Introducing World Missions
Second Edition

A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey

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Dedicated to Gary McGee,
brother in Christ and fellow pilgrim in mission,
now present with the Lord
A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, Introducing World Missions

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Preface

Introducing World Missions was first published in 2004 and written for prospective missionaries as well as for those who are interested in missions but may serve in other capacities in God’s work. Since that time we have been gratified to see it used as a text in introductory missions courses in many colleges and seminaries around the world. Since the initial publication, many excellent introductions to mission have become available (e.g., Gailey and Culbertson 2007; Hawthorne and Winter 2009; Hoke and Taylor 2009; Tennent 2010; Sunquist 2013). We rejoice that those who are interested in diving into mission have so many great offerings from which to choose.

Additionally, even though only ten years have passed since the initial publication of Introducing World Missions, we have witnessed an explosion of ideas, practices, challenges, and opportunities in mission. Ideas not mentioned in the previous edition such as church-planting movements, orality, integral mission, and insider movements have all come to the fore over the decade—together with several hundred new books on mission and missions—mandating a revision of the text.

The idea of becoming a missionary can be exciting and frightening at the same time. Living in a remote location, learning a new language, and possibly being physically cut off from those at home are all daunting for many people. Forging new friendships across cultures, the thrill of seeing a new church planted and leadership developing, and helping God’s people grow and develop in their walk with Christ are all exciting prospects for the missionary. Doing all of this in an increasingly uncertain world filled with indifference or even danger is a sobering prospect.

Introducing World Missions was the first in a projected series of eight books focusing on mission from an evangelical perspective. To date seven have been published, including The Changing Face of Missions (2005), Encountering Missionary Life and Work (2008), Christianity Encountering World Religions (2009), Encountering Theology of Mission (2010), Developing a Strategy for Missions (2013), and Effective Intercultural Communication (2014).

We intend this book to be a general introduction to contemporary missions. Written as a textbook, it focuses on providing students in introductory missions courses with a broad overview as well as occasional deeper explorations. Typical introductory missions classes include not only prospective missionaries but
also students who might not become missionaries themselves but need to understand contemporary missions as part of their anticipated pastoral roles. Although our focus here has been on the former, we have also written with the latter in mind.

The book is divided into five major sections through which mission is encountered. First comes the biblical and theological encounter, which lays the foundation for the rest of the book. In part 1 we argue that the evangelistic mandate of winning people to Christ must be at the core of any theology of mission that hopes to remain true to the biblical orientation. Contemporary practices and thinking about missions are best understood in light of their historical context, and in part 2 we provide an overview of the history of God’s work through the church in missions.

Introducing the contemporary student to mission requires pragmatic information in addition to the foundations laid, and in the last three parts of the book we tackle practical issues and current challenges from different perspectives. Part 3 explores missions from the viewpoint of the prospective missions candidate and others who share in the task. What does it mean to be called as a missionary, and what is involved in getting from here (the missionary’s home) to there (the country or location of service)? Part 4 carries the story further by looking at the challenges that will face any “sent one.” These span a spectrum of personal and family issues, strategic and ministry issues, and the requirements of adjusting to a new culture and all kinds of new relationships. Part 5 concludes the book with an exploration of contemporary challenges to missions, a survey of the missionary encounter with the non-Christian religions of the world, and a brief projection of what lies in the future for missions.

To supplement the text, we have added four additional sets of materials. They have been designed to help the teacher get the most out of the book.

First, most of the chapters include a case study. Case studies help the readers dig more deeply into a selected issue that fits the discussion in the chapter. Our case studies leave the reader with a dilemma for which a solution should be sought. For every case study in the book, there are numerous good solutions and numerous bad ones. Having students wrestle with the dilemmas presented in the case studies engages them in the learning process. Case dilemmas help students learn how to draw from theory in light of practical problems faced on the field.

If you are a teacher, we encourage you to use the case studies in ways that fit your objectives for the class. Students might write an essay on possible solutions to a case as a homework assignment. Alternately, class discussion of the case studies can be used to determine student awareness of the issues raised. To get them to think more deeply about the issues involved, students can be organized into small groups to work together in developing possible solutions.

Our second set of additional materials is the numerous sidebars scattered throughout the book. Most offer deeper thinking on a particular issue being discussed in the text and come with accompanying questions for discussion and reflection.

Third, course help for professors and study aids for students are available at Baker Academic’s Textbook eSources website at http://bakeracademic.com/IntroducingWorldMissions. Student resources include extra readings of relevant articles from the Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions (2000), flash cards to help students master key terms in the book, and self quizzes to help students grow in comprehension of important issues. The teacher resources include the same extra readings that the students have, case studies not found in the book for use in class, discussion starters for each chapter, and a test bank of questions informed by, but not identical to, the student self-quiz questions.

