

Business as Mission: The Distinctives and Challenges of a New Approach to World Mission

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This is a pre-published draft of a paper that will be included in the Evangelical Missiological Society's forthcoming volume on Business as Mission, edited by Mike Barnett and Tom Steffen, and published by William Carey Library. Please do not republish or forward in any form without permission from the publisher.

Abstract

In this paper we argue that "Business as Mission" (BAM) is part of a much larger movement within the Church, a movement that recognizes that "ministry," properly perceived, is something all Christians are called into, is something that most often takes place *outside* of a church building, and primarily by lay people. BAM shares much in common with "Tentmaking" and "Marketplace Ministries," two sister camps within this movement, although there are important differences as well. The differences are not well understood and, as a result, neither are the unique challenges and opportunities. This paper begins with a brief overview of the distinctives of each camp, followed by a more detailed discussion of BAM and the internal debates taking place among its advocates. Our discussion draws heavily upon insights that were gained during the 2004 Forum of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization held in Pattaya, Thailand. The paper concludes with recommendations for overcoming the challenges and for how missiologists and theologians can assist this new movement.

Introduction

The speaker was in some ways a caricature of globalization – an Iranian-born citizen of Canada, educated in the U.S., and now working in China alongside her American husband. In 1993, before an audience of about 19,000 college students, “Mary” shared the following story:

[M]y husband and I traveled to a remote place in China – we went as far as the airplane could take us, and then on by train. That evening as we strolled down the street we stopped at a little sidewalk restaurant to eat. Knowing that we were foreigners, the people eagerly crowded around us and began saying, "Coca Cola. We like Coca Cola." We asked them if they had ever heard of Jesus? After some murmuring they answered, "No, no one had ever heard that name." In anguish, I wondered why Coca Cola had gotten to this area, and after 2000 years, Jesus had not?¹

Her story illustrates the remarkable capacity of business to reach people virtually anywhere in the world, including places where the gospel still struggles to gain a foothold. It also helps explain why well-known evangelicals such as Billy Graham, Henry Blackaby and Wayne Grudem are focusing more of their attention on the heretofore neglected role of business – and those who run them – in mission. This increased attention is part of an even broader movement, perhaps the first great missionary movement of the Twenty-First Century, in which laypeople from every profession are discovering, or rather, *rediscovering*, their role in *missio Dei*. That role goes beyond financial support, service on church committees and prayer, and extends into areas that were once thought to be the exclusive purview of professional missionaries.

Terms such as “Marketplace Ministry,” “Business as Mission” and “Tentmaking” are all being used, often synonymously, to describe what in our view are separate strands, or camps, within a single movement. They are closely related in that all start by emphasizing the “Priesthood of all Believers” (1 Peter 2:9-10) and the idea that mission, properly understood, is something all Christians are called into. They all promote the intrinsic value of work, and claim that the distinction often made between sacred and secular vocations is not only unbiblical, but is counterproductive to the completion of the Great Commission.

However there are also important differences. For example, in addition to promoting the evangelistic potential of individual Christians in a workplace setting, as Tentmaking does, Business as Mission stresses the redemptive potential of a *business itself*; a distinction sometimes referred to as a focus on “job taking” versus “job making.” The primary concern of Marketplace Ministries (also referred to as Workplace Ministries) is equipping Christian lay people to be more effective ambassadors for Christ in the workplace. While many of these organizations are now international, their principle purpose is to minister to other Christians within a mono-cultural setting. In contrast, Business as Mission stresses the strategic role of business in reaching places where Christ has never been preached (Rom. 15:20). Put another way, Business as Mission (and Tentmaking) is primarily interested in the “uttermost parts of the earth,” while Jerusalem is the main concern of Marketplace Ministry.

The differences are admittedly subtle, and, at times, unnecessarily divisive. Yet, as every missiologist knows, advancing the cause of Christ in foreign, less-evangelized places is a vastly different undertaking from doing it at home. Likewise, the challenges businesspeople face in these settings are in many ways quite different from those facing physicians, teachers or professional missionaries. It is therefore good to have a degree of specialization by profession, cultural or geographical orientation, and mission strategy. However, too much specialization can be counterproductive if it leads to disunity, redundancies and inefficiencies. This is a risk the movement currently faces. For example, each camp now has its own associations, conferences, advocates, models, literature, goals and leadership. There is little, if any, communication taking place between the camps, little awareness that the other camps even exist, let alone what is transpiring within each camp.

