

---

## INVITED ARTICLES: BUSINESS AS MISSION

### **“BUSINESS AS MISSION” HYBRIDS: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA**

*Steve Rundle*  
Biola University

#### **INTRODUCTION**

“Business as Mission,” as the name suggests, involves businesses that have a missionary impulse, and as such, fit the definition of hybrid organizations. Neither motivated by money, nor embarrassed about making it, these enterprises and the entrepreneurs who start them defy easy classification. They are hybrids in their purpose, and in many cases, their organizational structures. Many are organized as “regular” for-profit businesses, but others have ties, either formal or informal, to the tax-exempt, nonprofit world.

The term itself—often abbreviated simply as “BAM”—first began to appear in the Christian business lexicon about twelve years ago. Since then, many Christian universities have created courses, convened seminars and conferences, and organized student trips around this theme. Serious scholarly work also started appearing on the subject at about the same time.<sup>1</sup> Those who have followed the “Social Entrepreneurship”

(SE) literature will notice many similarities. In fact, I often encourage people who are trying to gain a better understanding of the management and legal issues associated with starting a BAM business to consult the SE literature. It is in many ways more mature and well developed than the BAM literature, and many of the challenges (e.g., how to avoid mistakes that can invite trouble with the IRS) are the same. Clearly the motivations are different; social entrepreneurs want to do good for their fellow man, while so-called “BAMers” are motivated, ultimately, by a desire to serve God and draw people’s attention to Him. On the surface the differences can be subtle, and in fact there are many things the two groups can learn from each other. But the Christ-centered nature of BAM is a significant difference that gives rise to different questions and requires a more interdisciplinary approach to the subject.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview of the emergence of BAM as a movement and a field of scholarly inquiry. It is not an all-encompassing literature review, but rather a limited one that is meant to provide a chronology of this young field. This is followed by some

---

1. See, for example, Rundle (2000), Befus (2001), Lai (2003), Johnson (2003), Rundle and Steffen (2003), Silvos (2002), and Yamamori and Eldred (2003).

suggestions for further research. One limitation of this review is that the observations and suggestions are those of an economist only. If this is indeed an interdisciplinary field, then a more comprehensive understanding of this field and the areas where further research is needed will by definition require contributions by scholars from other fields. The paper concludes with a few thoughts about how to encourage more scholarship in this area.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF BAM SCHOLARSHIP

While the practice of Business as Mission in various forms can be traced throughout the church's history,<sup>2</sup> as a field of scholarship, BAM is new and undeveloped. Baker (2006) notes that the words "business," "commerce" or "industry" are rarely mentioned in the standard histories or theologies of Christian mission. One is similarly hard pressed to find any mention of "world mission" or "Great Commission" in the business literature, although discussions about faith in business have a long history. (See for example, Miller, 2007.)

### Tentmaking: The Forerunner to BAM

Scholarly interest in the role of business in world mission first began to appear around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century under the heading of "Tentmaking." Based on the missionary model of the Apostle Paul and his friends Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:3, Romans 16:3, 2 Timothy 4:19), mission experts began experimenting with the idea that one's professional skills can be used as instruments to advance God's kingdom, particularly in less-Christianized countries.

It is worth pausing here to reflect on Paul's motivations and strategies, because they reveal some interesting and surprising facts that have important implications for the tentmaking debate. First, a strong case can be made that Paul's mission work was, with a few exceptions, largely

self-supported. At a minimum, he earned his own way in Corinth (1 Cor. 9), Ephesus (Acts 20:34-35), and Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8). Second, he worked even though he did not have to. In 1 Cor. 9 he makes the strongest case in the Bible in favor of donor support for those in spiritual ministry. He did receive some financial support from the Philippians (Phil. 4:15-16), but his vigorous refusals to accept support in 1 Cor. 9:12 and 15 suggests that it was not his *modus operandi*. Given that Paul's passion in life was to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16) and see churches spring up in the spiritually driest places (Rom. 15:20), this raises the important question of "Why did Paul work when he had every right to live off the financial support of others instead?"

A careful study of his letters reveals the answer. For Paul, self-support was an integral part of his missionary strategy. Preaching the gospel for free added credibility to his message (2 Cor. 2:17, Titus 1:10-11) and served as a model for his converts to follow (2 Thess. 3:7-9, 1 Thess. 2:10-11, Eph. 4:28-32, 1 Cor. 4:12, 16, 1 Cor. 9:12-18). Remember that many of his followers were reformed idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, and extortionists (1 Cor. 6:9-11) who likely had no idea what a Godly lifestyle looked like. By modeling a disciplined and Christ-centered lifestyle, Paul helped transform not only their spiritual worldviews, but their economic and social conditions as well.

