CONTEXTUALIZATION & the CHURCH
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ART WORK by ANDREA ARMSTRONG
EDITORIAL

How are we presenting the Gospel; are others really hearing and understanding?

I often like to look in the dictionary for the precise definition of a word that I know and use, but am not quite sure of how to explain the meaning. So, I tried to find the word, “CONTEXTUALIZATION”, and discovered that it is not in any of the dictionaries in our house. Interesting!

Next, I went to the internet, and came across only a few definitions, but some other interesting facts.

“CONTEXTUALIZATION” basically means, “to place (ideas or words, for example) in a suitable or particular context”.

The usage of the word “contextualization” or “contextualize” is about 3 out of 100 million (or more) words spoken or written in English. Obviously not a commonly used word.

In the world of missions, though, I would think that this word is used more than 3 in 100 million. But there are still many people who do not understand the meaning of the word, let alone the concept of contextualization in the church and in missions around the world.

We asked several people from different organizations and varying ministries to share something they are either using in their ministries or have witnessed being done in missions.

What we hear and how we understand something is not usually the same as others from different cultural backgrounds will hear and understand. So, how do we effectively share and present the Gospel to those of different cultural backgrounds? As you read through these articles, we trust that you will gain a deeper understanding of some of the issues that are facing people in cross-cultural ministries.

We also ask that you pray for those you know, and the many others who are involved in cross-cultural work, that they may have wisdom from the Lord in presenting the Gospel in such a way that people will truly understand and believe—in their own way.

Janet Armstrong
Look for the word “contextualization” in the Bible and you won’t find it. But, like the word “Trinity,” the concept is very evident in the Scriptures. Contextualization describes the process of adapting the unchanging gospel message to a myriad of cultural contexts in the world today.
The gospel is like a diamond. The diamond itself doesn’t change at all, but the light it diffuses looks very different from different angles or facets. Each cultural context will see that unchanging diamond in its own color. It is the color of their own worldview which ‘feels right’ to them. What is good news to an American may appear very different than what is good news to another nationality.

Contextualizing the gospel tries to remove unnecessary stumbling blocks to genuine faith in Christ. Some examples: the meaning of the cross is a legitimate stumbling block, but a symbol of the cross on a church or hung around one’s neck may be an unnecessary stumbling block in certain contexts. Prayer is a non-negotiable in Scripture, but the manner of praying is negotiable for different contexts. As believers in Christ, we have freedom to eat pork, but it may be an unnecessary stumbling block in some contexts.

Contextualization is simply an attempt to take off Western wrappings, which have typically become a part of worldwide Christianity, and put on ‘clothing’ which looks and feels much more natural and ‘right’ to others we are ministering to. The Church owes to the peoples of the world an understandable hearing of the unchanging gospel.

Let’s look at a select few examples of contextualization in the Bible from among many such examples.

1) Joseph
Genesis tells of Jacob’s son Joseph, who was brought to Egypt. We are told that “the Lord was with Joseph” (Gen. 39:23). When asked to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, Joseph’s reply is, “I cannot do it . . . but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires” (Gen. 41:16). His fellowship and witness of the one true God was strong, yet he seemed able to fit into a pagan culture. “Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife” (Gen. 41:45). Ancient On, later called Heliopolis, was the place of a temple to the sun. Joseph looked like an Egyptian and spoke their language.

2) Daniel and His Friends
Daniel and his three friends were faithful followers of Yahweh, yet they served for years in a pagan setting. The new names given to them, Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are all related to Chaldean gods. They were tutored in the language and literature of the Babylonians and were better at Chaldean wisdom than their peers. Eventually, they held very high positions in pagan governments. They would not compromise the non-negotiables of their faith, but obviously felt at home with a good deal of adaptation.

3) Jesus as a Jew—The Incarnational Model
In the New Testament, the prime and most radical example of contextualization is Jesus himself in his incarnation. The One we know as the second Person of the Trinity lived in a truly perfect culture in heaven as God. His acculturation was on such a deep level that he actually became a man, biologically, racially, socially, culturally, linguistically, and religiously. Jesus was unmistakably a Galilean Jew of the first century. Yet we also see that in certain cases, Jesus was willing to break the rules of his culture when necessary. A few examples would be his prioritizing being in his Father’s house rather than with his earthly parents, speaking to a Samaritan woman, touching lepers, and not following the traditions of the Pharisees when they conflicted with the Spirit’s leading.

4) Paul Versus the Judaizers
After Pentecost, the fledgling church grew rapidly in the form of people movement among Jews. The word “Christian” was not yet invented, and new believers never thought of themselves as ceasing to be Jews (there were no new “Christians” on the day of Pentecost, but there were about 3,000 new believers in Messiah Jesus).

One incident which brought a paradigm shift in the thinking of the young community was God’s arranging a meeting for Peter with the uncircumcised household of Cornelius. Nonetheless, circumcision and obeying the law of Moses remained a thorny issue in the church. The Judaizers or “party of the Pharisees” (Acts 15:5) still considered these as conditions for salvation. Acts 15 records the watershed decision made in the council at Jerusalem: Gentile believers are not required to be circumcised.

The Church owes to the peoples of the world an understandable hearing of the unchanging gospel.
Paul’s letter to the Galatians, his first, was written during this time period, and meets the issue head-on. Paul, the Hebrew of Hebrews, had known from the day of his conversion that he was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Rather than studying theology under the tutelage of the apostles in Jerusalem, he developed his own in Arabia. We see Paul practicing this contextualized theology in the book of Acts. Examine the way in which he speaks in a Jewish synagogue in Acts 13:13-43 and you will see a Jew communicating to Jews in very Jewish ways and referring to Jewish sources. Look at his approach in Acts 17:22-34 and we see a Jew consciously changing the content and style of his message to fit this pagan Greek audience. Here Paul uses a pagan altar as a bridge to their understanding of the gospel. Now he quotes not from the Old Testament but from a pagan poet with whom the audience was familiar. In fact, Paul and other New Testament writers did not hesitate to quote from pagan sources. “There are at least 133 references or quotations in the New Testament taken from Jewish and Greek non-biblical literature” (Accad 1997:26).