This point was underscored at the Lausanne conference recently held at Pattaya, Thailand, where there was not one, but *three* different issue groups on these topics – Issue Group #11 (Marketplace Ministry), Issue Group #30 (Business as Mission), and Issue Group #10 (The Local Church and Tentmaking). For those who consider Micro-Enterprise Development to be part of this movement (not everyone does, as we will see below), a fourth issue group would be included – Issue Group #4 (Holistic Mission). While there were some opportunities at the conference for cross-communication, there was little, if any collaboration and no coordination. In the end, much of the work done by these groups was redundant, and an opportunity for each camp to discern and define their distinctive roles within the larger movement was missed.

Such confusion and competition at this early stage is predictable, and, we hope, ultimately healthy. The purpose of this paper is to provide a basic overview of the Movement as a whole, with particular emphasis on the Business as Mission (BAM) camp. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to the broader movement simply as “the Movement.” After defining the various camps within the Movement, we will turn our attention to some of the ongoing debates within BAM circles, drawing heavily from the discussions that took place at the recent Lausanne conference. This will be followed by a look at some of the challenges facing this Movement, BAM in particular, and the implications for churches, educators, missiologists and business professionals.

Four Camps within a Single Movement

This new Movement, which at its core stresses the active participation of laypeople in ministry and missions, can be divided, or more precisely, *has divided itself*, into distinct camps: Tentmaking; Marketplace Ministries; and Business as Mission. For the purposes of this essay, we include a fourth camp, Enterprise Development, which includes micro-enterprise development (MED), small- and medium-size enterprise (SME) development, and revolving loan funds. Not everyone agrees, however, that Enterprise Development – which relies heavily on charitable donations and is not particularly geared toward mobilizing laypeople into mission – fits within the Movement under discussion. But there is no denying that many people think instinctively of Enterprise Development when the term Business as Mission is used. After all, they argue, it involves business and has a missional purpose. Accordingly, no overview of this Movement would be complete in our opinion without some discussion of this approach.

Although a detailed discussion of each camp is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief introduction to each is necessary in order to help the reader understand their nuances, and to put BAM into its broader context.

Tentmaking

We turn first to the most familiar of the four camps: Tentmaking. While there is no single, agreed upon definition of the term, for present purposes let us define a tentmaker as a mission-minded Christian who supports himself or herself in a cross-cultural mission context through a vocation such as teaching English, medical work, or working for a locally-owned or international company.

The term, and the model, originated with the Apostle Paul – the pioneer of Christian missions – who was, by trade, a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). While there is some debate as to how much tentmaking he actually did, at a minimum we know that Paul plied his trade in Corinth (1 Cor. 9), Ephesus (Acts 20: 34-35), and Thessalonica (1 Th. 2:9, 2 Th. 3:8). He received financial support from others on occasion (Phil. 4:15-16), but his vigorous refusal to seek such support suggests that self-support was his preferred practice (1 Cor. 9: 12, 15 and 18). Not that he opposed the idea of donor support. On the contrary, in the same text Paul strongly defends the right of missionaries to receive financial support from donors. Yet, he denied himself this right and preached “without charge” so as not to be seen as motivated by personal gain (1 Cor. 9:16-18). Supporting himself also added credibility to his message and gave him ample opportunities to model a godly work ethic and Christ-centered lifestyle. It is highly likely that he saw his day job as a central part of his ministry, as an indispensable part of his church planting strategy, and as important to his witness as his preaching.

This is not, however, the popular notion of tentmaking within the pews today. Instead, the prevailing notion is that the tentmaker’s job is mainly a source of income, or a “cover” for access and ministry, rather than a legitimate ministry in its own right. Put another way, they see the job as a necessary evil rather than an indispensable part of a healthy church planting strategy. In fact, one commonly cited disadvantage of tentmaking is that the requirements of the job leave little time for ministry. Such a perspective presupposes a dichotomy between “work” and “ministry,” and is based on a gross misunderstanding of the purpose and the power of tentmaking. It also creates deep ethical tensions as it encourages tentmakers to work only enough to keep their supervisors and local authorities happy. It is hard to imagine that Paul worked only for appearances sake, or that when he exhorted his followers to “imitate me” (1 Cor. 4:16) or to “follow us” (2 Th. 3:7-9) he was encouraging deceptive practices. Nevertheless, while such practices are roundly condemned in many ministry and mission circles, they remain commonplace – and are even encouraged – among many.

Marketplace Ministries

The second camp within this Movement is referred to as Marketplace Ministries, although the term Workplace Ministries is also gaining currency. These ministries are usually para-church organizations that bring together the members of a given business community to minister to each other and to evangelize, disciple and coach others within their spheres of

influence. More than 1200 such ministries are currently operating around the globe (McLoughlin, Johnson, Hillman and Miller 2003). Many are local, some are regional, and a few are global in reach. But in almost all cases, the focus is on near-neighbor rather than cross-cultural outreach.

