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What the western church can learn from **Africa**

David Tarus, an African Langham Scholar studying in Canada, writes about what the "western" Church might learn from the Church in Africa.

"When I came to Canada more than a year ago, and having briefly lived in the USA, I was deeply saddened to see churches that have been shut down...

Back home in Kenya the Church is growing exponentially. Bible schools cannot train pastors fast enough for the growing number of congregations. My Dad just planted a church less than a year ago, and they have close to a hundred people now. The congregation is already thinking of planting another church nearby!

Of course growth in numbers does not necessarily mean growth in depth. In fact it has been observed that the church in Africa was a mile long in terms of quantity, but only an inch-deep in terms of quality. Some elements of African Christianity can be quite disturbing — especially its tendency to mix different beliefs: becoming at times too syncretistic."

Despite this, there is much that the African church can teach us! David goes on to humbly suggest what "western" Christians can learn from African Christians:

Taking the Bible Seriously

African Christians take the Bible seriously. This could be because the world of the Bible is very close to African worldview. The Bible speaks to various issues such as polygamy, land conflicts, wife inheritance, sacrifices, hospitality, injustice, natural calamities, dangers, and fears. African Christians find in the Bible a message for every day experiences. For African Christians, the Bible is authoritative for all matters, especially in matters of morality. I sometimes hear Westerners say that they

cannot take the Bible seriously because it was written a long time ago, and they are completely divorced from its world. African Christians would hear none of that. The Bible is alive for us.

Taking Social Action Seriously

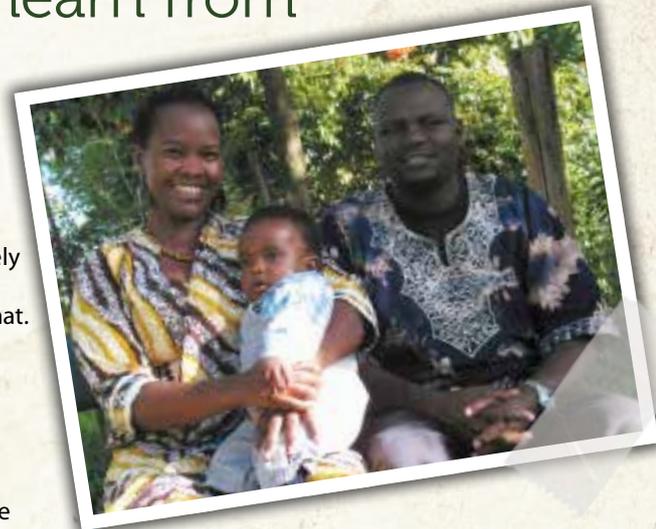
African Christians understand poverty and suffering. They have experienced firsthand dictatorial regimes, corruption, ethnic conflicts, the HIV/AIDS calamity, Ebola, and various environmental disasters. Regardless of overwhelming poverty, African Christians embrace hospitality and charity.

We do not separate the gospel from social action. I think [western] Christians can learn the value of charity and hospitality that stems not from plenty, but from inadequacy. Canada [and Australia likewise] is a land of plenty.

I marvel at how much food is wasted in Canada. I have occasionally been invited to carry food home after a party, because, my host would say, "these would be thrown away!" I find this sad because I see a lot of poverty in some parts of downtown Hamilton. The church should not separate care for spiritual needs of the people from their everyday needs.

Taking Community Seriously

The African worldview emphasizes togetherness, community, and interdependence. In Africa, it is not the Western "I think therefore I am," but "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" that matters. The value of community affects how we look at Christianity — reading the Bible in



community, understanding the church as family of God (the coming together of "relatives" of Christ), spiritual disciplines from communal perspective, emphasis on individual as well as corporate (social) evils, and the kingdom of God (read as KIN-DOM) understood communally. I see a lot of individualism in Canada. Sadly, even within the bounds of the Church, individualism seems to be the order of the day. Would Canadian [or Australian] Christianity be different if it focused more on community? What if spiritual disciplines were communal instead of individual? What if salvation was looked at from a communal perspective instead of from an individual perspective? How would that shape [western] faith?

Taking the Supernatural Worldview Seriously

This could be the most problematic thing to encourage [western people] to embrace because a supernatural worldview is sometimes frowned upon and considered primitive.

However, a belief in the supernatural is human; human beings are spiritual beings. In fact Christianity itself is a supernatural belief system.

