

Editorial Reflections

TIME Magazine, Rick Warren, and the P.E.A.C.E. Plan

Probably at no time in history has any one pastor captured the imagination of 88,000 churches to the extent that Rick Warren and his Saddleback church have done.

In an earlier issue we have already commented on his *Purpose Driven Life* book, and its astounding popularity.

After *TIME Magazine* came out with a cover story on the “25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America,” I suggested to Rick—who was the leading figure on the cover and in the article—that he invite all 25 to a meeting where their *individual* influence could be multiplied many times over in being *united* behind something significant.

I then suggested that that “something significant” around which they might unite be his soon-to-be announced P.E.A.C.E. Plan. Now, however, without trying in any way to scoop the fall 2005 announcement and its final details—since it is still under construction—I can say that as of now it is a plan focused on killing five giants: Spiritual lostness, lack of servant leaders, the giant of poverty, the giant of disease, and the giant of ignorance. The means by which these giants can be killed off are the five letters of the P.E.A.C.E. Plan: Plant churches, Equip leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick, and Educate the next generation.

In a meeting just last week Warren challenged a number of pastors and others with the early feedback from pilot projects in 47 countries. His goal involves among other things literally hundreds of thousands of “ordinary believers” going out across the world to do something significant in as little as two weeks.

He has a huddle of experienced mission workers around him to assist in pulling off successfully this amazing “dream.” He want everyone to dream big dreams.

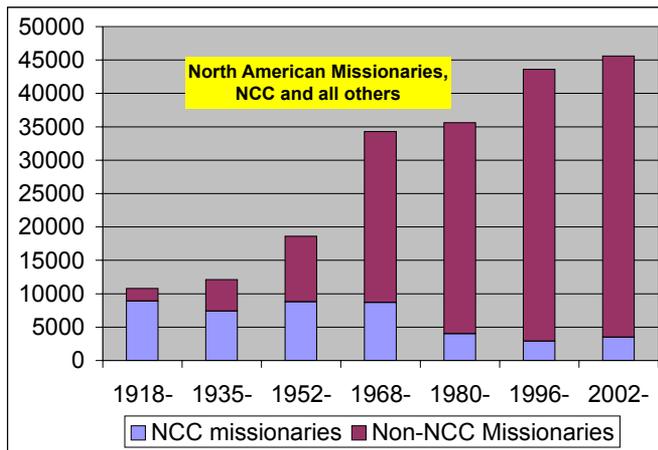
Now, Rick has been a booster for the U.S. Center for World Mission for many years—when we were dreaming dreams too big for many to accept. Now he is dreaming big and we hope to be of as much help as possible.

What do I think of the plan? Not for a century has there been a bigger plan for the churches of America to reach out across the world. There is absolutely tremendous potential in it. On the other hand, if not guided carefully it could fall very short of expectations. Why? Because we already have too many churches attempting to rethink missions without the experience of mission agencies to guide them, and many are wasting their time or worse. Secondly, we already have too many “short term” young people going out without proper field orientation, often without any contact with long term workers, accomplishing little or no real mission work.

Rick, however, grew up on the mission field. He is an “MK.” He highly values the long term workers, and expects many short termers to turn into long termers. May it be so. Note, however, if short termers in any large number begin to get guidance and help from field missionaries they will surely return home with a better understanding and higher respect for missionary work. But, *theoretically*, too many short termers could tie up all the long termers to the extent that exactly all missionary work would be displaced by long termers caring for short termers. That is a recipe not for *enhancing* mission outreach but for precisely *demolishing* the mission movement! However, if any U.S. pastor can avoid this it would seem Rick Warren can—with the help of his veritable “army” of human resources.

What This Graph Does Not Tell Us

Bob Blincoe, the U. S. Director for Frontiers, Inc. sent me the following graph, which he, in turn, drew from some statistics presented by Robert Coote in the January 2005 *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.



Richey Hogg noted years ago that in 1925 mission personnel from denominations (of the kind now related to the National Council of Churches of Christ) constituted 75% of all American missionaries at that time. Later, I pointed out in an article in *Missiology* that by 1975 the 75% had dropped to less than 10%. This graph confirms the trend. Look more closely, however.

The necessary caution is not obvious. Do not assume that the total number of missionaries on the field in any year *represents in any direct way* the interest in missions of the church population in that same year.

For example, the biggest jump (the bar for 1968) reflects not the interest in missions in 1968 but the avalanche of new mission agencies (150) and the thousands of new missionaries who were sent out in the ten years following the 1945 ending of WWII—call it the “War bulge.” It could have been that no missionaries were sent out in any year of the ‘60s.

In fact, in the middle of the hallucinating ‘60s there might well have been less sending than usual. Yet, its 1968 total is the biggest jump in the entire graph!

Similarly, the later retirement “avalanche” of the War Bulge group distinctly dampens the total for 1980 and after. Suppose 10,000 boomer missionaries retired after 1996. In 2002 ten thousand new missionaries would need to be sent out just to stay even. We would have had to have the closing of another mighty world war to keep the total from dipping. The fact that it does not dip at all would seem to imply a rather huge upswing in recent new personnel! In

other words, if we wish to gage the current sending out of personnel we need to find out precisely *how many are currently sent out*, not subtract the number retiring—which is what the graph actually does since it records the *net total* on the field at a given date.

