that decision all that was conceded was that OMF could contribute to organizing bodies that organized evangelistic campaigns.[18] Thus, the biblical concept was followed that to those who had, more would be given. Where a missionary was in a pioneer setting with no Christians to organize any evangelistic campaign, an evangelist could not be funded by the mission or the missionary and thus the indigenous principle meant that most new believers in OMF's difficult pioneer settings would never see a national



Philippines 1958 Field Conference. A. J. and Janet Broomhall are in the row behind the children, the fourth couple from the left.

evangelist. How that contributed to indigenous methods is not for me to explain.

On charity

One area where Broomhall had a unique contribution to offer was in the area of thinking about how medical work could best contribute to church planting. At the first Overseas Council he was asked to make a presentation along with Fred Mitchell, the British Home Director.[19]

> The following statement pertinent to the subject was prepared by Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Broomhall, and accepted by the Council:
>
> "The Council unanimously recommends in order to do effective medical work without endangering either its continuity or the health of the medical personnel that in the immediate future we regard ourselves as primarily committed to work in Thailand. If later, God sends a sufficient number of suitable medical workers consideration will be given to the expansion of medical work in other fields."
>
> … The Council felt that this was God's call and that we should go ahead in medical work to the extent that God sends in funds, and medical and other personnel, for the carrying on of such hospitals and clinic. Basically, it was suggested that the treatment of the sick is a contribution that we can make as a Christian Mission to the physical healing of the afflicted, beginning in Thailand and developing as God leads and supplies.
>
> … It was felt that medical work was a legitimate charge on Mission funds, and, being separate from church work, it is in a special category, which is not affected by indigenous principles. Experience in China and at home indicates that medical work usually has not been an integral part of the life of the church, though it is essentially an outgrowth of Christian experience. Even the policy of making a hospital self-supporting has been on occasion an embarrassment to the doctors, and a source of misunderstanding among the people reached. It was agreed, therefore, that provision and maintenance of property and the salaries of medical staff should be a Mission responsibility. Furthermore the mission would undertake to provide, if necessary, a subsidy for free treatment on a remittance basis. Hospitals are a Mission project and are not of a temporary character or intended to become self-supporting.[20]

The fact that Broomhall and Mitchell could make a presentation which was unanimously accepted shows quite clearly that the mission was not moving from a wholistic to a merely soul-saving mode of operation. Indigenous principles in church planting were designed to enable East Asian churches to sprout up and expand in total dependence on God. Medical work was designed to provide physical healing to the afflicted to the degree that God provided the funds and the doctors. In this seminal statement, a case might be made for the view that the Mission intended to provide medical care as practicable without regard to whether or not it significantly contributed to evangelistic efforts. The reality was that it did contribute greatly to the evangelistic efforts, at least in Central Thailand. Furthermore, as the church in Thailand matured, Thai Christian medical personnel did follow the example of missionary doctors by sacrificially caring for the sick.

There were other ways of showing kindness—charity—besides medical services. In the early days of work in the new fields, some tended to be legalistic in their concern to avoid dependency on the part of local believers. This led to serious discussions on whether or not a missionary could provide a local believer with a meal or a traveling Christian worker with a room for the night. To help address this issue, Broomhall compiled contributions from three field conferences to produce an article for the May 1955 *Overseas Bulletin* on "Biblical Charity and the Indigenous Church" in which he begins with nearly two pages of biblical texts on charity and then moves on to demonstrate how true and false needs can be assessed and how material help can be harmful.[21]

> Charity may be harmful if it is costless to the giver, if it is cold and calculating instead of "yea, and their own lives also;" if it is treated as generosity when it is known to be government issue, public relief, or the natural due of the people; if it is valueless to the recipient and does not meet his need, or even by contrast intensifies distress without resolving it, so that the sufferer despises the donor; if it humiliates him; if it is undiscriminating, regarding the lazy and dirty in the same light as the poor but self-respecting; if it is often repeated till it becomes commonplace or expected; if it shows favouritism, especially toward yes-men, those who attend meetings and please the foreigner. It should never be out of sentiment—"she looked so cute"—or because it is difficult to say No![22]

From there he presents practical ways to meet real needs. While providing many examples he offers no formula, for his premise is that true charity is the fruit of a life lived in close fellowship with God. His summary is worthy of deep consideration.

> Part of our commission to preach the Gospel is to live it. Love and charity towards neighbours and brethren in Christ is part of that living. True love truly expressed in relief of distress is godly and will be owned by God. But experience shows that the evil heart of

man takes that love and misuses it; it sees hope of gain, becomes lazy, and responds while there are incentives.

To benefit by experience is wise and godly too, in order to avoid stumbling weak brethren or ensnaring the unsaved. So it behoves us to be exceedingly discreet and careful in our expression of charity. It should never be to attract inquirers, to award adherents or converts, or for Christians to the exclusion of others. As for habit—better not to start, than to be generous and find it hard to withdraw without ill-feeling, or to find people expecting more.

Ultimately it comes back to this, that in practicing charity as in other things, we need to live so close to the Lord and in such real dependence on Him, that He can show in each individual case just what He would have us to do.[23]

Cooperation and separation

The CIM grew out of the environment of incipient evangelicalism. The Evangelical Alliance was started twenty years before the CIM, and Hudson Taylor was both a debtor to and contributor to the Evangelical Movement. The relationship of the CIM to the Fundamentalist movement of the twentieth century was a bit more complicated. In the U.S.A., the pre-eminent representative of nineteenth century evangelicalism was D. L. Moody. He had two notable successors: R. A. Torrey and John R. Mott. Hudson Taylor would willingly share a platform with the young Mott (long before he dreamed of creating a World Council of Churches). The CIM Council for North America included the aged R. A. Torrey. But after the battles for control of churches and mission boards in the 1920s and 30s, there was little room for the CIM to maneuver. Neo-evangelicalism (which would soon go back to being called evangelicalism) was in its infancy and thus the Christian world was a somewhat lonely place for the likes of CIM/OMF as it tried to replant itself in East Asia.[24] The situation was well illustrated by a crusade planned by Billy Graham to take place in March 1963 in Manila. From September through November of 1962, as preparations were underway for the crusade, Broomhall (who was based in Calapan, Mindoro at the time) suddenly discovered that his Field Council was divided over whether or not, or just how much OMF should officially support the event. At that time even separatists approved of Graham's message. What they did not approve of was the fact that his campaign managers welcomed a broad spectrum of churches to have their leaders on the organizing committees. OMF had worked on building cooperative relations with missionaries and Filipino Christians from a similarly broad spectrum of church groupings. So the two questions that had to be addressed were: (1) what was the scriptural approach, and (2) which relationships were they willing to damage.

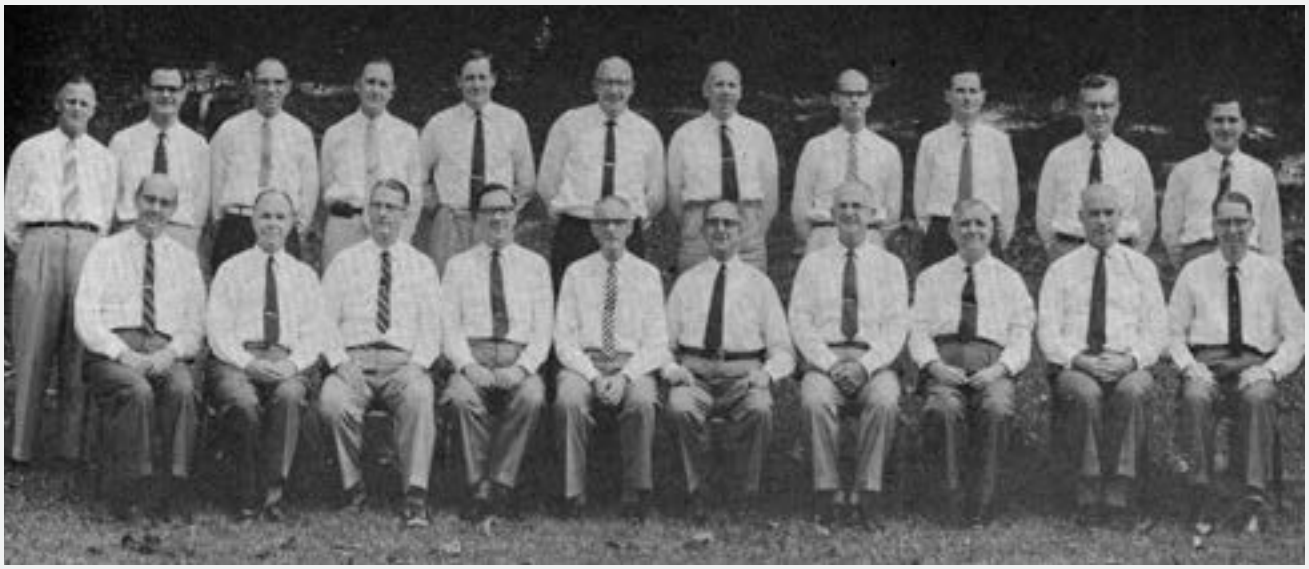
In a letter to the Overseas Director, Broomhall wrote:

> It is hard to know where to begin, or what to say, on this subject. The heated emotions and wild talk are very distressing, and the fact that the Field Council was about equally divided left us with the choice between a decision which ran counter to one side or the other or else a compromise which satisfied no one absolutely.[25]

Broomhall's own convictions came through quite clearly. He believed that they should wholeheartedly support the crusade (if a consensus could be reached by the Field Council) but that a compromise was almost certainly going to be necessary. The issue was much bigger than Manila and should be soundly addressed at the highest level of the mission. Even so, he could say that "From my understanding of Scripture the modern cult of separatism is not only unscriptural but clearly censured again and again as carnal, sinful and meriting church discipline."[26]

In the end, the Directors advocated a conciliating policy and came up with a suitably conciliating statement. Months after the crusade—which it seems that Billy Graham could not attend due to ill health—the topic was reviewed at the Overseas Council meeting.

