



“Correct Me If I’m Wrong”
*The quarterly bulletin of the Global
Community of Mission Information Workers*
Volume 9, Number 3, July 2019

Pentecostal Research
by Teresa Chai, PhD
Academic Dean
Asia Pacific Theological Seminary

As the Academic Dean and member of the Post-Graduate Committee, I have just been a part of three very different dissertation defenses by Doctor of Ministry and PhD candidates. They represent the diversity of



topics being studied by emerging Pentecostal scholars.

The first one perhaps surprised and delighted me the most, touched on common ground that Christians of different traditions have, which is evangelism. This is in a context where both Pentecostals and Methodist are the dominant Christian groups of a particular country. The question posed by the author is “how can the Pentecostals and Methodists work together in evangelizing their country?” He pointed out that the demarcation between the two groups is so sharp that one is seen as the “old religion” and the other as the “new religion”. At the end it would seem like each was so focused on issues between them that they were not evangelizing those who have not heard the gospel at all. The author (a Pentecostal himself) advocated that the Pentecostals should extend an olive branch as a sign of peace to the Methodists. He recommended a “collaborative” approach rather than a competitive one. This dissertation is important to me as an ecumenist and I want to see a spiritual unity forged between Pentecostals and those of other Christian traditions.

The second dissertation is about non-formal Christian Education among the Assemblies of God of a certain Mekong Delta country. Christian Education has not been a strength of Pentecostals thus this study bears great expediency for the movement. Extensive research was done by literature reviews on the subject but also surveys and case studies of specific programs in existing churches. The author presents four case studies of churches in two different socio-economic settings of an urban city and a rural province. These educational settings in each church are thoroughly described, explored and analyzed using a grid of questions asking: What are the approaches employed and why? Where did they originate? What about the teachers? What is their contribution to the church? How does the non-formal compare with the formal? How does it fit into the socio-economic situation? From his study he finds four distinct approaches: collective responsibility, holistic community outreach, building a culture of grace and church in action through life groups.

There are good recommendations from the above dissertation that can be applied in different settings:

1. Christian Education can be done even without a formal structure.
2. Serve the community by teaching good moral and practical lessons.
3. Teachers are the key to a successful Christian Education and thus those selected should be people of good Christian character.
4. Teacher development should be of utmost importance.
5. Training should be done for all teachers in the church regardless of what age group they are teaching.
6. The curriculum should fit the context.
7. Youth should be mobilized to teach children.
8. Periodically evaluate and analyze the dynamic educational context.

The third dissertation is a research on “Followership” among Chinese Pentecostals in three countries in South East Asia. This is an enigma of a research topic for a Pentecostal because it represents “the other side of the coin” where in the Pentecostal tradition it has been more the Senior Pastor or Lead Minister in focus. Yet in actuality it is the second tier of leadership that supports any main

leader in the organizational structure. On the second level of leadership if they do not understand their roles, skills, struggles and challenges they will not grow and prepare for when they may be called to the top position of leadership. Indeed, not everyone can be the main leader. Pentecostals who have lauded the key leader need to concentrate of the position of the subordinate leaders and this research contributes important insights into this.

By no means do these dissertations cover every aspect of Pentecostal research but they do represent the quality and intensity of Pentecostal scholarship in the 21st century. There are major contributions that Pentecostals want to make to Global Christianity from their studies on different issues that will enrich the Body of Christ.



Researchers, Stay Alert

By Les Hirst

For those who do research, I would like to suggest ways to overcome seductive temptations we all face along the way. Especially for new researchers, these enticements often seem reasonable and, in pragmatic terms, almost necessary. However, as we begin our research we need to be equipped to both discover reliable findings from our research and make well-informed decisions for ministry. Think with me about three ways of constructively dealing with temptations we face.

Allow research findings to make their point, not simply to prove my point – We do research to harness useful information. We have a hunch, call it a theory or a hypothesis, or a plausible explanation of a personal experience. We then decide to create a research project to see how our idea matches with reality. If we have a strong sense that we know what the results will be at the beginning of the research project, it is easy to, even unwittingly, manipulate the project to prove our point. If the underlying purpose of the research is to prove an idea or theory, it will be detected by those who read the research. This could put the findings in doubt. The way to resist that subtle temptation is, from the start, to ask ourselves the question, “Can I distance myself from my desire to prove a point, and let the research findings lead where they may?” Finding someone to help with objectivity can also help to ensure that genuinely useful and instructive information can be gathered.