Many such ministries focus on the business owners, chief executive officers (CEOs) or other leaders who have significant authority within a corporation and, as such, help influence the corporate culture. Ministering to these leaders and equipping them to manage their companies according to biblical principles, to integrate their faith into the lifeblood of the companies, and to be a positive witness for Christ to their employees, customers, suppliers and competitors is therefore paramount. These ministries emphatically believe that a person can be both a good, successful business person, with all that implies, as well as a faithful, obedient follower of Jesus Christ. They believe that God calls people into business the same way He calls others into the pastorate. They are ardent promoters of the doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers, and as such, encourage business men and women to view the business as their ministry and their employees, coworkers, suppliers and customers as their “flock.” The focus is on evangelism, discipleship and coaching, but almost never on cross-cultural outreach or church planting. The members of these ministries are, however, called to be faithful members of a local congregation.

Enterprise Development

The Enterprise Development camp is well known to most missiologists. The primary goal of enterprise development is to assist the world’s poorest people bootstrap themselves out of poverty by helping them create a business. Many such businesses are known as micro-enterprises. These are the smallest of businesses, designed to help poverty-stricken families become economically productive, but generally too small to employ others in the community. For example, a woman may be a skilled seamstress, but have no sewing machine and no access to capital. An organization specializing in micro-enterprise development (MED) and micro-finance might help this woman by providing a small loan – usually less than US\$300 and more often in the US\$50 to US\$100 range – for the purpose of acquiring her equipment and/or initial inventory. When the loan is repaid the funds are recycled as seed capital for other loans. The money essentially becomes part of a permanent endowment that will be perpetually recycled to help the poor.

A variation of this approach is small- and medium size enterprise (SME) development, which targets larger businesses that have the potential for creating employment for many people in the community. These businesses, while still small, more closely resemble businesses in the developed world in that there is a semblance of a corporate structure, a payroll to be met, a variety of products or services, and so forth. Because of their location in countries that lack well-developed credit markets, these businesses (like micro-enterprises) often must turn to nontraditional sources like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for financing. Loans in the range of US\$500 to US\$5,000 are common, and some can reach as high as US\$20,000.

In all three cases (micro-, small- and medium-sized business development), the object is to intervene in the community by providing loans to entrepreneurs and helping them set up or expand their businesses so that they can become economically self-sufficient. The mission focus

is holistic, although the importance placed on the spiritual component of holistic mission varies widely from organization to organization. Some target Christian entrepreneurs only, as part of a broader strategy to build up the indigenous church. Others make loans to anyone who qualifies, hoping that the exposure to this program and the relationships it creates with Christians will lead to evangelistic and discipleship opportunities. Still others make no effort to evangelize at all, striving instead to simply address the people's economic needs.

Business as Mission

Business as Mission (BAM) is the newest camp to emerge within this Movement. The term was first coined in 1999 by a small group of people meeting in the U.K. at the Oxford Center for Mission Studies to discuss a relatively new approach to missions, one that taps the power and the redemptive potential of large, often *global*, businesses. The BAM label was one of two that were created during those meetings, the other one being "Business with a Christian Hat." The latter term, which thankfully never caught on, was meant to describe businesses that have a Christian reputation, but are not thinking or acting strategically in a global mission sense. In contrast, BAM arises out of a deep concern for the least-developed and least-reached nations of the world, especially those in the 10/40 window. Like Paul, it proceeds from a compelling desire to see the Gospel taken to places where Christ has never been preached (Rom. 15:20).

The BAM label resonated within the Christian mission community and took on a life of its own. A mere five years later, major BAM events were being held on every continent and its leaders were invited to participate in the 2004 Forum of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand. Nonetheless, an agreed upon, concise definition of BAM has been illusive; a problem that we will elaborate on in the next section. For the purposes of this discussion, we define BAM as "the utilization of for-profit businesses as instruments for global mission." A business is not likely to be an effective instrument for mission unless there are Christians managing it, so the vital role of Christian business *people* is implied in this definition.

Proponents of BAM often use adjectives like "real" and "legitimate" to describe these businesses in an effort to differentiate them from the business-as-cover strategies sometimes associated with tentmaking. Such adjectives would seem to also rule out unprofitable businesses that are sustained with the help of nonprofit-subsidized labor and/or capital, although on this matter there are differences of opinion.

