

# SOME SUGGESTIVE CONCERNS ON MISSIOMETRICS

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Originally, the inquiry of Christian mission was Biblical, theological and historical studies. After the Second World War, it was radically shifted to the science in general such as cultural, anthropological, informational, sociological, marketing economics and mathematical statistics. Even the names of schools of world mission were changed to schools of intercultural studies. The characteristics of mission studies transformed to become science of mission, counting, measuring, statistics, forecasting, etc.

Todd Johnson and David Barrett, writers of the *World Christian Trends: AD 30 –AD 2200*, said that “we must question on the use of the word of ‘science of mission.’ It has certainly indicated a thorough serious and professional approach to the study of mission. But it does not correspond to science as understood in secular usage today. It was the term used back in 1800. It was correct then to extend it to include religious knowledge, Biblical knowledge, theological knowledge, including historical knowledge, and descriptive knowledge about mission. But in the 20th century, this widest approach to the study of mission has been better termed by the more recent term ‘missiology’ which means ‘theology, thought, thinking, and observation about Christian mission’.”<sup>1</sup>

As we see from the above citation of David Barrett and Todd Johnson’s words, the meaning of the term, ‘science of mission’ from AD 1800 to 2000 is very much apart. William Carey’s ‘An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for Conversion of the Heathens’ in 1792 was the first missionmetrics which was firmly rooted on Biblical concept of Christian mission. And the later in 1852, the term of ‘science of religion’ was used by abbe Prosper Leblanc. In 1867, the Edinburgh University founded the first Chair of Missiology. In 1873, the first university chair was founded in Geneva, Switzerland. Some others in science of religion followed soon after in Holland, France, Belgium and Germany. In 1896, at the University of Halle, Germany, Gustav Warneck became the professor of Science of Mission.<sup>2</sup>

All these historic phenomena were deeply rooted on Biblical and theological aspects.

Missiometrics, however, as science of counts and measurements which sprung up in the late 1990, was something beyond the traditional science of mission. Even though the promoters of missiometrics claim that missiometrics are adopted from the measurement of temples, altars and the count of worshipers (Revelation 11:1), they, however, did not consider that King David’s census was what Satan wanted to bring trouble to his kingdom. And God was displeased with what David has done, so He punished King David. And King David

confessed to God “I have committed a terrible sin in doing this. Please forgive me. I have acted foolishly.” (I Chronicle 21: 1-8)

We ought to do keen and sensitive consideration on what the Lord think about what we are doing with counting and measurement.

## I. SOME REFLECTIONS CONCERNING CENSUSES

The first edition of *OPERATION WORLD* was edited by Patrick Johnston in 1974. That was the first book of missiometrics which was deeply rooted in spiritual nature as a handbook for prayer guide and world intercession.

In my library, this historic missiometrics publication, all the edition from the first to the latest seventh edition which was published in 2010, are kept on the bookshelves.

Patrick Johnston is a man who is well-balanced and spiritually motivated missionary scientist. Whenever I open the *Operation World*, the spirit rests upon my heart and abiding in my mind that leading me to pray for the world. Now, Jason Mandryk is succeeding *Operation World* with same vision and spirit.

There is one more book on missiometrics which I benefited from, is *North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, edited by Edward R. Dayton and published by *Missions Advanced Research and Communications (MARC)* in 1973. The title included *MISSION HANDBOOK*. The editor has been changed to Samuel Wilson in 1979, and to Bryant L. Myers in 1990.

In 2000, the 18th edition of *Mission Handbook* was transferred to *EMIS (Evangelism and Missions Information Service)* of the Billy Graham Center. The most recent edition I got was the 20th edition for 2007-2009. This handbook of mission compiled full information of north American mission agencies. It is so effectively surveyed based on the perspectives of missions in America. I was able to gain so many productive ideas and prophetic vision from these handbooks that developed some of my missiological perspectives. From that handbook I also found some of current problems which American missions are facing. Not only that but also I got a broader picture of the world and decreasing aspects of Christianity in the West.

## II. SECULARISED WESTERN WORLD BECOMES THE SERIOUS MISSION FIELD

The historian, Stephen Neill, once said that the moral pretensions of the West were shown to be a sham;

1. Todd Johnson and David Barrett, *WORLD CHRISTIAN TRENDS: AD 30 – AD 2200* (Pasadena, California: William Cary Library, 2011), p. 147.