Paul writes about the messenger of the gospel in I Cor. 9:19-23. “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

These verses show the heart of a man who is motivated by Christ’s love. He will do almost anything for the sake of the gospel in the hope of winning some. He is willing to deny his own ethnocentrism. “Ethnocentrism” is derived from the Greek word ethnos, meaning a people or race. Ethnocentrism is the feeling that one’s own ethnic group is superior to others. It is racial or cultural pride and is a problem common to all cultures. The cross-cultural messenger of the gospel must recognize the tendency toward ethnocentrism and combat it. If not, he will tend to impose his own cultural norms on those he wishes to reach. The danger is that these cultural norms become a requisite to Christian faith. This was an obvious problem during the period of colonial missions, and we are not free of it yet. “Often it is not the ‘offense of the cross’ that closes Muslims to a reflectful consideration of Christ, but the offensiveness of the messenger” (Livingstone 1993:79).

We want to make the gospel as clear as possible to our hearers. Communication is not an easy matter even in one's own culture, so when communication is cross-cultural, it requires all the more sensitivity. In each cultural context, appropriate symbols and words must be used to communicate the message, which is the gospel. We, as cross-cultural messengers, make efforts to contextualize ourselves and our message for the hearers. But we also need to remember that the hearers themselves must contextualize the gospel message within their own culture. As messengers, we may have some role in guiding that process, but ultimately, the hearers/believers have the privilege, freedom, and responsibility of self-contextualizing. They then ‘own’ the message, and the gospel seed can grow and multiply best in the soil of their own culture.

References:

John Bailey* (pseudonym) works in a Creative Access Nation.
“When it is one of us and not one of them…”

Imagine that 50% of Japanese come to know and believe in Jesus.” I said.

“Wonderful!” said Mr. Nakamura, happy at the thought of the suggested scenario.

“What kind of festivities, cultural heritage would be around? What would Japan look like?” I continued.

A slightly distressed look appeared on Mr. Nakamura’s face.

“What kind of colors, sounds, images will there be in Japan?”

“Christmas, Easter….Hmmm, it’ll be terrible…” finally mumbled Mr. Nakamura.

Even if he and his family have given up observing their own festivities, it is something of a consolation that their cultural heritage is still very much present in their environment, forming the identity of the people of Japan of which they are a part.

We insist till we are blue in the face that Christianity is not a white men’s religion, so why is it that Japanese have to give up their own festivals and adopt white men’s festivals - even though both Christmas and Easter have origins as pagan as any Japanese ones?

It was the end of several months of Bible study with Mami, an 18 year-old girl who had gone through the Sunday School system and decided that she wasn’t going to be a Christian. We had been studying the Bible through the media of Japanese TV and pop music.

“It would be sad to leave the church.” She said, “Thank you for showing me a Jesus I have never known before. I think he’s really cool!”

“Do you think,” I asked one of the ladies in church, “if someone walks into the church, he will think that this place is Japanese?”

“Of course not!” Came her instantaneous answer. She burst out laughing at the thought.

Japanese is a culture in which the “outsider” (外) and “insider” (内) are systematically defined and foreigners are firmly on the outside (外国人 or 外人). We seem to be doing ourselves in by trying to attract people to God through their interest in Western novelties. We condemn Jesus to forever remain on the outside (外) of Japanese identity.

“Contextualization” – it’s a big word that’s being bandied around much in mission circle, but unfortunately one sees remarkably little effort put into the process.

When someone from the other end of the globe steps into a church in Japan and marvels at how similar it is to the churches they know ‘back home’, is it really a good thing?

“We praise God with the same songs, so even if I can’t read the lyrics on the screen I can still sing along in the original English version! And the church services are so similar, I feel right at home!” a visitor once said.

But the local people, unless they have had time to adjust to the new church culture, feel like foreigners in the church, singing a tune composed to speak to the hearts of people on the other side of the globe in a different language.

The issues involved in contextualization boil down to a few simple principles...
The first of these is “Respect”:
A genuine respect for the culture that has extended its hospitality to us says that there are many things we can, indeed need to, learn from them. We will not insist on staying the same. In fact, we will insist on changing to better feel along with the people we have come to live and work with.

My husband and I felt some degree of small achievement when we cried over a sad Japanese TV drama and laughed at the jokes of their stand-up comedians. We realized that we were beginning to understand Japanese people and beginning to feel as they feel when we laugh at what makes them laugh, and cry at what makes them cry.

It is also believing that the host culture has the resources that people can draw from to worship and understand the God of the Bible. People can come to know God their creator through these internal resources; they don’t have to put on Western glasses to see God.

“Respect” is believing that our host culture has something valuable to teach us about becoming better people and better Christians, because in some ways, they are superior to us. For instance, I have learned much about true humility and relating within a team from Japanese people.

The second one is “Love”:
It is love that seeks to learn and to understand - and having understood, to love more. We will then learn as a lover learns, not as a spy who will use his learning to ‘attack’ the very culture that hosts him. Without love, our best church planting strategies, skills and gifts, dedication and even our health broken down by overwork—all these can be in the end just hot air to puff up our own image.

We need to work for God, not just because of our love and obedience to Jesus, but also because of our deep, deep love for the people of our host culture. I genuinely think that I will be less than flattered if you were to tell me that you are spending time with me basically out of obedience to God rather than love for me!

I used to be distressed about not being as gifted as other people. However, I have learned that lots of love is better than lots of gifts. Over and over again, I have seen the great joy in people’s eyes when they hear our heart-felt praise for things Japanese.

An old Japanese farmer was once asked over national TV what his secret was for producing huge, perfectly red and juicy apples. His reply was “love” – not technology, fertilizers or any special tips.

As people bent on communicating the love of God, we must do no less.

Finally comes “Sincerity”:
Respect and love that are not sincere are not respect and not love. In the end, we become deceivers of others and of ourselves.

At a retreat for missionaries that I attended, a young lady and I started to have a chat.

“Do you like being in Japan?” she asked.

“Ooh, I love Japan! It’s the one place in the world I most want to be now.” I enthused.

“Wow, that’s great. Most people here seem to not like the countries they work in very much…”

We ultimately betray our true feelings – be it in our complaints, body language or behavior. If we profess to love a people, then let the love be sincere, let people sense our love for them through our lifestyles and attitudes. When we love deeply and respect sincerely, we may continue to stumble and make mistakes, but we would have started on the road of communicating God’s love for people in the language they understand – the language that speaks to their hearts.

