Corrigendum: Nestorian 'merchant missionaries' – A model for Christian Chinese migrants

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The author apologises for omitting the second author from their article, Nestorian 'merchant missionaries' – A model for Christian Chinese migrants, published 30 April 2015.

The second author Martin H. Pohlmann has now been added to the article. For more information please see updated authors' contributions section, which reflects the authors' role in the article.

Authors' contributions

Both authors (Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa and North-West University) equally contributed to the research and writing of this article.

Nestorian 'merchant missionaries' – A model for Christian Chinese migrants

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Both the Old and New Testament lay a foundation for the role of migrants in God's mission, *missio Dei*. With the unprecedented rise of the Global South to prominence in the world mission enterprise, China is poised to play a major role in fulfilling the Great Commission Mandate. Already Christian Chinese migrants are in many countries, possibly in over 140 countries of the world, including many of the unreached, unengaged people groups. The Nestorians, also called 'merchant missionaries', were amongst the first to take the gospel to China. They can serve as a methodological mission model, using some basic biblical principles, to help Christian Chinese migrants today, especially the Wenzhou businessmen, to fulfil their apostolic role in world mission.

Sowel die Ou as die Nuwe Testament lê 'n fondament vir die rol van nomades (rondtrekkendes) in God se missie (*missio Dei*). Met die Globale Suide se ongeëwenaarde toename in prominensie ten opsigte van die onderneming van wêreldsending, is China gereed om 'n hoofrol in die verwesenliking van die Groot Sendingopdrag te vertolk. Chinese Christen nomades is alreeds in 140 lande van die wêreld besig, waarvan baie tussen die onbereikte, onbesette mensegroepe is. Die Nestoriane, of 'kooplui-sendelinge', was van die eerste sendelinge wat die evangelie na China geneem het. Hulle voorbeeld kan as 'n sendingmodel dien om Chinese Christen nomades te help, veral die Wenzhou-sakemanne, om hulle apostoliese rol in wêreldsending te vervul.

Introduction

This is an article in the field of biblical evangelical theological missiology. The method of research will be firstly a biblical investigation into migratory missions. Examples will be investigated followed by trends of doing missionary work whilst people were migrating. The second method will be an investigation into a particular group of Nestorian Christian missionaries in history. Though not agreeing with their 'brand' of Christology (Artemi 2012:1–16), there will be appreciation shown for their 'migratory' method of mission. It is to this migratory methodology that this article will make a special appeal to demonstrate, with a definite historical reference, how the Chinese merchant migrants could be more effective in mission work today. In addition to the discussion of this respective Nestorian migratory methodology, of importance for further consideration is also the fact that the Bible gives various 'mission models' which will be covered in the content of the article. This article deals with migrant people who were effective by following some basic key principles of witness wherever they went. Specifically the 'grand models' are firstly the nation of Israel in their exile experience and the Early Church (Ac 2:1ff.) in its expansion from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8) as prophetic fulfilment of the continuing *mission Dei* unfolding in the grand narrative of God's missional text.

Throughout history, there is much evidence that migrant believers, exemplified for instance in the Moravians of the 18th century and also various Dutch, Methodist, Moravian and Baptist groups who came to Southern Africa under various denominational umbrella's after 1652, and others who travelled to other parts of the world and were used to take the message of God's love across the globe. This article will focus in particular on the migrant Nestorian Christians of the past, who could provide some elements of a model for Chinese migrant Christians today. Owens (2005) in his paper says:

> Future study based on recognition of the similarities between the two situations will facilitate a better understanding of the scriptural mandate of missions on one hand, and a more realistic understanding of the history of the expansion of Christianity on the other. (p. 12)

It is this very point that this article wishes to use as a *launch idea* to take things further.

A new phenomenon has developed whereby it is estimated that there are now Chinese Christians living in possibly over 140 countries outside of China. By the very mass of people involved, they have the potential to reach cross-culturally to the local people of every host country. The historical example is the Nestorian 'merchant missionaries', who spread the gospel eastward and by the end of the second century they had reached Northern Afghanistan. By the seventh century, these Persian missionaries had reached the 'end of the world', viz. *Chang'an*, the capital of the *T'ang* Dynasty in China (Moffett 1975:416). Thomson (2003:1–12) presents evidence in a paper on 20 November 2003 of the presence of Christians in China as late as the 7th and 8th centuries. Specifically speaking, we need to heed the caution offered by Hendrik Kramer (1977:56) when he says of the Nestorians: 'About the Nestorian missions we know far too little to hazard such assured opinions'.