Finally, for both students and teachers, there
are bibliographic resources and links to relevant historical documents for each chapter.

Fourth, the images at the beginning of each chapter serve as visual resources. Each image connects in some way to the material of the chapter. For close to two thousand years artists from around the world have imagined Christ in ways that make sense to them—from the widely-recognized dirty blonde-haired, blue-eyed “Head of Christ” by Swedish artist Warner Salmann to the black-haired, brown-eyed “Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem” painted by Tanzanian Charles Ndege (see chapter 8). We invite readers to spend time meditating on the images, asking God to use the images to draw you into the world of the artist and to see Christ in a new way through their imaginations.

Because of a lack of consensus among those writing about mission, it is necessary to give a quick explanation of the way mission and missions are used in this book. Essentially, the term missions refers to the specific work of churches and agencies in the task of reaching people for Christ by crossing cultural boundaries. The term mission, however, is broader, referring to everything the church is doing that points toward the kingdom of God (Moreau 2000b). We will return to this discussion in greater depth in chapters 1 and 5. Our aim throughout the book has been to be consistent in using mission in the broader sense of the term and missions for the more narrow. Where we quote authors who use these terms differently than we do in this text, we have chosen not to change their original wording.

We anticipate that those reading this book will be better equipped to understand, analyze, evaluate, and critique general approaches to mission and missions. However, this is simply the start of a longer journey for you as readers, during which you will encounter things you never anticipated (both good and bad) and grow in appreciation of the One you serve. It is our prayer that through this text God will enrich you as a person who is discerning how to participate in God’s mission.
The Incarnation by Father Fernando Aritzi (Mexico)

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Missions in the Modern World

Introduction

If you are reading this book, chances are you are interested in missions. Maybe you already sense a call from God to go somewhere. Maybe you are interested in other cultures. Maybe you want to go into ministry but not missions and still hope to support missions in some way. Missions has changed dramatically in the past few decades, and we hope to introduce you to the changes and provide you with information that will help you understand what is involved in either being a missionary or being involved in supporting God’s missionary work. To start, a brief survey of the modern world will help set the context. After that, we provide you with some exploratory thoughts on missions and missionaries that will set the stage for the rest of the book.

What in the World?

The world today is both fascinating and frightening. The fascinating is portrayed through travelogues—both written (W. H. Fuller 2010) and multimedia (e.g., the Transformations videos). The frightening runs the gamut from terrorism to wars to trafficking. Wars—including wars of independence (Chechnya), civil wars (Liberia), ethnic wars (Rwanda, Bosnia), religious wars (Afghanistan, Pakistan), and terrorist wars—flare up on a regular basis everywhere. Millions follow the stories with morbid interest on television, in newspapers and magazines, and via the web. Perhaps the most frightening element of wars in the twenty-first century is that the technology to manufacture and deploy weapons of mass destruction is no longer limited to governments; wealthy individuals with a vendetta and the technical know-how can control the ability to kill by means undreamed of a few decades ago, and the arguments over drone surveillance and strikes are a reminder of how far we have come in even the last ten years.

The very technology that cures diseases previously thought incurable also can be used to revive old diseases, make new ones, or even manufacture machine-based diseases against which flesh and blood may very well be completely defenseless. As if that were not enough, apparently new diseases such as AIDS and Ebola have arisen in the past fifty years that have devastated whole populations. While we are now able to halt the progression of AIDS in individuals, AIDS had reduced life expectancy in several African nations from more than fifty-five years to less than thirty-five years as of 2010. Patrick Johnstone points out, “The Church is the only network
with the human resources, moral imperative and spiritual motivation to deal with the root causes of the spread of HIV (sexual promiscuity and substance abuse) and help its victims by providing local, self-sustaining mechanisms for survival, a loving community for the present and real hope for the future” (2011, 9).

As bad as these circumstances are, there are equally frightening religious realities. In Saudi Arabia in 2005, seventeen pastors were arrested (including Indians, Pakistanis, Eritreans, and Ethiopians; Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea 2013, 161). Five Muslim youth were accused of killing three Protestant Christians (two Turkish converts from Islam and a German Christian) in Turkey in 2007. After seven years without a full trial or verdict, the alleged killers were released (“Conditional Release” 2014). In Malaysia, starting in 2009 and through a series of court rulings and reversals, Christians have been prohibited from using the term Allah even though they have used it for centuries in Malay-language Bibles (www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/top-malaysia-court-delays/1021244.html). In Nigeria, Boko Haram, a Muslim extremist group, killed roughly five hundred people through bombing attacks in 2011—and half that many in just the first two months of 2012 (Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea 2013, 242). In Nairobi, Kenya, on September 21, 2013, the Islamist group al-Shabaab entered a shopping mall and, after warning Muslims to leave, opened fire on many in the mall, killing 69 and wounding an estimated 175 people in a three-day siege. They are suspected of being responsible for ongoing attacks in and around Mombasa, Kenya, including burning churches, shootings in churches, and bombings at Christian outdoor events (“Kenya: Six Dead” 2013).