> At the request of the Chairman, Dr. Broomhall reported on the attitude



Overseas Council, Singapore, 1960. Back row (left to right): Cyril Faulkner, David Day, Ernest Heimbach, Jim Broomhall, David Bentley-Taylor, George Kraft, George Williamson, Ron Roberts, David Hayman, George Steed, Roy Ferguson. Front row: Elden Whipple, Herbert Rowe, Morris Rockness, Arnold Lea, J. Oswald Sanders, Rowland Butler, John Kuhn, Fred Keeble, Leslie Lyall, Marvin Dunn. *The Millions*, North American ed. (August-September 1960): 115.

> of our missionaries to the Manila Crusade and stated that almost everyone approved and some twenty were able to participate, although some did keep out of anything to do with organization, but nobody seemed satisfied with the official Mission attitude. Those in favour of full participation were disappointed that we should yield to pressure from those who so strongly advocated complete separation. Those who were for separation expressed regret that we should cooperate in any way.[27]

While there was a wide spectrum of "Christendom" that was looked upon with disfavor by elements of the Fellowship, a growing number of churches of like faith were emerging in the Philippines that OMF could potentially work with. In 1958, after years of discussions on how and when to cooperate with "national fellow workers", as they were termed, Broomhall wrote a document for the 1958 Overseas Council on "Cooperation with Organized Groups of Nationals Working in Their Own Country." The whole article is worth studying in our present era due to our renewed focus on partnership. Broomhall began with the pros which are fairly obvious.

> Close cooperation has a firm Scriptural and historical basis, in the experience of our Mission in S. E. Asia as well as in China.
>
> It combines the good in both national and foreign ideas and methods.
>
> The time-factor is significant; combined efforts are likely to hasten completion of the task in a given sphere.
>
> The danger of encroachment by false cults … may be more adequately met by nationals who are better able to detect a faulty response to error.
>
> … the feelings of sensitive Orientals who want to cooperate with us must be taken into account. If friendly advances and zeal to join the work are rebuffed, there may be a serious loss of confidence and cooling of spiritual fellowship. …
>
> At the recent Philippines Field Conference the question was asked: "Is it even constitutional for us to turn away national workers who desire our cooperation, when we are committed to cooperation with churches of like faith?"
>
> When they come of their own accord into our areas and join in our work, we will of course extend them all due courtesy and fellowship while safeguarding mutual independence.[28]

The cons were a bit less obvious, except to one with years of field experience and a gift for interpreting what he had experienced.

> There is more land to be possessed, more work to be done than can be compassed however thinly they and we are spread. Why overlap?
>
> If there are reasons for sharing in the work, we believe that we should work with or under godly nationals rather than the reverse. For nationals to be attached to us, a foreign organization, and to work under us, would be a move in the wrong direction, depriving the indigenous church of its initiative and independence….
>
> There are real advantages in the simplicity of our system of teaching and establishing those we win to the Lord. The Christians will often work and witness better with our limited help than if nationals from outside are available to do it for them.
>
> Like us, national workers from elsewhere, unless they practice indigenous principles intelligently, may actually hinder the local believers by encouraging dependence. Unskilled, faulty or low-standard national workers would not be beneficial; … But good capable ones do not need us, and tend to make us superfluous….
>
> Practical problems of living and working together are also considerable. Equality in standard is essential when living at close quarters, and apart from short-term cooperation this sooner or later involves subsidization, directly or indirectly.
>
> Moreover there is a real likelihood of short-term cooperation developing into a more permanent share in the work, especially if the national workers are highly valued by the church. And the potential result – as real as it is absurd – is that the missionary, without having completed the planting of a stable church finds himself redundant, and looks elsewhere for work to do, so starting the process over again.[29]

The conclusions were suited both for the present situation that field workers found themselves in while giving a clear objective that the whole Fellowship could aim for.

> The only true answer is for us to acquire the fluency, knowledge of the people, and adaptation to them that are necessary. When we have this, short-term visits by nationals for the sake of sharing their special gifts, will not involve such complications as have been suggested. Meanwhile most of our missionaries are in the process of acquiring that efficiency, and feel a need of help for themselves and the churches. What cooperation is possible?
>
> Until we are able to do pioneer evangelism on virgin soil effectively we are hardly ready to husband the results of an evangelistic campaign conducted by visiting nationals. But where the help of national workers is sought in breaking up hard ground it should come through the missionary outreach of other groups in response to the need being made known, rather than by the foreign mission inviting help and carrying the expenses. (The difference between giving information and giving an invitation is distinct, and clear recognition of it will eliminate confusion of the issue.) …
>
> In every instance it should be the local Christians who invite the national workers, and who therefore carry the responsibility for providing hospitality and expenses. The missionary's part is to advise, even to suggest the need for such temporary help, and to indicate the extent of the help he himself can give.[30]

He ended with six questions for self-analysis.

1. Is attainment of efficiency by our missionaries being checked by lack of help such as only experienced nationals can give?
2. Is the gospel being withheld unnecessarily by our restrictions on cooperation with available nationals?
3. Are the converts in some places being starved, deprived of the

help that only their national workers can supply?

4. Do we owe it to the immature national workers to provide the fellowship in the work which they seek?

5. Are there indications, not for us to attach others to ourselves, but for us to enter into closer association with some organized groups of nationals?

and 6. Is their contribution so distinct from ours that we could work side by side without waste of effort or hindrance to the indigenous church?[31]

These questions that were considered valuable in the 1950s are still worth asking today in order to evaluate how we work with the national church.

The missionary as evangelist

Broomhall was always an evangelist at heart. In the episode of the Billy Graham crusade in Manila, even though they were based in Mindoro, he and Janet volunteered to serve by doing "counselling etc." This was anticipated to be a ten-day commitment.[32] It was not as though he had plenty of spare time on his hands. Rather, his reason for being a missionary was to make disciples and establish churches that would be zealous to fulfill the Great Commission. Therefore, they always sought to be models that nationals could follow, a theme that can be traced back to their days among the Nosu. A helpful document that explains his view of ministry in his new setting is the "Philippines Field Guiding Principles and Plan of Action (Adopted by the 10th Annual Conference May 15–21, 1962)." While this was a field production it had the superintendent's fingerprints all over it. "The authority for O.M.F. work in the Philippines" was clearly stated:

> As ambassadors of Christ and ministers of reconciliation we accept the authority of the Word of God which we preach for salvation, sanctification and edification in all things, especially as concerns the church. (2 Tim. 3:16). With this authority we do not hesitate to declare firmly and clearly "the whole counsel of God" whether palatable or not. (Acts 20:27).[33]

Logical, though not always obvious, corollaries to this mandate were then elaborated upon under "Evangelism":

1. Recognizing the size of our task, our own limitations, and the need for converts to carry the gospel to their own people, we nevertheless accept the obligation to preach the gospel to all within the areas for which we have accepted responsibility. Moreover, this commission holds good whether or not it is possible to give adequate teaching to those who respond….

2. We seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in all planning and work.

3. We recognize favourable response in any form as an indication for further teaching and are guided by this rather than by maps, plans and schedules. Nevertheless our aim remains "a church in every community and thereby the gospel to every creature."

4. While the work of establishing believers is never to be halted, the preaching of the gospel must continue, and believers should share in evangelism from the time of their conversion.[34]

It is clear that not every missionary is a pioneer, nor are all gifted in evangelism. For this reason, much of the superintendent's time and energy was spent finding the place where a person's gifts might be best used. However, Broomhall was insistent that missionaries needed to get out and break new ground. In a letter written about a specific worker in 1964, he made the following observation.

> I do think that those who are most closely concerned with church-planting need to open their eyes to the wider claims and scope for us as a mission here. We are hemmed in by missions and churches stepping in to work in each other's areas, and can expect it to continue wherever we may work; it looks as if any lowland work we attempt must be with the expectation of parallel work or even rival work starting in the same places, with our indigenous principles having to compete with far freer and faster-fruiting methods used by others. But I do believe that with our methods and principles we could still have far greater results if we applied them as we should; I believe that our small results have been due (to language limitations etc of course, but apart from those factors) to static missionary work, pastoral rather than evangelistic ... N_.C_. is doing what I have longed to see others do. We need to apply ourselves to our objective, (and Overseas Council urging), Intensive Evangelism, and I believe that when we do we shall see churches grow.[35]

Broomhall was always an evangelist at heart…. His reason for being a missionary was to make disciples and establish churches that would be zealous to fulfill the Great Commission.