The Nestorian mission enterprise of sharing the gospel 'as they went' seems to have contributed largely to the presence of Christianity in China by the 6th century. We suggest that this model might help Christian businessmen and women to spread the gospel more effectively, not only with other Chinese people, but also cross-culturally, and across racial, ethnic, and social barriers. This follows from Owens' (2005:11) thought of visioning mission through the lens of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9, viz. people 'from every tribe and language and people from every nation'.

Role of migration in Old Testament – Genesis

The Scriptures are replete with examples of how God used migrants. An eminent missiologist, Walls (2002:3–11), states, 'the Old Testament provides every known kind of migration – indeed the book of Genesis might almost readily have been named the book of Migrations'. Two of Israel's greatest patriarchs, Abraham and Joseph, were migrants. Joseph was forced into migration by his brothers who sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants from Gilead, who took him to Egypt (Gn 37:19–36). Abraham's migration was initiated with a call from God that would lead to multiple blessings, including blessings to the nations (Gn 12:1–3). Halliday (2012:409–410) states, 'In fact, our Biblical story is one rooted in migration and change … Our Christian story is grounded in migration; we have always been people on the move'. Hanciles (2008) agrees as follows:

> Crucially, the interface between human mobility and divine purpose in the biblical story is unmistakable and compelling. The inextricable link between migrant movement and the *Missio Dei* (the mission of God) arguably confirms the historicity of many events. It is strongly paradigmatic of the biblical God's intimate involvement in human affairs. In other words, to claim that the God of the Bible is a God of mission is to accept that He makes Himself known to human beings through ordinary, culturally conditioned experiences. And, as already noted, few experiences are more basic to the human condition than migration. Significantly, migration and exile form the bookends (of sorts) to the biblical record: the earliest chapters record the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:23), and the last book contains the magnificent vision of the apostle John, who is exiled on the island of Patmos (Rev 1:9). (p. 140)

God's global mandate for mankind, 'to be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth' was stated on two separate occasions – to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 and to Noah and his sons after the flood in Genesis 9:1. Though there are differences of opinion regarding the historical value of Genesis 1–11 within biblical studies, we agree with Blauw (1974:17) for the purposes of this article when he says: 'As our point of departure we choose the first chapters of the Bible, Gen. 1–11'. This is admittedly a conservative stance towards Scripture, but there is a consensus from Blauw to Henry (2011) on this matter. 'Man's rebellion spreads to all, and all are implicated and contaminated: family (Gen. 4); society (Gen. 6:5); culture (Gen. 9, 10); and finally, the whole world stands in rebellion against God (Gen. 11)', Steyne (1992:65) states.

The point for this section within this article is that mankind was to take all the knowledge that they possessed about God and all the blessings they had received from God's hand, and spread this knowledge, as they migrate to fill the earth. Henry (2011:23) explains the *missio Dei* as follows: 'Therefore we can speak of God as a "missionary God", and can understand the Church to be a commissioned people (Jn. 20:21).'

Role of migration in New Testament – Acts

Migration played a key role in God's plan for the nations. Whilst Genesis gives us one of those migratory scenarios – specifically in Abraham's journey, the New Testament also commences its early history with a migratory narrative. Within the New Testament, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to address the Jewish crowd, who were from key diaspora communities:

> Parthians, Medes, and Elamites: residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia: Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt, and parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs. (Ac 2:9–11)

Hengel (2000) commenting on this event writes:

> While Philo speaks about Jewish colonists, who are sent from the mother city, Jerusalem, to all parts of the civilized world, Luke exhibits a contrary tendency: he talks about pious Jews (and pagan converts to Judaism), who have returned from all over the world to Jerusalem. Here they hear in their native language (i.e. in the language of their country of origin) the new message, addressed to the entire world, concerning the 'great deeds of God' (Acts 2:11), as a first step toward a worldwide mission. The linguistic miracle is symbolically to prepare this worldwide mission. (p. 166)