Sadly, Christians not only are being persecuted but also are persecuting. At times, unfortunately, people who claim the name of Christ are the ones who persecute others, even others who also claim Christ’s name. Pentecostals in Chiapas, Mexico, have been harassed for years and denied justice by Catholic officials. By 1999 some thirty-five thousand had been forced to flee as refugees. Orthodox leaders and politicians in Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Russia worked to enact and enforce laws banning or restricting newer religious movements, including evangelical and Pentecostal groups. What in the world is happening?

Questions of Truth

In the realm of ideas, the encroachment of postmodern thinking is eroding traditional ideas of truth. Since the gospel is a message of truth, this trend will have a potentially huge impact on the missionary effort. Truth is no longer thought to be absolute. In 2001 pollster George Barna found that only 33 percent of Americans accept the idea of absolute moral truth (Barna and Hatch 2001, 80). His poll indicated that born-again Christians do better, but still only 49 percent of them accept that moral truth is absolute. For centuries motivation for missionary work has been founded on the truth of the gospel and the need to communicate that truth to people who do not follow Jesus. If Barna’s polls accurately reflect American thinking, then motivation for future missionary work by Americans may be in serious trouble. What will the perceived need for the missionary enterprise be twenty years from now (see Gustavsson 2011)?

In addition to an erosion of the idea of absolute truth, other religious systems offer competing and well-articulated views of the world. As Kenneth Hylson-Smith notes:

It needs to be appreciated that the transformation of the worldwide religious scene during the last two centuries has been and still is part of an overall shift of population, and of both political and economic power, on a mega-scale. This reached prodigious proportions in the course of the twentieth century, and it is now of unequaled magnitude. It seems likely to
become even more pronounced and critical as the third millennium advances. (2007, 167)

While missionaries have long gone out from American locations to the rest of the world, the rest of the world now is coming to North America, where universities and colleges are teeming with people in search of higher education unavailable in their own countries. After completing their education, many choose to stay and settle in North America. Mosques and temples are slowly becoming a normal part of the American suburban landscape. Many of them are being built not for outreach purposes but to service the needs of immigrant communities that are not ready to give up the faith of their home countries. This is a time of unprecedented opportunity; rather than being a world away, people of non-Christian faiths are the next-door neighbors of American Christians.

This influx, however, also presents challenges to Christians. As Americans have come increasingly into contact with people of other faiths, questions have arisen about issues of salvation. Is Jesus the only way to heaven? Aren’t there many paths to God? Can’t other religions produce good and virtuous people? A Barna survey in 2000 of adult Americans showed that 44 percent agreed with the statement, “It does not matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same thing” (Barna Research Online 2000). Even among those who have had a born-again Christian experience, 31 percent agreed with the statement, “A good person can earn his/her way into heaven” (Barna Research Online 2000).

Globalism and Tribalism

In the 1996 book *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Benjamin R. Barber proposes two axial principles of our age: globalism and tribalism. He explains in a 1992 *Atlantic* article:

The tendencies of what I am here calling the forces of Jihad and the forces of McWorld operate with equal strength in opposite directions, the one driven by parochial hatreds, the other by universalizing markets, the one re-creating ancient subnational and ethnic borders from within, the other making national borders porous from without. They have one thing in common: neither offers much hope to citizens looking for practical ways to govern themselves democratically. (1992)

These forces are not unseen in missions. At times the Western dominance in finances and technology can reduce mission efforts to a McDonald’s approach (“McMissions?”), as explained by John Drane’s books on the McDonaldization of the church (2001, 2008). North American Christians may “extra-value meal” their methodologies as packaged approaches that look the same everywhere in the world. They also may demand immediate service and solutions for spiritual problems. Within this same outlook many missions agencies focus their efforts on developing churches comprising a single demographic group. Such an approach can result in churches isolated from diversity and insulated by their ethnicity.

Spelunking in the Cave of Missions

Spelunking is the exploration of caves. For many, missions is like an unexplored cave. Full of dark tunnels and twists and turns, and largely unmapped, missions bewilders them with talk of unreached people groups, Business as Mission, church-planting movements, contextualization, environmental mission, insider movements, reverse mission, spiritual warfare, indigenous missionaries, tentmaking, and so on.

