

DEFINING THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF INDIGENIZATION: A ROADMAP
FOR PARACHURCH MISSION AGENCIES SERVING THE BAHAMAS

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ABSTRACT

Defining the Essential Components of Indigenization: A Roadmap for Parachurch Mission Agencies Serving in the Bahamas

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As a missionary who has served seven years in the Bahamas, a disturbing trend among mission agencies that focus upon youth ministry has been identified. Among agencies working in the Bahamas the desire to establish lasting indigenous youth ministries is a common objective. However, in spite of significant effort, adequate funding, and a variety of creative approaches, little indigenization has been achieved. For this reason, this thesis explores the following question: For North American parachurch mission agencies serving within the Bahamas, what is the most effective missiological approach? This thesis addresses this question by exploring the essential components necessary for effective indigenization among parachurch youth ministries.

To Kelly: My Loving Wife, Faithful Friend, and Partner in Ministry.
For Your Steadfast Support and Encouragement

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INTRODUCTION

Christian missions have made great strides over the years in both missiological theory and practice. The successes and failures of the past have taught the Church much about how it should proceed if the Great Commission is to be fulfilled. Studies in Christian missionary activity have revealed that indigenization is foundational to the development of lasting responsible overseas ministries.¹ This realization has resulted in almost two centuries of ongoing dialogue and discussion. In spite of this missiological interest, indigenization has proven to be an elusive goal.²

Indigenization: Two Characteristics

The term “indigenous” has its roots in Biology, referring to native plants or species.³ For example, a cactus is indigenous to arid climates, while polar bears are indigenous to the Arctic. In missions, indigenization describes the process of planting ministries that “fit naturally into their environment.”⁴ An indigenous missiology avoids planting ministries that

¹ Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 202.

² Doug McConnell, Michael Pocock, and Gailyn Van Rheenen, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 328.

³ Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 327.

are out of place and are simply replicas of their Western counterparts.¹ Just as a plant needs to have certain natural characteristics to be called a flower, a ministry needs certain native characteristics to be deemed indigenous. The three-self formula and contextualization are important characteristics of an indigenized ministry.² More than just providing a framework for solid missionary activity, these concepts serve as benchmarks for measuring the level of indigenization that exists within a ministry.

A three-self ministry is a ministry that is self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Self-governance is a call to empowerment, encouraging national leaders to become significant players in their ministry's decision making processes.³ Self-funding challenges national leaders to strive for financial independence in order to ensure long-term financial stability.⁴ Finally, self-propagation encourages nationals to become proficient in evangelizing within their own culture.⁵

The three-self formula was first conceived in the mid-1800 by missiologists Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson.⁶ At the height of the nondenominational mission society movement of the 1800's a shift took place away from *conversio gentilium*- the conversion of individuals, toward *plantatio ecclesiae*- church planting.⁷ In spite of the numerical success of this movement an unhealthy dependency had developed between Western mission agencies

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 328.

³ Ibid., 15.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Van Rheenen, 182.

⁶ Ibid., 185.

⁷ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryville, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 331.

and the native churches they had begun.⁸ Further exasperating the dilemma was the false notion that Christianization was integrally connected to civilization.⁹ As a result, mission agencies had become blind to their own ethnocentrism viewing foreign ministries as inferior to those in the West.¹⁰ Rather than viewing these ministries as equals, younger overseas ministries were perceived as “children not yet come of age” in need of “benevolent control and guidance” from their Western counterparts.¹¹ To combat this decidedly unbiblical ideology Anderson and Venn concluded that “the primary goal of all Western missionaries should be the development of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches of Christ.”¹²

In an evaluation of the three-self formula Verkuyl makes the following observations.¹³ First, unlike some missiological trends the influence of the three-self formula has been long lasting. Second, countless missionaries have come under the sway of the three-self methodology. These include such well know missiologists as Donald McGovern in India, Dr. Harry Boer in Nigeria and Hendrik Kramer.¹⁴ More than having a pervasive influence upon missionary thinking the three-self formula has brought about a mighty transformation in mission policy and practice. As a result, indigenous peoples have been empowered and

⁸ Van Rheezen, 183.

⁹ Bosch, 298.

¹⁰ Ibid., 295.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 64; quoted in Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 2.

¹³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁴ MacDonald, 5.

young ministries have been given a greater voice in administrative affairs and decision making processes.¹⁵ Over the years the three-self formula has revolutionized missiological thinking and has become almost synonymous with indigenization.¹⁶

Since the three-self formula's introduction into missiological thinking, critics have noted that the method contains some inherent weaknesses and limitations.¹⁷ Some fear that the formula places unrealistic expectations upon young ministries. According to Smalley, "Forcing the 'three selfs' on other people may at times make it impossible for a truly indigenous pattern to develop."¹⁸ Others note that the formula has a tendency toward over-emphasizing independence, sometimes neglecting the interdependence of all ministries that exist within the one Body of Christ.¹⁹ McConnell states, "The idea [is] unconsciously framed by the perspective of Western individualism rather than by the more biblical perspective of Christ-centered interdependence".²⁰

Missiological thinkers like Allan Tippet argue that the formula is not broad enough.²¹ He feels that a responsible ministry has more than three-selfs, contending that self-image, self-function, self-giving, and self-theologizing should also be incorporated into the

¹⁵ Verkuyl, 65.

¹⁶ Van Rheenen, 184.

¹⁷ MacDonald, 5.

¹⁸ William Smalley, Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church, *Readings in Missionary Anthropology II* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978), 336; quoted in Harry MacDonald, "Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 6.

¹⁹ Van Rheenen, 183.

²⁰ McConnell, 328.

²¹ Ibid.

indigenization equation.²² Finally, there is the pragmatic problem of Western mission agencies not fully appreciating the challenges of financing an overseas ministry in light of world economic conditions.²³ Because of these weaknesses and limitations, some have rightly noted that it is entirely possible to be a three-self ministry and still not be indigenous.²⁴

To address this problem contemporary missiology now includes a cultural-critical emphasis when defining indigenization.²⁵ The pertinence of this emphasis in modern missionary activity is highlighted in the following statement, as proposed by Tippett, “The greatest methodological issue faced by the Christian mission in our day is how to carry out the Great Commission in a multi-cultural world, with a gospel that is both truly Christian in context and culturally significant in form.”²⁶ Properly employing a cultural-critical approach to missions elevates the importance of the context in which the gospel is being presented without sacrificing the message itself.

Contextualization is the term most commonly employed when this emphasis is applied and is the second benchmark used to measure the level of indigenization that has occurred within a ministry.²⁷ McConnell describes contextualization as follows: “The core

²² Ibid.

²³ Van Rheezen, 184.

²⁴ MacDonald, 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Charles R. Tabor and Yamamori Tatsumao, ed, *Christopaganism and Indigenous Christianity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1975), 116; quoted in Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 6.

²⁷ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 132.

idea is that of taking the gospel to a new context and finding appropriate ways to communicate it so that it is understandable to the people in that context.”²⁸ In some circles, instead of using the term contextualization, other similar terms that vary slightly in emphasis and definition are preferred. A few of the most common alternatives include: accommodation, adaptation, and inculturation.²⁹ Depending on the missiologist the use of either of these terms can be substantiated; all wrestle in their own way with the significant relationship between the Christian faith and the many diverse and ever-changing cultures of the world. However, for the purposes of this paper contextualization is the term that will be used to express the cultural-critical emphasis that is necessary for effective indigenization.

Contextualization can happen in most every aspect of a ministry, from the doctrinal or philosophical dimension to the social or organizational dimension.³⁰ Theology is one area of missions that has benefited greatly from a contextual approach. Frame defines theology as, “The application of God’s Word by persons to all areas of life.”³¹ Without a contextualized theology the Word is not applied to life and dead orthodoxy will typically be the result. Because each culture is unique the Word of God needs to be applied uniquely in every situation. For example, in a fatalistic culture, when teaching about God’s sovereignty, missionaries must be careful not to deny man’s free will.³² A contextualized approach to theology will make this kind of distinction a priority.

²⁸ McConnell, 15.

²⁹ Ibid., 325-329.

³⁰ Ibid., 339.

³¹ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987), 76.

³² McConnell, 345.

Historically, a good example of theological contextualization can be found in the missiology of Count Zinzendorf, founder of the Moravian movement. Taylor notes, “Zinzendorf advised his missionaries in Greenland not to speak of Christ as sacrifice, since the shamanism knew no such concepts. Zinzendorf also is reputed to have said, ‘If the greatest need of the heathen is a needle, then we should call our savior a needle.’”³³ In these ways, without compromising his message, Zinzendorf contextualized the way in which he presented the gospel so that it could be more easily understood and readily accepted within the culture that he was ministering.

As stated by MacDonald, “Contextualization refers to more than just theology; it also includes developing church life and ministries that are biblically faithful and culturally appropriate.”³⁴ A missionary’s method of ministry is another area that requires a significant amount of contextualization. As described by Tippet, indigenization is when “people of a community think of the Lord as their own, not a foreign Christ; when they do things as unto the Lord meeting the cultural needs around them, worshipping in patterns they understand; when their congregations function in a body, which is structurally indigenous; then we have an indigenous church.”³⁵ For this type of indigenization to occur the missiological approach to ministry must fit the culture.

As an example, McConnell notes that when communicating the gospel cross-culturally it is important to understand how the receiving culture “thinks about the world,

³³ William Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2000), 505.

³⁴ MacDonald, 15.

³⁵ Allan Tippet, “Indigenization,” *Practical Anthropology*, January-February (1969): 136; quoted in Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 27.

itself, its laws and its values.”³⁶ Using a systematic approach to teaching theology in a culture that communicates using narratives and proverbs will have limited success. A culture that is more formal when approaching religion will be skeptical of a ministry approach that is more casual and relational. Worship is another important area of ministry that is in need of contextualization. An overview of the Scriptures reveals that an exceptionally high number of people experienced the presence of God in the context of worship. Using appropriate cultural expressions in worship such as native rhythms, instruments, and language can significantly enhance the worship experience. In these ways contextualization takes into consideration the various accepted norms and attitudes of a receiving culture.

Contextualization is a key ingredient in the indigenization process. Without contextualization the indigenization of a ministry will suffer. Ultimately, contextualization is a work of God achieved through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Dyrness notes that the type of adaptation necessary to effectively contextualize a ministry only takes place when leadership is motivated and energized by the Holy Spirit.³⁷ With the help of God ministries all over the world are being contextualized; the result is an increase in effectiveness in the many spheres of missionary activity that are ministering throughout the world.

As can be seen, the three-self formula and contextualization are complimentary. Rather than replace the three-self formula, contextualization builds on it. Contextualization enlarges the scope of the “three-selves” to be more than just “independent variables” of diagnostic criteria for indigenization.³⁸ Contextualization takes into consideration cultural

³⁶ McConnell, 343.

³⁷ William Dyrness and James Engle, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press 2000), 148.

³⁸ Charles H. Kraft., “Equivalence Churches,” *Missiology: An International Review*, January (1973): 39; quoted in Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 6-7.

variables and how they influence the development of a ministry.³⁹ Together, the three-self formula and contextualization provide a useful criterion for measuring the extent to which a ministry has been indigenized.

Therefore, indigenization is properly formulated in the following equation:

$$\text{Three-Self} + \text{Contextualization} = \text{Indigenization.}$$

Employing this two-prong approach helps ensure that the indigenization of a ministry is more than just a “formal correspondence” that “models itself slavishly after the foreign church that founded it.”⁴⁰ When taken together these two approaches help catalyze a new society that captures the principles of effective ministry without comprising the message of the gospel.⁴¹

Ultimately, an indigenous ministry is a responsible ministry that can grow to maturity in Christ and walk with dignity alongside those who founded it.⁴² The indigenous ministry is responsible to the point where “equality is established and a mutual relationship that glorifies God takes place.”⁴³ Responsible ministries “reflect the attributes of God in appropriate ways within their cultural contexts.”⁴⁴ Although indigenization does not guarantee the success of a ministry, the vast majority of missiologists contend that there is little chance of long-term responsible ministry development without it.

³⁹ MacDonald, 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Van Rheezen, 189.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

A Case Study in Indigenization

For the past eight years my wife and I have had the distinct pleasure of serving as parachurch missionaries on Long Island in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. When I speak to others about ministry I am regularly asked, “Why the Bahamas?” Contrary to what some people first assume, my calling is not an extended vacation financially backed by the local church. Much to the contrary, my tenure in the Bahamas has been a life changing challenge highlighted by both unexpected blessings and heartbreaking disappointments.

My journey to the mission field began with a series of short-term mission trips to the Bahamas. Through the course of these trips I became aware of the lack of youth ministry that existed on many islands throughout the nation. To help address this need a team of intercessors from my home church began praying that the Lord would raise up a team of full-time Christian workers who could provide a relevant model of youth ministry for the islands and train up a new generation of youth leaders. Much to my surprise I eventually became part of the answer to these prayers.

In keeping with Dyrness’ caution to “not launch ministry in any part of the world without first dialoging with churches and others ministering there,” a dialogue was started with some Bahamian clergy living on the islands that I had visited.⁴⁵ Through these conversations my call was confirmed and an invitation was extended. It was decided that a non-denominational approach to ministry would be the most appropriate vehicle for reaching the youth. For this reason a partnership was made with Young Life, a stateside mission agency that had a common vision for developing Christ-centered relationally oriented youth ministries overseas. In addition, my wife and I were commissioned by our local church as missionaries to the Bahamas. After twelve months of fundraising, preparations, and training

⁴⁵ Dyrness, 151.

we left for the mission field having made a five-year commitment to pioneer the development of a new ministry in the Bahamas.

This ministry was envisioned to have the following core priorities. First, it was to have a high Christology, focusing on the importance of developing a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Second, the ministry was to target disinterested teens that were not otherwise involved or interested in the local church. Third, emphasis was to be placed on training local volunteers that could carry the weight of the ministry in the future. Fourth, contrary to the programmatic approaches to youth ministry that are common in the Bahamas, relational evangelism and discipleship were seen as the means through which the gospel would be propagated. A fifth emphasis was placed on Christian camping which at that point in time was an innovative approach within the Bahamas that was by and large untested.

The goal of the ministry was to ultimately develop a lasting indigenous youth ministry. More specifically it was hoped that this indigenous ministry would:

- Effectively reach teenagers for Jesus Christ
- Develop a contextually appropriate model of youth ministry
- Develop quality youth centers and Christian camps within the Bahamas
- Empower Bahamian leaders to excel in relational evangelism and discipleship
- Reflect a healthy organizational model capable of existing apart from North American missionaries
- Spread to numerous islands of the Bahamas

It has been to these ends that my wife and I have labored now for nearly a decade. As will be seen below some of these goals have already come to fruition, while others have proven to be more difficult to achieve.

A Mixed Review

What has been accomplished? Currently, a vibrant youth ministry exists on two islands of the Bahamas. A rural expression of the ministry can be found on Long Island and

an urban expression can be found on Grand Bahama. Over the years the ministry has impacted over a thousand Bahamian teenagers. Currently, two hundred teenagers and twenty-five trained leaders are involved in the ministry. A youth center has been developed which serves as a hub of regular youth ministry activity. In 2002 the ministry was legally incorporated and a Bahamian National Director took over as the primary decision maker and advisor for the ministry. Outreach ministries have been developed that target both junior and senior high students. Several discipleship ministries have also been created. These ministries exist to nurture the spiritual development of both the youth and adults who are involved. In the area of camping several local outreach and discipleship camps have become annual events. International camping and international mission trips have also been incorporated into the program providing an increased level of cross-cultural exposure for both the teens and their leaders.

Leadership development ministries have been created in several areas. A student leadership program has proven to be a successful means for developing deeper levels of discipleship as well as an avenue for aspiring high school students to get firsthand experience in ministry and service. Adult leadership teams have also been developed to serve the ever-expanding outreach, discipleship and camping programs. Recently, a college leadership program has been initiated to reduce attrition following high school and also to keep graduated students engaged as leaders.

Over the years the Lord has blessed the ministry with an abundant harvest. Many young people have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Students at both the high school and college level are being discipled into spiritual leaders. Adult leaders have been trained and equipped in youth ministry. A Christ-centered model of youth ministry has

been introduced on several islands. Camps and youth centers are being utilized to enhance the effectiveness of the ministry. Indeed, there is much to celebrate!

However, to provide a thorough analysis a discussion of what has not been accomplished must also be considered. In spite of the successful incorporation of the ministry and the recruitment of a credible National Director, the ministry remains by and large under the governing oversight of a stateside mission agency. Stateside mission-staff remain responsible for organizing and implementing the majority of the ministry's goals and policies. In terms of administration, an organizational structure capable of stimulating and facilitating future growth has not been developed. Although an indigenous Board of Directors exists on paper its role in developing the national ministry is negligible. On a local level, mission-staff have been unable to sustain committees and transient leadership has resulted in limited long-term commitment among Bahamians.

In terms of funding Bahamians do not primarily fund the ministry. Funds come mostly from sources outside of the Bahamas. Donations from within the Bahamas are typically limited to one time gifts, camp scholarships, or good/services. Camps remain dependant on North American assistance and youth center development has relied primarily upon North American short-term mission teams. Currently our very capable National Director is a tent-maker because raising funds within the Bahamas has proven exceedingly difficult. Increasingly, financial shortfalls are stunting long term ministry development.