That, I believe, is Contextualization.
When living or ministering in another culture, we are to respect and honor the people, their customs and traditions. This is the most resourceful and effective way to minister contextually.

Where on the earth the foot treads, there the sky is also esteemed.

PROVERB

(Indonesian)
CRITICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION IS A PROCESS (sometimes facilitated by a cultural outsider) whereby a particular people critically examines their understanding of their own culture in light of their growing understanding of the truth disclosed to them in the Scriptures. This process requires them to:

1. Evaluate and critique their traditional worldview, its beliefs and practices in light of careful study of the Scriptures
2. Align both personal and corporate behaviour with the gospel in a manner consistent with the gospel and appropriate to their life context.
3. Determine appropriate practices and forms for Christian life, worship, discipleship and service.

Contextualization is not about introducing Christian practices and forms; it is not about making new Christians conform to a particular form of Christian tradition. Rather it is about allowing and enabling believers to develop Christian practices and forms which conform with the gospel, but which may not necessarily conform with other traditional (cultural) forms of Christianity.
Critical contextualization requires **faithfulness** to the Biblical text through a process of careful exegesis, clear communication and meaningful incarnation of the Biblical message. Incarnation simply refers to the process of daily living as a Christian within a particular culture in a manner which aligns with the Gospel and imitates Christ in his incarnation.

**Critical contextualization requires critical evaluation of the culture—including its worldview, beliefs, values and practices.**

Critical evaluation of a culture is the careful examination of cultural assumptions and beliefs in light of Scripture.

Contextualization is not making the Biblical message relevant—that is not the task of the outsider or missionary—rather it is making the message meaningful in terms which the people can understand, facilitating critical reflection on the message of Scripture in the particular cultural context, and helping the people internalize the message, so that their worldview and behavior is transformed.

**Critical contextualization enables local (ethnic) believers to:**

- Evangelize their own people in a sensitive manner appropriate to their own cultural and self-awareness so that the Gospel will challenge them at the point of their core beliefs and sense of need. *(Note: Traditional western methods and materials may not be appropriate because they are oriented to the western concept of the autonomy of the individual; Western societies are very individualistic; most non-western societies are collectivistic and relationally interdependent. Western societies traditionally emphasize guilt; non-western societies are concerned with shame.)*
- Disciple other new believers in a sensitive manner appropriate to their own culture, beliefs, values and worldview and bring about a transformation in their hearts and minds consistent with the gospel and which leads to a biblical, transformed worldview and consequent transformed behavior.

(Note: contextual disciple will require locally developed or adapted methods and materials. It is not appropriate to translate or import materials uncritically. Contextual discipleship involves the wider community of Christians.)

- Plant the church in all the fullness of its Biblical purpose and various functions with governance and forms appropriate to their own specific cultural context. *(Note: There is always a temptation to import existing traditional forms. No forms should be imported without critical reflection: Are they consistent with Scripture? Are they appropriate to the cultural context?)*

**SYNCRETISM**

Syncretism is the blending of contradictory, incongruous or incompatible religious beliefs, values and practices.

Syncretism may be conscious and intentional, or it can be unconscious and unintentional.

Syncretism is the result of failure to contextualize critically. Syncretism is the uncritical contextualization of the Biblical message that results in an incompatible mix of Biblical teaching and practice with local traditional beliefs and practices. It is the failure to allow Scripture to judge cultural beliefs and practices.

Syncretism is sometimes due to “over-contextualization”. It may be the intentional or the unquestioning or uncritical acceptance of cultural values, beliefs and forms of behavior or religious practice. In this case it is a result of the failure to contextualize in a critical manner guided by Scripture. It is the uncritical acceptance of local beliefs and practices.

**Four Steps in Critical Contextualization**

The process we describe is not a clear cut step by step process, but a number of overlapping phases or activities. In fact all four phases can be happening simultaneously as an individual grapples at different levels with several different issues.
Phase One: Analysis

Critical contextualization requires us to be analytical. (Notice the adjective “critical”)

This means that the contextualization is not done without thought or reflection. It analyzes, examines and critiques cultural beliefs and practices.

There are at least three cultures involved:
- My own culture
- The culture of the host society/community
- The Bible’s culture

This critical contextualization often requires the “triad” of critical reflection—a dynamic interaction between “host culture”, “facilitator’s culture” and Scripture. All participants put their own culture under the judgment of Scripture. All participants seek to learn to read the Scripture afresh, setting aside their existing presuppositions and assumptions.

When I first lived among the Yali people of Papua I observed and heard about a number of practices which seemed wrong to me. As I reflected critically on some of these I realized they were not all wrong; but some were different.

For example, I discovered that they were not individualistic like me but were highly relational. Through critical reflection I came to value their view of life in community as more biblical than my western view, and this helped my own understanding of what the church is meant to be and changed some of my emphases in evangelism and discipleship.

Phase Two: Reflection

Critical contextual contextualization requires “ontological” reflection

In phase two, outsiders (facilitators) examine and critique (or judge) the culture. They seek to examine, interpret and test objectively the “truth claims” of the culture’s beliefs and values—both those expressed formally, and those deduced from how people actually are behaving; or by what ordinary people say and do. “Ontological” means it has to do with the nature of being, how people are and what people think of as a reality. The facilitators seek to discover objectively the nature of things as they are believed to be by the people, and test those in relation to the reality revealed to us in Scripture.

There were some cultural practices which new Yali Christians continued to do uncritically which were not in line with Biblical teaching. For example, when someone died pigs were given to the relatives. As I thought about this, I realized that some cultural practices can be good, some are dubious (in the gray area) and some are clearly wrong.

In observation and through questions, I learned that some of these pigs were used for hospitality for the mourners, some as tokens of comfort; but some were to compensate the spirits of dead ancestors. As an outsider I did not understand the nuances (shades) of different meaning. Only an insider can tell you what these differences mean to him or her. There were tacit (unspoken) religious beliefs about some of these funeral practices of the Yali; but there were also personal human feelings and cultural values, such as the importance of relationships and obligations to kin (relatives).
Phase Three: Evaluation

Critical contextualization requires critical evaluation

Critical evaluation moves into the third phase as the insider (indigenous or local culture person) begins to reflect on and evaluate his/her own culture—its beliefs, values and customs (social, religious and personal).

