



## Current Issue

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## Guest Editorial

### **Disruption of Cross-cultural Mission: A Call to Lean into the Liminality**

Wanjiru M. Gitau

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When the GM editorial team first imagined the current issue of *Global Missiology* focused on “Socio-Political Disruptions and Missions Praxis,” we, like everyone else, had no idea that a crisis of pandemic proportions, the coronavirus, was around the corner.

At the time, we were looking at broad patterns of events that we sensed were disrupting cross-cultural mission. One of these patterns is the apparent diminution of frontier kind of foreign mission. Generally, Protestant and particularly evangelical frontier foreign mission has had a long, and fruitful history lasting almost 230 years since William Carey left his *Particular Baptist* pastorate in England and sailed out to India in 1793. Catholic frontier mission history has a much longer track record than Protestant mission. The nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century constituted the peak epoch of cross-cultural frontier work. Featured were cultural encounter, epitomized by translation of the Bible, the creation of grammars, the writing of catechisms and other material that enabled the transmission of the gospel to cultures and societies that had little to no prior contact with the gospel, and subsequent planting of churches, ultimately the growth of world Christianity.

The early modern missionary frontier crossing was inadvertently linked with the imperialist project. At the end of colonialism, the missionary movement needed to redefine itself. It morphed into relief, development, and educational formation. In a world that was emerging from confusions of global and regional wars, unstable governments, and inadequate social infrastructure, the socially oriented mission work filled an important gap demonstrating the good news of Christ as attending to actual material needs. In these spaces, many missionaries became bridge builders—towards religious communities and societies that could sustain and drive their own indigenous destinies. As with the frontier crossing, the bridge building has been so successful that by and large leaders, churches, and local institutions have been successfully raised to a point where they hardly need external help. Churches mentor their own leaders. Theological institutions now have their locally trained instructors. Significant to this equation is how a number of national governments have restricted visa access for mission workers by making them more expensive and increasing scrutiny of mission-themed work. Expatriate missionaries can no longer count on a lengthy tenure that they once enjoyed in foreign countries.

Another kind of disruption to cross-cultural mission work is the increase in plural options. This increase includes an ideological pluralism, not merely social encounter and coexistence of different religious groups or societies. This fact of plurality in itself is its own issue, but it is not a matter of disruption because religious plurality has been a constant feature within cross-cultural Christian encounter. Rather, the disruptive pluralism consists of the diffusion of ideas from multiple worldview options, religious and other. The plurality of worldview categories,

particularly disseminated through social media, has resulted in a polarization of those worldview categories that scaffold the substratum of faith. This process has not necessarily turned the world secular as largely feared, rather it has desacralized religious sensibilities that make Christian faith, and spreading it, and working in the name of faith, self-evident. Part of the problem of course is the plurality of Christian expression and Christian differences before a watching world. Another effect is that much humanitarian, relief, and development work, once the forte of Christian mission, is now carried out by agents who have little interest in the faith, even though there might be a convenient veneer of it. Scandal and rumor precede what would be genuine mission work. When it comes to social advocacy, whether of justice or of a material nature, where people were once driven by deep faith commitments, even when they differed with other dominant faith commitments, advocacy across the world now comes with multiple motivations. Recipient local communities do not necessarily trust such work for its Christian persuasions, even when it comes under a Christian banner. Besides, local political agents have learnt to co-opt a variety of external agents. Leading social functionaries have been calling out relief, development, and humanitarian work as a fig leaf covering the naked ambition of neoliberal global capital interests. Christian missionaries can no longer be naïve about any of these realities.

The summary above paints broad strokes of deeply complex issues. The articles in this issue are illustrative of select disruptions. One article emerges from contemporary socio-political events in Hong Kong: “When The Cross Is About To Be Wrapped In The Red Flag, How Should Churches Under The Hong Kong National Security Law Resist?” China has indeed taken an unexpected turn as it seeks to forge a certain political pathway. The church is considered part of the civil society, and its educational institutions are under sharp scrutiny. At the risk of being considered subversive, religious leaders are compelled to declare their political stance and support legislation which may involve making compromises on religious activity, including foreign involvement (mission work). It is obvious that the church in its role as part of the civil society is actively wrestling with the issue. The tendency of outsider (western) Christians is to spiritualize such matters and to assign categories that lessen the complexity so that mission work can seem to continue. But it is clear from the other article from the region, by Brent Fulton and entitled “Four Decades, Four Narratives: Political Disruption and Contemporary Missionary Discourse on China,” that reductive categorization of what is happening in Hong Kong, or even China, does not simplify or ease matters. Presently, Christians outside of the situation could not intervene if they tried, and in fact if they do their attempts put local Christians at odds against their own societies, which does not help the cause of evangelization. The narratives of *the needy church*, *the persecuted church*, *the Christian Church*, and *the missionary church* that have figured prominently in foreign missionary discourse about China since the late 1970s are unhelpful and inadequate. The whole situation is the kind of disruption for which there is no easy answer.

The subject of “Urbanisation, Change and Christian Mission in the Indian Context among Educated Middle-Class Hindus” addresses perhaps the most complex and unresolved issue in the long centuries of evangelization in India: the question of inculturation of the gospel into the traditional Hindu worldview. Caste consciousness within the urbanized, highly consumerist Indian society disrupts both tradition and taken-for-granted assumptions of modernity. This

situation creates new disruptive questions for the Christian gospel itself, questions that will require broader discourse beyond India itself. Even in other parts of the world, the correlation between the Christian gospel and modernity is quite confusing. Thus, the present disruption as perceived in modernizing Hindu consumer society presents opportunity for mission studies to address the theological gaps in the transitions from purist, traditionalist worldviews into the sensibilities of modernity.

Another instructive article is derived from the experience of the Spokane Indian Tribe within the United States of America. There is no shortage of irony here in that this industrially advanced nation, with its capacity to drive mission work and engage in relief and development abroad, has not addressed the crises of its first peoples within its borders. The other irony is how the economic activities that make the US wealthy and advanced are the very same ones that disenfranchise the marginalized, and that the gospel preached in the US has little or nothing to say about these shadows of wealth and advance. In Costa Rica, disruption takes on yet a different form when we are brought face-to-face with a case study of the refugee crisis exacerbated by economic failure and political violence in the larger Central American region. After years of a great deal of learning best practices of humanitarian work within the matrix of the social complexity, limitations imposed by US foreign policy and national insularity come in the way of one ministry organization's community accomplishments.

In this issue of *Global Missiology* we are confronted with the reality that crossing frontiers and crossing cultures in order to take the gospel to others is not what it once was. The disruptive reckoning has been going on for several generations, but it is the global coronavirus that seals this disruption and serves as a major wake up call.

The coronavirus has disrupted the most significant aspect of mission: travel and human contact in meetings, conferences, church activities, and generally busy work. Of necessity, many events have shifted to online activities. Christian mission was meant to consist of human-to-human contact conveying the love and care of God and inviting a personalized response. This interaction was personified through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Along that same vein, one particular episode of Jesus's life on earth represents the best response to our contemporary disruption. For the moment, what matters is not his great commissions. Not his teachings or his many miracles. Not the disciples' mission in Acts.

Rather, what particularly instructs us now is the 18 long years of Jesus's silence, during which we know little about what he was doing. After the episode of a 12-year-old Jesus traveling with his parents to and from Jerusalem for their annual pilgrimage, there comes a time of utter silence about his life. But we can imagine. Luke 4 can help us recreate his teen and young adulthood years.

When we meet Jesus in Luke 4 (and also Matthew 4), his responses to the devil's temptations are deeply steeped in awareness of scripture. When we meet him at the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, where he had been brought up, a scroll is handed to him by an attendant. He unrolls a specific scripture, one that replays the suffering, poverty, and injustices of his day. His exegesis of that text, although we are not told the content of his sermon, demonstrates

people's condition in the entire region. What is notable behind this text reading is that Jesus had lived in this world, and though he had not activated his mission all these long years he had become thoroughly educated, both formally and informally. When we later encounter the immense suffering of ordinary people, including through the injustice meted out by the Romans and the burdens imposed by religious leaders, we cannot help wonder why Jesus did not engage sooner to change the situations. We wonder until we realize that Jesus took time to learn, to study, to understand, in fact to interact with his people at a very human level, in a context of working as a carpenter himself. He is so ordinary that the people do a double-take: "Isn't this the carpenter's son?"

And that is the point. While he was young and unknown, Jesus existed in what anthropologist Victor Turner refers to as a liminal space. Early on he knew that he must be about his father's business. But the business must await the fullness of God's set time. So he lives in this in-between place. A liminal condition is that place of contingency, "between and betwixt," aware and yet so limited, disordered, even disintegrated and troubled because one is pained by one's own limitations and the pains of others. Like the hero in the making, one starts to see new possibilities, but they must await the proper moment, the crowning rite of passage. To otherwise force change through immature action is to short-circuit the real work of transformation that must take place in a person, and that later in the world he is going to face. So he humbles himself and endures an invisible, ambiguous existence, so ambiguous that even powers that be later have a hard time tracing his roots. He is a *persona non grata*. But that is what an important mission takes. Liminal existence.

Lately, as Christians have grappled with the loss of fellowship over the virus shutdowns, there has been a great deal of talk about revival of all things church and mission. But we really are not ready for renewal of any kind, unless, like a good bag of tea, we are soaked and steeped in this space where we are almost useless to the world. Liminality precedes renewal and transformation. A great deal of angst is generated in this status, and nothing of consequence seems to be happening, but yet a lot is happening! Yes, like the cocoon metamorphosing into a butterfly. It's like the baby growing in the mother's womb. It is a space even of doubt. For some, it's a dark passage where they must reinvent themselves. And, no, it's not exile, because exile entails expulsion and exclusion. Neither is it suffering and persecution, because the whole world is forced into this space together. It is just that Christians are invited intentionally to engage the apparent obscurity of this uncertain space. Just as Jesus in his 18 years, and then his 40 days of wilderness inaugurating experience. When we finally meet him, we meet a man very well aware of his world. A man who does not engage in confrontation with the Roman occupiers, although he could have called a legion of angels at his command. Even the crowds he fed could have formed his army. He resists pragmatic shortcuts to fulfilling his mission. He goes about deliberately, almost inefficiently forming the community that must carry on his mission. But that intentionality is exactly what forms a different mission than anything the world has ever seen.

Scholars like to fish for paradigm shifts. Social activists want to change and want it now. Evangelists want conversions and as many as possible so they can preempt hell. And church plants want multiple lights on a hill, lots of church communities on the landscape. There is a time

for such. But if our time of disruption, enforced by a disease, shuts all that down, let participants in the overall cross-cultural mission movement, in its many expressions — evangelism, church planting, social care — set aside the frenetic activity, and lean into this *Selah* moment. We have heard it said that the word *Selah* means something like, “stop and listen,” as with a musical interlude. Let's stop and listen. The time for action will come soon enough.