Presently, Bahamians are on the periphery when it comes to the propagation of the ministry. The recruitment of additional leaders and direct evangelism comes primarily from the efforts of North American staff. In some areas of the ministry expatriates living in the Bahamas, not Bahamians, have shown the greatest commitment. Among the dedicated

indigenous leaders there is more to be done than there are people to do it. With leadership at all levels being stretched thin some programs have been cut back and others have been eliminated altogether.

Making the Grade

With that being said the question must be asked, has a lasting indigenous expression of Bahamian youth ministry been achieved? According to the established criteria, a lasting indigenous ministry has unfortunately not yet been developed. Without question some inroads have been made and only time will tell the final outcome of this venture. However, in spite of this initial success, the ministry is at this point not self-governing, self-funding, or self-propagating. Neither has the ministry achieved a significant level of contextualization. Although some Bahamianization of the ministry has occurred there is little divergence from its North American counterpart. Some might conclude that a failure to indigenize the ministry has resulted from inexperienced staff, unrealistic expectations, an unreceptive culture or a fundamentally flawed strategy. However, after a critical review these variables do not seem to touch the root of the issue.

Having interacted with numerous parachurch mission agencies within the Bahamas that have a similar passion for developing indigenous youth ministry, I have found that my experience is just one example among many. These ministries have included school based educational programs, church partnering projects, and mobile boat based ministries. Each of these ministries has had a similar experience. In spite of significant effort, adequate funding, and a variety of creative approaches, none of these agencies have succeeded in developing a truly indigenous ministry. Even though the development of lasting indigenous ministries

within the Bahamas has proven to be illusive, it is my contention that successful indigenization is still within reach.

It is my belief that the answer to the problem of successful indigenization lays in the proper implementation of several essential missiological components. In these components lay the keys to success. In order to fully appreciate these components some groundwork first needs to be done. For this reason, a brief overview of the Bahamas is provided in the next section. This overview is a lens through which the cultural context of the Bahamas can be viewed. Next, several relevant missiological concepts need to be evaluated and significant questions related to the topic addressed. This will set the stage for an informed discussion of eight essential components necessary for successful indigenization.

A few years ago Scott Steele, a parachurch missionary to the Dominican Republic, initiated a similar undertaking to identify a written philosophy or methodology for beginning new parachurch youth ministries on foreign fields.⁴⁶ He concluded that “no serious undertaking to document this area of the work has been done.”⁴⁷ Missiologists studying current trends have made general observations that are no doubt helpful when considering the needs of the Bahamas, but to date no specific strategy has been developed.⁴⁸ This study’s aim is to take broad missiological observations and apply them specifically to the Bahamas. This is a pioneering study in Bahamian missiology. The worth of these conclusions will be known only after they have been put to the test of time and the rigors of ministry. So in the words of

⁴⁶ Scott Steele, “Organizational Career Development Program” (M.A. Thesis, Azusa Pacific University, 2005), 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dyrness, 147.

Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, “I invite you to join me on an intellectual adventure
...I offer everything herein for your thoughtful consideration, not blind acceptance.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 16.

CHAPTER 1
AN OVERVIEW OF THE BAHAMAS

A Cultural Approach

If indigenizing a ministry in the Bahamas requires significant levels of empowerment and cultural adaptation, a thorough understanding of Bahamian culture is an imperative. Until recently Bahamian society has been described as “a *terra incognita*, a rich and fascinating social treasure for which very few social scientists have searched.”¹ However, recent interest among scholars both outside the Bahamas and within has created new opportunities for missionaries to understand the cultural context of Bahamas. In the past missionaries were forced to “shoot from the hip” when developing their strategies and could only hope for success. Today, missionaries to the Bahamas are able to mine a vast array of anthropological, sociological, and historical data, to develop more thoughtful strategies that have increased probabilities of success. It is hoped that the discussion below will have just such a result, gleaning insights that can be used to develop a unique missiological approach tailor-made to fit an ever changing Bahamian social construct.

Demographics and Geography

¹ Dean Collinwood, *The Bahamas Between Worlds* (Decatur, IL: White Sound Press, 1989), 90.

The entirety of the Bahamas includes over 700 islands and cays.¹ The total land area is 5,400 square miles which is slightly larger than the island of Jamaica.² The Bahamian archipelago stretches for more than 550 miles- from the eastern coast of Florida to the northern shores of Haiti.³

According to the last census in 2000 the Bahamian population stands at 306,529 people.⁴ Of this number 162,179 live in Nassau making 86% of Bahamians urbanites.⁵ The racial makeup is 85% Afro-Caribbean, 12% Euro-American, and 3% other.⁶ An improved economy and advances in health care, combined with significant immigration, has had a 2% increase in the birth rate, creating an increasingly young population. In addition to the documented population it is estimated that there are somewhere around 20,000 undocumented refugees, mostly Haitian, residing throughout the Bahamas.⁷

Politics and Economics

Bahamian independence from Great Britain came in 1973.⁸ Since that time the Bahamas has had a stable parliamentary democratic system.⁹ The lack of a direct tax system

¹ Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas* (London, U.K.: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1969), 11.

² Ibid.

³ John Albury, *The Story of the Bahamas* (London, U.K.: The Macmillan Press, 1975), 4.

⁴ Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandry, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001), Bahamas Section A.

⁵ Ibid., Bahamas Section B.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Philip Cash, Philip, Shirley Gordon and Gail Saunders, *Sources of Bahamian History* (London, U.K.: Macmillan Publishers, 1991), 309.

in the Bahamas has resulted in what Craton describes as “a poor Government in a rich country.”¹⁰ Although this may be somewhat of an overstatement in both directions, the point is well taken and the means of the Bahamian government are not what would be expected given present domestic fiscal realities.

Most scholars agree that for being such a small nation the Bahamas is highly politicized.¹¹ This has created an environment where having connections is seen as advantageous, even necessary.¹² Political power is seen first as an opportunity to rise above and only secondarily as a means of changing the fortunes of others.¹³ Though the Bahamas is a secular State, religious leaders still exert significant political influence, primarily through a group known as the Bahamas Christian Council which has a voice in most matters of moral legislation.¹⁴

The economy of the Bahamas is driven by three industries: tourism, banking/finance and fishing. Statistically, the economic situation in the Bahamas can be summarized as follows. For the past ten years unemployment has held steady around 10%. Public debt is 43% of the GNP and inflation has been stable, oscillating between 0.05-1.5%.¹⁵ The average income per person is \$11,380 which is 38% of the per capita GDP of the United States.¹⁶

⁹ Johnstone, 16.

¹⁰ Craton, 285.

¹¹ George Mackey, *Millennium Perspectives* (Nassau, Bahamas: George W. Mackey, 2001), 24.

¹² Collinwood, 78.

¹³ Mackey, 258.

¹⁴ Collinwood, 40.

¹⁵ S.P. Dupuch, *Bahamas Handbook 2000* (Nassau, Bahamas: Etienne Dupuch Jr. Publications, 1999), 446.

¹⁶ Johnstone, Bahamas Section B.

“Minimum wage is set at \$170 [weekly] but does not apply to all employees, nor does it cover the cost of living in a society in which... import taxes double prices on some goods and gasoline is over \$5.00 a gallon.”¹⁷ The United States Department of Commerce defines the Bahamas as “a stable, upper-middle-income developing nation”.¹⁸ Due to this status the Bahamas has experienced difficulty in obtaining internationally backed economic development loans.¹⁹ This and other factors have caused some to question the degree to which recent economic prosperity has improved the Bahamian quality of life.

Religion

Religion is in many respects an integral part of the Bahamian identity.²⁰ Statistically 92.39% of the total Bahamian population considers themselves at least nominally Christian.²¹ The influence of the Bahamian people’s African heritage has had a dramatic influence on the development of the religious climate of the nation.²² Lively worship, hand clapping, responsive congregations, and hyper-spiritualized theology all have their roots in this African culture. Traces of animistic forms of religion such as obeah and voodoo can also be found within the superstitions of the Bahamian people. However, most would agree that there are

¹⁷ Suzanne Lewis-Johnson, “Left in the Cracks,” *Christianity Today*, vol. 45, Issue 4: 27.

¹⁸ Dupuch, 445.

¹⁹ Collinwood, 25.

²⁰ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People*, vol. 2 (London, U.K.: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 444.

²¹ Johnstone, Bahamas Section B.

²² Gail Saunders, *Bahamian Loyalists and Their Slaves* (London, U.K.: Macmillian Publishers, 1983), 61.

few formal practitioners.²³ Within the Bahamas, a Christian influence can be found in most every setting from morning devotions in public high schools to formal prayer at the House of Assembly.

The brand of Christianity found in the Bahamas is generally “characterized by a Southern Bible-belt style of fundamental Protestantism.”²⁴ The following chart provides a statistical overview of the diverse Christian influences found within the Bahamas (see table 1).²⁵ Although most Bahamians claim to be Christian, the vast majority are only nominally involved in a church.²⁶ Because of a lack of higher theological education, properly trained Christian leaders are in short supply. Currently, the church is experiencing a “brain drain” as more qualified leaders are fleeing to other places, much to the detriment of local congregations.²⁷ As a result, shallow spirituality combined with a lack of interest in local and foreign missions has become normative for many institutional churches.

Throughout the Bahamas, a negative view of Christian organizations has taken root. Perceived immorality among clergy and accusations of widespread corruption among church leadership has only added to the challenge. Bahamian evangelist Rex Major states, “I think sometimes there’s a critical analysis of churches by society, and the reaction brings a sense of repentance and sorrow.”²⁸ Unless this negative perception of institutional Christianity can be

²³ Collinwood, 14.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Johnstone, Bahamas Section B.

²⁶ Collinwood, 14.

²⁷ Craton and Saunders, 447.

²⁸ Lewis-Johnson, 26.

altered the younger generation will most likely contribute little to the future spiritual development of the nation.

At present the global Christian community in doing little to support their Bahamian brothers and sisters in Christ. Missionary activity within the Bahamas is fairly limited and on some islands is nonexistent. Johnstone notes there are only fourteen mission agencies active in the Bahamas, including no more than fifty missionaries.²⁹ When this statistic is compared with other regions it becomes clear that the Bahamas is by and large under-recognized and underserved.

Cultural Conclusions

As can be seen, the Bahamas is a complex society that is “not easily labeled; it does not fit smoothly into the categories social scientists invent to define the world.”³⁰ It is geographically unique, urban and rural, religious and secular, politically charged, rich and poor, culturally African and European, educated but not nearly enough, challenged by global trends but economically on the move. Because of this diversity it is hard to put a finger on the pulse of the nation.

Even after living in the Bahamas for nearly a decade I continue to gain insight almost daily into the things that drive Bahamian society and shape Bahamian thinking. No doubt Bahamian society has its strengths and weaknesses. Like any culture touched by Christianity there are some characteristics that smell sweetly of the aroma of Christ, while other aspects remain spiritual strongholds still in need of transformation. Hopeful, the survey

²⁹ Johnstone, Bahamas Section B.

³⁰ Collinwood, 2.

above does some justice to the many complexities that define the Bahamian experience. If so these insights will prove invaluable in developing the essential components necessary for developing lasting indigenous youth ministries within the Bahamas.

CHAPTER 2
FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS

Why Youth Ministry?

Before the essential components necessary for effective indigenization within the Bahamas can be presented, several fundamental questions must first be resolved. First and foremost is the question, with all the needs in the Bahamas, why should there be a concentrated focus on developing youth ministry? Why not focus on church planting ministries or ministries that address social needs such as AIDS or drug addiction? Indeed, a strong case can be made for each of these initiatives, but as will be seen there is within the Bahamas a growing need and opportunity for targeted youth ministry development. By taking hold of this opportunity, many other societal problems such as those described above will also be addressed.

Recent statistical surveys on global evangelism reveal that youth are a significant demographic. According to *The World Church Handbook*, Christianity is growing globally at a rate of about 60,000 people per day.¹ If current growth trends continue there will be 1.90 billion Christians by 2010, which is an increase of one billion Christians in just fifty years.² Interestingly, one third of these converts are expected to be children and youth.³ These facts

¹ William Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 87.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

alone reveal that a focus on youth ministry development is more than just a good idea; it is necessary for the future health of the Church, not just in the Bahamas but worldwide.

Although the Bahamas is small in terms of population, it has a significant number of young people.¹ Statistically, 31.61% of Bahamians are under the age of 15 and only 4.36% are over 65.² Without adequate youth ministry, the Bahamas will most likely not contribute very much to the expected growth of the Church in upcoming years. Some studies suggest that 60% of Christians make their initial commitments to Christ as adolescents.³ During these years life-long worldviews are developed and values are established.⁴ For this reason the importance of youth ministries that can offer discipleship and faith building experiences immediately following these initial commitments cannot be overstated.⁵ As stated by Osborn, “70% of children raised in church walk away from their faith when they turn university age because they do not understand the fundamentals of their faith.”⁶ Relevant youth ministry is perhaps the best and most immediate remedy for alleviating this problem.

Currently, the Bahamas is struggling in most every area of society, grappling with the challenges posed by globalization. Nowhere in the Bahamas has the effects of living in a globalized world been more pronounced than among the youth.⁷ Morally, the Bahamas is still reeling from the crippling impact of South American drug trafficking during the 1970’s

¹ Mizpah Tertullien, *Psychologically Speaking: Attitudes and Cultural Patterns in the Bahamas* (Nassau, Bahamas: Media Publishing, 2002), 233.

² S.P. Dupuch, *Bahamas Handbook 2000* (Nassau, Bahamas: Etienne Dupuch Jr. Publications, 1999), 525.

³ Scott Steele, “The Milagros Scholarship Program” (M.A. Project, Azusa Pacific University, 2005), 5.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Tertullian, 233.

and 1980's.⁸ In the late 1980's marijuana trafficking was adding \$200 million a year into the economy.⁹ During much of this period, drug money attracted more foreign money than all manufactured and agricultural goods combined.¹⁰ The result has been widespread drug addiction, crime and family breakdown.¹¹

Although the drug trade has been quelled, the influence on society has not been adequately addressed.¹² Drug use combined with crime have attributed to increased instances of child abuse, youth gang violence and all too often murder.¹³ Alcoholism has been a longstanding problem in the Bahamas, but has recently been amplified by Bahamian youth drinking at earlier ages.¹⁴ As increased level of violent crime, which was unheard of among the older generations, has many Bahamians living in fear behind locked doors.¹⁵ It is projected that unless the current drug and crime problems are effectively addressed the result will be “a permanent underclass of unproductive Bahamians... This culture of crime would be similar to that found in urban ghettos in the United States which at this point cannot be eradicated.”¹⁶

⁸ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People*, vol. 2 (London, U.K.: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 418.

⁹ Suzanne Lewis-Johnson, “Left in the Cracks,” *Christianity Today*, vol. 45, Issue 4: 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Craton, 420.

¹² Philip Cash, Philip, Shirley Gordon and Gail Saunders, *Sources of Bahamian History* (London, U.K.: Macmillan Publishers, 1991), 309.

¹³ Dupuch, 17.

¹⁴ Collinwood, 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

As for the family, in New Providence studies have found that 61% of all children born are illegitimate and a minority of children throughout the Bahamas lives in a home with two parents.¹⁷ Throughout the Bahamas, children of young mothers are living with grandparents and extended family because their biological parents are unable to support them. In all too many instances fathers are nonexistent, failing to fulfill their role in the upbringing of their children. In response Johnson notes that in some cases churches have been forced to take on the role of parents and schools are being asked to provide more than just an education.¹⁸

Adding to these challenges is the problem of HIV/AIDS which has infected 4% of the population.¹⁹ According to The Surveillance in the Americas Report compiled by the World Health Organization, “The Bahamas reported the highest per capita annual incidence rates of HIV/AIDS for the region.”²⁰ Among people aged 15-44 HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death.²¹ Unfortunately, globalization has offered no solutions to the problems at hand and only seems to be increasing their magnitude.

Mass media generated by a globalized world has had a profound effect upon the youth of the Bahamas.²² Unfortunately, American rap and Jamaican reggae have become dominant musical genres. The Christian culture of the Bahamas has found it difficult to compete with profane lyrics that glorify gangsterism, sex, and in the case of reggae music an

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lewis-Johnson, 27.

¹⁹ Dupuch, 390.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lewis-Johnson, 27.

²² Roderick Hewitt, “Caribbean Perspectives on Theological Education,” *International Review of Mission* 94, no. 373 (2005): 214.

altogether different religion. Television with its reality shows and unmitigated promotion of secular world-views has become for many children both babysitter and friend because parents are over-worked struggling to maintain single parent households.²³

Through the internet and cell phones, the way in which Bahamian young people communicate with each other has been dramatically altered.²⁴ The internet has become commonplace in the Bahamas. Although the internet has many positive functions, unmonitored, a computer can be a dangerous private domain where young people are exposed to most anything and everything. Cell phones have for many resulted in relational overload. Rather than improving relational skills cell phones have actually had the opposite affect, becoming a substitute for interpersonal interaction.

Globalization has brought about affluence and with it has come materialism.²⁵ The unfortunate effect has been the development of a more self-centered generation of young people that lacks concern for others, especially the poor and needy. As with anywhere, affluence has had a negative impact on the national work ethic.²⁶ Young Bahamians are often criticized by the older generations because they are more interested in “sitting on the blocks” than working for an honest wage. With the onset of a materialistic culture outward image has replaced the importance of inward character.