It would have been easy for me to give my advice to the Yali Christians about what to do about funeral pigs; but I had to avoid that for two reasons. First, my assessment of the practices might be wrong. Secondly, even if I was right, if the Yali Christians did not believe in their own hearts that what they did was wrong, my directive would lead to a change of behavior, but not a change of heart. Critical contextualization helps the insider reflect on and evaluate their practices.

Because of questions I asked of my friends, they invited me, “Tell us what we should do.” Instead, I told them, “Since you understand the meanings of the different funeral pigs, you yourselves have to judge what is right and what is wrong.” Then I offered to help them find answers in Scripture (because they did not yet have the whole Bible).

They decided that basically there were two categories of funeral pig—social and religious. Initially they were divided over the “religious” pigs: Some said that they simply honored dead ancestors; others said they were also associated with particular spirits. Evidently, for some, the underlying tacit (unspoken) belief was almost forgotten. But in the end, they all agreed to abandon the practice of offering funeral pigs in honour of ancestors.

The outsider missionary or church planter must be sensitive in the process to be:

- **primarily facilitative.** Help them process their thoughts by (a) encouraging them to talk without judgment or ridicule, (b) by asking probing questions which help them examine underlying issues and meanings. Facilitate their self-examination. It is not just their culture which is in question but their own lives.

- **passively directive.** The outsider never tells them what to do in terms of final choice. Passively directive means directing them to Scripture which you think is relevant and allowing or helping them interpret it. It means helping them explore and exegete passages of Scripture.

- **personally reflective.** Whenever you enter the equation, as an outsider you must examine your own life and your own culture. Be honest and show your willingness to be corrected by Scripture in your own life. Encourage them to be personally reflective too.

- **perceptively intentional.** It is possible to raise a question about what you see as a potential issue, to provoke the person into thinking about some issue you perceive but which may not yet have entered their awareness.

Phase Four: Transformation

Critical contextualization requires “missiological” transformation

The goal of critical contextualization is personal and (ultimately) corporate or cultural transformation. This requires a transformed worldview.

Working with the Yali people in a process of critical evaluation, I helped them:

- come to true faith and repentance
- learn to think theologically
- become effective in discipleship
- gain a biblical worldview

Transformed personal behavior will:

- result in a clear testimony to the community of the power of God in radically transformed lives. (Note: It may result in conflict/opposition or power encounter. I do not believe that power encounter is an action of the outsider, but a spiritual dynamic, where the Holy Spirit is at work in the insider.)

- invite questions and opportunities for witness

- generate a desire to share their faith verbally

- provoke a desire to worship

- lead to the establishment of a worshipping community in the culture and in a culturally appropriate manner

- lead (as the church multiplies) to a transformed society with the gospel contextualized or internalized appropriately and critically.

John is a 3rd generation missionary. He and his wife, Gloria, served twenty years as missionaries in Papua (Irian Jaya), Indonesia, and currently is the Asia Training Coordinator for World Team. They have 3 adult sons. Along with elders of the “stone age” Yali people in Papua, John & Gloria helped to translate the entire Bible — the first completed translation in any language in
What is the appropriate relationship of a Christian to a local church? How should followers of Christ “belong”? 

Mark Naylor

This is an important consideration when ministering cross-culturally, because cultural forms shape the way people understand “belonging”. For example, a helpful, if somewhat simplistic, diagram is provided to demonstrate three levels of relationships in which people experience belonging: Community, Family and Individual.

Some cultures, such as most western cultures, give great emphasis to individual relationships. A person is encouraged to develop numerous relationships in a variety of contexts (family, school, sports, church, work, etc.), with the hub of these relationships based on the individual.

Some cultures, such as many Asian cultures, find their primary identity within the family. Thus all relationships are made with a primary concern for the impact on the family. Marriages are arranged, and jobs are provided through family connections.

Other cultures, such as small tribal groups, have a strong community focus. In one African tribal group, when children reach their adolescent years, they are separated from their families. The boys then grow and mature within one house while girls live in another. Thus deep relationships are forged that influence all other decisions in life.
Such cultural dynamics shape the way that people will seek to belong in a church setting.

In the Asian context where we were involved in church planting, the current church planting goal is to define church life within the household setting, rather than impose a model that encourages individualistic decisions to attend particular meetings or commit to certain relationships.

However, this family model would most likely be inappropriate for a Canadian setting in which the individual is responsible for their own network of significant relationships, some of which occur within a single church context, but many are outside of the church.

The successful church planter must evaluate and work with the significant relationship networks of his or her community in order to understand how Christian community can be expressed in that context.

Mark and his wife, Karen, have served as missionaries with FEBInternational since 1985. Their ministry was in Pakistan among the Sindhi people in evangelism and church planting, and leadership development and training for Sindhi Christian leaders. They are now living in BC, Canada where Mark works at Northwest Baptist Seminary. He is still involved in Bible translation work into the Sindhi language. The NT in Sindhi is now complete and the goal is to print the entire Bible in Sindhi early in 2008. The Naylors have four children, Becky, Matthew, Philip and Sean.
Rev. Kim Chong Pae has been away on a 2-year leave in the USA—studying at Fuller Theological Seminary. He and his family are now back at ACTI, and excited about what the Lord has planned for them. Their children are all in different levels of schooling: James is in Korea, studying in University, Annie is planning to also study in Korea, and Sally is attending school in Singapore.
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Before my first visit to a "Three-Self" (official) church in China, I wondered, "How will I understand what is going on without knowing the Mandarin language and the Chinese culture?" During this particular service, however, I was surprised to hear translated Western songs and observe worship patterned after traditional Western forms. After the service concluded, Chinese and American Christians met informally to sing familiar hymns, the Americans in English and the Chinese in Mandarin.

What we witnessed was not a contextualized Chinese church, as we anticipated, but a replica of a transplanted, Western one. Such churches reflect the culture and heritage of the original sending church. The initial missionaries establish patterns within the target culture which mirror those of their own culture. These non-indigenous forms then become routinized as local Christians adopt them as part of the gospel. Contextualized churches, on the other hand, develop local ways for reflecting God's will by asking the very difficult question, "How does God expect His eternal will and message to be reflected in this cultural context?"

A transplanted church is like a potted plant transferred to a new culture. It is expected to grow and reproduce exactly as it did in the original culture. A contextualized church is like planting "God's seed" in new soil and allowing the seed to grow naturally adapting to the language, thought processes, and rituals of the new culture without losing its eternal meanings. These eternal meanings include a biblical perspective of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, humanity, time and eternity, and salvation.

