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A bilingual Khmer-English Theological Journal to give biblical knowledge to its readers as a honeycomb gives strength to exhausted travelers.

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## From the Editor

We are happy to include a variety of articles in this quarter's Honeycomb. Two are designed to stimulate our readers' thinking on culture and indigenization. Dr. Ravi Jayakaran's work on wholistic participatory learning and action reminds Christians of the importance of grasping the worldview of those to whom we are ministering if our ministry is to prove effective and transformational. Arun Sok Nhep's reflection on indigenization builds on this idea to suggest practical ways that understanding Khmer culture could influence church structure here.

A third article may also prove "cross-cultural" for many of our readers. François Ponchaud is a senior Roman Catholic missionary statesman in Cambodia, and discusses the steps his church follows in nurturing adult conversion in this mostly nonChristian environment. Among Ponchaud's other published works are his Cambodia: Year Zero and Cathedral of the Rice Paddy.

Ian Webber has written a devotional and exhortational study on intercession, and this quarter's Honeycomb includes a brief introduction on one of the least-studied books of the New Testament--Philemon. We regret that Robert Choy was unable to submit his promised follow-up article on "God and Money" due to his recent move from Cambodia to New Zealand.

To round out this issue of the journal, Debbi Maher introduces us to Yos Em Sithan, whose efforts a little over a decade ago encouraged official tolerance of Christianity.

As always, our hope is that these studies will introduce new ideas to our readers, to the end that we mature in our understanding and ministries. May we approach these articles in the spirit of 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, which rendered roughly says, "Welcome opportunities for learning. But test all you hear. Then swallow the fish and spit out the bones."

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## Honeycomb

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# Our Experiences with Wholistic PLA's: 

 Seeing the Spiritual and
## Whose Reality Counts

Ravi I. JAYAKARAN

" $A$nation forges deities in its imaginings, in its sacred literature, in wood and stone. The forms it gives them, the forces it has them embody, the virtues with which it endows them reflect the accumulated experience of the nation, the insights of its seers they answer to its needs." Thus wrote Arun Shourie in the introduction to his Worshiping False Gods. The gods a community worships and its spiritual beliefs demonstrate the way that community sees its world and perceives reality. What a sad reflection this is on Christians who have chosen to ignore these areas while striving to understand communities.

In recent years major paradigm shifts have been made in community development. It has been increasingly recognized that "Top Down" externally conceived solutions do not solve the problems of communities. Nor are they sustainable, since a major part of sustainability is community ownership. Understanding the community's reality is therefore an absolute must. This realization has now moved beyond non-government organizations to major development agencies like UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, and universities, as well as to major government agencies. Hence these agencies have started using PLA (Participatory Learning and

Action) on a wide scale. By contrast, Christian agencies have often failed to appreciate the need to understand the spiritual reality of communities as they see it before trying to witness to them.

In World Vision India we have started employing wholistic PLA in order to analyze the world view of various communities. This analysis takes the form of recognizing each of the dimensions that influence the survival strategies of communities and the lives of their inhabitants. It is mandatory to understand the specific influence these dimensions bear on their lives. For example, our research has shown that communities in one area see three main controlling influences.


These three influences affect each aspect of the survival strategy. For instance, a particular village community may depend on the following aspects for survival:

- Agriculture
- Animal husbandry
- Herbal medication
- Minor forest produce collection
- Electricity
- Local market
- Communication (Road)
- Etc.

The community sees god(s), outsiders, and themselves influencing each of these aspects to some extent or another. In
some cases, the influence may arise from only one source; in other cases, from two or all three. The extent which each of these influences affects an area of life will vary from community to community. For instance, the various influences on agriculture for three different villages may be as follows:

Influence of god
Influence of outsider

Influence of them selves


The areas of greatest uncertainty are those assigned to a god. A visit to these villages will show the centrality each ascribes to the god of rainfall. In Village 3, which depends entirely upon rain, the influence of the god will be perceived to be most important. Both Villages 1 and 2, which enjoy access to a water source more dependable than rain, depend more marginally on the rain deity, but he still can affect the village since rain can fall at the wrong time--say around harvest time-and completely damage the crop.

For each of the other aspects of the survival strategy, the degree of influence by gods, others, and themselves would similarly vary from one village to the other. Ethnographic studies of these villages may indicate the same people group or religious. background, but their wholistic world view when analyzed may present a totally different profile. The technique that can be used for carrying out a wholistic world view analysis (WWVA) has been detailed in Making Wholistic Disciples: World View Analysis: Measuring What Matters, produced by World Vision India.

The degree of influence of each influencer-namely god, outsiders and themselves-is discovered using a popular PLA technique called the " 10 Seed Technique" developed by the author and expanded to be used here wholistically.

The world view of a community can be more accurately ascertained on the basis of a capability and vulnerability profile of the community than by the stated religious belief of the group. For instance, in the village Dighori we assumed that the community-since it was predominantly neo-Buddhist-would have a Buddhist world view. On the contrary, we found that the gods and spirits that influenced the villagers' lives were those that controlled the areas of their vulnerability-the gods that controlled rainfall, disease, and the wild animals. Buddha, the god that they profess, only influenced the area of "peace of mind," and this was done by the regular recitation of "shlokas" (poetic praise songs) that they all knew very well. The overriding influences in their lives remain largely determined by the way they see reality-their world view. Thus even communities that claim to be Christian but have not had their world views influenced by the scriptures are likely to forge deities in their imaginings. They do this in order to address their vulnerabilities, or try to twist god to become appropriately usable (i.e., fulfill a utilitarian role). The first step in making wholistic disciples therefore is first to understand clearly the world view, and then begin the process of discipling.


Some discipling processes only change behavior, others change behavior and beliefs but leave the world view unaltered. By default the world view becomes the overriding, dominating influence.

In the diagram, which is an adapted modification from one used by Heibert and Dyrness, the outermost area is that of behavior. This is one that is most susceptible to change by external influence. Within behavior lies the deeper realm of belief, which needs stronger penetrative indoctrination before any change is adopted. However the controlling center is that of the world view. If one's world view is not properly understood, analyzed, and discipled, it will by default revert realities back to how it has traditionally seen them. Thus when the external influences for change are withdrawn, the undiscipled world view will take over and revert things back to the earlier status.

The survival strategy as a whole consists of various activities that a community undertakes in order to hold its world together. These will consist of the various aspects already mentioned. Those aspects in their direct control are seen as capabilities and those that are under indirect control are seen as vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, a seamless continuum runs between the directly controlled and indirectly controlled-between the empirical and supernatural.


Thus, whenever a development agency identifies what it considers an "area of vulnerability," it actually is in the eyes of the concerned community an area well within their control, albeit indirect control. Intentions by the development agencies to
intervene are thus seen as being at conflict with the existing ruling supernatural.


## Wholistic World View Analysis of a Community

In analyzing a community's survival strategy, one notices the peripheralization of god, wherein he is turned to only for assisting in areas of uncertainty. As the circle of influence of the community to control its environment widens with access to resources and building up of skills (enhanced capabilities), one might actually see god pushed out of that particular aspect. Thus a development agency that doesn't recognize reality as seen by the community may actually cause damage to the world view, making the community more and more godless. Perhaps this gives us greater insight into what has happened to western affluent communities which have developed survival strategies that have brought more of the uncertainties into their control, thus pushing god out of playing an active role in their lives.

Wholistic PLA also enables us to perceive how messages that we attempt to communicate are understood by the community. For example in the village of Gohekhurd we discovered that the community's perception on approaching god was different from that of the World Vision staff working in the project. The more powerful the god, the less frequently was he to be approached; and then never by individuals, but always by a whole village or several
villages together. In the face of this belief system the World Vision staff were talking about a God who interacted with individuals on a personal level and who actually "came to the door and knocked" (Rev 3:20). This obviously didn't make sense to them, for they thought that he was "too small" to be worthy for them to follow.

Another major weakness in our approach is that we do not come across to people as a community. We are more visible as a group of individuals who are vertically aligned (hierarchically). The strong sense of being a community with its vibrant supportive relational interaction is not seen in us. Thus community level interaction with World Vision is with different "individuals" with whom they meet, rather than with a Christian community. The profile of the individual they interact with plays a major role. Thus individuals can only play a role with the particular caste group that they are a part of. This is especially very strong in the rural areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka where caste plays a dominant role. Since the names of people bear the caste they are from, there is a strong overriding influence on efficiency in influencing the community. A totally changed name (anglicized or "Christian" name) is assumed to be a cover-up for a lower caste, because the features and the style of speaking betray the origin of a person.

A major barrier for communication is the strong caste system. Except in the tribal areas, major rural portions in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka states are strongly influenced by caste. For example in the Vidharba region of Maharashtra, there are villages where some of our staff cannot have any influence at all because of their origin and the family backgrounds from which they come.

It is said that culture is the patent that ensures the continuance of a practice. Caste then is the ground matrix that gives the practice its framework. Having to work within this framework restricts the efficiency of the transformational development process. Yet this is a reality that one has to be able to acknowledge that the community is a part of.


At the base of ethnocentricity is attitude, as can be seen in the diagram alongside. The community's attitude to a particular thing results in prejudice. A very strong attitude may have a history behind it and thus result in a strong prejudice against or for that particular stand. In due course of time this attitude is manifest in the form of ethnocentricity, and it shapes the cultural practices which lend the community the justifiable reasons for their particular stand.
Change therefore has to take place at the attitude level before we can overcome prejudice or change ethnocentricity. The background experiential history of a community plays a vital role in shaping its attitude. Hence it is important to listen to and explore their history as perceived by them if we want to even begin to understand what their attitude is.

