



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

BRAZILIAN EVANGELICAL MISSIONS AMONG ARABS: HISTORY,  
CULTURE, PRACTICE, AND THEOLOGY

by

EDWARD L. SMITHER

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Philosophiae Doctor

In the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria

in the subject

SCIENCE OF RELIGION AND MISSIOLOGY

PROMOTER: PROF CJP (NELUS) NIEMANDT

AUGUST 2010



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Table of Contents | 1  |
| Summary           | 5  |
| Keywords          | 7  |
| Abbreviations     | 8  |
| Acknowledgements  | 9  |
| Declaration       | 10 |
| Dedication        | 11 |
| VITA              | 12 |

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

|       |                                    |    |
|-------|------------------------------------|----|
| 1.1   | Need for and Purpose of this Study | 13 |
| 1.2   | Definitions                        | 14 |
| 1.3   | Research Questions and Limitations | 15 |
| 1.4   | Significance of the Study          | 16 |
| 1.5   | Locating Myself as a Researcher    | 17 |
| 1.6   | Literature Survey                  | 18 |
| 1.7   | Method of Study                    | 23 |
| 1.7.1 | Participants                       | 25 |
| 1.7.2 | Data Collection                    | 26 |
| 1.7.3 | Data Analysis                      | 31 |
| 1.7.4 | Validation                         | 31 |
| 1.7.5 | Summary                            | 33 |

### CHAPTER 2: FROM A MISSION FIELD TO A MISSIONS SENDING BASE

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| 2.1   | Introduction  | 36 |
| 2.2   | Roman Catholic Missions and Protestant Immigrants       | 36 |
| 2.3   | History of Evangelical Missions                         | 40 |
| 2.3.1 | Bible Societies   | 40 |
| 2.3.2 | Methodists  | 41 |
| 2.3.3 | Robert Reid Kalley                                      | 43 |
| 2.3.4 | Presbyterians   | 44 |
| 2.3.5 | Southern Baptists                                       | 45 |
| 2.3.6 | Other Denominations and Missions                        | 48 |
| 2.3.7 | Pentecostals  | 48 |
| 2.3.8 | Parachurch Movements                                    | 54 |
| 2.3.9 | Summary   | 54 |
| 2.4   | Evangelical Revivals and Evangelical Missions to Brazil | 55 |
| 2.4.1 | Evangelical Missions and Roman Catholicism              | 57 |
| 2.5   | Brazil's Evangelical Identity                           | 61 |
| 2.5.1 | A High View of Scripture                                | 62 |
| 2.5.2 | A Call to Genuine Conversion                            | 64 |
| 2.5.3 | A Visible Faith   | 66 |
| 2.5.4 | A Missionary Zeal                                       | 70 |
| 2.5.5 | Priesthood of the Believer                              | 71 |
| 2.5.6 | Free Church   | 74 |

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| 2.5.7 | Summarizing Brazil's Evangelical Identity                 | 75 |
| 2.6   | Brazil: A Missions Sending Nation                         | 77 |
| 2.6.1 | A Brief Narrative of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Missions | 77 |
| 2.6.2 | Missão Antioquia  | 80 |
| 2.6.3 | Curitiba Conference                                       | 81 |
| 2.6.4 | COMIBAM   | 82 |
| 2.6.5 | Associação de Missões Transculturais Brasileiras (AMTB)   | 85 |
| 2.6.6 | PM International  | 86 |
| 2.6.7 | Missão Horizontes   | 87 |
| 2.7   | Current Status of Brazilian Evangelical Missions          | 88 |
| 2.8   | Chapter Summary   | 89 |

