

Western Dominance in World Mission: Time for a Change?

The forum held on the 25 May 2011 at CMF as part of the Thinking Mission series was intended to look at the issues of continued Western dominance in mission – was this the case and if so what could be done about it? The genesis of the question had something to do with the feeling on the part of some of those who attended Lausanne 3 in Cape Town that the agenda there had been overmuch the product of the West. ‘West’ here means those nations such as the United States and the U.K. whose thinking comes primarily from the European Enlightenment, who were until recently colonialists and may be still neo-colonial in practice.

The forum was structured around a presentation by Eddie Arthur and responses by Kang San Tan, Peter Oyugi and Claudio Muzzi. Eddie was asked to describe the history of the modern missionary movement and to reflect upon its significance, while Kang San, Peter and Claudio were to respond from the perspectives of Asia, Africa and Latin America. A final question and answer session considered the possible practical outcomes.

The modern missionary movement: an era of Western dominance. Was it all bad and where do we go from here? *by Eddie Arthur*

Introduction

Missionaries were part of the wallpaper of my childhood. From time to time there would be a strange adult at our weeknight supper table and I would be introduced to Miss X who was a missionary in some far flung country. These missionaries seemed to be a harmless enough bunch of people, a little dull and strangely dressed, perhaps, but they were unlikely to cause any problems. However, it was clear from my mother's reaction that I was supposed to regard these slightly dishevelled people with a great deal of awe and admiration. They were missionaries and they were labourers in God's harvest, I should feel lucky that they were clearing up the desert before I could have seconds! Over the years, I met a large number of these people. They would regularly turn up at Church youth group or University CU meetings to tell us tales of derring-do on the mission field. Missionary talks were predictable: their slide set would

always end up with a sunset and at some point in the talk they would say, 'I may be a missionary, but I'm an ordinary person, just like you' (at which point everyone in the room would think 'you are fooling no one but yourself'). In my experience missionaries were a little eccentric, but like the earth in the Hitchhikers Guide, they were "mostly harmless". I was of course, aware that there were other ways of looking at missionaries. They were rapacious neo-colonialists who destroyed cultures and bribed people to adopt a foreign religion. The song Missionary Man by the Eurhythmics captures this nicely. To be honest, I was never quite sure how this image of the colonial oppressor tied up with the rather mild mannered missionaries who had eaten my Mother's Yorkshire pudding, but the image was there.

It is my job in this short introduction to give a personal overview of the missionary movement, looking, in particular, at the issue of Western Dominance. When I have done that, a number of kind people will come forward to tell you where I went wrong! It is very easy to find fault with the Western Missionary movement of the last 200 years (indeed, I will do so quite soon). However, we should recognize that by and large it was a *success*. The phenomenal growth of the worldwide Church over the past hundred years or so can be traced, in part at least, to the pioneering work of missionaries from the Western world. That being said, I don't want to appear to remove God from the throne. It is His mission and He is the one responsible for the growth of the Church around the world. Equally, I think it is important that we recognise that much of the most spectacular growth of the Church (for example in China since 1948) has happened in a post-missionary setting. However, whichever way we look at things, the missionary movement has been, under God, a significant factor in the growth of the Church around the world, and in that sense, if no other, is a success story.

A Bit of History

It is common, at least in the English speaking world, to trace the start of the missionary movement back to William Carey, and I would like us to spend a brief time looking at Carey as an example of a particular type of missionary. Perhaps the most important thing to note about Carey was his devotion to God coupled with a great evangelistic zeal. His famous book (*An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*) has become a benchmark in mission thinking and it reflects both his passion for God and his concern for those who do not know him. However, despite his evangelistic zeal, Carey and his colleagues did not adopt high-pressure evangelistic techniques designed to maximise the number of converts. In fact, it took seven years before they saw their first conversion from Hinduism to

