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This is the first newsletter by COTARI. COTARI is a nonprofit organization founded to perform research related to reaching out to peoples of other religions, and to provide training for people interested in this area of ministry.

If you would like to know more about COTARI, please go to www.cotari.org.



Why COTARI?

Frank Hwang Choe,
President and Founder

Many people might wonder why we need another mission organization when there are so many of them already. I will explain why we need a new mission organization like COTARI.

I have participated in about ten short-term missions, visiting several different countries with one to four week time periods. I also studied missiology, a study on how to do Christian missions. After 32 years of service as an engineer in a large industrial company, I received a degree of Master of Divinity from a seminary and became an ordained minister. What did I learn from these experiences? What can I contribute to Christianity? I observed two trends in Christianity today. One is that somehow Christianity has not substantially penetrated those countries where one of the so-called great religions of the world dominates. The Christian populations in these countries are one to two percent or less, in spite of many hundreds of years of missionary efforts. This is true for all Muslim countries, for India, for Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia, and even for Japan and Taiwan. Sometimes, people blame political and social barriers for the failure to evangelize these countries. But how could that be true in Japan and Taiwan? There is nothing a missionary could not do in these countries. Therefore, political and social barriers could not be the sole reason Christianity has not penetrated these countries. In addition, China, South Korea, and some South American or African countries are teeming with Christians in spite of their political and social barriers. This picture

does not fit well with the geographical “10-40 window” either. This geographical descriptor provides a rough picture in geography, but does not explain why these regions are not evangelized. The real reason is that they have one of these great religions. This led me to think that the strategies modern missionaries are using might not be the same as those used by Jesus Christ or the Apostle Paul. I cannot forget the panoramic picture of 4.8 billion people of other religions that Lord showed me to spread the gospel to them 21 years ago. Few mission organizations do research in this area. If we keep failing, we cannot succeed unless we change our strategies. Doing research in mission strategies to evangelize peoples of other religions is the first reason I founded COTARI in 2010.

The other trend I observed is that very few Christians do evangelism. Moreover, few pastors do evangelism. Pastors appear to be ignorant about practical knowledge on how to do evangelism, and do not teach their congregation on this as a result. This is because seminaries do not teach about the practical aspects of evangelism. When I was attending seminary, they had one two-unit class that teaches both evangelism and apologetics together in the whole three year curriculum for my M. Div. degree. Doing evangelism is a commission (Mat. 28:18-20), but they say evangelism is a gift and should be done by those few people who are gifted. This often stems by misinterpreting “evangelists” in Eph. 4:11. The evangelists in Eph. 4:11 refers to a category of functions in the church, and are more like missionaries today. For example, Philip in Acts 8 is called an evangelist in Acts 21:8. Every Christian is called to do evangelism, and it is His commission, or a command from our Lord Jesus Christ. Following this command should be a natural Christian response to God’s plan of salvation for our humanity. His salvation plan is expressed in the whole Bible, starting in Gen. 3:15 (proto-evangelism) and Gen. 12:1-3 (Abrahamic Covenant) and continued on to Rev. 7:9-12 (praise to the Lamb and God at the end time by all peoples). Most Christians in the Western Church are happy that they are well off and they primarily care about their own welfare. They are becoming like Jews before the exile that occurred after the fall of Northern and Southern Kingdoms of ancient Israel. The Western Church is declining for this reason. I felt a strong need to teach what evangelism should be according to the Bible, and teach practical aspects of evangelism to Christians, in order to reverse the declining trend of the Western Church. This is the second reason I founded COTARI.

I believe that the Lord has been with us at COTARI from the beginning, and that He will continue to be with us and guide us to achieve His Kingdom purposes. May all our striving add favorably to His glory! Amen.

Chronology of COTARI

The following is a brief chronology of COTARI since its founding:

- January – February, 2010: A seminary professor and a missionary invited as directors of COTARI
- March 8, 2010: Article of Incorporation filed and endorsed by the Secretary of State of California as a nonprofit “advancement of religion” corporation.
- April 14, 2010: Secretary and Chief Financial Officer appointed.
- April 19, 2010: Statement of Information filed and endorsed, and also Article of Incorporation certified by the Secretary of State of California.
- May 19, 2010: Staff Meeting
- May, 2010: Contract agreement made with a web development expert for creating and maintaining the COTARI website, www.cotari.org
- June 18, 2010: Directors Meeting
- June 23, 2010: Statement of Information certified by the Secretary of State of California.
- August 13, 2010: Staff Meeting
- October 5, 2010: IRS granted tax exemption status to COTARI as a public charity organization
- November 5, 2010: Directors meeting
- November 22, 2010: FTB of California granted tax exemption status to COTARI as a public charity organization
- November 27, 2010: Contract agreement made with a Legal Counsel
- February 25, 2011: Staff Meeting
- March 25, 2011: Directors Meeting
- April, 2011: Completed two research papers – “Guidelines for Interpreting Other Religions’ Scriptures Through the Bible” and “A Missiological Interpretation of Romans 11:17.”
- May 20, 2011: Staff meeting. Chief Financial Officer resigned and the replacement appointed. Communication Officer appointed.
- June 15, 2011: Part 1 and Part 2 of the paper “A Missiological Interpretation of Romans 11:17” submitted to International Journal of Frontier Missions (IJFM)
- July 15, 2011: Staff meeting

Missiological Interpretation of Romans 11:17 (Part 1)

This paper is one of several papers that COTARI planned to write, and reviews the past interpretations of the allegory of grafting wild olive branches to the cultivated olive tree (called “reverse grafting” in this paper, because it is opposite to the normal practice of grafting), and consolidates various conflicting interpretations provided in the past, and provides a contextually proper interpretation. More importantly, a new missiological interpretation was discovered and is described. This new interpretation provides strong Biblical support for the frontier mission approaches such as Insider Movement, C5 Movement, and Church Planting Movement. Along with 1 Cor. 9:19-23 that teaches us about our attitude towards Christian missions,

the reverse grafting allegory in Rom. 11:17-24 is one of the two most important teachings that the Apostle Paul provides for Christian missions. More details on this paper will be provided in the next issue of Newsletter.