2. *WORLD CHRISTIAN TRENDS: AD 30 – AD 2200*, p. 141.

'Christendom' was exposed as being no more than a myth; it was no longer possible to speak of 'the Christian West.'<sup>3</sup>

According to Bryant L. Myer's report, "The New Context of World Mission" on Mission Handbook, 1998-2000, in 1960, among the total Christian population of the world, only 30% of them were in the non-Western world and 70% of them were in the Western world. However, by the year 2000, 78% of the world Christian population was in the non-Western world and only 22% of Christian population was in the Western world. The Christian population of the non-Western world is five hundred million which is more than five times of Western Christian population with little over one hundred million.

In Europe, there has been a significant decrease of Christian church attendance. Over 90% of Christian population is nominal Christian and they do not attend Sunday worship service.<sup>4</sup>

A Swedish mission scholar, Stefan Gustavsson, declared at the Tokyo Consultation of Edinburgh 100th Anniversary Celebration as followings:

*We Europeans, it seems to me, have in careless way sold our souls and dispersed our rich inheritance. Europe has become the prodigal son. During the first century the gospel spread like a fire around the Mediterranean. But unlike the earlier in Asia Minor and North Africa – once parts of the world with thriving churches – Europe today has denied the gospel and replaced it with other convictions. Look at the different continents in the world. The Evangelical church worldwide has seen enormous growth in the last 100 years. During the 20th century:*

*The Latin American Evangelical church increased by over 5000 percent.*

*The African Evangelical church increased by over 4000 percent.*

*The Asian Evangelical church increased by over 2000 percent.*

*On the other hand, the situation in Europe is very different. To quote World Christian Encyclopedia:*

*No one in 1900s expected the massive defections from Christianity that subsequently took place in Western Europe due to secularism, (and) in Russia and later Eastern Europe due to Communism.*

One of the Korean missionary, Daniel Chae, who is working in London also wrote to me that Europe is a serious mission field... Europe has become a secular society and indicated decline in church membership and attendance as followings:

*According to the 2001 Census in the UK, 72% claimed to be Christians, but at the same time 66% answered that they did not go to church. A later census in 2006 showed that one half of Christians in*

*the UK left the church between 1979 and 2005. Now only about 5% of the British population go to church on a regular basis.*

### III. DECLINE OF OLD CHRISTENDOM AND ASCENT OF NEW CHRISTENDOM

According to Philip Jenkins, "one central fact in the changing religious picture is massive relative decline in the proportion of world's people who live in the rationally advanced nations (in Europe and America)." Philip Jenkins again said that when the Western Christian leaders look at the non-Western world, they see what they want to see.<sup>5</sup>

Until today, most of the publications on missiometrics were done by Western mission scholars. They paid very little concern upon decreasing facts of Western Christianity and paid more attention on unreached non-Western world. As Jenkins pointed out, when the Western mission leaders are looking at the non-Western world, they only see what they want to see.

Since 1990, the number of non-Western missionaries became twice the number of Western missionaries.

According to a report by Susanta Patra, General Secretary of India Missions Association (IMA), IMA consists of 237 member missions, 1,200 Indian partnering missions, 5,000 mission leaders, 2,500 Indian board members and around 55,000 Indian missionaries.

The report of Korean World Missions Association (KWMA), reveals 22,014 Korean missionaries are working in 169 countries.

The report of the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA), informed us that there are 50,000 Nigerian missionaries are working in Africa and other continents.

In contrast to this factor, the American missionaries nowadays are mostly short-term missionaries with less than one year service. Short-term missionaries are over 150,000 while long-term missionaries are less than 40,000.

This statistics show that the numbers of long-term missionaries are not changed since 1996 to 2005. However, the number of short-term workers has sharply increased from 60,000 to 150,000 during same periods.

And also, among 130,000 missionary forces of US agencies, US citizens are only 40,000 while 90,000 missionaries are non-US citizens. This indicates that 69% of US current missionaries are non-US citizens. Among these 130,000 missionaries, only 40,000 missionaries are working overseas.