Thus to summarize the discussions till now:

1. Understanding the reality of the community "as they see it" is mandatory for effective Christian witness. Stated differently, Their reality counts.
2. Our experience using wholistic PLA has shown us that when we start to listen to communities and try to understand their reality, we find their world views to be very different from what we expected. Often those with similar ethnographic profiles had divergent world views, and this was because of their experiential history.
3. Communities need to be empowered to share their world views-to tell their stories. This involves use of proactive processes like wholistic PLA.
4. Communities have definite perceptions of and effects related to their circumstances and the issues facing them. They must be facilitated to present their understanding of the cause and effect of matters that impact their survival strategies.
5. Last, but in no way the least, our effectiveness in understanding the community's reality depends on how well we are able to make a paradigm shift in our approach in order to be more open and understanding.

## A Short Note on Wholistic PLA

PLA has been successfully used in development circles for years. It has now started breaking ground even with the larger development agencies and government departments. It has found wide scale application for generating new insights into a wide range of subjects such as demographic profiles, education, health, agriculture, deforestation, rural and urban integrated community development, relief and development, children's programs, marriage counseling, AIDS awareness, BCC (Behavior Change Communication), etc.

More recently, earlier PLA methods have been modified and expanded to go beyond the empirical to facilitate a better understanding of the supernatural as well. Though PLA always had the potential to be so used, the method stayed largely confined to use in a secular way to understand only the empirical.

World Vision India has carried out some pioneering work in this regard and expanded its scope so that it could also be used in carrying out a Wholistic World View Analysis and for "measuring what matters in Christian witness." The precondition still remains as with other PLAs, i.e., the mandatory attitude change within the practitioner.

The scope for the use of wholistic PLAs in World Vision is broad and can find widespread use in our Area Development Programs (ADPs). At the end of the final exercise where the world view analysis diagram is completed, there is scope for us to discuss with the community in interactive dialogue what their assessment of the "perfect God" is-who would be able to deal with every aspect of their lives: (a) help them become better stewards of their capabilities and (b) enable them to be empowered to deal with their vulnerabilities effectively.

This would essentially work towards bringing god actively into the area of their capabilities-that part of their survival strategy which is within their control and also bring about an integration of several smaller "god needs" to be concentrated in one place (reconciled diversity). This would be the first step in discipling their world view. The second step would be to bring about further integration (centripetal infusion) to show that it is the same God who deals with their vulnerabilities and capabilities.

While all this sounds exciting and promises major breakthroughs, the reality remains that there is a lot of resistance to doing anything differently. Work like this, because it challenges all our earlier presuppositions, can be threatening. It calls on us to be willing for open-ended interactive dialogue for which we may not be ready. However, if we are willing to make that change, and follow what Jesus said about resembling a seed that falls and dies before it brings forth shoots, a stem, leaves, and finally fruit, then I believe we are at the threshold of a new beginning!
> "Preach the gospel all the time; if necessary use words." -St. Francis of Asissi
> "Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some person ever reads. ' -Unknown

Adapted from a research article written by Dr. Ravi I. Jayakaran while he was working with World Vision of India.


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## Intercession

Ian WEBBER

An eyewitness tells Luke what he recalls of the Last Supper

${ }^{1}$t was a night of mixed emotions I have to tell you, Lukethat Passover Meal. First of course there was a note of celebration in this annual reminder of Yahweh's Great Deliverance of us His people. But there was also a sense of unease in that upper room. It flowed back and forth among those who were gathered there, and kept surfacing. I knew Jesus was aware of it, too. Undoubtedly it was brought on to some extent by the tensions that were always simmering just below the surface in Israel. We knew we were slaves again-not in Egypt this time, but here in our own land. Not under Pharaoh, but now under Caesar.
"Our own personal well-being was also threatened. Pressure was building among the Temple leaders to squash the Master's influence. Much had occurred, even in just the last few weeks, that seemed to point to something quite dangerous. I've

[^0]already told you about some of these things, you'll remember, Luke. ${ }^{2}$
"There was something else too-an argumentativeness that was disturbing our time. In the squabbling and boasting in which we were caught up, our fellowship had suddenly become fragile. Jesus quite properly rebuked us, and we were all chastened-but the sour note lingered around the table. It was a somewhat 'uneasy truce' for a few of us who wanted to continue pushing our own claims to be considered 'the greatest.' I have to say that Peter was in this group! But so, I'm ashamed to admit, was I.
"Then we come to what is for me the most disturbing element of the entire meal. Simon was still urging his claim to the top spot in the list. He had stopped listening to what Jesus was saying. He was deaf to the Master's words-insensitive to the Lord's exhortation. He was ignoring Him. Then Jesus brings Peter, and the rest of us, up with a jolt. "Simon! Simon!" He doesn't shout, or even raise His voice. But we all hear him. The whole room is suddenly very, very still.
"Simon often talks more than he listens, I've noticed. But now, with everyone else around the table, he is most certainly in the 'listening mode.' And the chilling announcement falls from Jesus' lips that we are and will be in great spiritual dangerSatan's testing ('assault' might be a better term) is imminent!
"What is so terribly frightening is that Satan can challenge God, and that it will be up to us to stay faithful. Perhaps even more unnerving is that the main responsibility for holding us faithful will rest on Peter! Peter, for goodness' sake! Well, that certainly sobered him, I remember. The one thing that provided a glimmer of hope (a strong note of hope, actually) was Jesus' assurance that He had already interceded. Every single one of us knew that He would continue to do so.
"My throat was dry. I reached across to take a sip of wine. In my mind's eye I saw the winnower at work-the grain scooped

[^1]up and thrown into the air, and a strong wind separating forever the chaff from the grain. . ."

That is how I told Dr. Luke my version of what that last supper was like, when he was researching for his "orderly account." It is as vivid to me now as it was that night so long ago.

## A great promise

In this article I want to focus on Jesus' words to Peter (after He had gotten Peter's attention) and to the rest of us as well. Peter-who had lapsed into a "Simon" during the meal-is in effect designated the leader for at least the coming crisis. The ugly infighting prior to Jesus' rebuke was both so unnecessary and so demeaning. The Lord assured His disciples that He had interceded for Peter. They surely understood that He would continue to do so, and that by implication they too were included in this. For Peter specifically, His prayer of intercession was for "The Rock."

All this was surely of great encouragement to them (as it is for us) even though they all faltered shortly thereafter (as we often do). And of course the wonderful promise enshrined in Scripture ${ }^{3}$ remains certain for us that we might be courageous (given fresh 'heart') in the face of every trial, every temptation, every problem.

## Partnership

We often say, "I'll pray for you." At times that can be something of a "throw-away line"-a phrase of little substance and not much intentionality. However it is that we say the statement, what it needs to mean is, "I promise to allocate specific time(s) when I will pray earnestly for you in the matter of . . . ."

It is the same in Khmer as in English, I suppose, that the meanings of words change over time. This is no surprise, and we ought to use words in the way that everyone else uses them. However, it is equally important on occasion for us to go back to what words originally meant. For example, to "comfort" is often

[^2]used nowadays to mean something like giving a person a brief pat on the head or a hand on the arm and saying, "There, there; never mind. You'll be OK!" and then walking away. So it has a soft meaning. Originally it meant to do something that would be genuinely empowering for a person. The other became strong (Latin: fortis) by our being with (Latin: com) him or her in some positive, purposeful, and supportive way. It is an ongoing, unflagging thing. The com-fort-er doesn't lose interest after a few minutes; the com-fort-er doesn't say or do something once and then withdraw; the com-fort-er doesn't give up.

And inevitably a com-fort-er is an intercessor. So what is the original meaning of intercession? And what are its characteristics and purpose?

## Context and content

Basically, interceding is acting between and on behalf of people. That means acting between and on behalf of their situations, conflicts, difficulties, relationships, meetings. It is usually a case of assisting, facilitating, linking, connecting people-being a go-between for them. Sometimes it means doing for people what they cannot at the time do for themselves. It means to act on behalf of one or more parties for the sake of justice or mercy or healing or reconciliation or forgiveness.

It can also mean acting to dis-connect! For example an intercessor will sometimes act to prevent a crisis, danger, pain, stress, depression, or fear.

Different contexts define the content and the nature of our interceding. And the above cluster of descriptions implies that it is not something we do casually or off-handedly. It is much more than, "Let's have a word [!] of prayer about. . . ." It is, and is meant to be, sustained work.

## Biblical contexts guide our thinking

When the purpose of our intercession is that of connecting, we will be taking people-in our minds-into the presence of God
and up to the throne of His grace, and asking on their behalf for something. We can intercede for others when we are physically with them, although much of our interceding is done in their absence.

In the days after Hannah's impassioned petition to the Lord for a son, it is surely possible that Eli interceded for her beyond what is highlighted in 1 Samuel 1:17 and 2:20.. Prayer is a key role for a priest-to intercede is part of his ministry. That, by the way, is true for us all. It is part of what is meant when we talk of the priesthood of all believers.

There are examples of intercession in Solomon's great prayer at the dedication of the Temple. ${ }^{4}$ On the other hand there is no evidence in the Book of Jonah that the prophet made intercession for Nineveh. God is bigger than our interceding, of course, but Jonah "short-changed" himself by failing to intercede. Matthew's account of the storm ${ }^{5}$ certainly sounds like a cry of urgent intercession for their comrades. It was surely an individual petition as well, we have to say.

When the purpose of our intercession in to prevent links, to block connections, then we plead with the Sovereign Lord on behalf of afflicted ones. We stand against those things that take hold of people and threaten their safety, or their sanity, or their ministry, or their health-whatever has the affect (or "intention") of dulling God's love, impeding God's grace, weakening someone's hope, or reducing their trust, joy, or faith.

