



# RMNI

## RECONCILIATION REPORT

[www.RMNI.org](http://www.RMNI.org)

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*Mobilizing the African American Church for Global Mission*

**Inside this issue:**

Website	1
Thoughts on Thinking	2-4
Prayer & Praise	4

**InSites:**

- 100+ Good stewardship links at [www.rmni.org/financial/links.asp](http://www.rmni.org/financial/links.asp)
- Coalition of ministries to encourage church ethnic outreach [www.ethnic-america.net](http://www.ethnic-america.net)
- Forbes best of web [www.forbes.com/bow/b2c/favorite.jhtml?id=8](http://www.forbes.com/bow/b2c/favorite.jhtml?id=8)
- Christian History Institute <http://chi.gospelcom.net/about/index.shtml>

By mid-2006, there will be an estimated 460 million computers in Christian use (David Barrett, Todd Johnson & Peter Crossing, Int'l Bull. Miss. Research, 1/06, p. 28). I've found tiny Internet cafes (with sticking keyboards) in East Africa and India. With a Yahoo account and online address book, you're wired globally, for pennies. Those same pennies allow people to surf the worldwide web (www). We focus upon offering downloadable resources. A download is a file sent to some peripheral—printer, hard drive, etc (webopedia.com). Most of our nearly 2000 web pages are reference, teaching, and networking documents, together with PowerPoint® presentations on a variety of subjects, offered without charge, obligation or registration. For example, we list Black churches that strongly support global missions, missions that sponsor short-term mission trips and provide information on African American mission candidates, for possible support. Recently an African American missionary working in South Africa called me and is now attending one of the churches we list.



At the moment the top media and downloads are our 2-page listing of job websites and agencies in Chattanooga

(62—the numbers following are the predicted downloads in a day), our Status of The Christian World Mission 2005 presentation (18), The Handbook for African American Missions Teams/Committees (27), Benevolence Ministry guidelines (15), and Chapter 1 of the dissertation on why there are so few African American missionaries (14). The top pages currently visited (in distinction to downloads) are PowerPoint marriage presentations (194). Many come looking for information on Uganda (36 a day on average), or Sudan (25), or want information on urban ministry (21). Incomplete information concerning visits in February show 336 visitors from Europe, 127 from Asia, and 53 from Africa.

An African American mission head called me up last week to say that he had downloaded the African American missions seminar to modify for use in a global missions institute. We encourage modification according to the presenter's needs. Walt Robertson launched our website and our new missions forum ([/www.rmni.org/afam/AfAmMissForum.asp](http://www.rmni.org/afam/AfAmMissForum.asp)), while Bob Wieggers, has done a great job taking over webmaster responsibilities. 3HD.com provides free web hosting, as does Walt for the forum. The Web is a timely, cost-effective and ubiquitous tool to facilitate Christian ministry, and we're grateful for those who visit at [www.RMNI.org](http://www.RMNI.org).

RMNI.org	Downloads	Visits (not hits)
<b>Feb. 06</b>	2553	8527
<b>Jan. 06</b>	2240	8214
<b>Dec. 05</b>	1553	6707

## Thoughts on Right Thinking



Four times in Matthew's Gospel Jesus asked people what they thought<sup>1</sup>. He gave a brief story or fact and asked for a reasoned reply. Mature thinking leads to certain viewpoints, and if our thinking is faulty, God is interested in correcting it ("All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you." NIV, Phil. 3:15).

Counseling couples about their finances has revealed escapist thinking. If one spouse lost a job, spending didn't slow. With thousands of dollars in credit card debt, people spent significantly on cell phones, dining out, vacations and cable TV. Mature thinking is based upon reality—facts.

Life involves a search for principles that make decisions fewer and easier. They may be our rules of conduct, or a fuzzy set which predicts how a boyfriend will react to a job loss. They may be values by which we judge Republicans, a missionary, Methodists or a prospective mate. These become our hard-won pathways.

Usually our search is inductive—operating from observation and experience, until we're tentatively satisfied that we have a workable "law." It may even have predictive power. We test and modify our model as needed. In some cases, such as with God's laws, we may have only a general principle and then must proceed inductively to apply it. For example, God says not to marry an unbeliever. We look at the "prospective's" prayer life, church life, stewardship, interests and comments after a hammer hits the thumb.

