

Great

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Commission News

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Today's Newest Mission Field –The West

A New Era On Global Missions?

Thomas Wang

No matter how you interpret “end time” prophecies (eschatology), future outlook of the world will be a mixture of light and gloom, joy and dread, and hope and despair!

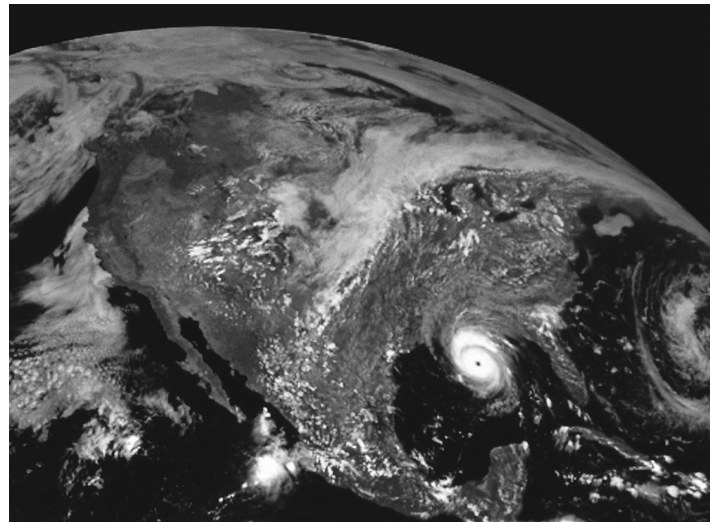
Western Europe, ever since the Renaissance of the 15th century, has been determinedly leading the world away from its Creator, that is, from a God-centered life-view to a man-centered one. The Enlightenment accelerated this process by declaring that man has become the measure of all things and was no longer in need of God. Modernism, empowered by the Industrial Revolution, went one step further in announcing that man has overcome nature and therefore nature's God. And finally, Post-modernism, with an abundance of advocates, declared that man after all, is God.

Indeed, the dethronement of God has always been Satan's highest agenda since the Garden of Eden at the beginning of mankind. Human beings, created in the image of God, in spite of all evidences provided in nature and in the revealed Word which portrayed a caring and loving God, chose to follow the enticement of Satan the ancient foe, is beyond lamentation!

In north America, things have not fared better either. Since the early 60's, traditional Christian faith has been put on the defensive and has been

consistently marginalized in human affairs. Secular cultural pressure is such that one almost has to apologize when mentioning the name of “Jesus” in public places.

In 1962, the Supreme Court of the United States declared prayer in public schools are unconstitutional. In 1963, the same court outlawed Bible reading in public schools. By the showing of hands of nine unelected elderly individuals, young people across the entire nation lost their privilege and right for prayer and reading of God's word in schools. And the church remained mainly silent throughout the ordeal. Since the early sixties, higher juvenile delinquencies and lower study scores were the inevitable result.



In short, we have witnessed in the brief span of half of a century the amazing character-transformation of the WEST: Christian, post-Christian, non-Christian and in many ways, anti-Christian!

The speed of change is frightening!

1. Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Britain, Norway, Sweden and Finland have all legalized same-sex marriage or same-sex union. Canada followed suite in July 2005.
2. Many traditional churches in Europe are almost empty. Sanctuaries were sold and used as mosques, museums and bingo houses.
3. Some churches and denominations are no longer involved in global missions. Their chief concern today is “survival”.
4. The shocking truth about Europe--the prodigal continent.

(Reprint from YWAM Europe Office news)

“Over two millennia, Europe’s ‘Christian’ identity has been forged by apostolic bands, wandering monks, scholars, reformers, revivalists, social reformers and countless anonymous witnesses to the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Today, at the dawn of the third millennium, this ‘Christian’ identity is becoming obsolete. In short, Europe is increasingly becoming a mission field of neo-pagans, baptised and unbaptised. In France today there are more spiritist healers than doctors,



lawyers and priests combined! Bookstores across the continent carry huge ranges of titles on occult, witchcraft, mysticism, eastern religions and esoteric spirituality on shelves where once ‘Christian religion’ books dominated.

Did you know...