BAM, like MED and SME development, is a holistic mission strategy that aims to create jobs and wealth for the local people as well as address other physical, social and spiritual needs. The approaches, however, are quite different. Enterprise Development strategies are designed explicitly to promote entrepreneurship at the local level. BAM, on the other hand, often (but not always) involves a team of *expatriate* entrepreneurs who launch and manage a business and *hire* local people. Many BAM companies – commonly referred to either as "Great Commission Companies" or "Kingdom Companies" – promote leadership training and development from within the company, with a long range goal of turning over management and possibly ownership of the company to local national employees. In some cases there is a complete exit strategy in place, while in others the owner(s) retain an equity interest to finance the development of other Great Commission Companies.

BAM-related ministry takes many forms. First, there is a recognition of the intrinsic value of the business itself, that God (and man) derives pleasure from a business that is well-run, and especially when done in such a way as to draw attention to Himself. In this way there is little difference between BAM and Marketplace Ministries. Both see business itself as an act of worship and as a legitimate calling. BAM takes this a step further, however, by making a concerted effort within the company setting to witness for Christ, both overtly and through holistic lifestyle evangelism. Examples of these efforts include such things as Bible studies, training in the areas of literacy, nutrition, sanitation, child care, healthy living, and health care, as well as company-sponsored community projects that demonstrate the loving heart of Jesus. In addition, an effort is often made to leverage the business strategy itself for greater ministry impact through creative alliances with other Great Commission Companies or ministries. In short, the business is an integral part of a holistic mission strategy, one that specifically aims to meet physical as well as spiritual needs in the least-evangelized and least-developed parts of the world.

Internal Debates

Unfortunately, as more people use a label, the murkier its definition tends to become. Like “tentmaking,” the term BAM now means different things depending on whom you ask. Our goal for this section is not necessarily to resolve this debate, but rather, to highlight some of the ambiguities or areas of disagreement. Recall that BAM was originally coined to describe businesses that were created specifically for the purpose of actively and holistically participating in global mission. But what exactly qualifies as a “real” business? Do businesses that are launched and/or sustained with assistance from nonprofits – for example, those staffed by donor-supported workers or financed with the help of donated funds – count? Under what conditions? Is the BAM umbrella big enough to include strategies like MED aimed at indigenous business development, or are these two distinctly different approaches to mission? And what exactly qualifies as a mission strategy? Are good deeds enough, or must BAM include verbal proclamation of the gospel? On this matter missiologists will have a strong sense of *déjà vu*, as it basically rehashes the decades-old debate about holistic mission.

What kind of business?

As any business person will confirm, a “real” business must succeed on its own merits. It must produce a good or service that people will buy, and generate enough revenue in the long run to cover its capital and operating costs. In other words, even though companies often rely on outside sources of capital, they must eventually generate sufficient revenue *internally* to repay the capital, as well as pay all other expenses. By contrast, the typical ministry is funded by *externally* generated income; that is, by donations. Finding ways to fund ministries with internally generated income is well outside the experience base and comfort zones of most people in traditional ministry, *but is precisely the gift that many business people have*. For those who catch a vision for BAM there is never an expectation of a donation – business people have no such preconditioning. Instead, they seek ways to harness the power of market economics for the benefit of the Kingdom.²

A complete discussion of the preference for donor-supported ministry, which can be traced throughout the history of the Church, is beyond the scope of this essay. Certainly there is nothing new about misgivings about commerce, and especially about the mixing of ministry and commerce. Those misgivings came to a head in the 20th Century when Christians, following the Industrial Revolution, debated with renewed vigor questions about the compatibility of Christianity and capitalism, and whether it was possible to be both a good Christian and a successful businessperson. While this debate is gradually fading into the history books, many people continue to see the pursuit of profit as inherently exploitive and antithetical to good corporate citizenship. Many still hold the view that only those profits that are donated to charities are praiseworthy. This ambivalence about profits helps explain why business remains perhaps the final frontier of Christian ministry and mission strategies. Professions such as teaching, health care and construction have long been accepted as having a legitimate role in mission, but there remains a strong presumption that the principle contribution a business person makes is a financial one. Put another way, business people are perceived mainly as the golden geese of Christian ministry and mission.

The lingering ambivalence about profit-making, combined with the preferential treatment the government gives to nonprofit corporations, explains why nonprofits are the organizational form of choice for most ministry leaders. The bias against profit-making also reflects a subtle, deeply-ingrained belief that nonprofit corporations are more trustworthy, and that those who work for them are less susceptible to temptations such as greed and pride. Together, these biases form an almost insurmountable philosophical and cultural barrier for most ministry leaders against any truly for-profit mission strategy. In those cases when the promotion of business is a goal of the ministry, such as MED and micro-loan programs, the programs themselves are rarely expected to become self-supporting, much less a source of income for the parent organization.