## **The Refugee Crisis and Foreign Involvement: The Case of CFCI in Costa Rica**

Jenny McGill

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### **Abstract**

Missiologists have long debated the effects of foreign involvement, particularly by imperial powers on their colonial soils. Regarding the current refugee crisis in Central America, a brief history is offered in relation to key development markers as well as the humanitarian aid and refugee admission that the United States government has provided to the region. The adverse and positive ramifications that foreign agencies working in these communities can have is addressed. The current crisis of migrants and refugees to Costa Rica is explored, with special focus given to one of the most impoverished neighborhoods located in San José—La Carpio. The dilemma and concerns of how best to help this community in such need are presented as well as how one humanitarian organization, Christ For the City International (CFCI), is serving there. CFCI provides a model to replicate for all who would see that La Carpio and the lives of its peoples improve. This study examines how geopolitical events and insufficient government aid have affected the mass migration occurring in Central America, particularly from Nicaragua into Costa Rica, and offers an example of how outside humanitarian organizations can best impact the poorest in those communities for sustained development.

**Key Words:** Central America, Costa Rica, humanitarian aid, migration, NGOs, refugees, poverty, servant leadership

### **Introduction**

Central America consists of seven nations; from north to south they are Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. This article focuses on the closer relationships among the middle five of these countries (Guatemala to Costa Rica) and, in particular, the relationship between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. What effects have the wars, gangs, and violence that have swept through the country of Nicaragua in the last decades had on its neighbor, Costa Rica? In particular, how have governments, humanitarian organizations, and mission agencies addressed the human rights and development of Nicaraguan refugees (predominantly women and children) to impact their status and well-being?

A summary of the recent history of Central America will be offered, elucidating the development markers for these five countries, along with the humanitarian aid and refugee admission that the United States government has provided to the region. Second, the current crisis of migrants and refugees to Costa Rica will be explored and explained, with special focus given to one of the most impoverished neighborhoods located in San José—La Carpio. Reflection is given to address the adverse and positive ramifications of foreign agencies working in these communities. The dilemma and concerns of how best to help this community in such need are presented as well as how one humanitarian organization, Christ For the City International (CFCI), is serving there. CFCI provides a model to replicate for all who would see

that La Carpio and the lives of its peoples improve. This consideration describes how geopolitical events and insufficient government aid have affected the mass migration occurring in Central America, particularly from Nicaragua into Costa Rica, and offers an example of how outside humanitarian organizations, through their incarnational presence, can best impact the poorest in those communities for sustained development.

### *A Summary of Central American History*

While a thorough investigation of the historical, economic, and political factors which affected Central America in the last century is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief summary will be offered. This isthmus has possessed a rich history through the centuries and gained particular outside attention in the twentieth. Obtaining independence from Spain on September 15, 1821, five countries—Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica (GEHNC)—embarked on varied but connected journeys over the past one hundred years.

The twentieth century brought the focused attention of the United States to Central America, first by President Theodore Roosevelt and later by John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. Teddy Roosevelt intervened in the domestic affairs of Central America to protect the burgeoning U.S. economic interests and private business investments there. Because Central America was dependent solely on the one market of the United States by the 1920s, the 1929 U.S. stock market crash brought about Central America's own economic depression as a result. Growing social ills brought a desire for social change among the populace, but dictators gained rule in all the countries, except in Costa Rica, through the 1930s. The havoc wreaked brought increasing resistance from the populace. While some revolutionary activity erroneously was deemed communist, those championing communist ideals were certainly active. Costa Rica disbanded its army in 1949, and political and social reforms for Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras took place during the 1940s and 1950s. Nicaragua, however, was the only country to experience no such reforms (Foster 2000).

In the 1960s, as the Cold War ensued globally, concerns about communism gaining hold in Central America grew, not least because of Cuba. John F. Kennedy introduced the Alliance for Progress, an organization providing ten years of government aid to Costa Rica, in part to stem communism. The U.S. military presence and protection of its business interests remained strong in Central America. The Central American Common Market was also created in 1960 to economically unify the five countries (GEHNC) but lasted only until 1969 when Honduras withdrew and declared war on El Salvador.

When the world economy plummeted in the 1970s during the oil crisis, Central America was hard hit. After the devastating 1972 drought in Nicaragua, a series of earthquakes and resulting fires that same year destroyed 70% of its capital, Managua, killing 18,000 and leaving 200,000 homeless (United Press International 1972). Additionally, the Central America population doubled from 1950-1980, straining the already small urban land mass competing with lands increasingly used for cattle and crops. By 1973, refugees had consumed ten percent of the arable land in Costa Rica (Foster 2000). The previous decades of dictatorships, incomplete reforms, and abject poverty among the majority of the population fomented continuing unrest.

The civil wars of the 1970s-1990s became one of the bleakest periods in Central American history. While U.S. President Carter cut military aid to Central American countries with human rights abuses, Reagan increased military intervention, especially in Nicaragua. After 40 years of

the U.S.-supported Somoza family's pilfering dictatorship (which owned 25% of the country's assets), the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) launched a guerrilla war and gained control in 1979. They won a contested election in 1984 but were deposed by the U.S.-trained Contras in 1990. The civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua left wrecked economies, infrastructures, and two million refugees (Foster 2000). With democratization, demilitarization, and diversification of market economies, 1997 marked a new peace for these countries, albeit with vastly embedded political corruption, national debts, and widespread poverty.

Apart from the devastation of wars and economic crippling that Central America experienced in the last century, low literacy rates among the populace and the lack of educational opportunities also have been extremely detrimental. Excluding Panama and Belize, in the 1920s only 2.7% of the population in the remaining five countries of Central America (GEHNC) could read (Foster 2000, 188). By comparison, in France by the late 1700s, 50% of males and 30% of women were literate, and in Britain, literacy rates were correspondingly 70% and 55% by 1850 (Lyons 2003, 313). In New England of the U.S. colonies, male literacy rates were 85% by the mid-1750s. Female literacy rates were at least 48% before the end of the eighteenth century, if not higher (Perlmann and Shirley 1991, 53, 60-61). The gender, though not racial, difference disappeared by the late 1890s (Sutch and Carter 2006). This historical literacy lag among Central American inhabitants profoundly affected their lives and impeded the development of their nations.

Even as recently as 1998, literacy rates were only 55.6% for Guatemala, 71.5% for El Salvador, 72.7% for Honduras, 65.7% for Nicaragua, and 94.8% for Costa Rica (Foster 2000, 271). As of 2015 or 2016 estimates, literacy rates for those 15 or older were 97.8% in Costa Rica, 89% in Honduras, 88.1% in El Salvador, 82.8% in Nicaragua, and 81.5% in Guatemala. Literacy rates had almost no gender difference in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua but had an 11% difference between the sexes in Guatemala and a 4% difference in El Salvador (Central Intelligence Agency 2019).

#### *Humanitarian Aid from and Refugee Admission to the U.S.*

Apart from its military involvement in the region, how else has the U.S. government been involved in the countries of Central America? The cumulative amount of aid granted in the last decades is staggering. Considering the annual totals in 2017 alone, U.S. foreign aid given to the GEHNC countries was (in millions): Guatemala (\$257m), El Salvador, (\$118m), Honduras (\$181m), Nicaragua (\$44m), and Costa Rica (\$18m). Monies specifically given by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2017 were: Guatemala (\$197m), El Salvador, (\$104m), Honduras (\$149m), Nicaragua (\$23m), and Costa Rica (\$4.7m) (USAID 2017). Although they received far less aid, Nicaragua and Costa Rica have benefitted greatly from the billions of US foreign monies since the 1940s, falling under the United States' Strategy for Central America which "aims to secure US borders and protect American citizens by addressing the security, governance, and economic drivers of illegal immigration and transnational crime" (Mack and McNeil 2012).

Also, formally since the Refugee Act of 1980, the U.S. has set the precedent for welcoming the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers of any other country. If granted U.S. protection, these individuals are granted employment authorization and may be eligible to receive other social services. Apart from its refugee program, the United States currently offers a

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to over 417,000 citizens of ten countries, including three from Central America: El Salvador (60.3% of all TPS holders), Honduras (19.3%), and Nicaragua (1.1%) (Wilson 2019). This benefit typically is designated for a period of six to eighteen months at a time. While not a pathway to lawful permanent residency, TPS individuals can apply for non-immigrant status or an adjustment of status through an immigration petition (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services n.d.).

The U.S. President, in consultation with Congress, sets the annual cap of refugees admitted to the United States. In 1980, over 207,000 refugees were admitted, but the number of refugees has steadily decreased since, apart from the 1990-1993 Balkan bump (Migration Policy Institute n.d.). While funding was boosted in 2016 by the Obama administration, the Trump administration has further heightened immigration enforcement. Trump reduced the original allotment of 110,000 for FY 2017 to 50,000 persons and lowered it to 30,000 for FY 2019. This is the lowest allotment of any President to date. In 2018, the US accepted only 22,491 refugees (Blizzard and Batalova 2019).

For those refugees admitted into the United States, most originate from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Ukraine, and Bhutan. Of the top ten countries of origin from which refugees accepted into the U.S. come, the only Central American country is El Salvador (National Immigration Forum 2019). Trump further withdrew an estimated \$700 million in funding to nonprofit organizations, such as the International Justice Mission, working in the Northern Triangle nations of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (BBC 2019). Rather than creating pathways for legal work authorization, the US has pursued refugee resettlement outside of its borders. The resultant burden will shift to surrounding countries such as Costa Rica.

### **The Crisis of Refugees in Costa Rica**

While the migration to the U.S. of Venezuelans, Mexicans, and other residents of Latin America has been widely observed, fewer researchers have analyzed the increasing strain of Central Americans, primarily Nicaraguans, flooding into Costa Rica and how to address it. Given the history of wars in the region and despite extensive US aid, Central Americans are migrating due to violence (particularly against women), corruption, lack of education for their children, and gang extortion of local businesses. For example, Guatemala faces falling coffee prices by 60%, and the Honduran family of Keila Garcia pays more than 50% of their income toward their children's private education (Anderson, S. 2019). Many Nicaraguans fled south during the Somoza dictatorship of the 1970s and again when the conflict ensued between Ortega's Sandinista government and U.S.-supported Contras in the 1980s. With President Ortega's violent response in 2018 to anti-government protests, an average of 200 Nicaraguans sought asylum in Costa Rica daily, not including those who entered illegally (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2018).

With the astounding destruction that military dictatorships, civil wars, and natural disasters wrought, Nicaragua has suffered greatly. When its GDP is divided by the number of its inhabitants, the annual purchasing power parity (PPP) rating per person is \$5800 (2017 est.), the second poorest in Central America (Central Intelligence Agency n.d.). Emigration persists due to ongoing human rights violations domestically. According to the Corruptions Perceptions Index monitored by the organization Transparency International, Nicaragua falls in 125<sup>th</sup> place (out of 180 countries) in its perceived lack of public sector corruption, while Costa Rica ranks 48<sup>th</sup> (Transparency International 2018).

Juxtaposed with Nicaragua, Costa Rica is lauded for its neutrality in war, openness to foreigners, biodiversity, and ecological advances. For example, Costa Rica was named the “United Nations Champion of the Earth” for its example in addressing climate change (United Nations Climate Change 2019). Its commitment to social welfare, increase in public assistance, and reception of migrants is exemplar in the region and for the world.

Another reality in Costa Rica exists, though—for the impoverished. Approximately 22% of the population lives below the poverty line, and females head 43.5% of those households (Anders 2016). This poorer population has swelled in Costa Rica from the high tides of immigration from neighboring countries. The fact that 25% of the country is protected as national parks—for good reason—further restricts land use for potential migrant settlement (World Population Review 2020). Approximately 600,000 Nicaraguans live or seasonally work in Costa Rica, comprising 15% of the population. This figure does not include those who have entered Costa Rica without legal documentation. Even with the impressive responsiveness of the Costa Rican government, the nearly 29,000 approved asylum applications have created a backlog: only 8000 work permits have been processed (Negrini and Verza 2019). The sheer scale of administration required to adjudicate these cases leaves the rest with no other option than to wait and try to survive.