## Summary

Intercession is a gift that is given to us, and a ministry that is stirred up within us. It is the "scenery" for God's "theater." It is-if we continue to use the imagery of theater-one of the "backdrops" for the drama of God's saving, healing, forgiving, enabling work. Our intercession is included as part of the Lord's processes that make up the work of God among people. It is one of

[^3]the tools by which God loosens the hold of a hard heart and an unbelieving spirit; by which He weakens sin's grip. It attacks fear and operates to take some of the deep pain out of the natural consequences of tragedy; psychological distress, emotional damage, mental anguish, relationship breakdown, etc. It is one of the great bulwarks against all such troubles.

So our intercession is an act of great love. When we engage in the priestly ministry of intercession we enter into a project that applies a spiritual balm-a gentle, soothing, healing ointment-to the heart, mind, body, soul, spirit of needy people.
















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## Introduction to Philemon

Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.

## Background

None of Paul's letters receives less attention than Philemon. Yet none more clearly illustrates the gospel.

Philemon was penned to an individual, unlike Romans through Thessalonians. It concerns personal rather than church matters, unlike Timothy and Titus. It is the shortest of Paul's extant letters. It thus stands unique.

Philemon is one of Paul's prison epistles, along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. ${ }^{1}$ Among these four, Colossians and Philemon stand in particularly close relation. ${ }^{2}$ The imprisonment is probably Paul's house arrest described in Acts 28, thus dating these letters around $\mathrm{AD} 60-61$. This is an earlier imprisonment from the one alluded to six years later in 2 Timothy. ${ }^{3}$ In the earlier letters Paul expected-and was apparently grantedrelease, but in 2 Timothy the apostle knew that his martyrdom drew near (4:6). This time he was not under relatively comfortable house arrest but chained (2:9) in a cold dungeon (4:13).

[^8]Paul's imprisonment alluded to in 2 Timothy, however, does not concern us here. During his earlier Acts 28 house arrest, the apostle apparently met a runaway slave named Onesimus and led him to faith in Christ (see Phm 10). Possibly Onesimus had stolen from his owner as well as running away (Phm 18). But even if he had not, he still owed his master Philemon the labor he would have rendered all the time he was AWOL. In first-century Rome slaves were considered the property of their masters, who could execute them with impunity for such crimes. Nevertheless, the right thing for the new Christian Onesimus to do was return to his owner, despite this death threat which hung over his head. So Paul wrote the short letter in our Bible to Philemon to urge him to receive and forgive his slave.

## Brief Commentary

Paul Greets his Readers (1-3). Paul is going to make an entreaty in this letter, so he does not begin by using his authoritative title "apostle." He is of course an apostle. And he has no qualms about calling himself such and asserting his Christ-given authority where necessary. ${ }^{4}$ But because in the present case he will appeal to Philemon's heart, he lays his authority aside. He refers to himself as a "prisoner," a title more likely to elicit Philemon's sympathetic attention to his request.

The letter is addressed to Philemon (a believing Colossian slave-owner), to Apphia (possibly Philemon's wife), to Archippus (whom Paul calls his "fellow soldier"), ${ }^{5}$ and to the church which met in his house.

Paul Expresses Thanks and Prayers for his Readers (4-7). The seasoned apostle knows the difference between genuine praise and

[^9]flattery. He eschews the latter ${ }^{6}$ but is never embarrassed to offer the former. ${ }^{7}$ How encouraging to have a mentor genuinely thank God for one's fellowship, faith, and service! And how it prepares the heart to receive further counsel and consider new opportunities. Paul's praise in these verses is substantive enough to be warm and personal, but not so effusive that it appears contrived or manipulative.

Philemon is in Paul's prayers: first, the apostle hears of Philemon's faith in Christ and love for the saints ${ }^{8}$ and so gives thanks; second, he asks that Philemon thoroughly grasp ${ }^{9}$ every good thing we have in Christ, so that the sharing ( $\kappa$ olv $\omega v i \alpha$ ) of his faith may come to be ( $\gamma \varepsilon \nu \eta \tau \alpha \downarrow$ ) effective ( $\varepsilon v \varepsilon \rho \gamma \eta)$ ). I

[^10]suggest that this is the preferable understanding of this verse. Paul prays that Philemon's increased understanding cause the sharing of his faith to be more fruitful. The NIV inverts this sequence, so that Philemon's sharing of his faith increases his understanding. While both are true-witness increases our knowledge, and greater knowledge makes our witness more effective-it is the latter interpretation that better fits both the grammar of this verse ${ }^{10}$ as well as the general Pauline sequence that knowledge precedes fruitfulness. ${ }^{11}$

Paul concludes his praise of Philemon by telling him how much joy and encouragement he has brought his old friend, by calling him "brother," and by noting how he has refreshed other believers.

Paul Requests that Philemon Receive and Forgive Onesimus (8-22). The apostle will not use his authority to force Philemon's hand. Rather, he appeals to the slave owner on the basis of (1) love, (2) his own advanced age, (3) his pitiable status as a prisoner of Christ, (4) his relationship to Onesimus as "father," and (5) his warm attachment to Onesimus ("my very heart," v. 12). His request is bold. Runaway slaves enjoyed no legal protection. When found they were often beaten unmercifully or assigned to tasks which would greatly reduce their life expectancy. By asking that Onesimus be restored without punishment Paul is asking Philemon to contravene Roman culture. Such a step would grant unaccustomed human dignity to slaves, and would challenge prevailing economic and social views. Nevertheless, this is precisely what Paul asks.

He appeals "for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains." "Onesimus" ('O $\nu \dot{\eta} \sigma \iota \mu \circ \varsigma$ )-meaning "useful" or "profitable"-was a common name for slaves.

[^11]"Useful" was formerly "useless" ( $\propto \chi \rho \eta \sigma \tau \circ \nu)$ but now that he is a Christian has become "useful" ( $\varepsilon \cup v \chi \rho \eta \sigma \tau 0 \nu$ ). The mild humor of this play on words was designed to further incline the offended Philemon to hear Paul's request.

The prisoner would like to keep the now useful Onesimus as his aide, but prefers that any good Philemon might do should be done freely rather than under coercion. So he sends him back. Verses 15 and 16 draw together pairs of opposites-separated but now have him back; for a little time but now for good; not as a slave but now as a dear brother. These opposites illustrate the good changes brought about when people believe the gospel.

After thus carefully preparing the soil of Philemon's heart, Paul finally voices his request in verse 17. All that has gone before has merely set the stage for this climactic appeal. If you consider me a partner, ${ }^{12}$ Paul says, welcome him as you would welcome me. Because of the vast difference in status between slaves and their masters, and thus how the culture assumed an aggrieved slaveholder would treat his runaway, Paul's is an astounding request. By granting such humanity and dignity to a repentant slave, it flies in the face of and condemns the inhumane values of the day. Christian faith often does that.

But what about Onesimus' debt? That is settled as well-it is to be charged to Paul's account. Then as now a signed debtor statement carried great legal weight, and the apostle personally pens that he will repay it: But of course, since Paul had led him to faith in Christ, Philemon owed the apostle his very self. Through the gospel brought by Paul Philemon's debt of sin and damnation has been paid; how then can he extract from the apostle this

[^12]assumed monetary debt? Clearly, Paul is asking Philemon to bear the brunt of Onesimus' wrong and forego any compensation.

The difficult request has been made. Philemon weighs Paul's words. As he stands, letter in hand, returned runaway at his feet, Paul urges him to step over the line: "Yes, brother, may I enjoy benefit from you in the Lord." The word translated "may enjoy benefit" comes from the same root as the name Onesimus, ${ }^{13}$ and continues the apostle's playful use of the slave's name. Further, Philemon has refreshed the hearts of the saints (v. 7); how can he fail to do the same for the one who introduced him to Christ (v. 20)? Nudging him further, Paul expresses his confidence that Philemon will do not only what he asked, but even more. ${ }^{14}$ If Philemon still hesitated to comply, he soon knew that he would have to personally explain to Paul why he did not, since the prisoner hoped to soon visit him.

Did Philemon forgive Onesimus as Paul requested? We don't know. But the fact that this letter was included in the Bible suggests that he did. Interestingly, a few decades later Ignatius warmly refers to the bishop of nearby ${ }^{15}$ Ephesus: ". . . Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love, and who is your bishop, whom I pray you by Jesus Christ to love, and that you would all seek to be like him. Blessed be God, who has granted unto you, who are yourselves so excellent, to obtain such an excellent bishop." ${ }^{16}$ It is interesting to speculate that the forgiven slave went on to serve the church in a worthy and significant way.

[^13]Paul Passes on the Greetings of Others (23-25). Paul closes his letter by passing on the greetings of other believers. Epaphras had evangelized Colossae and continued to pray for the church's maturity. ${ }^{17}$ Mark, whom Paul earlier had rejected as a member of the second missionary journey, ${ }^{18}$ is once again considered one of the apostle's "fellow workers." Aristarchus was a Thessalonian who was arrested in the riot at Ephesus, and who accompanied Paul in his journeys to Jerusalem and Rome. ${ }^{19}$ Demas, though called here Paul's fellow worker, later deserted him because of his love for the present world. ${ }^{20}$ Luke was the Gentile physician who authored Luke and Acts.

## Theological and Practical Counsel

## Illustrating the Gospel.



As the diagram above illustrates, the relationship between Paul and Philemon was one of mutual partnership and respect. On the other hand Philemon was Onesimus' owner and master; Onesimus had wronged his master, making him liable to death at his hand.

[^14]
## Offers to intercede and pay debt.



Exercises faith in the acceptability of the payment and intercession.

However, Paul offered Onesimus to intercede with Philemon on his behalf and pay his debt. Onesimus then took his life in his hands and trusted in Paul-that his intercession would prove acceptable to Philemon and his life would be-spared-and returned to his master.