Christianity, Krishna Pal. Though Carey was absolutely convinced of the unique claims of Christianity, this did not mean that he lacked respect for or interest in Indian cultural traditions. Carey wrote detailed grammars of a number of Indian languages and produced translations of many Hindu texts. In fact he was rebuked by his home mission for his interest in Indian culture and tradition. He campaigned against the tradition of suttee (the immolation of widows), not on Biblical grounds, but on the basis that it was not supported in Hindu texts. Carey was an extremely gifted linguist and was involved in the translation of the Bible into a huge number of languages (there doesn't seem to be any clear agreement on exactly how many – but it was a lot). Today he is revered in Bangladesh for the great influence he had on the development of the Bengali language.

Carey had a huge respect for the people amongst whom he worked and ministered. However, his relationships with the British authorities in India were not always so cordial. The British East India Company was hostile to missionaries and so Carey and his colleagues moved to the Danish colony of Serampore where they established a school and a printing press. Over time, they became accepted by both the Danish and the British authorities in the country but they were always somewhat distanced from the growing colonial influence in the country.

Carey was a remarkable man, but he had his faults. He certainly contributed to his first wife's nervous breakdown and he neglected his children dreadfully. Despite the undoubted fact that he remains an inspiration to many and an excellent example of a missionary who loved the people and culture that he served, he was also part of a missionary movement which struggled with a troubling dynamic:

- Mission became tied up with the enlightenment/Imperial project
- Mission/missionaries became a tool of the colonial governments
- The message of mission became confused with the idea of western culture and learning
- Missionaries did not discern their own syncretism
- The power dynamic between the rich west and the rest changed the relationship between missionary and people.

My Own Story

My own journey through mission agency life began in my early twenties when I came to the end of three years as a post grad in biological sciences and joined Wycliffe Bible Translators. At that point, I was a fairly typical, Guardian-

reading, liberal minded product of the English University system. One of the things that attracted me to Bible translation work was that it involved placing the text of Scripture in peoples' hands and allowing them to make their own choices. In my perception, Bible translation was about as far as you could get from the typical colonial stereotype of mission work, while remaining vaguely evangelistic. This appealed greatly to my inherent sense of post-colonial guilt.

Sue and I arrived in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in March 1988 and elected to spend a few months in the city before moving out to the village where the language programme we would be working in was based. During our time in Abidjan, I did a number of odd jobs, helping here and there with things that needed doing. At one point, I was asked to sit in for the Centre Services Manager, an American, who was taking a two week break. So there I was, only a few months in Africa and I stepped into a managerial role with numerous Ivorian and Burkinabe staff working under me. I didn't bat an eyelid; I'd been asked to do something and I stepped up to the plate to take on the challenge. It was only afterwards that I realised that all of the bosses were expats and all of the staff under them were African. One of the key men who reported to me during that time was called Ambroise. During my time in Ivory Coast he became a good friend and I learned to respect his commitment and his integrity hugely. I came to realise that the whole of our operation depended on Ambroise and his knowledge of how to get things done. The idea of a new guy like me supervising an older and far wiser man like Ambroise was patently ridiculous. However, at the time, I didn't question what happened because that was the way we did things. Missionaries were the bosses. In my own defence, if I had possessed the ability to step back and see what was really going on, I'd have been horribly upset. But I didn't and the system swallowed me up and I became part of the problem.

When we came to move out to the village to work on a translation programme things happened pretty much in the same sort of way. We came out as experts; or at least as trained translators, and the way that the system worked was that we would recruit and pay our own co-workers. The local church leadership had some input into the process but basically we were in charge. With no experience of employing or managing people in my own cultural context, I was all of a sudden running what was effectively a small business in rural Africa. I wasn't a good boss. What is more, the fact that we had the money and the power meant that in some ways we were setting up an enterprise which was in competition with the local church leadership. The Church leaders were from out of the area and didn't speak Kouya and were able to have only limited input into the translation project. So, we basically –

without intending to – created a parallel structure and in the process allowed rivalries to grow between people who worked for us and others who were in the more formal church structure. Again, this was not our intention; we just fitted in with a way of working and lived with the consequences. It is also true that we had to raise the money for salaries from our supporters in the UK and that when we had a 'bad month' we still paid our colleagues and took a cut in income ourselves.