Costa Rica has a relatively low population density; however, the capital city of San José has a much higher one—almost 17,000 people per square mile. The overcrowded conditions dramatically worsen in some of the poorest San Jose neighborhoods, such as La Carpio and Triángulo de Solidaridad. For example, La Carpio, adjacent to San José’s landfill, is located on the northwest side between two polluted rivers, Rio Virilla and Rio Torres. Many of its inhabitants are undocumented migrants from Nicaragua, while their children born in Costa Rica are citizens. Approximately 40,000 people live in 1.4 square miles (Evans 2012). Shelters are built with cardboard, scraps, and corrugated tin. Electricity is siphoned illegally and hazardously. Some paved roads and alleyways, plus added sewage and water connections, have improved living conditions. Those who can find work engage in low-skilled labor, such as cleaning, coffee picking, and lawn care. With one main road into and out of La Carpio, others “commute” by crossing the rivers, such as the 50-meter-wide Rio Virilla, to work on the coffee plantations.

The residents of La Carpio, even in a country like Costa Rica, face absolute poverty, inadequate housing materials, living space, and sanitation, lack of health care and educational opportunities, and unsafe living conditions. They face higher rates of gang activity, drug trafficking, and crime, and they bear the social stigma of living in the wrong neighborhood. Education is compulsory for minors in Costa Rica, but this does not apply to the undocumented living in the barrios. The new primary school, opening in 2018, serves over two thousand preschool and primary school-aged children, but no high school is present. Due to overcrowding, the school ran in three shifts where each student received about three hours of teaching per day. This has changed to two shifts with the new building (Rico 2018).

Despite the government taking a passive approach toward La Carpio and isolated acts of xenophobia, Costa Rica as a whole has shown concern for its migrants and poorer communities. For example, the System of Art Education for Social Inclusion (SIFAIS), the Latin American Center for Competitiveness and Sustainable Development (CLACDS), and the INCAE Business School have commenced an annual measurement of progress in La Carpio versus the

municipality of San José as a whole. Factors such as access to water, personal freedoms and safety, health, housing, education, and information and communication are studied (Lang 2018).

But for a small country such as Costa Rica becoming strapped by its own economic vulnerabilities, increased drug trafficking, nominal US foreign aid, and burgeoning refugee populations, what else can be done for its poorest communities predominantly filled with migrants struggling to survive? What can be done locally in the communities where corruption affects governance, and gangs have majority power?

### **Paternalism v. Servanthood Mission Work in Costa Rica: Making the Right Difference**

Foreign involvement has often hurt rather than helped local communities. The imperialistic spirit of colonialism blinded even the best intentioned, such as missionaries. Complicity in land agreements, treaties, and services provided—to the detriment or disadvantage of indigenous parties—have been thoroughly documented. Significant foreign investment can also make little difference. For example, approximately \$2.3 trillion of Western foreign aid was spent since World War II and the turn of the twenty-first century (Easterly 2006, 4), yet 56% of the world's population still lives on less than \$2 per day (Kochhar 2015).

Despite abject failures, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have learned valuable lessons in fostering community development. Corbett and Fikkert describe several considerations. First, they advocate understanding poverty alleviation as primarily the reconciliation of relationships (with God, self, others, and creation) rather than merely the attainment of material wealth. Their goal is to “restore people to a full expression of humanness” (Corbett and Fikkert 2012, 74-75). Second, material poverty alleviation, from pursuing this four-fold reconciliation, is then for people to fulfill their calling to glorify God through their concrete work, thereby sustaining their families. This development model focuses on changing individual worldviews as well as organizational systems and processes. Third, Corbett and Fikkert advocate moving from a needs-based understanding of community development to an asset-based model. The former starts from a viewpoint of what the community lacks. The latter identifies and mobilizes *pre-existing* local assets rather than immediately and directly ameliorating the external situation with foreign resources. This approach frustrates the “North American need for speed” but allows for the precise development of those assets for sustained change (Corbett and Fikkert 2012).

Research also shows that Western involvement in communities has been associated with vastly improved outcomes (Pak 2006; Woodberry 2012). Rev. Dr. Duane “Chip” Anderson is the president and CEO of Christ For the City International (CFCI), an interdenominational Christian mission agency, and offers several insights as to why. Dr. Anderson lived in Costa Rica for 18 years as a missionary before being asked to lead CFCI in 2000. Dr. Anderson shares his experience as a new missionary:

I did play the role of the great white Savior [upon arriving]. I brought in lots of money, lots of short-term teams, and we did everything according to what I wanted to do. When I left the community, it all collapsed.... so I switched to a different model. Basically, that through mutual friendship networks, I found out who could be trusted in communities, and then I would ask them, “What’s *your* vision? What do you think God has called you to do for your community?” Then I would serve whatever that vision was and bring in the resources, only in those areas where they needed the help. Most of the time, they have the

volunteers. They have the materials. They just lack some little catalytic drop of something in order to be enabled and empowered to do it for themselves (Anderson, D. 2019).

For CFCI to enter a community, they commit to remain there for many years. Their commitment is to run programs for multiple generations to allow people to change effectively over time. That is, measuring a community's progress only in terms of economic change is reductionistic. Spiritual richness or emotional wholeness are harder to measure as tangible benefits, but these are extremely valuable in helping individuals, families, and communities develop. Dr. Anderson shares:

[Our] centers are centers of refuge, not just from the economic poverty, but especially for spiritual flourishing. Many times, short-term teams come down, and they lament the dirt. They lament people not having enough food or the right kind of food, but in essence, their richness is of a different kind.... We like to impose our Western mentality and value systems on them, and of course, they are not going to measure up. That's why [some] organizations try to use that to gain political power over people, and then it turns out they only abuse them more. [CFCI is] there to open doors, to provide opportunities, to serve in a humble way—in the name of God—what God has laid on *their* hearts. Once you understand that worldview, then dollars only mean a small portion of what it takes. Mobilizing volunteers, finding those people in the community who have a “God-heart” to serve their community, recruiting them, training them, giving them an opportunity to serve—that's where the real gold is (Anderson, D. 2019).

One objection to foreign, predominantly Western, groups—especially Caucasian white missionaries—is that they impose their views onto the locals of that community. This view certainly has historical and current validity when implicit bias and abuse of power endure. Dr. Anderson again elaborates:

[The naysayer to Western involvement in foreign contexts] wrongly assumes that in these contexts, the government is in control. The reality is that in most slums, the government is not in control. The gangs, and multiple gangs, are in control. . . . Also, despite the Costa Rican government's positive stance toward refugees, it too has laws about illegal immigration. For instance, a non-Costa Rican resident cannot access medical services in La Carpio. However, at the same time, the Costa Rican government will help CFCI as a humanitarian organization to service those people who do not qualify under its laws. For example, we keep the sick people out of their emergency rooms. I think the “colonialism” argument is based on a materialistic worldview, is mono-dimensional, and hijacks the discussion of what it takes to arrive at real solutions that are needed to help others. The CFCI's community development worldview is based on the biblical idea that humankind is body, soul, and spirit. We are not only [material]. The way to best help humankind is to provide opportunities for freedom in each of those areas (Anderson, D. 2019).

With CFCI's emphasis on local leadership driving the discussions and decisions, the above concern is better addressed. When government and foreign aid are insufficient or unable to meet a community's needs, charitable groups, even Western ones, can be useful and wanted. When the poorest—most often women and children—are starving, from what hand color the help comes may not matter to them. CFCI's humble goal, according to Dr. Anderson, is to follow Christ's example in serving others rather than being served (Mark 10:45). CFCI's leaders and volunteers

posture themselves as servants in the community to which God has called them to promote the physical, social, spiritual well-being of the residents and their families.

### **The Case of Christ For the City International (CFCI) in Costa Rica**

The vices of war, domestic violence, drug and sex trafficking, and deportation negatively affect the most vulnerable: women, children, the ill, and the elderly. Multiple state-sponsored and nonprofit organizations labor to better the lives of migrants in Costa Rica. The Costa Rican Humanitarian Foundation (CRHF), for example, manages more than fifty volunteer projects focused on education, community development, and health care throughout the country (Nystrom 2018). In La Carpio, under the direction of Gail Nystrom, CRHF oversees three Family Well-being Centers, food distribution, sewing, and sports programs, and a host of local “collaborators” offering training in the community topics such as health, education, job training, employment, and self-development. Multiple churches minister in the community, such as Lutheran, Assemblies of God, Seventh-day Adventist, Catholic (the San Martín project), and the International Baptist Church. Other organizations serving in La Carpio include Soldados de Jesús (Soldiers of Jesus), Mike Yoo ministries, Young Life, El Banco de Alimentos, La Fundación SIFAIS, Casa Ilori, Encamíname, and the planned Centro de Educación y Nutrición (CEN-CINAI) feeding program.

The Bible urges special consideration and care for the poor and vulnerable (Isa 10:1-2; Prov 14:31, 19:17; Matt 25:35-40; Luke 4:18). Those who follow that God of the Bible are drawn to continue that good work. The colonial aftermath of the imperial powers (e.g. the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal), as well as current hardships exacerbated by exploitative practices of contemporary world powers (e.g., the United States, China), have taught missionaries many a lesson not to repeat, and most ministry leaders strive to serve in new ways to empower, not overpower, a community’s local citizens.

One organization serving in exemplary ways is Christ For the City International (CFCI). Established in 1995 and located in 18 countries, CFCI has more than 500 workers, of whom over 90% are non-North American and 55% are volunteers. The CFCI Costa Rica base has been operating for 29 years, originally under another organizational name. CFCI does not rely on government funding from the U.S. Twenty-seven projects in different areas of the country are currently carried out, including seven Community Transformation Centers in Tirrases, Pavas, and Renacer, and four in La Carpio: Segunda en Carpio, Renovación, Las Gradadas (Betél), and Reneuvos. Additionally, CFCI runs a free health clinic for refugees, serving 500 patients per month.

A CFCI Community Transformation Center (CTC) is either a specific building or centralized location from which certain ministries and activities are introduced to foster community transformation over time. The Tirrases CTC offers academic assistance, youth sports programs, women’s ministries, and children’s Bible classes, while the CTC in Pavas offers vocational training and a refuge home for those struggling to leave their gangs and addictions. Segunda en Carpio offers academic assistance, ESL, and children’s Bible classes. At Renovación, various programs are given such as a women’s support group and art and music classes for children. Las Gradadas stands at the base of Rio Virilla in La Carpio and offers a safe, positive environment for children and women to learn, play, and eat at least one meal per day. The Reneuvos CTC holds the only green space of 3.2 acres in all of La Carpio with several fields for soccer and children’s play. Its two leaders and 50 volunteers offer a daycare for teen mothers to finish their education,



school tutoring, vocational training, and programs for women and children on a weekly basis. Renacer is a therapeutic center for homeless girls aged 12-17 with addictions. This 15-month voluntary program offers a small-group setting to learn life skills, receive vocational training, and further one's education in order to finish high school. Graduates of the program receive post-program follow-up until age 21, and 92% of graduates do not return to living on the streets. CFCI's composite impact, including pastoral training, touches over 10,000 lives per month in the poorest barrios of San José.