Inspired by Paul's model, modern tentmaking pioneers like Ruth Seimens, J. Christy Wilson and Ken Crowell set out in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century to demonstrate that the model works today; that one's professional training and experience can in fact be assets for world mission rather than liabilities.<sup>3</sup> However, the "sacred-secular dichotomy" was deeply entrenched in the church, and tentmaking was viewed with great suspicion. The

2. See, for example, Danker (1971), Baker (2006), Pointer and Cooper (2006), and Owens (2006).

3. Admittedly all three were reluctant pioneers because their initial plans were to serve as traditional missionaries, but for various reasons they found those avenues to be closed. See Seimens (1997), Wilson (1979) and Goheen (2004).

concerns tended to revolve around several key issues:

1. Time management, and specifically whether tentmakers were disadvantaged because the time they spent at work meant less time for “doing ministry;”
2. Sources of income, and specifically whether it was better for tentmakers to be self-supported or donor-supported; and
3. Accountability, that is, whether self-supported tentmakers represented a new breed of “lone wolf missionaries” who did not want to submit to the authority of a sending church or missionary sending agency.

On the issues of time management and income, Siemens, Wilson and Crowell were in basic agreement that tentmaking was by definition a self-supporting missions model, and that there is no necessary tradeoff between work and ministry. It is important to note, however, that unlike the more recent “Faith and Work” literature, the word “ministry” was understood to mean evangelism. In other words, work was consistent with ministry only in the sense that it created opportunities for evangelism. With the exception of Ginter (1998), there were few tentmaking advocates who were emphasizing the God-pleasing nature of the work itself, or otherwise promoting a broader definition of ministry or mission. On the third issue of tentmaker accountability, there was more disagreement. While some believed formal ties with a missionary sending agency was a good thing, Siemens was an outspoken critic of such links, believing that agencies were not sending true “Pauline-style” tentmakers, but “missionaries in disguise” instead. She did favor accountability, but felt that it should be with the tentmaker’s home church, not a missionary sending agency.

The first noteworthy scholarly contribution to this field was the now classic book by William Danker (1971) called *Profit for the Lord: Economic Activities in Moravian Missions and the Basel*

*Mission Trading Company*.<sup>4</sup> This remarkable study documented the role businesses played in the missionary strategies of the Moravian Church and the Basel Mission Society in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. At times the businesses served as funding engines for their missionary endeavors abroad, and at other times the businesses were more integrally part of the missionary strategy. Put in today’s language, the businesses were at times examples of “Business for Mission” and at other times, examples of “Business as Mission.” In either case, the businesses were always intended to be financially self-sustaining, and there was no distinction made between secular work and sacred work. All work was seen as sacred (Danker, p. 29). The book is essential reading for BAM scholars and practitioners alike, as it offers a candid appraisal of the successes and failures of these pioneering businesses, and the lessons have surprising relevance today.

Possibly more significant for the tentmaking and BAM movements was the publication in 1979 of J. Christy Wilson’s book *Today’s Tentmakers*. Written at a more popular level, its primary focus was on the contemporary importance of tentmaking. In addition to a short autobiography, the book provides a biblical basis for tentmaking along with practical advice for individuals and churches that are considering tentmaking as a possible mission strategy. Wilson defends the validity of self-funded missions, and maintains that there is no necessary tradeoff between work and ministry. A careful reading of his book, however, suggests that work’s primary kingdom significance is as a platform for evangelism, rather than an act of worship and a ministry of its own kind. Wilson is also a strong advocate of tentmakers forming teams and seeking an accountability relationship with either a sending church and/or missionary sending agency.

Reinforcing this view of tentmaking was an empirical study by Hamilton (1987) that sought

---

4. Subsequently republished in 2002 by Wipf & Stock Publishers.

to identify the factors that contribute to a tentmaker's effectiveness, or lack thereof. He defined tentmakers as cross-cultural, self-funded Christian workers who are recognized in the host culture as something other than a religious worker, but trained, called and motivated like any other missionary. His definition of "effectiveness" is less clear, although he states that his evaluation was based at least in part by a modified Engel Scale (p. 98). This measure of one's spiritual progress, together with an emphasis in the book on evangelism, suggests that spiritual outcomes were his main concern. By this definition, the tentmakers that ranked as most effective had the following characteristics:

1. Prior experience leading an evangelistic Bible study;
2. Their primary motivation for going abroad was to evangelize;
3. They believed God called them to be tentmakers rather than traditional missionaries;
4. They had prior experience sharing their faith to others at home;
5. They had a strong relationship with their home church; and
6. They were enthusiastic about tentmaking to the point of recruiting others to be tentmakers.

By the late 1980s, tentmaking was becoming quite trendy in evangelical missions circles, a trend that was endorsed by mission statesman Tetsunao (Ted) Yamamori's influential book *God's New Envoys* in 1987, and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's first-ever statement on tentmaking in 1989.<sup>5</sup> The Lausanne statement affirmed the role Christian lay people could play in world missions, and gave local churches the responsibility for recruiting and equipping people to be cross-cultural witnesses

among unreached people groups. Church congregations were also given the responsibility of providing pastoral care for their tentmakers while on the field, and helping them with re-entry culture shock when they returned home.

It is impossible to pinpoint the exact date or cause, but by this time many missionaries with little or no work experience outside of a church were being encouraged to consider tentmaking as a way to gain entry into countries that were otherwise closed to missionaries. New mission agencies began springing up that were specifically focused on getting missionaries into these "creative access countries." This new generation of tentmaker was encouraged to raise donor support (to create a system of accountability and prayer support) and find tentmaking "platforms" that would not require too much time and thus distract them from their ministry goals. For the average Christian, there was no longer much of a difference between a tentmaker and a donor-supported missionary, except that missionaries operated openly in their host country, and tentmakers had to be more discreet about their true purpose for being in the country.