Paul requested that Philemon make two simultaneous transfers. First, Philemon charges Onesimus' debt to Paul's account: "If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back. . . ." Second, the slave owner takes Paul's status and grants it to Onesimus: "Welcome him as you would me." Although in the letter this status request precedes the one regarding debt, logically it follows the settlement of the debt question.

This exchange mirrors the redemption sinners find in Christ.


The relationship between God and Christ is one of profound oneness and partnership. Jesus himself spoke of this when he asserted, "I and the Father are one (John 10:30)." The two are not identical, but intimately and inseparably united. The underlying relationship between God and each human is that of creator and hence master. But since all in Adam are sinners by nature and by choice, they stand before him as debtors threatened with eternal death.

Offers to intercede and pay debt.


Exercises faith in the acceptability of the payment and intercession.

Out of mercy, Christ intercedes for each sinner. He first offers to pay the sin-debt of each: Christ came "to give his life as a ransom for many"; ${ }^{21}$ "God made him who had no $\sin$ to be $\sin$ for

[^15]us" (2 Cor 5:21); "Jesus . . . suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9); "he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed . . . Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:5-6). Jesus likened salvation to release from debt. ${ }^{22}$ Having paid the sinner's debt, he further offers to confer on him his own status before the Father: "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" ( 2 Cor 5:21); "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Cor $1: 30$ ); we are "in Christ" and authorized to pray "in Jesus' name." What is required of the sinner is that he or she exercise faith in the relationship between Christ and the Father, and in the acceptability of the payment Christ has made, and approach the Father in Jesus' name for the promised forgiveness and new relationship as son or daughter.

release is made possible. 1 Tim 2:6 uses the term $\alpha v \tau i \lambda u \tau \rho o v . ~ B o t h ~$ imply payment. See also 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:18f.
${ }^{22}$ Matt 18:21-27; Luke 7:40-50; Matt 6:12.

When such faith is exercised, God judicially transfers the sinner's debt to Christ and Christ's righteousness and acceptability to the sinner.

If Philemon obeyed Paul's request, his forgiveness and acceptance of Onesimus would illustrate the gospel to all who came to know about it. It would cost Philemon to forgo his "rights"-both in lost finances and in lost opportunity for personal revenge. But his life would forever after provide a living example of how Jesus heals relationships. The New Testament frequently urges Christians to similarly "act out" the gospel in their relations with others. ${ }^{23}$

Diplomacy. There are those who believe that power and position give those who possess them the right to run roughshod over all "beneath" them. That it is theirs to command and others' to obey. That the higher one rises in rank the more one impresses others by ruling through decree. Philemon negates such assumptions.

Paul was an apostle commissioned by the risen Christ. Yet here he lays aside that authority to entreat an old friend. He will not force Philemon's hand; he declines to command him. He will appeal based on the nature of the gospel and on the relationship they enjoy. In this way, any good that Philemon does will be his own choice and therefore commendable. Philemon will get the credit, not Paul. At the same time Paul has left himself vulnerable: Philemon could ignore his request and leave him no further leverage to force the issue. Paul's "leadership" could then be discredited. But he was willing to make himself appear weak so that Philemon by his free magnanimous deed could appear strong.

Thus the letter is valuable for not only teaching what is the right thing to do, but also how to approach people to do it. Because Paul's praise of Philemon was deserved and sincere, it is not toady ingratiation. A strong leader feels free to praise his people when it is proper and build them up; he does not exalt himself over them and push them down. How much more smoothly many churches

[^16]would function if its leaders would employ the statesmanship and diplomacy evidenced in Paul's letter to Philemon.

Affirming a substitutionary sense to hyper. The Greek New Testament often uses the preposition hyper ( $0 \pi \varepsilon \rho$ ) to speak of Christ's dying for the world. ${ }^{24}$ It is sometimes alleged that this preposition means only "for the benefit of, on behalf of," and never bears the substitutionary sense "in place of, instead of." Thus Christ's death would somehow benefit the world without having been made in its place. However, Paul uses hyper in Philemon 13 when he says, "I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me. . . ." Clearly hyper is used here in a substitutionary sense. Onesimus's serving Paul would in no way benefit Philemon; it would, in fact, inconvenience him by depriving him of the services of his slave. Paul is implying that, had he had the chance, Philemon would have personally served Paul in prison. But since he is not there, Onesimus can serve in his place.

Therefore, although we neither can nor should compel hyper to be understood substitutionally every time it speaks of the death of Christ, that meaning must be entertained as at least lexically possible and contributory.

Christian Holism and Social Issues. An individual's Christian faith should influence every area of his or her life. The Bible does not encourage us to "believe" our faith only in some isolated compartment of our minds, but rather to allow it to shape how we think and act toward every issue. Thus Philemon's faith, not current Roman practice, should determine how he treats his returned runaway slave Onesimus. Christian faith is holistic in the sense that it should influence or direct every aspect of a believer's life. This short letter illustrates that truth.

But Philemon also illustrates the New Testament pattern toward confronting social ills in the larger society. Slavery-

[^17]etc.
especially as practiced in pagan societies unregulated by the Mosaic Law-is demeaning to humans made in the image of God, exploitative, violent, and brutal. It has been for centuries a scourge crying for eradication.

Nevertheless, the New Testament as a whole and Philemon in particular says nothing about Christian responsibility to overthrow the system of slavery. No protests are organized, no letters written, no committees formed, no protest made to the government. Paul simply says, "Philemon, treat your slave as aChristian brother." Elsewhere he urges slaves to serve faithfully, and slave owners to treat their slaves fairly. ${ }^{25}$ Christians are to act in every area of their lives as Christians, and the church is to conduct itself in every way as Christians, but society at large is never the focus of New Testament admonition. Jesus did not himself attempt or direct others to correct pagan society, nor did the apostles. We are salt and light which show by example and create thirst, not whips and scourges to compel the unconvinced. Paul makes it clear that the church's business is the church, not civil government: "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside" (1 Cor 5:12-13).

Had Christians campaigned against slavery-or any other ill in Roman society-it would have confused the gospel. Apart from God's grace, it may have proved suicidal if slaves were thereby encouraged to revolt. The Christian method is to change people's hearts and then teach the converted (individual and church) how that change should manifest itself in every relationship. The New Testament teaches discipling individuals and churches, and knows nothing of discipling nations as nations. Although Christians can and should work for social good, Philemon reminds us of our primary method and mandate.

[^18]
## Appendix: Chiastic Arrangement of Philemon ${ }^{26}$

A 1-3 Epistolary. $\left\{\begin{array}{c}\text { a } 1,2 \text { Names of those with Philemon. } \\ \text { b } 3 \text { Benediction. }\end{array}\right.$
B 4-7 Prayers of Paul for Philemon. Philemon's hospitality. C 8 Authority.

D 9, 10- Supplication.
E-10 Onesimus, a convert of Paul's.

> F 11, 12- Wrong done by Onesimus. Amends made by Paul.

G-12 To receive Onesimus the same as receiving Paul.

H 13, 14 Paul and Philemon.
I 15 Onesimus.
I 16- Onesimus.
H - 16 Paul and Philemon.
G 17 To receive Onesimus the same as receiving Paul.

F 18, 19- Wrong done by Onesimus. Amends made by Paul.

E-19 Philemon a convert of Paul's.
D 20 Supplication.
$C 21$ Authority.
B 22 Philemon's hospitality. Prayers of Philemon for Paul.
A 23-25 Epistolary. $\left\{\begin{array}{c}a \\ \text { 23, } 24 \\ b 25\end{array}\right.$ Names of those with Paul.

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# Training Adults to Become Christians in the Catholic Church 

## François PONCHAUD

After Jesus rose from the dead he instructed his eleven disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

Many biblical scholars conclude that the gospel of Matthew gives more attention to church organization than do the other synoptic gospels. In the verse cited above, Matthew points to the baptism that the early church conducted for new converts in A.D. 80. Maybe Jesus himself did not speak as clearly as does this passage, but it confirms what the churches practiced forty to fifty years after his death. According to Matthew, Jesus did not only send the apostles to evangelize, but charged them with "baptism" and "teaching the people to obey what he had commanded them to do." The baptism and deeds expressed the faith of those who gave their lives to Jesus as Christ and Lord.

Therefore since the beginning of the church, we can see in the Acts of the Apostles Christians who have concentrated on two tasks: sharing the good news of salvation brought by Jesus, and training others to become disciples.

After Peter proclaimed Christ's resurrection, "with many other words he warned them, and he pleaded with them" (Acts
$2: 40$ ). The early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship . . . and prayer" (Acts 2:42). After Paul converted to faith in the Jesus whom he had persecuted, he was educated and baptized by Ananias (Acts 9:5, 17-19).

From the second until the fourth centuries there were not many Christians, and this minority suffered persecution under the authorities. Therefore the church was eager to teach adults to be Christians. Tertullian (A.D. 150), Origen (A.D. 180), and Cyprian (A.D. 250) were famous in teaching people. Later, after the state became Christian, believers did not pay much attention to instructing and converting adults. They only performed baptism for newly-born children. Then in 1963 the second Vatican council decided to teach adults who wish to become Christians in accordance with the ancient way. This way is appropriate to the situation of Cambodia, since there are a small number of Christians living among a majority of Buddhists who hold to a faith very different from Christianity.