- * that believers in China outnumber the whole population of Germany?! (80 million)
 - * that there are more Anglicans in Nigeria than in the UK and the US combined?!
 - * that one church in Korea has a membership equal to the whole population of Amsterdam?!
 - * that there are more members of the Assemblies of God denomination in Brazil than there are evangelicals in the whole of Europe?!
- Europe has become the prodigal continent, squandering its Judeo-Christian heritage.

Europe must “come to its senses” and decide to return to the Father.

5. The problems of Europe “could come from several directions—from globalization favoring the formation of totalitarian regimes, from growing syncretism, and from Islam.

“Europe could be subjected to an enforced Islamization accompanied by the introduction of Sharia law. This danger was increased by the fact that the indigenous population is shrinking.”

6. Christianity is becoming the target of persecution in Europe. As reported by Wolfgang Polzer of Evangelical News Agency: “....130 Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox representatives, was convened by the evangelical missiologist Prof. Peter Beyerhaus. The so-called Blankenburg Proclamation speaks of a dangerous anti-Christian influence in legislation, academic life and school education.

“Scientists who believe in God as the creator were subject to public defamation. Christians, not willing to compromise their faith, had to face ridicule, intolerance, stigmatization and career obstacles.

“The declaration refers specifically to the plight of German homeschoolers. Approximately 150 families were subject to fines and jail because



they refuse to send their children to state controlled schools....”

7. Looking forward....Where do we go from here?

(1) A Missiological Paradigm Shift

Since the days of Matteo Ricci, Zinzendorf, William Carey, Robert Morrison etc., world mission has always been a **one-way street**, that is, from the “sending countries” (mainly Western Europe, North America etc.) to the rest of the world.

In today’s world however, with the steady decline of Christian conviction of the West (especially in western Europe), together with the growth and the maturing of the two-thirds world church, a time for a missiological paradigm shift is called for, that is, global missions is to be understood as a **two-way street**. Which means, missionaries will be mutually sent between the west and the two-third world. The West today is both a sending base as well as a mission field.

(2) The daughter churches’ turn to share the global task

A. Global Missionary Outreach

Robert Morrison of England brought the gos-

pel to China in 1807. For the first two centuries the Chinese church was mainly on the receiving end. However during the past several decades, increasing number of Chinese churches are involved in mission outreach. We anticipate this trend will grow and flourish that Chinese churches and other Two-Thirds world churches will partner with the global church to bring the gospel to all unreached people groups worldwide.

The YWAM newsletter which was quoted earlier also has this to say, “The center of gravity of the worldwide church has in fact moved from Europe and the West over the past two decades to the Two-Thirds World.” If so, it is only the duty of the two-thirds world churches to participate in the world team.

B. Re-evangelization of the West

Christians of the two-thirds world have a high appreciation to the West. Western missionaries came over during the past two centuries, labored, suffered and some died in the field where they served. Toward such love and such grace, we could not and should not forget. Also, we should somehow return this lofty love-debt.

So today, when we see the West is being devastated by secularism, unbelief and neo-paganism, our conscience and integrity would not allow us to just watch with quiet indifference. We do not want to come under the shame and condemnation of “Our Guilty Silence” as written by Dr. John Stott. We will swim against the tide and remind America and the West of their Christian roots and respectfully sounding the call: “Return To God”.

Indeed, Western Europe, Canada and America are like a run-away train going downhill and gaining speed by the seconds. Many watched in awe but remained silent. It takes courage for the valiant ones to leap on board and apply the brakes!

Dear friends of the West, It’s braking time! Repent and return to God! The God of love is waiting with open arms! Return!

RESPONSES to the article: WORLD NEWEST MISSION FIELD - THE WEST

The Christianization of Europe was part of a global advance of Christianity in the early centuries of the Christian Church. Sadly the combination of the politicization of Christianity after 300 AD and the spectacular Muslim conquests of other areas where Christianity was strong before 700 AD meant that Europe then became the only "Christian" continent. There were powerful state church systems, but only in pockets were numbers converted through a living faith in Christ.

