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- from Smoke Signals – newsletter of Wiconi International by Richard Twiss Feb 9, 2007

Richard

Twiss and other indigenous North Americans recently met with young adults from forty countries at a gathering of the Institute For World Christianity. Richard reports:

"I yakked around about worldview issues and their importance to enlarging our self-centered heart and informing our narrow-mindedness to allow Jesus to make Himself known in the midst of every culture and nation of the world. My new mantra these days is, 'we are ALL ethnocentric [focused on our own culture] – narrow-minded – and only see in part – NO EXCEPTIONS!' The sooner we can cop to this fundamental reality of the human condition, the sooner we can experience the wonder of God in the midst of the diversity or otherness.

"...The impact of America, for good and bad, is felt around the world. Across the former Soviet Union there is a surge of materialism as they flee from the bland, impoverishing, dehumanizing and colorless psychological oppression of soviet communism. The wealth, freedom, availability of endless products and lifestyle of the west, particularly America, is introducing a new kind of colonialism; the neocolonial power of materialism. Communism had to be attached to political power to invade other people. Materialism has no such limitations. Globalization is creating a new superpower – consumerism; it is creating a new empire. This empire is exerting its will to create a generation of consumers with an insatiable appetite for stuff. One young father shared how 2nd and 3rd graders in his country of Moldova are comparing who has the best cell phones at school and how, many families will skip meals and make other sacrifices to wear the best clothes.

Concern was expressed by the majority of these next generation emerging leaders was how the American church is exporting its 'invented theologies of consumption' that justify consumerism. It is an American 'Christian' phenomenon that is spreading around the world in the guise of biblical prosperity. The brethren from Brazil were heartsick over the fact that the poor of their country are flocking to churches that have imported these theologies. They attend and give what little money they have in the hope of becoming wealthy like the pastors are guaranteeing, if they follow their prescribed principles of giving; but instead, they only become poorer, while these pastors

are becoming very wealthy. This concern was shared by most of the delegates I spoke with.

“In each of their situations, they want to escape the overbearing influence of western culture and theology to find the authentic Jesus. They love the Word of God and only want the Kingdom of heaven to visit their countries. It is the same longing I hear in so many 20 and 30-somethings [young adults] across America who are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the church as they know it. Though they may still attend a church, nonetheless, they are careful to avoid buying into the system.”

Richard and three others were also sponsored to attend the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC, attended by President Bush and many other government people. They had some platform time and opportunities to speak with a number of leaders, including the Secretary of the Interior, responsible for oversight of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They shared the importance of God’s heart for justice and their concerns that land and sovereignty are matters of biblical justice more than issues of natural resources. “I offered to him the possibility of some First Nations Jesus lovers that would be willing to serve him as a ‘Jesus loving’ native sounding board and his staff when it came to making decisions about critical issues impacting native people.”

He also reported that many of their politicians have “a deep love and appreciation for one another because of who Jesus was in their lives. Something you never hear about in the media. They told of their weekly prayer gatherings where they encouraged and supported one another.” =

New voice for Indigenous Christians

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Christian Alliance

The first general meeting of the newly formed National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Alliance will be held at Collaroy Conference Centre, Sydney from 26-27 February this year.

A series of meetings have been held over the last two years to establish a solid foundation for a united voice from the widest possible group of indigenous Christians in Australia. The initiative has involved indigenous groups from the mainline denominations as well as pentecostal and evangelical organizations. TEAR Australia, World Vision and the Evangelical Alliance have sponsored accommodation and meeting costs, but participants have been asked to find their own travel costs.

Those involved “strongly believe this is a vision from God for such a time as this. Aware of the ongoing pain and disadvantage of our people, believing that God has a redemptive work to do through us, and convinced that now is the time to act” they are committed to bring “healing and positive transformation in our nation.” There is a strong sense that no one organization can do all that God wants and we need each other. Membership is open to Christians organizations involved in indigenous ministry and individuals having a recognized interest in the aims and objectives of NATSICA.

Khesed Ministries was invited to join and has signed up. John Blacket will be attending this first gathering, as our Aboriginal Council members are not able to attend at this time.

Mission Statement: NATSICA seeks to glorify God in bringing a unified Christian voice to advocate for change in government policy, in churches and in the wider community to address the spiritual, social, economic and political issues that affect indigenous peoples.

Praise God that the manuscript of our new booklet, God's Feet, has been completed after 18 months of prayer and thought and discussions. It is teaching and stories in simple English designed for indigenous people, on getting free from the crippling power of shame and curses to live in God's blessing in His glory.