This may also be the experience of many readers of this book. To help you understand the core vocabulary related to missions, it is important at least to explain the basic ideas behind the most important terms. In our discussion below we introduce those terms. In the “Key Terms in Mission”
sidebar we provide a list of concise definitions for terms used in modern missions circles, many of which are discussed in greater detail later in the book. This will provide the foundation you need not only for reading the rest of this book but also for reading missions books in general.

### Key Terms in Mission

New terms for missionary working and thinking seem to be coined daily. The following ones, with basic definitions, are used throughout the book. Additionally, many of them are discussed more fully in relevant sections of the book.

**10/40 Window:** An imaginary rectangular window between the tenth and the fortieth latitudes, bordered around Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. This window contains the bulk of the unreached peoples in the world and the bulk of the non-Christian religions.

**4/14 Window:** Developed as a spin-off from the 10/40 Window, this term refers to the age at which children are most likely to commit their lives to Christ as well as the ages at which they are most vulnerable.

**Business as Mission:** "BAM is broadly defined as a for-profit commercial business venture that is Christian led, intentionally devoted to being used as an instrument of God’s mission (missio Dei) to the world, and is operated in a cross-cultural environment, either domestic or international" (C. N. Johnson 2009, 27–28).

**Diaspora:** The contemporary scattering of peoples across the globe whether from economic migration, refugee flight, displacement, or other circumstances. This reality has opened new doors for missional action and missiological reflection (e.g., diaspora missiology; see Wan and Tira 2009; Wan 2011).

**Ecumenical Movement:** Parallel to the conciliar movement, this term generally refers to the twentieth-century phenomenon of Protestant churches and denominations working together in the context of the World Council of Churches with a goal of achieving some type of external unity (see Ritschl 1991).

**Environmental Mission:** Defined as mission that focuses on “caring for the environment and making disciples among all peoples” (Bliss 2013, 17).

**From Everywhere to Everywhere:** Reflects the fact that mission is two-way everywhere in the world. Almost every inhabited region of the world is now both sending and receiving people who serve in some capacity as bearers of Christ’s message, whether as refugees, international workers, traditional missionaries, or businesspeople.

**Glocalization:** Intersection of the global with the local; on a personal level consciously striving to have a global perspective while fully engaged in a local setting.

**Holistic or Integral Mission:** Mission that takes into account the whole of human needs: spiritual, social, and personal. Holistic mission includes evangelism and church planting as well as development and social transformation.

**Contextualization:** The core idea is that of taking the gospel to a new context and finding appropriate ways to communicate it so that it is understandable to the people in that context (Moreau 2012, 32–36). Contextualization (or appropriate Christianity; see C. H. Kraft 2005) refers to more than just theology; it also includes developing church life and ministry that are biblically faithful and culturally appropriate (Moreau 2005, 321).

**Church-Planting Movements:** “A rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment” (Garrison 2004, 21).

**Mission and Missions**

The first distinction made in contemporary mission studies is between mission and missions. Until the mid-1900s no distinction was made between the two. Generally, the preferred term was missions. Out of the work of the
International Missionary Council, however, came the recognition that biblical discussion of the idea of mission was not limited to what the church was doing, since God has always been active everywhere in the world (Potter 1991). (We will expand on this idea later.)

Essentially, missions has been relegated to the specific work of the church and agencies in the task of reaching people for Christ by crossing cultural boundaries. By contrast, mission is broader, referring to everything the church is doing that points toward the kingdom of God.
the church missions committee, a Bible study leader).

**Monastic Mission:** Missionaries who choose to live a monastic lifestyle in their mission engagement, which includes commitment to an ordered life, communal living, a simple lifestyle, and working on behalf of the poor (Claiborne 2006; Bessenecker 2006).

**Orality:** Reliance on the spoken word rather than on writing, including the framing of mission for those whose preferred communication patterns are oral rather than literate.

**People Groups:** A people group usually is defined by ethnic or linguistic terms. It is estimated that there are some twelve thousand distinct languages and dialects and as many as twenty-four thousand people groups in the world today.

**Reverse Mission:** Missionary engagement of people from countries that historically have been the recipients of missionaries (e.g., Africa, Asia, Latin America) to countries that have historically been the senders of missionaries (e.g., Europe, North America) (see, e.g., Catto 2008; Olofinjana 2010).

**Shalom:** The Hebrew word for peace in the Old Testament, where it refers to wholeness, completeness, and soundness. It is a holistic term, extending to include spiritual peace (salvation), physical peace (healing), psychological peace (wholeness), and social peace (justice and freedom from war).

**Short-Term Missions:** This term usually refers to trips with a mission focus that range from one week to one or two years. They may be organized by churches, agencies, or even individuals for a variety of reasons (e.g., English-language camps, church-building projects, evangelistic campaigns).

