

My Journey with “*Global Missiology*” (GM): Reflection and Review

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Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org. January 2018

INTRODUCTION

Global Missiology (GM) is a quarterly e-Journal first published in 2003. On the occasion of turning over the leadership of the English edition of “*Global Missiology*” (GM-E) to Dr. Nelson Jennings, it is fitting to reflect on my journey with GM and review the process from conceptualizing to launching. This brief piece can help readers of GM in their understanding of the operation and development of GM. This is also a testimony of God’s faithfulness and guiding GM for more than a decade.

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE E-JOURNAL “*GLOBAL MISSIOLOGY*”

I began teaching “missiological research methodology” in the doctoral program at Reformed Theological Seminary from 1993-2000. Since then I have been passionate about “missiological research,” yet I realized the lack of published work in the area of “missiological research methodology.”

Besides, for decades Christians in North America had misconceptions about missiology. It was perceived to be a subject in Bible schools where returning/retired missionaries told stories of their field service among savages in remote places. When “missiology” was first introduced by European scholars to North America, even the administration of ATS (Association of Theological Schools of US & Canada – the accreditation agent of theological institutions in North America) did not know what to do when Fuller Theological Seminary wanted to launch the first missiology program in North America in the mid-1960s.¹ It was not until 1970 when the Doctorate of Missiology program was launched in the School of World Mission and Arthur F. Glasser became dean of the School of World Mission in 1971.² Within the academy, “missiology” was perceived to be a non-academic field due to the lack of an academically developed “missiological research methodology” and scholarly publications.

¹ “For four days this October, the extended community of Fuller Theological Seminary celebrated the 50th anniversary of Fuller’s School of Intercultural Studies (SIS). Started by renowned missiologist Donald McGavran as the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth, SIS has been training students to spread the gospel across the globe since 1965.” (retrieved Dec. 1, 2017 @ <http://fuller.edu/communication/event-recap/sis-50th-anniversary-and-2015-missiology-lectures/>)

² “Fuller Seminary through the years,” @ <http://fullerseminary.org/about/history-and-facts/fuller-seminary-through-the-years/> (retrieved Dec. 1, 2017)

In 2001, I submitted articles to theological journals on “missiological research methodology” and was rejected repeatedly for various reasons – except scholarship. I began to think outside of the box for two reasons: frustration at repeatedly being declined for publication in scholarly journals and the challenge of teaching “missiological research methodology” in the Doctor of Philosophy program at Reformed Theological Seminary with no scholarly publications as textbooks and reference. The desire to develop an academically respectable research methodology in missiology led me to work on the draft of a textbook. The plan to finish the manuscript was interrupted by other pressing projects in the area of “diaspora missiology” and “relational paradigm” (see publications of these two areas @ www.enochwan.com).

THE LAUNCH OF *GLOBAL MISSIOLOGY*

In 2001, I began conversations on collaboration on a text of “missiological research methodology” with Arthur Glasser and Paul Hiebert of Fuller, Ted Ward of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Ralph Winter of the US Center, and Roger Greenway of Calvin Theological Seminary. Due to many personal and professional factors, the plan of jointly producing a text book on “missiological research methodology” failed; but, Arthur and Roger suggested that I should think of starting a journal focusing on “missiological research methodology.” It was an impossible project due to the lack of a sponsor and funding source.

The idea of launching a low-cost e-Journal so that there could be a venue for publication on “missiological research methodology” came into our conversations. However, I am a computer illiterate, i.e., nothing more than the use of word processor and e-mail. After two years of praying and preparing, and with a US\$50 donation³ from Roger Greenway and the encouragement of Arthur Glasser, *Global Missiology* as a quarterly digital publication was launched in 2003, made possible by the Lord’s provision of volunteers with IT skills – an answer to our prayers. Arthur Glasser, Roger Greenway and Michael Jaffarian served on the first Advisory Board. Copied below is the content for the first issue of *Global Missiology*.

Vol 1, No 1 (2003)
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³ US\$50 donation from Roger Greenway was the only financial contribution to GM in the operation of over a decade.

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THE OPERATION OF “*GLOBAL MISSIOLOGY*”

The vision for GM was to serve the Christian community globally with a passion to supplement traditional missiological publications by free access without any paid subscriptions. At the launching of GM, it was viewed with suspicion and did not receive the same kind of respect as traditional/print academic publications. The reason was that digital publication of journal was not yet common nor trendy. Providentially since 2003 until now, as a quarterly publication there has been no interruption due to financial or personnel factors.