A supernatural worldview is part of the DNA of African peoples. It is therefore very common in Africa to embrace the supernatural elements of biblical faith such as vision, healing, and exorcism.

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Langham Scholars studying in Australia –

comings and goings...

Ronald Lal Din Suah

(Myanmar)

As covered in our November 2014 newsletter, Ronald completed his PhD last year and returned to Myanmar with his family in December. He visited Melbourne briefly to attend his formal graduation in April this year. Ronald continues to teach at the Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology in the capital, Yangon.



Qaiser Julius (Pakistan)

Qaiser has been studying at Melbourne School of Theology since 2012. His PhD thesis: "A comparison, contrast and critique of Ahmadi and Christian responses to persecution in the minority context" has been accepted, making Qaiser one of the very first Pakistani Theology PhDs! He will graduate this November, after a brief return to Pakistan where he is helping lead the celebrations to mark 10 years of Langham ministry in that country. Please pray for Qaiser and his family as they prepare to return permanently to Pakistan when the children finish school in December.



Anwar Mehammed Berhe

(Ethiopia)

If you receive our eNews, you will be aware of Anwar's coming to Australia this month.

For those of you who don't get the eNews, we'd like to introduce him to you...

Anwar Berhe grew up in a conservative Muslim family. Through a dream, God challenged him to consider the claims of Jesus Christ. He then spent three years studying apologetics and other religious books, having discussions with Christians and weighing the cost of conversion until he made a personal commitment

to Christ. This decision was followed by rejection and persecution from his family, school friends and community. God enabled him to stand firm in his faith and be a witness for Christ. Now a number of his family have become Christians. His story is one of God's faithfulness through the most difficult circumstances.

Anwar is the Muslim Outreach Ministry Director in Ethiopia's largest evangelical denomination, the Kale Heywet (Word of Life) Church. He also teaches about mission and Islamic studies at the Evangelical Theological College in the capital, Addis Ababa.

Like Qaiser, Anwar will be studying at the Melbourne School of Theology. With his wife and young daughter, Anwar will be living in Australia for his first year of study, at home in Ethiopia for his second year and then in Australia again for 6-8

months in his third year. [Splitting study time between home and abroad is an increasing trend for Langham Scholars from the Majority World. It reduces costs and enables Scholars to more easily stay in touch with what is happening in their home countries and ministries.]



Gillean Smiley Langham Australia Executive Officer writes:



God's faithfulness in calling people to himself, despite the most challenging of circumstances, is evident in the testimony of Anwar Mehammed Berhe, our new Ethiopian Scholar (above). As the only Christian in his region, he first tried to hide his new faith by going into the bush to read his Bible and pray, but when his family became suspicious, he confessed he had converted. Initially deciding to kill him, the family were eventually persuaded to simply cut off all support, hoping this

would force him to reconsider. "I could not get a job anywhere", Anwar told me, "because I had no shoes and my clothes were rags". I hope many of you have a chance to meet Anwar and hear his story during the time he and his family are here — it will encourage and inspire you.

As Anwar arrives, we are preparing to say goodbye to Qaiser Julius and his family. Qaiser has also seen great persecution and violence against Christians, especially in the context of the anti-blasphemy laws he explores in his thesis. Despite

the risks, the Christians in Pakistan have enthusiastically embraced the training and support offered through Langham Partnership and will celebrate 10 years of Langham ministry this month.

What better way to celebrate than through running three training programs in the last week in September, in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore — and welcoming Chris Wright as a very special trainer, along with Steve Sonneman and Paul Barker?

May God continue to bless and strengthen the Christians who are persevering in their faith and witness in Pakistan, as they provide such an example and encouragement to us all.

Please support our Scholars and their families in your prayers — and giving if you are able to do so.

'Every meeting ... is evidence of our unity in the Christian world' Russians and Ukrainians, together, writing a Bible Commentary

Langham Literature is partnering with the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (EAAA) in producing the **first ever Slavic Russian-language evangelical commentary on the whole text of the Bible**. It is currently being written by a team of 43 Ukrainian and Russian theologians, a project that has become far more strategic than ever anticipated.

For the contributors to be writing this together while their nations are locked in deeply divisive hostilities is no mean feat.

Konstantin Nazarov is a Russian contributor based in Moscow. More than half of the editors are Ukrainian. Konstantin has known some of them for a long time,

but with others I made acquaintance only after the Skype session related to the Commentary ... people here in Russia and in Ukraine took quite different positions on some political issues. In the beginning discussions became so heated that some Christian friends struck each other off in their social networks ...