**Spiritual Warfare:** Reflects the reality that Satan does not want unbelievers to come to Christ or believers to live fruitful, holy lives. The warfare that Christians face involves Satan and his hosts constantly trying to maneuver them toward spiritual lethargy or depression while they seek to live the abundant life that Jesus promised.

**Syncretism:** The replacement of core or important truths of the gospel with non-Christian elements (Moreau 2001b).

**Tentmaking:** A term coined from Paul’s stay at Corinth when he made tents so as not to be a burden to the Corinthian church. Tentmaking is the practice of using paid employment to gain and maintain entry in a cross-cultural setting. Tentmakers work as professionals and engage in ministry activities in addition to their wage-earning work.

**Transformation:** Working to change society by transforming its unjust structures into more just ones. In the twentieth century evangelicals typically did not think of transformation as appropriate missionary work. However, advocates of transformation rightly note that the historical fights against the slave trade, infanticide, widow burning, and foot binding are all examples of transformational mission (see Tizon 2008 for an in-depth exploration).

**Unreached Peoples:** People groups (see above) that currently have no access to the gospel. They are “hidden,” not in the sense that they are invisible, but in the sense that there is no way, given current conditions, that they can hear the gospel in their own language in a way that makes sense to them.


**Missio Dei**

**Missio Dei** is another term used regarding mission. Taken from the Latin for “mission of God,” its central idea is that God is the One who initiates and sustains mission. At most, then, the church is God’s partner in what is God’s agenda—in other words, mission is God-centered rather than human-centered, but without neglecting the important role that God has assigned to the church in that process. As Craig Ott notes:
Rightly understood, grounding mission in the *missio Dei* does not reduce the importance of scriptural commands, nor does it excuse Christians from the joyful and sacrificial obligation of mission work. Rather, it reframes our understanding of mission in terms of God’s own character and prerogative. The mission of the church is embedded in the great drama of God’s mission. (Ott, Strauss, and Tennent 2010, 62)

**Missiology**

Missiology is the academic study of missions, mission, and *missio Dei*. Missiology has three central concerns: (1) the identity or nature of mission, (2) the goal of mission, and (3) the means or method of mission. To get at those concerns, missiology includes the study of the nature of God, the created world, and the church and the ways they interact. Thus theology and the social sciences play important roles in missiological thinking. As an academic discipline, it is relatively new and not completely settled (see Moreau 2001a).

**Missionary or Missioner**

Since the understanding of the role of missionaries (and more recently the term “missioner” has been used) has changed dramatically over the past century, we need to discuss what a missionary is (Presler 2010, for example, frames his discussion in terms of the marks of a “mission companion,” 165–74; see sidebar 1.1). The types of work that are called missionary service are almost unlimited today. From Filipino domestic servants working in the Middle East to Brazilian church planters in Portuguese-speaking Africa, from European health workers in Latin America to American microenterprise specialists working in Asia, a multitude of Christians are working cross-culturally on every continent and from every continent. In one sense they all have the opportunity to work out the general call of God that all Christians share: the call to urge people to respond to Christ and to live lives reflecting his kingdom. The question remains, however: Are they rightly called “missionaries”? Traditionally, a missionary was a person who crossed cultural boundaries to establish new outreach on behalf of Jesus and plant new bodies of local believers. How are we to understand the new generation of cross-cultural workers who are engaged in effective ministries but do not correspond to the traditional idea of what a missionary is? Additionally, what is the difference between those who cross cultures for a short time (from a week to a year or so) and those who go for longer stays (several years to life)? Are both missionaries?

When you think of the word missionary, what do you imagine? Spiritual giants who look death in the face on a regular basis? People who give up vacation time to build homes in another city? Or, from a more negative view, people who sign their lives away with no chance to ever change their career? Hardy explorers who can’t sit still? Religious zealots who travel far and wide searching for potential converts? Some of these misunderstandings are part of American culture, while others typically are found in churches. It will be helpful first to look at these misunderstandings as a backdrop so that what a missionary actually is can be seen more clearly. Sidebar 1.1 also provides helpful instructions and insights on what it takes to be a mission companion.

**Misunderstanding 1: Missionaries are superspiritual.** This may be the most common misunderstanding of all. Some assume that the commitment required to become a missionary sent three hundred times more missionaries than the whole of Asia. Today, the numbers are roughly equal.

Jonathan Ingleby (2011, vii)
puts people who follow that call into a category of supersaints. Others assume that the strangeness and the hardships of life in other parts of the world constantly put missionaries on their knees, and this results in a higher spirituality. The simple reality is that missionaries are human and that some go into missionary work with mixed motives resulting in mixed spirituality. Sometimes missionaries themselves make the problem worse by what they communicate to those at home (either through newsletters, websites, or preaching or teaching while on furlough). Missionaries are not superhuman in their faith, and the other members of the church could benefit from knowing this; it might help them to see that they too could perhaps serve as missionaries.