A transplanted church could also be compared to a banana plant in Canada. To survive winter, it has to be taken into the house and given special care. Because it is unable to adapt to the new climate, the plant will never be able to reproduce itself. Contextualized churches, on the other hand, are like banana plants in the Bahamas. They thrive in their environment and produce much fruit.

Many mission churches, like potted plants or banana plants in a cold climate, are unable to reproduce and need special care just to survive. This missiological reflection will contrast transplanted and contextualized churches in four areas: functional arrangements, leadership patterns, cognitive approaches, and message formulation.
**Functional Arrangements**

Times for Sunday worship are frequently patterned after the schedule of the sending church. These transplanted churches may view 10:00 A.M. on Sunday as God’s sacred time of worship. In many late night cultures, like Uruguay, however, many religious groups have their largest worship services at 7:00 or 7:30 P.M. Many early Christian churches met in the evenings so that Christian slaves were able to join Christian freedmen in worship and fellowship.

The order of worship in transplanted churches also follows that of the sending churches. The missionaries from sending churches whose worship services consist of “a prayer, three songs, preaching, an ‘invitation’ song, more songs, announcements, and a closing prayer” establish churches with such patterns. Those from testimonial churches have testimonial worships. Cell-based churches tend to believe that their organized cell structure fits every context in the world. Leaders of transplanted churches fail to ask the question, “What worship forms and structures bring eternal Christian meanings and spiritual formation into this contemporary culture?”

It is obvious that human culture rather than divine revelation designates these times and patterns of worship.

**Leadership Patterns**

Leadership patterns of transplanted churches also reflect those of the original sending church. Western cultures are youth-focused, and their churches prefer energetic, vibrant preaching ministers who appeal to young families. However, when such young leaders are ordained in age-oriented societies, they tend to attract only the young and their churches are considered “for children.” Such churches frequently disintegrate or stagnate because of immaturity. Young preachers in age-oriented societies do not appeal to the full age spectrum of the culture as they do in the West.

Some North American churches organize themselves with a plurality of elders, who shepherd the preaching minister and the entire flock. In addition to being shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4), they frequently serve as a board of directors who make the basic decisions for the entire church. This organizational structure works wonderfully well in rural or small-town America with its egalitarian focus and business orientation. Egalitarian churches in authoritative Latin America, however, seldom develop the incisiveness to significantly grow. Strong apostolic leaders, following the model of Paul, select elders and empower other leaders. In Latin America some transplanted churches have an egalitarian leadership patterned after North American churches. Contextualized churches, while still reflecting the servanthood of Christ, have strong leaders. Church planters in Latin America tend to be crusade evangelists, who call unbelievers from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to the kingdom of God thus confronting the spiritistic practices of popular religion. Trained nurturers are then left behind after the campaign to organize the new converts into a Christian community. The founding crusader, however, maintains close contact with the new developing churches by working with local leaders to develop the spiritual and physical resources for the growing movement. Egalitarian leadership is one of the great deterrents of church development of many fellowships in Latin America.

The Bible, while giving principles of Christian leadership (Mark 10:35-45) and structure (Titus 1:5-9), was not meant to be a detailed instructional manual on leadership patterns.

**Cognitive Approaches**

David Hesselgrave, using material from Edmund Perry via F. H. Smith, describes three cognitive approaches to reality: (1) the conceptual or rational typified by modern Westerners, (2) the concrete relational illustrated by Confucian-oriented Chinese, and (3) the intuitional characterized by traditional India (1991, 301-304). These cognitive approaches greatly impact how people from different cultures approach and worship God. Rationalists seek to know, understand, and differentiate.

The Christian worldview is systematically presented in propositional categories. Concrete relationalists emphasize respect, responsibility, and community. "Life and reality are seen pictorially in terms of the active emotional relationships present in a concrete situation" (1991, 303). Intuitionalists solicit oneness, unity, and harmony. Their intuition "emanates from inner experience and vision" (1991, 303). All three of these are operative in all cultures but are emphasized in varying degrees.

Transplanted churches, both consciously and unconsciously, superimpose their cognitive approach upon other cultures.
Transplanted churches, both consciously and unconsciously, superimpose their cognitive approach upon other cultures. Western transplants frequently reflect cognitive forms of worship, emphasize content over relationship, and avoid any type of inward experience.

Contextualized churches, on the other hand, theologically reflect upon scripture and purposefully communicate God’s eternal message into the receptor culture. Consequently, the church’s music reflects the culture. Thus Christian lyrics powerfully present the Gospel in the melodies and rhythms of the receptor culture rather than using those of the sending culture. For example, people in emotional cultures like those in Latin America do not have to become Western rationalists in order to come into our churches. During my recent four months in Latin America, I visited many growing churches. One distinctive feature of each is that they expressed praise to God with great emotion. I believe that Bible-believing people with a great knowledge of the scriptures can also be Christians of great emotion.

God accepts followers by grace through faith and obedience from all three cognitive modes!

Message Formulation

Evangelists in transplanted churches assume that the one Gospel should be preached in the same way in every context of the world. The sermons are merely translated from one language to another. Contextualized churches, however, realize that both presentation of the message and its form and structure must be adapted to the receptor culture.

Illiterates among the Aja of Benin are oral learners and most effectively hear the Gospel as narrative. Topical lessons might fill in the gaps of the narrative but stories are not only remembered but also provide the historical backdrop for theological understanding. The teaching that Christ has defeated the principalities and powers (Col. 1:15) has little impact on secular Americans or Europeans who have little understanding of spiritual powers. The concept of Christ, the triumphant One who has defeated the spirits, is, however, the metaphor that stirs the heart of the animist, Spiritist, and New Ager and brings him to the foot of the cross (Van Rheenen 1991, 141-42). Only in Christ can one find deliverance from the fear and control of the satanic realm. Christian proclamation among unbelievers must focus on those metaphors of atonement that most impactfully touch their hearts and help them understand the kingdom of God.

Theology is thus like light reflecting off of a prism. Although the prism is of one substance, it can be seen in different ways depending on the direction, color, and intensity of the light. So it is with the Christian message. Although there is one Gospel, it can be perceived through different metaphors and types of presentation.

