

Book Review

Sadiri Joy Tira and Juliet Lee Uytanlet, eds., *A Hybrid World: Diaspora, Hybridity, and Missio Dei*

Reviewed by Juno Wang

Tira, Sadiri Joy and Juliet Lee Uytanlet, eds. (2020). *A Hybrid World: Diaspora, Hybridity, and Missio Dei*, William Carey Publishing. Littleton, CO, 256 pp., ISBN: 978-1-64508-288-0.

A Hybrid World addresses the growing reality of hybridity among people on the move in the twenty-first century, a reality that brings opportunities and also challenges for the mission of God. The book is mainly a compendium of papers from a hybridity in diaspora mission consultation held in 2018, sponsored by the Lausanne Movement and the Global Diaspora Network. Edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Juliet Lee Uytanlet, the papers in the book are integrative, multi-disciplinary, and practical with implications, written by forward-thinking theological educators and hybrid ministry leaders. The editors and the majority of authors have doctoral degrees and are also hybrid people themselves. They utilize their expertise and experiences to engage in diaspora research and/or ministry in various fields around the world.

The Book's Thesis

The book begins with discussing diaspora and hybridity in Scripture and history, showing that they are not new phenomena. These discussions reveal increasing phenomena of diaspora and hybridity that present global missions with opportunities and challenges of identity, intermarriage, children, community, and leadership, to name just a few. The book's chapters wrestle with these areas through dialogues with new secular literature that carry significant missiological implications. The purpose is to encourage the global church not to be overcome by the challenges but to take the opportunities given by the mission of God through our relationships with God and others to gather hybrid people to Himself.

The Authors and Arrangement of Themes

The book is co-edited by Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira, a Filipino hybrid, with a Doctor of Missiology degree from Western Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Reformed Theological Seminary. He recently served as the Catalyst for Diasporas of the Lausanne Movement. The other co-editor, Dr. Juliet Lee Uytanlet, is a third-generation Chinese-Filipina with a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Asbury Theological Seminary and is a global missions and urban missions faculty member of Biblical Seminary of the Philippines. Tira and Uytanlet began to plan toward the consultation in 2016, while they served for diasporas for the Lausanne Movement.

A Hybrid World brings together 17 papers. All 17 authors have provided missiological implications in their papers to serve the purpose of the consultation. Their educational backgrounds include six with a degree in intercultural studies plus one in anthropology, four in theology, three in Biblical studies, one in missiology, and one in educational studies. With all of their hybrid experiences and expertise, the authors address a wide array of themes. The first theme looks at hybridity in the Old Testament to see how the Israelites faced the challenge of living among diverse people groups and intermarriage. That discussion then takes up the

genealogy of Christ and the Gentile missions in the New Testament to show that hybridity is inherent to God's mission in the Bible.

The second theme explores the importance of having a conversation on theological hybridity because hybrid people who are on the move travel with their religions and ways of understanding and talking about God. The conversation will help us to understand God better with multiple perspectives and to be relevant in a hybrid world. With the movement and mixing of hybridity blossoming in our globally connected world, the Church needs to recognize diverse experiences, adapt, and actively engage at new hybridizing worlds and missional frontiers.

The third theme, which is the major theme of the book, is that of hybrid identity issues. These are discussed using cultural anthropology and personal experiences, with specific examples of hyphenated Honduran, Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, Indian, Sri Lankan, Filipino, and South African hybrid identities. On the one hand, there are similarities and differences between a hybrid ethnicity and people in their various host countries or communities, so we who are hosts need to expand our bandwidth for reaching hybrid immigrants without generalizing our methodologies and practices. On the other hand, the gospel opportunities for hybrid people in general are to find their eternal home and know that the only one true God desires to have a personal relationship with them. We are to point them to Jesus, who is a hybrid between heaven and earth, and help them find their identity in him. The Church can help bicultural children to thrive and be future global leaders by using, for example, hybrid art-making as a way for missions.

A final theme concerns a "third space" of culture, that is a liminal space across boundaries when we intentionally distance ourselves from our own culture to approach other cultures for the sake of hybridizing cultures in a diverse mission team. This third space is mentioned in several papers and is discussed as the kind of multi-ethnic framework required of Christian leadership within today's globalization and hybridization.