In response, some mission leaders started distancing themselves from the tentmaker label. For example, the U.S. affiliate of Tentmakers International Exchange—an organization called Intent—introduced the term "kingdom professional" to describe people who, rather than being ambivalent about work, were unapologetically committed to their professions, and saw their work as the necessary context for holistic ministry. In another example, tentmaking pioneer Gary Taylor (1998) wrote a blunt criticism entitled "Don't Call Me a Tentmaker," in which he complained that he "found few in the missions industry who could work in the normal secular sense of the term. It seemed very few cues remained from pre-missionary work-life to guide them into producing for their living and witnessing for their calling" (p. 24).

Another tentmaking pioneer, Patrick Lai, tried to clarify rather than abandon the tentmak-

5. The Lausanne Tentmaking Statement can be found at <http://www.globalopps.org/lausanne.htm>

ing label by introducing a nomenclature that differentiated tentmakers into five categories. At one end (T-1) were working professionals who were transferred by their employers to an overseas assignment but who were not well trained in cross-cultural ministry, and therefore not very effective as tentmakers. At the other end of the spectrum (T-5) were donor-supported missionaries who perceived their tentmaking “platform” mainly as a cover for missionary work. In between these two extremes, says Lai, was the Apostle Paul (T-3), who had a single-minded focus on church planting but who nevertheless took his work seriously and was not averse to receiving donor support on occasion.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these efforts to clarify, and other attempts to defend a more biblical perspective on tentmaking by people like Seimens (1998), Ginter (1998), Rundle (2000) and English (2001), confusion over the definition and purpose of tentmaking continued to grow.

### **The Emergence of BAM**

As far as I am aware, the term “Business as Mission” first began to appear in the late 1990s at a pair of conferences focusing on the redemptive potential of Christian-managed businesses in Central Asia. BAM was similar to early definitions of tentmaking in that it was self-supporting and laity-driven, but it was also different because of its exclusive focus on business, and its embrace of a more holistic understanding of mission. Indeed, in a presentation given at those conferences, Markiewicz (1999) emphasized the role businesses can play in promoting the social and economic transformation of a nation, and affirmed the missional legitimacy of business *on those grounds alone*.

Several theologians and missiologists provided important refinements of this point. Among

missiologists, Myers (1999) and Kirk (2000) made strong biblical cases in support of a broader understanding of mission—one that sees the purpose of the church as going beyond mere evangelism, and including all manner of personal and social reconciliation. Among theologians, Sherman and Hendricks (1990), Novak (1996) and Stevens (1999, 2001), among others, defended the intrinsic value of work and confronted the so-called “sacred-secular dichotomy” as it pertains to work, ministry and business. According to these theologians, to the extent that our “secular” work and our businesses contribute to the common good, our work is “missional” and “sacred,” and pleasing to God. By encouraging lay people to leave the marketplace to go into a more narrowly defined “ministry,” the church actually undermines its global impact.

Encouraged by the affirmation of this message, the idea of “Business as Mission” struck a chord with Christian business professionals and the term took on a life of its own. Within a short time there were conferences being held and books being produced on this topic.<sup>7</sup> By 2004 the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization identified BAM as an important new development in world mission and invited about 70 people from around the world to discuss this matter at its conference in Pattaya, Thailand. The official document that was subsequently produced (see Tunehag, McGee and Plummer, 2004) states plainly that “Business is a mission, a calling, a ministry in its own right.” It goes on to say that “Ultimately churches, mission agencies and kingdom businesses have the same purpose: to bring glory to God’s name among all nations.”

The week-long Lausanne meeting was made up of a geographically and ethnically diverse group of business and mission scholars, business professionals, missionaries, and pastors. As might be expected for such a diverse group, there were several areas of disagreement, even at the end,

6. Lai’s nomenclature was originally drafted in 2001, and widely circulated on the internet. Today the only place it can be found on the internet is at the end of a response by David English at <http://www.globalopps.org/papers/tentmaking%20definition.htm>. A revised version can also be found in Lai (2005), pages 21-28.

7. See, for example, Befus (2001), Silviso (2002), Rundle and Steffen (2003) and Yamamori and Eldred (2003).



which are discussed in more detail in Johnson and Rundle (2006). For example, do businesses that are started by (nonprofit) mission agencies and sustained with the help of donor subsidized labor or capital qualify as “real businesses?”<sup>8</sup> If there are no concrete evangelism and church planting goals, can it still be considered BAM? And what are the essential ingredients of a mutually beneficial partnership between a business and a mission agency or church? Like their secular counterparts, Christian-led hybrid organizations have much to learn about effectively managing and governing these enterprises. Mission leaders naturally prefer that agencies and/or churches have final authority over the endeavor, but many business people see that as a recipe for ruin. The preference of business leaders is to control key aspects of the partnership themselves so as to not jeopardize the viability of the business. In so doing, the outcomes that are favored by the mission leaders may be at risk.