A summary of the Bahamian youth culture can be described as follows. Positively, Bahamian teens exhibit a genuine interest in spirituality and are willing to engage in Christian activities such as youth groups and Christian events. Bahamian youth are looking

²³ Tertullian, 234.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 235.

for adult role models and are responsive to adults who show that they genuinely care about them. Because Christianity is taught in public schools, most Bahamian teens have received a significant amount of Christian education. Technologically, Bahamian youth are becoming increasingly savvy, possessing skills and knowledge previously unavailable to their parent's generation. Finally, Bahamian youth are proud of their Bahamian cultural identity which seems to help promote self-esteem and national unity.

On the negative side of the coin, Bahamian youth struggle with many of the moral challenges that are prevalent within the broader culture. Promiscuity and drug use are widespread.²⁷ Due to a lack of discipline, respect for the law and other adult authorities is in decline.²⁸ This has resulted in increased levels of crime and mischief among the youth.²⁹ Even though Bahamian youth receive a Christian education in public schools, understanding of fundamental Christian doctrines is limited. Commitment to church and Christian living are also lacking among the emerging generation. Most of these problems have been exasperated by the globalized influence of the media and secular culture. A heightened sense of nationalism combined with problems with illegal immigration has resulted in prejudice and hatred toward minority groups.³⁰

Bahamian youth are in many ways hurting and in need of guidance. Although they are spiritually open to the Gospel, secular culture has firmly gripped their attention and has become formative in shaping their worldviews. This reality has created both a need and an opportunity for youth ministry development throughout the Bahamas. However,

²⁷ Craton, 420.

²⁸ George Mackey, *Millennium Perspectives* (Nassau, Bahamas: George W. Mackey, 2001), 14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁰ Craton, 459.

modernization combined with globalization has resulted in a substantial generation gap. For some, a defeatist attitude toward the youth has emerged. Others are concerned about young people, but are too intimidated by them to reach out and lend a helping hand. Across the board older generations have failed to identify relevant strategies for engaging the current generation. Unfortunately, the need is great and local churches are in desperate need of support.

Why Develop an Indigenous Ministry?

As discussed in the introduction, indigenous ministries that are both three-self and contextualized have the highest probability of success. Without indigenization the probability of developing a lasting, responsible ministry is very low. Although this argumentation is indisputable, there remain several matters surrounding the importance and priority of developing an indigenous ministry that still need to be addressed.

First, it should be stated that indigenization is not “give it away” missiology. Smith describes the mentality of “give it away” missiology in the following quote, “As soon as converts have been won and a church formed, elders should be appointed to act as overseers of the flock, and the missionaries pass on, following the example of Paul, to unevangelized fields.”³¹ In this approach several dangerous missiological principles should be noted. First, is the haste in which elders are appointed combined with the absence of any mention of discipleship and training. Second, is the gross oversimplification of Paul’s missiology that fails to appreciate the long-term commitment of the Apostle to the ministries that he began. Third, is the emphasis on moving on to new fields, rather than the establishment of

³¹ Oswald Smith, *The Challenge of Missions* (London, U.K: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 111.

responsible ministries. In an attempt to justify this approach some point to the imminent return of Christ and the need to save the souls of those who will otherwise be eternally lost. Missiologist Roland Allen wrongly argues that the deficiencies of the “give it away” approach should be overlooked because, “the Holy Spirit would compensate for any insufficiencies.”³² Using God’s sovereignty as an excuse for irresponsibility is a dangerous game to play.

The long term consequences of “give it away” missiology have been devastating. In some places missionaries in favor of this model have been guilty of setting up ministries quickly and moving on to start new works without first developing trained spiritually mature leaders who can effectively carry on the work by themselves. Usually these ministries fail to continue or they become defective, even heretical. The result in some parts of Africa has been the development of an independent church that is described by RTS professor Samuel Larson as “a mile wide but only an inch deep.”³³ The methodology described by Smith is a missiological short cut that should not be confused with genuine indigenization. German missiologist Gustav Warwick notes that “the actualization of the [three self] goal should be gradual, implemented through a process of education.”³⁴ The indigenization of a ministry takes time and effort, requiring cooperation by both missionaries and national leaders who are in touch with the leadings of God and empowered in accordance with His timing.

It has been my experience that those who label indigenization as nothing more than a dressed up version of the flawed “give it away” model usually have ulterior motives. By

³² Gailyn Van Rhee, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 183.

³³ Samuel Larson, *History of Missions*, Course 1 MS 506 (Charlotte: Reformed Theological Seminary, 2006).

³⁴ Van Rhee, 183.

making this false derivation they are effectively knocking down the proverbial “straw man” to make room for a more managerial missiological approach. This managerial model typically maintains tight controls over its ministries and has little genuine interest in indigenous leadership other than using them as a means to build a ministry empire or reach numerical targets that will positively influence their fundraising efforts.

True indigenization is a Biblical model that can be exegeted from both the ministry of Christ and the Apostle Paul. In Christ’s ministry the priority placed upon indigenization is notable. In John 4:4-41 rather than go directly into a potentially hostile Samaritan village, Jesus decides to focus his ministry on one isolated Samaritan woman. Following her conversion, this woman becomes the first indigenous missionary to self-propagate the message of the gospel to her own countrymen. Interestingly, in John’s account it was only after an invitation by the indigenous community that Jesus entered the town at all. After the conversion of Legion detailed in Mark 5:1-20, rather have him join their company Jesus encourages him to stay behind and be an indigenous witness to his own people because they would not allow Jesus to remain in their region.

Examples of Jesus contextualizing his ministry can also be found in the gospels. Through parables Jesus told earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Often Jesus would use Jewish symbolism to describe himself and his ministry. Jesus did not superimpose a rigid, prefabricated model of evangelism. Instead, Jesus contextualized his approach depending upon whom he was ministering to and where. Bosch notes “the inclusiveness of Jesus’ mission embraces both the poor and the rich, both the oppressed and the oppressor, both the

sinner and the devout.”³⁵ In these and other ways Jesus modeled many of the principles of indigenization that have been identified above.

The Apostle Paul also modeled an indigenous approach to ministry. A study of Paul’s missiological activity reveals that the three-self formula was being employed long before Anderson and Venn.³⁶ The churches Paul developed did not rely upon him or the other evangelists to propagate the gospel.³⁷ In 1 Thessalonians 1:8 Paul praised the indigenous church because their propagation of the gospel was having a long range impact even beyond themselves. Paul states, “The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia— your faith has become known everywhere.” As found in 2 Timothy, Paul encouraged those under his leadership to be bold, “Preach the Word: be prepared in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2a).” Clearly in Paul’s methodology self-propagation was not just requested, it was expected and rejoice over.

Many of Paul’s churches were also financially independent to the point that Paul could ask them to make special donations to the church in Jerusalem that was in an economically depraved situation. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul states, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collection is to be made.” Then in 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul encourages the believers with these words, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.” Paul was able to make this request to the

³⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryville, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Corinthian church not because he wanted them to one day become self-funding, but because they already were self-funding.

Paul also saw the need for self-governance. Although there were extremes cases as in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 when Paul saw the need to step in and personally govern his young flock, Paul's long-term goal was the empowerment of indigenous governance. Paul states this clearly in his letter to Titus saying, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town (Tit. 1:5)." Likewise, in 1 Timothy 3:1-14 Paul outlines the qualities necessary for leaders who wish to govern. Rather than micro-manage his ministries, Paul recognized the importance of developing ministries that were self-propagating, self-funding and self-governing.

More than just develop three-self ministries, Paul also practiced contextualization in both his ministry approach and theology. When speaking to Jewish audiences his custom was to reason with them in their synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 14:1, Acts 17:2, Acts 19:8). When speaking to Gentiles, Paul would go to more secular places of meeting such as the marketplace (Acts 17:17). Theologically, Paul contextualized his message greatly depending on his audience. For example, to make his message more understandable to the people of Athens, Paul quoted pagan poetry and only used Jewish references when necessary (Acts 17:22-34).³⁸ Conversely, in an attempt to not offend Jewish believers in Jerusalem, Paul purified himself and his company according to Jewish custom (Acts 21:26). In these and other ways Paul sought to contextualize his ministry. Paul provides insight into his motivations stating, "I became all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Cor. 9:22b)." Without question Paul was convinced of the missiological necessity of

³⁸ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 461.

contextualization and was the first recorded missionary to grapple with these missiological concepts.

Although the Biblical evidence is enough to justify an indigenized approach to youth ministry in the Bahamas, several subsidiary arguments can also be presented. First, statistical research supports an indigenous approach. Consider the following numbers found in Weber's 2007-2009 edition of the *Missionary Handbook* that details the level of North American missionary activity overseas. From 2001-2005 there was a 3% decrease in the reported number of long term missionaries sent by North American mission agencies.³⁹ This was the largest decline since the project study began in 1992. There was also during this period a 5.2% decrease in middle term missionaries (1-4 years) and an astounding 58.3% decrease in reported short term missionaries.⁴⁰

Although it has been suggested that the short term statistic is spurious, the notable decline in North American missionary activity in each category is alarming.⁴¹ In addition, Weber notes that there was a marked decrease in the number of agencies reporting primary activity in evangelism and discipleship, mass evangelism, and national church nurture/support.⁴² These declines should be a warning sign for national leaders overseas who are dependant upon North American mission agencies in the areas of supervision, staffing and funding. If current trends continue in the downward direction, the ability of North American missionaries to support overseas ministries will be significantly reduced. These

³⁹ Linda Weber and Dotsey Welliver, *Missionary Handbook: U.S. and Canadian Protestant Ministries Overseas 2007-2009*, 20th ed (Wheaton, IL: EMIS, 2007), 24.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 35.

⁴² Ibid.

statistics present yet another reason why an indigenous approach to missions is pertinent if lasting and responsible overseas ministries are going to be developed.

Second, studies in organizational leadership support an indigenous approach. Even though missionaries and their agencies have experience and knowledge, equipped nationals know best how to reach their own people. Nationals will naturally have their finger on the pulse of their own social climate and will be best suited to provide solutions to ministry obstacles. Nationals have a vested long term interest in the success or failure of their ministry and when empowered and equipped will “fight the good fight” to ensure its longevity. Presumably, nationals who have ownership over a ministry will take better care of it. From a practical standpoint there are also legal realities and administrative necessities that cannot be managed from overseas. For these reasons, indigenization stands alone as the most viable missiological approach.

Finally, missiological studies on evangelism support an indigenous approach. “Ralph Winter describes types of evangelism according to the cultural distance between teachers and those being taught.”⁴³ *E-1 evangelism* is when someone interacts with someone who speaks their language and shares a similar cultural heritage. *E-2 evangelism* is described as “an intermediate category between *E-1* and *E-3 evangelism* describing Christian outreach to cultures that have some type of general similarity as that of the evangelist.”⁴⁴ *E-3 evangelism* is when missionaries interact with people of a decidedly different culture.⁴⁵ Although the Lord can work at each level, *E-1 evangelism* tends to be the most effective. When nationals

⁴³ Van Rheezen, 82.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁵ Edward Glenny and William Smallman, *Missions in a New Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000), 22.

are ministering to nationals there is little to no cultural distance that needs to be crossed.⁴⁶

The value of indigenization is that the number *E-I* relationships are maximized.

The discussion above is a compelling case in favor of an indigenous approach. The only question that remains is when the indigenization process should begin. Some missionaries prefer presenting the concept of indigenization well after a ministry has been conceived, but the prevailing rationale is that indigenization should begin on day one. Smith notes that “the habit once started is hard to break.”⁴⁷ For this reason, indigenization should be presented not as a future possibility to be considered later, but as a stated goal or core value that is regularly discussed and reviewed.⁴⁸ If indigenization is not a goal from the start, reliance upon foreign support results and defective ministries are developed that are “weak and indolent rather than aggressive and powerful.”⁴⁹ As a junior missionary I remember my director telling me that no matter what I do I must not do it alone. A national should accompany me in every possible way. This was a wise statement that has no doubt helped to set a precedent for indigenization that has existed from the ministry’s conception.

Rather than develop structures of ministry that rely on Western supervision, personnel, and finances, indigenization “presupposes that missionaries must pass the leadership baton to nationals who can more effectively lead their own local churches and church movements”.⁵⁰ Both Jesus and Paul have provided an excellent model to follow and it is the responsibility of the Church to emulate their missiological precedent. Statistically,

⁴⁶ Van Rheezen, 83.

⁴⁷ Smith, 112.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Van Rheezen, 181.

there will never be enough foreign workers to occupy every village, town, and city throughout the world.⁵¹ Even if there were enough missionaries the amount of resources needed to sustain them would be astronomical. Even with enough missionaries and enough funds, indigenous leadership remains the most effective tool for reaching indigenous people. For these reasons indigenization is not just a missiological option; it is a missiological necessity.

What is a Parachurch Organization?

The next foundational question to be discussed is primarily ecclesiological. Simply stated, are parachurch organizations the appropriate vehicles for developing indigenous ministries with the Bahamas? Within the fabric of North American Christianity there seems to be an ongoing ecclesiological discussion about the role of parachurch organizations. Some in favor of what has been deemed the “storehouse” model feel that all ministry, funds, and personnel should be directed under the auspices and supervision of a local church. Needless to say ministers of “storehouse” churches leave no room for parachurch ministry and lead their congregations accordingly. Taking their logic to its extremes would have drastic implications on how the Church approaches not just overseas missions, but many domestic ministries as well. Everything from Christian education to faith-based community ministries would need to be completely overhauled. Although few take their objections to such extremes, subtle skepticism regarding the legitimacy of parachurch organizations are prevalent, especially among those who hold the institutional church in high esteem.

For this reason, the next section will provide discussion surrounding both the legitimacy and importance of using a parachurch approach to missions. Many Christians

⁵¹ Smith, 111.

have a very limited and often distorted understanding of the role that parachurch organizations have within the broad panoply of Christian ministry. Often this is because parachurch ministries are so prevalent that their importance is taken for granted. The following will hopefully provide clarity in regard to this widely misunderstood missiological category and help solidify the need for a parachurch approach to indigenous youth ministry development in the Bahamas.

The word parachurch can be etymologically broken down to mean beside or beyond church.⁵² Just as a paramedic works alongside a hospital and a paralegal works alongside an attorney, the parachurch works alongside the institutional church. As stated by Schmidt, “The parachurch is beside-church, trying to do God’s work alongside the traditional church.”⁵³ The distinctive marks of a parachurch organization have been identified to include at the very least the following characteristics: a Christian mission statement, independence from traditional church structures, and non-profit legal status.⁵⁴ Inter-Varsity, a popular parachurch ministry that works with college students describes itself in the following way, “Inter-Varsity it not a church, Inter-Varsity’s job is to enhance the work of the local church. We desire and earnestly seek a spirit of cooperation.”⁵⁵ Although this definition would not capture the heart of all parachurch organizations, it does capture the spirit of the movement and its relationship to other institutional expressions of Christianity.

⁵² David Schmidt, *The Prospering Parachurch: Enlarging the Boundaries of God’s Kingdom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 13.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁵ InterVarsity, *We’re Glad You Asked About InterVarsity Fellowship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, n.d.), n.p.; quoted in David Schmidt, *The Prospering Parachurch: Enlarging the Boundaries of God’s Kingdom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 23.

Perhaps the clearest explanation of the parachurch has been made by renowned missiologist Ralph Winter in his work entitled, *Churches Need Missions Because Modalities Need Sodalities*.⁵⁶ Winter provides some clarity to the parachurch discussion by drawing the following distinction. According to Winter, the local church is categorically defined as a sodality because of its diversity of functions and intergenerational make up.⁵⁷ Although sodalities are of great importance in maintaining the vibrancy of the Christian community, they have an inherent tendency toward “bureaucracy that hardens into tradition.”⁵⁸ Even at their best sodalities cannot fully express the veracity of the gospel in every arena that needs to hear it.

Parachurch mission agencies are categorically defined as modalities. A modality by definition is a specialized organization that is comprised of voluntary groups within sodalities that seek to meet narrower objectives.⁵⁹ Beyond parachurch mission agencies, theological institutions and a vast array of faith-based charities all fall into the modality category. Rather than be intergenerational, modalities tend to have a more limited admittance, focusing primarily upon a given target group such as youth, the impoverished, urbanites, or the elderly.⁶⁰ The strength of modalities is in their mobility, efficiency and focused objectives. Modalities such as parachurch mission agencies are typically noted for their ability to move

⁵⁶ Ralph Winter, “Churches Need and Missions Because Modalities Need Sodalities,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Summer (1974): 195; Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 34.

⁵⁷ Taylor, 26.

⁵⁸ Schmidt, 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Taylor, 26.

beyond traditional lines, their passion for leadership development and strong faith convictions.⁶¹

There is evidence of modalities and sodalities working together throughout Christian history.⁶² Following Pentecost the church in Jerusalem would be considered a sodality. In contrast, Paul's band of evangelists, who were economically self-sufficient and organizationally separate, would be considered a modality. According to Ralph Winter in his work *The Warp and Woof: Organizing for Mission*, examples of modalities and sodalities coexisting within the Church can also be seen during the medieval period.⁶³ Throughout much of the middle ages the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church were acting as the primary sodality, while monastic communities such as the Jesuits and other monastic orders existed along side of them serving the role of a modality.⁶⁴ This trend continued into the Protestant Reformation period with the Lutheran State Church being the modality and mission minded groups such as the Moravians acting as sodalities.⁶⁵

Even during the 1st Great Awakening the existence of sodalities and modalities can be identified.⁶⁶ During this period, various denominations were serving as modalities within an increasingly Christian civilization. Existing alongside of these growing institutions were several sodalities. Numerous seminaries and small groups called *conventicles* that met in

⁶¹ Schmidt, 32.