Persecution could have been another method (Ac 8:1) used by God to move out the Jerusalem-bound followers toward the next phase of reaching the ends of the earth. Their group

was 'scattered', *diespárēsan*, a word that was used three times in Acts 8:1, 8:4, and 11:19. It is the root word for our English word *diaspora*. Santos (2011) summarises these three occurrences:

> In all three cases, *diaspeiro*, relates to the scattering of Christians of Hellenistic origin, Greek-speaking Jewish Christians from the *diaspora,* into areas with a non-Jewish majority (Acts 11:19), but also in the area around Jerusalem and toward Samaria (Acts 8:1). The unique contribution of these verses in the use of *diaspeiro* is that those who were scattered served an essential purpose in the expansion of early Christianity or to missions (Acts 8:4–8, 40; 11:19–21). (p. 28)

Whilst the scattering was not intentional on the part of the believers, it was clearly missional in effect and instrumental in God's overruling plan. Wherever they fled, they were witnesses used by God to plant his church beyond Jerusalem and Judea. Phillip took the gospel to Samaria (Ac 8:5), and others took the gospel to Phoenicia, Cypress and Antioch (Ac 11:19). In Antioch, those who had been scattered were 'telling the message only to Jews, but some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ' (Ac 11:19–20). The persecuted, scattered believers had crossed geographic, cultural, language, racial, and historical barriers in fulfilment of the four phases of Jesus' Acts 1:8 missionary Commission. Henry (2011) relates similarly to persecution as one of the contributing factors in the mission success of the church in Africa today:

> Although African nations face very serious problems such as poverty and disease, ethnic hostilities, non-democratic governments and religious persecution, African people are still turning to Jesus by the scores every day. (p. 103)

There seems to be something similar in all groups of effective Christians who share their faith within the daily context of life, no matter how difficult life is.

Pursuing an apostolic role for Chinese migrants

David Bosch (2007), an eminent South African missiologist refers repeatedly in his book, *Transforming mission,* to the force of Old Testament mission as centripetal, directed towards Jerusalem. Whereas Jesus' statement in John 20:21 describes mission more in centrifugal terms, moving away from Jerusalem towards the 'ends of the earth'. The Chinese *effort* of migratory missionaries seems to be part of this New Testament thrust.

Currently, Chinese Christian migrants are located in many countries of the world, mostly as merchants, small shop owners, and factory owners. In Botswana alone, the evidence of Chinese people is a recent phenomenon. The International Airport building outside the city of Gabarone was built almost entirely by Chinese migrant workers. Many converted Chinese are involved in Christian ministries, reaching out to other Chinese in their neighbourhoods or towns. There is a great need for them to also reach out across racial, ethnic, language, and religious barriers, to share the good news of the gospel with their host countrymen, in order for them to fulfil their role in God's plan for the nations. Wan (2011) agrees that:

> Diaspora Christian individuals and congregations have the potential to reach not only their kinsmen in the Diaspora, they also have the potential to expand their mission efforts to participate in cross-cultural missions to reach out to members of the host society. (p. 139)

Jesus himself took the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, then to Samaria and to Gentile regions north of Israel. Jesus then commissions the Church to do the same in their own way (Ac 1:8). The key is that we should be *his witnesses* as the *Spirit comes upon you* in moving within this impetus into mission.

Wenzhou businessmen (A Chinese sample)

Chan (2011:181–182) states that Wenzhou is a municipality in Zhejiang Province, with a population of just over nine million people. The businessmen and women are entrepreneurs by tradition, having the highest per capita income in China and the highest percentage of merchants in their population. They are amongst the richest group in China, with an estimation of over one billion dollars (USA) of liquidity ready for investment opportunities. Also, they have an age-old tradition as itinerant merchants, with an estimated 1.5 million of its merchants scattered throughout every part of China doing business and another half million merchants doing business in possibly over 140 countries around the world. Because of their wide national and international dispersion and their business acumen, they are called by some, 'the Jews of China'.