A. J. Broomhall

Epilogue

I have tried to provide a slight taste of the climate and issues that CIM/OMF had to deal with in the first dozen years after leaving China. I have used Dr. Broomhall as a central figure in this short study not because he was a pivotal character in the story but because he is a good example (in more ways than one). As most of my prior studies had related to the work in Yunnan which was transplanted to Thailand, I might well have chosen John Kuhn as my focus, but I chose to explore another field and personality. Thus, it is likely that readers who knew Broomhall or worked

in the Philippines will find flaws in my study. I will take full responsibility for them if you will kindly bring them to my attention. I would, however, close with a reference to John Kuhn which we find in the Precis of the Tenth Overseas Council 1966 (when Broomhall was assigned to the British home staff and was no longer a voice in the Council).

> It was at this stage of the Conference that the Chairman announced that he had received a cable telling of the Homecall of Mr. Kuhn. Mr. Kuhn had worked in West Yunnan, North Thailand and Laos and his name could well be written across the map of these those areas. Mr. Keeble, who expressed a short tribute to Mr. Kuhn, said, "A prince and a great man has fallen, the man who had been Mr. J. O. Fraser's "Timothy" in Lisuland and a man who even in his younger days was regarded as an elder brother. He was endowed with those rarest of gifts, maturity and humility".[36]

A few pages further on is this entry:

> Contribution to Emerging Churches
>
> It was felt that on some occasions where emerging churches are evidencing reliance on God alone and development towards self-support, it might be helpful, funds permitting, to make limited non-recurring grants to established funds as a gesture of fellowship, and thereby to assist churches in the completion of their plans, e.g. church building, calling their own pastor, or to further the training of promising lay workers. The Council also agreed that where a group of emerging churches has already established their own revolving fund for such purposes as stated above, the Fellowship might consider making a contribution to that fund on the same basis as contributions to individual churches as already mentioned. Naturally it was not intended that one church should benefit under both categories for the same purpose.[37]

The difference of opinion found here on the use of mission money to help the growth of the church from some of the ideas expressed by Broomhall and his contemporaries that we have already examined is patent. I would not suggest that this was evidence that there arose another generation after them, which did not know "the God-given pattern laid down at Bournemouth".[38] Perhaps it is an example of the change that gradually took place as new leaders applied the lessons they had learned from experience, gained not in China, but in the New Fields of East Asia. **MRT**

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[1] The seven-volume series by A. J. Broomhall, published from 1981 to 1989 by Hodder & Stoughton and OMF, was re-published in 2005 by OMF and Piguant as a two-volume set, *The Shaping of Modern China: Hudson Taylor's Life and Legacy*. A Kindle edition of this two-volume set is available.

[2] David W. Ellis, "Obituary: Dr. A. J. Broomhall," *Independent* (5 July 1994), https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-dr-a-j-broomhall-1411725.html; "Alfred James Broomhall," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_James_Broomhall (accessed 5 February 2020).

[3] Margie Hogarth (nee Broomhall), e-mail message to author, 7 March 2020.

[4] A. J. Broomhall, *Strong Tower* (London: CIM, 1947), available for download from https://missiology.org.uk/book_strong-tower_broomhall.php (accessed 3 March 2020).

[5] A. J. Broomhall, *Strong Man's Prey* (London: CIM, 1953), 47, 249.

[6] It is interesting to note that the number of participants photographed at the Kalorama meeting in February 1951 is quite similar to those who attended the Bournemouth meetings in November but that the new faces toward the back appear considerably younger than those in the chairs up front.

[7] Arnold Lea, "The Three Selfs," *China's Millions*, North American ed. (May 1951): 68.

[8] A. J. Broomhall, "Rival Allegiances," *China's Millions*, North American ed. (January 1952): 8.

[9] Arthur Glasser, "Salowu Bible School," Letter of October 1, 1950, *China's Millions*, North American ed. (March 1951): 43.

[10] F. Rawlinson, Helen Thoburn, and D. MacGillivray, eds. *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Conference Held in Shanghai, Tuesday May 2, to Thursday, May 11, 1922* (Shanghai: The Oriental Press, n.d.), 693.

[11] Paul Hutchinson, "The Conservative Reaction in China," *The Journal of Religion* 2, no. 4 (July 1922): 346, 351. For a history of the Bible Union of China, see Kevin Xiyi Yao, *The Fundamentalist Movement among Protestant Missionaries in China, 1920–1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003).

[12] "Some Notes Regarding the Decisions Made at the Bournemouth Conference, Nov. 17–30, 1951," 4, OMF Singapore Archives (OMFSA) AR 5.1.4 Box 2.1. Writing sixty-eight years later, we can be thankful for the doors that have remained open, but we should not complacently assume that this situation will last.

[13] "Third Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Wednesday, May 25, 1955," OMFSA AR 6.1.4 Box 1.5c.

[14] "Third Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Thursday, May 26, 1955," OMFSA AR 6.1.4 Box 1.5c.

[15] "Third Session of the Overseas Council … May 26, 1955."

[16] "Seventh Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Friday, November 17, 1961," 31, OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.7. Underlining original.

[17] "Seventh Session of the Overseas Council … November 17, 1961," 31.

[18] "Seventh Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Wednesday, November 15, 1961," 24, OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.7.

[19] Broomhall was not yet a superintendent, as he had only just been designated to Mindoro but was invited to share with the Council on this topic.

[20] "First Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Thursday, April 16, 1953," OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.1.

[21] A. J. Broomhall, "Biblical Charity and the Indigenous Church," *The Overseas Bulletin* 17, no. 3 (May 1955): 74–9.

[22] Broomhall, "Biblical Charity and the Indigenous Church," 77.

[23] Broomhall, "Biblical Charity and the Indigenous Church," 79.

[24] A book that helps reveal the religious climate of those days is Garth Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). An earlier book of special worth is Eric S. Fife and Arthur F. Glasser, *Missions in Crisis: Rethinking Missionary Strategy* (Chicago: IVP, 1961).

[25] Letter from A. J. Broomhall to Arnold Lea, 12 October 1962, OMFSA AR 5.1.5 Box 1.12.

[26] Letter from A. J. Broomhall to Arnold Lea, 12 October 1962.

[27] "Eighth Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of the Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Wednesday, April 3, 1963," OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.8.

[28] A. J. Broomhall, "Cooperation with Organized Groups of Nationals Working in Their Own Country," 1–2, in "Fifth Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Monday, August 25, 1958," OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.5.

[29] Broomhall, "Cooperation with Organized Groups of Nationals working in Their Own Country," 2.

[30] Broomhall, "Cooperation with Organized Groups of Nationals working in Their Own Country," 2–3.

[31] Broomhall, "Cooperation with Organized Groups of Nationals working in Their Own Country," 3.

[32] Letter from A. J. Broomhall to Rev. Basil Costerisan, 28 Nov 1962, OMFSA AR 5.1.5 Box 1.12.

[33] "Philippines Field Guiding Principles and Plan of Action (Adopted by the Tenth Annual Conference, Baguio, May 15–21, 1962)," 1, OMFSA AR 5.1.5 Box 1.12.

[34] "Philippines Field Guiding Principles and Plan of Action," 3.

[35] Letter from Jim (Broomhall) to C. F. Weller, 1 January 1964, OMF Philippines Archives, AR 2.2 Folder 10b.

[36] "Precis of Proceedings of the Overseas Council, Tenth Session March 19–31, 1966, Singapore," 4, OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.10.

[37] "Precis of Proceedings of the Overseas Council, Tenth Session March 19–31, 1966, Singapore," 7.

[38] "Third Session of the Overseas Council, Minutes of Overseas Council meeting held in Singapore on Thursday, May 26, 1955," 34, OMFSA AR 5.2.4 Box 1.3. These words reflected what "had been the view of the Headquarters Staff and had formed the basis for interpretation and application to matters on the field under their purview."

Fear in Sharing the Good News

Andy Smith



Andy Smith has served with OMF International in the Philippines since 1989. For several years, he planted churches which forced him to learn to deal with his fears in sharing the good news. Then he served in field leadership and training roles in which he helped others learn to deal with their fears. He is currently OMF's International Coordinator for Evangelization.

Introduction

God wants every person to have a chance to hear and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ. However, his messengers sometimes fail to do their part. Chua Wee Hian reported the following incident.

> In 1970, my colleague Ada Lim and I were invited to a training conference attended by eight Thai students together with the young missionary. I had the responsibility of teaching the students how to share their faith with others. Half way through our week of training I suggested that they should have some practical field-work in the village market near our campsite. The Thai students protested, saying, "We Thais are very polite. We can't just go and talk to strangers about Jesus Christ." I replied, "We Chinese are also very polite, but it's not a matter of courtesy! It's a matter of our willingness to obey Christ's command to be his witnesses."[1]

Faithful Christians share the good news. Other Christians are less eager to do so. Like the students above, certain fears restrict their involvement. A variety of factors such as cultural values, personality traits, and lack of training can produce these fears. As Chua Wee Hian indicated, solutions exist which can help us deal with them.