These biases – and the attempt to break through them – were at the heart of many of the debates that took place at the recent Lausanne conference. However, while the final document produced by the BAM issue group attempts to present a clear case that BAM is different, and that it represents a fundamentally new approach to missions, not all participants agreed on exactly where the boundaries should be drawn.³

Differences notwithstanding, most BAM advocates agree that what is most distinctive about BAM is its for-profit approach to mission. It represents a sharp break from the “ministry-equals-nonprofit” way of thinking, and the view, held uncritically by many Christians, that businesses are by definition greed-driven and, as such, inappropriate instruments for mission. Advocates of both Marketplace Ministries and BAM are trying to counter that view by (1) affirming the God-pleasing purpose of business, and (2) encouraging business people to *embrace* that purpose rather than treat it as something outside of the ministry domain. BAM takes this a step further by encouraging business people to look beyond their own people group and to use their creativity in ways that will advance the cause of Christ in the neediest, least-reached parts of the world. In short, BAM goes beyond “ministry” and brings business into “mission.”

What kind of mission?

The question of what qualifies as “mission” is a familiar one to missiologists, so we will not labor long here except to put the question into a business context. On one hand, as one theologian forcefully argues, businesses themselves, by imitating the attributes of God, can glorify Him (Grudem, 2003). Another evangelical theologian maintains that since mission is the purpose of the Church, all Christians are missionaries by definition: the implication is that mission is undertaken in everything a Christian does – work, play, family life, and religious activities (Stevens, 1999). Of course, others have argued that if everything is mission, then the term is essentially meaningless (Kirk, 2000; Hesselgrave, 1999; Myers, 1999; Rundle and Steffen, 2003). Nevertheless, there are some who maintain that simply by doing business responsibly, a business person is fulfilling his or her calling, and by extension, if he or she owns the business, it would seem to qualify as a BAM business.

Others are more selective, reserving the label for only those businesses that have an obviously redemptive purpose. An interesting case in point is the story of the founding of the Guinness Brewing Company (Markiewicz, 1999). As the story is told, the company was founded by a young Irish Christian, Arthur Guinness, who was deeply concerned about his countrymen’s addiction to hard liquor and the devastating impact it was having in the community. The burden he felt, his calling if you will, was to create a healthy drink that people would enjoy. The original recipe of Guinness beer was apparently so heavy, so full of iron, that a person could hardly drink more than a couple of pints, thus reducing the problem of drunkenness. It was also so full of minerals and natural ingredients that doctors prescribed it to pregnant women.

This is a fascinating story about the positive and culturally appropriate difference a Christian entrepreneur was able to make in society. But is this an example of Business as Mission? Many say yes. Guinness was led by the Spirit (no pun intended) to find a creative solution to this plague, and the sharp reduction in alcohol consumption and crime was a clear victory for the Kingdom of God. The problem here is that similar stories can be told about non-Christian entrepreneurs. This is why most BAM advocates maintain that the definition must go beyond the positive social impact. A successful BAM business must demonstrate a positive social and economic impact, *and* draw attention to Jesus, even prompting some people to accept Him as their Lord and Savior. These multifaceted measures of success are often referred to as a “triple bottom line.”

It is quite possible that the Guinness Brewing Company had a positive impact both socially and spiritually. Unfortunately we are not told. What we do know is that by the end of his life, Guinness had donated much of his fortune to missionary causes. As laudable as that was, however, such corporate and individual philanthropy is usually ruled out as a defining characteristic of BAM. For example, the document produced by the BAM issue group at the Lausanne conference emphatically says:

[Philanthropy] is different from business as mission. One might call this business for missions, using business ventures to fund other kinds of ministry. We recognize that profit from a business can be used to support “missions” and that this is good and valid. Likewise employees can use some of their salary to give to charitable causes. While this should be encouraged, none of us would like to be operated on by a surgeon whose only ambition is to make money to give to the

church! Instead we expect he has the right skills and drive to operate with excellence, doing his job with full professional integrity. Likewise a business as mission-business must produce more than goods and services in order to generate new wealth. It seeks to fulfill God's kingdom purposes and values through every aspect of its operations. A business for mission concept can limit business and business people to a role of funding the 'real ministry'. While funding is an important function, business as mission is about for-profit businesses that have a kingdom focus.⁴

Put another way, the view that Christians should “make as much as they can and give away as much as they can,” while well-intended, runs the risk of reinforcing the separation between sacred and secular that BAM seeks to undo.