Copies have been sent out to a small group of people for comment, and layout and design work has begun. A number of those people have responded with details and very helpful comments and suggestions.

We are planning 3 versions: a CD, a DVD and a booklet, to be released at the end of March this year.

We are excited at what God will do through this, and believe there is a strong anointing for significant ministry to many people. We would appreciate your prayerful support.

Tulku Putingka - the dances and songs of the people

Indigenous Songs and Dance performed (by lawmen and women from Western Desert communities and the Goldfields Wangkatha people).

A rather unique ceremony was held on Morapoi Station in the WA Goldfields in January this year. This sort of ceremony has not happened in the Goldfields for at least 40-60 years. It was described as "handing back the songs and dances of the land";.

It was a significant, but fairly low key, event. There were about 300-400 present, with a good number of non-Aboriginal Christians, and also a professional film crew making a film from the event that will be shown on ABC later this year and available on DVD.

At a time of drought in December when the dams were almost empty, Wongayi Christian leaders, Ps Greg Stubbs, Ps Geoff Stokes and Richard Evans stood holding hands on the site where the dancing was to be held and committed the gathering to God. God answered with heavy rains immediately.

During the event, there were times of singing and dancing in which men and women — both Aboriginal and Watjellas — were taught the dances and songs. Some of these were held in nearby bush settings of significance with Goldfields Aborigines, although recent rain prevented most from getting to the Seven Sisters site. I came to appreciate this story for the first time while there: it is about a perverted old man chasing seven sisters to make them all his wives. It is seen as Satan chasing pure and virtuous people — the seven churches. "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands are this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and these seven lamp stands are the seven churches" Rev. 1: 17

I had some great times talking things through and sharing insights such as God's Dirt with a number of people, including Aboriginal Christians - Greg Stubbs, Geoff Stokes, Bruce Smith [Christian lawman who organised the Central Desert mob], Brendon Cook from Tom Price — and non-Indigenous people, including an Irish elder who is working with Cedric Jacobs on constitutional law issues.

On Saturday night, two dancers wore a red, yellow and white ochre mask and carried a pole with feathers, which was presented to a senior Goldfields Wongayi to give them the authority to perform and teach the dances and songs. There had been a lot of discussion between the Desert lawmen and Goldfields men during the day about aspects of the ceremonies, with the Goldfields Wongayi men standing up for Biblical standards, affirming ceremonies and acts that are Godly and standing against those they believe are not. They believe the lawmen will need to break free from some things or they will be really ostracised by Christian Aborigines and by God, and are telling them so. There are things there that are morally and Biblically wrong/evil.

There have been other times when small ceremonial changes have been made in Australia, but I feel this is a sign of significant cultural redemption developing. But it is warfare and we need to continue to support all involved in prayer, especially asking for wisdom and insight and strength.

It is probably also very significant that the last Wongayi 'wati' [initiated man] went to be with the LORD a few days after the event — shades of Simeon waiting for the Messiah's birth in Acts 2. He was a Christian who taught Sunday school in NSW country towns to other Aborigines many years ago.

After we sent out a call to prayer for this event, we received a number of encouraging emails — even people saying they have been waiting for this for many years. We also received a few phone calls and emails, particularly from missionaries and Bible translators, expressing very deep concern that this was exposing Wongayi to very powerful evil forces. The secrecy involved is a great concern, and I agree that this is not Godly. Prayer support for discernment and strength are very important. One linguist tried to convince me that God only created languages — not cultures — so he believes my basic starting point is flawed. I disagree, especially as Satan is a destroyer, not a creator.

There has been a lot of prayer support as we challenge forces in the culture and ceremonies. We know that Jesus has already won the battle over all evil spirits and Satan, and we must appropriate this in every part of life.

It is important to remember that this event came after significant times of spiritual warfare, including Wongayi Christian leaders travelling to the 'gates' of their country and to other significant places, praying and placing angels there to guard the gates against any evil — physical, moral or spiritual — from entering their land.

This move is breaking away from the missionary attitudes of a huge number of Christian leaders and people over the last few hundred years. You may feel threatened by it, or believe it is totally wrong, but please ask God what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches.

Over the years, many Christian Aborigines have said that they 'walked away from the Lord' to attend ceremonies and later 'came back to the Lord'. Some have said to missionaries 'After dancing and dancing for days, we didn't want to read the Bible or pray.'

I believe there are two reasons behind this attitude and these comments.

1. There are demonic powers at work in these ceremonies.

This is true, but it loses sight of Jesus' victory on the cross over Satan and all his hosts. Demons have NO power when Jesus and the Holy Spirit are present, and Christians have died to their own power, to sin and to Satan's power, and Jesus Christ Himself now lives in them.