Scope of the research

Initially, I wanted to research the good news and emotions. I started gathering biblical passages in which these two subjects appeared. I eventually realized that there is way too much material on that topic. So I reviewed what I had collected and decided to limit my research to the fears that Christians face when sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and the solutions they have found for dealing with those fears.

My experience as a trainer further compelled me to focus on this topic. I facilitate seminars and workshops on evangelism. Participants in those events frequently confess that fear hinders them from sharing the good news. We then discuss those fears. Those conversations have shown me that we experience a variety of fears and that each of them can prevent us from telling others the gospel.

Research methodology

In order to prepare this paper, I surveyed fellow members of OMF International. Since we are a large organization, I chose to survey only those who have attended our training course in evangelism. However, since over two hundred and thirty had taken this course by January 2019, I selected a subset of that number made up of people who I feel represent our organization's diversity.

The survey had two parts. The first part identified the fears our members experience while sharing the gospel. Specifically, it looked for answers to the question, "To whom do you fear something bad might happen if you share the good news?" The second part sought to better understand the specific fears that are faced. It also requested solutions which help them deal with those fears. The surveys are included at the end of this paper.

The surveys behind this study were developed in early 2019 and completed by forty members of OMF by September of that year. Half are men; half are women. Twenty-three serve in open access contexts. Seventeen serve in creative access contexts. The respondents come from ten different countries and serve on eleven fields. Three are from homesides which face unique tensions because of our evangelistic efforts.

Identifying our fears: Results of the first survey

It is significant that none of the respondents replied "Always" to any of the first seven questions. It is encouraging that only ten replied "Often" to one or more of them. These two findings suggest that fear hinders our members' sharing of the good news less frequently than might have been thought. They could also suggest that the respondents have discovered solutions which help them deal with these fears.

Because seventy-seven percent of the respondents replied "Often" or "Occasionally" to at least one of the seven questions, I chose to group them together in interpreting the survey.

Questions one through seven reveal the most common fear: something bad might happen to those to whom the good news is shared. Sixty percent of the respondents said they often or occasionally face this fear. According to question 8, forty percent of them think something bad is most likely to happen to those to whom the good news is shared.

The second most common fear is that something bad would happen to the respondent, the one sharing the good news. Forty-three percent said they often or occasionally face this fear. In question eight, twenty-five percent think something bad is most likely to happen to himself/herself.

Two fears tied as the third most common: something bad would happen to the respondent's (1) field or (2) team. Twenty-five percent of the respondents said they often or occasionally face these fears. Only eight percent of those answering question 8 think something bad is most likely to happen to their field or team.

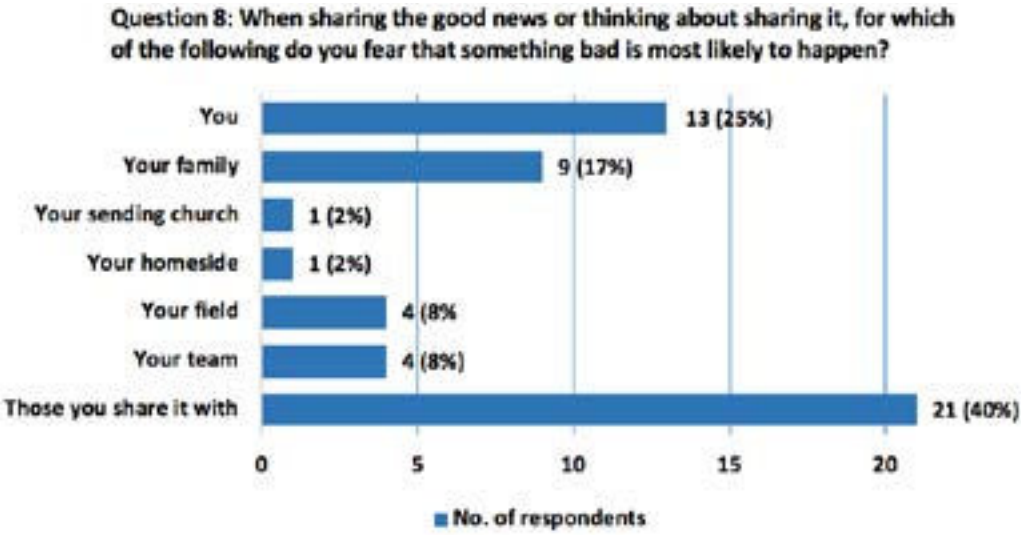
A significant twenty percent expressed fear that something bad might happen to their family. A similar number, seventeen percent, think something bad is most likely to happen to their family (question 8).

Thirteen of the fifteen respondents who said they serve in a context where they are free to share are in open access contexts. Those serving in creative access contexts gave a variety of answers: five percent replied "Free to share;" seventeen percent replied "Mostly free to share;" twenty-one percent replied "Restrictions to sharing;" and two percent replied "Illegal to share."

Forty-three percent of the respondents think they have the gift of sharing the good news. Thirteen of the seventeen who gave the reply serve in open access contexts. Another thirty-eight percent think they might have this gift.

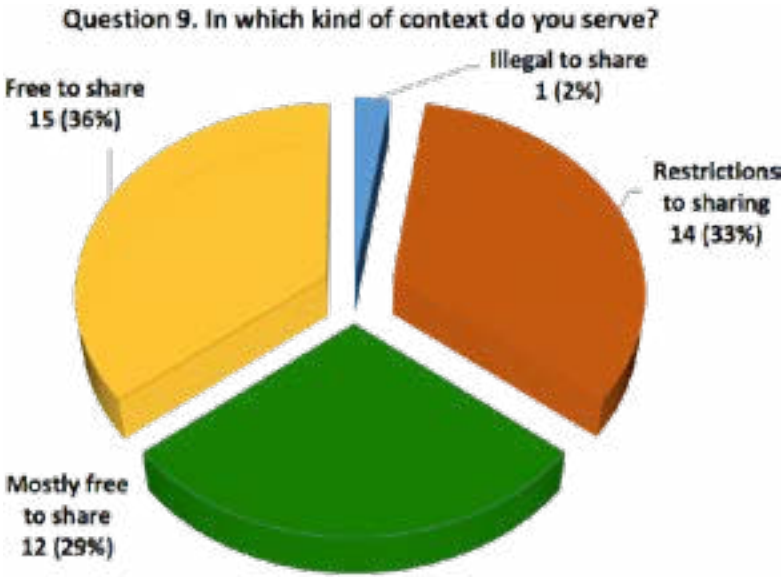
Question: When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to ...	Always	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
1. You?	0 0%	3 8%	14 35%	19 48%	4 10%
2. Your family?	0 0%	1 3%	7 18%	14 35%	18 45%
3. Your sending church?	0 0%	0 0%	2 5%	10 25%	28 70%
4. Your homeside?	0 0%	0 0%	1 3%	10 25%	29 73%
5. Your field?	0 0%	2 5%	8 20%	13 33%	17 43%
6. Your team?	0 0%	2 5%	8 20%	17 43%	13 33%
7. Those you share it with?	0 0%	0 15%	18 45%	13 33%	3 8%

Note: Ten of the forty respondents replied "Often" to at least one of the seven questions. Twenty-nine replied "Occasionally" to at least one of them. Thirty-one replied "Often" or "Occasionally" to at least one of them. Twenty replied "Often" or "Occasionally" to two or more of them. On average, each respondent replied "Often" or "Occasionally" to 1.8 of the questions.

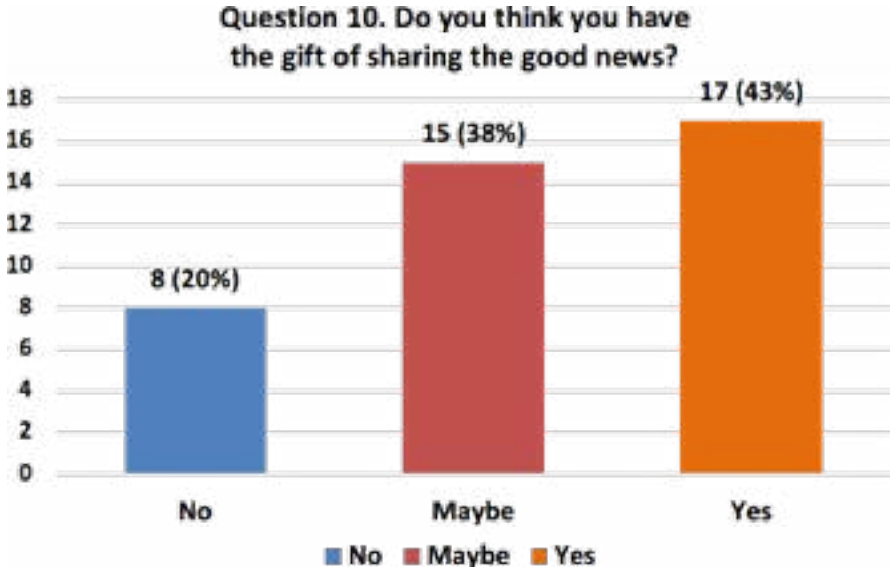


Notes: Seven respondents chose more than one answer on this question. One respondent chose none of them. I should have offered "I have no such fears" as a possible reply.