Cao (2012) describes them as:

> … new rich businessmen, locally called 'boss Christians', spearhead the revival. Wenzhou's recent Christian revival has benefited from the city's political marginality and a mission-driven local faith tradition as well as a vibrant household economy. It is the most Christianized Chinese city with a Christian population estimated to be as many as one million. This upwardly mobile class of Christian, usually with rural origins, has a separate identity from the official TSPM church, rural house church groups, and Beijing's intellectual house churches. Many Wenzhou churches are headed by boss Christians and are informally recognized by, but not officially registered with the local state. Although not affiliated with the TSPM or any other official organization, they operate above ground and develop activities and programs outside the boundaries of the traditional house church. (p. 29)

Within this affluence Wenzhou Christian businessmen share a generally common goal, 'God's China Vision' – the firm conviction that now, because of China's rising political economic power and global influence, it is the Chinese' turn to undertake the Great Mission of returning the gospel to Jerusalem. They believe that China will be the anchor leg in completing the Great Commission. They also

believe they have a debt to pay the western missionaries, who sacrificed their lives to bring the gospel to the Chinese (Cao 2012:36–44).

In addition, Wenzhou, with a possible enthusiastic estimate of one million Christians – which is about 11% of its population, has the highest percentage of Christians amongst all the cities in China. However, if the 'unregistered' Christians are included in the statistics, there could be about 1.5 million believers, or about 20% of the city's population. Also, 20% of the 100 000 Wenzhou international merchants, who live outside China, are rumored to be Christians. Chan (2011:183) writes about these Wenzhou international merchants, that these '… "merchant-cum-missionaries" are currently carrying the good news of inexpensive Chinese products as well as the Good News of free salvation to all corners of the world'. In highlighting six major missiological characteristics of these 'merchant-cum-missionaries', Chan (*2011*) continues:

1. These congregations are more ethnocentric than ecumenical in spirit, as Wenzhou Christians would gather together whilst Chinese Christians of other dialects worship in separate groups;
2. these congregations provide social functions along with spiritual care for Chinese communities and often serve as the only means of social support for merchants who are far away from home;
3. these congregations experience diaspora growth rather than cross-cultural growth, as almost all new converts are of similar ethnic origin, if not dialect;
4. most of these Chinese merchants are struggling to survive socially, spiritually, and financially;
5. because of difficulties in establishing long-term business and residency, these congregations are unstable with a high rate of membership turnover; and
6. these congregations are ambivalent to the local host community. (pp. 186–187)

We suggest that the Wenzhou Christian businessmen, in addition to reaching out to the Chinese diaspora, also reach out to their host countrymen, through sharing the gospel cross-culturally. According to Nyiri (2006), some Chinese believe that the burden to finish the great commission mandate has fallen onto their shoulders. He (2006) continues:

This view reverberates in official speeches, but its circulation goes far beyond state-endorsed narratives. In a rapidly growing global Chinese evangelical movement, there is in the words of Reverent Edward Wei of the British – based Chinese Overseas Christian Mission (COCM) – a 'worldwide sentiment that the responsibility for or instrument of mission has moved over to the Chinese' (p. 105).

This takes the challenge presented by Howard D. Owens in his lecture presented at the National Meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society in 2005, to a different level and specific application. This mission mandate is a challenge given to every Christian of all times in all places according to Matthew 28:19. It is not a burden for these migrant Chinese alone. The point is that every Christian of any time should have a mission vision for the nations of the world. One thing has to be recognised by every Christian today, as Henry (2011:107) states: 'There is a need to commence with a bold recognition of the fact that the Church-in-mission today is facing a world fundamentally different from anything else if faced before'.

The Nestorian model

Early Christianity outside the Roman Empire spread down the Euphrates valley until the majority of the population of Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq, had embraced the Christian faith – at least in principle. The expansion continued to move down through Yemen and it is rumoured to have been adopted as the official religion of the royal house. It then moved down into Iran and northward to the Caspian Sea. The first nation to adopt Christianity as its state religion was not the Roman Empire, but the Kingdom of Armenia. There is evidence that Christianity 'gained support from the State' in AD 301 (Welcome Armenia s.a.). This Eastern movement was rooted in the Persian Empire. The persecution that was experienced in the Roman Empire directed toward Christians by Decius and Diocletian was even more brutal amongst the Persian Christians. In a 41 year period in the fourth century, an estimation of over 16 000 Christians were put to death by the Persian Emperor, Sapor II. One major difference between the Christianity in the Roman and the Persian Empires was that the Persian form of Christianity never had an emperor, such as Constantine in Rome, to show them imperial favour or provide political security (Walls 2000:108).