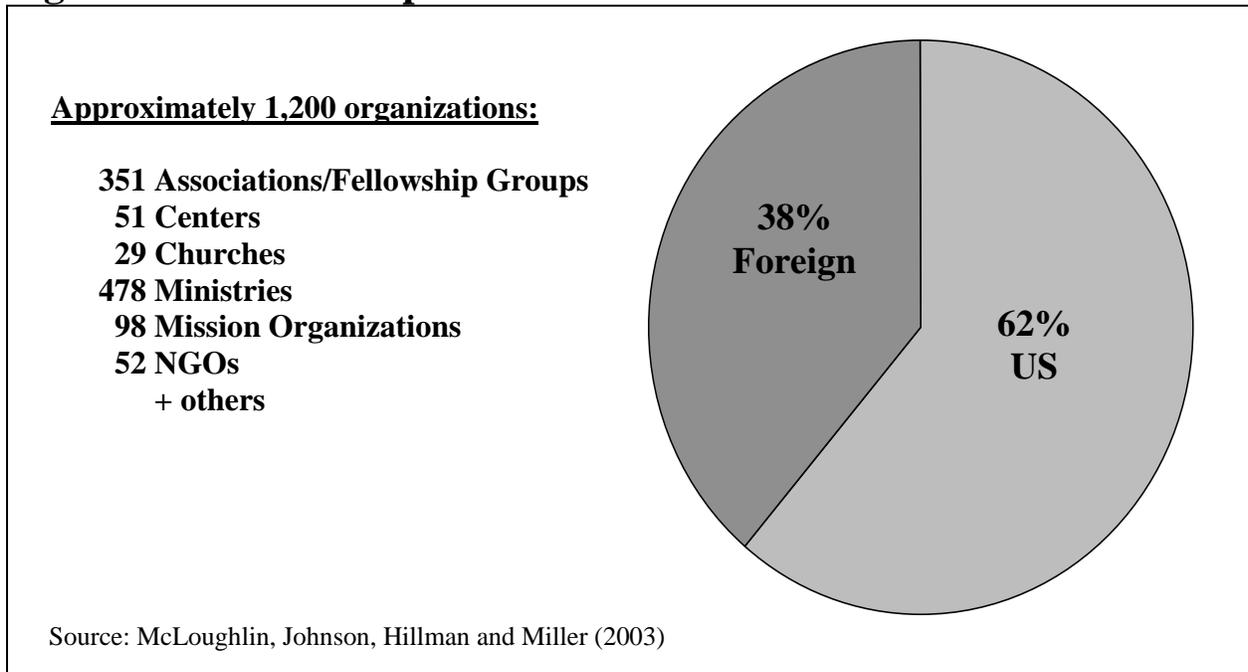
Nevertheless, we do not believe corporate philanthropy should be categorically ruled out. Instead, one should ask: “Why was the business created?” and “How is it managed?” If the business was created specifically for the purpose of advancing the cause of Christ, and managed in a God-honoring, biblically-sound way, then we maintain it is a BAM business. Some companies, like Pura Vida Coffee, are created for the principle purpose of generating income for mission.⁵ Because its God-honoring management practices line up with its missional purpose, we would say it fits the definition, even though its contribution is mainly a financial one. On the other hand, businesses that are created for the purpose of generating income for missions, but are managed according to worldly ways do not pass the test. Neither do those that are managed ethically, but are not particularly concerned about advancing the faith.

Proponents of BAM seek to affirm the calling of entrepreneurs and encourage them to use their God-given creativity in ways that will promote mission. It would be unfortunate if, in the process of defining BAM, those same entrepreneurs felt inhibited rather than encouraged. We believe our two-part test – examining the purpose *and* practices of the company – is a more useful and flexible approach to identifying a genuine BAM business.

Unique Challenges

The Movement under discussion – which encompasses Tentmaking, Marketplace Ministries, BAM, and, to some extent, Enterprise Development – is being propelled by a renewed understanding that “mission,” properly perceived, is something all Christians are called into. Accordingly, the very definition of “missionary” is being challenged as more laypeople take an active interest in fulfilling the Great Commission. As Figure 1 illustrates, the Movement is not merely a western phenomenon, but is emerging spontaneously and simultaneously all over the world. In 2003 there were some 1,200 organizations – for example, 351 fellowship groups and associations, 478 ministries, 98 mission agencies and 52 NGOs – that claimed at least some involvement in this area. This Movement, if encouraged and mobilized effectively, would represent a tremendous injection of human and financial resources for the cause of Christ. However, several barriers stand in the way of this Movement reaching its full potential. These include the still widely-held belief in a sacred-secular divide, cultural differences between the for-profit and nonprofit worlds, inadequate training and support, and a lack of dialogue between the camps themselves and between the camps, the academy and the ecclesiastical Church.