Transplanted churches are established by missionaries who are ill-prepared to learn local languages, discern the essence of the indigenous cultures, and collaboratively theologize with maturing Christians to interpret God’s eternal message and apply it to local cultural issues. Naive contextualization has been greatly amplified by the “re-amateurization of missions in the 21st century” (Winter, 1996). Many missionaries go out without adequate training and recreate transplanted churches. The great need is for missionaries who learn local languages and cultures and work with local Christians to apply God’s eternal message to local culture.

Sources Cited


USED WITH PERMISSION

Dr. Gailyn Van Rheenen served as missionary to East Africa for 14 years, taught missions and evangelism at Abilene Christian University for 17 years, and is currently Facilitator of Church Planting in Mission Alive, a rapidly growing ministry to equip church planters, provide church planter care, focusing on "planting Christ-formed churches" in North America. (www.missionalive.org). He has written several books on missions. His web site (www.missiology.org) provides "resources for missions education" for local church leaders, field missionaries, and teachers of missions. Gailyn and his wife Becky are parents of four children (one deceased), and have three grandchildren.
Most missionaries struggle with contextualization. What is it? How do you define it? What does it really involve? Dean Flemming takes some of the mystery out of contextualization by showing that the New Testament gives us concrete examples of what contextualization entails.

Flemming not only provides insights into issues of contextualization, he explains the contextualization methodology of the New Testament writers. In doing so, he has provided us with a handbook to help us read the New Testament reflectively in order to assist new Christians in the process of contextualization of the gospel in their cultures, but also to help people in historically Christian cultures to re-contextualize the gospel.

The New Testament is a rich compendium of case studies in theological contextualization in a variety of cross- and inter-cultural contexts. In each context a particular worldview (with its beliefs, values, ethics and consequent behaviour) is challenged, and an alternative, biblical and gospel-centered worldview (with its own beliefs, values, ethics and consequent behaviour) is presented in a variety of possible ways.

Contextualization is never a "one size fits all" methodology. At best, as the subtitle suggests, there are "patterns for theology and mission". Each context is treated with sensitivity to the specific issues faced. What is crucial in this process is firstly a clear grasp of the bible narrative and its theology of redemption, and secondly, a sensitive but critical understanding of the culture with the ability to apprehend and build on the common ground, while at the same time, to challenge what does not align with the Bible's theological perspective.

Flemming makes a wonderful contribution to the literature on contextualization. In my experience, missionaries do not appreciate the resource they have in Scripture for contextualization, or that good contextualization starts with good exegesis. Flemming’s book is a great guide and rich resource. He has done a lot of spade work in grappling with a number of significant texts, and shown that the NT writers were already doing contextualization and how they did it!

Buy or borrow this book. It will enrich your understanding of the New Testament and enable you to learn from the models of contextualization discussed.
Contextualization & Eschatology

Dr. Tan Lai Yong
While on holiday with my family, I saw this signboard outside a home that was being renovated. The builders advertised that they were totally committed to giving a good finish to the house.

I live and work in a region where there are more than 25 different people groups. There is indeed a rich diversity of cultures that is being influenced by modern education and the economics of rapid urbanization. We need to be contextualized when we present the Gospel. Much has been studied and written about cultures and customs. We certainly need to know the inclinations of our host culture as well to discern the influence of taboos and traditions that modified our own understanding of the Christian life.

The signboard outside the house that was being renovated reminded me that cross cultural workers should also take on the same attitude – to have the finish in mind right from the start. We should view our work in church planting and evangelism from the end times and this should modify the methods and ways that we present the Gospel.

From the passage in Ephesians 5:25-27, we catch a glimpse of the Apostle Paul’s view of the church from the end times:

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

As we work to present to Christ a radiant church, holy and blameless, we should be looking at ways:

- a) to love the church
- b) to give up our status and examine our traditions
- c) to present the Word

In our desire to surge forward, there may be situations when missionaries seem to love their plans and methods more than the people. I have been in situations where foreign workers very quickly want to start an orphanage or a bible school without first learning the local language and culture, and without connection with the fledging local church.

When I moved into the host country in 1996, I could not get a medical license though I was a qualified doctor in Singapore and even held medical registration to practice in the United Kingdom. There was a feeling of professional loss and emptiness in status. Trained as a doctor, it was tempting for me to quickly start a clinic. That would allow me to help the many needy and poor patients in an area where there were few doctors. Deep in my heart, I also knew that a medical practice would also allow me to quickly establish my status. However it dawned on me that in many poor villages, there was a much bigger need for clean water, toilets, and health education. In the long run, having good sanitation, clean water and appropriate hygiene knowledge would give the villagers better health than having a clinic. But these changes take a much longer time.

These days, many missionaries, especially Asian missionaries that are being sent out, are highly trained and qualified. Many have seminary degrees and are respected pastors that are held in high esteem in their own countries. There is an unsaid culture shock when entering a host culture that does not have a place in the society’s pecking order for ordained clergy.

We should view our work in church planting and evangelism from the end times and this should modify the methods and ways that we present the Gospel.
In unreached areas, there may be a naïve and somewhat healthy ignorance of churchmanship or church government. It does not always do the new church that much good to quickly introduce the methods and traditions from our own sending culture. We have to first ask the eschatological question of what the church is to look like when Christ comes.

I do not have the answers and would apologize if I have stepped on anyone's feelings for bringing up sensitive issues. This is not the process of ordination or about the doctrine of Holy Communion. But I feel troubled when church traditions from another country are introduced into a local church plant too quickly.

In some instances, the foreign missionary assumes that only ordained people can initiate the Holy Communion. Since he or she is the only ordained person in the newly planted local church, it automatically means that locals will not be leading the Holy Communion. How would this affect the locals? Are we empowering them?

Are we ready to give up on our positions of influence as we had experienced in our home churches so that we can focus on presenting the local church radiant through the Word and the Spirit? I do not have the answers but would encourage much thinking and prayer in our own situations as we seek to plant and build up local churches.

Contextualization does not mean that we simply drift along with our host culture. Paul talks about the cleansing through the Word. We need to bring a counter culture ie a biblical lifestyle with us and through us.