Eastern Christianity continued to spread through the Persian Empire and beyond, moving along the trade routes by land and sea until it made its presence known in India, Sri Lanka, and China. Kramer (1977) is wrong to imply that effective mission work in China is only a recent phenomenon: 'Since the day when Morrison posted himself at the gates of this empire, missions have gone through various stages' (1977:378). There were much earlier effective mission contacts with China. Concerning this early spread of Eastern Christianity in Asia, Walls (2000) writes:

> That Eastern Christianity reached China is also recognized; those interested in synchronous parallels might note that the missionary whose Chinese name was Alopen was putting Christianity before the Chinese Emperor in 635, much the same time as the faith was put before the king and council of Northumbria in northern England. Indeed, if we are thinking in terms of geographic extent, the eastward spread of the Christian faith across Asia is still more remarkable than the western spread across Europe … If we look at the eastward as well as the westward Christian movement, and look at it on the grids of the Persian and Chinese Empires as well as on that of the Roman Empire, it is evident that there was almost a millennium and a half of Christian history in Asia before even Western Christian mission in Asia began. It is equally evident that the

> early Christian history of Asia is not a marginal or ephemeral one, but substantial. The ancestors of modern Asian Christianity exist, but their names are not being called. And both Western and Asian Christians will remain impoverished by this omission until the work of reconception of the syllabus progresses. (p. 110)

The Christianity that spread to these Eastern regions was assigned various names like the Syrian Church, or the Nestorian Church, or the Church of the East (Owens 2006:134). In early Chinese text, Christianity is referred to as the 'Persian religion' (Baum & Winkler 2000:47).

According to Jenkins (2009:45), the Nestorians led one of the greatest missionary ventures in Christian history. By AD 800, their church extended deep into Central and Eastern Asia and was firmly rooted in southern India, to the extent that as many as a quarter of all Christians in India were Nestorians. Moffett (1975:416) adds that by the end of the 2nd century, Christians are mentioned as far towards the east as northern Afghanistan, and reports of mass conversions amongst the Huns and Turks in Central Asia began in the 5th century onwards. By the 7th century, Persian missionaries had reached the 'end of the world', Chang'an, present day Xian, the capital of the T'ang dynasty in China. Moffett (1975) also points out that:

> This Asian Christianity for a thousand years spread faster and farther than either of the Western sects, Roman Catholicism or Greek Orthodoxy. It is further distinguished by intense missionary activity, excessive asceticism, theological orthodoxy (for the most part), and a quickness to indigenize, all of which help to explain its rapid cross-cultural expansion. Its first characteristic was missionary compulsion. From the very beginning, Nestorian, or 'Syrian' Christianity as it is better called in this period, was a spreading, evangelizing faith, growing so fast that within a century and half it has broken out of its first bastions in the little semi-independent border principalities of Osrhoene (Edessa) and Adiabene (Arbela) and had permeated the Persian Empire from 'the mountains of Kurdistan to the Persian Gulf'. (p. 419)

Owens (2006:134–136) writes that these merchant missionaries *combined* their business acumen with their desire to spread the Christian message along the trade routes of Asia. *This is a key point in painting the Nestorian model.* The point is that any Christian today could imitate this practice. They were less like traditional missionaries and more like Christians who supported themselves by their business and who had a zeal for sharing their faith (The New Testament apostle Paul was a bi-vocational missionary or tent maker according to 1 Cor 9:6). The close relationship between these Persian merchants and their missionary zeal is confirmed by the metaphorical meaning of *merchant* in the Syriac language. In the language of the Persians, the word for merchant is *tgr,* which was often used as a synonym for a Persian missionary. Owens (2006:137) citing Harris says that even though the Nestorian missionary model included both professional missionaries and lay missionaries, both types made their living as merchants, carpenters, blacksmiths, and weavers, and were not supported financially by the church structures. Owens added:

> These Christians had the character to persevere through difficulty, the training to transmit the Gospel message, and the social networks to encounter the men and women who had not yet heard of the Savior from Nazareth. These missionaries took the Gospel to the extremities of Asia. (p. 137)

The Nestorians had two primary schools where they received biblical theological training, one in Edessa and the other in Arbel. Edessa is described as the headquarters of the Nestorian missionary expansion in the 3rd century, and as Moffett (1975), relying on Segal, states, Edessa was famous for several historical reasons:

> Edessa is undoubtedly one of the oldest centers of the Christian faith in the world. It had the earliest known Christian church building; it produced the first New Testament translation, the first Christian king, the first Christian state, perhaps the first Christian poet, even the first Christian hermits. (p. 418)