Being in the same organization, I assumed that the respondents and I share the same meaning of six of the seven categories. I allowed them to define family. Based on their replies, it was clear that some interpreted it to mean both spouse and children with them in their place of service and family members, especially parents, in their home country.



Note: Two respondents circled two answers each on this question.



Dealing with our fears: Results of the second survey plus other insights

I wanted only those respondents who replied "Always," "Often," or "Occasionally" to a question in the first survey to answer the related questions in the second survey. The related questions asked for details about that fear and about solutions that help them deal with it. However, some people provided these details even though they had answered "Rarely" or "Never" to a certain fear. Upon reflection, I decided to include their replies in the findings because the practices which greatly reduce the impact of those fears on their sharing of the good news might help others for whom the impact is felt often or occasionally.

It was beyond the scope of this research to evaluate the suggested solutions. As a result, I will simply list them below.

Biblical insights

Where appropriate, I will add biblical thoughts to the following discussion. This is because Christians mentioned in the New Testament were sometimes afraid to share the good news. At other times, they boldly shared it (I found thirteen such examples: Acts 4:13; 4:31; 9:27; 9:28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31; 2 Cor 3:12; Phil 1:14; and 1 Thess 2:2). These incidences can teach us much about dealing with our fears.

Insights from articles

I will also add thoughts from several articles. Knowing that many people turn to the internet for practical help, I did a Google search on "evangelism and fear" on 16 January 2019. It gave me 7,120,000 results. I then read the top nine results.[2] Although written for Christians in general and not necessarily for those engaged in cross-cultural work, each article shared some helpful ideas.

I noted that a few of the articles assure us that experiencing fear when sharing the good news is normal. In his article, York explains,

> First, fear in evangelism is normal. It assures you that you are a normal human being. After all, Paul the apostle was afraid to evangelize. How does he admit to entering Corinth? He determined to be true to the message of Christ and the cross, but he admits to being with them 'in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling' (1 Cor. 2:3). In a city filled with such godlessness, impurity, and vice, such fear is certainly understandable.[3]

York continues, "fear in evangelism has nothing to do with the presence or lack of spirituality. It has everything to do with being human."[4] With that in mind, the respondents' replies about how they deal with fear in sharing the good news will now be reviewed.

Fear that something bad might happen to me

Thirty-four respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. The most common fear, named by nine, is that of being rejected. This includes being avoided by others they have not yet shared with. Some fear the loneliness that can result from such rejection. Six listed the second most common fear, a closely related one: damaging their relationships with locals.

Beougher thinks this fear of rejection is "the greatest source of fear" in sharing the good news. He urges us to be honest about it: "our fear of rejection is really loving the approval of men more than the approval of God."[5] In his article, Root suggests that we can overcome this fear by being rooted in God's love. He explains:

> The Scriptures say that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). I suppose a corollary could be drawn from this that "imperfect love breeds anxiety." If I am looking to anyone other than God as a primary source of love, then I am setting myself up to be afraid and insecure, especially when it comes to sharing the gospel.[6]

Six respondents mentioned the fear of being kicked out of the community; four, the fear of making people mad; and three, the fear of being harmed physically. Four fear they will not know

how to answer tough questions. Three are concerned that they will convey the message poorly. Two think they will look foolish. Such fears were addressed in several of the articles in which the authors make a distinction between good and bad fear. Regarding those he trains in evangelism, Wallace comments that "Their fears are centered myopically in their concern for how they were going to *appear to the world around them.*" He believes that our fear of evangelism stems mostly from "our desire to be comfortable, and there's nothing more uncomfortable than being embarrassed or humiliated by our peers."[7] Scrivener agrees: "The fear which dominates us apart from Christ is the 'fear of men'."[8] However, Wallace also finds positive value in our bad fears: "Sometimes our fears expose what's really important to us, so they're a good place to assess and address our priorities."[9]

Regarding solutions for dealing with these fears, twenty respondents mentioned prayer. Most pray for wisdom to know what to share and for boldness to share it. Fifteen expressed something about doing their part and trusting God to his. They specifically trust in his sovereignty, love, and presence. This solution makes me think of the early church in Jerusalem. In Acts 4, the Jewish Council arrested Peter and John, interrogated them, and then "charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18).[10] When released, the pair returned to the gathered church. All then prayed. Afterwards, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

Eight respondents emphasized preparation as a way for overcoming this fear. This solution reminds me of Apollos who was competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. Further, Priscilla and Aquila had "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24–28). Scrivener and York echo the need to pursue better equipping. Scrivener explains: "In perhaps the Bible's clearest verse on personal evangelism, Peter tells us to be 'prepared.' … We are to be prepared with *words*, with an 'apologia'—meaning *answering* words (1 Peter 3:15)." Quoting from the same verse, he shares his thoughts about "the ultimate preparation for evangelism: 'In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy'" because

> We speak out what we are "full of." This is an inescapable fact of human psychology. We are always evangelizing. We are always speaking of what is "holy" to us. If something is sacred, set apart, consecrated, of first importance, it will overflow from our hearts and into our conversations. So Peter counsels us to fill our hearts with "Christ the Lord".[11]

Three respondents highlighted the need for developing their ability in the local language. Six talked about building strong relationships with people before sharing with them.

Five respondents mentioned the Bible. They read it, memorize its promises, and thus find security in God. The Apostle Paul found such security. For instance, Acts 18:9–10 recounts a situation in which opposition might have quieted him. Through a vision, the Lord encouraged him, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." Several years later, Paul was being held in the Roman soldiers' barracks in Jerusalem. The Lord again strengthened him: "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

Kohlmeyer affirms the value of knowing God's Word. She believes it "is key to overcoming our fear of feeling inadequate … as we evangelize."[12] Meditate on it. Get to know it well. Hide it in our hearts.

Five respondents testified about embracing Jesus' teaching on rejection which helped them die to self.

Respondents also suggested other solutions that are highly practical: use Bible storying; do evangelism with local Christians; go in pairs; gain experience in sharing; arrange a time and place where you will share with a certain person; ask the person's permission before sharing; and ask better spiritual diagnosis questions. Kohlmeyer's general recommendation is a good conclusion to this section: "Beloved children of the King, bring your fears and anxieties about sharing the gospel with others to God in prayer. Pray that words might be given to you in opening your mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, that you might declare it *boldly* as you ought to speak (Ephesians 6:19–20)."[13]

Fear that something bad might happen to my family

Twenty respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. Six mentioned the fear that loved ones will experience a spiritual attack. Four fear that family members will be harmed physically, perhaps even kidnapped or killed. Three reported incidents in which their relatives back home got sick. Three mentioned fears related to their children, such as living in an unsafe environment. One explained that their sharing the good news caused their children to lack friends in the community.

Prayer was by far the most common solution mentioned for dealing with these fears, named by fourteen respondents. They pray for their family, pray with their family, pray with others for their family, send specific requests to others, and urge those others to pray for their family. Eight respondents emphasized the need to trust God. They hold onto his promises and keep in mind Christ's protection and victory, and God's guidance, power, and authority.

The authors of three of the articles urge us to acknowledge and even nurture good fear. Beougher advises,

> In terms of dealing with fear and evangelism, I think the starting point is to realize that not all fear is bad. Fear reminds us of the significance of the task of sharing the gospel. It's not something we should take lightly, and it also forces us to depend on the Lord, and in that case, fear can be a very helpful thing.[14]

Respondents mentioned additional solutions once each: doing regular risk assessments, listening to hymns, informing their family about what they are doing, and asking prayer partners to support relatives back home. One whose family shares the good news together in a crime-filled environment mentioned the need to be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matt 10:16).

Fear that something bad might happen to my sending church

Thirteen respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. Three who serve a resistant people in their own country fear that their church might be threatened or attacked.

Although some of the respondents did not give specifics about this fear, all of them provided solutions. Four mentioned trusting God. One tries not to worry. Another clings to God's promises that, though we suffer for the gospel, he walks with us. Four highlighted the importance of keeping their sending church aware and informed. Specifically, they remind those congregations to be aware of potential opposition, to pray for protection, and to use care in communicating with them.

Three respondents listed prayer. One sees this fear as a good opportunity to talk to their sending church about spiritual warfare.

Fear that something bad might happen to my homeside

Eleven respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. Only one of them is from a homeside that faces unique pressures because of our evangelistic efforts. Three fear that their homeside will become busy with crisis management. Two fear that their homeside will be threatened or attacked. One mentioned their homeside might experience spiritual attacks. Another expressed concern that something bad might happen to their homeside if that homeside is too pushy in seeking updates from the field.