Be self-aware and declare biases about the research plan and outcomes – We all have biases! This is assumed and acceptable. What is important is that biases that are related to our research are clearly outlined in the research report. Doing so preserves the integrity of the research. Questions that reveal biases include: Who paid for the research? Am I a part of the organization that I am researching? Is this “marketing” research? Since readers of research reports know that researchers have biases, they will respect a particular researcher all the more for enabling them to read any research report with their eyes wide open. Being self-aware and declaring biases is highly important and part of integrity in research.

Drawing conclusions that the results justify – It is easy unwittingly to overstate findings by using phrases like, “the majority believe” or “almost none of the participants.” Clearly and precisely stating any numbers involved conveys accuracy. We can also be tempted to use strong words to describe the results of our research, for example “significant,” “valid,” and “reliable.” Such terms can have very precise meanings in reporting research that may not match one’s impression of research findings, for instance the meaning of “significant” in reference to “statistical significance.” Researchers reporting in languages other than their own mother tongue need to be particularly vigilant in this area, including consulting with native speakers. We need to be committed to telling the simple, hard truth about what our research discovers, even if the results do not seem especially exciting. As God’s servants in conducting research, we can be confident that he honors truthful reports of justifiable results.

In my experience, if you have not yet encountered the temptations mentioned above, you will at some point in your journey as a researcher. Being aware of these common problems, guarding against them, and being equipped to allow the research findings to make their justifiable points by knowing and declaring our biases will help us immensely. Research is a quest for truth and is, as such, a sacred task. May God help us to discover uncompromising findings from our research and make well-informed decisions.

Les and Priscilla have served as missionaries and served missionaries for



over 40 years. Beginning as a young family with two boys in northwest Argentina, they later moved into leadership development and designed a regional church-based training program as an extension of the local seminary. Later, in Caracas, Venezuela, they led a church-planting team. Returning to the US for medical reasons, Les directed and taught in the cross-cultural department of a small Bible College. Les and Priscilla have served in a variety of roles and short-term projects in several parts of the world with various organizations including WorldVenture, ReachBeyond, TEAM, Paraclete, Compassion, and Global Mapping International. Les and Priscilla are graduates of Denver Seminary and Les has his Ph.D. from Trinity International University.

Wanted!

The newly established Bethany Research Institute (BRI) is recruiting for a researcher, in full-time or part-time capacity, as a member of its global virtual team.

BRI's mission is to serve the global frontier mission movement by conducting world-class research around movements, missionary competence and missionary training.

BRI is part of Bethany Global University in Minneapolis (USA) and as such under the umbrella of the ministry Bethany International. For more on the BRI, check out www.bethanygu.edu/research

If you are interested, or know someone who might be, write to BRI's Associate Director Dr. Emanuel Prinz at emanuel.prinz@bethanygu.edu for a job posting or with your application.

PROLADES News

from Clifton Holland

The PROLADES Encyclopedia of Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean is available at: <http://www.prolades.com/encyclopedia/encyclopedia-main-index.htm>. The English version of the chapter "Religion in Brazil" (298 pp. 1st edition) is newly available on our website. The chapter "Religion in Mexico" (146 pp. 2nd edition) is now being reviewed by colleagues in Mexico before being published on the Internet. The Portuguese and Spanish versions of "Religion in Brazil" are in the final stages of being edited. "Religion in Guatemala" is being updated.

Our search engine for the RITA (Religion-In-The-Americas) Database has been off-line for some time now due to problems on our new hosting service. Those problems are being resolved and we hope to have it operational again in a few weeks. We are currently updating this database of all known religious denominations in Latin America and the Caribbean. We hope the updates will be online in late October.

Who's Who in Missions Information

Special Profile: Martin Osei-Buabeng

1. [CMIW] Please tell us about yourself and your family.

[MO] Yes, I'm Martin Osei-Buabeng, an Ashani by tribe, and I live mostly in Kumasi. I have five children with my wife, three girls and two boys. Thank God all but our youngest daughter, who is still at Uni at Cape Coast, have finished University. By denomination I'm a Presbyterian. I've been involved in missions work since 1983, when I joined the Ghana Evangelism Committee.