The final document that was produced was not intended to resolve every question, and is ambiguous enough in these areas as to allow for a variety of interpretations. That said, a survey of other definitions seems to reinforce many key ideas that are found in the Lausanne statement. For example, Eldred (2005) describes BAM as “for-profit business ventures designed to facilitate God’s transformation of people and nations” (p. 60). Johnson and Rundle (2006) define BAM simply as “the utilization of for-profit businesses as instruments for global mission” (p. 25), where “mission” is understood to include transformation at the personal and social level. Johnson (2010) later elaborates on this by describing a BAM business as “a for-profit commercial business venture that is Christian led, intentionally devoted to being used as an instrument of God’s mission (*missio Dei*) to the world, and is operated in a crosscultural environment, either domestic or international” (p. 28).

8. The alternative being “fake businesses” run by “undercover missionaries.”

In fact, emphases on BAM as cross-cultural, intentional, and holistic witness within an authentic, for-profit business context can be found in most definitions of BAM or BAM practitioners, including those presented in Rundle and Steffen (2003), Rundle (2003), Eldred (2005), Baer (2006), Tunehag (2008) and Russell (2010). The exceptions, while few in number, come in two extremes. At one end are those who maintain that, to the extent that they are fulfilling their calling, all Christians in business are doing BAM, regardless of their location, intentions or impact. At the other extreme are those that, like one mission agency’s recent advertisement for a BAM seminar, define BAM as “missions projects with business providing cover for the missionary.” These exceptions notwithstanding, it appears that a consensus is emerging on the definition of BAM, one that emphasizes several basic points. Specifically, BAM is:

1. Self-funded (hence the need for profitability);
2. Laity-driven (hence the frequent reminders about “calling” and the doctrine of the “Priesthood of all Believers”);
3. Intentional (which excludes those who are not thinking strategically about their missional impact);
4. Holistic (that is, focused on the multiple “bottom lines” of economic, social and spiritual outcomes); and
5. Cross-cultural (and specifically concerned about the world’s poorest and least-Christianized peoples, although depressed urban settings in the developed world may also qualify).


It is important to note, however, that nothing in this list necessarily excludes businesses that are owned by nonprofit organizations. I will confess to being much more of a purist about this issue in the past. I believed then, and still believe now, that the newest and most interesting development in this area is that “regular” Christians in business are being forced to think globally

in terms of their production processes, customers and supply chains. It is through these market pressures that God is raising up a new kind of missionary for a new generation. By comparison, nonprofit-funded missionaries are not new at all, and even the operation of business by missionaries is not entirely new.

My views on this matter have been evolving, however, in large part because I do not believe it is

a “hill worth dying on.” The social entrepreneurship literature has settled this matter long ago by accepting that different circumstances can call for different organizational structures. Gregory Dees (1998), who is one of the most influential SE scholars, makes this point with the following diagram. It illustrates social entrepreneurship as a continuum between “pure charity” and “pure business.”

**Figure 1: The “Social Enterprise Spectrum”**



Stakeholders	Pure Charity	Hybrid	Pure Business
Customers/Beneficiaries	Pay nothing	Subsidized rates or mix of payers & nonpayers	Market rates
Capital	Donations & grants	Below-market capital or of donations & market-rate capital	Market rates
Workforce	Volunteers or donor-supported	Below-market wages or mix of volunteers and fully paid staff	Market rates
Suppliers	In-kind donations	Special discounts or mix of donations & purchased supplies	Market rates

Adopted from Dees (1998)

In the Christian missions world, one can think of the traditional missionary as being a “pure charity” in that he or she does not charge money for his/her services, and therefore is funded by donors. Conversely, the “regular” business described earlier is a “pure business” in that it charges a market rate for its products or services and pays market rates for its capital, labor and supplies. God can work through either a charity or a business, or a hybrid organization that is a combination of both. The task of Christian business scholars is to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and to begin equipping the next generation of missionary. With this foundation in place, we are now ready to turn our attention to mapping out a research agenda.

## AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Perhaps the most obvious and urgent area that requires further research is the question of BAM’s effectiveness, and how it differs from what one might call “business as usual” or “missions as usual.” Four recent studies have attempted to answer these questions, and have reached somewhat contradictory conclusions. The first and most ambitious is a study by Patrick Lai (2003) that was part of his work toward a doctoral degree at the Asia Graduate School of Theology. Subsequently revised and republished in 2005 under the title *Tentmaking: Business as Mission*, Lai surveyed about 450 tentmakers (not all were in a business context) who were serving in the so-called 10/40 Window, questioning them about their back-

grounds, motives, habits and outcomes. Like the Hamilton study some twenty years earlier, Lai's definition of "effective" centered on evangelistic outcomes, and specifically: (1) the number of people they (the tentmaker) led to Christ; (2) the number of people they disciplined in the Word; and (3) the number of churches they planted. Most of his subjects were affiliated with missionary sending agencies that emphasized evangelistic outcomes over other measures of kingdom impact.