2. They have developed an attitude — mainly through the influence of other Christians, including missionaries — that ALL of their culture, ceremonies, songs and dances are demonic, so they feel guilty over attending the ceremonies.

I am totally convinced that this is not true, and that the guilt is based basically on a lie, because God created every culture [see Genesis 11 - language and culture are intertwined]. In every culture, people have listened to Satan's lies, and the culture God gave them has been corrupted and needs to be redeemed and brought back to God through Jesus Christ.

There has been a racial blindness that assumes Aborigines are 'primitive' because many tribes didn't wear clothes traditionally, were nomadic, and didn't have permanent houses, agriculture, or laws and economics that made sense to outsiders. Most missionaries and other outsiders couldn't understand or accept these things or see anything of God in Aborigines.

I believe the time has come for a confrontation over these lies and corruptions, especially relating to Aboriginal culture in the Central Desert and Goldfields- but not a confrontation by hosts of angels snatching Jesus from the cross. That was not God's way, and He still surprises us over how He overpowers and disarms the enemy. Some evil practices have already been challenged by their own people and have been modified or changed, but it needs something much deeper.

A number of Indigenous Christian leaders around the world are now saying that the church has approached Indigenous people the wrong way and we need to show respect for the people in authority and for the traditions in their cultures - that is scriptural. Read how Joshua circumcised his men in Joshua 5:1-9, and Romans 13:4 and Colossians 1:16. Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day and went through the teaching leading up to his bar-mitzvah when he was 13.

Please read Acts 15: 1-12 and 23-29 to see how this type of issue was handled by the early apostles, where they decreed only four requirements that were not cultural transposition - abstain from drinking blood or eating meat from strangled animals or offered to an idol, and sexual immorality. But note that Paul observed the Jewish law carefully after he became a Christian, and had Timothy circumcised to make their ministry more effective with Jews [Acts 16:3]. Very few missionaries to Aborigines have been initiated to make their ministry more effective! Much of the past and even present missiology could be compared to Christians from one tribe trying to impose their initiation or wedding ceremonies on other tribes as a requirement of being Christian - clearly absurd.

We need to realize that the church is crippled and has locked itself out from completing the Great Commission by cutting off these lawmen - the gatekeepers of their land and people - who see the church only as a place for women and children. Without their involvement, we don't have the authority of those who have been placed in authority by God. =

Carnarvon Mission Reunion

at the ex Mission site, April 13 - 15th 2007.

Organised by Wangka Maya Link Up, together with the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre and the Carnarvon

Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation

Contacts

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Activities could include visits to the old Mission site at Ingada Village, art craft, Karaoke, healthy living activities, a Church service, story telling, a visit to the old cemetery, barbecue, exhibit photos. Talks about the future of Ingada Village.

Transformations in Western Australia

For many years, Rodney Rivers has been trying to get Walo Ani to minister in the Kimberley. Walo is from PNG, on staff

at Toowoomba City Church helping facilitate transformations in the Pacific and Australia. He was a speaker at the Highway of Holiness gathering in Perth last September.

Rodney met Walo in PNG while he was working with SIL. Rodney is from the Kimberley and was involved in translation of the Kreol Bible, due to be released and dedicated at the Kathering Convention, 4-6 May 2007.

Last July, Rodney travelled through the whole of the Kimberley, asking God which place was ready for transformation ministry with Walo. When he came to Looma, he saw Christians from totally different streams of the church meeting together at 5am for prayer and at other times during the week.

Walo will be ministering at Looma and in some other parts of WA 15-27 April.

Indigenous Discipleship Training School - March - August 2007

Ps Willy Dumas and Tweed Valley Community Church are running their first 6 month discipleship course from March to train and release young indigenous

Christians into mature ministry. It is a Certificate III in Theology.

They expect students will be granted Abstudy funding, but they need sponsors to help with a gap of around \$2000 per student to cover live-in accommodation, tuition fees and transport for the outreach phase.

Can you help? Maybe you can give \$100 or \$200 a month towards training a future indigenous leader - or even a one-off donation.

If you can help, please contact

Pastors Willy & Sandra Dumas, Tweed Valley Community Church,

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Coming Events

World Christian Gathering On Indigenous People

Jerusalem, Israel September 2008

Plan now to be there!

Easter Convention with Eagle Rock Community Church, Perth

at the Community Centre, Alcock/Yule Streets Maddington

Pastors Tim & Di Edwards invite everyone.

Rallies at 7.00pm Fri/Sat/Sun 6-8 April + morning teaching sessions and family sport and activities. Guest speakers.