### CHAPTER 3: BRAZILIAN WORKERS IN ARAB CULTURE

|        |   |     |
|--------|---|-----|
| 3.1    | Introduction  | 90  |
| 3.2    | What is Culture?  | 92  |
| 3.3    | The Difficulty of Describing Culture                      | 93  |
| 3.4    | Theoretical Framework for Discussing Cultures             | 97  |
| 3.5    | The Influence of Arab Culture on Brazil                   | 98  |
| 3.6    | Race  | 102 |
| 3.6.1  | Arabs and Race  | 102 |
| 3.6.2  | Brazilians and Race                                       | 107 |
| 3.6.3  | Brazilian Perspectives on Race in the Arab World          | 109 |
| 3.7    | Economics   | 113 |
| 3.7.1  | Arab World Economics                                      | 113 |
| 3.7.2  | Brazilian Economics                                       | 117 |
| 3.7.3  | Brazilian Perspectives on Economics in the Arab World     | 119 |
| 3.8    | Time  | 124 |
| 3.8.1  | Arabs and Time  | 124 |
| 3.8.2  | Brazilians and Time                                       | 126 |
| 3.8.3  | Brazilian Perspectives on Time in the Arab World          | 128 |
| 3.9    | Communication   | 132 |
| 3.9.1  | Arab Verbal Communication                                 | 132 |
| 3.9.2  | Arab Non-Verbal Communication                             | 134 |
| 3.9.3  | Arabs and Orality   | 135 |
| 3.9.4  | Brazilian Verbal Communication                            | 138 |
| 3.9.5  | Brazilian Non-Verbal Communication                        | 139 |
| 3.9.6  | Brazilians and Orality                                    | 140 |
| 3.9.7  | Brazilian Perspectives on Communication in the Arab World | 142 |
| 3.9.8  | Brazilian Perspectives on Orality in the Arab World       | 145 |
| 3.10   | Family  | 150 |
| 3.10.1 | The Arab Family   | 150 |
| 3.10.2 | The Brazilian Family                                      | 155 |
| 3.10.3 | Brazilian Perspectives on Family in the Arab World        | 159 |
| 3.11   | Relationships   | 168 |
| 3.11.1 | Arab Friendships  | 168 |
| 3.11.2 | Brazilian Friendships                                     | 171 |
| 3.11.3 | Brazilian Perspectives on Relationships in the Arab World | 175 |
| 3.12   | Hospitality   | 184 |

|        |   |     |
|--------|---|-----|
| 3.12.1 | Arabs and Hospitality   | 185 |
| 3.12.2 | Brazilians and Hospitality                                      | 187 |
| 3.12.3 | Brazilian Perspectives on Hospitality in the Arab World         | 188 |
| 3.13   | Spiritual Worldview   | 194 |
| 3.13.1 | Arabs and Islam   | 195 |
| 3.13.2 | Arabs and Folk Islam  | 196 |
| 3.13.3 | Brazilians and Roman Catholicism                                | 202 |
| 3.13.4 | Brazilians and Spiritism  | 204 |
| 3.13.5 | Brazilian Perspectives on Spiritual Worldview in the Arab World | 209 |
| 3.14   | <i>Jeitinho Brasileiro: A Case Study in Adaptation</i>          | 222 |
| 3.15   | Chapter Summary   | 226 |

#### CHAPTER 4: BRAZILIAN APPROACHES TO MISSION

|       |   |     |
|-------|---|-----|
| 4.1   | Introduction  | 228 |
| 4.2   | Ministry Strategies                                       | 228 |
| 4.2.1 | Evangelism  | 229 |
| 4.2.2 | Discipleship  | 232 |
| 4.2.3 | Church Planting   | 234 |
| 4.2.4 | Humanitarian Work   | 237 |
| 4.2.5 | Medical Work  | 240 |
| 4.2.6 | Business, Business as Mission, and Business Development   | 241 |
| 4.2.7 | Sports Ministry   | 243 |
| 4.2.8 | Teaching  | 246 |
| 4.2.9 | Training and Mobilization                                 | 247 |
| 4.3   | Brazilian Missions Agencies                               | 248 |
| 4.3.1 | Missão Antioquia  | 249 |
| 4.3.2 | Missão Kairos   | 251 |
| 4.3.3 | PM International  | 252 |
| 4.3.4 | Junta de Missões Mundiais da Convenção Batista Brasileira | 255 |
| 4.3.5 | Interserve  | 256 |
| 4.3.6 | CCI Brasil  | 258 |
| 4.3.7 | Summary   | 259 |
| 4.4   | Strengths of Brazilian Missions among Arabs               | 261 |
| 4.5   | Challenges for Brazilian Missions among Arabs             | 266 |
| 4.5.1 | Brazilian Church Support                                  | 267 |
| 4.5.2 | Language Acquisition                                      | 274 |
| 4.5.3 | Financial Support   | 282 |
| 4.5.4 | Brazilian Women in the Arab World                         | 290 |
| 4.6   | Chapter Summary   | 295 |