To be honest, it wasn't really until we'd been in Africa for a number of years and a colleague with an MA in English joined our team that I started to notice the way in which power and money were skewing much of the way we were working. Though we were involved in a translation project and the New Testament was eventually published and distributed; the thing I am most proud of from my time in Africa is the development of an MA course in Bible translation in conjunction with a local seminary. Even this was an interesting learning process. The seminary invited us to partner with them: the idea was theirs from the start. As we worked through the process of developing curricula and admissions procedures, it was clear that they were very uneasy about handling the new translation students. At their instigation a separate review body was created to oversee the candidature of the translation students as opposed to the normal pastoral students. This committee also recruited and managed the translation teaching staff. Within a very short while, it developed into a faculty within the faculty and all sorts of jealousies were created. Perhaps I should add that it was an immense privilege for me to travel out to Ivory Coast a few years ago to negotiate the end of this second structure and to find a way for the faculty to manage the translation programme in exactly the same way that it manages everything else. After a slow and somewhat awkward start, this programme is now entirely in African hands - exactly where it should have been in the first place. I learn slowly, but I do learn!

Conclusion

One of the remarkable things is that God allows people like me to join him in his mission. My story is far from the worst example of Western insensitivity, and yet there are aspects of it which make me cringe when I remember them. The truth is that all missionaries, in all ages, are fallen. Carey was a remarkable man, but he certainly made some huge mistakes when it came to caring for his family. We could go on and enumerate mistakes made by people of every generation, but we wouldn't gain much from the exercise. Western missionaries have made mistakes which are typical of, and caused by, their own generation and background. Further, the imbalances of finance and

power which we have mentioned have inevitably led to the sorts of problems that we have been discussing, and these problems have had an impact on the way in which the Gospel has been perceived and received in different parts of the world. Though I never wished to do so, I did sometimes become that 'Missionary Man' and the Gospel suffered as a result. However, the amazing thing is that God knew this all along. This is not to excuse me for my failings; be they the failings that come from my culture or my own idiosyncratic lack of sanctification. But God is aware that he has placed the glory of his Gospel in earthen vessels. In appointing human ambassadors for his message, God is making himself vulnerable to their weakness and failings. He could have chosen angels or lightning bolts to carry his message, but no, he has chosen fallen human beings, and against all of the odds, God's strength is perfected through the weakness of the human messenger.

Whatever else they are, the mistakes of the Western missionary movement are an amazing demonstration of the condescension and grace of our amazing God. The one who humbled himself and took on the form of a servant, suffering death on a cross, continues to humble himself by allowing his own glory to be bound up so closely with the lives of his fallen followers. But missionaries are not simply inadequate vessels for the Gospel; they are refined by the action of taking the Gospel message to others. As a translator, I would sit with my Kouya colleagues and examine passages from the Bible in great depth. Oftentimes, these passages would address issues in *my* life: failings of which I was very aware. But not only that, my Kouya colleagues were aware of them too! The Scripture which I was bringing as an 'expert' judged my motives and actions and, hopefully, brought them more into alignment with what God wanted for and from me.

Implications for the Future of Mission from the West

Here are some of the conclusions and questions, in point form, that merit further discussion:

- We shall continue to need Western missionaries
 - 'From everywhere to everywhere' includes westerners
 - But the west needs missionaries too
 - What may be needed is a different sort of missionary
 - Friends
 - Colleagues
 - People who submit to national leadership and multicultural teams
- The issue of short term mission needs addressing
 - What does it contribute?