“Mission Korea” and the American “Urbana”

Speaking of statistics, now that Intersivity’s every-three-year student mission convention in Urbana, Illinois is moving to St. Louis the name may not stick, and the attendance may grow beyond the limits of the former auditorium in Urbana.

However, it is worth noting that right now Korea holds the world’s record for the size of their student mission conferences. I would guess off hand that if Urbana wanted to catch up they would have to get 60,000 attendees. Mission Korea, in proportion to South Korea’s population, is far larger. First of all, it is every two years. Also, it unites Campus Crusade, Intersivity, Chi Alpha, Navigators, and a dozen other agencies. Yes, Korea, noted for its individualistic fragmentation fields a much more inclusive student mission conference as well as a much larger conference (proportionately). I may say it is far more specifically focused on missions, not just the Christian life.

A Korean IJFM!

Speaking of Korea, this calendar year will see the birth of a sister publication to *IJFM*: the *Korean Journal of Frontier Missions (KJFM)*! The *KJFM* is a joint initiative of the IJFM/ISFM and the Korea World Missions Association, Global Teens Ministries and the Korea Frontier Missions Network. The first issue of the *KJFM* is expected to go to press in August 2005.

In addition, a joint conference of the ISFM and KWMA (planned for November 2005 in Korea) will hopefully be a coming-out party, drawing missiologists from all over Korea (and a few from abroad) as they found a chapter of the related International Society for Frontier Missiology!

Anyone interested in subscribing to the *KJFM* may write to gtmor@korea.com for more information. Those

interested in knowing more about the *KJFM* (other than how to subscribe) and the Korea Frontier Missions Network may write to kwma@kwma.org.

What in the World is an MBB?

The acronym could mean “Mennonite Background Believer.” I talked to one of that kind last night. She and her husband grew up as part of a Mennonite community, but now they are Baptists.

In my own world of acquaintance, MBB more often refers somewhat *ambiguously* to “Muslim Background Believer.” Unfortunately, this term may often mean “someone who used to be part of a Muslim community but is now a Baptist,” that is, a “former Muslim.” But, I say *ambiguously* because, technically, all Muslims have a Muslim background, and that meaning may be all that some intend when they use the term.

However, today, suppose you confront a missionary to Muslims, asking “Do you routinely expect a Muslim who wants to follow Christ to leave his people, his culture, and join a Western-oriented Christian church?” Their answer may be uneasy, reflecting the impact of today’s strong current of thought in mission circles in the direction of “insider” movements—which deliberately allow Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., to continue within their cultural traditions. To the insiders of the Insider Movement, this new attitude parallels that of the Apostle Paul, who vigorously defended the normality of Greeks continuing within their Greek culture and not being pressured to adopt Jewish ways.

The theme of “Insider Movements,” you may recall, was the theme of last fall’s meeting of the International Society for Frontier Missiology as well as the focus of our last issue of *IJFM* summing up that conference.

The tragedy, however, is that all too often and for a good long time many Christian missionaries have been confused on this point. As outsiders they may instinctively shy away from much of Islamic culture. They may bump on the word *Allah*. They may not realize that Christians in the Semitic sphere (Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic) prayed to *Allah* for 600 years before Muhammad was born. They

may not realize that 30 million Christians today, mainly in the Middle East (including Pakistan) and Indonesia, pray to *Allah*, and that *Allah*—not the English word *God*—is the word in their Bibles as well. They may not realize that the practice of stopping to pray at certain points during the day was a Christian custom which Muslims simply borrowed. They may not realize that every single word in the liturgy used in the mosque has been traced to Jewish, Samaritan, or Christian sources. Etc.

All cultural traditions need revision in the light of Bible truth, but Muslim cultural traditions (the hundreds of different ones) must be considered just as capable of being carrying vehicles of Biblical truth as our own flood of words from Teutonic or Scandinavian tribal cultural backgrounds.

When *Allah* was used by Christians, in their Bibles it lost its pagan meaning. This happened centuries before the term *God* was used by Christians, which also had been a pagan term. Of course, *God* is not the word used by the French or the Italians or the Greeks. Both *Allah* and *God* (and *Deos* and *Theos*) gained their Biblical meaning when they were pressed into duty in Bible translations. At the same time all these words gain divergent and undesirable meanings when employed in other documents. Notably, when *Allah* is used in the Qur’an it means some things which are significantly different from its meaning in the Bible.

Some missionaries may assume that a Muslim who follows Christ will (and should) *normally* choose to call himself a *Christian*. Yet, it would appear that no one in the New Testament ever called himself a *Christian*. In the New Testament the word *Christian* (perhaps in all three of its occurrences) could well be a derisive term dreamed up by outsiders, meaning something like “Messiah-nut,” and a political term that was not accepted by followers of Christ in general for centuries, primarily when Constantine ruled toleration for “Christians.” **IJFM**