⁶² Harry MacDonald, "Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 32.

⁶³ Ralph Winter, *The Warp and Woof: Organizing for Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1970); quoted in David Schmidt, *The Prospering Parachurch: Enlarging the Boundaries of God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 31.

⁶⁴ William Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2000), 507.

⁶⁵ Schmidt, 31-32.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

homes for prayer and Bible study are just a few notable examples.⁶⁷ Throughout Christian history the presence of modalities and sodalities has been an integral part of the framework of the Church's organizational structure. Having made such a contribution throughout the Church's history, modalities such as parachurch organizations should be cherished and not scorned.

Ideally, sodalities and modalities are interdependent. Unfortunately, parachurch organizations often move from being specialists who work beside the traditional church into a role that is beyond the churches that they support. Taylor notes, "Historically there has been a tension between the church and the mission agency."⁶⁸ This tension is aroused when lines of authority are crossed, competitive attitudes emerge, funding is threatened, and the interests of parishioners shift.⁶⁹ Even though some within the institutional church have found working with parachurch organizations to be a challenge, there remain an untold number of ministries that have found ways to make it work and are prospering as a result.

Several biblical metaphors have been used to justify and explain the vital role that parachurch organizations play within the Church. In Isaiah 54:2 the prophet gives the illustration of "expanding your tent."⁷⁰ Parachurch mission agencies can be seen as part of the fulfillment of this scriptural promise. These organizations exist to expand the influence of the Church into areas that are difficult to reach through traditional means. The New Testament metaphor of "new wine skins" mentioned in Matthew 9:16-17 is another way to

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 26.

⁶⁹ Schmidt, 32.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 10.

understand the parachurch.⁷¹ Parachurch organizations are “new” vessels able to contain and carry the gospel in unique ways. The third metaphor that is helpful in understanding the role of the parachurch is found in the Apostle Paul’s description of the “Body of Christ” found in 1 Corinthians 12. According to this metaphor the parachurch mission agencies can be understood as an arm of the Church that reaches out to meet specific target groups and social needs. When taken together these metaphors are helpful in defining the significant role that the parachurch plays in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Why Utilize a Mission Agency?

Within the Bahamas, trained and equipped youth workers are in short supply and older youth ministry patterns are proving ineffective. This has created an opportunity for North America missionaries with skills in youth ministry to train up a new generation of Bahamian youth leaders and present a relevant model of youth ministry that will more effectively reach the youth of the nation. Although some missionary activity like church planting is viewed within the Bahamas as unnecessary, partnerships with North American believers that are concentrated on impacting the youth are welcomed and are being received well by both Bahamian Christians and the Bahamian government. However, what form should these partnership take and what types of missionaries are needed? Given the current options it seems that the utilization of long term missionaries serving under capable parachurch mission agencies or mission boards is the best approach. However, before drawing this conclusion some of the other missiological options will be considered.

First, is the possibility of North American missionaries serving the Bahamas as tent-makers. According to Weber, while the number of fulltime missionaries and nonresidential

⁷¹ Ibid., 29.

missionaries has remained relatively constant, tent-making has spiked considerably.⁷² Traditionally, “tent-making is the practice of using paid employment to gain and maintain entry in a cross-cultural setting. Tent-makers work as professionals and engage in ministry activities in addition to their wage earning work.”⁷³ The term was initially “coined from Paul’s stay at Corinth when he made tents so as not to be a burden on the Corinthian church.”⁷⁴ Recently, missionaries have found tent-making a viable way to gain entrance into restricted mission fields such as China and parts of the Middle East.⁷⁵ These tent-making missionaries find high security employment as English teachers or in specialty fields such as engineering. Some choose tent-making out of necessity, while others choose it because they prefer to work outside the supervision and constraints of a mission agency or church. Unfortunately, tent-makers leaning on a “lone ranger” approach “too often result in bewildering discouragement and an early trip home.”⁷⁶

Although tent-making is an honorable calling with a Biblical justification, it is not a realistic option within the Bahamas. In order to work legally for gainful employment within the Bahamas a valid work permit is required. In the Bahamas work permits are given very selectively to North Americans. I was told by an immigration official who served as a volunteer for our ministry that less than a hundred work permits are given out to North Americans annually and most go to contractors within the tourism industry and to diplomats.

⁷² Weber, 19.

⁷³ Doug McConnell, Michael Pocock, and Gailyn Van Rheenen, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 17.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jim Raymo, *Marching to a Different Drummer: Rediscovering Missions in an Age of Affluence and Self-Interest* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian, Literature, Crusade, 1996), 29.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 186.

Perhaps, the only viable option for tent-making in the Bahamas lies in the field of education. Throughout the Bahamas there is a shortage of teachers. The strength of tent-making as a teacher would be in the daily interaction with youth and other youth minded people. The weakness would be that teaching is a demanding, high stress job. Most of our ministry's volunteer leaders are teachers and readily admit that their schedules do not permit them to give the kind of time necessary to initiate and sustain a ministry without the help of full time staff. As can be seen, tent-making in the Bahamas has limited possibilities and is not a sufficient alternative to long term missionaries working under the supervision of a credible mission agency.

Short term missionaries are another option that could be considered. Because of the relatively close proximity of the Bahamas to the United States short term missionaries can and have made significant contributions. A short term mission is defined as a "trip with a mission focus that ranges from one week to two years. They may be organized by churches, agencies, or even individuals for a variety of reasons (from English language camps to church-building projects to evangelistic [programs])."⁷⁷ As stated by James Engel in *Baby Boomers and the Future of World Missions*, "We cannot escape this conclusion: in spite of some interest in overseas service, only few are willing to consider missionary service now."⁷⁸ This vibrant but limited interest in missionary activity, combined with increased mobility and global awareness, has resulted in short-term missions becoming engrained in the American evangelical framework.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ McConnell, 16.

⁷⁸ Raymo, 31.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 183.

The strength of short-term trips is that they are focused and can accomplish a great deal in a short period of time. Specialists who could not serve longer terms can come into a mission field and inject new life into ministries that are in need of support and assistance. When done strategically, the long term effect of these short term efforts can be substantial in maintaining the health of an overseas ministry over the long haul.⁸⁰

However, short term missions have several inherent weaknesses. When short termers engage in evangelism, well thought out coordinated follow up with indigenous leadership is essential. Without follow up more harm than good can be done. New converts fall through the cracks and the reputation of the local Christian community can suffer. On both the sending and receiving end the role short term missions can easily become distorted and misunderstood as an excuse for not allowing nationals to do long term work.⁸¹ The other problem of short term missions is in the area of proper recruitment and preparation. Rather than support local leadership long term missionaries to are forced to “set aside their ministries and responsibilities to oversee Christian tourism.”⁸² When the wrong people are sent and proper training is not done ahead of time ministry is stifled rather enhanced. In spite of these weaknesses short term missionaries are filling a vital role in many places. However, these missionaries cannot replace the need for mission agencies who can train, support, and sustain long term missionaries.

Among the alternatives, parachurch mission agencies remain the most effective tool for developing lasting indigenous youth ministries within the Bahamas. These organizations serve the institutional church by forming missionary teams and developing suitable strategies

⁸⁰ Ibid., 184.

⁸¹ Ibid., 178.

⁸² Ibid., 184

that expedite missionary outreach.⁸³ Since the 19th century mission agencies have been the primary sending vehicle used by the church to accomplish these tasks. Each year parachurch mission agencies are responsible for sending out thousands of missionaries all over the world.⁸⁴ When the needs are great as they currently are in the Bahamas, career missionaries are required and parachurch mission agencies are needed to send them.⁸⁵ Tent-makers and short term workers are filling a critical gap, but they are no substitute for career missionaries sent by experienced mission agencies.⁸⁶

In the sections above several foundational questions have been discussed. Through this discussion it has become clear that the needs among Bahamian youth are daunting and the need for a concentrated missionary effort to reach them cannot be ignored. It has also become clear that the development of an indigenous ministry will have the greatest long term impact. Through parachurch mission agencies the youth of the Bahamas can be engaged, indigenous leaders can be empowered and a generation can be impacted for Christ.

⁸³ Melbourne Cuthbert, *Managing Missions in the Local Church* (Newark: ABWE Publishers 1987), 44.

⁸⁴ William Dyrness and James Engle, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press 2000), 146.

⁸⁵ Raymo, 179.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

CHAPTER 3

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR INDIGENIZATION

Understanding Essential Components

The fundamental assertion of this thesis is that within the Bahamas a successfully indigenized youth ministry can be achieved through the implementation of several essential missiological components. By definition, a component is a part of a whole. The whole can be anything from an automobile to a mission organization. Essential components enable the whole to maximize its full potential. Without these essential components the whole's effectiveness will suffer, eventually rendering it useless.

Recently, I purchased a computer over the Internet. To begin the process, I first needed to select a model. After making this selection I chose the components that I wanted to be included in my system; the hard drive, monitor, processor and software all required individual selection. These components varied greatly in both quality and price. Other components such as the power cord and keyboard were standard in every model and could not be altered. Because I knew my needs, I was able to create a unit specifically designed to serve my purposes.

The indigenization of a ministry is analogous to buying a computer. Step one is deciding on a model. Through the discussion above it has been determined that the most appropriate missiological approach available to North American parachurch mission agencies desiring to work among the youth of the Bahamas is a model that develops responsible, indigenous youth ministries. Anything less than an indigenous approach will be insufficient.

Just as with buying a computer, some ministry components are standard. In youth ministry standard components include the need for volunteer leadership, regular discipleship, outreach events and orthodox theology. However, other components vary depending on the ministry's context and objectives. These components need to be specially selected. For example, the components needed for a youth ministry working with street kids in Brazil might differ from the components needed for a ministry working with farm kids in rural Oklahoma. As with the computer, it is possible to choose low end components that barely do the job or high end components that will run more effectively.

The ministry components chosen will have a dramatic impact on how well the ministry model performs. As stated by Dayton and Fraser, "People and cultures are not like standardized machines that have interchangeable parts. We cannot simply use an evangelism approach that has worked in one context in another and expect the same results."¹ Van Rheezen is in agreement observing, "It is sad that frequently, whenever missionaries fail to prioritize the essential tasks of missions, little is left after they depart."² For this reason, the following section sets out to define and describe the essential components necessary for developing indigenous youth ministries that are sensitive to the needs and realities of Bahamian culture.

The components to be described are high end and may be costly for mission agencies to install. Some of these costs are financial, while others are more intangible. Nevertheless, through implementing the appropriate essential components the elusive goal of indigenization can be achieved. The components described below were not chosen

¹ Gailyn Van Rheezen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 145.

² *Ibid.*, 174.

arbitrarily. Much to the contrary, they have been carefully selected through the following screening processes: Biblical and theological exegesis, the evaluation of strategies in contemporary organizational development, an expansive literature review, an informal survey of prominent youth leaders, both in Latin America and the Caribbean, and my own personal experience.

Because indigenization is a complex objective, a number of essential components have been identified. Given the constraints of this project a comprehensive review of each would not be possible. For this reason, the essential components selected have been narrowed down to those that are of the greatest importance and most commonly overlooked. These components include the following:

1. The Foundational Components
 - A Cross-Cultural Emphasis
 - Partnerships
2. The Organizational Components
 - An Indigenous Organization
 - Strategies for Growth
 - Financial Resources
3. The Leadership Components
 - Spiritual Leadership
 - A Leadership Pipeline
 - Healthy Mission Agency/Field-Staff Relations

Perhaps it is best to think of these components as core values. The value of well-developed and consistently applied core values should not be underestimated. In Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, it is suggested that values and goals be formally documented.³ Although Collins feels that formally stating these values unknowingly turns them into policy, which ultimately limits their effectiveness and only promotes hierarchical

³ Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 106-144.

structures of control, there is consensus that stated core values are the theological rudder to keep the missionary enterprise on course.⁴ The essential components discussed in the following chapters are core values that should be regularly reviewed by staff and intentionally transferred to indigenous leadership.

⁴ Dyrness, 149.

CHAPTER 4
THE FOUNDATIONAL COMPONENTS

A Cross-Cultural Emphasis

Among mission agencies desiring to develop indigenous ministries within the Bahamas it is necessary to have an acute cross-cultural understanding. In missions, missionaries are forced to leave behind much of what they know and enter into a cultural context that is not their own. For mission agencies and their staff the challenge is to cross cultural lines and discover what God is doing and saying in the context of a culture that is not their own.¹

Fortunately, agencies have begun to recognize the importance of doing ministry within a cross-cultural framework. According to the ReMap study outlined in William Taylor's *Too Valuable to Lose*, cross-cultural training is now the most common training requirement among the world's leading mission agencies.² Recently, several valuable resources for cross-cultural training have been developed, such as David Harley's *Preparing to Serve: Training for Cross-Cultural Missions* and William Taylor's *Internationalizing*

¹Harry MacDonald, "Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 9.

²William Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 101.

Missionary Training.¹ In resources such as these agencies and missionaries are being equipped in how to develop culturally appropriate missionary training programs.²

A good cross-cultural training will focus on the fundamental differences found in two types of thinking: identificationism and extractionism.³ Below is a summary of Van Rheenen's survey that compares these two opposing anthropological perspectives.

Choices between identificationism and extractionism begin as soon as a missionary's feet touch the ground. Identificational missionaries enter the mission field humbly as guests.⁴ They embrace culture shock as necessary for true acculturation to occur, seeking to learn their new culture before taking on the role of a teacher.⁵ An identificational understanding of thought forms encourages missionaries to teach in ways that people can understand because they recognize the fundamental differences in how cultures conceive reality.⁶ Identificational missionaries, "struggle to adjust their teaching methodologies to fit local patterns of learning and reasoning."⁷ Through careful listening and a willingness to learn, cultural strengths and weaknesses are identified and accepted.⁸ The result is a ministry that is contextualized, focused on developing an effective gospel presentation and meaningful

¹ Jim Raymo, *Marching to a Different Drummer: Rediscovering Missions in an Age of Affluence and Self-Interest* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian, Literature, Crusade, 1996), 182.

² Ibid.

³ Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 60.

⁴ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 461.

⁵ Van Rheenen, 85.

⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 81.

interpersonal relationships along with the hope that one day indigenous leadership will take the lead in directing the ministry. When relating to people, identificationalism regards nationals as equals who have a reciprocal relationship with missionaries. Identificational missionaries live at the level of the people they want to reach, eating their food, sleeping in their homes, and understanding their local problems.⁹ The result of an identification approach is increased cultural awareness, high levels of trust, and an indigenous leadership structure that is better equipped to serve.

Conversely, extractionists see everyone from their “host context as ‘peas out of the same pod’ rather than distinctive types of people.”¹⁰ They are proud, wanting to teach before they understand. Rather than embrace culture shock, extractionists seek to be protected from it by surrounding themselves with other missionaries, regularly traveling back to the States, and avoiding uncomfortable cross-cultural interactions. They assume that a degree from an American university qualifies them for ministry. They presumptuously provide the answers to cultural problems without understanding the questions.¹¹ In understanding thought forms extractionist missionaries do not see differences in cultures and prefer to use Western thought categories.¹² They assume people will understand, even if they teach in the same way they did in their own culture. Moreover, they assume a cultural superiority in thought, often judging the weaknesses of a culture without recognizing its strengths. Seldom does the

⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 59.

¹² Ibid., 60.

extractionist perceive cultural dilemmas because they avoid developing significant relationships with nationals.¹³

Interpersonally, extractionist missionaries keep ministry on a professional level.¹⁴ Extractionists blindly and methodically “superimpose American perspectives of thinking and organizational programs on local people.”¹⁵ The extractionist wants local people to come to them and learn from them.¹⁶ Rarely will an extractionist eat local food, stay with local people or understand their problems.¹⁷ As a result, indigenous ministry objectives and goals are not developed and little desire for indigenous empowerment is aroused. Seldom do extractionist missionaries last on the field or succeed in learning their new culture.

“Few mission programs are exclusively indentificational or totally extractionistic. Rather, these descriptions are extremes on a continuum bound by identificationalism at one end and extractionism at the other.”¹⁸ Depending on how a mission agency is oriented will considerably determine its missiological approach. Solid mission agencies will have a distinct bent toward identificationalism. As stated by Van Rheen, “Identificational missions are the most demanding yet most rewarding type of ministry. It is most demanding because it requires learning new languages, speaking eternal messages in cultural terms that may be understood by diverse societies, and personally interacting with people where they live, rather than expecting them to come to the missionary; it is most rewarding because

¹³ Ibid., 61.

¹⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.,.

interpersonal relationships with Christians of other cultures enrich spiritual perceptions and broaden horizons.”¹⁹ For these reasons identificationalism should be the goal of all missionaries desiring to develop effective indigenous ministries.

Throughout my missionary career, my wife and I have sought to be identificational missionaries. Admittedly, we have not always succeeded. However, this desire has motivated us to get involved in the local community in which we live. We regularly invite people into our home for meals, we eat native foods like raw conch and sheep tongue even against our better judgment and we support other ministries even when their methods are considerably different from our own. In ministry my wife has written Bahamianized devotionals using island themes and close friends have helped us understand how to relate to island culture. When teaching, we take these lessons seriously and strive to present Biblical concepts in ways that are culturally relevant.

Recently, our island was hit by a tropical storm that dumped more than thirty inches of rain, causing significant flooding and widespread damage. Many homes were destroyed and some of our students were left without a place to stay. To respond we opened up our home as temporary housing for students that had no where else to go. In these and other ways we are putting identificational thinking into practice.