Regarding solutions for dealing with these fears, four listed prayer. Two talked about trusting God; one also highlighted the need to stop worrying. Additional solutions were mentioned once each: remind the homeside to communicate carefully with their workers; reveal little about one's homeside; and be wise.

Fear that something bad might happen to my field or sector

Twenty respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. Six fear that their entire field might be expelled from the place of service. Two are concerned that their field will become busy with crisis management. Two mentioned the fear that their field will be threatened or attacked.

Regarding solutions for dealing with these fears, six respondents mentioned prayer. Three emphasized the need to build good relationships with those they serve. Two talked about trusting God. Two respondents said that the name of their organization or field should not be revealed. At the same time, members should seek advice from their field leaders. Members should also be reminded about our vision for church movements and mission movements. This solution brings Paul's admonition to Timothy to mind. The apostle urged his young co-worker to "share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling," linking their appointment to suffering. He also reminded him that they are part of an eternal plan that God put in place "before the ages began" (2 Tim 1:8–9, 11–12a).

Additional solutions were listed once each: contextualize; identify with those we serve; be humble; have a clear identity; try not to create situations that complicate life for other members; do regular risk assessments; be wise; learn more about those we serve and how to share with them; and take time to rest.

Fear that something bad might happen to my team

Twenty-two respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. Six fear that their team might be kicked out of their place of service. Four are concerned that their sharing might lead to conflict, disagreements, and disunity within the team. Three are afraid that it might lead to the team members being attacked, kidnapped, or even killed. Two respondents mentioned the fear of spiritual attacks. Two also listed the general fear that they will cause their team trouble. York acknowledges that "Rejection, ridicule, and anger come with the territory in evangelism." Quoting Matthew 10:28, he counsels us, "we know we are told not to fear even the most violent of reactions against the gospel."[15]

Regarding solutions for dealing with these fears, five respondents listed prayer of a general kind. Three included trusting God. Three also talked about being better prepared for sharing. Two emphasized going out in pairs. Two highlighted specific team practices. Others repeated some of the practices they made. Those practices include the following. Teams should meet regularly, study Bible passages on issues in sharing, pray, explain the intent of their actions, and confess their mistakes. They should aim for genuine communication and a growing understanding of each other in discussing issues together. They should do regular risk assessments, warn each other about possible bad reactions to their sharing, and temporarily halt their work in a community when necessary. They should ensure that long-term emotional support and immediate housing are provided for those who get kicked out. And they should keep their vision in front of them.

In a way, Saul's being accepted by the disciples in Jerusalem has some parallels (Acts 9:26–29). Initially, "they were all afraid of him." So Barnabas explained his coming to faith, calling, and bold preaching in the name of Jesus. His actions allowed Saul to become part of the church in that city and to go "in and out among them …, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord."

Respondents mentioned several other solutions once each: be careful when in public areas; befriend the people before sharing with them; contextualize; identify with the people; take time to rest; and be wise.

Fear that something bad might happen to the people I share with

Thirty-two respondents replied to the follow-up questions about this fear. Twelve expressed fear that the person will face some kind of opposition from their family, ranging from pressure to rejection to physical harm. Eight also mentioned their fear that the person will be persecuted and perhaps even killed. Two respondents each named the following fears: the person might lose job opportunities; the person might return to their former way of life; the person might face Satanic opposition; and "I may make it difficult for them to find Jesus."

Beougher addresses the latter fear. Some Christians are "afraid that they might do more harm than good." He has observed that sensitive believers usually make this comment and yet they rarely fail in this way. He believes it is less sensitive believers who "come across as aggressive" and cause such problems.[16]

Regarding solutions for dealing with these fears, nine respondents mentioned prayer; one specified prayer against the power of evil. Six highlighted trusting God. They trust in his sovereign control, power, love, and care, and the fact that he is more concerned about the person's salvation than the messenger is.

Kohlmeyer emphasizes that sharing the good news is a spiritual endeavor. She first warns us about our enemy: "Recognize that fear is from Satan. It is one of the many tactics he employs to shut us down and shut us up." Then she reminds us about our Helper: "Through the Spirit we are emboldened and empowered, like the apostles in the Book of Acts, to speak life-saving words to those who are perishing (Acts 4:31, 13:52; 1 Corinthians 2:4). His power is available to us, 24/7/365."[17]

Four respondents remind themselves that it is better for a person to find Jesus and lose their life than to live longer but be eternally separated from Jesus. Four emphasized the need to share the good news in a way the people can understand. Three are committed to long-term discipleship as seen in training believers in crisis management, preparing them for suffering, and meeting with them regularly for prayer. Three also expressed the need to show to those they are sharing with that they really love and care for those people.

Two respondents are helped by their personal devotions. One mentioned the Acts of the Apostles and church history as aids in overcoming this fear. These solutions are similar to the testimony of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who witnessed the boldness of Peter and John. They "perceived that they were uneducated, common men…. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

In his article, Scrivener makes a related point: "The 'fear of the Lord' is … actually about being magnetically attracted to, possessed with, and awed by his all-compelling majesty…. Such fear is a liberating fear. It means that, when it comes to evangelism, we fight fear with fear. The fears *will* come…. But as we enter a conversation, we are not to be awed by the desire to be liked. Instead, we should be awed by the all-surpassing greatness of Christ."[18]

Two respondents emphasized the importance of befriending entire families, not just one member of a family. One explained that they study the good news in groups, encouraging group members to share what they learned with their families and friends, to bring their families and friends to the study, and to lead studies among their families and friends.

God wants every person to have a chance to hear and respond to the good news. He has assigned the sharing of this news to his sons and daughters. Most of us experience various fears when carrying out that task or even when thinking about doing so.

Two respondents also included a helpful reminder about carefully choosing where to meet with those they are sharing with. Two highlighted the need to point the person to the God who can help them to stand. Two others are helped by remembering how God has protected those they shared with in the past. These last two suggestions echo the reason why Paul was not ashamed of sharing the good news: "For I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." He then urged Timothy to imitate his way of sharing the good news (2 Tim 1:12b–13).

One respondent lets people decide on actions themselves whereas another guides them in what to do. One respondent, who serves in a context with very little serious persecution, reminds himself of that fact.

One respondent each also mentioned the following solutions: be ready to do appropriate immediate follow-up of those who believe; share your testimony; do not rush baptism; be wise; and be sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit. Several Bible passages show that Paul and his team followed the Holy Spirit in their sharing of the good news (Acts 13:2, 4, 9; 16:6–7).

Additional biblical insights for dealing with these fears

Other Bible passages offer additional insights into what compelled early Christians to share the good news in spite of challenging situations.

- In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spoke "boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:1–3).
- Paul's desire to finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave him, "to testify to the gospel of the grace of God," was more precious to him than his life (Acts 20:17–24).
- Paul talked boldly to Festus and King Agrippa because he spoke "true and rational words" and because he knew the king was aware of the events to which he bore witness (Acts 26:25–26).
- Paul was "under obligation" to a wide variety of people and was "not ashamed of the gospel" since "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:14–16).
- The necessity of preaching the gospel was laid on Paul. He preached it because of his desire to be a good steward of it (1 Cor 9:16–17).
- Paul desired to win people to faith in Christ and to "share with them in its blessings" (1 Cor 9:19–23).
- Paul expected God to answer the prayers of the saints in Ephesus, which meant he would give him the words to speak and the boldness to speak them (Eph 6:19–20).
- Paul and Silas "had boldness in our God to declare … the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict" because their appeal did "not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive;" instead, they had "been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel" and therefore spoke "to please God who tests our hearts" (1 Thess 2:2–4).
- Paul reminded Timothy "to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in" him. He explained why: "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim 1:6–7).

All of the fears

Compiling all the replies for the second survey reveals the following most common fears:

- Expulsion from the place of service.
- Being persecuted, perhaps including physical harm (to the ones sharing, their relatives, church, field, homeside, or team; or to those whom they are serving).
- Spiritual attacks.
- Rejection and the resultant loneliness.
- Damaged relationships with local people.

Here is a list of the most common ways for dealing with these fears:

- Prayer.
- Trusting God.
- Preparation (additional solutions, such as Bible reading, contextualization, and embracing Jesus' teaching on rejection, could be included with this one).
- Befriending of people—entire families if possible—before sharing with them.
- Team interactions.

Conclusion

God wants every person to have a chance to hear and respond to the good news. He has assigned the sharing of this news to his sons and daughters. Most of us experience various fears when carrying out that task or even when thinking about doing so. The Bible, the nine online articles, and the findings of this survey suggest that such fears are normal. The same sources also provide ideas for dealing with them.

Grow in your understanding of the majesty of God. Desire to please Him. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Stay filled with the Spirit. Prepare well. Acknowledge your fears. Confess your bad ones. Ask God to make you bold. Engage in spiritual warfare. Develop a strong sending base that knows you well and prays for you. Know those to whom you plan to share. Know the good news. Learn from effective sharers of it. Share it as a good steward. When possible, do it with a partner. Trust God to lead you as you go.