Normally the Catholic Church does not quickly perform baptism for those who ask to become Christians, but waits until they have gone through these four phases of formation:

1. initial evangelization
2. educating them to become disciples (catechumenate)
3. preparing them to receive the sacrament of baptism and the body of Christ
4. having neophytes reflect on the new life that they have received (mystagogy)

## 1. First phase-Evangelization

Every Christian has an important obligation to preach the gospel of salvation through Jesus. As the apostle Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). This is the task every one of us must do. If we know the way that provides happiness for us, we must share it to others. We cannot keep it only for ourselves! We preach the gospel through various ways, such as visiting people and caring for their living situation, just as Jesus took care of the living situation of people. We share with them and inquire about their faith. What do they want? What do they
understand of the meaning of their lives? How does their religion solve their problems? How do they experience their spiritual lives? Usually our Catholic brothers do not like to stress verbal religious proclamation because faith is a kind of love story. It is mysterious; we cannot share it with friends in a public area. On the other hand, we believe that the Holy Spirit-who is the spirit of Jesus risen from the dead-dwells in those who are devoted to their religion. He called them and exhorted them through the various ways of their own religion as well. We just try to be a witness to the way that leads to God, whom people are seeking through their own religions. We try our best to understand their deep desires and pay attention to respond to their needs as well.

The people who convert to Jesus are most likely to become the ones who change the direction of their lives. They change their minds not because they learned a theory or studied the Bible, but because they met Jesus-the living God-and accepted Him as their refuge. He leads them to change their thinking, behavior, relationships with others in society, relationships with men and women, manner of living as husband and wife, way of loving others, etc.

Sometimes those who accept the gospel believe immediately in Jesus as their savior, but they do not obey the good news as described in the parable of Good Seed (Mk 4:1-9). Sometimes it will take a few years-or ten to twenty years-for them to really depend on Jesus according to the Father who "draws them" (John 6:44), and according to their answer also. In this phase the candidate reveals his ${ }^{1}$ desire to become a Christian. Perhaps a person met a Christian who proclaimed the gospel in a confusing way-for example that the church saves mankind through giving money or rice, etc. In this case the church should help purify their desires and teach them to entrust their lives to Jesus, who shows the new way to the Father. That person then accepts Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He is willing to turn away from his old way, to know Jesus, and live for Him. If the person gains

[^26]some kind of understanding then the church will conduct a ritual called "entering the church ceremony."

The church decides whether or not to accept this new member by considering some aspects of his faith and character:

- The person who applies for church membership must believe that Jesus is not the Father and not the Holy Spirit.
- Because he has met Christ the living God, he eagerly proclaims the Gospel to others.
- He must turn away from depending on the Buddha and trust in Christ instead. That does not mean we reject Buddhism, but rather that we Christians choose another way. We cannot reach Battambang by taking a bus and at the same time boarding a plane.
- He is not afraid of ghosts, and no longer consults with fortunetellers or mediums.
- He has started to care for other people who are poorer than he, striving for justice in society with all his strength.
- He is glad to join with other people who are seeking Jesus as he is.
- He is faithful to his spouse, no more playing cards, no more drunkenness, no more doing inappropriate business (especially oppressing others), no more receiving bribes, etc.
- If he is still young, the parents must be willing to let their child become a Christian.
Then the church accepts him as a Christian even though that person has not yet participated in a baptism ceremony.


## 2. Second Phase-Train Them to be Disciples.

Jesus told the group of his apostles "to make disciples of all nations" and "teach them to obey everything I have commanded" (Matt 28:19). The Church Fathers made a new word for that phase of "teaching them to become disciples": discipleship. It takes a long time to become a disciple. Baptism does not mean that a person is a disciple.

The person who is already a member of the church has to receive instruction in three major areas: knowing God's Word, knowing how to pray, and living according to Jesus' teaching.

According to the book of Acts, the early church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, and to prayer (Acts 2:42).

The ones who received instruction in the faith "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching." The person who hears the Word of God not just learns about the Bible, but gradually recognizes that God the Father loves him and calls that person to make a covenant with Him as if God were asking to marry him. When we study the Bible we discover a kind of love story, because the history of salvation in the Bible reads like a love story and the gift of life. The believer responds to God who loves him. Regulations come out of love also; therefore, the catechumen must consider his manner of living. He needs to bring his lifestyle in accordance with the love of God. The person who "teaches the Bible" must be a witness, who by his own living example shares his experience. A Bible teacher is not just one who teaches the Bible's words.
"They devoted themselves to prayer": the catechumen receives instruction on how to pray on his own as a Christian. Every religion teaches people to pray or to recite prayers, but only Jesus teaches people to have a spiritual relationship with the Father through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. So we have to teach them to pray the way that Jesus taught in Matt 6:5-13, particularly verses 9-13. The prayer was the "Our Father"; this is a model for Christian prayer. The person who receives instruction on prayer prays to the Father with love, using the words and the mindset of Jesus.

They "devoted themselves to fellowship." Members of the early church shared their possessions with one another. This means that Christian living is different from the lifestyle of other people. It is not preoccupied with earning for one's own consumption with no consideration for the poor. This is a very crucial point, showing that the candidate has experienced true conversion-not only lip conversion. The catechumen receives instruction on how to live according to his Master's teaching. People are to love others and forgive those who wrong them. Such practice is very different from what people normally do. Then they are to reflect on the message that Jesus shared on the mountain (Matt 5-7). He revealed that the way that leads to true happiness differs from the way of happiness
of the world. Everybody must obey Moses' law; only Christians obey the new commandment of Jesus.

This phase may take a long time-maybe one or two years. In this phase various rituals are performed, such as transmission of Jesus' prayer (Matt 6:9-13), meaning Christians should testify that they live according to the words of this prayer to let the seekers listen. Sometimes the ceremony of the giff of Jesus' word on true happiness (Matt 5:1-12) is held. Sometimes a ritual is performed using the brief Christian creed formulated by the church leaders in Nicea (A.D. 325). In this way the new convert understands that he has received the faith that was preached by the apostles and has been proclaimed from one generation to the next until today.

## 3. Third Phase-Candidates Preparing Themselves to Receive Baptism and Holy Communion

For many generations the church has celebrated Lent for all Christians to prepare themselves for forty days to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then the church conducted a special teaching for the catechumens. During this time they read passages to remind them of baptism-Jesus tempted by Satan (Matt 4:1-11), Jesus undergoing a transfiguration (Matt 17:19), Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman (John 4:5-42), Jesus healing a man born blind (John 9:41), Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44). The whole church teaches those who want to receive baptism during Lent so that they know the way of Jesus - that they need to fight Satan, but that this way leads to the glory of God. When they receive the sacrament of baptism Jesus gives them a source of life that will provide eternal life. He enlightens their minds and raises them from the dead.

Normally the bishop performs water baptism for them in the night of the Passover ceremony to declare that those who receive baptism also share the death and resurrection of Christ. As Paul said, "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death. . . . If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (Rom 6:3-5).

## 4. Fourth phase-Reflection on the Wonderful New Life that Christians Receive through Christ.

After the Passover ceremony the neophytes reflect together on the dignity of their new life for at least fifty days.

The Church Fathers frequently compare adults who want to become Christians to the conception of a baby in his mother's womb, or to an Israelite who left Egypt for Canaan.

Jesus compared the sacrament of baptism to a new birth (John 3:3-8, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. . . . I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit"). But infants stay in the womb for nine months before they are born. A wife receiving sperm from her husband resembles a believer receiving the Word of God. When he first receives the Good News, his faith is like the conception of a child, but it is still small like the fetus in the mother's womb. Then the catechumens show their behavior, meaning that they are willing to follow Jesus who called them. They want to know Him more and more as their good teacher, and they decide to totally give themselves to Him who is the real source of life. They begin to believe when they "join the church" with an auspicious ceremony. When they join the church that means they are "Christian."

The fetus spends a long time in the womb in order to grow physically. Similarly, a new convert to Jesus as savior needs time to grow spiritually. He must not only learn but also practice how to live like Christ and follow him whom he has met as the living God.

This comparison helps us understand that we need time to let faith grow, just as a fetus needs time to mature enough to become a baby. If a baby is born after sufficient time in the womb he will live. If he is born before adequate time he will either be premature or miscarry and will not live. If he is delayed in delivery he will die in his mother's womb. That is why we don't rush to ${ }^{\circ}$ perform baptism, but allow time to assure that the new faith is certain and not transitory. Nor do we delay too long, or the individual might lose interest and his faith die out.

This comparison also helps us realize that teaching catechumens does not consist simply of verbal "instructions," but
also of training in living the Christ's way. The whole church is like a mother who nourishes the fetus in her womb; it is not just two or three people who perform that task.

All Christians educate newcomers by setting the example of genuinely loving each other, and by conducting various ceremonies. The newcomer helps the church to realize her role of a mother who loves, educates, and feeds her son.

The Church Fathers also compare the instruction of catechumens to the exodus from Egypt toward Canaan. This was a very crucial event in the history of God's people. God called his people out of slavery in Egypt. He parted the Red Sea, led them through, and gave the Law on Mount Sinai. He seemed to say: "I love all of you, but do you love Me? I speak the Word, but do you obey it?" The Israelites sinned against God by worshiping the golden calf. Therefore God tested their hearts for forty years.

Origen, a second-century Egyptian, was a renowned teacher of the faith. He used to give this example to teach catechumens: "Brothers, you left the Gentile world and gave up the worship of other gods in Egypt! You became the people of God. You began to walk. You received instruction in the faith, just as the Israelites did when they wandered in the wilderness. You received the Mosaic Law and Jesus' commandments, and began living a life according to Jesus' instructions. When you attempted to live the new way of life, priests helped by leading you across the Jordan River. You will receive baptism in the Jordan like Christ. Then you will enter the Promised Land to rest with Christ."

This comparison helps us understand that faith is like a journey with Jesus-a journey consisting of phases. The catechumens walk with the whole church they listen to God's Word together with other Christians. This process is a little bit different, but we must try our best to live according to the Gospel of Jesus.