Unless a concerted effort is made to develop an identificational perspective, an extractionistic mentality will prevail and indigenization will be significantly stifled. Through cross-cultural training, identificational thinking can be developed at every level of the mission organization and the pitfalls of extractionism can be avoided.

Partnerships

¹⁹ Ibid., 73.

In Stan Guthrie's *Missions in the Third Millennium*, partnerships are identified as one of the 21 key trends for the 21st century.²⁰ Statistically, there are 1.8 billion children who are considered to be "at risk."²¹ For these children there are an estimated 110,000 full-time workers and 20,000 ministries to children worldwide.²² It is estimated that daily around two million "at risk" children are cared for by evangelical Christian ministries.²³ Only recently have these ministries begun to recognize the need and the benefits of working together. Guthrie cites this trend stating, "There is a strong sense of coming together, of a need to network and share resources, ideas, knowledge, expertise, and so on."²⁴ To indigenize a youth ministry within the Bahamas, meaningful partnerships must be developed.

Before beginning this discussion, the fundamental differences between paternalism and partnerships must be addressed. Paternalism views the indigenous ministry and its workers as children unable to lead themselves and in need of continual care and supervision.²⁵ Moving beyond the realm of legitimate pastoral support, paternalistic mission agencies prefer to play the role of the over-bearing guardian, rather than the humble servant. Paternalism is destructive to indigenization and demeaning to national leadership.²⁶

Paternalism can developed even among the most well intentioned missionary enterprises. The work of the Jesuits in Latin America is just such an example. In spite of an

²⁰ Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 117.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 118.

²⁵ Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz, *Partnering in Ministry* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 37-41.

²⁶ Ibid.

approach that modeled humility, community, and a personal Christ-centered spirituality, the Jesuits had a tendency toward paternalism. Stephan Neill makes the following observation about the Jesuit's work in Paraguay:

The weakness of this great enterprise was that the Jesuits did so little to develop a sense of initiative and independence among their flock. They seemed to wish rather to have around them docile children than to train adults for self-government. They had complete control of the situation for more than a century; in that time they never brought forward a single candidate for the priesthood and developed no order of religious women or nuns.²⁷

Partnerships are a movement away from paternalism, validating the gifts and abilities of others and their ability to contribute equally to the overall development of the ministry.²⁸

By definition, a ministry partnership involves “two or more organizations working together to achieve a common goal.”²⁹ In some instances partnerships also exist between people within the same organization. In healthy partnerships ministries and people mutually respect and support each other.³⁰ According to Butler, “Effective partnerships are built on trust, openness, and mutual concern.”³¹ In missions, local churches, missionaries, mission agencies, and indigenous leaders are all in partnership together. When recognized and developed, healthy partnerships maximize a ministry's effectiveness and give glory to God by reflecting unity in the Body of Christ.

The term partnership is pulled right out of the pages of scripture. References to the “people of God” (Heb. 4:9) and the “Church of the living God” (1 Tim. 15) do not just imply partnerships, they insist on them. It is unfortunate that the secular business world and not the

²⁷ William Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2000), 509.

²⁸ Bush, 43.

²⁹ Guthrie, 118.

³⁰ Raymo, 186.

³¹ Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 98.

church have brought partnerships into the spotlight. “In the corporate world, at the close of the twentieth century,” there was a stark increase in the number of business mergers and acquisitions as companies began to realize through such practices they could maintain “a competitive edge in a rapidly changing marketplace.”³² Picking up on this trend “non-profit and mission organizations began collaborating through strategic alliances” commonly referred to as partnerships.³³

The strength of these alliances has been increased productivity with less overhead. However, in some instances partnerships are just not possible and partners have been too unequally yoked because of differing strategic objectives.³⁴ Guthrie makes the following observation, “With the best intentions, usually accompanied by a lack of cross-cultural understanding, partnerships can also collapse or veer far off course. If the joint ministry is not perceived to be a task among equals, financial and strategic paternalism can emerge, with the Westerner calling the shots. Or the less powerful can become dependant on the largeness of the stronger one.”³⁵ When these types of breakdowns occur the indigenization of a ministry slows to a crawl.

In order to indigenize effectively within the Bahamas there are at least three types of partnerships need to be maintained. The first is the partnership between the missionary and their sending church. According to Pirolo, the sending church should be the church that heard the Holy Spirit say, “Separate unto Me (this individual, couple, family) for the work which I

³² Doug McConnell, Michael Pocock, and Gailyn Van Rheenen, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 254.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Guthrie, 123.

³⁵ Ibid.

have ordained for them to do (Acts 13:2).”³⁶ Often overlooked is the continued importance of the sending church in the life of a missionary. Many falsely assume that it is the mission agency, not the missionary’s sending church who should take responsibility in equipping missionaries for service and maintaining their spiritual and emotion health. The role of the sending church does not end when the missionary is hired by the mission agency. Much to the contrary, their role is in actuality amplified. Historically, missionary-sending churches are at the heart of the mission agency movement. Local congregations are vital in providing mission agencies with qualified staff, funding, and accountability.³⁷ When this connection is weak the concept of the church existing for the sake of world missions is abrogated.³⁸

For my wife and me, it is doubtful that we would still be on the mission field if it were not for our sending church. Beyond confirming our calling, being a significant source of funding and providing us with numerous work-teams, our sending church has helped us to develop a support team call an Advocacy Team. The “A-team” concept is outlined in Neil Pirolo’s *Serving as Senders*, which is a practical guide to caring for missionaries as they are preparing to go, while they are on the field, and when they have returned home. In this resource Pirolo outlines six areas of support: moral, logistical, financial, prayerful, communication, and re-entry.³⁹ Throughout our tenure as missionaries, our sending church has partnered with us by ensuring that each of these areas is given proper attention. In return my wife and I have sought to maintain a close relationship with them through annual visits and monthly reports. When we are on home-leave we make it a priority to give back to our

³⁶ Neal Pirolo, *The Reentry Team* (San Diego: Emmaus Road International, 2000), 17.

³⁷ William Dyrness and James Engle, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press 2000), 146.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Neal Pirolo, *Serving as Senders* (San Diego: Emmaus Road International, 1991), 177-180.

church in any and every way possible. In recent years we have given sermons, led Sunday school, and even presented the ministry to a kindergarten class that regularly prays for us. In these ways our partnership is reciprocal, with both parties contributing to the overall health of the other.

The second partnership that needs to be maintained is between the missionary and the mission agency. In many cases this relationship is made difficult because of distance and middle managers being spread far too thin as a result of having too much on their plate. Unfortunately, these difficulties are exasperated by the tendency for mission agencies to model themselves after secular corporations rather than Christ-centered communities.

Dyrness notes that modeling Christian organizations after secular industry is entirely inappropriate.⁴⁰ Recently even secular businesses, recognizing slumps in productivity, have begun to shift away from hierarchical structures that inhibit innovation because of their top down command and control style of leadership.⁴¹ Hopefully, for both Biblical and pragmatic reasons mission agencies will begin to recognize the folly of the prevailing “corporate” model and move more in this direction themselves. The concept of teamwork and community is inherent in the development of healthy partnerships between missionaries and mission agencies.⁴² In the “team model” missionaries are more than just “cogs in the machine” or “pawns on the board,” they are brothers and sisters in Christ who need to be treated with respect, dignity and equality. This is formally demonstrated by the quality of support they are provided from their mission agency and the relevance of policies that are instituted.

⁴⁰ Dyrness, 148.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² McConnell, 274.

Informally, it comes from directors who genuinely love their staff and are willing to sacrifice time and energy in order to maintain a healthy relationship with them.

Just as mission agencies contribute to the health of their missionaries, missionaries contribute to the health of their agencies. Between missionaries and mission agencies a spirit of “love for one another” needs to be developed, for by this “people will know that you are my disciples (John 13:34).” A good partnership between field-staff and mission agencies will be a stream of “living water” (John 4:10) that nourishes the development of indigenized ministries.

Much of what has been discussed in regard to the partnership between missionaries and mission agencies also applies to a third type of partnership that is between mission agencies and indigenous leadership. The only significant difference is that this partnership is a cross-cultural relationship. Although interaction directly between mission agencies and indigenous leaders is usually limited, Guthrie notes several common mistakes that are often made in these types of interactions. Among them are “(1) assuming you think alike; (2) promising more than you can deliver; (3) taking to the road without a map; (4) underestimating cultural differences; (5) taking shortcuts; (6) forgetting to develop self-reliance; and (7) running a race without an end.”⁴³ When these mistakes are avoided good partnerships with indigenous leaders tend to result and over time prosper. Only when all three of these partnerships are healthy is indigenization stimulated and meaningful partnerships with others organization and churches made possible.

⁴³ Guthrie, 123-124.

CHAPTER 5
THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENTS

An Indigenous Organization

Before developing an indigenous organization, the question of ownership must first be addressed. Ultimately, Christ has ownership over every ministry. “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy (Col. 1:17-18b).” But, who in missions under Christ’s supremacy should have the authority to develop the vision, make ministry decisions, and provide supervision? Is it the mission agency’s board, the field-staff directors, the missionaries on the ground, or the indigenous leadership? To be sure, an indigenous approach to missions affirms that ownership ultimately belongs to the latter.

To translate this desire into reality an indigenous organization needs to be developed. The broad strokes of organizational development are readily available in resources like Mancuso’s *How to Form a Non-Profit Corporation* and Brinkerhoff’s *Faith Based Management*.¹ Although these resources were written primarily for organizations operating in the U.S., much of what is discussed also applies in the Bahamas. However, some contextualization would need to be done.

¹ Anthony Mancuso, *How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation*. 7th ed. (Berkeley, CA: Nolo Publishing Company, 2005); Peter Brinkerhoff, *Faith-Based Management* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999).

The following four-phase model describes what specifically needs to happen in order for an effective indigenous organization to develop. This model is a general timeline highlighting important benchmarks that need to be reached. The model provided below is specific to the organizational development of an indigenous Bahamian youth ministry, but can be applied elsewhere in similar situations. As will be seen, the question of ownership is significant at each stage of development. The goal of the proposed model is to have ownership flow smoothly from the mission agency into the open hands of indigenous leaders who have been prepared to receive it. Although this model does not address every variable, it does provide a blueprint, outlining the general flow of ownership throughout the indigenization process.

Phase 1 begins after a new ministry is conceived and God's call is embraced. This initial phase is the start of the indigenization process and begins well in advance of any direct ministry. During phase 1 the stateside mission agency takes the lead in planning the organizational development of the indigenous organization. At this point the mission agency is the primary decision maker that sets the course in vision development, establishing core values and appropriate policy application. Often during this phase, mission agencies work closely with indigenous leaders on the ground and missionaries who are being groomed for deployment to the field.

For my wife and me, it was us who had the initial vision to start a youth ministry in the Bahamas. However, during this initial phase of the ministry development we temporarily relinquished ownership of that vision to our mission agency in exchange for their accountability, credibility, administrative assistance and pastoral supervision. During phase 1, our priorities were in the areas of fundraising and making preparations for deployment; it

was a relief during this time to place the responsibility of ownership in the more experienced hands of a mission agency.

Phase 2 begins when field-staff are deployed. Glennly describes this stage of development as the “pioneer” phase because at this point missionaries represent the “full scope of resources” and leadership for the ministry.¹ The role of field-staff is to begin implementing the vision, goals, and values that they have developed with their mission agency. Two strategies are typically given consideration when deploying field-staff in a “pioneer” location. One strategy is sending a team of missionaries whose primary goal is to establish a significant “beach-head” for indigenous ministry development.² A second strategy is sending one missionary or a staff couple to “survey the land.” Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. When thinking about the dynamics of the Bahamas the former approach, one that treads lightly during the early stages of ministry development, is in most instances preferred. During phase 2, mission-staff are crucial in building an organizational framework that will allow for contextualization and three-self indigenization.

It is important to note that once missionaries are deployed the mission agency has surrendered its decision making authority. According to Anderson, “Mission boards exist to carry out the purpose of the missionary,” not vice versa.³ The missionaries should be free to make decisions as long as they are in keeping with scripture and the stated vision and legal policies of their agency. At this point, the role of the mission agency should shift away from

¹ Edward Glennly and William Smallman, *Missions in a New Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000), 22.

² Doug McConnell, Michael Pocock, and Gailyn Van Rheenen, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 262.

³ Harry MacDonald, “Indigenization: The Concept and Process as Applied to the Formation and Development of Alvo Da Mocidade” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983), 3.

maintaining ownership and move more toward pastoral support, on-going training, administrative assistance, intercessory prayer, and the recruitment of additional staff. Even though ownership has been handed over, it is crucial for the mission agency to stay engaged in the ministry's development, remaining deeply committed to doing everything in its power to ensure its long-term success. During this phase, indigenous leadership still has little decision making power. This is primarily because it is largely non-existent, having been only minimally introduced to the vision and goals of the recently envisioned ministry. However, it is never too early to begin imparting the vision of a lasting, responsible, indigenous ministry.

Phase 3 begins when an indigenous leadership team is developed. The transfer of ownership and responsibility to indigenous leaders begins to take place at this point.⁴ This is a fragile time in the development of an indigenous ministry. The tendency is for missionaries on the field and mission agencies abroad to hold on tightly to what they have begun. Unfortunately, many mission agencies have chosen to model themselves after organizations like the United Nations, World Bank or International Monetary Fund who are “structurally unified with strong, centralized control.”⁵ When this is the case, handing over control is difficult and unnatural.

The importance of mission agencies having an “indigenous policy” must be stressed at this point. This policy should capture the mission agency's desire to eventually transfer “all operation, control, leadership, finances etc.” over to indigenous leaders.⁶ This policy must be clearly worded and faithfully followed. For ownership to be transferred seamlessly,

⁴ Glenny, 23.

⁵ William Dyrness and James Engle, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press 2000), 89.

⁶ Michael McCubbins, *Sedition in Missions* (San Diego: Express Image Publishers, 1996), 19.

mission agencies and indigenous leaders alike should be aware of their agency's "indigenous policy" and be sufficiently trained in both the principles and methods of indigenization. If done well, the transfer of ownership is naturally desired by everyone involved. Feelings of reluctance are overtaken by a passion for the development of indigenous ministry.

Phase 4 begins after a significant number of indigenous leaders have been identified and the ministry has grown to the point where it can organize itself into an indigenous organization of its own.⁷ Foreign missionaries can remain, but only at the invitation of national leaders. Ideally, these missionaries should be serving in the capacity of support staff and new ministry developers, not directors.⁸ This new organization should not be a carbon copy of the mission agency, but having been conceived by it, the indigenous organization should have the same DNA.⁹ Their vision, goals, and core values should be shared. However, contextualization must be done in order to make this new organization an appropriate expression of the parent ministry from which it came. It should be noted that ownership is not given away in order to relieve the mission agency of the responsibility. Much to the contrary, ownership is bestowed. This transfer of ownership is not a hasty transaction, but comes exactly when indigenous leadership is ready to take it and not a moment later.

Some might rightly ask, if a separate organization is formed how is unity maintained throughout the mission? One answer is through the implementation of an affiliation agreement that formally defines the relationship between the mission agency and the indigenous organization. This agreement should reflect mutual respect, unity, and a desire to

⁷ Glenny, 23.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 454.

remain closely connected. However, this “formal” solution does not ensure the desired result. Hale is insightful on this point stating:

A mission does not have to have tight organizational unity in order to be united. The crucial unity we are speaking of here is spiritual unity, not organizational unity. Organizational unity leads rather to uniformity. Missions that veer toward a centralized administrative style run the risk of becoming homogenized, and lose the sparkle of their members. Initiative is stifled, capable people discouraged, and stimulating ideas dry up. That kind of unity no one needs.¹⁰

The relationship between the mission agency and the indigenous organization is one of spiritual unity, not organizational unity. Ironically, spiritual unity naturally “bubbles up in visible manifestations of warm fellowship and cooperation.”¹¹ Organizational unity promises no such rewards. When spiritual unity is deemed acceptable, the formation of an indigenous organization is embraced. If it is rejected, indigenous organizational development is discouraged.

Once an indigenous organization is incorporated and its board is established, the mission agency becomes submissive to the leadership of that organization. From this point on the indigenous Board of Directors has primary ownership over the ministry and is ultimately responsible for its future development. Just as with the boards of stateside mission agencies, the indigenous board exists to, “fulfill the vision with excellence and integrity.”¹² This board should avoid the tendency toward developing a mentality that leads only “to maintenance of tradition, the status quo and preservation of financial resources”.¹³ It must be visionary and forward thinking, perceiving the successes of the past as stepping stones for future achievement.

¹⁰ Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 214.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹² Dyrness, 153.

¹³ *Ibid.*

An effective Board of Directors should understand its mission statement and be mindful of its responsibilities.¹⁴ Relationships between board members need to be personal, rather than superficial.¹⁵ Planning must be proactive, rather than reactive, taking seriously both the present and future needs of the ministry.¹⁶ Most importantly, a good board follows through; it decides what it is going to do and does it.¹⁷

The CEO or President of the indigenous organization must be carefully chosen. This person must be a servant leader sold out on the necessity of indigenizing the ministry as a means to ensuring its long-term sustainability. They must be properly trained and mature in their faith, deeply committed to the stated vision, goals and core value of the organization. They must have a heart for recruiting and training additional indigenous staff and board members.¹⁸ They must be a good fundraiser, communicator, and gifted in hospitality.¹⁹ They must also be a team player, not a lone ranger, able to work well with North American staff as well as other indigenous leaders. They must be willing to make tough decisions and hold others accountable, even in the face of goliath size problems and delicate matters.²⁰

It has been my experience that there are some within the mission community that tote the banners of indigenization, but are committed to the concept only to the point where

¹⁴ Max De Pree, *Called to Serve: Creating and Nurturing the Effective Volunteer Board* (Cambridge, U.K.: William (Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 19-20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14, 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

ownership needs to be relinquished.²¹ Here a caution flag must be raised. Proponents of this kind prefer to define the relationship between national leadership and North American mission agencies as interdependent. Because independence within the Body of Christ is decidedly unbiblical, talk of interdependence gets a lot of mileage. Although defining the relationship between mission agencies and indigenous leadership in terms of interdependence seems proper and is an appropriate goal, the reality is that such relationships rarely capture the essence of the term.