A corollary to this misunderstanding is that missionaries never have spiritual or psychological problems. However, the recent rapid growth of member-care emphasis in missions agencies, together with some of the data developed on missionary attrition and burnout (W. D. Taylor 1997; Whittle 1999), indicate that this simply is not true. Missions agencies have responded to the fact that missionaries hurt just like other people by making available services for those who are seeking to deal with personal pain or anguish. We will return to this topic in chapter 15.

Part of the problem here is that missionaries themselves may feel that they are not supposed to suffer from anxiety, depression, or "worldview challenge our own, letting their urgencies pervade our own—that is the discipline of servanthood in mission."

4. The mission companion is a Prophet: Prophecy [as forth telling rather than foretelling] can be a vitally important ministry—sometimes to the host setting, sometimes to the home setting, sometimes to both.

5. The mission companion is an Ambassador: In both tone and aim, mission companions must join with God's overall purpose, which is the healing of relationships that only reconciliation can bring.

6. The mission companion is a Host: Hosting is a vital dimension of mission. Just as our going out in mission depends on others being willing to receive us, so the mission from others that we need depends on our receiving them.

7. The mission companion is a Sacrament of Reconciliation: Mission does not consist only in the function of getting certain kinds of work done. Both identity and mission are freighted with the very presence of Christ. In receiving a missionary, the host receives Christ present in the missionary. In ministering, the missionary ministers to Christ present in those across a boundary of difference.

**Reflection and Discussion**

1. With which descriptor do you most closely identify?
2. Which descriptor makes you most uncomfortable?
3. How might aligning yourself to follow the mark you identified in question 2 change your outlook on and practice of mission and the calling of a missionary?
A missionary is a prepared disciple whom God sends into the world with his resources to make disciples for the kingdom.

Ada Lum (1984, 21)

The prevalent theories within the globalization discourse which depict the phenomenon as a one-directional, Western- or American-dominated movement are seriously flawed not least because such views overlook the capacity of non-Western societies to adapt or resist Western flows and project alternative movements with potential global impact.

Jehu J. Hanciles (2008, 376)
The good news is that contemporary techniques for learning a second language help students to focus on methods that match their individual strengths rather than force them all into a single methodological mold. This approach makes it possible for those who are less gifted in language aptitude to learn fruitfully how to communicate in a new language, even though they still need time and hard work to be successful.

One of the realities of the urbanization and globalization of the world is that English is becoming a “world” language (though with countless variations). Urban settings are themselves polyglot, and missionaries who work among people with no common language have found at times that English is appropriate for ministry. This reality should be handled with care; we are not advocating that a missionary plan on avoiding the acquisition of a second language. Nevertheless, it is true that in certain locations language learning does not always occupy the core strategic role that it played in the past.

Misunderstanding 5: Missionaries always have a very strong call from God. This misunderstanding builds on the idea that God’s call is always identifiable through a tangible event (a dream or vision, an audible voice, an irresistible urge of some type). We will treat this topic in greater depth in chapter 9, but for now, suffice it to say that God’s calls on the lives of his people are as varied as the people themselves, and it is wise not to box God into a particular method.

Misunderstanding 6: Missionaries are bigoted cultural imperialists. Like the third misunderstanding, this one tends to be perpetrated by those most threatened by the whole idea of missions. There has been an element of truth in this claim, especially in view of the stories of the early missionaries and their attitudes toward the people whom they sought to reach. Although today’s Christians must be careful not to judge eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionaries in light of twenty-first-century sensitivities, they should not shrink from the plain fact that missionaries, like all people, have biases and prejudices.

Particularly tempting to the missionary is the notion that he or she has been sent as an “expert” who is expected to have answers to religious questions. After all, the missionary typically comes to teach and reach rather than to listen and learn. Yet almost all contemporary missions training is geared toward helping the missionary to be successful in listening and learning, for that is the key to a heart of service.

Misunderstanding 7: Missionaries are no longer needed. Some say that the day of the missionary is dead. Perhaps this is a lingering side effect of the call for a cessation of missions that came in ecumenical circles in the early 1970s. It may be due to the recognition of the increasingly pluralistic attitude and growing global nature of the church (Engelsviken, Lundenby, and Solheim 2011). The reader may be surprised to know that the authors essentially agree that missionaries are no longer needed—if the missionaries we have in mind are the intrepid explorer, or the commercially minded person who serves in a neocolonial role, or the “big man” who demands that things be done his (or her) way at the expense of local sensitivities.