Finally, desire to share in the gospel's blessings and be willing to suffer for it. Keep in mind the joy of people "seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4) for the first time. To be there when it happens, to have played a part in it, is to be reminded anew of the blessings we have received in Christ. It is to partake in the "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7). Accept too that sharing the good news and suffering are linked. God has called us to both. His power will enable us to endure the second while or as a result of our having faithfully carried out the first.

Additional research to consider

Due to limitations, I chose to focus on certain aspects of this subject. As I proceeded, I listed additional aspects that might be helpful to do further research on.

- Look more closely at the differences between those who serve in contexts where they are free to share the good news and those who serve in contexts where there are restrictions on sharing it.
- Look for patterns among those from each field. (I was able to do this for one which they found helpful.)
- Look for patterns among those of each ethnicity.
- Look for patterns among those of each gender.
- Look more closely at the differences between those with the gift of evangelism and those who lack it.
- Look for patterns among those from each homeside.
- Look more closely at the differences between newer members and long-time members.
- Look more closely at the differences between younger and older members.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the suggested solutions. **MRT**

First survey

Andy Smith is trying to better understand the fears that prevent us from sharing the good news more often. He also wants to discover the solutions that help us overcome this fear.

For each question below, circle the best answer. It should take you about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After doing so, please return it to Andy Smith.

1. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to you?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

2. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to your family?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

3. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to your sending church?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

4. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to your homeside?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

5. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to your field?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

6. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to your team?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

7. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, how often do you fear that something bad might happen to those you share it with?

Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

8. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, for which of the following do you fear that something bad is most likely to happen?

Always Often Occasionally Rarely Never

9. In which kind of context do you serve?

Free to share Mostly free to share Restrictions to sharing

Illegal to share

10. Do you think you have the gift of sharing the good news?

Yes No Maybe

Homeside:

Field:

Name:

I will not reveal your name when publishing the findings. However, if you share a unique fear or a really helpful solution, I might want to follow-up with you to learn more about it. Therefore, I need to know your name.

Second survey

11a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to you?

11b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

12a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to your family?

12b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

13a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to your sending church?

13b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

14a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to your homeside?

14b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

15a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to your field/sector?

15b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

16a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to your team?

16b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

17a. When sharing the good news or thinking about sharing it, what do you fear might happen to those you share with?

17b. What solutions have you found that help you deal with this fear?

[1] Chua Wee Hian, *Learning to Lead: Biblical Leadership Then and Now* (Leicester: IVP, 1987), 187.
[2] The Google search on "Evangelism and fear" yielded these articles as the top nine: Timothy K. Beougher, "How Do I Overcome My Fear of Evangelism?," *Southern Equip, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, http://equip.sbts.edu/video/overcome-fear-evangelism/; EvangelismCoach, "18 Common Evangelism Fears," 29 April 2018, https://www.evangelismcoach.org/fears-of-evangelism/; EvangelismCoach, "20 Fears about Personal Evangelism," 1 May 2018, https://www.evangelismcoach.org/evangelism-fears/; Denise Kohlmeyer, "How Do We Overcome the Fear of Evangelism?," *Unlocking the Bible*, 30 April 2018, https://unlockingthebible.org/2018/04/how-do-we-overcome-the-fear-of-evangelism/; Larry Moyer, "Overcoming Fear in Evangelism," http://www.evantell.org/blog/how-to-overcome-fear-in-evangelism-initial-steps/; Jerry Root, "How Can We Overcome Our Fear of Evangelism?," *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer*, *Christianity Today*, 7 August 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2018/august/how-can-we-overcome-our-fear-of-evangelism.html; Glen Scrivener, "Evangelism Made Simple: The Key to Overcoming Your Fear," *Desiring God*, 23 January 2018, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/evangelism-made-simple; J. Warner Wallace, "The Source of Our Fear When It Comes to Evangelism," *Cold-case Christianity with J. Warner Wallace*, 17 March 2017, https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-source-of-our-fear-when-it-comes-to-evangelism/; Barry York, "Overcoming Fear in Evangelism," *Gentle Reformation*, 3 December 2018, https://gentlereformation.com/2018/12/03/overcoming-3-main-fears-in-evangelism/ (all the above articles were accessed on 16 January 2019).
[3] York, "Overcoming Fear in Evangelism."
[4] York, "Overcoming Fear in Evangelism."
[5] Beougher, "How Do I Overcome My Fear of Evangelism?"
[6] Root, "How Can We Overcome Our Fear of Evangelism?"
[7] Wallace, "The Source of Our Fear When It Comes to Evangelism." Italics original.
[8] Scrivener, "Evangelism Made Simple."
[9] Wallace, "The Source of Our Fear When It Comes to Evangelism."
[10] This and all following Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
[11] Scrivener, "Evangelism Made Simple." Italics original.
[12] Kohlmeyer, "How Do We Overcome the Fear of Evangelism?"
[13] Kohlmeyer, "How Do We Overcome the Fear of Evangelism?" Italics original.
[14] Beougher, "How Do I Overcome My Fear of Evangelism?"
[15] York, "Overcoming Fear in Evangelism."
[16] Beougher, "How Do I Overcome My Fear of Evangelism?"
[17] Kohlmeyer, "How Do We Overcome the Fear of Evangelism?"
[18] Scrivener, "Evangelism Made Simple." Italics original.

An Interview with Scott Callaham about

World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues

Scott N. Callaham



Scott N. Callaham is Lecturer in Biblical Hebrew and Old Testament at Baptist Theological Seminary, Singapore, where he teaches in Chinese and English. He is the author of *Modality and the Biblical Hebrew Infinitive Absolute* (Harrassowitz, 2010) and the lead editor of *World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues* (Lexham, 2019).

Many books have been written on mission in recent years. What sets yours apart from other recent books on the topic?

The contributors to this book are trying to do something new and fresh that we have not seen in contemporary books on mission. Simply put, we are calling missiologists and missionaries back to the Bible because we believe that the church should return to the Bible for all aspects of mission. We really mean *all aspects*, and we don't want to domesticate this challenge to the church by merely advocating returning to the Bible as a guide for the *theology* and *practice* of mission, although these aspects of mission clearly need to be reformed. Instead, we are aiming for a complete rethinking of world mission that takes us back to the source—the Bible.

What motivated you to write this book?

While discussing the current state of world mission among ourselves, a number of the contributors realized that many missionaries readily acknowledge biblical "foundations" for the theory and practice of mission, but judge those foundations to be of little consequence to their work and leave them behind. Human-sourced, pragmatic philosophies instead take a leading role in their missional efforts. As we considered how to respond to this state of affairs, we decided that a book would enable us to reach the broadest possible audience in order to encourage rethinking of mission in light of the Bible.

Who is your target audience and how do you hope they will respond?

While we certainly encourage mission practitioners, mission sending agencies, seminaries, and mission training institutes to rethink mission theory and practice from a thoroughly biblical perspective, in the end we wrote the book for all biblically- and theologically-engaged Christians.

We hope that our readers respond to the book by adopting its ethos: trust in the full authority and sufficiency of all of Scripture. One example of this theme in action appears at the close of the first chapter, "Old Testament Theology and World Mission." There we advocate ways that the contemporary practice of world mission must change to align with Old Testament teachings. Indeed, missional theology begins in the Old Testament, which speaks clearly to a perennial question regarding the spread of the gospel message in our world today: "What about those who have never heard?" In the Old Testament we see that God reconciles humanity to himself through covenant relationship that he defines and initiates, and there is no hope of healing the destruction human sin brings outside of that covenant relationship.

A frequently overlooked story in the Bible dramatizes this very issue—the book of Ruth. In the beginning of the book, we meet two Moabite women whom we assume are worshipers of the Moabite god Chemosh. After the death of their Hebrew husbands, the natural thing to do would be to resume normal Moabite lives and worship the Moabite god. After all, what claim should any other people's gods have on their loyalty? Unfortunately, their mother-in-law Naomi, a supposed worshiper of Yahweh, seems to agree. After one daughter-in-law—Orpah—leaves to resume her Moabite way of life, Naomi insists that Ruth should likewise return to her people and god.

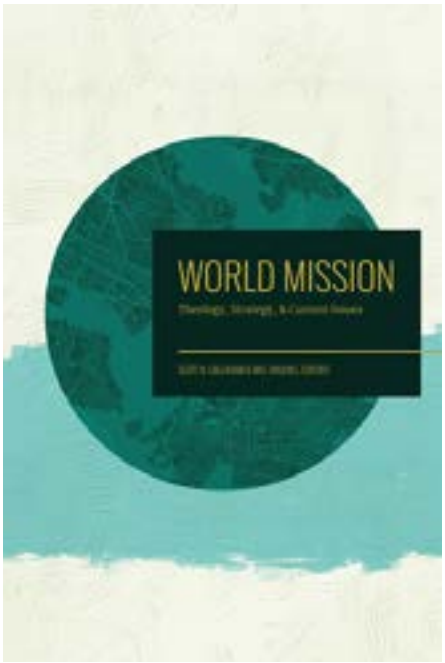
Startlingly and against common sense, Ruth utterly rejects the command to go home and instead swears by the name of Yahweh. Clinging to Naomi, she embraces her only real hope—the true God of whom she may have known very little. Yet she knew enough, and in a sense

knew more than her Israelite mother-in-law. What follows in the book of Ruth is an inspiring story of devotion centered upon this unexpected "woman of noble character."