Moreover, the excellence of CFCI is its philosophy of resident leadership, locally-driven ministry, and incarnational presence among the most vulnerable, ministering in neighborhoods where most Ticos (those born in Costa Rica) rarely tread. CFCI invites external partners to adopt a Community Transformation Center as a longer-term investment in the community. While their main emphasis is on education and vocational training, the ministry of CFCI is not reduced to merely social services. Rather, their view is that the best service to the residents should include both social and spiritual components.

### **Conclusion**

Given the political and economic history of Central America and despite the humanitarian aid granted, Costa Rica faces an increasing inability to accommodate the needs of its migrants, namely from neighboring Nicaragua. The number of incoming refugees into Costa Rica has reached a critical level with no apparent reprieve. The poorest areas of its capital city, San José, are particularly the hardest hit with harsher living conditions and fewer infrastructures to improve conditions.

Foreign aid is one answer when a community cannot overcome the dominance of gang activity or the lack of government aid. At the same time, the community possesses within its members the resources to plan, forge, and produce considerable change over time. Incarnational ministry is crucial to help make a daily difference in the lives of individuals seeking to overcome their challenging circumstances of unemployment, illiteracy, and unsafe living conditions. From its localized position, Christ For the City International (CFCI) is an example of such a humanitarian organization. CFCI is striving to contribute in a meaningful and sustainable way to the poorest living in San José, Costa Rica. What governments and neighboring countries cannot do, individuals and small organizations at a grass roots level can.

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# **Four Decades, Four Narratives: Political Disruption and Contemporary Mission Discourse on China**

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## **Abstract**

This article brings China's current clampdown on foreign Christian activity into perspective by showing how the interplay between shifting political winds and the developing internal capacity of the indigenous church have given rise to four dominant mission narratives. Viewed in broader historical context, these narratives' inability to account for political disruption calls into question the *covenantal* meta-narrative that equates the Gospel's advance with progress and political modernization. Other narratives, including those of political leaders, need to be recognized as having a place in the larger *missio Dei* meta-narrative.

**Key Words:** China, Christianization, covenantal, narrative, persecution

## **Introduction**

Following three decades of relative openness, in 2014 the church in China began to experience increasing pressure under Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's authoritarian rule. Along with tightened restrictions on local believers came heightened scrutiny and new restrictions on foreign Christian workers as well. In early 2020 Asia Harvest reported:

In 2016, Asia Harvest was among the first to warn that a massive persecution was about to erupt across China. By the following year, house church leaders we work with were telling us things like: 'The persecution we're experiencing is the worst since the Cultural Revolution 40 years ago!'

Meanwhile, thousands of foreign Christians who have given their lives to serve the Lord in China are feeling devastated. They've been kicked out of China and banned from returning for five years or more (Asia Harvest 2020).

The experience of foreign Christian involvement in contemporary China provides an instructive case study of the relationship between political disruption and Christian narratives about the church and mission. Christian narratives about China and its church, while reflecting an inherent unity, have evolved over time due to the interaction between changes in the political environment and changes in the capacity of the indigenous church. This interaction has shaped how foreign Christian entities perceive the situation of the church in China, what is possible in ministry, and what constitute desirable outcomes. Viewed in a broader historical context, these narratives' inability to adequately account for political disruption suggests the need to acknowledge competing narratives when assigning meaning to political events.

## **Variations on a Theme**

Michael W. Stroope describes narrative as "the organization of events and actors in such a manner as to convey chronology and development. Within the creases of narrative lies emplotment. As a literary device, plot arranges complex events and personalities into an accessible and comprehensible story" (Stroope 2017, 161). Psychologist Jerome Bruner uses the notion of "canonical script" to denote the normative nature of narratives, which make sense of

reality in a way that is culturally acceptable (Bruner, 1991, 13). According to political scientists Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe, narratives provide insight into how different people process information and move toward achieving their goals. Particularly relevant for the present study is the concept of meta-narratives, which provide uncritically accepted organizing concepts that shape individual and group narratives as well as the likelihood that narratives will find acceptance (Patterson and Renwick Monroe 1998, 316, 325-26).

Stroope contends that, when mission claims the role of the grand narrative, objectivity is compromised and the mission narrative seeks dominance over other narratives to justify a specific agenda (Stroope 2017, 167). Chandra Mallampalli points to the tension between two historical narratives, the *incarnational*, as developed in the work of Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh, and the *covenantal*. The latter, being central to early Puritan faith in America, formed the basis for the country's commitment to democracy and rule of law, embedding in the consciousness of American Christianity a mythology that assumes the Gospel "will necessarily produce in other cultures a progression from chaos or tyranny to, ultimately, prosperity and democracy" (Mallampalli 2006, 8-9). Although this perspective appears to be incarnational in that it recognizes cultural symbols of other nations, the indigenous Christian experience is validated "*only if it catalyzes movement toward political modernity*" [emphasis added] (Mallampalli 2006, 10).

Nathan Faries in his work on American narratives about the church in China notes a similar theme. Outsiders, blinkered by their own nationalism, tend to miss what is distinctly "Chinese" about Chinese Christianity. Their political assumptions keep them from fully appreciating the very real cultural loyalties of the Christians whose stories they are attempting to tell (Faries 2010, 6-7). Examining secular China narratives, former *Los Angeles Times* Beijing bureau chief James Mann alludes to this meta-narrative of political modernization in his critique of the "soothing scenario" that came to dominate American discourse on China following normalization of relations in the late 1970s. Convinced that economic and cultural engagement would somehow bring about political transformation, US business and government elites, journalists, and academics promoted mutually reinforcing narratives that ignored the unchanging nature of China's Leninist system (Mann 2007, 6-7). Rather than incorporating China into the Western-led rules-based international order based on free-market principles, America has instead found itself increasingly drawn into a new emerging order in which China plays a leading role (Mann 2007, 105).

The Asia Harvest quote at the beginning of this article represents the dominant China church narrative adopted by foreign Christians during the past four decades. A product of the political modernization meta-narrative, the *persecuted church* narrative sees the church's challenges primarily as political, the assumption being that regime change would bring about preferable conditions for the church. The responsibility of the church outside China is thus understood, in the short term, as alleviating the suffering of believers, while the long-term goal is to promote political change, usually through a combination of advocacy, diplomatic or economic pressure, and publicizing the abuses of the regime.

While this narrative has characterized much foreign Christian discourse about the church in China and, under Xi Jinping, has reasserted its role as the dominant narrative, three other narratives have also gained currency in the post-Mao period. Each of these contains elements of the political modernization meta-narrative described above. The *needy church* narrative follows

logically from the *persecuted church* narrative and sees China's church as being in survival mode, lacking basic necessities and thus requiring practical assistance from outside in order to function properly (i.e., to modernize). The *Christian China* narrative focuses on the numerical growth of the church, anticipating a critical mass of believers whose influence will bring about lasting cultural and political change. Finally, the *missionary church* narrative invites foreign participation in equipping a new wave of cross-cultural workers being sent from China to unreached peoples beyond its borders, thus replicating the Western missionary advance of previous centuries (Fulton 2014, 100-103).

All four narratives have figured prominently in foreign Christian and missionary discourse about China since mission agencies began reengaging China in the late 1970s. The nature of this discourse has changed over time, however, with changes in the degree of political pressure on the church and in the church's size and internal capacity. Examining the interaction between these two variables, political pressure and church capacity, helps to explain shifts in the China narratives of outside Christian entities.

For the purpose of this study political pressure is gauged in terms of relevant policies and their implementation; incidences of harassment or direct persecution; and, restrictions on Christian social engagement. Internal capacity refers to the church's ability to provide for its material needs, whether Bibles, meeting venues, or support for Christian workers; to train its own leaders; to produce indigenous resources; and, to advance its outreach in society. As seen in Figure One, below, four possible scenarios arise from the interaction of the two variables.

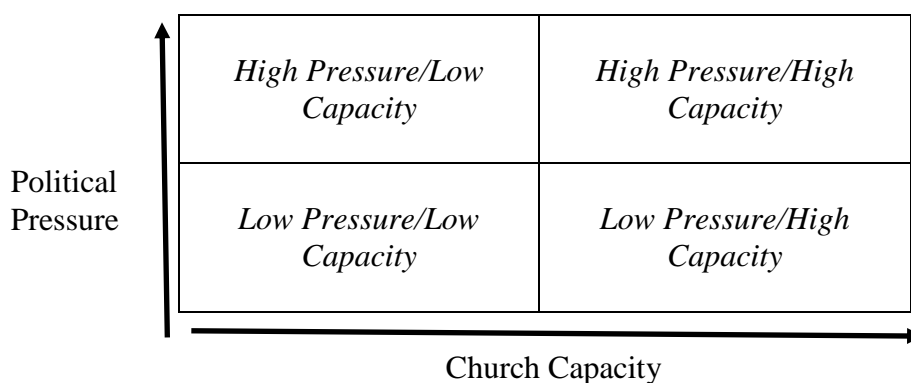


Figure One: Interaction of political pressure and church capacity

Applying this framework to the China situation, one can see how changes in both the degree of political pressure upon the church and in the church's internal capacity have interacted to produce each of these scenarios over time and, in the process, to color outside perceptions of the church, giving rise to the various external narratives explained below. As a kind of shorthand, the narratives have been useful in making sense of the complex, fluid, and often opaque situation in China. Although rooted in reality, each of these narratives tends to emphasize various aspects of the church and its environment over others, producing a picture of the church that is accurate yet incomplete.

## The Persecuted Church: Surviving the State

Coming out of the intense persecution of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, the church faced a severe shortage of trained pastors. Bibles were scarce, and the church had no legal status. Under Communist Party Document number 19, issued in 1982, China's official approach toward religion shifted from active suppression to control. Acknowledging that religion had not disappeared despite attempts to eliminate it, the reformist government called for religion to be managed via officially sanctioned religious bodies that had been constituted in the 1950s but banned during the Cultural Revolution. Protestant religious activities were to be conducted under the auspices of the Three Self Patriotic Movement and a newly created sister organization, the China Christian Council, while Catholic worship and clerical affairs were consolidated under the Catholic Patriotic Association. House church Christians, accounting for the vast majority of both Protestant and Catholic believers, were in principle not to be prevented from meeting, but they were to be encouraged to join churches under the TSPM (Lambert 1994, 47, 54-57).

Most of China's Christians were found in the countryside, where the church had experienced widespread revival. They continued to face threats of arbitrary fines and imprisonment for refusing to cooperate with the TSPM. Receiving Bibles or other support from outside China were forbidden, as were activities, whether in the official or unofficial churches, for children under the age of 18 (Lambert 1995, 69). Dr. Billy Graham's highly publicized visit to China in 1988, intended as a show of China's growing acceptance of religion, was marred by the arrest of Xu Yongze, a peasant evangelist and head of the Born Again Movement, a grassroots house church network representing millions of Christians (Aikman 2003, 167). A year later, the government's brutal crackdown on Tiananmen Square demonstrators quashed hopes for a more democratic China and reinforced the watching world's impression of China as a ruthless Communist dictatorship.