However, some of us did not lose our reason and this has helped us to communicate during the process of writing ...

Through **prayer**, our brothers and sisters are able to say that,

Every meeting of the group of editors is evidence of our unity in the Christian

world. We understand that war is mostly produced by people who want to cause instability; but the only thing simple people like us want is the opportunity to do our work.

The daily realities they face have **sharpened their reflection** on the biblical text.

In writing on Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, I found many parallels with our situation today: 'kings' and 'vassals', true and false prophets, oppressors and oppressed ... But our brief does not allow us to sermonize or politicize ... We all believe that soon the situation will normalize, and today's problems will be forgotten ... so the editors work hard to make sure that the commentary will be as relevant in ten years' time as it is today. No specific political names or events are mentioned. We comment first on the Bible, then 'see' events through the biblical text.

Writing together is forging unity and a strong text; it is also **inspiring new writers** with confidence to write for their people!

In writing for the Commentary, I was forced to look at verses that as a preacher I can easily skip ... Also, I was forced to look for practical applications of the text – every new insight became a small victory for me ...

I was thinking about pastors, preachers and simple Christians ... most literature of this kind is written in other languages. Some (but very few) books are translated.

But this commentary will lead to many new books being written here ...

I see myself writing first of all for the 90% of Russians who do not go to church but who are asking deep questions, also religious ones. They need more than evangelistic booklets.

And for preachers, specifically those in new churches with many unchurched people in their audiences ...

I hope some of us will be able to write 'deeply' ... so that the word from the Bible will touch many more people.

Konstantin Nazarov is a current Langham Scholar. He hopes to complete his PhD in 2018. He teaches at the Training Christian Ministers (TCM) Institute of the Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary and in 2015 will be a visiting teacher in Minsk (Belarus), Vienna (Austria), Omsk (Russia) and Lviv (Ukraine). He is also preparing proposals for two further writing projects.

by Pieter Kwant,
Director
Langham
Literature



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What the western church can learn from Africa

The belief in the supernatural shapes how we think about spiritual warfare. We believe, in Africa, that spiritual forces are real forces. African Christians do not ignore spiritual warfare, they face spiritual forces head-on. Exorcism is a general part of the Sunday liturgy even among many traditional mainstream churches such as Presbyterians, Methodist, and Baptists.

The African worldview is also very

religious. Religion is interwoven into the fabric of everyday life. For many Africans, to live is to be religious.

The western worldview is characterized by Enlightenment philosophies that embraced the rational more than the supernatural. How might an acceptance of supernaturalism help shape Christianity in Canada [or Australia]? How would it shape how [western] Christians do spiritual warfare? How would this help address human fear?

You only need to watch paranormal ... and monster movies to appreciate that supernaturalism is here to stay, even if academics think otherwise. The quest to understand supernaturalism drives people (Christians included) to unbiblical sources which consequently leaves the door open to deeper supernaturalism.

Perhaps [western] Christians need to think of ways of addressing the deep seated human need to conquer the mystical dimensions of life.

The New York Times Magazine featured a cover story a few years ago titled, "Mission from Africa" about African Christians in the United States. The article asked this crucial question: "How does the West brace itself for something different?" Or to ask it a little bit differently:

Is the non-Christian West ready for the Christian Rest?

David Tarus is a Langham Scholar studying for his PhD at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario Canada. He is married to Jeane and they have a son, Berur Keitany.

Pastoring El Dorado!

Preaching adventures in Honduras



The name 'El Dorado' conjures up tales of extreme deprivation in search of a mythical city or kingdom of gold...

But Pastor Oscar Danilo Madrid was after a different kind of treasure when he set out into the hostile mountainous area near San Pedro Sula in northern Honduras. Betuel Ayes, the national Coordinator for Langham-Honduras, shared his encouraging story at a recent **Langham Preaching Seminar** in Colombia:

Pastor Oscar served for more than ten years as a committed lay leader in the Four Square Church, one of the oldest denominations in Honduras. Then he fell prey to the seductive power of the so-called 'American dream'. But after three years as an illegal immigrant in the USA, he perceived God's corrective voice speaking into his situation and calling him to something better.

So he returned home.

