

Remarks by
PLN Murthy, Chairman, Executive Committee
ChristianTrade Association International
Sunday, 10 July, 2005

Thank you, Bill Anderson, thank you for your remarks today and for all the ways you and CBA America have helped – and will be helping – to launch this new association. We truly could not do it without you. We are grateful.

Well, you may be asking yourself, “Why is this Indian man standing in front of me, speaking about the new international work of the Christian trade?” I suppose I am living proof that things are different today. If you had asked me a little over a year ago if I was to be involved in this new thing, I would have laughed with you. But, change has certainly happened. I was elected last summer by a group of my peers, along with the rest of the Executive Committee, to develop this new association. We have met three times this past year – for a total of nearly 7 days – praying, thinking, and seeking God for what this new thing was going to be. And, today, I can tell you that we sense that we have His Mind in the formation and launch of ChristianTrade Association International.

In a recent book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel Huntington quotes from a novel by Michael Dibdin. Here’s the quote: “There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are. These are the old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century and more of sentimental (talk). Those who deny them deny their family, their heritage, their culture, their birthright, their very selves! (Those who deny these things) will not be lightly forgiven.”

Pretty remarkable words from this Harvard historian. And, widely believed. Look at the world today. The major conflicts of the last 10 years – certainly since the fall of the Soviet Union – have been about conflicts between cultures. Many academics would identify 9 or so major civilizations in the world: Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Chinese, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, and Japanese. It is how we develop our sense of who we are.

We see this clearly in our sports teams. When the local soccer team from my city in India of Hyderabad plays, I am a fan. The opposing team may be from the city “next door.” But, I know who I am rooting for. “My team.” Then, possibly, there is a play-off between various teams in my State. And, finally, an “all-star” team is chosen. Then, I am from the State of Andhrapradesh. And, I cheer for the team from my State. However, a national team from India may play New Zealand or Brazil or Netherlands. Well, in this case, I am rooting for the All-India team. None may be from my town or even from my State. But, I am Indian. I know who represents me. They are from my culture – my “civilization”.

Do, you see the thrust of where I am going? We are all part of one basic culture or another. And, each has its own norms for behavior, beliefs, and identities. Maybe at one time we thought in terms of language or skin color. But, today it is culture.

Now, what does the Gospel have to say about this? Oh, it is very clear.

In Titus 2:14: “(Jesus) who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.”

Or, after Peter’s experience in Acts 10 where the Lord gave him a vision of animals coming down from heaven on a sheet, he then went to Cornelius’ house and reports, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.”

What is the message of Scripture? I think it is most clearly stated in Ephesians 2: 19-21. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the LORD.”

So, even though our “civilizations” may be different, we are “fellow-citizens.” How can this be true? Only because of our kinship in Christ Jesus.

That is why the formation of this new Christian trade association is so important. It is a testimony of our faith and our calling. We are one, even though we differ. We are called together, even though our callings are individual and unique. And, we are “one,” even though in looking around this room we are all extremely different.

What, then, can we do together? We can celebrate that the Lord has brought us together in the Kingdom. We can challenge each other to excellence in this calling. We can work together to see that others called by God to this unique way of communicating His Story will be encouraged and helped.

Wednesday morning of this week, 16 nations – that is the beginning membership in ChristianTrade Association International – will meet in our first Annual General Meeting. We will elect our first Board of Directors. We will discuss our role and purpose. And, we will start down a path of discovery with the Lord about how this new mission will support the Christian trade worldwide. We already have some ideas about how this will be done. Jim Powell, our first President, will speak more of this in a few minutes.

Our overall goal is to see the Kingdom expand, to see individuals come to saving faith in Christ. It is what you want to see happen at your publishing house, your work as a wholesaler or as your ministry as a bookshop is successful. We plan to offer training for publishers and bookshops. We plan to hold international regional conventions. We plan to serve the Christian trade in any way possible – leading toward a greater penetration in your country and around the world with the Gospel.

Let us not follow the dictates of our culture or civilization. Let us not simply allow the “crowd” to determine the priorities of our lives. Let us agree together with the challenge of the 117th Psalm:

“Praise the LORD, all nations!
Extol Him, all peoples!
For great is His steadfast love toward us,
And the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD!” (ESV)

So my brothers and sisters, let us move forward together to build the Kingdom of God through ChristianTrade Association International.