The title of Ma Li and Li Jin's book, *Surviving the State, Remaking the Church*, suggests how China's church came to be viewed during this opening decade of the current reform period (Ma and Li 2018). This "surviving" church drew the attention of foreign Christians who rallied to provide Bibles and other practical assistance, including basic pastoral training via shortwave radio and smuggled audio cassettes. Prayer and advocacy campaigns, often incorporating outdated Cultural Revolution images or iconic pictures of soldiers in Tiananmen Square, served to publicize the church's plight. In the minds of many, the church in China became synonymous with persecution. Returning to the framework introduced earlier, suggests the combination of high political pressure and low church capacity gave rise to an enduring narrative of China's Christians as innocent victims of a hostile atheistic regime or, as in the case of Xu Yongze, as tragic heroes who pay a price for standing up to authorities (see Figure Two).



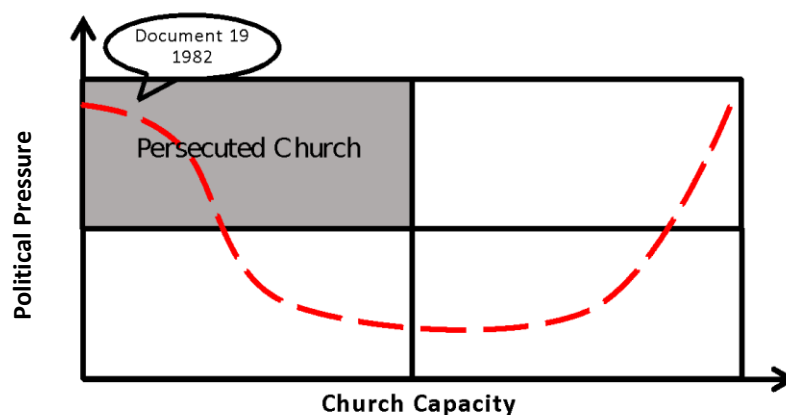


Figure Two: High political pressure and low church capacity give rise to *persecuted church* narrative.

### The Needy Church: Open for Business

China began emerging from the shadows of Tiananmen in 1992 when paramount leader Deng Xiaoping made his famous southern trip to Shenzhen, a bustling special economic zone bordering Hong Kong and a symbol of Deng's bold economic reforms. Eager for Western knowledge and technology to support its modernization effort, China welcomed exchanges with overseas educational institutions. Western businesses set up shop in China, along with traders and manufacturers from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere in Asia. In the runup to its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2000, China's diplomatic efforts sought to assure the world that China was indeed on the path to reform and to answer criticisms of human rights violations, including religious persecution.

Although religious policy did not change in principle, enforcement became less stringent. Growth in the official church, including the opening of nearly two dozen Bible schools and the regular printing of millions of Bibles per year by Amity Press, a foreign joint venture inaugurated in the late 1980s, eased pressure on believers and enlarged the church's presence in society. Increased personal freedom resulting from loosened restrictions on rural migration and the opening of the economy to private enterprise also gave Christians more space in which to operate. Foreign Christians who began coming in large numbers to China could meet freely with local counterparts in educational or business settings.

Whereas the *persecuted church* narrative limited overseas Christian involvement in China to prayer, advocacy, and some direct aid provided surreptitiously, the *needy church* narrative called for large-scale engagement by sending agencies, churches, Christian colleges and universities, and parachurch organizations of all stripes, not to mention thousands of independent tentmakers. China became another pin in the world map at agency headquarters, a line item in foundation budgets, or a new section in organizational strategic plans. In addition to thousands of Christians from Western nations as well as from East Asia and Latin America who would move to major cities as teachers or business professionals, many linguistic or humanitarian workers from around the globe went to China's southwestern provinces, home to hundreds of distinct ethnic minorities, most of them unreached. On campuses outside China, meanwhile, international

student ministries flourished as waves of Chinese students arrived in the United States, Canada, Australia, the UK and elsewhere.

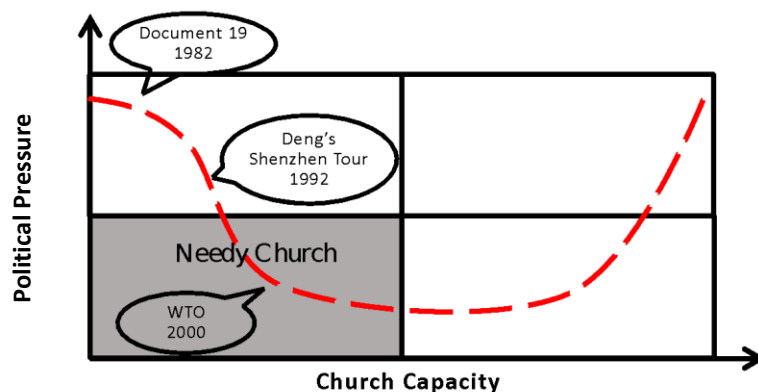


Figure Three: Political pressure decreases, giving rise to the *needy church* narrative.

### A Christian China: Cultural Transformation

The first decade of the new millennium saw China further entrenched in the international economic system, as increasingly complex global supply chains linked China's fortunes with those of other nations. In what would become the largest human migration in history, hundreds of millions of rural Chinese began flocking to the cities to work in factories manufacturing goods for export or on massive construction projects, including the iconic "bird's nest" stadium and other venues for the 2008 Olympic Games. At the same time, the highly competitive and increasingly unequal social environment created by China's market reforms revealed the darker side of the Chinese miracle, with official corruption running rampant and public trust at an all-time low.

No longer the purview of uneducated peasants in rural house churches or elderly pre-Revolution believers in urban TSPM churches, the Christian faith was being adopted by a significant number of intellectuals, many of whom had been left disillusioned by the massacre in Tiananmen Square. Making their mark in society as professors, writers, artists, media professionals, and entrepreneurs, these Christians heralded the dawn of a promising new era for China's church. Many were members of urban fellowships that would, in time, evolve into standalone unregistered congregations affiliated neither with the TSPM nor with traditional rural movements. Technically illegal, these congregations were nonetheless allowed to proliferate as long as they did not engage in overt political activity or become too large.

With the growth of China's church receiving considerable international attention, the paradox of what was arguably the world's fastest growing Christian movement thriving in the world's largest Communist country begged the question of which would ultimately prevail, the church or the state? Former *TIME* magazine Beijing bureau chief David Aikman offered a provocative answer in his survey of China's contemporary church, *Jesus in Beijing*. Subtitled *How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, Aikman's book predicted that a "Christianized" China would bring the emerging superpower into closer

alignment with the United States, becoming a force for peace and stability in the world (Aikman 2003).

*Christianity Today* magazine, which had generally held to the *persecuted church* narrative in its China coverage, broke new ground with its May 2008 cover story profiling how emerging churches were “shaping society in untold ways” through ventures in education, community service, and business (Moll 2008). The same week this issue of *Christianity Today* hit the newsstands, a massive earthquake struck Sichuan Province, provoking an unprecedented nationwide response. Within days Christians from multiple cities, led by one of the pastors profiled by *Christianity Today*, were on their way to assist with relief and rebuilding, some staying on for years to come.

Some of the strongest expressions of the *Christian China* narrative have come from Reformed Christian circles. The Reformed tradition’s well-defined concept of church polity meets the immediate need for “rechurching” among congregations planted by foreign Christian English teachers or returning Chinese intellectual believers who lacked a well-developed ecclesiology (Ma and Li 2016, 59). Yet the covenantal thinking inherent in contemporary Reformed missions also includes a much broader vision, summed up in the ambitious title of a conference volume that emerged from a 2013 gathering of academics, pastors, and missionaries—*China’s Reformed Churches: Mission, Polity, and Ministry in the Next Christendom*. Writing in the conclusion, the editor mused:

I am mildly tempted to describe a triumphant future when China will become a global center of Reformed theology, church life, and mission. That kind of future seems quite possible today and would be very welcome. But China could take an unexpected turn at any moment, driving the house churches back underground and strangling Chinese Presbyterianism just as it is beginning to flourish (Baugus 2014, 303).

Continued loosening of political control, coupled with the church’s increased capacity not only to meet its own basic needs but also to play a redemptive role in the broader society, gave rise to this new narrative. As China’s meteoric rise as an emerging economic superpower laid bare the moral decay festering beneath the surface, foreign Christians who were engaged in China, along with a new generation of urban believers, saw an historical opportunity fundamentally to alter China’s core values and shape Chinese culture.

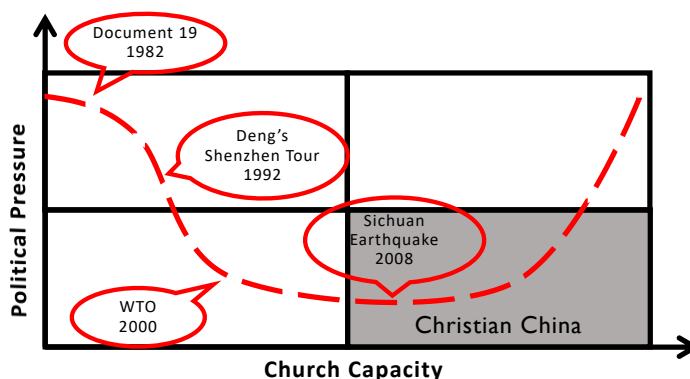


Figure Four: Increased church capacity supports the *Christian China* narrative.

## **The Missionary Church: Back to Jerusalem**

Soon after assuming power in 2012, Party General Secretary Xi Jinping created a top-level national security commission tasked with silencing dissenting voices, blunting foreign influence efforts, and reining in groups that had strayed outside direct Party control, including religious entities (Fu and Distelhorst 2018). Externally Xi embarked on the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aimed at extending China's economic, diplomatic, and military reach globally through infrastructure projects carried out by Chinese companies (Rolland 2015).

For China's Christians, the BRI lent momentum to a nascent indigenous mission training and sending movement that had begun taking shape in the previous decade and whose roots date back to the "Back to Jerusalem" movement of the 1940s. The prospect of Chinese going across Central and Southeast Asia toward the Middle East sparked the imaginations of church leaders and foreign mission agency personnel alike, who envisioned a wave of Chinese missionaries following in the tracks of the BRI and taking the Gospel to areas where Western missionaries could not penetrate. The "Seoul Commitment," issued by some of the 200 Chinese participants at a Lausanne young leaders conference in 2013, affirmed the Chinese church's commitment to world missions and unveiled a vision to send out 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030 (Jin 2013).

Supporters of this vision met with a sobering reality in June of 2017, when two young Chinese missionaries were slain in Pakistan by militants apparently linked to ISIS. China's foreign ministry quickly sought to play down the incident in order to avoid jeopardizing large-scale investment in the region (Hancock 2017). Within China, meanwhile, Xi's national security push had resulted in new regulations aimed at foreign NGOs that effectively erased the legal gray area in which many faith-based organizations had been operating (Cheng 2017). Foreign Christian workers who had lived in China for years found it increasingly difficult to obtain visa renewals. Some left proactively after local colleagues were taken in for questioning. Several organizations were systematically targeted by security officials, resulting in a significant reduction of in-country personnel.

Faced with heightened political pressure, many foreign workers refocused on areas outside China where they anticipated working with a new generation of Chinese missionaries. While China's leaders were well aware of the church's missionary intentions, particularly in light of the narrowly averted diplomatic crisis in Pakistan, many Chinese believers remained optimistic about the prospects of fielding cross-cultural workers beyond China's borders.