Americans seem to “have an inborn need to take charge.”²² In contrast, Bahamians are admittedly non-confrontational. They are used to working within systems that do not serve their needs and will generally be reluctant to complain if someone is not hearing their concerns or acting according to their wishes. The result is that conflicts are rarely resolved, with disgruntled leadership preferring to slowly stop contributing, rather than challenge the established lines of authority. Within the Bahamas, when it comes to ownership, interdependence is code for benevolent mission agency control.

In order to indigenize within the Bahamas, ownership needs to be appropriately placed in the hands of Bahamians. This can only happen through the development of an independent indigenous organization. Inherent in this approach is the relinquishment of a significant amount of control in the areas of decision making, organizational development, and policy making. Stateside mission agencies need to set aside their fear and compulsion to control and follow the example of Christ, taking on the more humble role of a servant. In

²¹ McCubbins, 20.

²² Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz, *Partnering in Ministry* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 97.

doing so, they will powerfully model to others Jesus' divine method of ministry empowerment.

A Strategy for Growth

For effective indigenization to occur, prayerful and thorough strategies for growing the ministry must be developed. The Church has been growing since the days of the apostles. Over the years the Church has extended itself from just a handful of people meeting in a single room in Jerusalem to over two billion people living in every country of the world.²³ This legacy of Church growth is continuing right up until the present. Yonggi Cho's ministry in South Korea, which grew from five people meeting in a tent in 1958 to a church of over 700,000, is just one example to be celebrated.²⁴ Growth does not happen by accident or mere chance, but requires God's sovereign direction. As stated by Van Rheezen, "A well developed strategy, reflecting interaction between the will of God and the condition of the culture, is an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God."²⁵ This both/and approach to ministry growth affirms both our need to develop strategies for reaching others and God's role in determining the results.

It is important that growth strategies not be driven purely by a desire for numerical increases in the ministry. Taylor notes, "I have observed this in missionary life; ideological pressure to make numerical growth the only standard of correct missionary practice."²⁶

²³ International Bulletin of Missionary Research, *Status of Global Missions*, vol. 30, no. 1 (n.d.): 28.

²⁴ Gailyn Van Rheezen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 163.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁶ William Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2000), 30.

Recently, some groups have placed a great deal of emphasis on the “missionary countdown” where the number of people left to hear the gospel is tracked over time.²⁷ Globalization has contributed significantly to the problem of numerically driven missiological goals.

Technologies combined with increased means of communication have contributed in turning the gospel into a product.²⁸ When this happens “the strategy for the evangelization of the world becomes a question of mathematical calculation.”²⁹ This raises the following questions: Is it appropriate for mission agencies with the goal of global evangelization to extend themselves at all costs to reach numerical goals, even at the expense of the long term spiritual, physical, and emotional health of those who are bringing the message? Should the end goal of global evangelization justify questionable means of accomplishing that goal? Absolutely not! Missionary strategies need to remain relational and Christ-centered and avoid the temptation to become “harbingers of the new globalization process.”³⁰

What is needed more than ever in Christian ministry is a theology of growth that balances both the numerical and spiritual dimensions. In Acts 2:47b it is recorded, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” More than just describing numerical increases in involvement, this verse also highlights the spiritual transformation that God was bringing about in the lives of new believers. People were being transformed inwardly, going from a state of being lost to being saved. It is clear that the writer of Acts wanted readers to be aware of both the numerical and spiritual harvest that the Church was experiencing.

²⁷ Dyrness, 165.

²⁸ Taylor, 31.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

It seems as if the church has lost sight of this biblical balance and has become obsessed with evaluating success in terms of numbers. Most ministries methodically track dollars raised, numbers of ministries, and the number of people involved, but few try to evaluate the spiritual significance they are having among the people they serve. A biblical understanding of growth measures growth quantitatively and qualitatively. Although qualitative growth is more subjective and difficult to ascertain, ministries should be deeply concerned about the following spiritual dimensions of ministry growth: the depth of spiritual maturity among their members, the maturation and development of the organization's structure, improvements in training capabilities, and levels of indigenization. These factors are just as important, if not more important, than how much money is in the bank or exactly how many giving units attended worship on Sunday. In order to effectively indigenize, strategies for growth need to be developed that reflect a desire for both numerical and spiritual increases.

Ultimately, growth is brought about by God. "Sometimes God calls the best people to work in places where results humanly speaking, are meager."³¹ And, in sharp contrast to business entrepreneurs who assume total responsibility for long-term, sustained profitability, God and God alone is responsible for the outcome of those who labor in his vineyard."³² Although strategies for numerical growth are not wrong in and of themselves, they must be kept in their proper place and not elevated to the point where other more spiritually focused goals and objectives are squelched.

³¹ Dyrness, 88.

³² Ibid., 87.

Financial Resources

“One of the most feared elements related to a missionary career, causing many would be missionaries to falter, is the question of raising financial support.”³³ For those missionaries seeking to develop a viable indigenized organization this trepidation is only amplified. The fact of the matter is that quality youth ministry costs money; there is no way to get around it. As with any mature ministry, indigenous organizations will incur office expenses, program expenses, vehicle expenses, and salary expenses that all need to be paid in a timely manner. In order for an indigenous youth ministry to thrive in the Bahamas, a financial support structure must be created.

Some suggest that overcoming financial hurdles can be achieved through developing a primarily stateside support network. Glenny notes, “There is a growing desire among North American churches to direct missionary financing to national workers and their ministries...The nationals are seen as more effective, lower in cost, already enculturated, and anxiously awaiting support to accelerate their work.”³⁴ Although this may be true in some cases, the statistics show that overseas youth ministries are not the ones benefiting from this trend. According to Weber, North American mission agencies have recently experienced the largest ever recorded increase in giving.³⁵ However, 76% of this increase has come from six agencies that specialize in relief work.³⁶ The same study found that ministries specializing in evangelism and discipleship, which includes youth ministry, have only experienced a 2.7%

³³ Jim Raymo, *Marching to a Different Drummer: Rediscovering Missions in an Age of Affluence and Self-Interest* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian, Literature, Crusade, 1996), 91.

³⁴ Glenny, 23.

³⁵ Linda Weber and Dotsey Welliver, *Missionary Handbook: U.S. and Canadian Protestant Ministries Overseas 2007-2009*. 20th ed (Wheaton, IL: EMIS, 2007), 21.

³⁶ Ibid.

inflation adjusted growth rate.³⁷ Given these figures, the expectation that a Bahamian youth ministry could be funded solely through overseas donations is unfounded.

More than just being statistically unfeasible, some missiologists contend that such an approach is methodologically opposed to the core fundamental ideals of indigenization. How can a ministry be self-funded if it is subsidized from abroad? Raymo references an Indian pastor critical of subsidizing who states, “Do not rob us of the joy and responsibility to support our own people.”³⁸ Although equating subsidizing indigenous ministries to stealing is an extreme position, the point is well taken. Subsidizing should not be an excuse for the development of an indigenous funding base.

Most mission ministries by necessity need to be heavily subsidized initially. However, over time subsidization should taper off, if not disappear altogether. In Brazil, MacDonald introduced a financial policy that gradually weaned the indigenous ministry off stateside funds.³⁹ This strategy proved very effective and his ministry, ALVO Da Mocidade, is now completely self-funded. Because the Bahamas is relatively close to the U.S. the prevailing wisdom in regard to subsidizing does not necessarily hold true and a contextualized approach that allows for some foreign financing has its merits. In my opinion, as long as an unhealthy dependency is not being enabled, raising a portion of the indigenous ministry’s funding base outside of the Bahamas would not necessarily compromise the indigenization process.⁴⁰ However, the need to develop an indigenous funding base within the country still remains and should be given priority.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Raymo, 186.

³⁹ MacDonald, 89.

⁴⁰ McCubbins, 22.

Within the Bahamas fundraising does not work in the same way as it does in the States. In the U.S. the GDP is significantly higher than in the Bahamas, but the Bahamian cost of living is just as high, if not higher.⁴¹ The incentive of a tax deduction in the U.S. has developed an unprecedented amount of generosity directed toward non-profit organizations. The giving mentality among Americans is virtually unequaled. In the Bahamas there are no tangible incentives for charitable giving. As a result, Bahamians tend to give sporadically, preferring to invest in their local church. Rather than committing to being a monthly donor to a parachurch organization, Bahamians prefer to make onetime gifts to special causes or individuals in need. The prevailing giving mentality in the Bahamas makes raising an annual budget for parachurch organizations exceedingly difficult.

Several years ago an attempt was made to bring a Bahamian National Director on staff full-time. This candidate was a highly respected educator and spiritual leader with personal and business connections throughout the Bahamas. Before starting the fundraising process he was thoroughly trained. A sizable list of potential donors, along with a practical strategy for reaching them through relational fundraising was created. After a full year of fundraising, which involved mailing hundreds of support letters, countless personal meetings and a banquet, only a small percentage of his budget was raised. This experience was eye opening to the grim reality that raising money in the Bahamas is no small chore.

Nevertheless, a successfully indigenized Bahamian youth ministry will at some point need to overcome these obstacles and become self-funded. Having yet to succeed in this area myself, I do not claim to have all the answers. However, there are a few insights that have been learned over the years that should be highlighted. First and foremost is the reality that

⁴¹ Suzanne Lewis-Johnson, "Left in the Cracks," *Christianity Today*, vol. 45, Issue 4: 23.

apart from someone bequeathing the ministry a large sum of money, there is no one “golden egg” that can eradicate the dilemma.

An indigenous fundraising strategy within the Bahamas needs to be multifaceted. Already discussed is the possibility of attaining some level of support from stateside contributors. Typically, for tax reasons, these donors will prefer to give through a U.S. based agency, be it a mission agency or financial clearing house like the United Way. To promote fiscal responsibility and make funds more easily available, it is very important that any U.S. gifts given in this way be immediately transferred into national accounts that are under the direction of indigenous leadership.⁴² Because stateside donors tend to be faithful and generous, obtaining these donations is vital.

It should be noted that within contemporary missions, even after years of discussion on the need to develop self-funding organizations, there remains reluctance among some mission agencies to allow nationals to handle funds, especially those funds that are raised from abroad. By taking the financial aspect of organizational administration out of the hands of indigenous leaders, they are deprived of a powerful opportunity to develop fiscal responsibility, only burdening mission agencies with additional work.⁴³ It has been my experience that the modern practice of missionary executives handling funds that rightfully belong in the accounts of indigenous organizations are based on nothing more than a distrust of a “national honesty” and a fear of developing hyper-independent indigenous leadership.⁴⁴

In addition to outside funds, an indigenous donor base comprised of Bahamian individuals and businesses that operate in the Bahamas also needs to be developed. It has

⁴² MacDonald, 109.

⁴³ Raymo, 101.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

been my experience that Bahamians prefer to provide goods and services over against financial contributions. However, larger businesses will generally designate a percentage of their budget for charitable giving. For example, when building our youth center on Long Island a sizable portion of the funds came from a foreign contracting firm connected to the Atlantis Resort in Nassau. Interestingly, it was our ministry's Bahamian status, combined with its connection to a U.S. based mission agency that attracted them to the project. On a smaller scale, Bahamian businesses have been very supportive of our camping program, providing food, supplies and scholarships. Bahamian donations will generally be the hardest to generate, but remain the most rewarding to receive. In the Bahamas, donations such as these do more than just meet the budget; they are tangible expressions of indigenous commitment and support.

The third avenue for generating funds that needs to be explored is event-based fundraisers. Traditionally, parachurch organizations use banquet style events to raise money. In the past fundraising events ranging from cookouts to basketball tournaments have also had success within the Bahamas. Although these events are time consuming their proceeds can help to supplement local budgets, covering the cost of overhead and ministry programs. The value of this type of fundraising is that it does more than just raise money. It provides opportunities for the community to get acquainted with the ministry. Often these events improve community relations, build trust and increase levels of local awareness.

The final way that money can be raised within the Bahamas is through income producing business ventures. Within the mission agency that I am affiliated, this method of raising money overseas has proven to be the most lucrative. One indigenous ministry in Nicaragua owns a coffee plantation that sells to overseas buyers like Starbucks. In Brazil,

camp properties have served a dual purpose; beyond providing camping opportunities, properties have been used for cattle ranching and rice farming.⁴⁵ Recently, indigenous leaders in the Bahamas have begun to seriously consider what income producing business ventures might be available for them. Because the Bahamas is a tourist-based economy the idea of developing a beachfront retreat center has been given some consideration. Business ventures along these lines have the potential to produce significant income, while at the same time enhancing the ministry.

Before any money is raised an accounting system must be in place.⁴⁶ Local and national bank accounts need to be opened. Treasurers and accountants need to be brought onboard. Without them, salaries cannot be paid and expenses cannot be properly accounted. Financial policy needs to be put into place that gives appropriate attention to Bahamian banking laws and corporate regulations. These policies should be included in the organization's constitutional by-laws and be made available to treasurers and staff. A system for tracking donors and engaging new donors also needs to be created. All of this activity should be done under the supervision of both local leaders and a Board of Directors. Because these actions require a significant amount of time, effort, and expertise missionaries can serve an important role in ensuring that they are done properly. A solid financial structure will ensure healthy stewardship and increase the overall efficiency of the ministry.

Beyond helping to develop the indigenous financial structure of the ministry through the provision of time and expertise, missionaries can also model for indigenous staff a modest lifestyle that reflects godly financial stewardship. Indigenous staff will inevitably seek the same lifestyle of Western staff. If left unchecked and unregulated budgets will

⁴⁵ MacDonald, 91.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.

quickly rise to near unobtainable levels.⁴⁷ For this reason, “allowances should be based on need, not worth.”⁴⁸ As an example, the historic precedent set by the Faith Mission movement, who wisely set aside just enough for their missionaries to sufficiently live, should be commended.⁴⁹ The legacy of Hudson Taylor’s Faith Missions continues in mission agencies like Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) where “all members receive the same allowance which is determined on the field.”⁵⁰

As a general rule, missionaries should live at the level of the people they want to reach. An analysis of Paul’s theology of finances reveals several guiding principles.⁵¹ First, missionaries should be careful not to give any appearance of moneymaking.⁵² Second, missionaries should intend for every ministry to become financially independent.⁵³ Third, every ministry should be responsible to administer its own funds.⁵⁴ When missionaries approach finances in these ways the results are far reaching: godly stewardship is demonstrated, missionaries are not put above nationals, home churches are not financially overburdened, indigenous budgets are held in check, a framework for setting salaries is put in place, financial responsibility is transferred, and God is honored.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Raymo, 100.

⁴⁸ Smith, 114.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bush, 94.

⁵¹ Raymo, 100.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

In order for a sizable donor base to be established and maintained, fundraising strategies need to be nurtured. Missionaries need to play their role too, providing training and expertise, as well as being an example of modest living. Multifaceted fundraising initiatives need to happen on both the national level, through the efforts of an indigenous Board of Directors and locally through volunteer leaders. As a result, ministry will eventually move toward being self-funded and there will be adequate resources available to meet the demands of ministry; staff can be hired, appropriate transportation can be purchased and camping equipment can be acquired. Most importantly young people are reached for Christ. In the end, the benefits of a self-funded ministry will far outweigh the time and energy spent to get there.

CHAPTER 6
THE LEADERSHIP COMPONENTS

Spiritual Leadership

Primary to the goal of indigenization is the training and equipping of national leaders. As stated by Sanders, “Leadership may be defined as that quality that inspires sufficient confidence in subordinates as to be willing to accept his views and carry out his commands.”¹ Included in Anderson and Venn’s three-self method was a call for the establishment of schools to train “native teachers and preachers” in the art of spiritual leadership.² Today, the need for high caliber spiritual leadership remains.³ The importance of “spiritual formation...cannot be overstated...the development of both the mind and the heart is critical.”⁴ What made missionaries like Hudson Taylor, William Carey, and C.T. Studd exceptional were their expressions of the “extraordinary life of God in the faithful lives of ordinary men.”⁵ These men were not just dynamic people who were exceptionally driven and exceedingly courageous; they were spiritual leaders who had been touched by God and lived

¹ Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 27.

² Gailyn Van Rhee, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 182.

³ Sanders, 28.

⁴ Jim Raymo, *Marching to a Different Drummer: Rediscovering Missions in an Age of Affluence and Self-Interest* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian, Literature, Crusade, 1996), 187.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

daily under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Although it has been said that “leaders are seldom selected; they are found,” spiritual leadership must be cultivated.¹

Anthropologists such as Dean Collinwood, who have studied and lived in the Bahamas, note that the national leadership mentality is still suffering greatly from the influence of colonialism.² Currently, Bahamian leadership exists in a state of tension. On the one hand, the Bahamas is in rebellion against the colonial ideologies of the past that still pervade Bahamian society. On the other hand Bahamian society is firmly holding onto the colonial mindset as the only means of maintaining order and producing results.³ As will be seen below, neither of these leadership approaches are in line with spiritual leadership. Below are just a few examples of the colonial leadership mentality and its influence on Bahamian society.