After the entrance of sin into human beings, with the consequent spoiling of moral judgment, God knew that we would have difficulty knowing what's right. Evangelical Christians believe that God has given us perfect and sufficient moral guidance in the Bible. These moral absolutes best conform to who we are as God's creatures, and are both natural—conforming to our nature<sup>2</sup>--and supernatural, given by God. Moral decisions based upon this guidance are deductive (reasoning based upon a premise or principle) and synchronous with our nature. Those gathering a moral code inductively from poets, philosophers, heroes, vocalists and dear old Dad, are a law unto themselves. They arbitrate their own moral code, and will fail at some point to live by it.

When should a Christian think deductively and when inductively? We operate deductively when Scripture is clear (particularly when one of His promises applies) or when the premise is proven. Otherwise, we should operate inductively, by learning (all *true* truth is God's truth), observation and trial<sup>3</sup>. Deductive thinking seems to be more prone to error and more potentially harmful, due to a faulty premise or principle.

**Deductive thinking is counter-productive** when it equates the current state of "truth" with absolute truth. History is replete with obsolete "laws." Phlogiston (principle of fire) stood until Lavoisier disproved it and ether was supposed to be the fifth building-block element<sup>4</sup>. Copernicus showed that the earth revolved around the sun<sup>5</sup>, etc. Here are examples of poor deductive thinking:

1. I'm \_\_ years old, therefore I can't do x anymore. But can we do x in reality?
2. I should be able to buy x because I live in x neighborhood, my parents had it, my neighbors have it--in fact, most Americans have it, therefore I ought to be able to buy x. "X" might be a cell phone, plasma HD TV, fitness club membership, private school education, or a late-model car. Spending should be based upon currently available income and whether God desires it for us (James 1:5).
3. We should plant more churches. Not necessarily. In the African American community we seem to have a church for every Black pastor with charisma. More churches divert resources into new buildings and infrastructure (salaries, vans, PA systems, etc.). I'd love to see African Americans move to existing missions-minded Black churches already pastored by godly and humble servant-leaders. These churches could then equip and send out the unneeded pastors and ubiquitous associate pastors (whom God has called) to cross cultural fields desperate for help.

(Continued on page 3)

6. Visiting national pastors/missionaries are worthy of support. Do they meet the criteria of 1 Tim. 3:1-7? Who are they serving and how are they serving?

7. An overemphasis upon reason and logic can trump Biblical truth, as forms of Christian universalism do. "God is love," therefore He wouldn't create a hell. I talked recently with a young man who claimed that his guiding principle was common sense. He grew up in a family on welfare and believed that no one should pay for anything--that people should be able to walk into any store and freely take what they wanted. He also believed that his "higher power" was good and that this power would not punish anyone—even Hitler. Cults such as the Jehovah-Witnesses make logic their absolute. Hell is not reasonable, so as someone put it, their founder (C.T. Russell) put a fire hose on it.

"I just wanted to thank you for being where you are!!!... Continue to cry out that others may hear and be moved. May the Lord continue to use you in your ministry efforts to spark a fire that will burn in the heart of all of God's people. You do not stand alone...many of us are praying!"

An African American missionary

**Inductive thinking is proper** when we approach reality dissatisfied with the current level of understanding. "Truth" doesn't seem to be working, so we look for a better explanation.

1. Most great paradigm shifts in science have occurred because someone didn't buy the academic community's "truth."<sup>6</sup> Science operates best from an inductive posture, using assumptions that, so far, hold up to examination, such as Einstein's laws of relativity.
2. Bill Hybels, who founded the Willow Creek movement of seeker-friendly churches, didn't attend seminary, so didn't learn the traditional wisdom. He approached church growth inductively, by surveying the unchurched, then developed a new church model. He addressed the issues that turned off would-be seekers on Sunday morning, and reserved another evening for the redeemed<sup>7</sup>.
3. In missions certain biblical principles can be found (the Spirit recruits workers—Luke 10:2). Field principles are more problematic. Should missionaries go out as couples, in pairs, or in larger teams? Is the best way to reach Muslims in a given culture to plant churches or to operate book stores, or to use radio? If church planting, who should do the planting, and how? Of fifteen ministry projects to reach Muslims, only one or two of them might be fruitful, regardless of sincerity.

