

Commissioning Address For Omar Djoandy as the new SIM (Australia) Director, held on 28th Feb, 2004 at Sydney Technical High School , Sydney, Australia.

A New World

At the end of the last millennium Christian History, an evangelical magazine, sought to note the 100 most important events in the history of the church in the last 2000 yrs. Africa had only one mention, and even that mention had more to do with Britain than with Africa – it was a mention on the abolition of slavery as effected by William Wilberforce. While the article was informative, it missed one of the most significant events in the life of the church of Jesus Christ in the last 2000 yrs.

1. 10 to 360 million . . . At the beginning of the 20th Century, it is estimated that the African church numbered about 10 million converts . . . at the end of the same century, the church had grown to an amazing 360 million converts! This growth of the African church is such that today,

- in the 70 million strong worldwide Anglican communion, there are more Anglican Christians in the single country of Nigeria alone than in both Europe and America combined (there are 17 million Nigerian Anglicans as compared to Europe's 2.3 million and Americas 3.4 million).
- 80% of Kenya's population calls itself Christian. 34% professes to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as savior. This is nearly equal to all the evangelicals in Europe put together.
- Largest single congregations in London and Zurich, and possibly in several other gateway cities in the west, is led by African. What growth is being experienced by the church in Europe, and I gather is the case here in Australia, is being experience in the 2/3 world migrant communities.

The same type of astronomical growth was also being experienced in Asia & South America. For this reason Christianity can no longer be said to be a western religion, it has become a southern religion, and as has been said by some missiologists, the face of Christianity has become darker – it has become Asian brown, or African black.ⁱ

As one church missiologists has noted *“Perhaps few areas of the world demonstrate this dramatic shift more forcibly than Africa, an area “experiencing the fastest church growth of any region” in the world.”*ⁱⁱ While much of this increase is surely linked to population growth, it is significant that the percentage of Christians grew from 9.2 percent in 1900 to 45 percent by 2000.ⁱⁱⁱ *The World Christian Encyclopedia of 2001 also estimates that African Christians are increasing at a rate of 23,000 new Christians a day (or 8.5 million a year) while the Church in Europe and North America loses an estimated 6,000 church members a day.*^{iv}”

2. Megatrends The Challenges of a New World : This single fact on the growth of the Southern church, is but one of the many new challenges, the megatrends that are sweeping thru the world today, and face us as we engage in missions in a new world today . . . there are others.

1. First is the reality of global communications and travel. Today one can communicate with the traditional mission field in real time. This global communication in some sense signifies some of the new resources, especially in IT, that exist and must be harnessed for the task missions. One reality of this fact however, is that the resource has raised up new challenges – for example, the increased pastoral expectation that has been placed on the mission

- agencies at home, to respond in realtime to the field, especially in terms of pastoral member care, and issues of security.
2. Secondly is the ever increasing pervasive spreading western mindset and world culture – for the first time in the history of the world we have a ‘global culture’ – the global youth culture. Youth in Africa, particularly in the urban centers, have more in common with youth in Asia and North America, than has been the case in any other time in history. This fact alone has given the gospel message new highways to travel, but it is also a mega-highway for sin that makes it harder to reach this age-group.
 3. Third is postmodernism and the remaking of the new world missionary – the traditional mission sending nations of the world are largely postmodern . . . and they are seeking to send postmoderns missionaries to a largely traditional world that is just beginning to deal with the reality of modernity – how will postmodern missionaries, coming from what has been called in America ‘the under-parented generation’ manage in a traditional world that works totally differently?
 4. A fourth is the fact of the increasingly dwindling missionaries from the western world, and the rising, unmanageable cost of such missionaries. It has become harder than ever before to find and resource the traditional missionary. Apart from this, the new and emerging youth want short term missions but are not as attracted to long term missions – which is what most mission agencies were established to manage.
 5. Yet another is the emerging mission force from the 2/3 world. Today the 2/3 world is sending out more missionaries than the western world. And the missionaries of this new millennium are colored and black! But most of the established mission agencies, which includes SIM, are not geared to notice, recruit, mobilize, or send out 2/3 world missionaries . . . unless they happen to be living in the west.
 - Recently a rallying call was made at a missions leaders meeting I attended in North America, for 300 missionaries to go into China as teachers of English as a second language, which the Chinese govt. is keen to facilitate. After the person making the appeal sat down, a participant got up and noted that those 300 missionaries would not be found in the US or Europe – they would be easily found in the 2/3 world. At a later stage of the meeting, someone else noted that they would not even be the traditional “full time” missionary worker, but must go into China as businessmen . . . for business will increasingly become the new media of missions in this age.

The models are changing

6. The growing realization in the 2/3 world that the church in the western hemisphere is on the demise . . . and that the models of church, theological devp., and church ministry in the western world have not worked. The 2/3 world is therefore increasingly faced with the growing question “*If the Christian enterprise in the western world has not worked, and the church is on the demise, what are we doing copying their models of ministry – won’t we end up in the same position they did if we copy them?*”

There is also growing suspicion about where the western church is heading. Probably no other issue raises up that concern than the recent debate within the Anglican communion about the ordination of homosexuals as the African churches within the Anglican Communion spoke of breaking away from the western church and charting their own path.