Figure 1: The Makeup and Breadth of the Movement



Barrier #1: A dualistic view of the world that is still deeply entrenched

Few Christians openly support the view that God cares more about the spiritual realm than the physical one. Yet, while this dualistic view of the world – often referred to as the “sacred-secular dichotomy” – is falling out of favor and is now roundly criticized in evangelical circles, evidence of its deep entrenchment and widespread support is easy to find. It shows up, for example, in the tentmaker-missionary heading to the 10/40 Window who must apologetically explain how he will prevent his day job from becoming a distraction from his ministry. It shows up in churches when pastors promote the view that “ministry” is something that is directly linked to a church program, rather than something that laypeople are already doing *outside* of the church building, even at work. It shows up in the hierarchical view many Christians have about vocations – that the work of pastors and missionaries is more highly regarded by God than that of stock brokers or CEOs. The list could go on.

By encouraging this view, or at least by not *discouraging* it, the Church has inadvertently marginalized its largest constituency. The unfortunate legacy of this is that many lay people now uncritically accept their place in the ministry margins. According to Dallas Willard, the division between sacred and secular has done “incalculable damage to our individual lives and the cause of Christ” (1990:214). If the Movement is to reach its full potential, this dualistic view of the world simply must be abandoned in practice as well as in principle.

Barrier #2: Cultural differences

Without question there are substantial differences between the rules, cultures and expectations of nonprofit and for-profit corporations. Learning to communicate and minister cross-culturally in this sense represents another significant challenge to the Movement. Tom

Sudyk, founder of Evangelistic Commerce, poignantly describes the clashing cultures from a business person's perspective:

A businessperson relocated from the rigor and risk of a business into the culture of the typical church suffers a tremendous shock. Gone is the discipline of the marketplace, which keeps business people constantly accountable for their decisions....Methods of successful business people are suddenly considered harsh, insensitive or, at a minimum, out of place. A new vocabulary must be mastered, different expectations adopted and varying results tolerated. (2003:153)

Another example is that of an acquaintance of ours who was recently approached about doing business consulting for a well-known mission organization. It was not until well into the discussions and contract negotiations that she realized she was expected to raise her own consulting fee from outside donors. What for one culture is so widely practiced as to be a basic assumption, to another culture can come as a complete shock. Similar shocks undoubtedly occur in people making the transition in the other direction: from traditional ministry to a business environment. Our point here is not that one culture is superior to the other, but rather that the Movement will stymie unless and until these differences are recognized and the clashes minimized.

Barrier #3: Training and Support Challenges

Effectively mobilizing this new generation of missionaries will also require changes in curriculum and new approaches to training and field support. At present, most business people lack any meaningful training in cross-cultural ministry, and most missionaries are inadequately trained in the ways of business. For example, somewhere between 10 and 40 percent of American business professionals return early from extended assignments abroad because of difficulties associated with adjusting to a foreign country (Black and Gregersen, 1999; Black and Mendenhall, 1990). This figure is strikingly similar to the estimates on missionary attrition presented in Taylor (1997).

A complete discussion of the suggested curriculum changes is beyond the scope of this essay.⁶ It is important to point out, however, that the solution is not necessarily a one-size-fits-all curriculum. Business schools should continue to be the preferred place to learn business, and schools of world mission the place to learn missions. Having said that, if the challenges listed above – the dualistic worldview and cultural differences – are to be overcome, it must begin in our universities, colleges and seminaries. Some basic courses in business, cultural anthropology and missiology should be a part of every Christian educational program, whether in business school or seminary.

New thinking must also be brought to bear in the way field support is provided for self-funded missionaries. A complaint we commonly hear is that “our churches don't know what to do with us. We don't fit any of their boxes.” Indeed, the source of the problems business-missionaries face on the field is not always related to inadequate training, but rather to a limited and overtaxed network of qualified people who are willing to serve as advisers and mentors. Mission agencies are naturally weak in the area of business strategy and economics, yet have

been slow to hire or partner with those with the necessary competencies. This, too, is a formidable challenge that, if unresolved, will undermine the Movement's potential.