Predictably, those who stood out as most effective were spiritually mature and evangelistically zealous, as well as socially well-adjusted, focused, and well organized.<sup>9</sup> Yet, Lai also discovered something counterintuitive: those who believed the ultimate objective of mission was simply to win people to Christ were actually *less* effective in accomplishing these goals. The most consistently effective tentmakers were those who defined their objective as "transforming society" more generally. Evangelism and discipleship mattered a great deal to these tentmakers, but their ultimate objective was much broader than that. These findings are important and interesting, but the narrow definition of "effective" combined with the sample selection bias raises questions about the generalizability of the findings.

Another study, which also considered the effectiveness of BAM, reached a similar conclusion. Like the previous study, this one was part of a doctoral program undertaken at Asbury Theological Seminary (Russell, 2008) that was later published in 2010 under the title *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission*. In an effort to hold as many cultural and geopolitical variables constant as possible, Russell focused on a single city—Chiang Mai, Thailand—and conducted an in-depth study of twelve self-identified missionary-run businesses there. The results were similar to Lai's, although much more pronounced—those

who had a single-minded focus on evangelism and church planting were surprisingly *less* effective at producing converts than those who had a broader definition of effectiveness. Stated differently, those with a more holistic understanding of their purpose for being in the country actually generate more spiritual fruit than those who have a single-minded focus on spiritual fruit! As interesting and significant as these findings are, however, they also have limited generalizability because of the small sample and the location-specific nature of the study.

A third study was conducted as part of a Master's thesis at Eastern University by Christopher Brown. Subsequently published by Bronkema and Brown (2009), the study looks specifically at the impact of BAM in the area of social and developmental transformation. The authors find evidence that, while much is said about the "multiple bottom lines" of BAM, in practice, societal and developmental concerns take a distant back seat to the economic and evangelistic bottom lines. Indeed, of the 39 "practitioners and theorists" surveyed, *none* identified societal or developmental transformation as one of the expected outcomes or best practices. They attribute this to the lingering ambivalence many evangelicals have toward incorporating social concerns into their mission goals. Their point may be a valid one, but given that there are likely thousands who would identify themselves as BAM practitioners, one cannot draw too strong a conclusion from such a small sampling.

Finally, in another study that was part of a Master's thesis, this time at Copenhagen Business School, Christiansen (2008) attended a class for aspiring BAM practitioners and found that, contrary to Brown's study, the seminar participants were in fact more interested in societal and spiritual outcomes than in the economic impact and viability of their businesses. This arguably is a predictable finding for a study in which half of the participants are missionaries or church leaders who were either just thinking about BAM or in the start-up phase of their businesses. But it

9. More on the characteristics of an effective tentmaker can be found in chapter 4 of his book *Tentmaking: Business as Mission*.



nevertheless reinforces the point that we simply do not know yet what motivates BAM practitioners or whether they are having a noticeable impact in their communities.

The author also investigates whether the Christian values associated with a BAM business can be a source of competitive advantage, and concludes that they might be, but only in the short run because non-Christian companies practicing “Corporate Social Responsibility” are close substitutes. While this finding is extremely tentative, it is an interesting question nonetheless because many Christians uncritically assume that their Christian conduct in business will be a long-term source of competitive advantage.

As these studies suggest, much more theoretical and empirical work is needed before we can say with any confidence whether, how and under what circumstances BAM is effective. Among the areas where further study is needed is the idea of “effectiveness” itself: What are the non-negotiable outcomes of an effective BAM business, and what metrics are most useful for assessing its effectiveness? What are the motivations, backgrounds and support structures of an effective BAM practitioner or management team? How can the resources and skills of the management team be expanded? Longitudinal studies would be especially helpful as they would add to our understanding of the evolution of these ventures and the factors that contribute to their eventual success or failure.<sup>10</sup>

Closely related are questions about the structure and governance of a BAM business. Like the “Social Enterprise Spectrum” in Figure 1, the population of self-described BAM businesses currently reveals a wide range of organizational structures and governance arrangements. At the “pure business” end of the continuum are

independently owned and operated businesses, founded and managed by sincere Christians who find themselves for various economic reasons located in a part of the world that has great social and spiritual need. As career business professionals, they are not preconditioned to seek advice from pastors or missionaries, but rather, they start meeting needs in their own way. Untrained but nevertheless led by the Holy Spirit, some of the most interesting things happening in the BAM arena are being done by these people, and *are off the radar* of most mission agencies and churches.

At the other end of the continuum are small businesses owned by missionaries or their agencies that are principally motivated by the spiritual rather than the economic opportunity. The ownership and control of the businesses is often ambiguous, although many agencies are beginning to take a closer look at this in order to avoid jeopardizing their status as tax-exempt charities. The management teams are often recruited more for their ministry experience, and held accountable to evangelistic goals. Not surprisingly, these people often show more interest in the church planting goals, although as we saw in the studies by Lai (2003) and Russell (2008), it is an open question as to whether they are any more successful than the other group at achieving those goals.