All the Church Fathers used to compare baptism to a wedding, which also has different phases such as the proposal, engagement, bringing presents to the bride, the wedding ceremony, and living together.

The way in which the Catholic Church instructs the catechumens is the way that Christians have practiced ever since the beginning. God touches the hearts so that people believe, but
we have the obligation to educate people in the faith. Origen stated that "They approach faith, enter faith, confess faith, and live by faith." Jesus also desires that believers unite themselves into one great family by living His new way of life and changing the world according to God's will. Faith influences the world.



















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## Indigenization of a National Church

A Reflection on Cambodian Church Structure

Arun SOK NHEP

## Introduction

TThe concept of indigenization is not new to Christianity. We read about it as early as Paul's ministry in the book of Acts. Gentile churches, while keeping a close relationship with the mother church in Judea, had difficulty adopting Jewish practices such as circumcision. Paul, as a missionary to the Gentiles, understood the need of the Gentiles to be themselves. He defended their cause and convinced the Jewish Christians not to impose their own customs and lifestyle on the Gentiles (Acts 15).

Everywhere the gospel is proclaimed Christianity has to work toward making the Church indigenous. Presently, church culture seems to be moving towards Western-and especially American-paradigms in music, worship, structure, strategy, evangelism methods, etc. This trend also occurs here in Cambodia.

Unfortunately, in process of church planting, not only were the gospel and a Christian worldview transmitted, but western church culture as well. As a result, the Cambodian church as a whole seems disconnected from its own socio-cultural environment. This puts believers under pressure, as they are torn between the cultural system transmitted by missionaries and their own cultural system. Christians are perceived by their compatriots as traitors, and become strangers within their own culture. Some missionaries and national leaders are aware of the problem of
western acculturation but do not know how to make the appropriate changes.

The purpose of this article is to learn from what has been written about contextualization with its benefits and dangers, and to provide a reflection (but not a model) on how a contextualized Cambodian Church may be conceived.

## Indigenization

Nowadays missionaries are evaluated not only by their accomplishments in evangelizing a nation, but also by their ability to indigenize the churches they establish. Consequently, most mission societies orient their objectives toward the training of national leaders so that, in turn, the nationals can take over the leadership of their own churches.

According to Soltau, a church is indigenous when "it becomes native to the country and grows there naturally, as part and parcel of the people among whom it has been planted."

Smalley defines an indigenous church as "a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialized Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures." ${ }^{2}$

In practice, however, a local church is judged to be indigenized or not based on its autonomy in leadership, finance, and propagation strategy. This autonomy is often labeled as the three-self formula: "self-governing, self-supporting, and self propagating."

Self-governing churches are not necessarily indigenous, because national leaders are often trained in western patterns of church government. They are not really oriented to organizing the

[^29]church from their own socio-cultural perspective, but rather blindly imitate the western church culture. In fact, nationals often serve as figureheads in the leadership while missionaries exercise the real power over the local churches because of the financial support they provide. "Self-supporting" is also often considered a barometer of success in indigenization. National churches are encouraged to meet their needs financially and support their leaders. They are also encouraged to establish local strategies to share the gospel with their own people. But the methods used, whether in financial matters or in evangelism strategies (crusades, campaigns, etc.), are often not different from those of the west.

But indigenization entails more than this three-self formula; it requires deep reflection on and evaluation of the cultural identity of a national church. This leads to the next and probably most important step in the process of indigenizationcontextualization.

## Contextualization

According to Lingenfelter, contextualizing means "to frame the gospel message in language and communication forms appropriate and meaningful to the culture and to focus the message upon crucial issues in the lives of the people." ${ }^{3}$

Contextualization: reaction to colonialism. Unfortunately, in the past the history of mission has been closely linked to colonialism. Mission opened a door for western colonization, and colonization allowed missionaries to establish the church in remote areas of the world.

During the colonial era, encounters between western and other nations resulted in a feeling of superiority on the part of white people because of their advanced science and technology. Consequently, western culture was considered superior to other

[^30]cultures, and often it was labeled simply as "the culture" in contrast to others termed "primitive".

Missionaries during that period were affected by the spirit of their times. They organized the church molded on western culture. In their reasoning, "the West's obvious superiority over other cultures proved the superiority of Christian over pagan religions." ${ }^{4}$ And these "primitive" nations did need not only salvation, but also civilization! For instance, "in 1890, T. W. Pearce pointed out that merely introducing Christianity to China was not enough, Western civilization, in its entirely, had to overcome Chinese civilization." For this reason, even today one can notice a strongly western culture within Chinese churches.

In the same spirit, they translated the Bible using the literal translation principle (often from the King James Version) and did not care about the linguistic or cultural sensibilities of the receptive languages. Often witnessing to the gospel was combined with English teaching so that new believers could find better jobs and attain higher economic status. Thus, Anglo-culturization was sometimes perceived by missionaries and national as superior to local culture.

Although the colonial era thus entailed such negative aspects as arrogance and segregation, we have to admit the positive side of that period: the gospel was proclaimed, regardless of how it was transmitted; ${ }^{6}$ the Bible was translated into many languages; churches, hospitals, and educational systems were established.

But the anti-colonial movement brought to an end racial segregation within the church, at least on the ethic level. The superiority of western culture was questioned; western Christians started to discern between the gospel and their own culture. They also began taking other cultures seriously and sought to understand them. Consequently, more and more missionaries encouraged

[^31]indigenous leaders to present the gospel with a local context and theology. The local church must seek to "integrate the Gospel message (the text) with its local culture (the context). The text and context must be blended into that one, God-intended reality called Christian living." ${ }^{\prime}$

The dangers of contextualization. However, contextualization also has its drawbacks, especially when there is a tendency to perceive all cultures as good. Other religions may also be considered as a revelation of God, and therefore may open a door to syncretism. As a result the uniqueness of Christ and his salvation are questioned. Christ may be presented as only one way to the Father, and not the way.

This could also lead to the other extreme-rejecting everything from the West, even its good principles.

Critical contextualization. In order to benefit from contextualization and avoid dangers of dragging, the process must be undertaken with care. I think the task of contextualization should undertaken by local leaders and missionaries (preferably from different nationalities) together. A local leader has ability to discern and feel what is good or bad in his culture. But the role of the missionary is also important in providing a framework. Before making any exegesis of a culture, one should seek first to understand that culture.

Kwast ${ }^{8}$ believes that understanding a culture is like peeling different layers. The first layer is to study the behavior of the people. Second, understand their values. Third, probe the deeper level of beliefs: what they hold to be true. Finally, at the very heart of any culture lies its worldview: what is real to people. This last has to be taken into account when sharing the gospel.

[^32]Hesselgrave9 argues that the missionary has his own cultural background, which embodies his own worldview and standard of values. He himself received the message of the Bible within his own specific cultural context. This is the "missionary's culture." He has to transmit the message to another culture with its distinct worldview and value system. This is the "target culture." The temptation is ever present to project the cultural background of the missionary into the process and therefore blur the original meaning of the Bible's message. The missionary must take into account the target culture with its value system. He must remember that the ideas of this culture are as strong as those from his own. His audience will project their own understanding into the message of the Bible. The missionary must strive to communicate in a way that is relevant to the target culture while still remaining faithful to the original message. This is a most difficult task.

Therefore the responsibility of the missionary is heavy, as he has to lead and train leaders in the respondent culture. National pastors have often proved even worse in spreading a western message with little relevance to their own culture. The consequences are both disastrous and lasting. What is done is difficult to undo.

Hesselgrave believes that communication between the missionary and the target culture is often a monologue-from missionary to respondent. The missionary only relates the message without trying to understand the respondent culture and worldview. Nothing will be gained by ridiculing or pointing to inconsistencies in the beliefs. The message of the gospel is universal. The Christian message remains the same for all times and all cultures. Contextualization is essential for the message to be understood and accepted.

In the case study of the Cambodian church, I would like to leave aside the theological aspects of contextualization, and emphasize the institutional structure of the indigenized church.
${ }^{9}$ In an article published in Kraft and Wisley, Readings.

## The Cambodian Church

Every society is a system. In order to function efficiently, any system needs to be balanced and harmonious. According to Mayers, "all the parts of the systems relate to the whole and give it meaning. The whole, in turn, gives meaning to the parts. Without the whole, the parts would have no reason for existing; and without any one of the parts, there would be no whole." ${ }^{10}$

A local church, although spiritual part of the Kingdom of God, also remains part of a definite socio-cultural group. The church is called to transform its environment with the gospel without becoming unnecessarily foreign to the socio-cultural system.

The church of Cambodia has manifested a desire to indigenize, and missionaries are working to relinquish the leadership to national Christians. Nevertheless, non-Christian Cambodians still consider the church to be foreign, since the church culture and institutional structure are unfamiliar to most people. For a Cambodian, to become a Christian is not an easy thing-he experiences not only a spiritual transformation, but has to adapt to western church culture. For this reason, most of the churches have a difficult time in discipling new believers, as they tend to return to Buddhism after a brief sojourn in Christianity. I think this phenomenon is due to cultural nostalgia, because the church has neglected the importance of contextualization. I believe that indigenization without contextualization is ineffective.

Learning from history. Portuguese Dominican missionaries arrived in Cambodia in the mid-sixteenth century. Buddhism had entered a few centuries previously, and experienced such expansion that it superseded Hinduism as the national religion. Christianity never enjoyed such success. Buddhism succeeded in its indigenization.

[^33]In 1975 the Roman Catholic Church counted only a few hundred members in its fold. ${ }^{11}$ Leadership was exercised by French bishops and priests. Although the Catholics took great pains to inculturate, the French missionaries did not seem ready to relinquish leadership to nationals. Only two or three Khmer priests were ordained, and the first Khmer bishop was ordained at the last minute because foreigners had to leave the country before the Khmer Rouge took over the country in 1975. Therefore the Catholic Church is perceived by the population as a French religion.