God’s work of bringing all people to worship him is far from finished, and thus the need for missionaries will be present until the consummation of history. One of the exciting realities of our day, however, is that the Western missionary is no longer the only one toiling in God’s harvest fields. Indeed, the evidence is clear that Western missionaries have become a minority in God’s labor force. Even so, the need is for all peoples who have viable churches to be directly

Had I cared for the comments of people, I should never have been a missionary.
C. T. Studd (quoted in Grubb 1933, 196)
engaged in the task of sending their own laborers, and Western churches are not exempt from this responsibility.

A corollary to this misunderstanding is that missionaries, especially Western missionaries, cost too much. We will discuss this subject more fully later, but for now, three important arguments will help clear some of the fog surrounding this misunderstanding. First, Western churches are not exempt from the responsibility to send workers into the harvest field simply because laborers from the West cost more. Second, if Western churches were to turn away from sending out missionaries and only send money to support less expensive missionaries from non-Western settings, the zeal of the church soon would decline, and even the flow of money would be in danger of drying up. Third, although God commands Christians to be good stewards, he never asks them to determine their role purely in light of monetary considerations. God’s focus is on reaching people, not on attaining the greatest efficiency in the process. The “most bang for the buck” is not God’s ultimate standard for judging how to carry out our missionary obligation.

Misunderstanding 8: Missionaries always go overseas. This misunderstanding is based on the idea that unreached people are always “over there,” and the missionary has the task of going to where they are. Immigration and urbanization patterns, however, have resulted in many newcomers in North America and Europe who represent cultures that currently have little or no viable witness for Christ (see Spencer 2008). While away from home, whether as students or professionals or refugees, people tend to be more receptive to the good news of the gospel than when they are in their home cultures with all their support structures intact. At one time, home missions referred to pockets of indigenous people needing to be reached within the home country. Today the meaning is much broader, and it includes work among resettled urban populations (e.g., Indians in Chicago, Cubans in Miami, Chinese in Los Angeles, Bosnians in New York) as well as work among international students present in every major university in North America (see, for example, Claerbaut 2005; Baker 2009; Fujino, Sisk, and Casiño 2012; and Payne 2012).

Misunderstanding 9: Missionaries live in “the bush.” This misconception comes from a stereotype of pioneer missionary work carried out in remote jungles in Africa, highland villages in Papua New Guinea, or the Amazon basin in South America. Although many missionaries live and minister in remote rural settings, urbanization is changing that situation quite dramatically (for an excellent example of ministry through living in urban slums, see Barker 2012). Soon more than half of the world’s population will live in cities (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson 2001, 2:541), and some mission agencies are beginning the difficult process of changing deployment based on this reality. Urban mission can range from helping the desperately poor in Manila, to dealing with bureaucracies in São Paulo, to meeting the needs of executives in Nairobi—a bewildering set of challenges that requires the very best of our efforts if the world’s megalopolises are to have an effective gospel witness. Although it is true that much of the Bible translation work left to be finished is
focused on rural pockets of people, our attention is commanded by the simple fact that half of the world’s population is packed together in sprawling urban landscapes, desperately seeking work, educational opportunities, and a better life than the countryside offers.

Misunderstanding 10: Missionaries sign their lives away forever. Some people think that once you become a missionary, you are stuck for life, and for them, the idea of making a lifetime commitment is too overwhelming to contemplate. Although a permanent missionary commitment perhaps was truer of the missionaries of previous centuries, it certainly does not hold in the same way today. As we will see in chapter 9, God’s call to ministry can be fulfilled in numerous ways, of which traditional missionary work is only one.

Conclusion

Those who seek to follow God’s leading into cross-cultural missionary service face a more rapidly changing and dangerous world than ever before. This is a time in North America when the willingness to sacrifice in the service of Christ is harder to find than in centuries past. The case study for this chapter—“Kidnapped!”—draws on this reality to show that missionaries and mission agencies have to be ready to respond to crisis situations.

There also are greater opportunities than ever before. Missionaries know of and can have access to literally millions of people who have yet to hear the claims of Christ through a variety of means—radio, satellite, internet, video—that the apostle Paul never could have imagined.

As we introduce you to both the challenges and the opportunities, our prayer is that you will have the foundation necessary to make wise decisions about mission service, or if you are not so called, to help you counsel and guide others whom God brings across your path who are seeking his will in reaching the nations.

Kidnapped!

Paul G. Hiebert


“We have to decide now,” said Gerald, chairman of the mission’s executive committee. “It is Wednesday, and it takes two days to get the money to the kidnappers. The deadline they gave us was Sunday.”

“I vote against paying the ransom,” said James. “If we give in now, it will encourage terrorists everywhere to kidnap missionaries for ransom. Besides, we can’t agree to their condition that we take our missionaries out of Mindanao and abandon our new converts. That would sentence them to persecution, possibly even death.”