**Inductive thinking is improper** when it conflicts with the revealed truth of God.

1. Personal experience does not trump God's Word. If a woman preaches the best sermon we've ever heard, it doesn't mean that God has called her to be a pastor (1 Tim. 2:12-14; 3:2).
2. We may believe that we've received a special revelation or dispensation, but it contradicts previous revelation. I mistakenly married a couple many years ago based upon someone else's "revelation". New "information" does not contradict Scripture, rightly interpreted.

**How do we think rightly?** Five ideas--first, God must be our chief love and value, or all consequent value judgments will be flawed. Our moral glasses will be greasy—our very eyes will be bad, affecting everything they see (Matt. 6:19-24). This is so if the god is money, pleasure, pride, beauty or self. This is desperate, since our moral scales are unbalanced, can yield no right measure, yet we are oblivious to it. God must be our major premise. Second, the Word of God can recalibrate our moral scales. It "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Third, we can offer our body to God as His instrument for good. We won't say no to God based upon protecting our body (opening up missions for some). Fourth, we are not to be conformed to this world system. How?--by operating from biblically-based values. "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Rom. 12:2b). Fifth, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). How would Jesus *think*, and how would we answer Him for our decisions?

1 Matt. 17:25; 18:12; 21:28; 22:42

2 Stephen Kennedy, "What is 'Natural Law'?", *Trinity Magazine*, Winter 2006, p. 14; *New Dictionary of Theology*, Sinclair Ferguson, David F. Wright and J.I.Packer, eds. See "Natural Theology," the moral argument for God, p. 452, ISBN: 0830814000.

3 Even in the scientific field, the lines overlap between the inductive and the deductive, since God gives Christians opportunity to ask for His wisdom. George Washington Carver, by his own account, would go early into the woods and

seek the mind of God. God would sometimes respond with thoughts that Dr. Carver directly took to his laboratory and explored, without benefit of texts. Carver asked about the peanut, and God apparently revealed vast information on that legume, in his lab (see Rackham Holt, *George Washington Carver*, 1944, p. 220-227). It's thoroughly documented that many of the best scientific minds have in fact been Christians. They believed that God is a God of orderly system, and have searched for the principles by which systems operate, and are able to directly access the Designer/God for understanding (James 1:5).

4 [www.chemheritage.org/explore/ancients-time8.html](http://www.chemheritage.org/explore/ancients-time8.html); [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aether\\_\(classical\\_element\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aether_(classical_element))

5 [www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Mathematicians/Copernicus.html](http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Mathematicians/Copernicus.html) accessed 3/2/06

6 Thomas S. Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. ISBN: 0226458040.

7 I've visited Willowcreek. The commitments required of those who had joined the church exceed those of any other Christian church I've attended. There is no perfect church, however.



Jim taught this workshop on debt and investing during a Covenant Keepers marriage weekend, 2/11/06, at the Chattanooga Convention Center.

**Southern Sudan Mission June, 2006 (\$3500) & Haiti Mission Sept. (\$2500). Contact us for details.**

Our Sudanese coordinator just spent several weeks in our ministry area. He says: "Please continue telling guys that in USA that Sudan is not like before, Sudan is peace right now. You can move from one corner to the other without another problem."

Visit [www.rmni.org/sudan/MissionsTrip/home.asp](http://www.rmni.org/sudan/MissionsTrip/home.asp)

## Prayer and Praise



↑ We're grateful to have a ministry. These are very busy days. We're grateful for all who pray, participate, and contribute funds and encouragement, enabling us to serve. Thank you!

↑ Inner-city needs: Moon (salvation); Rel (needs to attend a strong church); Curtis needs a good job, despite a record; "E" and Black need to surrender to God. Lisa's son was killed and she needs salvation. Tiffany needs God's help to start a new life. Thanks for praying—we have 1-2 co-workers now for the Westside project.

↑ Pastor Gilbert Were needs funds to complete the roof on his church in Kakamega, Kenya. He's a great Brother.

↑ Please pray for 10 Team members for the Sudan and Haiti trips, and for the best ministry partner in Haiti. Please pray for excellent health and protection, for wisdom and for our Sudanese coordinator—Patrick.

↑ That each of us associated with RMNI will love the Lord with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

↑ For protection from spiritual attack upon Judi and myself.

↑ Please pray for an assistant director.

↑ We need wisdom to engage Judi's mother, who is living with us, in her use of time.

↑ Son Tim and wife Karen are house parents for teen girls under PA state supervision, and need grace and much wisdom.

↑ That each of us associated with RMNI will love the Lord with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.