Barrier #4: Lack of dialogue

A fourth challenge is the lack of any meaningful dialogue between the individual camps within the Movement, between the camps and the academy, or between the camps and the ecclesiastical church. For the survival of the Movement, and the long-term effectiveness of its participants, this must change. For example, dialogue between the camps by holding joint conferences is important not only for the sake of improving efficiency, but also because it can serve to expand the vision of the respective participants in each camp. Dialogue between the camps and the academy is important to ensure the Movement's biblical, theological, intellectual and praxeological integrity. Accordingly, there should be a forum in which thoughtful reflection, considered dialogue, probing research and genuine scholarship can take place. And finally, the sustainability of this new Movement is vulnerable to erosion if it does not see itself as part of the larger body of Christ. Dialogue between the camps and the ecclesiastical church is essential to the long-run health of the Movement.

Conclusion

Given the profound changes taking place in the world today – globalization, postmodernism, diasporas and the migration of Christianity to the less-developed world – it would be naïve not to expect an equally profound effect on our understanding of mission and missionaries. The increasing role of business in missions is part of that new understanding. Rather than seeing themselves merely as geese that lay financial eggs, Christian business people are now becoming more directly involved in the mission of the church.

Many observers believe this new understanding, while still in an embryonic stage, represents the beginning of a major new missionary movement. For example, noted missiologist Charles Van Engen says that “the commercial business marketplace may well be the primary mission field of the twenty-first century” (2002). Similarly, Ted Yamamori, the current International Director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, claims that “kingdom business will be a strategy of choice for missions in the twenty-first century” (2003:10). Notice the slight differences in emphasis: Van Engen's is on business people as an overlooked mission *field*, while Yamamori's is in the overlooked potential of business people as *missionaries*. This underscores our point that the Movement is actually broader and more complex than it first appears. It is comprised of different camps, each sharing the same ultimate goal – to see God glorified in and through the marketplace – but each with their own agendas and strategies.

Business as Mission stresses the redemptive potential of business in the poorest and least evangelized parts of the world. Far from being a mere “access strategy” or a source of income for traditional missionaries, BAM promotes a more holistic and more inclusive approach to mission. It directly challenges the traditional view that (a) God calls only a small subset of His people into ministry and missions, (b) such a calling requires specific vocational training, and (c) ministry of any kind is most properly pursued within the framework of a nonprofit organization. It has

tremendous potential to mobilize a vast, under-utilized segment of the Church, and for increasing the financial resources available for world mission. However, there are significant challenges that still need to be overcome. For example, each camp is presently working in virtual isolation, hardly aware of the other camps or the similarities and distinctives between their visions. There is little, if any, dialogue taking place between the Movement and the ecclesiastical church, partly because of the inherent challenges related to communicating new ideas cross-culturally. At this stage in the Movement's history here is a critical need for the active and collaborative participation of missiologists, theologians and business scholars who will carry on this dialogue and facilitate the cross-pollination of each camp's ideas, methods and theologies. For the sake of the billions of people who are still suffering and without hope, we must do what we can to encourage and assist this Movement.

Discussion Starters

1. The authors identify four camps within this new movement. What are they? How are they distinguished from each other?
2. Identify five ways a Christian's "secular" job can also be considered "full time ministry."
3. Why do some observers object to Enterprise Development being included as part of the movement under discussion? Explain why you agree or disagree with those objections.
4. Consider the hypothetical case of a missionary team that launches a carpet weaving business in the country of Afar. Suppose that, in addition to the two American "managers," the company also employs 15 locals, and has established a reputation in the community for fairness, generosity and unwavering integrity. However, in spite of the fact that the Americans draw no salary from the business, the business is not profitable, and requires an annual subsidy of \$10,000, which must be raised from American donors. Would you consider this an example of Business as Mission? Why or why not?
5. Do you believe it is easier to make a business person out of a missionary, or a missionary out of a business person? Please explain your answer.
6. Identify two practical ways your church can do a better job of affirming and equipping those who are ministers in the marketplace.

Notes

¹ Mary N. "God so Loves the Creative Access World." Keynote address during the 1993 Intersivity student missions conference at Urbana, IL.

² The dependence on internally-generated revenues and external market forces is one of the most challenging aspects of BAM, and perhaps the hardest thing for many people to accept. There are a host of corollary issues attached to this subject that go beyond the scope of this essay, including questions about accountability, measures of success, and so on.

³ This document is available at http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP59_IG30.pdf.

⁴ http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP59_IG30.pdf, page 13.

⁵ See Rundle and Steffen (2003).

⁶ Those interested in this topic are encouraged to read Johnson (2003), Kilpatrick (2005) and Rundle (2003).

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