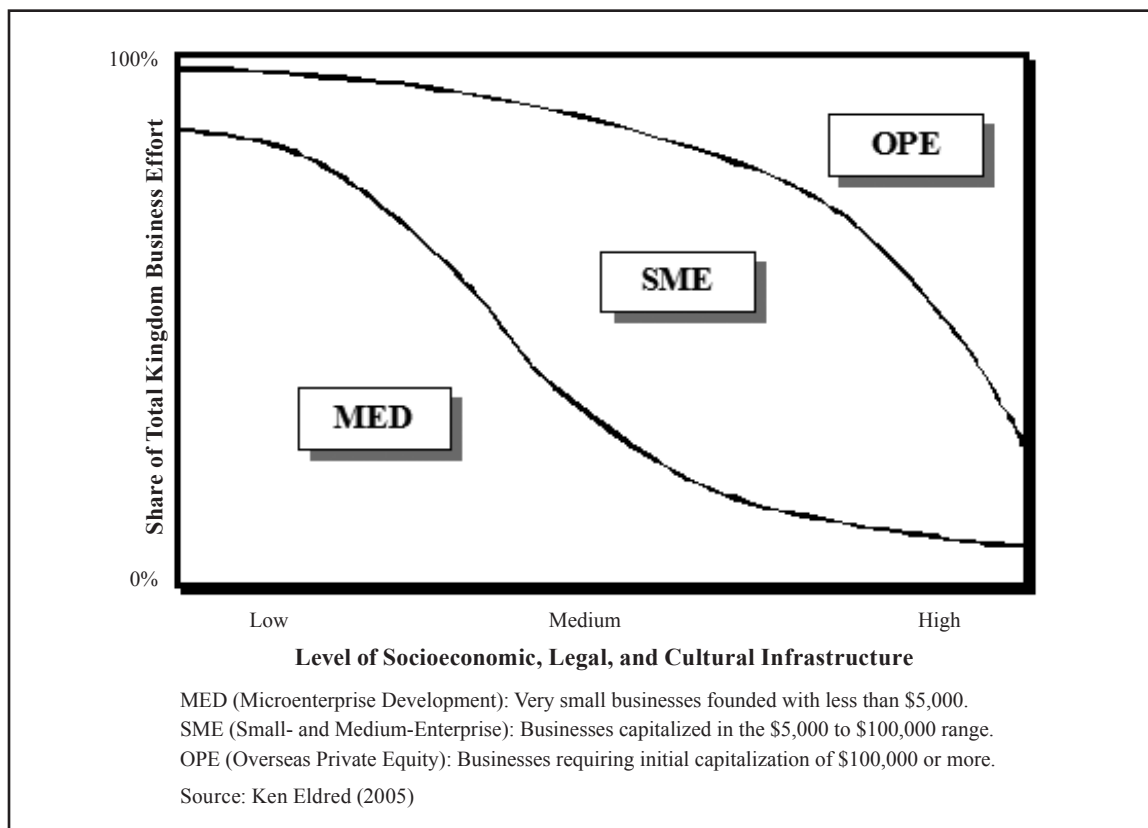
In between these two extremes are a plethora of hybrid organizational and governance structures, including arrangements similar to licensing agreements, partnerships, joint ventures and quasi-franchises. This suggests another fruitful avenue for further research, one that would study these arrangements to determine which ones are most useful, and under what circumstances they are mutually beneficial. A short paper by Rundle and Sudyk (2007) identifies some of the most common financial arrangements, but more rigorous study is needed that can help prospective BAM practitioners understand the impacts and limitations of those arrangements, as well as the legal implications.

10. Toward that end, Rundle and Steffen (2003) was revised and updated in 2011, with the second edition providing updates on the original case studies. Two companies, however, are no longer in business and are only mentioned in the preface. A separate study of failed BAM businesses could be very enlightening.

A third avenue with almost unlimited potential for further research is the environmental factors that can inhibit or contribute to the goals and strategies of BAM. For example, in countries with severe market imperfections, is one model or one form of governance more effective than another? In what ways can governments or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) help or hinder the efforts of a BAM business? In what ways can BAM businesses help improve a society's political, legal or cultural climate? Or turning

the question around, what are the political, legal or cultural preconditions for success? Figure 2 is an illustration from Ken Eldred's 2005 book *God is at Work* that suggests that countries with weak socioeconomic, legal and cultural foundations are less suitable for "Overseas Private Equity" businesses, what we are referring to here as BAM. This is a thought-provoking and potentially important assertion that to my knowledge has never been tested.

Figure 2: Ideal Business-Mission Strategy



This list of gaps in our knowledge base is far from complete. There is undoubtedly a similarly long list of questions that can be raised by missiologists, anthropologists, psychologists, theologians and other scholars, which is why an interdisciplinary association of scholars may need to

be formed so that the various "dots" of research can be connected.