#### CHAPTER 5: TOWARD A BRAZILIAN THEOLOGY OF MISSION

|       |   |     |
|-------|---|-----|
| 5.1   | Introduction                                      | 296 |
| 5.2   | <i>Missão Integral</i> (The Whole Gospel)         | 298 |
| 5.2.1 | Historical Development of <i>Missão Integral</i>  | 298 |
| 5.2.2 | <i>Missão Integral</i> Defined                    | 304 |
| 5.2.3 | Theological Foundations of <i>Missão Integral</i> | 306 |

|  |  |     |
|--|--|-----|
| 5.2.4  | <i>Missão Integral</i> Applied   | 310 |
| 5.2.5  | The Missiological Significance of <i>Missão Integral</i> in the Arab World | 316 |
| 5.3  | A Church-Centered Missiology   | 318 |
| 5.4  | Missions from Below  | 322 |
| 5.5  | A Spiritually Aware Missiology   | 326 |
| 5.6  | Chapter Summary  | 328 |
| CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION  |  | 330 |
| APPENDIX A: BRAZILIAN TRANSCULTURAL WORKERS SURVEY POOL              |  | 334 |
| APPENDIX B: BRAZILIAN WORKERS SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES         |  | 337 |
| APPENDIX C: BRAZILIAN MISSION LEADERS SURVEY POOL                    |  | 391 |
| APPENDIX D: BRAZILIAN MISSION LEADERS SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES |  | 392 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY   |  | 407 |
| LIST OF TABLES   |  |     |
| 3.1  | Brazilian Perspectives on Race   | 113 |
| 3.2  | Brazilian Perspectives on Economic Challenges                              | 122 |
| 3.3  | Brazilian Perspectives on Time   | 131 |
| 3.4  | Brazilians Perspectives on Communication                                   | 148 |
| 3.5  | Brazilian Perspectives on the Arab Family                                  | 166 |
| 3.6  | Brazilian Perspectives on Arabs, Friendship, and Conflict                  | 182 |
| 3.7  | Brazilian Perspectives on Arab Hospitality and Food                        | 192 |
| 3.8  | Brazilian Perspectives on Spiritual Warfare                                | 219 |
| 3.9  | Brazilian Perspectives on Cultural Adaptation                              | 225 |
| 4.1  | Brazilian Perspectives on Evangelism, Discipleship, and Church Planting    | 236 |
| 4.2  | Brazilian Perspectives on Other Ministry Forms                             | 248 |
| 4.3  | Brazilian Perspectives on Success in Mission                               | 265 |
| 4.4  | Brazilian Perspectives on Church Support                                   | 272 |
| 4.5  | Brazilian Perspectives on Learning Arabic                                  | 280 |
| 4.6  | Brazilian Perspectives on Financial Support                                | 289 |
| 4.7  | Brazilian Perspectives on Women Missionaries' Struggles                    | 294 |

## SUMMARY

The aim of this work is to tell part of the story of the Brazilian evangelical missions movement by focusing on the work and Brazilian evangelical transcultural workers serving in mission in the context of the Arab-Muslim world. These participants are members of a broader movement of more than 5000 Brazilian evangelicals serving around the world—an evangelical labor force large than that of England or Canada—which has grown significantly since 1976.

In order to locate the work of Brazilian evangelicals in an Arab-Muslim context, it was important to first offer a historical narrative showing how Brazil has shifted in the twentieth century from being a “mission field” to being a base for sending missions. Relying on key historical literature, this has been accomplished first by recounting how Brazil was evangelized largely by North American missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Building on this narrative, the argument has been made that while the Brazilian evangelical church does share common characteristics with North American and global evangelicalism, it has also begun to forge its own evangelical identity. One important part of this identity is its concrete participation in global mission efforts.