There he sensed an overwhelming call to pastoral service. Following an intense year as a lay leader at 'Las Bodas del Cordero' Church, and noticing his growing and fervent desire to serve the Lord, the church leaders commended him for a special mission: to plant a new church in a difficult, mountainous rural area.

Oscar took on this challenge immediately, without second thoughts or any visible means of support other than his firm desire to honour God. Of his immediate family (his wife and three children) only his youngest son (15) went with him. His two other adult children stayed in the city, as did his wife.

In that hostile region known as 'El Dorado', Oscar began his mission with home visits and preaching in public places. He soon gained the favour of the local people. One family opened the doors of their home to him. Their house became the interim meeting place for a fledgling church.

Conversions became the order of the day; friendships developed; more and more people began to join Oscar's project. In less than a year, the church grew to over 50 members.

That was three years ago.

Today the church has more than 200 brothers and sisters attending regularly. One member donated a piece of land, where a church building has since been constructed.

We first met Oscar by a kind of providential coincidence: one of the coordinators of 'Escuelitas-Langham',

happens to own a plot of agricultural land near El Dorado. In the course of his work, he came to know this dynamic pastor and invited him to participate in an 'escuelita' (mini preaching school).

We were struck by Pastor Oscar's exceptional leadership abilities, his fervent desire to grow and his amazing hunger to learn (he is over 50 and only had a few years of formal education).

Oscar and seven of his leaders began their process of formation as expository preachers over a year ago when they participated in a Langham Preaching Level One Seminar. They have now started an 'escuelita' in their own church!

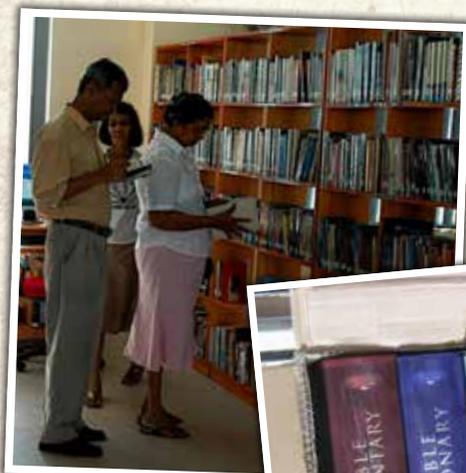
Gold is often used by artists to depict the presence of the divine. In this El Dorado, a true 'city of gold' is to be found!

by Jennifer Cuthbertson, Langham Preaching



Getting **good books** where they are needed...

You can provide a Bible College or Seminary in the Majority World with a resource they have identified as desperately needed! Recently a young couple in Brisbane gave three colleges (two in Nigeria and one in India), a New Bible Dictionary — a book they had found invaluable in their own Christian walk. Colleges have let us know of the resources they need but cannot afford through the "Literature Wishlist". You can browse the list or search for specific countries or colleges on the langhamcatalogue.org website, under "About us" — then "Donor Options" headings. You can purchase all or part of a College's wishlist online (some of the books are as little as AUD\$2!) and we will send the books directly to the recipients. It's a great way to share the blessings we have enjoyed from particular books with others!



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AUSTRALIA

Langham

PARTNERSHIP

Our vision is to see churches in the Majority World equipped for mission and growing to maturity in Christ through the ministry of pastors and leaders who believe, teach and live by the word of God.

As an evangelical organisation, the Langham Partnership is above all committed to exalt the name and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, to promote the gospel of His grace and to foster the mission of His church.

We do this through our three programmes:

Langham Scholars offers doctoral scholarships for theological leaders who will lead churches and train the next generation of Bible teachers in their home countries

Langham Literature provides preachers and Bible colleges with evangelical literature and mentors indigenous writers, editors and publishers

Langham Preaching establishes national movements for continuous training in expository biblical preaching



Langham Preaching seminars are all about getting into God's Word. Please pray for Langham Preaching events across the world — see the enclosed prayer slip for Preaching events to be held over the next six months.

For a weekly update, subscribe to the emailed Preaching Prayershot at <http://au.langham.org/get-involved/sign-up-for-email-updates/>



Have you considered including Langham Partnership in your will?

Like many mission organizations, we can benefit greatly when friends make a final gift that continues to bless the ministries they have generously supported in life. Once you have made proper and primary provision for family and friends this can be a very effective way to go on making a difference to the church on earth when you have joined the church in glory! If you would like to consider this option in your will please contact the Langham Australia office on 02 4751 9036.