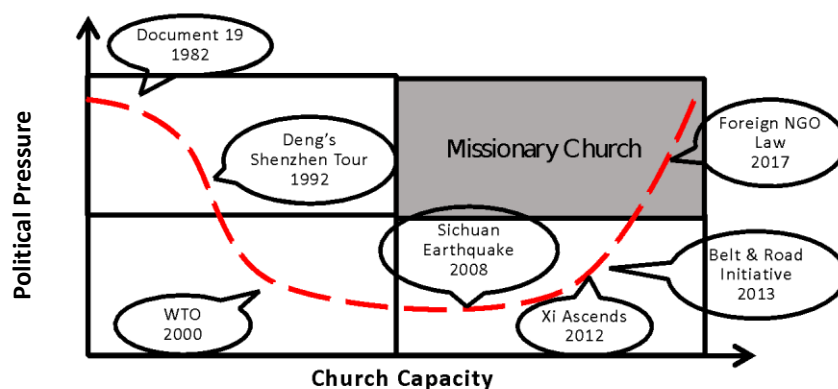


Figure Five: Increased domestic political pressure causes missionaries to focus attention outside China.

### Political Disruption Revisited

Developments under Xi Jinping suggested that China had indeed “taken an unexpected turn” (to paraphrase the quote earlier from the editor of *China’s Reforming Churches*). Following decades of progressive openness, the foreign mission community understandably viewed the imposition of Xi Jinping’s new normal as a violent disruption to what had been the status quo. Viewed within the context of the past 30 years, China’s detour away from greater religious tolerance was clearly an aberration. In the context of the past 3,000 years, however, the past three decades constituted the aberration. For most of China’s history the state has kept a strong hand on religion, and foreign involvement has not been welcome (Bays 2004). From the vantage point of Xi Jinping, the reckless reforms under Deng Xiaoping, which brought the Party to the brink of irrelevance, constituted the disruption that is only now being rectified through decisive measures to tighten the Party’s grip, including the removal of foreign religious forces.

Whether the narrator is a missionary who has had to leave China or Xi Jinping himself, that narrator makes sense of events, judging which have a rightful place in the narrative and which do not, according to his or her internal frame of reference. Amidst these competing narratives, the understanding of mission as the redemptive work of a sovereign and loving God views apparent setbacks as having a meaningful, though not immediately discernible, role in his divine plan. From this perspective political disruptions may be seen as part of God’s transforming work, both in the culture in which the Gospel is being incarnated as well as in the lives of his servants.

### Conclusion

Shifting political winds and changes within the Chinese church itself have given rise to successive narratives about China and its church. Those shifts have also revealed the inadequacies of these narratives. The *persecuted church* narrative politicizes the church by focusing solely on its relationship to the state. The *needy church* narrative overlooks the growing capacity of the indigenous church (not to mention the possibility that China’s church may actually have a contribution to make to the global church). By assuming a linear relationship between church growth and political change, the *Christian China* narrative ignores deep-seated cultural barriers—including within the church—to personal and societal transformation. The

*missionary church* narrative is likewise overly simplistic in its assumptions about the Chinese church sending out cross-cultural workers.

The inability of these narratives adequately to account for political disruption calls into question the covenantal meta-narrative of inevitable progress and political modernization. Yet, as the long history of the Gospel in China has shown, what appears to be disruption often serves to advance the cause of Christ in unexpected ways. Hence the need to recognize other narratives, including those of political actors, as having a place within the larger meta-narrative of the *missio Dei*.

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## **When the Cross Is about to be Wrapped in the Red Flag, How Should Churches under the Hong Kong National Security Law Resist?<sup>1</sup>**

Reported by 黎祉穎, 陳迦諾, 鍾智愷

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Under the dark clouds of the Hong Kong National Security Law, every heart is fearful. Judging from the incidents in mainland China, everyone—doctor, lawyer, or pastor—who has ever expressed an opinion deemed “subversive to the state” by the regime risks arrest. Recently, we have learned of a meeting held by the Chinese government’s Hong Kong Liaison Office<sup>2</sup> with 50 religious leaders, at which great emphasis was placed upon sympathy with and support for the National Security Law. We cannot help but worry that, after the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law, the regime will hasten its encroachment upon Hong Kong’s Christian circles.

Recently, Mission Citizens invited two scholars who have expertise in mainland state-church relations—Dr. Fuk-tsang Ying, Director of Chung Chi College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and, Dr. Wai Luen Kwok, Associate Head of the Department of Religion and Philosophy, Hong Kong Baptist University—to an online forum to offer their analysis of the Chinese Communist Party’s next steps in the suppression of Christianity in Hong Kong, and of how churches and believers should live and act in the face of imminent totalitarian rule.

**The National Security Law was passed because Hong Kong’s civil society is a force to be reckoned with.**

The two scholars first analyzed the reasons for the haste with which the Chinese Communist Party pushed the National Security Law [through the National People’s Congress]. Ying believed that through this law, Beijing was able to address several issues that the regime has wanted to address since the retrocession of Hong Kong in 1997, such as June 4, Falungong, [failed attempts to pass] article 23 of the Basic Law, citizenship education, last year’s revision of the “fugitive” [extradition] law, and so forth. He pointed out that in the 2003 withdrawal of article 23 of the Basic Law, it appears as if the Chinese Communist Party has compromised. In reality, it merely changed tactics and sought to extend its control through education. Who knew that a movement against the imposition of patriotism classes derailed the Party’s plans yet again, at the same time making the Party realize that the power of Hong Kong’s civil society cannot be taken lightly, for the people of Hong Kong have repeatedly derailed the Party’s plans by exerting their power as citizens. Therefore, Ying believed that the National Security Law is the tool that the Chinese Communists are using to “deal with Hong Kong once and for all,” abandoning its strategy of delay to avoid the mistake of 2003, when it allowed the opposition to grow, and to tighten its grip in governing Hong Kong.

In response, Kwok pointed out that the strength of Hong Kong’s civil society has made Chinese Communists lose confidence, to the point of seeing the democratic gains of last year’s district council elections (Bradsher, Ramzy, and May 2019) and the plan to get majority seats in the coming legislative council election<sup>3</sup> as an act of usurpation. He pointed out that this situation also reveals that the Chinese regime’s understanding of “one country two systems” is different



than Hong Kong's, for the people of Hong Kong will never consider democracy advocates' winning of a majority of seats in the district councils an act of usurpation.

### **The “politicization” of daily life instills fear.**

Kwok pointed out that incidents in mainland China make the people of Hong Kong realize that the regime's red line changes continually—even aiding the vulnerable will be criminalized, for example—making one wonder how many are in the “very small minority” targeted by the regime. Ying pointed out that the people of Hong Kong cannot trust the Chinese government's claim that the National Security Law targets only “a small number of individuals,” for there are many who have been criminalized for their speech; the single example of Pastor Yi Wang (Mozur and Johnson 2019) is enough to strike fear among Hong Kong Christians. Kwok argued that Hong Kong has entered the era of “politicization,” meaning that one constantly wonders if one's speech and actions are politically correct and self-scrutinizes; even before the National Security Law, fear had already invaded the daily lives of the people of Hong Kong.

Kwok mentioned that some teachers of church schools have been informed upon because of their political positions, and the regime uses the bureau of education to carry out “investigations” and monitor disciplinary measures, to the point that incessant correspondence between schools and the bureau of education due to a stream of informants' complaints will bring pressure to bear upon schools and educational organizations. Ying added that the regime does not only use the channel of the bureau of education but also manipulates public opinion, creating a situation of “the public against the public,” increasing pressure upon teachers, schools, and educational organizations, ultimately forcing schools to use fabricated reasons to stop renewing their contracts with the teachers involved. Kwok added that various institutions of society can also be targeted by the regime, and the means used can have endless variations. For example, official media recently accused *Breakazine* of inciting violence, and last year when there were conflicts [between demonstrators and the police] in various districts, they accused churches that opened themselves [to offer refuge to demonstrators] of tolerating violence. Moreover, in the social service sector, when the regime is dissatisfied with a particular organization in society, it can utilize internal discord and scandals as evidences of poor service quality, and then establish another organization with the same functions but a pro-regime stance, siphoning off government funding and establishing an organization in the community that can be used by the regime.

Ying argued that the greatest effect of the National Security Law has less to do with its specific provisions than with the destruction of the social fabric. Judging from the behavior of Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution in China, they are adept at using political criminal allegations to achieve their personal goals. For example, if someone you dislike says anything politically incorrect in a casual conversation, you can inform on him, causing him to lose his reputation, position, and livelihood. Therefore, interpersonal trust will be lost; even in churches, one will no longer be able to trust another person, causing the collapse of interpersonal relationships.

### **The Liaison Office's invitation to the leaders of the six major religions to a forum is already an expression of political stance.**

In Ying's view, expressions of political stance are a common means for controlling religion in China. As revealed in the Three-Self Church Reform Manifesto<sup>4</sup> in Chinese history, Hong Kong

will face a similar situation soon, and it appears that under the National Security Law, “silence will not be an option.” According to Ying’s historical analysis, one sees that the Chinese Communist Party desires the loyalty of religious leaders, and at the same time the signature movement is a way to show that the policy enjoys popular support. Moreover, the Three-Self Reform Manifesto demanded that churches recognize their relationship with imperialism and agree to undertake reform; in the process, they had to publish their signatories periodically, placing the various denominations under enormous pressure, leading church leaders to ponder exchanging a declaration of loyalty for space to practice their faith. Ying also pointed out that in the process of promoting the Three-Self Reform Manifesto, the Chinese Communist Party “really knew how to talk,” using the name of patriotism to get the denominations to sign [the manifesto], promising non-interference in religious matters by the regime, and subsequently making partial allowance for religious practice, leading the denominations to comply for the sake of survival.

With regard to Hong Kong, Ying pointed out that the invitation recently extended to the 50 religious leaders to attend a forum on the Hong Kong Region National Security Law at the Liaison Office was itself a move [to get the religious leaders] to declare [their] political stance. Therefore, 21 individuals expressed their support; as for those who chose not to participate, [refusal to participate] was itself a declaration of a political stance. There were basically two responses [from the religious leaders at the forum] to Hong Kong’s situation: “Sympathize but wish to express concerns,” or “support” for the legislation. Ying agreed that the former “had done their best” given their position and hoped that the regime would indeed address the concerns that kept them from giving their “support.” Ying predicted that for now the Chinese Communist Party focuses on getting Hong Kong’s religious leaders to declare their political stance, ordinary believers probably would not have to declare their political stance yet, but he anticipated that such incidents would occur among more and more leaders.

Subsequently Kwok responded that, in manipulating [religious leaders] to declare their political stance, [the regime] divides people into supporters and enemies. He pointed out that in the history of the Three-Self Reform Manifesto, many thought that it was merely a patriotic manifesto; they did not expect to have to make endless compromises. He reminded believers not to underestimate declarations of political stance.