Summary of the Contents

As a missiologist seeing people's increasing movement and mixing in this era, Dr. Tira is convinced that hybridity is a major area that must be addressed and appreciated by the Church. With limited space to cover all 17 chapters, this review summarizes the book's contents based on the opportunities, challenges, and missiological implications for hybrid missions.

Opportunities. The cultural hybridity concept highlights the mobile and fluid nature of diverse workers in multi-ethnic mission teams. This concept can be a valuable analytical tool for correcting the widespread integrated culture model used in missions leadership. Also, Christians who are hybrid by race, ethnicity, culture, and language can use their theological perspectives to have intentional cross-cultural theological conversations with Christians from multiple regions of the world, as well as constantly reform different traditions of Christian faith according to the Scriptures. Having such dialogues can also help culturally diverse Latino churches in the U.S., for example, to find common hybrid experience and recognize differences to interact among themselves and with U.S.-American culture. As for identity issues and desire for a sense of belonging in a community among hybrids, gospel opportunities help people find their identity in Christ. When we employ uprooted, situational, mixed and unmixed hybridity cultural anthropology theories, we can better understand hybrid experiences and challenges for ministry opportunities.

Christians who have intercultural or international marriages can share their experience with diaspora peoples in missions. As for interfaith Jewish-Gentile couples who may experience threats to marital stability and satisfaction, the gospel is their hope for spiritual harmony. More than half of their children, the American Jewish millennials, are open to spiritual conversation. The current hybrid generation lives in a “both-and” world with intercultural competency and has the ability to see themselves from multiple perspectives. Children on the move can be natural bridge-builders within the globally-networked world of the future.

We live in a globally connected hybrid world through the intersection of the physical and virtual where individuals and communities flourish. Therefore, hybrid diaspora have interactive relationships between their home nation, new land, and ethnic community. Hybrid art-making can be a way to demonstrate the uniqueness of our diverse community and give glory to our creator God who so loved the hybrid world.

Challenges. Missiology for hybrids is still at an early stage of development and requires both integration and interdisciplinary study without generalizations of one-size-fits-it-all strategies for different contexts. The pain and humiliation of being marginalized as migrants, members of diaspora communities, and even cross-cultural missionaries cannot be experienced by people who are at the center of power and privilege. A church that does not reflect the hybridity in her new context and live out her distinctiveness and exclusivity of Christian life faces the challenge of proclaiming the gospel in this fluid and fast-changing world. Furthermore, the Church is slow to adapt and engage in mission work at the new frontier, including the virtual world and reconfigured global households. The global Church needs to set as a priority reaching the hybrid diaspora, multiply disciples, and use her multicultural gifts to expand God’s Kingdom for world evangelization.

Christian hybrids need to contextualize their faith transculturally and transgenerationally to best suit their new context. Any leadership framework that still uses an integrated culture model for Christian missions is inadequate, and any claim of homogeneity is skeptical because mixing races and cultures cannot be avoided in any society, particularly in today’s hybrid world.

The differences in intercultural communication, family responsibilities and expectations, and being away from family all challenge the relationships among intermarried couples. The second hybrid generation does not fully fit in anywhere. Hybridity affects the sense of wellbeing of children on the move, and they are confused over identity and worldview.

Missiological Implications. The Church needs to teach hybridity in the Bible and how the Israelites in the Old Testament lived distinctively and exclusively as God’s chosen people in a pluralist world, as well as what the four Gentile women in Christ’s genealogy in Matthew tell us about hybridity in the mission of God. Hybridity missions need to be included in Diaspora Missiology to equip believers for missions because Jesus is the Lord and Savior of all human beings. We need to expand the mindsets, methodologies, and practices for missions, including being actively engaged and mobilized at such missional frontiers as our virtual world and reconfigured global households. A triadic approach can be used as follows: (1) to understand how a hybrid identity is formed by considering the relationships between the home nation, new land, and the hybrid community; (2) employ missiological cultural anthropology to understand how partners in interfaith and intermarriages communicate their worldview; and, (3) use hybridity cultural anthropology theories for gospel opportunities and forming churches for the hybrids.