Protestant missionaries from Christian and Missionary Alliance arrived in Cambodia in 1923. This mission focused on indigenization. The three-self formula was (and is) widely implemented in this denomination. But the church was then supervised by missionaries, and church structure is often based on American models. Because of this, the church was perceived as an American religion.

Unfortunately during the Khmer-Rouge period (1975-79), as the whole country was plunged into genocide, Catholic and Protestant churches shared the same fate: the Khmer bishop and priests were executed, and out of forty pastors only four survived. Churches were destroyed, Christians dispersed, and the majority perished.

The contemporary Cambodian church. When the postcommunist regime was proclaimed in Cambodia in 1991, the surviving Christians rebuilt the church. As the church grows, and as more national Christians assume leadership, it is time to think about how to contextualize church structure so that it fits local culture. Most missionaries and Cambodian leaders have noticed that evangelizing the Khmer people is easy, but keeping them

[^34]faithful to Christian living is hard. This is due to the fact that the believers do not know how to live as Christians in Khmer society, since the whole church structure is alien to Cambodians. For this reason it is important to reconsider the form of Christianity, so that the church of Christ may have a local look, rather than a French or American face.

## Understanding Khmer socio-cultural structure

The first step in the process is seeking to understand the Cambodian social structure. Cambodian society is organized according to a corporate social environment. Hierarchy is very important to Cambodians. For instance, when missionaries start to learn the Khmer language they will realize very soon that one of the main characteristics is that it is built upon a hierarchical system. Thus there are at least four levels of vocabulary. One cannot talk to God, to the king, to monks, teachers, parents, or friends, using the same vocabulary. Each set of vocabulary is used for each specific level of society.

In the traditional structure, hierarchy is based not only on the role that one may play in society but also on seniority. Wisdom is often associated with age. Normally a young man is not in a good position to teach elderly people. Missions have a tendency to focus their effort on training young people, because of their ability to learn the western way. The elderly people are neglected; as a result they think that evangelism or other tasks for God are a young person's job. Consequently, the church has lost a natural way to impact its community. In a society like Cambodia's, we should not neglect and underestimate the importance of the elderly.

Another important aspect that one should not overlook is that religious life in Cambodia is organized around monasticism. The concept of the church with a salaried priest or pastor working in an office is not familiar to Cambodians. For this reason, pastors are often considered more as mission employees or civil servants than religious or spiritual leaders.

## Two possible patterns

Establishing the Kingdom of God entails not only proclaiming the gospel but building a community of believers in a specific socio-cultural context. The church as a religious institution ought to be structured in a form that is culturally natural. In a hierarchical society "the cooperate interests of the group place significant constrains upon leaders."'2 The Cambodian church leadership could be structured on the two following models:

1. Presbyterian form: In the Khmer tradition, a position of authority and seniority often tend to be synonymous. For the instance, the king is respected not simply because he is king, but also because of his seniority. The social and religious activities are usually organized by a group of elderly lay men, the Achars, who lead the Buddhist community in worship and ceremonies. In the temple, they fulfill the role of mediator between the Buddhist monks and the believers. (Since a Christian pastor looks like a layman, in contrast to a Buddhist monk, he is often named the Achar by non-Christians. He is thus perceived as less important than a monk.) .The Achars normally have a secular job; their involvement in religious life is merely voluntary.

A church organized with a "Council of Elders" may have more impact on the community than a church led by a sole pastor. Such a structure would not only be familiar to the Khmer people, but its foundation closely reflects the New Testament pattern. Furthermore, the requirements of the elders can also be found in the Scripture. ${ }^{13}$
2. Monastic form: Traditionally, the Cambodian pagoda is central not only for religious life, but also for social and educational life, where a group of people live together as a learning, praying, and meditating community. Young monks gather around elder priests and commit themselves to live in poverty and chastity (at least in theory). They spend their time in meditating and learning the Buddhist scriptures. But unlike

[^35]monastic life in Europe, these monks interact every day with secular society through ceremonies and teachings. They also receive their food and gifts from the population. This could be serve as a model for Cambodian Christians who want to commit themselves entirely to God without being entirely disconnected from the world. One may see connection between this lifestyle and the experience of Jesus and his disciples. The disciples gathered around the Master while learning and interacting with the population.

In the past, Benedictine monks organized monastic life Cambodian style, but they failed to flourish. I think this is due to the uncritical concept of contextualization. For instance, they practiced flagellation, which is not familiar to the Khmer people.

In the process of contextualization, only the external form should be structured with a local paradigm (perhaps also evangelism and theologizing methods), but the core of the gospel, that is salvation in Jesus Christ, must remain intact. What the people need is not a local or imported religion, but to be transformed by the gospel.

## Conclusion

An indigenized church is not simply one led by national leaders imitating western church culture. Indigenizing a church should not mean that we have to reject the principles and values of other churches. As part of the universal church we ought to live and share together our discovery in our pilgrim life with the Lord.

We must be aware that church cannot be completely integrated into its cultural setting. We cannot conform ourselves entirely to our society, lest we may go astray from the One who called us. In the process of indigenizing the church we ought to think about transforming our culture by bringing the spirit of the gospel into it, instead of bringing its spirit to the gospel. "Transformation is neither bridging form one system to another or transferring a Christian system to another place and people. Rather, transformation means a new hermeneutic-a redefinition, a

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reintegration of the lives of God's people (the Church) within the system in which they find themselves living and working." ${ }^{14}$
${ }^{14}$ Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture, 18.



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## Meet Yos Em Sithan

Debbi MAHER


## YOS Em Sithan

Yos Em Sithan became a Christian in 1975, one week before the Khmer Rouge invaded Phnom Penh. Her brother Yos Ann Tipo led her to the Lord; her sister Yos Kam Molly was already a strong believer.

Having so little time to understand her new faith, she cried almost daily to God, "Why was this all happening? Please help me." Such was the extent of her new faith. God answered her prayers in a variety of ways. Although she had previously been a student and her father a government official, she was able to convince the Khmer Rouge soldiers otherwise and thereby avoid almost certain elimination. She was often asked what she used to do. "Are you a student? What was your job before?" She replied that she had been a vegetable seller in the market.

She was fortunate that her entire family was able to remain together when they were relocated to Prey Veng to work as rice farmers. Suspicious that she and her family were from the educated class, the soldiers would often ask questions regarding their skill in farming or hard labor. God intervened by giving her rice-planting skills, which as a city girl she had never had. Another means by which God provided for their family was Em Sitan's father's background with the Ministry of Agriculture. This gave him some understanding of farming, and allowed them to secretly grow extra food for their family. In 1978 her family was eventually separated, and the Khmer Rouge arranged for her subsequent marriage.

After the fall of the Pol Pot regime, her family did not immediately declare their faith openly. Her father, knowing the then-current system of government, felt strongly that they should be cautious. He had witnessed the deportation of a World Council of Churches representative known for his evangelistic activity.

1989 was a year of new life, and the realization of eternal life, in Em Sithan's family. Her husband, Malk Wathna, become a Christian following study in Cuba, and her father, Yos Ann, went home to be with the Lord. He had been respected in both Christian and Buddhist circles. The arrangements for his funeral created a major dilemma. How would they perform the ceremony in a manner that reflected their Christian faith? They sought permission from the local authorities, only to be turned down. They did have a ceremony with many in attendance. Seang Ang performed the ceremony, and leaders such as Oung Rien and Sar Paulerk were present. After this Em Sithan began to wonder just how we as Christians should practice our faith? She was encouraged by a leader in the Catholic community to write the government for permission to actively express their faith.

She knew of a prominent official-related to her father by marriage-who had close ties with high-ranking government members. Because she and her family were not associated with any certain group, and because of the tremendous respect her father had in government circles, he agreed to help her submit a letter to the proper authorities. She then began to feel that "God had a plan for us." She met regularly with an official responsible for religious matters to discuss Christianity. He wanted to know what Christians
were and who was behind them (meaning outside foreign support). When he realized that she had no outside support and that she was a teacher in the Ministry of Education, he saw that it was possible to be a Christian and simultaneously maintain love for Cambodian people and culture. Permission was granted for Cambodian Christians to openly express their faith.

In 1990 the Olympic Church opened its doors. In the beginning, Em Sithan's family would simply read the Bible, sing songs, and listen to FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Cambodia). They started without any denominational or outside support in order to avoid being perceived as having been deceptive in their initial discussions with the government. Today the church has between forty and fifty members. It has no pastor. She calls herself a church leader. There are four elders who share the speaking duties each week. Bible study is taken seriously in this church. Em Sithan has a TEE degree, and the church has an active outreach program. The Olympic Church has sister churches in Kampong Cham, Kang Meas, Batheay, and Rokakong (Kandal Province).

From 1993-97 Em Sithan served on the translation committee with Arun Sok Nep for the new translation of the Cambodian Bible. Until March 2000 she had maintained a parttime position within the Ministry of Education. She now works full time for the Bible Society as their Executive Secretary. The mission of the Bible Society is the translation, printing, and distribution of the Word of God for everyone, everywhere in Cambodia-especially the non-Christian.

Em Sithan remains optimistic regarding the growth of Christianity here. She sees the church and growing both spiritually and materially. She would caution fellow believers to always remain faithful to Jesus, as He is their only Savior. Following Christianity for power and gain is wrong. She is saddened to see poor Cambodians giving offerings to build lavish pagodas, which seldom address their personal or spiritual needs. She feels strongly that tithes, which go into churches, should be used outside the church for God's work. The Olympic Church uses their offerings for outreach and missions in the provinces. She would also enjoy having more fellowship with other local Christians, but finds that
her days are full with the demands of her church and the Bible Society.