#### A Word about Microenterprise Development

When some people hear the term "Business as Mission," they instinctively think about microfinance and microenterprise development

(MED), that is, efforts by NGOs to help poor people start their own small businesses.<sup>11</sup> Because of the vastly different purpose and approach of the organizations involved, some BAM advocates insist that this represents a separate topic. I will let others debate that question. Certainly these efforts have a missional component and involve businesses, and a similar debate is taking place there in the sense of whether microfinance is best carried out by a for-profit or a nonprofit organization. The reason this paper did not review any of that literature, or discuss any of the challenges associated with MED and microfinance, is because that area of scholarship has a longer history and is farther along in its development. Those interested in exploring the Christian contributions to this literature are encouraged to read Myers (1999), Bussau and Mask (2003), Smith and Thurman (2007), Greer and Smith (2009), Corbett and Fikkert (2009) and Hoksbergen (2007, 2009), to name a few.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Not long ago the *Wall Street Journal* noted a significant change in the attitudes of university business students (Middleton, 2009). Compared to other incoming classes in recent memory, today's young people are more interested in using their business skills to make a positive difference in society. Undoubtedly, many have been inspired by social enterprises like Tom's Shoes, Kiva, and Chipotle's Mexican Grill, as well as turned off by stories of corporate excess on Wall Street. In Christian circles we are seeing something very similar. The main difference is that "Business as Mission" goes beyond addressing the physical needs of the poor (or the ethical treatment of pigs and chickens, as in Chipotle's case), and includes a desire to make Christ known and see people freed from spiritual bondage. Clearly the inspiration for this comes only from the Holy Spirit. That

is a significant difference to be sure, but there is nevertheless much that BAM scholars can learn from the SE literature, particularly in the area of financing and managing hybrid organizations.

Thus far most of the scholarly discussion about BAM has focused on theological questions related to the compatibility of business and mission, or the compatibility of work and ministry more generally.<sup>12</sup> In my view, those questions have been largely settled, and the value of additional scholarship in that area is probably small. My plea to Christian business scholars is to begin looking at the strategic and operations side of BAM, where there has been much less work done. For example:

- Are there predictable advantages or disadvantages to different organizational forms for BAM businesses?
- What are some of the incentives and constraints that might shape the business strategies or the behavior of a BAM practitioner? Can they be condensed into a list of best practices?
- Are those best practices a function of one's cultural or geographical context, and if so, how?
- Do the best practices vary depending on the organizational form of the enterprise?
- How can spiritual outcomes be better defined and measured? How can practitioners be better trained and supported?
- What are the legal and ethical challenges facing Christians who "bring their faith to work"?
- How can Christian business scholars do a better job of equipping people for marketplace ministry both at home and abroad?

11. For simplicity I am not making a distinction between Microenterprises and Small- and Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs).

12. See Part 1 of Johnson (2009) for a fairly comprehensive review of this very large field of theological literature. In addition are two excellent, recent contributions by Van Duzer (2010) and Wong and Rae (2011).

These questions represent only the “tip of the iceberg.” Business as Mission has the potential of being a major force for good in the neediest parts of the world, but scholarship in this area has been lagging. To facilitate more research in this area, there is a need for an interdisciplinary association of Christian scholars that are united in their interest in this subject. Such an association would include anthropologists, theologians, missiologists, political science scholars, sociologists and many others. They do not need to organize their own conferences, necessarily, at least at first. Instead they could organize paper sessions at conferences related to their own disciplines, communicating their results and sharing their papers via a shared electronic network. The establishment of a venue for publication would also be an important step toward generating more research in this field. It is my hope that this paper will stimulate more interest in this important and rapidly developing subject.

## REFERENCES

- Befus, D. (2001). *Kingdom Business: The Ministry of Promoting Economic Activity*. Miami, FL: Latin America Mission.
- Befus, D. (2005). *Where There Are No Jobs: Enterprise Solutions for Employment and “Public Goods” for the Poor*. Miami, FL: Latin America Mission.
- Baer, M. R. (2006.) *Business as Mission: The Power of Business in the Kingdom of God*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing.
- Baker, D. (2006.) Missional Geometry: Plotting the Coordinates of Business as Mission. In T. Steffen & M. Barnett (Eds.), *Business as Mission: From Impoverished to Empowered* (pp.37-64). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Bronkema, D. & Brown, C. M. (2009). Business as Mission Through the Lens of Development. *Transformation*, 26(2), 82-88.
- Bussau, D. & Mask, R. (2003). *Christian Microenterprise Development: An Introduction*. Waynesboro, GA: Regnum Books.
- Christiansen, L. (2008). *Faith-Based Social Entrepreneurship: Business as Mission*. Unpublished master’s thesis, Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark. Available at: [http://studenttheses.cbs.dk/bitstream/handle/10417/681/linda\\_christiansen.pdf?sequence=1](http://studenttheses.cbs.dk/bitstream/handle/10417/681/linda_christiansen.pdf?sequence=1)
- Corbett, S. & Fikkert, B. (2009). *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
- Danker, W. (1971). *Profit for the Lord*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Dees, J. G. (1998). Enterprising Nonprofits. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(1), 54-67.
- Eldred, K. (2005). *God is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- English, D. (2001). Paul’s Secret: A 1st-Century Strategy for a 21st Century World. *World Christian*, 14(3), 22-26.
- Ginter, G. (1998). Overcoming Resistance Through Tentmaking. In J. D. Woodberry (Ed.), *Reaching the Resistant: Barriers and Bridges for Mission* (pp. 209—218). EMS Series #6. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Goheem, W. (2004). *The Galtronics Story*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Greer, P. & Smith, P. (2009). *The Poor Will be Glad: Joining the Revolution to Lift the World Out of Poverty*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Hamilton, D. (1987). *Tentmakers Speak: Practical Advice from Over 400 Missionary Tentmakers*. Duarte, CA: TMQ Research.
- Hoksbergen, R. & Veenema, J. (2007). Million Mentors Initiatives: Haiti, Nicaragua and Kenya Final Evaluation Report (USAID Grant # REE-A-00-03-00105-00, September 10). Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.
- Hoksbergen, R. (2009). Transformational Development: The Role of Christian NGOs in SME Development. In S. Rundle (Ed.), *Economic Justice in a Flat World: Christian Perspectives on Globalization* (pp. 201-222). Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing Co.
- Johnson, C. N. (2003). Toward a Marketplace Missiology. *Missiology: An International Review*, 31(1), 87-97.