When we engage in theological hybridity dialogues as the body of Christ, we will understand God beyond our own cultures, traditions, and worldviews. Latino theology must dialogue with hybridity to contribute to it, learn from it, and relate to multicultural contexts. To continue the Christian faith in the next generation and beyond, hybrid Christians constantly need to reform their inherited Christian traditions according to the trans-temporal and trans-cultural Scriptures. We can learn from the Apostle Paul who instructed his hybrid disciple, Timothy, to multiply disciples in a diverse world with a simple spirituality, simple strategy, and simple structure. With a bit more intercultural training, hybrid Christians can use their multicultural skills and networks to bridge the gap in multiplying disciples to fulfill God's mission.

Intermarriages offer various advantages for intercultural ministry involvements, but mixed-faith marriages pose a greater threat to marital stability and satisfaction. Christians can share the eternal hope we have for spiritual harmony and thus train and mobilize intermarriage Christian couples for hybrid missions. The Church needs to provide compassionate care and transformative guidance to help hybrid Christians in diaspora communities to discern God's mission in this world. Bicultural children have both advantages and disadvantages of being raised transnationally; nevertheless, parents and the global Church can help them to thrive and be natural bridge-builders to connect the globally-networked world of the future. Using hybrid art-making for missions not only empowers artists for the mission of God but also is a testimony of God's art-making creation in all cultures and peoples.

Multiethnic mission teams, by applying the third space theory of "the space across and between boundaries," common missional commitments, and shared experiences, are far more important than our ethnicity or race. The space occurs organically, and the teams embrace the ongoing changes in and around us centered on Christ. Emerging leaders using this theory in Christian missions will lean toward weaknesses with an imaginative marginality to become servants to one another in Christ and be transformed by His suffering love.

The Church in a hybrid community must truly love her neighbors and build an authentic body of Christ that reflects the community. She is to become hybrid with acts of love, compassion, and reconciliation like Jesus to engage, invite, and love our friends and neighbors.

Strengths and Observations

As a bicultural hybrid minister and an intercultural outreach trainer, the reviewer identifies with all the topics discussed in *The Hybrid World* and finds the book relevant and practical. The majority of the authors have a doctoral degree, and their research contributions are valuable for missiological implications and strategy development. This book is also a tool to encourage hybrid Christians to use their skills and experiences to become bridges for the Kingdom.

From my reading, all the personal hybrid stories from different regions of the world in this book convince me that we are in an increasingly hybrid world, and it is urgent for the Church to become involved in hybrid missions for His Kingdom. The book tries to cover a broad range of topics as a way to introduce various fields related to hybridity. I sense the resounding call for developing hybridity missiology. Within all the opportunities and challenges, one of the major hybrid issues is identity. Therefore, I, a Jesus follower, have the gospel opportunities to help hybrid people to find their identity and eternal home in Christ. Hybrid Christians could be a missionary army once they are mobilized and trained to use their multicultural skills and networks for the Kingdom.

This reviewer learned from the Scripture and history that God's redemptive plan includes a hybrid world, and He has used hybrid believers to carry out His plan in the past. Authors of *The Hybrid World* initiate comprehensive dialogues with personal experiences and secular literature for readers to understand current opportunities and challenges for hybrid missions. The book discusses the importance of loving and accepting our hybrid neighbors, with the source of our love being our Triune God. After understanding what lies before us, we are to identify with the hybrid Jesus and take up our cross for hybrid missions. We are to look forward to worshipping Him together with hybrid people in the future. Now is the time for the Church to take action for our hybrid world.

Conclusion

A Hybrid World is practical in drawing on the many experiences of hybridity ministry practitioners and researchers through hybrid stories from different regions of the world. Although it was a challenge for the editors to organize a wide selection of topics and assemble them by themes, the purpose of the book has been achieved. All research efforts with missiological implications are valuable. Readers will learn new theories, understand possible hybrid ministry challenges, and be encouraged to take missional opportunities to advance the Kingdom.