Practically I found it useful to:

- **listen to the changes**
- **actively allow for changes**
- **provide for intentional change**

A good start onto the journey of contextualizing our faith to local culture is to spend time with local friends. While our long term intention is to share the Gospel, we should take time to listen and earn the right to be heard. Drinking tea – synonymous to relaxing time together – is a good way in my host culture. Sometimes, I review my past month and will take note if I had not spent enough time just hanging out with locals (often because I spent too much time in meetings and business / administration tasks).

Over a cup of tea, I listen and ask questions about education, the market economy, inflation, corruption, illness and lack of health care ... and how these issues affect and change their way of living. I listen to the changes and eventually want to tell them about the love of our unchanging God.

From a long term perspective – developing local leaders will be a giant step forward for contextualization of the Christian faith. This is one intentional change that missionaries must work towards.

Also, we should be aware that contextualization is not just about methods. We do need the guidance of the Spirit and the wisdom from God’s word. We need to discern the appropriate application of biblical truth in each culture and among each generation.
In the book “Habits of the Mind”, James Sire writes that Christians suffer from the sin of arrogance. That same arrogance causes others to suffer. Our very assurance that we as Christians are in possession of the truth has been and continues to be a barrier to others learning the truth we claim to know. He then quotes Richard John Neuhaus:

“Few things have contributed so powerfully to the unbelief of the modern and postmodern world as the pretension of Christians to know more than we do … If Christians exhibited more intellectual patience, modesty, curiosity, and sense of adventure, there would be fewer atheists in the world ...” (Habits of the Mind by James Sire IVP)

Where I live and work now, coffee drinking became more in the vogue a few years ago. Tea was thought of as an old fashion habit. But in the past 2 years, tea drinking made a huge come-back. Prices of tea spiraled. Tea merchants would now encamp themselves by tea farms so as to be the first to bid for and buy the tea leaves.

Fashion, styles and tastes will come and go. We are assured that God’s Word will stand firm and so should humbly and wisely bring His truth in relevant ways to wherever He brings us.

Dr. Tan Lai Yong is from Bethesda Frankel Estate Church in Singapore. He is married with 2 children.

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One of ACTI’s Greatest Assets is our MULTI-CULTURAL SETTING

Trainers, staff, lecturers, trainees are from different cultures and various backgrounds.
1. What does mission history say to us?

In countries, where the “Christian” colonial period lasted many years, mission efforts were mainly focused on planting Westernized forms of Christianity. As a result, people groups with animistic backgrounds accepted forms that were regarded as those conveying Christian meanings and they ‘became Christians’. However, for the majority of people groups, those efforts only resulted in prejudice toward Christianity along with antagonism toward the colonial force.

Regardless of the worldwide trend characterized by modernization and globalization, and even though people in those countries seem to be open to adopt certain parts of Western culture, Christianity is considered a political and religious power structure in competition with other religions.

There are existing denominations and churches in these countries due to missionary efforts made long ago. But, they seem to be isolated Christian groups not able to influence the majority in those countries with the Gospel. The harvest (goal of our mission) must be Christ-centered community of which members are the people of that land and Jesus the Messiah is confessed as King in the Kingdom of God by those people residing in the land where we want to see His body.

In some countries, the majority of the indigenous people are rarely found in churches. There are local people worshiping, but almost all are from Christianized people groups and immigrant outsiders. It should be His body for these people. However, up until now, we have failed to see His body of which members are mainly UPGs.
2. A Requirement of Change in Mission Paradigm

It has been over 30 years since Ralph Winter initiated the UPG mission focus. An emphasis on the need for a paradigm shift in mission focus has repeatedly been at stake - the change in focus from geographical to UPG.

Many Christian workers involved in ministry are actually engaged in activities within definitely Westernized church or denominational structures rather than in direct host people contexts. As long as church activities are done within Christian society, isolated from the host people, church workers are rarely given true opportunities to approach the people for Gospel evangelism. Thus, they normally wait for people to come by chance into church or denominational structures. Church planting movements concept (CPM) introduced by Garrison has become a resource to understand the missiological goal among UPGs.

Now is the time to go through a true paradigm shift not just emphasizing mission focus in terms of the target, but looking at the nature of mission and Gospel evangelism in frontier mission fields and at the end vision. This kind of paradigm shift is not something new in missiological understanding, but the same principle Religious Reformers struggled with - to turn to true Biblical principles. Ralph Winter commented about this as the reformation in modern missions that is about to happen on a global level; it is the release of the Gospel from its distinctively Western clothing just as Paul released the Gospel from its Jewish clothes and Luther released it from its Latin clothing.

3. Issues in the Requirement of a Paradigm Shift

“The Kingdom of God” vs. “Church Growth in Christianity” Paradigm.

Before dealing with church growth, we need to understand what church means. Generally, a visible church could be defined as a Christ-centered local community. It must be the body of Jesus. The goal of our mission is to see a vital and indigenous church movement in every UPG. The nature of the body of Jesus is inherently organic, going through spontaneous growth, with its own initiative and driving motivation in its life nature. That growth is the very Biblical nature of true church as the body of Jesus.

The HUP (homogeneous unit principle), believed to be the church growth principle introduced by Donald McGavran, is that of introducing organic nature in its growth. Korean church growth seems to fit this model. In a people group where there is not any explicit cultural barrier in terms of Gospel communication, the church as His body that is organic in nature can experience rapid growth. This was the Korean case as it was a homogeneous people group sharing historical and cultural common ground.

Considering this, what kind of paradigm shift is required? Discussion on church growth is often made from a local church’s perspective, about number increases of church members attending worship services or involved in church activities. Some say that number increase is not important, but quality in terms of members’ spiritual growth. However, both cases are still focused on the local individual church. This church growth paradigm is as vertical as that of the Jerusalem church. Many big churches are formed with this church growth concept. However, for most, the dynamic nature of an organic body is almost lost in the end. Why was the Jerusalem church scattered?

From the Kingdom development point of view or from mission perspective, how do we understand the real meaning of church growth? As in Matthew 24, the end of our mission will come when the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

What type of churches do we expect? Churches in Acts were not cathedrals, but home-based fellowships. Many mammoth churches are now trying to get away from the stagnating situation they face, by introducing a cell-like structure. It is not an issue of quality or quantity in a church, but the horizontal spreading of the Gospel among all nations. Though this seems a good idea for big churches, they will still have a centralized structure that cannot resolve the real issue.