First is the assertion of natural inferiority among subordinates.⁴ This attitude moves far beyond legitimate hierarchical subordination. In the colonial mindset subordinates are not just in a position of inferiority, they are inferior and always will be. Collinwood notes that Bahamian leaders tend to adopt a leadership style that is elitist, a replica of “the very colonialists they formerly despised.”⁵

The second characteristic of colonial leadership is an emphasis on things that separate people.⁶ More than just claiming superiority, colonial leaders practiced segregation.

¹ Van Rheezen, 164.

² Dean Collinwood, *The Bahamas Between Worlds* (Decatur, IL: White Sound Press, 1989), 79.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 81.

They did this by segregating residential districts, wearing distinctive clothing, and speaking differently. Although segregation has formally diminished in Bahamian society, it still exists in more subtle forms. Seniority and wealth are used as a means to make class distinctions. Private versus public education, your church, race and your political party all speak volumes about what side of the fence you are on. This differentiating mentally does not permit two equal choices but insists upon one way being superior to the other.

A third characteristic of the colonial leadership mentality is a disdain for theory.⁷ The brand of colonialism that has influenced the Bahamas had distinct preference for action without a theoretical base, because objective facts would undermine the aristocracy's claims of superiority.⁸ In the modern Bahamas this tendency still persists. Leaders tend to stress that their ideas come from the "real" world rather than textbooks or "high falutin" scholarly principles.⁹ Recently, I experienced this mentality while in church when the pastor went on a tangent during his sermon highlighting his own personal achievements that had all come without formal education or theological training. The consequence of this type of thinking is that many heartfelt initiatives started within the Bahamas fail because they are not backed by solid principles and adequate planning.

A fourth characteristic is a justification for everything in the status quo.¹⁰ In colonial times newly arrived administrators typically chose to join the establishment and overlooked

⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 83.

the glaring inequalities.¹¹ Although some probably felt uneasy about the overt racism and dehumanizing poverty they soon realized that “it was just such a system that allowed them to survive.”¹² Thus, colonialists justified and rationalized the status quo rather than implement a better system. In modern Bahamian culture the status quo is held up as the acceptable standard. People will be quick to complain about injustice and the general problems of society, but will rarely take the lead in changing them. Those who seek to take action tend to be condemned for “not acting mannerly” or in a way “consistent with Bahamian cultural values.”¹³ This mentality has negatively affected volunteerism in general and Christian service in particular.¹⁴

Although colonialism has deeply affected the Bahamian leadership mentality, it would be unfair to say that every Bahamian leader fits this profile. I have been fortunate enough to work closely with a number of notable exceptions to the rule. However, all too often the colonial leadership mentality raises its ugly head in politics, government, education, and even the church.

To rebel against this type of leadership, the “new” Bahamian leadership mentality often swings far to the opposite extreme. When this occurs, acceptable levels of subordination based on legitimate qualifications and seniority are replaced by individualism and a feeling that no one deserves to have any authority over someone else. People in authority are expected to lead in a friendly interpersonal way that is un-bureaucratic and turns

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 84

¹⁴ Ibid.

a blind eye to insubordination.¹⁵ The result is a society that functions not on qualifications, status, principles or laws, but by who you know and what channels you can tap into.¹⁶

Although accepted, Collinwood conjectures that anti-colonial leadership styles of this kind are disruptive to Bahamian culture and do little to motivate people to become productive members of their society.¹⁷

These two styles of leadership that dominate Bahamian society are a far throw from authentic spiritual leadership. To highlight this stark contrast, the remainder of this section is reserved for describing the principle characteristics of a spiritual leader. The qualities to be discussed are organizational non-negotiables that need to be instilled in leaders at every level of the missionary endeavor from regional directors who lead from afar, to indigenous volunteers serving in the trenches.

Studies in leadership have found that there are various levels of leadership. These levels are determined by both character and qualifications.¹⁸ Interestingly, lower level leaders are rarely able to effectively lead higher level leaders. Collins has noted that at the highest level of leadership are level 5 leaders.¹⁹ These leaders are characterized by both humility and professional will.²⁰ By “humility” they do not consider others greater than themselves and by “professional will” they exude a passion for growth and development.²¹

¹⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 20.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 21.

²¹ Ibid., 39.

In order to cultivate spiritual leaders of this caliber there must be both formal and informal training.²² Without it leaders at all levels will slowly succumb to various secular leadership styles that persist within their cultures.

The dominate character quality of a spiritual leader is sacrificial servanthood. In the New Testament there are two terms used for servant, *diakonos* and *doulos*.²³ Although the term *diakonos*, which means servant or minister, is readily understood and accepted, *doulos* (meaning slave) is not as easily grasped by our modern ears and needs to be qualified. As described by Taylor, “*Doulos* expresses both the vertical and horizontal relationship of the Christian, who is both a willing vessel of the heavenly Master and the submissive servant of fellow believers.”²⁴ The type of slavery implied is not that of modern times that assumes a natural inferiority, but first century slavery that was far more benevolent. “In the first century, slaves were not distinguished from free persons” and in many cases slavery was self-imposed “for economic and social advantages” with the reasonable “hope of emancipation in 10 to 20 years.”²⁵ When considering the predominant usages of these terms one thing becomes clear, the Christian leader is not the “ruler of the church,” but a servant of the people, voluntarily enslaved to the work of the Lord.²⁶

In contrast to the colonial leadership mentality that insists on the inferiority of others and demands to be served by subordinates, Jesus Christ is the model servant who “did not come to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45).” As stated in 2 Corinthians 4:5, “For we do not

²² Van Rheezen, 167.

²³ William Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2000), 211.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.” Servant leaders lead by example. They willingly and regularly take up the basin and the towel, joyfully washing the feet of those they are serving (John 13:4-5). For the servant leader no job is too lowly. Servant leaders are willing to work with indigenous leaders and even under them. Missionaries who demonstrate servant leadership are content with not calling all the shots and are not bent on micro-managing the affairs of everyone else.²⁷

Servant leaders should also be willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. As stated by C.T. Studd, “If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.”²⁸ Servant leaders do not seek out suffering, but are not surprised or discouraged when it comes. The motto of the high school softball team that I coach does well to illustrate this point, “Expect pain. Endure Pain. Don't Complain.” Not only should spiritual leaders not complain, they should rejoice when hardships befall them because “they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name (Acts 5:41).” As stated by Paul, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Cor. 4:17).” Rinehart has rightly described sacrificial servant leadership of this kind as “upside-down leadership” because it is paradoxical to the values of secular leadership that are inherently selfish, pleasure seeking and power hungry.²⁹

Spiritual leaders with a heart and mind for service must also be morally grounded. Scandals among Christian leaders involving money, sex, and drugs are blasted all too often on the nightly news. What is needed more than ever are not replicas of the colonial leaders of

²⁷ Raymo, 189.

²⁸ Ibid., 46.

²⁹ Stacy Rinehart, *Upside-Down: The Paradox of Servant Leadership* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 24.

the past who would do whatever is necessary to remain in power, but spiritual leaders with integrity. It is stated in James 3:1, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” Why are teachers judged more strictly? One reason is because they represent the leadership of the Christian community. For this reason, leaders are held to a higher standard by both God and man, and rightly so. Effective spiritual leadership sets an example for their flock by remaining morally and ethically above reproach. In the Bahamas, the moral character of many church leaders is in question. Without spiritual leaders who can stand the test, the viability of an indigenous ministry will be quickly brought to its knees.

Another important character quality of a spiritual leader is spiritual decision making. Recently, one of our indigenous leaders reminded me that every problem is a spiritual problem. Therefore, every decision is a spiritual decision. In ministry difficult decisions with serious consequences need to be made on almost an hourly basis. Contrary to the colonial leadership mentality, with its disdain for theory, sound reason and principles, spiritual leadership embraces these tools, constantly seeking God’s wisdom through prayer, the Bible and the godly counsel of others. Spiritual leaders demonstrate God’s power by resisting the temptation to embrace the enticements of “worldly wisdom,” constantly looking to God for spiritual answers to spiritual questions.

Spiritual leaders reflect Christ not only in their actions, but also in their proclamation. “It is a well known fact that the most successful missionaries in the world make the atonement of Christ their central theme.”³⁰ According to Smith our work must be evangelical

³⁰ Taylor, 506.

and “anything else is nothing short of tragedy.”³¹ In this regard, the Apostle Paul provides the leadership of the Church with an evangelistic imperative. In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul states, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Christ and him crucified.” The Moravians noted the power of preaching Christ through observing the work of David Brainerd among the Indians.³² As stated by Taylor, “The Moravians claimed that while he [Brainerd] used ‘the usual method of preaching...by connected arguments,’ he was ineffective, whereas when he ‘ventured straightaway to preach to them simply the Savior,’ he and other Presbyterian ministers were ‘astonished by...such a large and quick awakening.’”³³ Surely, as illustrated in Paul’s own letters there will always be other important matters that can and sometimes must be addressed, but the primary message being imparted must lift up the crucified Christ who died as an atonement for the sins of God’s people. Through this gospel the people of God are edified and the Lord of heaven and earth is glorified.

As noted by Glenny, “The spiritual formation of missionary personnel is often more presumed than demonstrated.”³⁴ Perhaps the most important principle of spiritual leadership that needs to be remembered when thinking about indigenization is that we produce what we are.³⁵ If we want indigenous leaders who are spiritual leaders we must be spiritual leaders ourselves.³⁶ Otherwise, secular leadership mentalities seeded in the distorted worldviews of the past will prevail. For this reason, leaders who are disposed to Christ must be intentionally

³¹ Oswald Smith, *The Challenge of Missions* (London, U.K: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 110.

³² Taylor, 505.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Edward Glenny and William Smallman, *Missions in a New Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000), 30.

³⁵ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Spire Publishers, 1998), 118.

³⁶ Raymo, 189.

discipled and trained in the principles of spiritual leadership.³⁷ Through daily devotions, Bible study, scripture memorization, mentoring, faith building experiences and the practice of other spiritual disciplines regenerated “hearts will be transformed” and “inner righteousness” will burst forth.³⁸ As a result, a new generation of Bahamian leaders will emerge and indigenous ministries will begin to firmly take hold.

A Leadership Pipeline

One missiological contribution made by Young Life, a parachurch mission agency, is the development of a leadership concept called the leadership pipeline.³⁹ Using a pipeline metaphor this concept defines several levels of involvement and leadership responsibility. According to Steele’s research on organizational development among youth organizations, there are “eight common steps of participation for people that stay involved.”⁴⁰ These steps are described below.

At the inlet of the pipeline there are teens who have attended outreach events and camps. Further down are teens involved in Bible studies and student leaders. Next, are university students who serve as volunteer leaders and summer staff at camps. Some of these students become student staff who work part-time for the ministry. The next leg of the pipeline involves post-university interns who work full-time with the ministry. These interns eventually have the opportunity to become area directors. Through significant involvement

³⁷ Coleman, 46.

³⁸ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishing Company, 1988), 7.

³⁹ Scott Steele, “Organizational Career Development Program” (M.A. Thesis, Azusa Pacific University, 2005), 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and achievements, senior area directors are groomed into regional directors. Although the pipeline described here is specific to the leadership structure of Young Life, the general concept is universal to most parachurch youth organizations that place a premium on leadership development.

In order for an indigenous ministry to develop, a leadership pipeline of this kind needs to be developed. As noted by Steele, “leaders will only aspire to the next level” of leadership.⁴¹ In many cases “people imagine their personal growth and career advancement by seeing the example of people they determine are one step ahead of them.”⁴² Therefore, it is important that leaders at every stage of involvement be associated with higher levels of leadership. By identifying with leaders further along the pipeline, younger, less advanced leaders will mature and become qualified for advancement.

Conversely, if the pipeline is cut short or has gaps, ongoing participation following high school is limited and often inconstant. Developing a mature leadership pipeline has had its challenges within the Bahamas. On both Long Island and Grand Bahama a vast majority of students move to Nassau following graduation, either to pursue college or find employment. As a result, the leadership pipeline effectively ends because of this widespread attrition following high school. Only after establishing a career do leaders tend to reengage as adult volunteers. As can be expected, most post-high school students never reengage.

Due to cultural and worldview differences, leadership pipelines that flow harmoniously in the U.S. do not necessarily flow smoothly overseas.⁴³ Thus, a specific

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 4.

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

pipeline that is contextualized to the Bahamas must be developed in order to sustain long-term ministry. This indigenous pipeline must cultivate indigenous leadership in progressive steps in ways that are appropriate to Bahamian culture.⁴⁴ In addition, it must be understandable to the global pipeline of leadership that exists within the broader ministry.⁴⁵ For example, a Young Life Bahamas leadership pipeline must be recognizable to the leadership pipeline that has been developed for Young Life in the U.S.. Steele notes, “If the pipeline is completely foreign to the global infrastructure of the organization there is a high likelihood that conflict and a loss of trust will result. National leadership may eventually break away or dissolve due to the difficulty of integrating with the larger global infrastructure or the larger infrastructure may reject it.”⁴⁶

For indigenization to occur within the Bahamas a leadership pipeline must be developed that reduces college age attrition and includes college students in its leadership structure. As will be seen, Bahamian college students are a particularly receptive homogeneous unit that should definitely be targeted for leadership.⁴⁷ The college age students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Because full time youth ministry is rare in developing countries the possibility of higher levels of involvement needs to become ingrained in leaders immediately following high school.

College age young people in the Bahamas typically fall into one of two categories: those pursuing higher education and those pursuing a career. Unfortunately, those in the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 475; Van Rhee, 163-164.

latter category generally do not make good leaders and tend to fail over the long haul. This trend is not specific to just the Bahamas and is supported by Steele's research in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In these countries it was found that leaders who continued with ministry, but didn't attend college fell away in large numbers due to mounting pressure and discouragement.⁴⁸ Several reasons have been suggested. First, this demographic often needs to work and contribute to their family's income or maintain their personal household. Second, because work is often found in communities (or islands) that are a long distance from the local ministries they would naturally work with, continuing in leadership becomes increasingly unrealistic over time. When either of these factors comes into play meaningful involvement ends. For this reason, the value of developing leadership among college students over those pursuing their careers cannot be overstated.

In developing countries the value of an education is priceless and naturally produces leadership. Research has found that education is instrumental in curbing sustained poverty.⁴⁹ Conversely, dropping out of high school has adverse effects on future opportunities. In the area of personal psychology, behaviorists have identified that education creates new perspectives and develops life skills.⁵⁰ In addition, economists have found that education creates useful skills that allow for people to take better advantage of opportunities.⁵¹ Through education, confidence is developed and new opportunities are provided. College also provides time for maturation.⁵² Typically, Bahamian high school students graduate around

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 13.

age sixteen. These students, although old enough to attend college, are still too young to get their driver's license and too immature to live alone. Because of the benefits of acquiring higher levels of education, it is not surprising that college produces quality leaders.

As stated by Steele, “education has a glove and hand relationship with growing in Christ.”⁵³ Recognizing this reality and the need to keep students involved following high school, our leadership has become increasingly proactive. This year a college leadership program was developed. This program targets students who were a part of the ministry's student leadership program while in high school and have graduated, but are now attending college in Nassau. It is hoped that this program will help these students to continue to grow in their faith and leadership ability. In addition, we have been developing a partnership with a ministry that provides college scholarships to students who live in Latin America and the Caribbean. This ministry seeks to provide funding and spiritual mentorship to college students who are actively serving as leaders in Christian ministries.⁵⁴ Through this program it is hoped that those who want to further their education and continue in leadership, but cannot afford tuition, can be provided the opportunity. The beauty of this program is that it is a partnership that subsidizes the indigenous organization but does not result in a direct dependence on the primary mission agency.

As can be seen, a leadership pipeline allows for “organizational traction in a new environment” to take hold.⁵⁵ Without a mature pipeline an indigenous ministry will fail to develop. Through the development of college leadership programs and partnerships with

⁵³ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁵ Scott Steele, “Organizational Career Development Program,” 3.

other organizations college age attrition can be substantially lowered and college leaders can be effectively nurtured. In these ways further indigenization is stimulated.

Healthy Mission Agency/Field-Staff Relations

Christ-centered community is at the heart of all missionary activity. For indigenous leaders, healthy Christ-centered community is modeled primarily through the relationships that exist within the mission agency. If authentic Christian community does not exist here, indigenous leaders will have a poor example to follow. As stated by Hale, “Unity is not only a horizontal matter among workers; it is also a vertical one between leaders or administrators and those under them.”⁵⁶ Although this horizontal relationship is important, it is the vertical relationship between the senior leadership of the mission agency and field-staff that is most often dysfunctional and will be discussed in further detail below.

The importance of healthy mission agency/field-staff relations cannot be overstated. The administration exists to help the workers, not to hinder them. At the same time, workers must be willing to support the administration.⁵⁷ A healthy relationship depends on both parties remaining mindful of their role in developing a Christ-centered community. When clarity is blurred, staff will begin to make “end runs” to avoid interactions with their agency and agencies will begin to alienate their staff through non-communication and heavy-handed tactics. This is not the type of community that Christ envisioned for the Church and is an unacceptable and shameful witness to those who do not yet know Him.