**The pastors who signed the Three-Self Manifesto in the 1950s were still criticized and denounced.**

Kwok asked in response [to Ying’s analysis], how do churches today avoid the same mistakes and falling into the situation of the Chinese churches in the 1950s? And how do churches help pastors find a reference point for discerning whether “to sign or not to sign” [a declaration of support for the Hong Kong Region National Security Law]? Ying pointed out that for now church leaders are bearing the brunt of suppression, which has not yet reached local congregations, but judging by examples from the 1990s, one can see that the Chinese Communist Party is still suppressing religion in the arena of international politics. He gave two examples: First, at the 1999 [sic? 1996?] Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, Taiwan [sent delegates] to participate as observers. When the Chinese delegation learned that Taiwan was participating as the Republic of China and using its national flag, China issued a public condemnation and strongly protested that Taiwan was flouting the “One China” principle. Ying expressed concern that should Hong Kong send delegates to these religious conferences in the future, its delegates

would have to go along with the Chinese government's condemnation in order to avoid the label of being in support of such positions [against the "One China" principle]. Second, when the Dalai Lama attended a world religions conference, the Chinese delegates present left immediately. In Ying's view, Hong Kong delegates will likely "turn in their assignment" by leaving [such events in the future] for the sake of self-preservation and avoiding the violation of national policy.

Currently, churches generally respond to the National Security Law in two manners. Some take a hard line and resist; others accommodate while "expressing concerns." So should the church be "as clever as a snake" or "gentle as a dove"? Ying responded that answering this question involves an assessment of the current situation, and that many factors should be considered. Some choose to exchange flexibility for space; others believe that there is no room to give. Ying drew lessons from the experiences of the churches in mainland China in the 1950s and explained that the Chinese Communist Party would also give [Hong Kong] churches that "sign the Three-Self Manifesto" some room [for maneuvering], but it would all depend on the actual political situation of the moment. Churches may obtain some room for maneuvering by adopting a moderate stance and making some compromises, but they may also become the target of concerted attacks. Moreover, compromise can only obtain an additional five to six years of time; many of the pastors who signed the Three-Self Manifesto lost their lives in the criticism-and-denunciation meetings of the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign. On the other hand, Mingdao Wang (Harvey 2002), who took a hard line and initially refused to join the Three-Self Church, was eventually forced to confess and was imprisoned in 1955. The Communist Party believed that killing one served to warn a hundred, and Wang's supporters joined the Three-Self Church in the end.

Kwok expressed the view that no one knows which is better, to compromise or to take a hard line, for no one can foresee the future. Ying agreed: in the torrent of history it is hard to know if a decision is right or wrong at the time. He sadly said that one must take one step and see [with every decision]. The people of Hong Kong have already lost their freedom to live without fear; [they now] have to consider how to live under Red terror. If a church member is arrested, what position should the church take? Should the church support the member or keep a distance for the sake of self-preservation? In addition, will the church now self-censor its speech? In Ying's view, church fellowship is a place where believers share struggles and worries, but some may also fear being "informed upon."

### **Churches can practice democratization and be an alternative community.**

In Kwok's view, should it one day be necessary to face such situations, Hong Kong churches should "democratize" their institutional decision-making processes; in other words, the decisions made by leaders should be reached through a process of input from and consultation with their congregations. Whether such an "alternative community" chooses to "kneel" or "not kneel" [before the regime], believers will have a better understanding of every decision and even be able to share in bearing the pressure, thereby decreasing the possibility of mutual denunciation and hatred. Kwok emphasized that the most frightening aspect of the National Security Law lies not in its actual provisions but in its bringing out the worst in human nature, causing the loss of trust between individuals and resulting in hatred, informing on one another to the regime, pleasing the regime and hurting others out of self-interest, and so forth. He mentioned that in the history of the Chinese church, Watchman Nee had no sympathizers when he suffered political persecution;

some even thought that he deserved what came to him. In Kwok's view, such tragedies reveal the importance of democratic decision making. Kwok stated, in dealing with contentious issues, churches should support their pastors; whether they choose to sign the declaration of support for the National Security Law or not, they should not be left to make these decisions alone; instead, it should be a democratic decision, and believers should therefore communicate frequently with their church leaders.

Some in the audience brought up the fact that when believers with different political views cannot reach a consensus, pastors cannot easily speak on behalf of their churches to the government. In Kwok's view, consensus does not mean unanimity. The minority should concede to the majority in the church as in a civic process; this is something Christians should learn. He characterized the government's actions in the past as suppressing the will of the majority for the purpose of achieving its own goals. Kwok described the situation of general politicization, in which the regime can infiltrate every dimension [of life] at will; on the contrary, the advantage of an alternative community is its independence, which can restore people to their dignified status. At the same time, a tight-knit community where people can confide in each other will provide space for interpersonal trust, alleviating the pressures attendant on circumstances marked by the worst in human nature and broken relationships, allowing believers to live an authentic life. Kwok said with a smile that in essence this is the oldest teaching of the Bible, calling people back to "the basics" of loving God and loving man.

### **The past view of the separation of politics and religion is no longer valid.**

How should the church respond to persecution by the regime and pervasive politicization? Ying pointed out that religion could not avoid politics. Hong Kong churches should learn from the historical experiences of churches in other countries, such as Eastern Europe, China, South Korea, and Taiwan. Believers also need to alter their mindsets, for the current political situation has changed; it is now a new era. He also mentioned that before 1997, some had worried that the government would use the "Fire Service Ordinance."<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, this did not happen; nonetheless, one should still prepare for the worst eventuality now. Ying pointed out that a distorted view of the separation of politics and religion used to be Hong Kong's way of resisting the challenge of political engagement, but now politics has encroached upon the church, and the "separation of politics and religion" of the past is no longer possible; Christians must face the problem directly and start reflecting on how they will live under totalitarianism. Churches may be forced to give up their right to establish educational institutions and places of worship. Moreover, with the maturation of the development of big data, the government may gather such information and use it to erode the freedoms of civil society. Therefore, churches must think about their future directions; whether past church planting strategies are [still] suitable is but one example....

Ying also responded to one final question regarding whether churches will leave Hong Kong. He stated that after the establishment of the Communist regime, there were churches and missionaries who left [China], but it is not possible for a denomination to completely withdraw its presence. Kwok added that in the current situation, the continual emigration of believers does decrease the financial resources of churches, but there are also people from overseas who enroll in courses offered in Hong Kong and continue to support Hong Kong churches. Moreover, the Bible teaches that churches ought to consider ways to serve the society in which they find themselves; therefore, it is not possible for the church to completely withdraw its presence.

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<sup>1</sup> [This and all other endnotes, as well as citations and references, have been added by the GM Editorial Team.] This article is a translation, provided by the GM Editorial Team, of a report published in *Christian Times* 時代論壇 on July 3, 2020, available online at [https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=162610&Pid=103&Version=0&Cid=2017&Charset=big5\\_hkscs#.XwQA1L7luW4.link](https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=162610&Pid=103&Version=0&Cid=2017&Charset=big5_hkscs#.XwQA1L7luW4.link) (accessed September 22, 2020). The report was on a forum held by Mission Citizens<sup>#</sup> on June 25 at 8 p.m. (local Hong Kong time), entitled “The Cross Tyrannized by the Red Flag—Hong Kong Version,” live streamed on its Facebook page (<https://bit.ly/2Z9vGrn>; accessed September 22, 2020) and moderated by Mission Citizens member Herman Wai Chung Tang [鄧偉棕], an attorney. At its height, over four hundred people participated; as of noon on June 26, there had been over 8,500 views cumulatively. Mission Citizens is a movement of Christian pastors and lay persons who believe that the Christian faith can be lived out in the current reality of Hong Kong and can inform Hong Kong’s search for a way forward after the Umbrella Movement and subsequent reform efforts. Begun in 2015, its mission statement appeared in *Christian Times* on September 8, 2015, [https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=91025&Pid=6&Version=0&Cid=150&Charset=big5\\_hkscs](https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=91025&Pid=6&Version=0&Cid=150&Charset=big5_hkscs) (accessed July 21, 2020); its Facebook page is located at <https://www.facebook.com/missioncitizens/> (accessed July 21, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> 中央人民政府駐香港特別行政區聯絡辦公室 (Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region).

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the authorities postponed the election for a year, which had been scheduled for September 6 (Bradsher, Yu, and Myers 2020).

<sup>4</sup> “The Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China” (“中国基督教在新中国建设中努力的途径”) (1950), also known as “The Christian Manifesto” or “The Three-Self Manifesto,” drafted under the leadership of Y. T. Wu, was a declaration by Chinese Protestants of their support for the newly established Communist regime. It gathered about half a million signatures.

<sup>5</sup> Many churches are located in multi-story buildings in Hong Kong and therefore are easily subjected to allegations of not meeting the government’s fire safety regulations.

# **Urbanisation, Change and Christian Mission in the Indian Context: A Study of the Changes in the Educated Middle-Class Hindus**

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## **Abstract**

India is urbanising rapidly and bringing with it rapid social changes. India, as is well known, is a predominantly Hindu country and a caste-based society. This article traces to what extent urbanisation and other related factors have changed the concept of caste for the educated middle-class Hindu and the avenues those changes have opened up for Christian witness.

**Key Words:** caste, change, Christian witness, middle-class educated Hindu, urbanisation

Today more than 55% of the world population lives in urban areas. India with 32% urban population may seem to lag behind, but in terms of absolute numbers India's urban dwellers are a mind-boggling 400 million. A UN report of 2018 has predicted that this number would double by 2050. (United Nations 2018). India has 46 cities with populations of over one million, with three having more than 10 million.

Sociologists generally agree that urbanisation brings change. Eshelman and Cashion are of the opinion that "The size, complexity and density of urban communities have given rise to new forms of social organisations, new behaviours and new attitudes." Weber, they say, labelled these changes as a transition from a traditional to a rational society (Eshelman and Cashion 1983, 512-513).

This article examines what changes urbanisation may have brought to the educated middle-class Hindu. They constitute more than 100 million (more than 25%) of the urban population of India. This is a group that is not only urban, but which has been schooled in western education. We would want to see how urbanisation coupled with western education have changed the behaviour and attitudes of the educated middle-class urban Hindu.

## **Caste in the Urban Context**

The three pillars of Indian Hindu society are caste, religion, and family. Though all three are equally important, due to space constraints this study will be looking only at caste in the urban context. The Indian caste system, a hierarchical division of Hindu society based on ritual purity or pollution and social status, forms a basis of the social stratification among Hindus. The article's larger interest is to see the changes in the caste system through the ages and especially the caste dynamics in the urban context.

According to Ghurye's analysis, the caste system has at least six basic characteristics which form the core of this very important institution of Hinduism (Ghurye 1992, 37-48):

- 1) Segmental division of society
- 2) Hierarchy
- 3) Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse
- 4) Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections
- 5) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation
- 6) Restrictions on marriage outside caste

Hindu society was divided into different segments. One was born into a caste group. The *Panchayat* (local governing body), which was free to make its own rules for the community, regulated every aspect of life of its members. Obviously, a 'community feeling' that transcends caste distinctions would be missing. Even the moral standards of one caste would be different from that of another. As Ghurye comments, "Castes were small and complete social worlds in themselves marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting within the larger society" (Ghurye 1992, 38).

What separates these caste groups from each other is a subject of intense debate. Some scholars believe that there is a definite hierarchy that separates them; others believe that it is the distinctiveness of each caste that makes it unique. C. Bougle wrote at the start of the nineteenth century, "The spirit of caste united these three tendencies, repulsion, hierarchy and hereditary specialization, and all three must be borne in mind if one wishes to give a complete definition of the caste system" (Bougle 1992, 65). Bougle's definition of caste is complete for it encompasses all aspects of the caste system. Each person was born into a particular caste and each caste was part of a hierarchy. The occupation of a person depended on his position in the hierarchy. And most importantly, this hierarchy also governed the social interaction between people.