“I know,” said Sarah, “but what about Mark? I believe they will kill him, just as they did Pastor Manuel last week. They mean business! And what about Rachel and the children? What about all their relatives and the members of the Hansons’ church? They will never forgive us if Mark is killed. I can’t blame them. I know how I would feel if someone let a person I loved die. I am convinced we must negotiate with the kidnappers on the ransom. If necessary, we can move the missionaries to Devao. They would be safe in the city, and the young Christians in the villages could still meet with them when necessary.”

Gerald realized he held the deciding vote. The committee had discussed the various possibilities many times over the past three weeks since the kidnapping took place. Now they had to make a decision.

The crisis began when the executive committee of the Mindanao Muslim Mission received word...
that the Reverend Mark Hanson, one of their missionaries, and Pastor Manuel had been kidnapped by the Islamic Jihad, a radical Muslim movement in the Philippines. Mrs. Hanson was in Manila with her two young children when the kidnapping occurred. The kidnappers demanded $50,000 and a promise that the missionaries would leave the area. They gave the mission two weeks to respond. The year before, the general board of the mission had adopted a policy not to negotiate with terrorists, so the executive committee rejected the ultimatum. At the end of the two weeks, it received word that the kidnappers had killed Pastor Manuel and had set a new deadline for Mark Hanson’s death two weeks hence.

Immediately after the kidnapping, the mission had informed the relatives and Hanson’s church of the mission policy regarding kidnapping. Although they agreed that paying the ransom would only encourage terrorism in the future, they encouraged the mission to continue negotiating with the kidnappers for Mark’s release. Special prayer sessions were organized in the churches for both Mark and Pastor Manuel.

After Pastor Manuel was executed, however, the family members urged the mission to pay the ransom secretly. When the executive committee reaffirmed the board policy, the family members, with the help of the pastor of Mark’s home church, began to raise the money and contact the terrorists on their own. They also called upon the United States government to urge the Philippine government to seek Mark’s release. Some of the church members, unhappy with the committee’s action, said they would withdraw their support if the mission did not negotiate to save Mark’s life. They also contacted members in other churches, who then phoned the mission office to express their concern for Mark Hanson’s life.

The US State Department contacted the mission and urged it not to pay the ransom. It offered to assist the mission board by putting pressure on the Philippine government, but the mission, wishing to avoid a close identification with the United States government, asked it to wait.

When the press heard of the kidnapping, newspaper reports began to appear—branding all Muslims as fanatics and terrorists, and calling on the government of the United States to offer commandos to the Philippine regime to recapture Reverend Hanson. Despite the mission’s pleas that the press keep silent on the matter, so as not to antagonize the kidnappers and other Muslims, inflammatory articles continued to appear in the local papers.

The executive committee kept in contact with the kidnappers through its field director in the Philippines and tried to negotiate a peaceful settlement. But the kidnappers remained adamant—the mission would have to pay the money and leave the area. If they refused, there would be other reprisals. None of the missionaries would be safe.

Gerald contacted the chairman of the mission board, who pointed out that there was no time to call a board meeting. Besides, the board members knew little about the situation. He said that the executive committee was authorized to act in times of emergency.

Now, as Gerald looked at James and Sarah, he thought of Mrs. Hanson and her children, and of the mission and its commitment to evangelize the Muslims in Mindanao. If a nation expected its people to die for the nation, should the church not expect Christians to give their lives for the cause of Christ? But did this situation call for such a sacrifice? Gerald breathed a prayer before he spoke...
Encountering Mission in the Scriptures

The Bible tells the story of God’s work for and among all the peoples of the world. The fact that the word mission does not appear anywhere in the Bible, then, does not mean that the Bible is not a missionary text through and through. In the Bible a divine drama is played out through the lives of numerous people, spanning thousands of years, who respond to God’s call and choose to walk his path (see, for example, Gladding 2010). This drama can be divided into a series of acts following the lives of the people it portrays as they struggle with the reality of a broken world and their own yearnings to connect to the One in whose image they are made.

Each scene in the drama is full of twists and turns, including various plots and subplots. Some characters, such as God, Christ, the Spirit—as well as Satan, the enemy of humankind—are found throughout the narrative. Others make quick entrances and exits, leading lives that reflect God’s image to a bleeding world.

In the four chapters composing this first part of the book, we explore this divine drama. Chapter 2 focuses on the Old Testament, and chapters 3 and 4 present the story in the New Testament. Chapter 5 begins the work of putting it all together, showing what is necessary for a theology of mission that honors biblical teaching and briefly surveying selected areas of that theology.
God and Man before Jesus Christ (second of four Tibetan images from Rewa Hope displaying salvation history)

A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, Introducing World Missions

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