7. Another reality is that the western world has in fact become the world’s greatest mission field – there are more pagans in some western nations than there are in many 2/3 world nations today. America ranks as the 3rd largest pagan country in the world, following only India and China. Missions in the last century has been caricatured as “*If it works in the west, export it to the rest*”, and most Western mission organizations are still in the export and forwarding business. In light of this reality about the growing need to re-evangelize the

west, I suggest that western mission organizations need to rethink this and consider whether they should not instead become mission organizations whose primary focus is to enable 2/3 worlds missionaries to come into Australia, to come into Europe and to come into America! A reversal of the traditional role.

Maybe SIM should work at assisting missionary Christians from the 2/3 world to come into Australia by setting up services for visa applications to Australia, collage placement, business start-up loans, etc. With Australia holding only a 4% average of Christians, existing solely to send missionaries to countries like Kenya with it's 80% needs a rethink. This old model of missions needs to be re-examined. The role of the mission agency needs to move from being "*If it works in the west, export it to the rest*", into "*Missions - from everywhere, to everywhere*".

All these, and others realities we do not have time to enumerate today, confront us as we try to do missions in an new age. The world of missions has changed, . . . of necessity the models of missions must similarly change. The mission industry of the last 200 yrs was hugely successful, and the rise and growth of the African, Asian and L. American church owes it to the western church. For this we, the African, Latin American and Asian church will always be eternally grateful to the church in Australia, America and Europe for sacrificially giving of their people and resources to bring us the gospel. But . . . a new mission force is slowly awakening in these continents – a sleeping giant is stirring, and must soon be mobilized into missions. Korea, China and Brazil are becoming the new missionary sending centers of the world, and increasingly I hear the church on the continent of Africa expressing a growing awareness and desire to send missionaries back into the western nations that colonized it, and to reclaim those nations for Christ. The Spirit of God is blowing in a new direction, we must align ourselves to that direction.

A New Partnership

How then, do we do this? Where do we begin? I believe that a paradigm that guides us in our search is already given us in scripture.

I Cor 12:14 - 27 ¹⁴ Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ If the American church should say, "Because I am not a African, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the European church should say, "Because I am not an Asian, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were German, where would the sense of vibrancy be? If the whole body were an European, where would the sense of color be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The American church cannot say to the Asian Church, "I don't need you!" And the European Church cannot say to the African church, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, the Asian parts that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the African parts that we think are less honorable should be treated with special honor. And the Latin American parts that seem unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while the representable parts like the big and wealthy American church need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

In I Cor 12 Paul pictures the church as a functioning body, with each part playing it's role. That vision of the body presents us with an ideal, new paradigm of the worldwide church functioning in harmony for the glory of God. The task of missions is too great for any one of us, and too great for all of us if we seek to accomplish it in an uncoordinated fashion. This is particularly the case if the southern church does not link hands with the northern church in it's growing desire to be a missions force, or if the northern church does not realize the reality of a new world. The south needs the north because the north has historical wisdom gathered from 200 yrs of missions, the north has institutions, books,

faculty, and financial resources. But the south has fresh personnel resources in huge numbers, vibrancy, new zeal, new music, new theologies and new paradigms for missions.

I Cor 12 guides us as to how these two can be brought together . . .

1. Firstly, we must recognize that when the church of Jesus Christ is mature, it will be interdependent, not independent. When the African church is mature – it will not stand apart and declare itself independent . . . it will not brush itself off with the American church and say “we no-longer need you”, NO – it will link hands with the American and Latin American church and live in a healthy, functional dependent state. Interdependence not independent.

No organ in the body starts life dreaming about becoming another organ when it is mature, or becoming independent of all other organs when mature. The body would be sick. Today however, to our shame, too much of the church lives in this state of sickness. We are all trying to become continentally or nationally independent of each other. I have asked church leaders in Australia and America “*The African church knows it needs your church, but how does the American church need the African church*”, and they have drawn a complete blank asking themselves “*Why in the world would the American church ever need the African church?*” Indeed, when I mention that there is much talk in the African church of sending missionaries back to Europe and America, they feel offended that we would even imagine we can ever help them. That sort of continental arrogance leads to a sickly state.

2. It presents us with a model that allows for diversity in the midst of a unified task. Too many organizations and churches set out to spread the gospel via a ‘franchise’ McDonald model . . . to cater to their own people when they travel overseas. They do not recognize the local cuisine and tastes . . . and so we franchise SIM so that it is the same in Australia as it is in Europe as it is in America. The danger now exists that SIM will try and franchise itself in the new Christian centre of the world – the same thing in Brazil as in China as in Nairobi, Kenya. This is not the way the body functions.