As transcultural mission necessarily involves cultural adaptation, forty-five past and present Brazilian evangelical workers were invited to participate in a collective case study and reflect upon their own “Brazilianness” and how they have adapted in the Arab world. The perspectives of ten Brazilian mission leaders have also been included. In this study, I have treated Brazil as an affinity bloc of cultures in which there is clear diversity as well as some elements of cohesiveness. I have approached the Arab world in the same way. Hence, the framework for discussing Brazilians in the Arab world has been to reflect upon two affinity blocs and to ask members of one group (Brazilians) to share their collective experiences living in a second group (the Arab world) specifically regarding seven aspects of culture that have clear missiological implications. They include: race, economics, time, communication, family, relationships, and spiritual worldview. After hearing these Brazilian voices, it has become evident, culturally, speaking that Brazilians are not Arabs and that Brazilians must surely work to adapt culturally. However, it also appears that there is generally less cultural distance between the Brazilians surveyed and their Arab contexts than what is normally experienced by Western missionaries in the Arab world.

This study was also concerned with asking, how are Brazilian evangelicals approaching mission in the Arab-Muslim world? Following a collective case study methodology, this question was posed to individual Brazilians and teams, but also to Brazilian evangelical missions organizations working in the Arab world. While a number of themes (strategies and practices) emerged, it seems that Brazilians are particularly concerned about humanitarian work and personal evangelism and would regard these areas as strengths of their movement. On the other hand, Brazilian workers and mission leaders also identified the most apparent challenges in their work among Arab-Muslims. They included: a lack of Brazilian local church support for missionaries, deficiencies in language learning, lack of financial support, and difficulties faced by Brazilian women in Arab contexts. For each apparent difficulty, I have proposed some solutions based on the collective input of Brazilian voices.

Finally, in this study, I have posed the question, how do Brazilians think theologically about mission? Also, how is this Brazilian missiology relevant to transcultural mission work in the Arab-Muslim world? While I have approached this question primarily through surveying the literature from Latin American and Brazilian

theologians, I have also looked for missiological themes in the thoughts of Brazilian evangelical workers and through observing their concrete mission practices. From this, four theological themes have emerged that are descriptive of Brazilian missions. They include: that mission is holistic (*missão integral*); that mission is church-centered; that authentic mission originates from “below” or from a posture of vulnerability; and that one’s missiology must be undergirded by an awareness of the spiritual world.

In summary, through this work, I have endeavored to tell part of the story of an emerging majority world missions movement by listening to the voices of Brazilian transcultural workers who serve in the Arab-Muslim world. The goal of this study is to inform the global church of this phenomenon in order that the global church would learn from the Brazilian experience as it moves forward in mission and missiological reflection. Secondly, my desire is to provide a framework of self-reflection for Brazilian evangelical missionaries and missions organizations serving in both the Arab-Muslim world but also in the entire world.



**Keywords:** majority world missions, two-thirds world missions, emerging missions movements, Brazilian evangelical missions, *missão integral*, holistic mission, missions from below, Arabs, Arab-Muslims, ministry to Muslims



## ABBREVIATIONS

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| ABU        | Aliança Bíblica Universitária (International Federation of Evangelical Students, Brazil)                        |
| AMTB       | Associação de Missões Transculturais Brasileiras (Association of Transcultural Missions Agencies)               |
| APMB       | Associação de Professores de Missões no Brasil (Association of Brazilian Professors of Mission)                 |
| BAM        | Business as Mission   |
| CCI Brasil | Crossover Communication International Brasil  |
| CEPLA      | Comisión Evangélica Pentecostal Latinoamericana (Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission)             |
| CLADE      | Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (Latin American Congress on Evangelization)                          |
| COMIBAM    | Cooperación Misionera Iberoamericana (Ibero American Missionary Congress)                                       |
| FTL        | Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (Latin American Theological Fraternity)                                   |
| JMM        | Junta de Missões Mundiais da Convenção Batista Brasileira (global missions board, Brazilian Baptist Convention) |
| LAMP       | Language Application Made Practical   |
| OM         | Operation Mobilization  |
| PMI        | Povos Muçulmanos International (Muslim Peoples International)   |
| PMM        | Professional Ministry Model   |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project like a doctoral dissertation is never completed without the encouragement, support, and help of others. Therefore, I would like to thank:

- My wife Shawn for allowing me the freedom to pursue this dream and for encouraging me in the process.
- My beautiful children, Brennan, Emma, and Eve, who did their best to obey mommy while daddy was in Brazil and other places doing research.
- My promoter, Prof. CJP (Nelus) Niemandt for his encouragement and direction.
- Mrs. Rina Roos at the Faculty of Theology for her gracious communication and help in sorting out more than a few details over the last couple of years.
- Dr. Jones Kaleli, my colleague in intercultural studies at Liberty University, who offered helpful feedback and fresh perspectives.
- Dr. Fred Milacci for his insights on qualitative research methods.
- Dr. Emily Heady, director of the Liberty University Graduate Writing Center, who read every word of this dissertation, offered great feedback, and continues to mentor me in writing.
- Cristina Boersma and Barbara Hubbard, Brazilian students at Liberty who read Portuguese for me and provided translations of key works. Muito obrigado!
- Bryan at the Muse Coffee Co. and Rebecca at the Good Cherry Coffee and Tea who let me office on their premises for many days for the price of a cup of coffee.
- David Ruiz of World Evangelical Alliance and COMIBAM who offered great encouragement at the beginning of the project and directed me to the right people in Brazil.
- João Mordomo and the CCI Brasil team for hosting me in Brazil and allowing me to see their work firsthand.
- Daniel Calze for allowing me to visit with him at the PMI office in Curitiba and for a wonderful meal at a churrascaria afterward.
- Valdir Steuernagel for receiving me for a brief yet powerfully insightful visit.
- Silas and Marcia Tostes for giving up a day to show me around the valley of blessing and for sharing the vision of Missão Antioquia while navigating the chaotic São Paulo traffic.
- Robson Ramos for encouraging me in this project from very early on, for receiving me in Balneário-Camboriu and involving me in his ministry, and for becoming a dear friend in the process.
- Marcos Amado for graciously taking time to share profound insights about his journey in mission in the Arab world.

Mostly, I would like to thank those who cannot be named for welcoming me, for letting me tag along as they ministered, and for allowing me to experience firsthand their stories.



I hereby declare that the thesis, *Brazilian Evangelical Missions Among Arabs: History, Culture, Practice, and Theology*, which I hereby submit for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

---

Edward L. Smither  
Student No. 29075972

---

August 2010



Dedicated to Brennan, Emma, and Eve Smither:  
You are blessed to be a blessing so that all of the families of the earth will be blessed.

## VITA

Dr. Edward Smither was born August 11, 1971. He received a BA in History from North Carolina State University (1993), an MA (1999) and MDiv (2001) from Liberty Theological Seminary, and a PhD in Historical Theology from the University of Wales-Trinity Saint David (2006). He is married to Shawn Michelle (Davis) Smither, and they have three children: Brennan, Emma, and Eve. Prior to coming to Liberty University in 2006, where he presently teaches church history and intercultural studies and directs the MA in Intercultural Studies, Dr. Smither spent ten years in transcultural mission work in France and North Africa.

The purpose of this work, “Brazilian evangelical missions among Arabs: History, culture, practice, and theology,” is to tell part of the story of an emerging majority world missions movement. First, these efforts are located historically through an initial survey of how Brazil went from being a mission field in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to a mission sending base in the late twentieth century. Second, this study describes the experiences—including apparent successes and challenges—of Brazilian missionaries in both cultural adaptation and practical ministry in the Arab world. Finally, the work describes some prevailing themes of Brazilian theology of mission. The goal of this study is first to inform the global church of this phenomenon in order that the church would learn from the Brazilian experience as it moves forward in mission and missiological reflection. Second, the intent is to provide a framework of self- reflection for Brazilian evangelical missionaries and missions organizations serving in both the Arab-Muslim world and also in the entire world.