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CHANGE AND RENEWAL IN MISSION AGENCIES: ANTIOCH MISSION

Antioch Mission is a thirty-three-year-old mission agency. As an organization in the seventies, we were aware that we should train our missionaries very well. However, we lacked administration expertise. Besides, Brazil had constant economic crisis, high inflation, lack of democracy and technology law restrictions, which made communication with the missionaries in the fields a nearly impossible task. We had difficulties, but our first generation of missionaries proved to be good and productive in the fields.

In the 80's and 90's, many questioned the need to have a mission agency. After all, the Lord had given the missionary mandate to the church, not to the mission agencies. Many questioned the role of the church. Was it a registered organization? Or, was it the meeting of two or more people coming together in the name of Jesus? Certain huge churches said that it was not necessary to have mission agencies. Mission agencies were seen as organizations which stole people and resources from the sending local churches.

After several tragic experiences, it was proved that even huge sending churches did not have the necessary expertise in the field. Mission agencies did not have all the needed structure either; however, they provided the help when independently sent missionaries got in trouble. The result was that the sending churches came to understand that their partnership with servant mission sending structures was a way

to do missions. Sending structures could provide field orientation, structure, and follow up. The tension between sending agencies and sending churches seemed to have ended in Brazil.

Meanwhile, Antioch Mission was very feeble. It had internal and external problems. Along with the external problems already mentioned, Brazil, as a whole, lacked good biblical teaching on missions in Bible schools and churches. Also, trends swayed teaching. For example, in the nineties, spiritual warfare was seen as a solution for all problems. Of course, spiritual warfare is important in missions, but it needs to be balanced with the future fullness of kingdom of God.

Unfortunately, the prosperity gospel also had its effect, perhaps being a barrier to a more advanced mission commitment. Missionary work requires one to give oneself and be prepared to make sacrifices to be relevant abroad. It is not so much what we get but what we give to the Lord as we obey the mission mandate.

Finally, we struggled with impact of certain church planting movements. Brazil had its proper version of the so-called G12. They opposed not only the sending, but also the maintaining of the previous sent missionaries who were not now G12 vision and revelation holders—sometimes leaving missionaries in the fields without support or bringing them back to Brazil only to cease their support at home.



Other church planting movements prefer only to support nationals, and in so doing, missed involvement in reaching Brazil's unreached peoples.

However, our Brazilian Cross-Cultural Mission Agencies' Association (AMTB) is composed of thirty-eight solid agencies. They have together sent four-thousand missionaries. Many are trained in the pluralistic theology of an interdenominational mission agency, which serves to help balance those from churches with less historic doctrines. Some of the good Brazilian missionaries had less balanced backgrounds—training made the difference in their lives and ministry.

Today, Antioch Mission is not perfect. But we can say our administrative abilities have been improved. Strategic plans have been put in place. Brazil itself has become more balanced economically. Communications are as fast as present technology can provide. Our mission training has been adjusted over time. It is wholistic mission indeed. We focus on needy areas of the world where there are less than 1% of believers. The role of the mission agency is better understood, as we have improved communication with sending churches. Though we have had many failures, Antioch Mission has adapted and reinvented itself, and has been respected through the reputation of its good missionaries ●