When discussing the evangelization of Cambodia, Em Sithan has an open mind, and welcomes foreign missionaries. She believes strategies should fit the situation as well as the country. Evangelism must be lived as well as spoken. It is important to share the need to love God and each other. What should not be done is to spend too much time arguing over denominations and translations. What is important is to obey God, fear and respect Him. He, alone is the judge; we should not judge each other.

In 1994, American evangelist Mike Evans brought a disastrous "crusade" to Cambodia. He made promises of healing to all who came, and eventually narrowly avoided having the stage overturned by the riotous stadium crowd. When Em Sithan saw the promotion of this event, she found it disconcerting that the evangelist's name was given more prominence than name of Jesus Christ. She made the decision that Olympic Church would not take part in this event. When co-workers at the Ministry of Education taunted her regarding the failed spectacle, she simply replied, "If you have questions regarding my Christianity, I would be happy to share with you. If, on the other hand, you wish to argue and criticize the events of the crusade, then I really have nothing to say." She believes as Christians study the word of God they will gain discernment regarding the various messages and messengers who come to Cambodia.

Em Sithan admits that there are many misconceptions regarding Cambodian Christians. A former co-worker at the Ministry of Education was surprised that she was a Christian; after all, she was an educated woman. She continued with the equally popular question, "So how much money do you receive for having a church in your home?" She replied, "If you really believe my faith is just about the money, why don't you open up your house and make some money as I do?"

Em Sithan was right to believe that God has a plan for her and Cambodia. He has shown her His faithfulness, protection, perfect timing, and provision. She has responded with a sincere desire to serve Him with humility, integrity, and a love for her country and its people.


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[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ Luke 22:15; 21:12; 20:46a; 19:41; 17:24; 14:24; 13:31, 17; etc.

[^2]:    ${ }^{3}$ Hebrews 7:24a, 25b.

[^3]:    ${ }^{4}$ See 1 Kings $8: 30,34,38-39,45,49$.
    ${ }^{5}$ Matt 8:25.

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[^8]:    ${ }^{1}$ See Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil 1:13-14; Col 4:10; Phm 1, 23.
    ${ }^{2}$ See references to Epaphras in Col 1:7; 4:12; and Phm 23; to Archippus in Col 4:17 and Phm 2; to Luke and Demas in Col 4:14 and Phm 24; and to .Mark and Aristarchus in Col 4:10 and Phm 24. Onesimus-the slave who is the subject of the letter to Philemon-is one of the bearers of both Colossians (4:9) and Philemon (12). These two letters were apparently written and sent at the same time.
    ${ }^{3}$ See 1:16-17; 2:9; 4:6-8, 13.

[^9]:    ${ }^{4}$ Paul employs the title "apostle" in the greetings of all his NT epistles except Philippians, Thessalonians, and Philemon. His tone is unapologetically strident throughout the letter to the Galatians, and he threatens to use authority in 2 Cor 13:10.
    ${ }^{5}$ In Col 4:17 Paul urges Archippus to "complete the work [he has] received in the Lord."

[^10]:    ${ }^{6} 1$ Thess 2:5.
    ${ }^{7}$ Paul typically begins his letters with thanks for the recipients, or at least includes commendation somewhere within them. He does this even for churches he has not met (Romans, Colossians) and those beset by problems ( 1 Corinthians). This pattern causes the letter to the Galatianswho were in danger of deserting the gospel for the law-to stand out in contrast.
    ${ }^{8}$ Literally "your love and faith which you have in the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints" ( $\sigma 0 \cup \tau \eta \nu \dot{\alpha} \alpha \gamma \alpha \pi \eta \nu \kappa \alpha \lambda \tau \eta \nu \pi i \sigma \tau \iota \nu, \eta \nu \varepsilon \chi \varepsilon \iota \varsigma$
     and other translations view this verse as a chiasm, or an $a b: b a$ arrangement. Thus the "love" is shown toward "the saints," and the "faith" is placed in "the Lord Jesus." Chiasm is a frequent literary device in the scriptures. In fact, the whole letter to Philemon may be viewed chiastically. See Appendix.
    ${ }^{9}$ Although $\varepsilon \pi i \gamma \nu \omega \sigma_{l} \varsigma$ and $\varepsilon \pi i \gamma \imath \nu \omega \sigma \kappa \omega$ are sometimes synonymous with $\gamma \nu \omega \bar{\omega} t \varsigma$ and $\gamma \iota \nu \omega \sigma \kappa \omega$, the force of the root is on other occasions strengthened by the addition of the preposition $\varepsilon \pi^{\prime}$. In such cases, the verb signifies know exactly, completely, through and through [BAG] or to possess more or less definite information about, possibly with a degree of thoroughness or competence - 'to know about, to know definitely about' [Louw-Nida]. Such is the force here. Certainly Philemon knows something of the good things we have in Christ; Paul prays that he enjoy a fuller, deeper grasp of these.

[^11]:    ${ }^{10}$ The NRSV, for example, preserves this sequence by translating, "I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ." The perceiving precedes and is the basis for the effectiveness of witness.
    "See, e.g., Col 1:9-12.

[^12]:    ${ }^{12}$ The word is kolv$\omega v$ bs, "companion, partner, sharer; one who participates with another in some enterprise or matter of joint concern." The idea of a common enterprise in which people jointly invest and participate, and which lies at the root of this word and its cognates, goes far beyond the purely social connotation of "fellowship" ( $\kappa 0 \imath v \omega v^{\prime} \alpha$ ) which is often found in English. Paul and Philemon were partners in believing and promoting the gospel of Christ.

[^13]:    ${ }^{13}{ }^{3} v \alpha i \mu \eta \nu$ is a $2^{\text {nd }}$ aorist middle optative form from the verb ov'iv $\eta \mu$ l, meaning in the middle voice to be the recipient of help or favor, to have profit or advantage, derive benefit, have enjoyment or delight. The optative mood was often used to express a wish or prayer.
    ${ }^{14}$ Paul perhaps hoped that Philemon would emancipate Onesimus, but never openly asked him to do that.
    ${ }^{15}$ Ephesus was about 160 km . west-northwest of Colossae in the Roman province of Asia.
    ${ }^{16}$ Ignatius to the Ephesians, ch. 1.

[^14]:    ${ }^{17} \mathrm{Col} 1: 7$; 4:12-13.
    ${ }^{18}$ Acts 15:36-41.
    ${ }^{19}$ Acts 19:28-29; 20:4; 27:2.
    ${ }^{20} 2$ Tim 4:10.

[^15]:    ${ }^{21}$ Mark 10:45, often considered to be the theme verse for this gospel. The word ransom ( $\lambda$ út $\rho \circ \mathrm{v}$ ) means price or means by which

[^16]:    ${ }^{23}$ See, e.g., Eph 4:32; 5:22, 25.

[^17]:    ${ }^{24}$ E.g., Mk 14:24; Jn 10:11, 15, 50-52; 15:13; 18:14; Rom 5:6-8;

[^18]:    ${ }^{25}$ E.g., Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim 6:1-2; Tit 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18. If a slave comes to Christ he is not to make his primary aspiration escape from slavery, but rather serve Christ where he is (1 Cor 7:21-23). One reason for this is that slaves and free are equal in Christ ( 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).

[^19]:    ${ }^{26}$ Adapted from E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated (London: Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 379.

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[^25]:     Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated (London: Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898; reprinted., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 379.

[^26]:    ${ }^{1}$ For the sake of convenience and euphony, in this article masculine pronouns used for people in general refer to women as well as men.

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[^29]:    ${ }^{\text {'T }}$ T. S. Soltau, Missions at the Crossroads (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 20.
    ${ }^{2}$ Article in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, ed. R. D. Winter and S. C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 497.

[^30]:    ${ }^{3}$ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture-A Challenge for Christian Mission, $2^{\text {nd }}$ ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1.

[^31]:    ${ }^{4}$ Paul G. Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 55.
    ${ }^{5}$ Ibid.
    ${ }^{6}$ Phil 1:18.

[^32]:    ${ }^{7}$ L. J. Luzbetak, The Church and Cultures, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1988), 72.
    ${ }^{8}$ In an article published in C. H. Kraft and T. N. Wisley, eds., Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979).

[^33]:    ${ }^{10}$ M. Myers, Christianity Confronts Culture (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 95.

[^34]:    "In 1955 the Cambodian Roman Catholic Church had 120,000 members. But during the Indochinese independence process, France gave to Vietnam the Cochin China, which used to be Khmer provinces and where the majority of Cambodian Catholics live. This explains one of the reasons why modern Cambodia counts only a few hundred Catholics.

[^35]:    ${ }^{12}$ Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture, 134.
    ${ }^{13} 1$ Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9.

[^36]:    ${ }^{1}$ T. S. Soltau, Missions at the crossraods (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 20.
    ${ }^{2}$ Article in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, ed. R.D. Winter and S. C. Hawthrone (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 497

[^37]:    ${ }^{3}$ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture-A challenge for Christian Mission (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1
    ${ }^{4}$ P. G. Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 55.

[^38]:    ${ }^{5}$ Ibid.

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[^39]:    ${ }^{7}$ L. Luzbetak, the Church and Cultures, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1988),72

[^40]:    ${ }^{8}$ In an article published in C. H. Kraft and T. N. Wisley. eds., Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979).
    ${ }^{9}$ In an article published in Kraft and Wisley, Readings.

[^41]:    ${ }^{10}$ M. Mayers, Christianity Confronts Culture (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 95.

[^42]:    
    
    
    
    

[^43]:    ${ }^{12}$ Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture. 134

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