All the above contradictory statistical comparisons of mission forces show us that missiometrics of Western missiologists need to re-think the current situation and the reality of changing global trends regarding the shift of power in mission.

3. Stephen Neil, *A History of Christian Missions* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 452.

4. John Stewart and Edna Valtz, eds., *Mission Handbook, 1998-2000* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997), pp. 32, 36.

5. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford Press, 2002), pp. 79, 209.

#### IV. NEED OF CREATIVE APPROACH OF MISSIOMETRICS BY ASIAN MISSIOLOGISTS

Missiometrics, the science of mission to counting, measuring, and interpreting global Christian mission, is an applied science of mission studies. The science of mission is a useful factor for the advancement of Christian mission to the world.

However that is not the sufficient factor to fulfil the knowledge of Christian mission to the world.

As I have stated in the previous section of this article, if the missiometrics is deeply rooted in spiritual motive and Biblical principle, the study will be truly profitable for the advancement of Christian mission to the world. The missiometrics as the statistics of global context in Christian mission, was only based on Western limitations of missions because it was done by Western missiologists. The contents of all statistics are one-sided for missions from the Western worldview. Even though a few missionary researchers of Western world intended to research on rising non-Western missionary movement, there were still much misleading aspects and results in their statistics.

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Lawrence E. Keyes was one of non-Western mission researcher who was the Chief Executive of O.C. Ministries. His research on Third World mission societies was concluded in *The Last Age of Missions* which was published by William Carey Library in 1983. His view concerning the rapid rise and spread of the Third World missionary movement appeared at the last paragraph of Chapter One with the following words: "Mission is no longer dominated by the West, it involves the whole world. However, one key question for us is, 'Are we of the West prepared to trust the Holy Spirit to lead the Christians of Asia (Africa and Latin America)... or must a controlling Western hand of permanently resting on the Ark of God?'"<sup>6</sup>

Larry D. Pate, one of the co-researchers as an associate of Lawrence Keyes at O. C. Ministries, wrote a book as his report, *World Missions From Every People: A handbook of Two-Third World Missions with Directory/History/Analysis* which was published by MARC in 1989. Dr. Pate's research method was a comparative analysis of continent to continent and country to country in the Third World between 1980 to 1988. The mistake of his way of research and analysis was that he only

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6. Lawrence Keyes, *The Last Age of Missions – A Study of Third World Mission Societies* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), p. 16.

7. Larry D. Pate, *From Every People – A Handbook of Two-Third World Missions with Directory/History/Analysis* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), pp. 28-29.

considered the numbers of reports he received without verifying or accounting from various of missionaries. According to his research on the Burma (Myanmar) Baptist Convention is the largest sending agency in the Third World which has 1,440 missionaries in 1988 and the agency of Kenya is the second, and an agency from Zimbabwe is the third. But in actuality, in the top ten sending countries in the Third World, India being the first, Nigeria the second, Zaire the third, Burma was the fourth, and Korea was tenth. Most of the Asian countries were not included in his list of the top ten. And the fastest growing mission agency was in Oceania and Asia was on the third rate.<sup>7</sup>

How could such a differing analysis occur? That was because he did not account for the different categories in the range of missions and missionaries. That was like counting cherries and apples as one and the same fruits. Inaccurate and insufficient research and the miscalculation of the scope of non-Western mission have brought very serious and harmful repercussions. We should not blame or complain about the Western researchers' misleading, but should create our own scientific mission research results basing on non-Western factors.

Since 1973, I have endeavored to create Asiatic mission researchers. This was the reason why I formed the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development to fulfill these objectives through the East-West collaboration. In 2003, the Asian Society of Missiology was established to develop Asian researchers of mission.

I am proposing today to all of Asian missiologists and research institutes to build all Asia-wide coalition to exchange every country's statistics in missions and compiling the Asian manual of missiometrics through our mutual efforts as Asian missiologists.

Asian way of research on missiology should have the distinctive character different from Western pattern of research on mission. And then our Asiatic missiometrics should become a genuine science of mission in that it takes cognizance of science of mathematics and analysis of the world by means of survey, measurement, counting, statistics, calculations, and computations.

This way of research should be anatomical, diagnostic and clinical in approach to the history and trends of mission since the Apostolic church and to Western Christendom.

This will be the way to obey the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.



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