⁵⁶ Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 221.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“Administration-worker tensions are as old as the Himalayas.”⁵⁸ Since the days of the early church the challenge of maintaining healthy relationships between missionaries and those directing them has existed. All too often tension and disputes arise between missionaries and senior leaders within their sending organizations. When left unresolved these tensions frequently result in qualified staff prematurely leaving the mission field. Usually accompanied with their departure are feelings of bitterness and frustration. Taylor notes, “Many missionary leavings were not as graceful as they might have been...leaving an abundance of psychological and spiritual bumps and bruises for the Holy Spirit and the body to heal.”⁵⁹ When a missionary leaves the field for negative reasons, everyone, from the missionary’s sending church to the indigenous leaders on the ground, feels the effects.

Studies have revealed that there is a high price for poor relations. Preventable missionary attrition is currently at an all time high. Winthrop, the Executive Director of the APMC, noted “if present trends continue, the whole future regarding career missionaries from the United States is in serious trouble.”⁶⁰ Although some missionary attrition is to be expected, the question must be asked, are current rates of missionary attrition acceptable?

The ReMap Research Project estimates that each year 3.4 missionaries per society are annually lost from missionary service.⁶¹ That loss equates to 5.1% of each society’s missionary force or one out of every twenty missionaries. One third of this overall attrition is unpreventable, resulting from retirement, political crises, family concerns at home, and death.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ William Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 15.

⁶⁰ Raymo, 16.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 86.

Other types of missionary attrition are preventable. It is these preventable reasons that need to be considered more closely (see table 2).

According to ReMap, if the amount of preventable attrition was eliminated from the total attrition rate, missionary attrition could be significantly reduced from 5.1% to 3.6%. The ReMap study also revealed that 13.7% of all preventable missionary attrition is directly related to the relationship between missionaries and their agencies.⁶² These reasons include: (1) disagreements with the agency 4.7%; (2) inappropriate training 2.7%; (3) lack of job satisfaction 2.6%; (4) inadequate supervision 2.1%; (5) dismissal by agency 1.6% (see table 2).⁶³

Adding to this 13.7% of preventable reasons for missionary attrition are the 48.8% of missionaries who cited reasons indirectly related to mission agency/field-staff relations. Their reasons include the following: (1) change of job 7.4%; (2) lack of support at home 7.2%; (3) problems with peers 5.9%; (4) personal concerns 4.9%; (5) inadequate commitment 4.4%; (6) lack of call 4.1%; (7) immature spiritual life 3.3%; (8) marriage/family conflict 3.3%; (9) cultural adaptation 3.1%; (10) problem with local leaders 2.9%, (11) immoral lifestyle 1.4%; (12) language problems 1.3%; (13) theological reasons 1.0% (see table 2).⁶⁴ For some of these missionaries their reasons for leaving could not have been abated by improved relations with their mission agency, but for others it could have. Astoundingly, it is conceivable that over 63% of missionaries who have left the field for preventable reasons could still be there if mission agencies had more effectively served them.

⁶² Ibid., 92.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The ReMap project also revealed that U.S. mission agencies were the largest culprit for mission agency/field-staff related attrition. It should be noted that among the sending countries surveyed, the U.S. had the highest attrition rates in eight of the twenty-five most commonly cited categories (see table 3). Among these categories “disagreement with agency” was cited most often among U.S. missionaries.⁶⁵ Without question, missionary attrition among U.S. agencies could be curbed significantly if the relationship between agencies and their missionaries were improved.

The reason for breakdowns in mission agency/field-staff relations is only recently coming into the light. Tension is usually aroused when the emotional, organizational and spiritual needs of the missionary are not being met. Notable examples include a lack of spiritual supervision, mismanagement, poorly developed expectations, failure among agencies to recognize the difficulties of crossing cultures, and unabated stress. The problem of systemic abuse is also a serious concern.⁶⁶

For many agencies structural limitations often stand in the way of ministry development. As an example, a few years ago our staff met for a weekend with our regional supervisor to develop a national vision for catalyzing indigenization within the Bahamas. While our leadership team took on the brunt of the responsibility in fulfilling this vision, our agency agreed to provide several key staff placements within the next year. After three years of empty promises, it became apparent that no additional staff was going to be deployed. The staff that had been promised were unable to be recruited or had been funneled to other areas within the mission. While trying to compensate for the lack of staff during the wait, several staff people and volunteers took on added responsibility. Before long, discouragement set in

⁶⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18, 20.

and everyone involved had become frustrated. As can be imagined, this has resulted in a strained relationship between the North American and Bahamian leadership on the ground and the mission agency's senior leadership. In instances such as these, healthy relationships are destroyed and indigenous leaders are left with a sour taste for further cooperation with the field-staff on the ground and mission executives abroad. Perhaps even more damaging is that authentic Christ-centered community is not modeled for indigenous leaders to emulate.

To improve and develop healthy mission agency/field-staff relations several organizational prerogatives have been identified. First is the need to provide pastoral support and supervision. For my wife and me, healthy Christian community and pastoral leadership are virtually nonexistent in our local ministry context. For staff such as us, mission agencies need to take the lead. Pastoral support needs to be regularly provided by directors both locally and regionally. Leaders in charge of supervision must be devoted to nurturing their team members and enabling them to function at their highest level.⁶⁷ Because of the challenges of ministry, which are only amplified when serving overseas, these directors need to remain closely connected to their staff. Regular visits, phone calls and periodic gatherings with other staff and indigenous leaders should be made a priority. In addition to supervisory support, field specialists with training in counseling and spiritual direction should also be utilized. This support staff can come from either within the mission agency itself or from partnerships with other organizations that specialize in these areas. Field-staff directors need to be qualified, properly trained in missiology and experienced in working overseas. They need to work closely with both the leadership above them and the field-staff they supervise to develop administrative processes that are both efficient and appropriate.

⁶⁷ Hale, 219.

In addition to regular pastoral support and encouragement, mission agencies also need to be committed to ongoing training. “The national church on the field holds high expectations regarding the vocational gifting and spiritual life of the arriving missionary.”⁶⁸ When a North American church calls a pastor they look for academic and spiritual characteristics that include godliness, integrity, and moral character.⁶⁹ Indigenous ministries need missionaries who meet the same qualifications.⁷⁰ Without ongoing pastoral care and training, the character and spiritual development of missionaries on the field will suffer greatly. Leadership development is an extension of Christ’s mandate to make disciples, and parachurch mission boards have their first responsibility to their own staff in this area.⁷¹

The agency I work for requires a total of six-weeks of formal training that is completed within a staff person’s first two years of service. Following this period little to no additional training is provided. When compared to other similar youth organizations this amount of training is on par with the status quo. Little wonder 27.3% of missionaries leave the mission field after their first term (1-3 years).⁷² As stated by Taylor, “two or even three months of orientation will not produce a true disciple.”⁷³ Causes of missionary attrition are exasperated when ongoing training is sporadic or in some cases altogether absent.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Raymo, 188.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ William Dyrness and James Engle, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press 2000), 160.

⁷² Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 87.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Dyrness, 160; Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 19.

To improve mission agency/field-staff relations the expectations of missionaries being sent to the field also needs to be reevaluated. The missionary expectation from the past is not the same today.⁷⁵ Mission agencies need to become more aware of these growing differences if quality staff is going to be retained. Patrick Johnstone, author of *Operation World*, identified the need for a new generation of missionaries.⁷⁶ The next generation of missionaries needs to have a passion for evangelistic ministry planting, missiological knowledge and skills, an appreciation of the need for cross-cultural sensitivity, an awareness of and appreciation for indigenous ministry development, and a commitment level equaling that of 19th century missionaries who were willing to pay the ultimate price if necessary. If missionaries do not already have these qualities it is the responsibility of the mission agency to develop them through ongoing training.⁷⁷

The next prerogative is the encouragement of appropriate furloughs. Furloughs for a missionary are a time of “physical, mental, and spiritual refreshment and renewal.”⁷⁸ It allows for missionaries to spend time with family and their church at home. “Links are strengthened. Prayer and financial support is supplemented. Needs on the field are made known.”⁷⁹ Through speaking engagements, missionaries build confidence and make new friends and contacts, sometimes even recruiting additional staff and sparking interest in future work teams. During furloughs, missionary kids are introduced to their homeland and

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 16, 18.

⁷⁶ Raymo, 18.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Hale, 392.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

the feeling among these kids that they are “without a country” can be reduced.⁸⁰ In order for missionaries to stay healthy over the long haul, furloughs need to be taken as often as necessary. When mission agencies encourage their missionaries in this regard they show that they care for their well being and are committed to their long-term healthy and stability.

Another way to improve mission agency/field-staff relations is through the validation of the partnership that exists between the mission agency and local sending churches. Often this relationship is neglected or completely nonexistent. Sending a missionary to the field should be an integrated process between mission agencies and local churches. “Just as church leaders are not produced by a Bible institute or seminary, so missionaries are not produced by a mission agency or training center.”⁸¹ Missionaries are produced by local churches that are committed to the training and discipleship of Christian workers and remain involved in their development even after they are hired and deployed by a sending agency.⁸²

Churches and mission agencies authenticate the spiritual calling of the missionary, coming along missionary prospects as they explore this calling and move toward departure.⁸³ Once on the field it is the role of church mission pastors and mission agencies to shepherd missionaries throughout the duration of their service. During furloughs, churches and agencies are to make sure the experience is satisfying. When conflicts arise a third party exists which can be instrumental in bringing about resolution.

Implementing this prerogative would for many mission agencies revolutionize the way in which they think about themselves and manage their staff. It would require a

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 27.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 28.

loosening of the reins and recognition that missionaries belong to the Lord and are not the mission agency's possession.⁸⁴ However, such an approach is consistent with the desire to develop Christ-centered community, not only within mission agencies themselves, but also throughout the broader church.

The final way to maintain healthy mission agency/field-staff relations is through encouraging open lines of communication. For open lines of communication to exist the administration must avoid autocratic decision making and field-staff need to be involved in the decision making processes. Within a mission agency experience and position do not permit autocratic decision making that ignores the input of their staff.⁸⁵ Any quality mission organization will "set up mechanisms whereby the workers' opinions can be fully aired and listened to."⁸⁶ Although it is difficult in large organizations to get everyone to agree on policy matters, consensus should always be the goal."⁸⁷

When conflicts do arise, a conflict resolution procedure should be in place and followed. Staff should be listened to with integrity and concern. Most disagreement can be abated if "workers and administration can come together in mutual respect and talk frankly."⁸⁸ Although communication is a two-way street, it is the supervisor who bears the greater responsibility for communicating with their workers and inviting their input.⁸⁹ In most mission agencies field-staff are expected to submit to higher level leadership. When this

⁸⁴ Dyrness, 159.

⁸⁵ Hale, 227.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 236.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 233.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 227.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

is the case they will often not speak up unless asked, fearing that unwelcome feedback will reflect poorly on them and not be received in the right way. When there are open lines of communication, differences become opportunities for growth and can be embraced. As mission agency/field-staff relationships are synergized occurrences of conflict are diminished and destructive disputes become rare.

If Christ-centered community is going to be demonstrated, missionaries need to hold up their end of the relationship as well. Missionaries live as those under authority and need to act accordingly. They must remain committed to the mission and not act independently or unilaterally.⁹⁰ Missionaries also need to be in agreement with their mission agency in regard to the overall goals of the mission. According to Hale, “One can disagree on strategy - as long as everybody gets behind the plan in the end. But the basic goals of the team must be shared by all.”⁹¹

Today, all too many missionaries are suffering from complacency.⁹² They are comfortable serving where they are and do little beyond meeting the basic expectations of their agency. The problem of missionary complacency is that it lowers the bar for nationals and the next generation of missionaries. It also undermines the organizational credibility of mission agencies serving abroad, reflecting poor stewardship of time, money and education.⁹³ Moreover, complacency often accompanies an elitist attitude among other missionaries and supervisors. A complacent attitude is toxic to Christian community and should not be acceptable at any level of the mission organization.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 220.

⁹¹ Ibid., 221.

⁹² Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose*, 22.

⁹³ Ibid., 21.

The importance of Christ-centered community needs to be lifted up by everyone involved in the indigenization process, especially missionaries on the field and those who supervise them. This is best accomplished through maintaining healthy mission agency/field-staff relations. As stated by Coote, “In a world where hundreds of millions have yet to hear the name of Christ and additionally millions have not heard the gospel presented effectively in their cultural context, there is no substitute for the missionary.”⁹⁴ But what if the missionary went home because of poor mission agency/ field-staff relations? For staff to remain, mission agencies must be a source of “supply and reinforcement” and not an added hindrance.⁹⁵ In order for missionaries to remain effective what they need most from their mission agency is support. By making the development of healthy mission agency/field-staff relations a priority Christ-centered Christian community is modeled, ultimately setting a godly precedent for everyone involved in the indigenization process to follow.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

In the missiological classic, *Let the Nation's be Glad!*, John Piper notes:

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship is forever.”¹ Nevertheless, until that day missions remain a primary objective of the church; it is to be fervently set upon and done with excellence.

This thesis set out to find the most excellent way - the Jesus way.² Through this study, indigenization has risen to the top as the most appropriate and not surprisingly most effective approach available to parachurch mission agencies serving within the Bahamas. However, indigenization often runs contrary to our instincts. To clarify the internal confusion that runs rampant among us and stifles our efforts, eight essential components for indigenization have been identified and discussed. These components are specific to the Bahamas, but still broad enough to be applied elsewhere.

I wrote this thesis with the intention that it would generate meaningful discussion among the mission agencies and churches with which I am associated. It is hoped that the information above will broaden the Church's understanding of missions and provide new

¹ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

² Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007, 36-41.

tools for approaching the missionary task. The essential components described above are not hard and fast rules that should be legalistically applied. Much to the contrary, they are guiding principles. This does not take away from their importance or the responsibility to put them into practice under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is my intention to apply these concepts to my own ministry as I arduously work to develop within the Bahamas a lasting, responsible, indigenous youth ministry. Prayerfully, according to your own gifts and calling, you will do the same. But let us all remember that one day our labor will end and our temporal call to missions will be replaced by an eternal call to worship.¹ On that day the Church's missionary effort will hopefully be deserving of the divine affirmation, "well done good and faithful servant (Mt. 25:23)."

¹ Ibid.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE BAHAMAS

Churches	Congregations	Members	Annual Growth Rate
Baptist Union/International Missions	211	61,100	1.5 - 3.6%
Catholic	30	27,492	1.20%
Anglican	95	11,345	-0.20%
Methodist	92	7,207	1.50%
Seventh Day Adventist	43	15,000	n.a.
Pentecostal	207	15,128	n.a.
Brethren	70	2,800	n.a.
Other denominations	81	5,487	n.a.

Source: Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandry, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001), Bahamas Section B.

TABLE 2
REASONS FOR LEAVING MISSIONARY SERVICE

Reason	Overall %
Normal retirement	9.4
Child(ren)	8.1
Change of job	7.4
Health problems	7.2
Problems with peers	6.2
Personal concerns	5.9
Lack of home support	4.9
Disagreement with agency	4.7
Elderly parents	4.4
Marriage/family conflict	4.1
Outside marriage	3.6
Poor cultural adaptation	3.3
Lack of job satisfaction	3.3
Inadequate commitment	3.1
Immature spiritual life	2.9
Political crisis	2.9
Problems with local leaders	2.7
Inadequate supervision	2.6
Lack of call	2.4
Inappropriate training	2.1
Death in service	1.6
Language problems	1.6
Theological reasons	1.4
Dismissal by agency	1.3
Immoral lifestyle	1
Other	1.9

Source: William Taylor, Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 92.

TABLE 3

REASONS FOR LEAVING MISSIONARY SERVICE BY SENDING COUNTRIES

Reason	Australia %	Germany %	Canada %	United Kingdom %	United States %	U.S. Had Highest Attrition Rate
Normal retirement	11.5	5.1	18.6	14.1	13.7	
Child(ren)	11.4	8.6	11	13.7	8.8	
Change of job	11.8	9.7	5.4	11.3	8	
Health problems	10.1	9.8	8.1	10	7.4	
Problems with peers	4.1	5.7	4.2	3.9	7.3	x
Personal concerns	5.8	16	2.4	4.5	4.5	
Lack of home support	2.8	0	8.7	3.7	6.1	
Disagreement w/ agency	3.1	2.2	1	2.3	4.9	x
Elderly parents	4.2	6.6	5.9	4.7	3.3	
Marriage/family conflict	3.7	2.1	0	2.1	4.5	x
Outside marriage	3.5	7.6	4.7	5	1.9	
Poor cultural adaptation	3	3.3	1.9	2	3.6	x
Lack of job satisfaction	1.9	5	3.4	4.4	2.7	
Inadequate commitment	3.8	2.2	4.2	1.8	2.7	
Immature spiritual life	2.2	1.3	3.5	2.4	2.7	
Political crisis	0	3.3	1.6	3.2	2.1	
Problems w/ local leaders	3.2	0.4	2.6	3.3	1.8	
Inadequate supervision	1.2	0.1	1	0.7	2.8	x
Lack of call	1.4	1.6	3.3	0.6	2.1	
Inappropriate training	3	0.1	1.5	0.5	1.7	
Death in service	2	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.1	
Language problems	0.7	1.2	0.6	0.6	1.5	x
Theological reasons	0.4	1.7	1.9	0	1.2	
Dismissal by agency	0.7	1.2	0.2	0.1	1.3	x
Immoral lifestyle	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.4	1.2	x
Other	3.8	3.2	2.6	2.9	1.1	

Source: William Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 93.

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