- Strengths/weaknesses
- Global South needs a voice in this – it is not just an industry
- Issue of Training
 - Continual shortening of the length of training is a problem

Finally, a quote from Charles Kraft's *Culture, Communication and Christianity*:

The day of missions is not over in Africa but the day of the kind of missions we have known for so long may well be. The day of the missionary is not over in Africa. But the day when it was considered sufficient for a missionary merely to have a call and a knowledge of the Bible is gone.

Today's missionary to Africa needs to be more highly trained in cultural studies than in theological. He must be trained to the point where he realizes that he knows virtually nothing of the cultural world of the people he seeks to reach. He must be trained to the point where he will sit and listen to and learn from the people he seeks to reach. He must be conditioned to realize that the texts for his vocal witness to these people must come, as Christ's did, from their life and experience, not from his own. He must meet them where they are, not demand that they meet him where he is. (pp 175-176)

Western Dominance in World Mission: A Time for Change? A Response from an Asian Perspective by Kang-San Tan

Defining Western Dominance

Dominance can be simply defined as when one society dominates another economically, culturally, and politically. While the colonial era is over, more subtle forms of Western domination still exist, because economic resources are still located in the West. The question remains: what is the relationship between Christian missions and Western Dominance and, in this sense, has Protestant Missionary Movement been a success? Christian missions have had an ambiguous relationship with Western colonialism. Given its close link to European and American cultures, at times reinforced through the complicity of missionaries with colonialist institutions, Christianity inevitably came to be identified as a Western religion, thereby assuming both the benefits and the liabilities of Western cultures and the entangling legacy of colonialism. Secular critics have tended to blame missionaries for everything, but there has been a robust response to this, for example by Lamin Sanneh in his, *Translating the Message*. Sanneh defends the missionaries against the charge that they are destroyers of local cultures. On the contrary, he argues that missionaries

revived local cultures through their translation work of the Bible into vernacular languages. We also need to add to our criticisms of Western mission the examples and devotion of many godly and sacrificial missionaries. Thus Vinoth Ramachandra says that there are ‘many shameful stories to be told of Western missionary complicity in colonial practices of domination,’ but adds that ‘the more typical stories of missionaries and local Christian leaders in India, Africa or the South Pacific who courageously defended native interests and combated racist theories and stereotypes propagated by their fellow countrymen are missing from the anti-Orientalist corpus.’

Of course, nineteenth-century missionaries were products of their times, just as we too are shaped by our own environments today, and they exemplified some of the prejudices of their peers. Thus in many minds the ‘three C’s’—Christianity, commerce and civilization—came to exemplify the ‘blessings’ that the West was to ‘share’ with the rest of the world. Stephen Neill observes:

Missionaries in the nineteenth century had to some extent yielded to the colonial complex. Only Western man was man in the full sense of the word; he was wise and good, and members of other races, in so far as they became westernized, might share in this wisdom and goodness. But Western man was the leader, and would remain so for a very long time, perhaps for ever. (*A History of Christian Missions*, 1964, 23)

Andrew Walls’ work reminds us that, ‘African church history isn’t the same as mission history.’ In Sierra Leone, for instance, no white missionaries arrived until 20 years after the first churches were established. In Egypt and in northern Africa – where Tertullian and Augustine put what became doctrine into words – Christianity is an indigenous faith. According to Walls, ‘Missionaries hardly show up in it.’ Likewise, in India, there has been an indigenous Christianity in place for almost two thousand years among the Syrian Orthodox.