Europe is now the prodigal continent acquainted with a form of Christianity, but strangers to its content and message. Many Europeans speak of the post-Christian world, but do not realize that they speak of Europe alone - elsewhere biblical Christianity is flourishing.

The spectacular loss in numbers of Evangelicals between 1900 and 1960 was due to the success of the Enlightenment and its daughters, humanism and liberal theology and its grandchildren, secularism, Communism and devastating ideological wars in the 20th Century. This was especially true in France, Germany, Netherlands and Denmark, and, to a lesser extent, in other traditionally Protestant nations. Periodic revivals in Scandinavia and the UK lessened the hemorrhage and provided a base for missions over a century ago.

Of the world's 67 million Evangelicals in 1900, almost half (33 million) were in Europe. Their numbers had fallen to under 12 million in 1960. Europe's slow growth of Evangelicals since then is, in part, due to low birth rates and also large-scale immigration of non-indigenous and often non-Christian peoples. By 2050 maybe 35-40% of Europe's population will be non-indigenous immigrants and their offspring.

We could say that Europe has become a new mission field, but the truth of the matter is that large swathes of Europe have never really been exposed to the biblical message of salvation or been adequately disciplined. It has always been a mission field! The large Christian world outside Europe is waking up to the reality of Europe's spiritual need.

What are the challenges for the global Church of the Lord Jesus in considering the spiritual needs of Europe?

1. How to evangelize a secularized, cynical, hopeless generation that now deifies "tolerance" and despises absolutes and yet still would consider itself "Christian" even if less than 10% of the population ever darkens the door of a church. For foreign missionaries to have an impact will require dedication, faith, adaptability and language abilities of a level not demanded in other parts of the world.

2. How to reach out to the medley of peoples from all over the world who are flowing in to an economically rich Europe with a population vacuum caused by the increasingly rare phenomenon of marrying and begetting children. By 2050 probably over half the babies born in Europe will not have white skins - they will have originally come from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Locals will find it harder to reach them than missionaries from other countries.

Patrick Johnstone

1 Nov 2006

WEC International

Author: Operation World

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Europe represents the new challenge for the future. Across the continent, faith has been declared either dead or (perhaps even worse) tried and irrelevant. At the same time, while Europe has been turning from a mission force to a mission field, God has been at work in the Majority World turning yesterday's mission fields into today's mission forces. "Reverse mission" is a term that is used in some circles, and it reminds us that now our sisters and brothers in the Majority World are taking up the mantle of missionary engagement and offering their own unique gifts from Christ to the task of the Great Commission. It is our fervent prayer that Europe - and North America - will reap the benefits of this newer missionary force.

Scott Moreau

Chair, Intercultural Studies Dep.,

Wheaton College

Editor, Evangelical Missions Quarterly

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"Dr. Thomas Wang's insightful article with the sub-title, "A New Era on Global Missions?" addresses a situation that the Western missionary - sending agencies need to note. Of course the USA is already receiving missionaries from abroad to reach

RESPONSES to the article: WORLD NEWEST MISSION FIELD - THE WEST

our citizens with the Gospel of Christ. One missionary in Mexico recently wrote: "Please do not recruit our most able Mexican pastors to reach Mexicans in the USA." The questions one raises are: "Can two-thirds world missionaries raise the financial support to live in the USA?" "Could U.S. mission agencies assist in the selection of such missionaries to come to the USA?" Dr. Wang's article will stimulate some fresh thinking among missiologists."

John Kyle

Former VP and Missions Director of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

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The handwriting has been on the wall for some years now: the western cultures and their churches are in decline; (many) southern and eastern cultures and their churches are in the ascendancy. It would be exceedingly difficult to improve upon Dr. Wang's analysis of the significance of spiritual declension in the west. I would simply add that plain demographics reinforce the importance of his challenge to churches and missions worldwide. The TFR (total fertility rate) of major western nations is in serious decline. Not alone the spiritual, but also the personnel and economic

resources available to our missions seem destined to diminishment.