Instead, to facilitate missions in a new world, I would model the body and encourage SIM to go to China and discover how the Chinese church is sending out 100,000 missionaries back along the old silk road. What models of missions they are developing, that are not dependant on the Western model of missions with it’s green-buck, but that is uniquely Chinese. That they should come to Africa and see how the indigenous church is sending out missionaries, and strengthen us in the unique models we are developing on the continent without trying to outfit us with SIM ‘armor’ as Saul did David. In this way they could learn many new things, without taking the culturally imperialistic position of assuming that what works in the west is good for the rest . . . that there is only one way of doing business – franchise.

3. That the values that guide us should be **humility** as we recognize that not one organ is independent of the others, and that not one is useless to the body; **mutual respect** allowing each organ to do what it does best without trying to convert it to do things our way; and **reciprocity** recognizing we all need to be given, and to take . . . and that to take without giving back, is to destroy the body, just as to give, but refuse to take back, is to destroy the body. Missions is to way, not an export from the west to the rest.
4. It also challenges us to begin building multicultural, multiskilled, multieconomic mission teams.

The future of missions belongs to partnerships. Now partnerships is an overused, tired word . . . and everyone believes they have partnerships with the 2/3 world. But the sort of partnership that Paul envisions here in I Cor 12 is at a vital, life engaging level. It is a partnership that is all embracing . . . that is deeply interdependent, that cannot be separated without killing the body. It is not a task partnership, not a business contract, not an alliance . . . but the sort of partnership that is marriage,

where 2 being commit to each other with a life-long vow, based on a relationship that results in fruit (a home, a joint future, children). It is an all-encompassing partnership that runs as deep as trusting one another and working together on a common mission without demanding that the one become a copy of the other . . . a partnership that celebrates our diversity, without seeking to stamp into us uniformity. This sort of mission partnership I do not believe the world has seen. Too many of the old, presently functional models do not allow for it . . . and yet only a major paradigm shift into new models will help us keep ahead with the task of missions in this world.

A New Strategy

Dr Omar Djoeandy, as you are commissioned to give leadership to an illustrious mission organization like SIM Australia,

- I pray you will have the courage to explore, and to model this new paradigm of missions in SIM -Australia, an organization that today has over 100 missionaries out in the world; and whose missionaries are found in over 20 countries.
- I pray you will look at the new resources for missions in today's world, and, placing these alongside the old resources, respond to the challenges of missions in a new world, in a new millennium.
- That you will set out to the frontier, and help us, the African church, benefit from the gathered experience and wisdom SIM has, as we rise up to the challenge of African missions.
- I pray that you will have the courage to continue mobilizing white Australians for missions; but that you will explore what it means to also mobilize Chinese Australians, Aboriginal Australians, African Australians, migrant worker Australians and first generation Australians.
- The new world is increasingly being redefined, not by national boundaries, but by the global youth culture, global communication, the multinational co-operations whose economies and powerful reach sometimes supercedes that of national governments, the media and the entrepreneur business men who criss-cross thru those borders. I pray that you will have the courage to redefine SIM to respond to a borderless world . . . that SIM Missionaries will be raised from Malawi – to go to the Ukraine, and from Java, to go to the Chinese community in Chinatown, San-Francisco.
- I pray that you will redefine the notion of sending and receiving, that you will allow mutuality in the task of missions, that SIM will have the courage to be both a sending agency, but equally one that charts new ways of bringing in African, Asian and L. American missionaries to evangelize – not the ethnic minorities, but the whole Australian population, and especially the white suburban communities.
- I pray that you will have the courage to explore missions via the undocumented migrant workers of the world, who exist even here in Australia . . . and who are a shadowy, unseen force that lives beneath the immigrations radar, but have always been an important tool in missions, and could teach us volumes about stealth existence and survival unwelcoming places.

Omar, I suggest to you that your biggest challenge in this new task will not be to maintained the status quo in SIM, it will not even be to generate more missionaries to send to the field . . .

- it will be to sense the direction the Spirit of God is blowing, and to align the ministry of SIM in that direction;
- it will be to 're-engineer' SIM so that it faces and responds to the new realities of missions in a new millennium.

In one sense you are uniquely gifted for this because you are a child of many cultures – rooted in your Chinese lineage, birthed in Indonesia, bred in Australia, formulated in your ministry experience in Africa, married to a child of the worlds originator of a global culture – America. You are a child of many cultures.

In all the time I have known you - you have proved to be bold, willing to take risks, to travel along the un-chartered path, to be innovative, and to step out by faith. You have also proved to be industrious, and gifted, especially in the task of designing new structures and processes to respond to the changing realities of ministry. Now – with over 20 yrs experience in this, at the prime of your life – all this must come to a head as you give leadership and invest this wealth of experience and gathered wisdom, this unique background and multiple gifting God has given you.

Amen.

ⁱ Trend drawn from Peter Jenkins “The Next Christendom”

ⁱⁱ Cf. J A Siewert and E G Valdez (eds), *Mission Handbook* (California: MARC Publications), 1997, p. 34.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Michael Jaffarian, “The Statistical State of the Missionary Enterprise”, *Missiology* 9, 1 (January 2000), 15-32, p. 19.

^{iv} D B Barrett, G T Kurian & T M Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press), 2001, p. 5.