

# Editorial Reflections

## An Arresting Comparison

Eugene Peterson's translation of the Bible, *The Message*, is undoubtedly the freest and most uninhibited translation widely used today. It is arresting, charming, delightful, but his brief introductory comments are amazingly insightful. His introduction to the OT prophets caught my attention because it reminded me of our own less-eloquent description of the mission frontiers to which this journal is dedicated. See for yourself:

Eugene Peterson: We don't need to read many pages into the Prophets before realizing that there was nothing easygoing about them. Prophets were not popular figures. They never achieved celebrity status. They were decidedly uncongenial to the temperaments and dispositions of the people with whom they lived. And the centuries have not mellowed them. It's understandable that we should have a difficult time coming to terms with them. They aren't particularly sensitive to our feelings. They have very modest "relationship skills," as we would say. We like leaders, especially religious leaders, with a touch of glamour, leaders who look good on posters and on television.

The hard rock reality is that prophets don't fit into our way of life.

For a people who are accustomed to "fitting God" into their lives, or, as we like to say, "making room for God," the prophets are hard to take and easy to dismiss. The God of whom the prophets speak is far too large to fit into our lives. If we want anything to do with God, we have to fit into Him.

The prophets are not "reasonable." Accommodating themselves to what makes sense to us. They are not diplomatic, tactfully negotiating an agreement that allows us a "say" in the outcome. What they do is haul us unceremoniously into a reality far too large to be accounted for by our explanations and expectations. They plunge us into mystery, immense and staggering.

Their words and visions penetrate the illusions with which we cocoon ourselves from reality. We humans have an enormous capacity for denial and for self-deceit. We incapacitate ourselves from dealing with the consequences of sin, for facing judgment, for embracing truth. Then the prophets step in and help us to first recognize and then enter the new life God has for us, the life that hope in God opens up.

Now compare that to our own *IJFM* statement about the frontiers of mission that we are trying to cross today:

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit area and ideas and insights

related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18)."

## An Arresting Event

The American Society of Missiology (ASM) has existed since 1972. The Asian Society of Missiology (ASM) was founded at Moscow, Russia, in 2003 at the 8<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention of the Asia Missions Association (itself founded in 1975). Three years later, the 9<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention was held in Ephesus, Turkey. But the "First International Conference" of the Asia Society of Missiology took place in October 2007, in Bangkok, Thailand.

The papers presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Triennial are now available in a beautiful book, *New Global Partnership for World Mission*, published by the Institute for Asian Mission. The 9<sup>th</sup> is a similar book, *Tracing the Apostolic Way of Mission*, both edited by Timothy Park, Ph.D., Director of the Institute for Asian Mission, and a professor at Fuller Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies. He is also President of the Asian Society of Missiology.

A third book, collecting the papers presented at the Bangkok meeting, will soon be available, likely entitled with the theme of the conference, "Asian Mission: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." We will report on this book when it becomes available.

I was asked to give the closing address at the Bangkok conference. Two others from the West gave responses to various papers: Jonathan Bonk, of the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut, and Paul Pierson of the Fuller School of Intercultural studies. But every other participant was Asian, and of the 60-some who attended, I counted only four without a doctorate.

There is not space here even to list the plenary addresses (always followed by a respondent and then a forum of discussion). Suffice it to say that this was a very keen and rich time. There was a very generous attitude toward earlier Western missions, despite warranted critique. My own paper was a listing of twelve Western errors and deficiencies. Those giving papers (as well as those listening) did not merely have PhDs, they had penetrating insights. Surely global missiology today is a two-way street!

## A Depressing Television Special

The depressing PBS program to which I am referring was advertised as follows: Documentary Explores Key Case on Intelligent Design. This two-hour PBS special entitled "Judgment Day: Intelligent Design on Trial" featured slanted re-creations of the 2005 Dover, PA court case.