If we continue to make efforts to plant churches the same as in our original contexts, we may not see the vibrant growth of His Kingdom among UPGs. Their context cannot be understood from our own perspective, where we feel comfortable in familiar cultural clothes and Christian structures. We need to revive the spirit like that of Hudson Taylor who willingly took risks and tried as much as he could to become like the local Chinese.

God’s Kingdom development is like seeds planted by the sower, with growth in good soil resulting in a harvest (Mark 4). There must be a spontaneous growing element, the very nature of organic entity.
Need for Rediscovery of the “Biblical Meaning of Church”

Church is described as a living organic entity in the Bible. An organic body can be characterized by the mutual interaction between cells within, where each one has its own life phenomena as a living unit.

Planting a church is not a matter of purchasing land and a building for worship or congregational activity. This concept is non-organic from the start.

One group, for example, is the 3rd largest people group in a country in Asia, with population of nearly 15 million. Tremendous effort has been made for church planting among them for over 150 years. As a result, around 15 churches are found, including a big gymnasium-like church established in a main city. However, the saddest thing is that we rarely find these people there. The majority don’t see churches as something that has relationship with their lives. Do we still continue church planting in this manner, which has failed so far? If we are not focused on people specifically living in a land, and don’t really understand the true meaning of church, we may continue to construct buildings, waiting for some people to come in or snatching some neglected people from society to be a group of aggregated individuals leaving their original community behind.

Church is neither a building nor a simple aggregation of individuals. In Acts we see the church as a community worshipping the Lord among the people in that society. They continued to remain in the existing socio-religious networks and at the same time gathered together in homes for fellowship based on faith in Jesus. We want to see this indigenous and vital church movement happening among these UPGs, but without clear rediscovery of the Biblical meaning of the church, we may not. As an organic body has its own initiative and intrinsic motivation to live, we need to emphasize the local people’s initiative as a crucially important factor for growth as an organic entity. What do we understand about church?

We may have different definitions of the term “church”. Some may understand planting a church as the way of His Kingdom development. Others may see Kingdom development as something much bigger than church establishment. In any case we need a rediscovery of the real meaning of the Church.

Correct Emphasis in Mission: “People” vs. “Ministry” Paradigm

Modern mission often puts emphasis on types of ministries, such as professional teaching, campus ministry, medical ministry, computer ministry, kindergarten, business ministry, etc. and there are new ones continually being created. (This variety of ministries may help with a creative, holistic approach.)

While focusing on the type of ministry, the starting point of mission has often been: “What can I do?” or “Where can I find the mission field which fits my background or professional experience?” As a result, mission directivity tends to depend on one’s capability in certain professions. In many cases, before knowing the people or their spiritual condition, the worker tries to find any possible mission field where his professional expertise might fit. Many candidates prepare themselves with goals like “I will do x-type of ministry”.

If we focus on “What does God want to realize among this people?” recognizing the remaining task among UPGs, we would understand that emphasis should not be put on a ministry type.

Correct emphasis on what must be done among the people may impact us to feel such a great burden that even with all knowledge or professional expertise we have it could never be fulfilled unless God gives His divine intervention. Therefore it should be that we put our emphasis on unreached people groups rather than on the type of ministries. Many committed believers want to go out to be witnesses of Jesus; however they seem to be too concerned about professional capability, opting to spend much time in developing their skills. Some people without professional expertise give up on going to the mission field, even though they had a very strong conviction of God’s calling.

We should be willing to live in the context of UPGs, where we may learn their felt needs and understand what must be done. In that context then, professional background (if any) may have useful meaning. What is important is willingness to live together with the people - the principle of incarnation when Jesus says “I send you as Father sent me”. This is the principle of contextualization.

What is important is willingness to live together with the people - the principle of incarnation when Jesus says “I send you as Father sent me”.

4. Missional End Vision

While UPG focus requires a paradigm shift from geographical to people, its goal has been uncertain. Here a true paradigm shift is needed in the traditional CP concept, where planting church has been regarded as the goal of mission. The traditional CP is static when the goal is planting, but as in Acts, Kingdom development is characterized by dynamic people movements to Christ.

The Homogeneous principle suggests the importance of the people unit where cultural barriers are minimized for effective Gospel spreading. In Acts, where the Gospel spread out in a dramatic way resulting in a collective movement to Christ, we see the socio-religious context of group decision at work.
Donald McGavran introduced the concept of a chain-reaction-like people movement to Christ within a homogeneous unit, a people group. Garrison describes CPM as a phenomena, “a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment”. Two important words are rapid and indigenous. For rapid reproduction, we must learn the principle Paul taught to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:2. The word indigenous is related to the matter of initiative. The initiative must belong to the insiders so the movement can come from within their context and can be their own.

Psalm 67 says, “the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth…. And all the ends of the earth will fear him”. This end vision should be realized along with what is written in Revelation 15:4, “Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” What must be the missional end vision? It seems to be clear. But, we need to ask humble questions of ourselves. Where are we now standing with that great God given vision?

5. Conclusion

We have tried to think about the UPG paradigm in mission. A paradigm shift needs to be made in terms of mission focus from geographical to UPG, a true paradigm shift that is parallel with the revival of the frontier mission spirit of Hudson Taylor, seen in Acts.

We should recognize that the old traditional church planting paradigm seems to be at odds with the original meaning in the Bible. Church is not a building or denominational structure, but an organic entity consisting of communities united together in a Christ-centered way. If we are insensitive to knowing how God is working in modern mission era, we will surely see the same failures made in mission history. The Holy Spirit who was and is guiding our lives is exactly the same one who works in the UPGs.

Adapted from an article by John Kim

* John Kim has been serving in SEA since 1994.
i Ralph D. Winter introduced a new term “Unreached People Group” at the opening session of Rosanne World Mission Congress in 1974. Since then, UPG has become a new pioneering mission focus.
ii David Garrison, “Church Planting Movements”. (IMB, 1999)
iv True meaning of church growth introduced by McGavran is not a vertical one that is often understood as an increase in the number of church members at a local worship place that is also often recognized as church or sometimes even as holy temple. The church growth that he introduced must be the Gospel spreading or propagating in horizontal way. A good story is introduced by him; “The Story of a People Movement to Christ” (MF, 1995).
v So many verses can be found: Eph 2:21-22; 4:12-16, Col 1:18; 2:19; John 15:4, etc.
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