Coming COTARI Projects and Programs in the Near Future

COTARI has three main areas of research in the near future: (1) writing theological papers in support of evangelizing peoples of other religions, (2) holding mission seminars, and (3) providing interpretations of other religions’ scriptures through the Bibles.

Theological papers: COTARI plans to write several papers to provide better support for evangelizing peoples of other religions, to increase the understanding on other religions, and to awaken the Christians for the need to reach out to peoples of other faiths. These papers are targeting missionaries, seminary professors, and church leaders who have interest in reaching out to peoples of other faiths. The titles of the papers are tentatively:

1. Guidelines for Interpreting Other Religions’ Scriptures Through the Bible (completed).
2. A Missiological Interpretation of Romans 11:17 (See the excerpt above. Completed and submitted for publication to International Journal of Frontier Missions on 6/15/2011)
3. A Missiological Attitude of Christians Towards Peoples of Other Religions (to be completed)
4. A Review of Church History on the Role of Other Philosophies and Faiths for Enabling Christian Maturity (to be completed)
5. No Completion of the Great Commission Without Reaching Out to Peoples of Other Religions (to be completed)
6. Let My People Go Free (to be completed)
7. Application of Group Psychology in Missions (to be completed)

Mission Seminar: One of COTARI’s major programs in 2011/12 is to hold a one-day mission seminar regarding the frontier mission methodologies, especially related to Muslim. Four to five guest speakers will be invited including a key note speaker. This seminar is to educate the church leaders on evangelizing Muslim, and to assemble the experts in one location for that purpose. The papers presented in the seminar will be published as a single volume of proceedings. It is expected that the seminar would cost about \$ 10 K additionally.

Interpretation of Other Religions’ Scriptures Through the Bible: COTARI will provide interpretation of other religions’ scriptures through the Bible. The target religions are all major religions of the world: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, etc. The theological paper, “Guidelines for Interpreting Other Religions’ Scriptures Through the Bible,” will be used as guidelines.



One of COTARI's major projects to be started in 2011 is the project "Interpretation of the Qur'an Through the Bible." For this purpose, COTARI will invite two Islamic scholars and two Christian scholars as advisors. The results of this project will be used to train missionaries bound for the Islamic countries. Also books will be published, one for missionaries, pastors, and missiologists and the other for the general public. Amazingly, the Qur'an includes passages that support Trinitarian position and Jesus as Word of God, in spite of contrary belief by the most Christians. This project will apply hermeneutics to the interpretation of the Qur'an. Hermeneutics is a science of interpreting scriptures and other classical books. One important aspect of interpretation is the context of a particular writing. This project will consider the life context of Muhammad – he was a prophet, but also was an army general, and a political ruler of Islamic countries. Current Qur'anic interpretation has not applied the full scope of hermeneutics in the past. It is expected that this project would cost about \$ 300 K and take three to four years to complete.

Following Islam, similar projects will be initiated and completed for Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, etc.

Training Provided by COTARI

At this point, COTARI has not provided any training for missionaries bound for the regions dominated by other religions yet. This type of training will be initiated as Scripture Interpretation projects of other religions are completed.

COTARI provided a class, "Practical Guide for Evangelism," for interested people over four days, on November 18, December 2, December 9, and December 16 in 2010. COTARI also provided a couple of training seminars as follows for the people planning to go on a short-term mission trip to Eastern African countries: Sample Sermons on April 9, 2011, and Essence of Evangelism on May 14, 2011. These training seminar will be expanded in the future.

COTARI Vision

To spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to

PILGRIMS: Pilgrims are defined as **Peoples Identically Loved by God** and to be **Reclaimed In Mercy**, peoples of other faiths, the last peoples of the world resistant to the Gospel.

COTARI Missions

1. Performing research on different religions and providing proper interpretation of their scriptures and cultures.
2. Performing sociological studies for contradicting theological beliefs among religions.
3. Providing training for missionaries bound to those countries dominated by one of the great religions of the World.
4. Publishing the results of items 1 and 2 above.
5. Preparing evangelism training materials and providing evangelical training to Christians.
6. Providing seminars and lectures in the areas of missiology and evangelism.
7. Providing membership to individuals, other Christian organizations, and churches.
8. Other research topics deemed useful for the COTARI vision.

Help Needed at COTARI!

If your heart is so inclined, please visit www.cotari.com and click on **Donation** button in **About Us** section, and then click on **Donate** button in **Donate** section, and make your contribution to COTARI. If you are willing to serve in any of COTARI projects and programs, please let us know by e-mailing us to info@cotari.org. If you wish to participate in discussions with COTARI, click on **Dialog** section and join in the discussions in COTARI blog.

Individuals, churches, and organizations are welcome to join COTARI as members.

COTARI needs your suggestions or ideas for the name of this newsletter. If your suggestion is adopted, a gift will be provided.

If you have any suggestions regarding operation of COTARI or any aspects of COTARI, please let us know by e-mailing us to info@cotari.org.

Points to Ponder

Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:13)."

Sinners were prostitutes and tax collectors during the days of Jesus Christ. Who should be sinners today?

Apostle Paul said, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some (1 Corinthians 9:22)."

All people included Gentiles during the days of Apostle Paul. Whom should all people include today?