Nestorians were trained for three years in these two schools, and then departed to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Some of the missionaries established new monasteries in the lands of their sojourn and those became in themselves new training centers. 'Future merchant missionaries were among the students in such schools. Aspiring merchants "were expected to study the Psalms, the New Testament, and attend courses of lectures before entering on a business career"' (Owens 2006:139). This model of 'missionary training and sending' has been followed by many groups all over the world. One of them being the Moravians, based in Moravia, and consolidated under the leadership of Count N. Zinzendorf (26 May 1700 – 09 May 1760). Anyone can visit the Moravian Mission Station in Genadendal in the Cape to see a yesteryear mission still active. The basic model of the Moravians was for people to be converted to Christ, have an evidential experience of Christ and then after elementary training they were sent into the world. This is exactly what the Acts narrative allows for. Not for everyone, but many people become migrant missionaries within the context of business travel just as the Chinese Merchant missionaries are doing.

Conclusion – A way forward for the Chinese mobile merchants of today

There are at least seven key missiological principles presented below that should be considered by the Wenzhou and other Chinese Christian migrants, to help them fulfil their apostolic mission calling. The same would apply to anyone else who felt the same but were different ethnically or economically. Paula Harris (2002:33–50) explored the general 'professional' model of recruiting missionaries to go into worldwide mission enterprises. The costs of training seminary students in a traditional model is prohibitive and then the costs of maintaining traditional agency-supported missionaries 'on the field' is exorbitant and needs to be revised. This article argues that the 'Nestorian model' provides a 'simpler' biblically practiced method (Ac 1–28) that could assist

not only the Chinese merchant missionaries, but anyone else wanting to 'do missions' in this new era. It is only one effective model amidst many others:

1. Nestorian merchant missionaries were missionaries first, who then did business for a living, and not the other way round. As mentioned, this was already practiced by the 'tent-making' apostle Paul of the New Testament. Chinese merchant traders should re-assess this value and adopt it.
2. Nestorian merchant missionaries were not ethnocentric, rather they took the gospel across culture, language, ethnic, geographical, political, economic, social, and racial barriers to reach the ends of the earth. A parallel can be seen in the Moravian movement. They were mostly German, yet they are known to have had a profound influence on the English Reverent John Wesley. Especially as Chinese merchant Christians travel to Africa and do business in Africa, they will have to make deliberate effort to reach out across cultures with people and share their faith indiscriminately.
3. Nestorian merchant missionaries underwent three years of training that included an intense study of the Scriptures, before they departed on their mission. Most mission training colleges do the same for candidates. The question is how busy merchant people can be trained in the Bible and theology today. No doubt, the effort needs to be made and time sacrificed, however the method of instruction could be different. There are many more ways to access training today through distance learning, for example by using the Internet and other social network outlets.
4. Nestorian merchant missionaries established training schools in places they sojourned in as a means to multiply other trained merchant missionaries. Perhaps short courses and speedier learning methods could be adopted by merchants today.
5. Nestorian merchant missionaries were able to identify 'cultural bridges' to share the gospel in a local culture, so that the work planted was indigenous. Eugene Nida (1968:2) says rightly: 'If we are to understand the role of religion in human life, we must examine it in relation to the basic drives and motivations, which are fundamentally the same in all cultures and which are responsible for making all societies "tick".'
6. Nestorian merchant missionaries had a vision and a passion for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, to reach the unreached people groups. The focus was on going the extra geographical mile if need. This should be pre-eminent in all of us (Ac 1:8).
7. Nestorian merchant missionaries used their networks to facilitate other missionaries being deployed to multiply their mission efforts. Networking is the language of today. From business customers to social media, there is almost no limit to networking.

Henry (2011:173–187) concludes in his book, *Quintessential mission*, with four 'missional verbs' that everyone needs to consider, viz. *Go*, *See*, *Feel* and *Do*. Effective mission models can all be assessed to include these four verbs. Effective mission, as modelled by the early Nestorian migrants, is not a contemplative philosophical occupation. Much like business itself, the mission of the church needs to be obeyed (Mt 28:19), seen for oneself (Jn 10:35), it needs to be moved by deep compassion (Mt 23:27) and then something needs to be done.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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