About three months ago I was asked to address a group of Japanese pastors on the subject "church and mission in the 21st century." I hesitated to mention this aspect of global change in a country that will also experience dramatic depopulation in the next 50 years. Lo and behold, the morning of my address I picked up a copy of *The Japan Times*. One of its feature articles was entitled "Motherhood Out of Style: Don't count on perks to lift birthrates." It was a reminder of the fact that faith and wishful thinking are very different. The handwriting on the wall calls for two things on the part of churches and missions: an honest global reality check and a thoroughly biblical response.

Heartfelt thanks, Dr. Wang, for helping us in both areas.

David J. Hesselgrave, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus of Mission,
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School,
Deerfield, Illinois
November 8, 2006

World Mission News

Saudi Arabia: A recent agreement between USA and Saudi Arabia gives cautious hope for Christians in the latter nation. The Saudi government promised that worship services will be allowed in private homes; religious police will not conduct surveillance, invade homes, confiscate private religious materials, or detain/punish suspects; the disparaging remarks on non-Muslims in official school textbooks will be removed; teachers/imans will be retrained to preach tolerance not extremism; and the Human Rights Commission will educate the public about human rights and aid abused victims. Christians are worried that the agreement specifies no accountability system to see that it is implemented while the Saudis have promised textbooks reforms before.

<Christianity Today, October/06>

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World Mission News

Bible: Of 2,400 language groups with portions of the Bible, 1,115 have the New Testament. Only 426 have the full Bible. Missionaries see groups formerly of animism or polytheism with only NT having deficient understandings of God and sin. The OT provides a framework of salvation history and connects well with groups that share ancient tribal lifestyle of agriculturalism, patriarchy, and sacrifices. They also resonate powerfully with Muslims who know Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. 500 of the 1,700 translations are full Bible project today. The role of national workers (90% of all translators) is increasing. But only 10% have biblical language skills with slow growth.

<Christianity Today, September/06>

Unevangelized: In 1900, 56% of 1.6 billion world population were unevangelized. There were some 15,000 cross-cultural missionaries working among these 879 million people. In 2000, the numbers were 26% of 6 billion people, and only 10,000 missionaries working among 1.6 billion people.

<LCWE Mission Report, www.lcwe.org. Sep./06>

USA: A recent US survey shows 92% of people have a faith in God and less than 11% 'have no religious tie at all'. There are different views about God: 31.4% believe in an 'authoritarian' God (highly involved in daily lives and quite angry, more in the South), 24.4% in a 'distant' God (not active and unconcerned about our lives, more in the West), 23% in a 'benevolent' God (very active but mainly a positive force, more in the Midwest), and 16% in a 'critical' God (not active but critical of the world, more in the East). 5.2% are atheistic.

<Dallas Morning News, 9/19/06>

Lebanon: 1 million of nearly 4 million people of Lebanon were displaced by the war between Israel and the Hezbollah. 90% of them are Muslims as they fled north where Christians and international agencies have been housing and feeding them. This display of love of Christ has opened a way for the gospel to these formerly unreached souls. It shatters some of their previous conception about Christians, to the extent that some are inviting the missionaries to continue the relationship and help them after they return home in the south.

<Mission Network News, www.mnn.gospelcom.net, 9/11/06>

Missionary Game: In Spring 2005, the largest secular TV station in Norway, aired a prime time show on Norwegian missionaries in Mali. It's positive response prompted Christian websites for children to create The Missionary Game about the every day life of a missionary. They had tried internet games to pique children's interest with not much success. The interactive and adventurous game lets one travel from village to village sharing the gospel; planting churches; distributing Bibles as well as the needed food, water, medicine, etc. It involves problem solving and praying for help from God. English version is available through www.themissionarygame.com.

<LCWE Mission Report, www.lcwe.org. August/06>

Africa Bible Commentary: After 5 years of work, the Africa Bible Commentary was published last July. This English volume is produced by over 70 evangelical African theologians. It gives section-by-section interpretation providing a contextual, readable, and useful guide to the entire Bible. There are also 72 articles on pertinent African issues such as HIV/AIDS, angels/demons/powers, funeral and burial rites, widows and orphans, and persecution. Many Christian world leaders acknowledge the significance of it.