Our evangelical volunteers (of different races, professions, ecclesiastical affiliations, places of residence) have been serving joyfully and harmoniously together. Its global ministry in digital publication for well over a decade is a testimony of God’s faithfulness and the faithful service of many volunteers. Without sponsors or donors, GM operates on the basis of volunteerism as a ministry to readers globally. It is an open access quarterly e-Journal operated by a group of volunteers to serve frontline practitioners freely and accessibly who either cannot afford to subscribe to a traditional print journal or are highly mobile (without mail delivery or fixed mailing address). It is “global” in scope of coverage of issues and in staffing - volunteers located in different countries, working without geographic proximity.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF “*GLOBAL MISSIOLOGY*”

For the first few years, we had volunteers gathering prayer requests from frontline practitioners to be listed out in the “Prayer Connection” section. Of course, we carefully sensitized requests with security concerns.

“Prayer Connection”



For some time, we had artistic contributors who provided us with video recordings of Christian hymns and poems in the “Creative Corner” section. The series of Christian poetry ran more than a year, but it eventually stopped due to a lack of on-going contributions.

After the passing of Art Glasser and Roger Greenway, Chuck Van Engen and Nelson Jennings succeeded them to serve on the advisory board respectively. We had special issues to pay tributes to Paul Hiebert and Ralph Winter after their passing. For a year, we had a series by David John Hesselgrave on a missiological reading of the Book of Acts. In recent years, Drs. George Robinson and Georgia R. Grimes Shaw joined the team of volunteers, serving as Assistant Editors.

Below is a brief chronicle of the development of GM into other language editions:

- 2005 GM-Chinese 《環球華人宣教學期刊》第一期, 2005 年
- 2008 GM-Portuguese **Português** - *Missiologia Global*
- October 2009 GM-Vietnamese **Tiếng Việt**
- 2011 GM-Spanish - *Misionologia Global*
- 2012 GM-French - *Missiologie Globale*

Being handicapped by my inability to type Chinese and the complications of having two kinds of Chinese written systems (i.e. traditional 繁體字 and simplified scripts 簡體字), the launching of the GM-Chinese edition was delayed for several years. It was not launched until 2005 when God providentially moved in the hearts of a team of volunteers to join us. Among them are people who have IT backgrounds, Chinese literary competence, skills in editing, etc. It is indeed God’s providence and team members’ commitment to the ministry of GM-Chinese.

In 2008, several volunteers teamed up together to launch GM-Portuguese (*Missiologia Global*). There was a lot of excitement, and *Missiologia Global* lasted for more than a year. Its publication came to a halt when the combination of multiple negative factors colluded together. The unfortunate turn of events was surprising, and we are awaiting a miracle for its resurrection.

Due to the scarcity of missiological publications in Spanish, Chuck Van Engen both challenged and encouraged me to explore the possibility of adding a GM-Spanish. After a year of prayerfully waiting and intentionally networking, GM-Spanish was added in July 2011.

In the same year, Dr. Thanh Le inquired about GM-Vietnamese. After months of networking and preparation, it was launched [Phần mềm Tạp chí mở T. 1, S. 8 (2011)]. However, it was not able to be sustained due to a shortage of contributors and skill volunteers. With the help of two graduates of the D.Miss. Program at Western Seminary, in 2018 GM-Vietnamese will be reactivated to serve Vietnamese readers worldwide.

And with the encouragement of Dr. Galen Currah, the GM-French edition was added in Jan. 2012 [*Missiologie Globale* Vol 1, No 1 (2012)]. However, due to the outbreak of civil war in his native French-speaking country in Africa, the editor had to resign. It will not be in operation until a new French-speaking editor is available. This is a prayer request and a call for help. Hopefully in due time GM-French will be revived to serve the French-speaking readership globally.

CONCLUSION

This brief review of the history of GM and its development clearly shows the faithfulness of God and the faithful ministry of like-minded teams of volunteers serving multiple-language editions of GM. The occasion of change of guard for GM-English is a golden opportunity for reflection.

The new Editor of GM-English, Dr. Nelson Jennings, is not a stranger to GM for he has served on the Advisory Board for many years and is my personal friend. He has extensive experience in editing, e.g. editorial role in *Missiology* and *IBMR*. He has field experience in Japan and Korea. He comes with a strong academic background, having served on the faculties of Covenant Theology Seminary and Tokyo Christian University. He is a team player and a good networker internationally. Therefore the future of GM-English is bright and promising.