Much of the missionary record obscures the fact that the spread of Christianity in the non-Western world has largely been the work of non-Western agency. In the African experience, African agents, serving as interpreters, catechists, school teachers, pastors, even bishops formed the main vanguard of the Christian expansion. Jehu Hanciles, ‘In the Shadow of an Elephant” (Lecture given at CMS)

Modern African Christianity, notes Andrew Walls, ‘is not only the result of movement among Africans, but it has been principally sustained by Africans

and is to a surprising extent the result of African initiatives'. Not to put too fine a point on it, the vast majority of African Christians have heard the gospel only from other Africans! In addition, African Theologians (Idowu, Mbiti, Bediako, Jehu Hanciles) have severely criticised Western missions for imposing Western culture together with the Gospel. (See Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture on Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*, Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992). In the case of Asia, Terry Muck, Harold Netland, Vinoth Ramachandra, and others, have noted the failures of missionaries in contextualisation, in genuinely engaging with the religious traditions. Western missions have been fairly successful in Africa and Latin America, but generally have not been so successful among Hindus, Buddhists, and certainly among Muslims. (See Terry Muck, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, Baker Academic, 2009:7-9)

The need for renewal

In short, whatever the successes of the past, Western mission is in need of renewal. Its missiological model is based on a Eurocentric concept of mission from the West to the rest, which ignores the fact that Britain and Europe are also mission fields. Culturally, the Western model fails to develop indigenous identities and assumes that Western ways are normative for the rest of the world. Conversion therefore implies both accepting Christian faith and embracing the culture of the West. Such a process severs Asian believers from their religious heritage and so denies Asians a truly Asian theology. As a result non-Christian Asians view Christianity as a foreign imposition, a religion inherently alien to Asia. This creates further problems. Practically and economically, mission of this sort tends to breed dependency and is unsustainable not only in Asia or Africa but also in Europe. Even greater issues are raised in the realm of power. Who controls policies and decision making for missionary work in Asia and Africa? This is vital because all kinds of pseudo and well intentioned attempts are made to reform Western missions without a real attempt to address the heart of Western dominance—how to share power with non Western partners.

Three Models Towards Decentralisation of Western Mission

To date three main models have been proposed to deal with Western dominance, namely Internationalisation, Regionalisation and Localisation/National Entities. Each model has its strengths and weaknesses, and what constitutes the most important theological critique and most effective resolution (biblical or programmatic), if any, is still under discussion. There has been some missiological evaluation (see, for example on the issues

of 'identity' Lamin Sanneh's, *Whose Christianity?* and on 'power' Jonathan Ingleby's, *Beyond Empire*.) The problems of sustainability and dependency need further work, but one important possibility is a decentred *network* of intercultural communities, 'parallel presences in different circles and at different levels, each seeking to penetrate within and beyond its circle' (Andrew Walls, *Missionary Movement* pp. 258-9). CMS are currently experimenting with such a model. This involves developing an autonomous Asia CMS entity with Asian leadership, which relates to other sectors of CMS as equal members of an Interchange Network based on participation in shared mission. This is supposed to mean that the West is no longer in control. Each local community sets the standards and maintains accountability, using local resources. Even so there are different routes towards a decentred network. One might be described as '*local/realistic*' with something as simple as a mission training base in one centre relating cross culturally in the region. This could be sustainable locally and would create a pioneer training programme rather than a transnational mission presence. It would however entail the loss of a regional outlook and interconnection, and would fulfil the aims of 'network mission' only minimally. In other words it would have little capacity to transform CMS's original aim to relate in a new and post-colonial way to Asia. Indeed it could well be just another 'nice idea' which camouflages the desire to retain power and control in the West, at least for the foreseeable future. Younger partners will be asked to wait until they are sufficiently mature to relate as equals. A second possibility would be a '*regional/reforming*' entity rather than one focused on a mission base locally. This would take on and share the responsibilities and liabilities of CMS's traditional work. The big question would remain as to how to incorporate the strengths of internationalisation, regionalisation and localisation? When international mission leaders meet, whose agenda do they serve, whose perspectives dominate, and when there are differences in viewpoints, would the powerful be willing to be converted? A third possibility might be described as '*prophetic/radical*'. This would involve a willingness to tear down in order to build new entities, with contextual and regional work in Non Western contexts handed over to trusted Asian leadership who are enabled to build capacity and take over leadership responsibilities. British control of resources and power would have to be divested and become inclusive, diverse and global. All regions would be focused on local contextual mission, but share power/responsibilities in trans-cultural and trans-regional work. Obviously this would demand transparency and accountability by all parties in order to build trust.