How does Ruth's story apply to the concepts of covenant and mission? When Naomi kissed Orpah goodbye, it was the kiss of death. Orpah's departure consigned her to an eternity apart from God. In our contemporary practice of mission, we should never presume that there is any hope for people in religious or cultural systems that lock them out of relationship with God. This element of Old Testament teaching should impel Christians to obey the Great Commission.

What idea do you feel readers will find most challenging to accept?

The most challenging idea in our book reverberates through every chapter: the sufficiency of Scripture. It is possible to nuance belief in biblical authority, such as to claim that the Bible is the Christian's *highest* authority or the *primary* authority. It is an altogether different matter to accept that the Bible is the *only* authority. This is the concept of the sufficiency of Scripture. Accepting the sufficiency of Scripture means breaking free from trendy, pragmatically-based theories from self-referencing experts, as well as rejecting theological systems that have grown up to excuse lack of Great Commission obedience.



World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues
Scott N. Callaham and Will Brooks, eds. N.p.: Lexham, 2019. ISBN: 9781683593034

The Great Commission tells us how to make disciples: baptize them and teach them to obey everything that Jesus commands. Yet baptism and theological education—the two activities that Jesus commands as he defines disciple-making—receive scant attention in much contemporary missiological discussion.

What were the most surprising things that you discovered about mission during the writing and editing process?

In the course of our research and work on the book's strategy section, we discovered that a great deal of contemporary activity that aspires to the title "mission" curiously does not seem to spring from the Great Commission itself. When we go back to the Bible, we discover that the heart of the Great Commission is essentially the command, "Disciples, make disciples!" According to the Great Commission, all nations—everyone, from every ethnic group, in every place—is in focus in world mission strategy. The Great Commission tells us how to make disciples: baptize them and teach them to obey everything that Jesus commands. Yet baptism and theological education—the two activities that Jesus commands as he defines disciple-making—receive scant attention in much contemporary missiological discussion. Naturally, we hope to rectify this problem through our chapters on these subjects.

In the final section of the book, we address perennial issues that are just as current today as they have always been. For example, we endorse the surprisingly controversial idea that the message of mission is the Bible. Therefore, missionary language training should equip missionaries to communicate the Bible. Since the Bible is a written document, in most cases this requires training in literary skills, especially in the case of languages with writing systems that are markedly different from the missionary's own.

At first glance our emphasis on literacy may appear to ignore the plight of those who strive for effective communication to oral peoples. Often lacking Bible translations, missionaries in these pioneering situations may feel at a loss, wondering what stories of the Bible to choose to begin work with oral cultures. Interestingly, the study of biblical theology reveals that Scripture supplies its own template for communicating its grand narrative: a pattern significantly at odds with typical story sets used in Bible storying. Missionaries should employ these insights in their work, and constantly move along the path of throwing open the doors of access to the Bible for all peoples.

The degree of opposition to grammatical-historical exegesis within the missional community surprised us as well. For the Bible to escape cultural captivity within the missionary's own culture and also to resist syncretism in the context in which the missionary serves, remaining true to the biblical author's intent must remain paramount in missionary proclamation. The practice of *ethnohermeneutics*, for which culture controls interpretation, is simply reader-response by another name.

Lastly, we were quite surprised to find Paul's apostolic ministry frequently pressed into service to justify overturning Great Commission patterns of discipleship for the purpose of rapid missional advance. Others have helpfully urged a more balanced approach to following Paul's example, but our unique contribution follows the overall theme of our book: an appeal to lay aside artificial agendas and return to Scripture for every aspect of world mission.

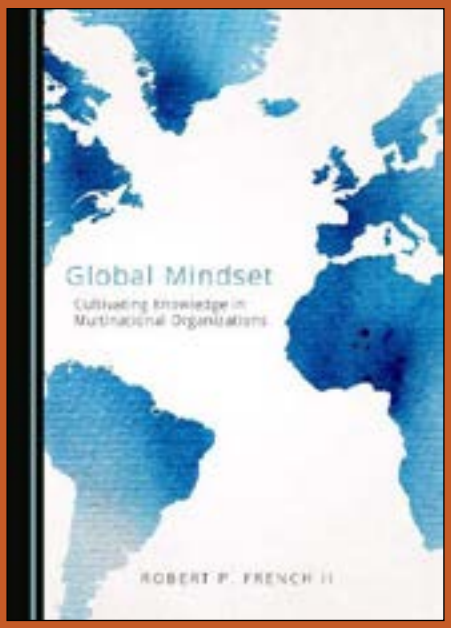
Do you have any final words for potential readers?

We ask that our readers hold us to our premise of trust in the authority and sufficiency of all of Scripture, and, like the Bereans in the book of Acts, examine the Scriptures continually to discern if what we assert is true. May God use our quest for truth in his word to return the church to biblical faithfulness in world mission! **MRT**

Global Mindset: Cultivating Knowledge in Multinational Organizations

By Robert P. French. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2019.
ISBN 978-1527518254. 180pp.

Reviewed by Irene McMahon



Over the past decade, the term global mindset has become a buzzword appearing in articles and books dealing with twenty-first century leadership. It is a concept which leaders of international mission organisations need to understand and pay attention to if they hope to train and support leaders in today's world.

The term has emerged primarily in the world of multinational corporations where it has been observed that, as leaders have relocated to new cultural contexts, previous effectiveness could not guarantee effectiveness in the new context. This led to the question: "why didn't effectiveness in one context guarantee success in another? Global mindset emerged as an explanation" (1). While the term offered an apparent explanation to the problem, the meaning of global mindset remained ambiguous. French's book is an attempt to clarify the concept and its associated assumptions.

One of the strengths of this book is the exhaustive literature review of works considering the concept of global mindset. Even so, French concludes that scholars' definitions and conceptualizations of this term are "vast, varied and difficult to summarize" (21). Of the 94 publications surveyed, 25% offered no definition and 36% offered unique definitions of the concept. These studies assume that a mindset somehow "enables an individual and/or organisation to effectively respond to global challenges and opportunities through cognitive processes, filters, or beliefs" (36). Yet the meaning of "mindset" lacks clear definition. The studies are consistent in their understanding that global knowledge is fundamental to cultivating a global mindset. Specifically, three types of knowledge are identified as imperative to a leader's effectiveness: cultural knowledge, knowledge of the industry in which s/he is working, and knowledge of the organisation they are part of (39). What is missing in much of the literature is a study of the relationship between global knowledge and global mindset. This is the contribution French hopes to make to this field.

French has elected to undertake his study within the industry of global Christianity. He has chosen the United Methodist Church (UMC) as it represents an organization operating in multiple contexts throughout the globe. He suggests that the industry of global Christianity is underrepresented in the study of global mindset.

What I believe is particularly useful for mission leaders is that French identifies the UMC as an organization "whose processes, and policies were developed in a particular cultural context and are likely ineffectual for a global organization" (46). This characterization could perhaps be applied to many world mission organisations. French thus finds that "despite the global organizational identity, experts recognise that the UMC does not and may not be capable of effectively operating as a global organisation within the bounds of its current organisational structure and processes" (79). It would be interesting to conduct a similar study within other world mission organizations to ascertain how many are capable of effectively operating as global organisations.

A further significant insight from this research is that "it is a potentially significant oversight to assume that individuals who are employed by or volunteer with a global organisation will self-identify as global members of the organization" (42). French's study was conducted in North America where he concedes that many members struggle to identify themselves as members of the global organisation (46). As many world mission organizations are made up of members and volunteers who live in a wide variety of contexts, it would be interesting to study how many self-identify as members of a global organisation.

One of the weaknesses of this book is actually the key finding, namely the revised definition of global mindset given in the final chapter: "A global mindset is comprised of two mindsets that enable an individual to effectively process global information by differentiating global complexities and cultural diversity (differentiative mindset) and integrating what has been differentiated within a specific context (integrative mindset)" (99). His desire for a definition that is theoretically robust results in one that laypeople will find challenging to understand. According to French, differentiation means to distinguish between two or more things and integration means bringing two or more things together. When applied to the context of global leadership, this means differentiating between an array of global complexities and culturally diverse concepts (similar to conceptualization) and then bringing them together to accomplish a specific task in a particular context (similar to contextualization).

From this perspective, a global mindset is a construct that can be developed by any individual through global or cross-cultural education, experiences, and skills. Having a "highly developed global mindset enables an individual to accurately conceptualize global information and then contextualize this global information appropriately in one or more contexts" (47).

This book addresses ideas that everyone in positions of global leadership should understand. It should be read by students and leaders alike who need to grapple with the concept and want a comprehensive survey of the literature on this subject. These are not easy concepts to grasp, but its revised definition is perhaps reflective of the complexity world leaders today face and have to navigate as they manage global organizations. This study is a foundational piece of work in studying the concept of global mindset in the world of not-for-profit organisations.