Johnson, C. N. (2009). *Business as Mission: A Complete Guide to Theory and Practice*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Johnson, C. N. & Rundle, S. (2006.) The Distinctives and Challenges of Business as Mission. In T. Steffen & M. Barnett (Eds), *Business as Mission: From Impoverished to Empowered* (pp. 19-36). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Kirk, A. (2000). *What is Mission? Theological Explorations*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Lai, P. (2003). *Problems and solutions for enhancing the effectiveness of tentmakers doing church planting in the 10/40 window*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Asia Graduate School of Theology, Quezon City, Philippines.

Lai, P. (2005). *Tentmaking: Business as Mission*. Colorado Springs, CO: Authentic Media.

Lausanne Tentmaker Statement. 1989. Available at <http://www.globalopps.org/lausanne.htm>.

Markiewicz, M. (1999). *Business as Mission: How Two Grocers Changed the Course of a Nation*. Paper presented at the Central Asia Business Consultation. Available at: <http://www.intheworkplace.com/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=12787&columnid=1935>.

Middleton, D. (2009, October 15). MBAs Seek Social Change. *Wall Street Journal*, p. B7.

Miller, D. (2007). *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Myers, B. (1999). *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Novak, M. (1996). *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life*. New York: The Free Press.

Owens, H. (2006). Nestorian Merchant Missionaries and Today's Unreached People Groups. In T. Steffen & M. Barnett (Eds), *Business as Mission: From Impoverished to Empowered* (pp.133-146). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Pointer, S. & Cooper, M. (2006). Seventeenth Century Puritan Missions: Some Implications for Business as Mission. In T. Steffen & M. Barnett (Eds), *Business as Mission: From Impoverished to Empowered* (pp.167-180). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Rundle, S. (2000). Ministry, Profits, and the Schizophrenic Tentmaker. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 36(3), 292-300.

Rundle, S. (2003). Preparing the Next Generation of Kingdom Entrepreneurs. In T. Yamamori & K. Eldred (Eds.), *On Kingdom Business: Transforming World Mission Through Kingdom Entrepreneurs* (pp. 225-244). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Rundle, S. & Steffen, T. (2003). *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Rundle, S. & Sudyk, T. (2007). Funding a Kingdom Company. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43(4), 442-448.

Russell, M. (2008). *The Use of Business in Missions in Chiang Mai, Thailand*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

Russell, M. (2010). *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission*. Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishing.

Sherman, D. & Hendricks, W. (1987). *Your Work Matters to God*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

Silvoso, E. (2002). *Anointed for Business: How to Use Your Influence in the Marketplace to Change the World*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

Smith, P. & Thurman, E. (2007). *A Billion Bootstraps: Microcredit, Barefoot Banking, and the Business Solution for Ending Poverty*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Steffen, T. & Barnett, M. (Eds). (2006). *Business as Mission: From Impoverished to Empowered*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Stevens, R. P. (1999). *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co..

Stevens, R. P. (2001). The Marketplace: Mission Field or Mission? *Crux*, 37(3), 7-16.

Siemens, R. E. (1997). Ruth's Story. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 14(3), 121-129.

Siemens, R. E. (1998). Why Did Paul Make Tents? A Biblical Basis for Tentmaking. GO Paper A-1.

Taylor, G. (1998). Don't Call Me a Tentmaker. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 15(1), 23-26.



Tunehag, M., McGee, W. & Plummer, J. (Eds.) (2004). *Business as Mission*. Lausanne Occasional Paper #59. Available at: [http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP59\\_IG30.pdf](http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP59_IG30.pdf)

Tunehag, M. (2008). A Global Overview of the Business as Mission Movement: Needs & Gaps. Available at <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/needs-gaps.html>

Van Duzer, J. (2010). *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Wilson, J. C. (1979). *Today's Tentmakers*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Wong, S. R. (2011). *Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Yamamori, T. (1987). *God's New Envoys: A Bold Strategy for Penetrating "Closed Countries."* Portland, OR: Multnomah Press.

Yamamori, T. & Eldred, K. A. (Eds.) (2003). *On Kingdom Business: Transforming Mission Through Entrepreneurial Strategies*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Steve Rundle is Professor of Economics at Biola University. His teaching and research interests are focused on the intersection between international business and world mission. He also assists, consults, or has co-founded several organizations aimed at helping Christian-owned businesses prosper in less-developed countries.