2. [CMIW] What is your current ministry? [MO] Because I'm a Presbyterian, I take care of one of the churches. Furthermore, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in my region has given me roles as a strategist, researcher, and church planter. I am also involved with a holistic ministry called Harvest Time International, whose vision is transforming the individual with the gospel, transforming the society, and then transforming the environment. In all these areas, Harvest Time envisions people being self-sustaining instead of relying on outside financial support. Since 2014 I have been involved in a ministry to children of Muslim immigrants from northern Ghana who have come to southern Ghana for work and to sell their goods, for example yams. We have about 80 children and we reach them every Sunday, 4 pm to 6 pm, in a Good News Club that meets in the slums.

3. [CMIW] What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction? [MO] Along with the ministries just described, I would say the research since 1983 with the Ghana Evangelism Committee. Ross Campbell was our founding director in Ghana. At that point, the information that we had from the whole country was that the population was 60% Christian.

But we saw that that was not really reflected in the lives of the people. So we said, okay, let's do a survey to find out if this is true. The vision that brought Ross Campbell to Ghana from God was that we should plant the Church in the South for the work in the North. So at that time we said, okay, most of the people in the North are there, but the churches in the North are not actually impacting the lives of the people in the North. However, there are so many tribes that have not been reached with the gospel, so there's a need for a survey. The staff were about 12 in number. I think, only three of the staff had vehicles; all the rest had motorbikes, and that's how we moved around the whole nation to gather information from all churches, district by district in one region, then we would move on to the next region until we were finished with the whole country. And then we sat down, put the data together, we did analysis, and eventually we came out with our report. And then there was a consultation. This was done in 1987 and 1988. And in '89 there was a national consultation, and thank God, Ross Campbell has the favor of all the churches in Ghana, so he was able to bring almost all of them together: Charismatics, Pentecostals, Orthodox, Catholics, and many branches of the West - they all came together. And then we told them our findings to give them a vision to reach out to all these communities, including the northern communities. A mandate was given to the Ghana Evangelism Committee that every five years we should conduct another survey, which we did in 1991 and then '92, and in 1993 the report was given to the Church. And again we saw that the rate at which the churches were growing was only by 1% after five years, in terms of Christian commitment. And in terms of church planting, many communities were there without churches. In 2008, Ross suggested me as his successor, and he left Ghana. Ever since we go into the North, sometimes with my own resources, with nobody supporting us, to gather the information. We continue with semi-annual consultations, so that the churches in the South hear what we're saying: they must be motivated to go up there in the North to help with the work. I have my own organization Harvest Time International, so we put our heads together, we brought together the churches in the region. Our passion is for the unreached communities or groups in the North - that we can both identify them and prepare their hearts for the gospel for the churches in the South to serve them in mission. And I believe that, as we keep on praying and then sharing of ideas with the heads of churches, we can make an impact. The challenge in the North is threefold. One is that most of the people are animistic believers. The other is that they are traditional believers. And the third one is Islam.

4. [CMIW] What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry? [MO] Over the next ten years, my mission first of all is to at least upgrade myself in research. So I'm planning to study again. And then again, my passion is that I should continue with cooperation with churches, because no one in mission can finish the job alone. So from here I want to share with the leadership in Ghana. We've decided to have a consultation every year in the South, and then another one in the North. So over the next ten years, we're going to pursue this exercise. So I'm going to train many people to share our vision, so that this research will not die down. Also, like Joshua and Caleb, research people must not sit back and keep their reports to themselves but be involved in their field work, preaching the gospel.

5. [CMIW] Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community? [MO] If there's a need outside Ghana, I'm ready to do my part to meet that need. For now, however, I believe God wants me to continue on this mission of research and ministry in Ghana. I believe that we have to finish our Jerusalem before we go to Judea. Then, in whatever way God blesses us here in Ghana, I want to share that with the rest of the world.

Information from the Word

James 3:1 *"My friends, we should not all try to become teachers. In fact, teachers will be judged more strictly than others."* (CEV) Do I want my research results to make a difference? Then I will necessarily become a "teacher" to my audience, and there is all the more reason to fear the temptations in Les' article. Check! Have I adjusted my results to prove a point? Have I ignored my personal biases? Have I chosen language carelessly? These things skew an audience's understanding. A stricter judgment awaits me if I lead other people astray.

Final Details:

- With the help of God this bulletin is now produced quarterly in English, Portuguese and Spanish
- The Editorial Team comprises Stephanie Kraft, Chris Maynard, Nelson Jennings, Rodrigo Tinoco, Duane Frasier and Larry Kraft.
- Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to us at info@globalcmiw.org.
- Back issues can be found at: www.globalcmiw.org