Role of Mission Leadership in the 21st Century

The search for genuine decentred models would require Western mission leadership which was radical rather than reformist, and willing to make intentional structural changes rather than engage in mission theories and rhetoric. Effective new leaders would be those willing to imbibe the humble spirit of kenosis, to be converted (not just open) to new ways, not to be at the 'centre' of the world; in a word 'post-colonial'. The fact is that there remains a huge risk that power is *not* decentralised, that other dominance models of mission are generated even within Asia and Africa. There is also the real possibility of producing isolation rather than interdependence and that valued models and best practices are lost. This would lead to a slow decline as such outmoded models failed to demonstrate the embodiment of a post-colonial spirit.

Western Dominance in World Mission: Time for Change An African Response by Peter Oyugi

Is it a fact?

I think so. Western dominance in world missions should not be seen as all bad for Africa. It is where it is now because of the selfless sacrifices of many Western missionaries. It is only fair to applaud these missionaries for all their hard toil to bring the gospel of Christ to this great and diverse continent.

If so in what ways does it distort current practice?

Of particular interest is the way Western dominance has influenced *current mission practice* in the Global South. Negatively, have the emergent missions picked up any bad habits from their Western exemplars? It seems that in the history of Christianity God has often used the super-powers of the day to be a vehicle for mission service. The Romans, European sailors, colonisers etc. have all provided unwitting help. However, the church in super-power contexts has tended to self-destruct perhaps due to the adage 'power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Often in the contexts of dominance, God subtly starts to use more of those on the periphery; missions have seemingly grown much more in the fringes of society in Africa (the poor, marginalized, etc.). Dominant forces in missions therefore need to constantly seek to link to the periphery and not remain 'aloof' in power and privilege. This scramble for power persists today.

Measure of Success

Power and dominance is not always an indication of God's favour upon a person or ministry. To equate uncritically volume of work done to success is perhaps one of the most insidious issues in missions currently. This is coupled with a large western pre-occupation with numbers and "results". How do we evaluate God's work among his people?

Dominance

Often, western dominance in missions has tended to take over emerging non-western mission initiatives. Most of this could be innocent; they simply want to come alongside and help, but the power equation is often so hopelessly unbalanced that consciously or unconsciously the non-westerners tend to take up more of a subservient role. Admittedly power is sweet and westerners can very easily find themselves 'enjoying' the prestige that power (whether real i.e. material or imagined) provides, especially in non-western contexts. Conversely, a sense of inferiority has time and again limited the vision of non-westerners especially in the presence of westerners. Thus the two end up in a deadly embrace which greatly undermines mission.

On-going causes and possible remedies!

Causes

Different ways (worldviews) about how Africans and Westerners understand and treat power, wealth and authority need further exploration if we are to avoid the clashes of cultures.

Sometimes, beneath the polite African welcome, there is seething anger at the perceived unrelenting Western dominance. This is not helped by some arrogant and culturally insensitive westerners.

Missionaries not sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit are often pre-occupied with building their own ministries.

Remedies

Past heartaches between Western and non-Western mission initiatives need to be honestly but sensitively addressed if we are not to continue harbouring bitterness, suspicion and frustrations that currently exist.

Much thought needs to be given to looking at how the fledging mission movements in Africa can be given the space and room to grow and maintain

their uniqueness while benefiting from the huge experience of the older and better-endowed western mission movements?

Cross-cultural training and equipping must be given greater emphasis when missionaries move in either direction.

The language of partnership needs to be redefined, so that we no longer see the West as having the superior civilization e.g. 'we have so much, they have so little'. Instead we need to find ways of working together for the glory of God. Money is not necessarily the answer to all things.

We must listen to and learn from mature Christians leaders who are non-Western, both in terms of reading books by non-Western authors and also by doing more listening than talking while on mission trips.