<LCWE Mission Report, www.lcwe.org. August/06>

China: With Marxism no longer the guiding ideology and the moral vacuum being filled by Christian sects and extreme forms of nationalism, the Chinese government is promoting the revival of Confucianism that it tried to eradicate earlier. While this helps them in pacifying the increasing rural unrest, it poses also challenges such as peaceful resolution on the Taiwan issue and meritocracy in picking leaders by examinations rather than party loyalty.

<International Herald Tribune, 9/14/06>

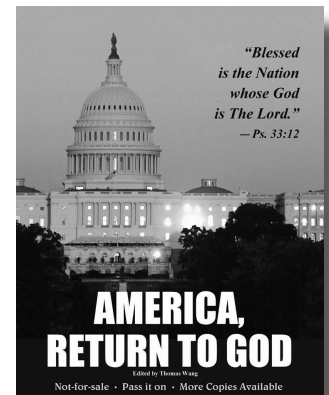
Nomad interns: The Book of Hope mission is looking to fulfill the vision of shaping the next generation of mission leaders with their Nomad interns. They recruit college students and send them out from 5 weeks up to 2 years to show Christian films, distribute gospel materials, and visit schools, churches and villages. This year they have 75 interns in Honduras and all across Africa. With no permanent home they move around according to the harvest and seasons in fulfilling the Great Commission within the well-defined God-given age-level territory of world's children and youths.

<Mission Network News, www.mnn.gospelcom.net, 10/6/06>

America, Return To God

Prayer Rallies Held in Nine Cities

We are grateful that the publication of America, Return to God has stirred up burdens for the spiritual well-being of America among many Christians and churches. As a follow-up momentum of this movement, GCCI has organized America, Return To God Prayer Rallies in nine cities (Dallas, Arlington, Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay Area, New Jersey, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York) in September. Many came prayed and shed tears for the spiritual decline of America. Christians from different churches prayed in one accord for America's repentance and restoration.



A 20-minute DVD on the Prayer Rallies will be released in December to remind churches to continue to call America to return to God, and to encourage her members to be salt and light of the society.

The total cost of the printing and postage of the 500,000 copies of America, Return To God was about US\$1,000,000. Donation received up to the end of October, reached half of that amount. Therefore, about US\$500,000 are still in need for the cost. Donations from churches, organizations and individuals are most welcome. Please issue checks to Great Commission Center International, designated for book publication.



China Mission Seminar Will be Held on Dec 29-30, 2006

More and more Chinese scholars and students are going back to China after their studies in recent years. They are doing well in different professions and their number and impact to the society back in China are increasing. They are being called "Hai Guei" (returnees from overseas). About 10% of them have become Christians while they are overseas and will to be a witness to the society in China. Many have shared with us the need for better preparation before their return.

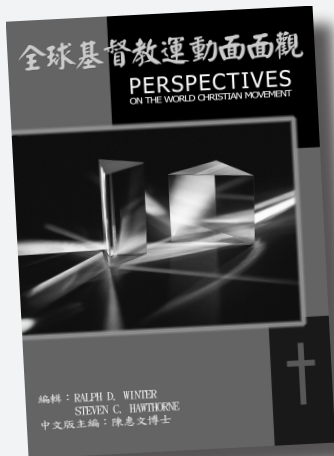
After consultation with the Overseas Campus Magazine and the China Ministry Department of Sowers International, we are organizing a China Mission Seminar for those who are planning to work in China. The seminar will be in Mandarin and starts from the evening of December 29 (Friday) through the evening of December 30 (Saturday).

Please encourage any Mainland Chinese Christians who are planning to go back to China to join us for the event. Registration form can be downloaded from our website.



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Perspectives Reader

Chinese Version

Just off the Press

Since its first publication in the 1970's, Perspectives courses have been a great tool for mission mobilization among churches in North America. GCCI has received permission from the US Center for

World Mission and the William Carey Library to translate and publish the Perspectives in the Chinese language. After several years of work, the Chinese Perspectives reader has come off the press in Hong Kong at the end of October. The shipments could be made in early December.

We will have a Christmas and New Year sale for the Perspectives Reader (in Chinese) and Operation World (in Chinese) as one set (US\$35 for each set, plus shipping, handling and tax for California residents).