The special was masterfully done but ominously and deceptively biased. For example, it asks star witness Lehigh University molecular biologist and intelligent design advo-

cate Michael Behe (or rather a look-alike actor representing Behe) “Are you saying astrology is a scientific theory?” Behe, in the “documentary,” simply says “Yes.” However, after consulting the actual transcript I found that he did not simply say “Yes” but *in effect* was saying, “Yes, in its day, astrology was *considered* a scientific theory,” which is totally different.

One obvious omission from the PBS special was the lack of reference to Behe’s ponderous, very technical new book entitled *The Edge of Evolution*, which came out months before the documentary (see p. 223).

The most surprising thing to me was the fact that the trial intended to prove two things, one of which was the existence of *religious motivation* on the part of those who promoted Intelligent Design (ID). If you eliminated religious motivation as inimical to science the whole history of science would collapse.

Another thing was the insistence that the concept of ID could be negated by a single book claiming that ID promotes the belief in “abrupt” changes in the history of life when in fact, Behe again and again denied that the speed of change has anything to do with the perception of design. Yet the video went on and on about the increased numbers of findings of long missing “missing links.” In fact, the very *absence* of “missing links” in the history of the evolution of the American automobile does not remotely prove a random process of formation but quite obviously the *presence* of intelligent designers. Bring on the “missing links;” the more the better for ID.

Aside from all of the rabbit trails in the presentation I have to admit that as much as I am convinced that there is obvious evidence of design in nature, if we are not careful we are merely proving that God is the author all of predatory violence, suffering and pain in both the animal and human worlds. ID people are obviously afraid of ridicule if they discern *evil* design.

### *Korean Mission Leaders Wrestle with Frontier Mission Issues, Challenges*

Earlier this month (November 1–3), about 150 mostly Korean participants gathered some two hours from Seoul on Ganghwa Island. The beautiful venue, a conference center named Jesus Town, is built into the side of a mountain. Much like two years ago (see *IJFM* 22:4 and 23:1 for more), the 7th International Korean Missions Forum was co-sponsored this year by the Council of Churches of Korea, the Korea World Mission Association (the Korean equivalent of the former IFMA/EFMA), the International Society for Frontier Missiology/Korean Society for Frontier Missiology, the *Korean Journal of Frontier Missions* and our own *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the great Pyongyang revival, a reminder of the amazing growth both



2007 ISFM President Chong Kim addresses Korean Leaders

of the Korean Church (Christians now make up some 30% of the population) and the Korean mission movement, which now sends more workers outside its borders than any other country, except the United States (over 16,000 as of February 2007). The meetings took place in the wake of the recent Afghanistan crisis, during which the Taliban took 23 short-term workers hostage, killing two before the ordeal ended. That crisis has raised new challenges for the Korean movement, which they are working and praying through. We’re sure our brothers and sisters will appreciate your prayers.

Participants heard presentations and reports from a number of distinguished Korean leaders, including KWMA president Dr. Sung Sam Kang and KWMA executive director Rev. Paul Han. We hope you’ll get to hear from these brothers in greater depth in the pages of *IJFM* sometime next year.

One highlight of the conference was the dedication of the Korean translation of *Appropriate Christianity*, an excellent 28 chapter book with contributions from 18 authors. Long-time Fuller Seminary professor and missionary anthropologist Charles Kraft, who edited the book and contributed several chapters, lectured on the contextualization of allegiance in three dimensions: Relationship (to God, others, self), Truth/Knowledge and Spiritual Power. (Readers interested in the English edition can order this excellent William Carey Library book at [www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org) or the Korean edition from [www.lifebook.co.kr](http://www.lifebook.co.kr)).

Other speakers included veteran missionary Brian Strom and Chong Kim, 2007 International Society for Frontier Missiology president and representative of the “Korean diaspora.” In his talks, Strom focused on the Kingdom of God and Insider Movements, while Kim shared his perspective on some of the challenges facing the Korean mission movement. The papers by Strom and Kim will soon appear in both Korean and English in the *Korean Journal of Frontier Missions*, vol. 13, 11/12, 2007. (Look for those papers to appear at [www.kjfmmission.com](http://www.kjfmmission.com).)

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