The challenge is to build authentic mission work rather than falling for cleverly crafted publicity that yields donor funding.

Redressing the balance of Western dominance does not mean getting rid of Western missionaries. We need missionaries from everywhere. So we should seek to have everywhere becoming both senders and receivers of missionaries.

Blessings of the Global South

Positively, what are the *new* developments in mission from the Global South that exemplify the blessings that Global South leadership can bring?

One blessing is openness to the work of the Holy Spirit – having both word and Spirit, and prayer and fasting as explained by Os Guinness: (See 'Mission modernity' in *"Faith and Modernity"*, Sampson, Samuel and Sugden, eds. Regnum Books, 1994)

Southern leaders often have new ways of expressing the faith – Escobar in *The New Global Mission* (p.15) highlights that among the main characteristics of the non-Western church are the following:

- Enthusiasm (uninhibited emotionalism)
- Maximum participation in prayer and worship
- Faith healing, dreams and visions
- Intense search for community (move to the city)

Conclusion

Jesus says in John 20:21 ‘...as the Father has sent me, I also send you.’ This has been aptly expounded in the paraphrase of a Mission ONE article (accessed from www.cosim.info/GlobalDominanceNon-West2.pps) as follows. We need to encourage north-south global partnerships that reflect the very heart of God in mission. We have a perfect role model in Jesus (Phil 2:1–11). We need once again to engage in global mission with the mind and attitude of Christ – incarnate ministry, emptying of self, serving out of weakness, compassion and affection, unity of mind and purpose, humility, esteeming others above self, nothing from pride, all for the glory of God. All mission methods, visions, strategies, models, cultures plans and traditions (including organizational ones) must be relativized under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is need to pursue maximum reciprocity in ministry, for in deep relationships we learn from and serve one another.

Western Dominance in World Mission: Time for Change A Latin American Response *by Claudio Muzzi*

Perhaps the definitions which give the forum its title are rather negative. Seeing things in terms of US and THEM is unhelpful.

My own experience of missionaries goes back to my youth. There were often missionaries in the house, but they were all girls and all Brazilians. I remember them as very kind people.

A more recent experience includes a young missionary couple going from the UK to Uganda. They were supposed to be leading an office with a number of staff under them, despite the fact that they had had no experience in that sort of work and no cross cultural training. They were not really going with anyone and had only a short-term commitment. Not surprisingly, their mission was not a success.

This sort of cavalier attitude to training is mirrored by the use or misuse of books. There is of course a huge need for books to do with training in response to the growth of majority world mission. However the books currently prescribed are often highly inappropriate. Usually they are translations of

Western texts without any real effort to contextualise. Clearly because the social reality is different the books need to be written not in the USA or Britain but from within the context. They also need to take into account that the majority world is often effective without being bookish. Many texts from the West major on 'health and safety': but Latin Americans thrive on risk. Chapters on 'having a good furlough' are inappropriate if, as is often the case, furloughs are simply not possible.

Sadly, Westerners often find it difficult to believe that Latin Americans can be leaders. They do not recognise their gifts, perhaps because they are different (and better). For example, leadership is not a matter of good management but of spiritual leadership, with an orientation towards people rather than projects. The matter is compounded by the way in which Latin Americans do not expect to be in mission leadership. They simply assume that they will be the workers while others will lead. We must be very careful about the dangers of stereotyping. (As Roland Allen pointed out as long ago as 1908!) Does having an accent disqualify people before their real worth is ever assessed. As the saying goes, 'We only have an accent, we are not idiots.'

The internationalising of missions should not be simply a matter of political correctness. It is part of God's plan for the ages. (See Rev 7:9ff.)

Finally, Westerners must learn not to patronise. Mission does not belong to Europeans. 'Tolerance' is not the word, but mutual accountability, with equal respect for each person. This applies to all mission agencies, including new ones.