The perpetuation of hierarchy has its own far reaching implications. There is a restriction on feeding and social intercourse between the castes. A person of a high caste would never accept water, much less any cooked food, from a person of a lower caste. Of course, the higher castes have found their justification in their scriptures, which seem to have strengthened their resolve to perpetuate the hierarchical distinctions.

Every caste was attached with certain civil and religious privileges and/or restrictions. That the low castes and the untouchables were not allowed to draw water from the village well or enter the village temple are only samples of the kind of ill-treatments that they received at the hand of the high caste. Another very important restriction was on the choice of occupation for each caste. Each caste was assigned with a particular occupation, and it was hereditary. The menial tasks were to be handled by the *untouchables or Harijans* (the outcaste), while the *Sudras* (low caste) took up those involving manual labour. Last but not the least was the restriction of marriage to one's caste. It was not only the caste which was important but also the sub-caste when it came to marriage. Though endogamy was quite strict, hypergamy was permitted in certain cases.

So it is obvious that Hindu society at large was divided into various caste groups and sub-castes, held together through strict endogamy and restricted social life. Yet, in spite of distinct cultural traditions of each caste, the castes were able to function together as one society. According to Ghurye, the social economic interdependence of each caste held the society together, creating a harmony in civil life. Of course, this harmony was not the harmony of parts that are equally valued, but of units which were rigorously subordinated to one another (Ghurye 1992, 48). Many Indian leaders may have exalted the caste system as a means of maintaining order in the society. Yet, it is strongly believed that caste in India has been perpetuated by the upper caste in order to exploit and oppress the lower caste.

### **Caste and Change**

Two centuries ago, Louis Writh postulated that the city would have a profound effect on traditional social values, which would cause irreversible changes in the way people thought and lived. His thesis was found to be largely true in European and Western countries, and it was thought that the same would be the case in India as well. Frank Conlon says that the

dominant anticipatory theme of scholarship on urbanisation and society in India seems to have been based upon a Wirthian assumption that traditional social institutions—the typical forms of family and caste—would experience profound erosion both as a result of urban experience and as a by-product of the expansion of urban influences into the countryside (Conlon 1977, 127).

Sociologists generally agree that caste has undergone change for the urban educated middle-class Hindu. But there is a difference of opinion as to what has caused the change. This study will not get into that wider debate but will focus on the changes that have occurred with respect to caste in urban India with reference to the educated middle-class Hindu.

#### *Impact of British Interventions on Caste*

India has always had cities, but as Pauline Kolenda rightly points out, the cultural patterns of the indigenous city were not distinctly different from those of the village (Kolenda 1978, 141). Though religions like Islam did have an effect on Hinduism but did not change its fundamental character. It was certain interventions of the British that brought about fundamental change.

The legal system in India when the British came was based on the principle of hierarchy. The legality of a matter was decided on the caste of the victim and the perpetrator, which meant that the legal system was non-egalitarian in nature. The British introduced various legal innovations which struck down Hindu law and which were based on principles of universalism, rationalism and individualism (Singh 1972, 96). These new laws abolished many of the practices which were against human dignity. Singh rightly says that all these changes posed a serious challenge to the two cardinal attributes of the Indian tradition—hierarchy and holism (Singh 1972, 86). Everyone became equal in the sight of the law, and the special privileges that the high caste enjoyed were thus taken away.

The British also brought in other legislative changes, such as abolishing untouchability. Along with industrialization, this legal end of untouchability brought with it many changes in the pattern and process of urbanisation. Heterogeneous colonies sprang up near factories. Restaurants and public transport, cinema halls, and other public places were open to all without discretion of caste. New workplaces like factories, hospitals, and schools were places where the caste criteria were not taken into account. Such mixing of peoples was a great blow to the caste system as was practiced traditionally.

#### *Change in Caste Ideology*

The urban educated middle class had to accept by default all the changes brought about through British legal interventions. However, whether these changes enabled them to overcome the caste system along with its prejudices was another matter. Their education under the British system made them somewhat unique, as it was different from the one practiced before. Based on a modern scientific worldview, the education system of the British taught equality and rational thinking, and it went against the thought pattern espoused by the principles of hierarchy and holism. Did the British education system thereby create a conflict of ideologies and pose a threat to the old system of education? Did the age-old traditions get transformed by their interaction with the educated elite? In addition, the city brought people of different cultures, religions, and regions together. This mixing of peoples should have caused either the diffusion of ideas giving rise to a syncretic culture or it should have done away with the irrational giving rise to a new rational system.



One area which demonstrably did change in the urban context for the educated middle class was their traditional obligation to adhere to the lifestyle of the caste into which they were born and to pursue the occupation allotted to it. Hemlata Acharya did a study to analyze the changing role of religious specialists in the pilgrim city of Nasik and found that they are increasingly taking up new and varied jobs (Acharya 1974, 391-402). But it is important to note that the high caste have stuck to white collar jobs, leaving the menial work to the lower caste. This sampling indicates that the educated middle class are selective in choosing the changes that they want to adapt to.

Andre Beteille, in his lecture at the University of California in 1992, contented that the educated middle class seemed to be in a state of confusion with respect to the orientation of caste in the society. They knew that caste existed but did not know how to respond to it as educated people living in the modern world (Beteille 1997, 152-155). The conflict within them has led to a compromise in that they tend to be rational in their public life and yet otherwise in their private life. Prominent men like Bakimchandra Chatterjee and M. K. Gandhi did not shy away from justifying the morality of caste. Their stance was surprising because though caste was based on the law of *Manusmriti* (an ancient Hindu religious legal text on which Hindu law is based), the Constitution of India completely negated the *Manusmriti*. It looks as if the majority of middle-class Indians took their cue from these great personalities. Though Gandhi may have justified caste as a means of keeping order in the society, the educated urban middle class seems to have taken it to justify a graded hierarchy.

#### *Caste System in Contemporary Urban Society*

Is the caste system practiced by the urban educated Hindu today? Srinivas, writing in the 1960s, remarked that the vast majority of Hindus (including the educated) do not consider caste as evil and do not want it to disappear - for they cannot envisage a Hindu society without caste (Srinivas 1962, 70). He further made a scathing remark about the middle class, noting that this class pays lip service to egalitarian ideals, but its attitudes are fundamentally hierarchical (Srinivas 1962, 88-96). This was confirmed by V.S. Naipaul who in 1964 wrote *Area of Darkness* in which he narrated the experiences he had with respect to caste in various different settings in India. This was not well taken by the intellectuals of India and Beteille says that it was because they saw some part of themselves there. (Beteille 1997, 172) Some recent incidents seem to justify what Srinivas wrote. Rohith Vemula, a dalit (a so-called "backward" caste) student, committed suicide on 17 January 2016, alleging discrimination. There have been several other incidents reported from college campuses. Yashica Dutt's memoir 'Coming Out as a Dalit' is another case in point. She comes out in the open as to how as a child, she was made to hide her dalit identity and how she learnt to keep it hidden for fear of discrimination. Dutt's testimony was that Rohith Vemula's courage to showcase his identity as a dalit gave her the courage to come clean. Undoubtedly Dutt speaking out publicly gave her a great release from the burden she was carrying for years.

Caste associations which form in cities for the betterment of their own caste members show the solidarity of castes in cities. Srinivas analyses that, because of the work of the associations, the horizontal solidarity of a caste is gained at the expense of vertical solidarity of that region. Hence the last hundred years has seen a great increase in caste solidarity and a concomitant decrease of a sense of interdependence that had developed between different castes living in the same region (Srinivas 1962, 74-75). Lloyd Rudolf asserts that this caste solidarity actually hinders the members from fully utilizing their potential because of limited boundaries defined by the association. Rudolf also suggests that modernity has entered into Indian character and society but that it has done so through assimilation and not replacement.

Changes will occur only when other integrative institutions, e.g., educational and religious institutions, are allowed to have their effects and also when there is a federation or consolidation of caste associations into larger groupings (Rudolf 1972, 168).

There is also a growing pressure on the urban middle class to revive and preserve Indian culture and tradition. Paradoxically enough, the reason for this contemporary pressure lies in another innovation of the British, namely nationalism and the political culture of democracy. These innovations had worked wonders in the Western world. As the feudal structure was replaced by democracy during the Reformation and Enlightenment, communal values were replaced by values of freedom, equality, and humanism. However, India did not see the same results. Singh gives three valid reasons for why British nationalism and democracy bore different fruit in India. First, these values had been derived from an alien tradition and had grown on the soil of India under colonial patronage, which was psychologically irksome. Second, India's economic and social structures were not comparable with those of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century West. Third, these historical innovations, which had evolved gradually in the West, were injected into the Indian body-politic in a compressed form and created new and far greater cultural stresses than they did in the West (Singh 1972, 114).

The growth of nationalism in India became oriented towards the Indian tradition. India's national leaders were for modernity but not at the expense of traditional cultural identity. There is always a tension in India between the traditional and modern.

#### **Recent Field Research Findings (Kolhar 2018:145-164)**

Field research was conducted as part of this study. A questionnaire was prepared in English and Gujarati (the local language) and distributed to about 150 people. Out of these, as many as 125 responded and 111 were found valid and chosen for study and analysis. The sample was randomly selected through snow balling (also known as chain-referral methodology), and the people who responded were from various walks of life, including teachers, professors, bankers, and managers. All of them were from the city of Ahmedabad, were educated, and belonged to the Hindu middle class.

The research yielded several revealing findings. The study's research shows that over the last three to four decades residential areas have become class-based rather than caste-based. As such, these areas have become more cosmopolitan in nature, meaning that people from different linguistic and religious backgrounds live in close proximity to each other. People of diverse cultures accept and interact with each other. Exchange of food and social interaction on different occasions shows an increased level of acceptance of each other. People usually do not take notice of caste in their routine interactions, in business dealings, or in their offices or neighbourhoods. Interestingly, the research also found that urban migrants, now a substantial number, are more accommodating than more long-term residents.

The research also explored factors which determine the social status of a person. Most of the respondents ranked education, economic status, and the kind of job that one holds as the most important criteria. In order to determine the importance of caste the next survey question was on how the respondents would like to be identified. Most said that they wanted to be identified by their surname and their profession. The surname indicates the caste of the person, indicating that somewhere in the back of their minds the respondents still are caste conscious. At the same time, the fact that they want to be identified by their profession means that they wanted to belong to a particular class.

Sociologists observe that class consciousness does not necessarily replace caste consciousness. The two may just co-exist and thus one can be a caste- as well as class-conscious person. Such a person may live with a divided mind, whereby both caste and class are important in both thought and action. Thus, in a professional set up, one may be very secular in outlook, but when it comes to family matters like marriage, one would turn caste conscious. This divided mind is why, for intimate family functions, caste still matters. This situation is probably also the reason why this group still practices rituals associated with caste, even though whether they understand them or not is a matter of debate. Such co-existing class and caste values can also explain why the majority of educated middle-class urbanites surveyed attended caste association meetings at least occasionally, if not regularly. The main purpose seems to be all about keeping one's identity alive. A higher caste identity gives a sense of superiority over others, a position that those who have it do not want to let go. Marriage is a very crucial issue, and it is generally still based on caste. Interestingly, the survey indicated that 52% of the respondents preferred a marriage partner of their own choice, irrespective of caste. This group was equally divided among the younger and older generation, but included more of women and migrants. These are the people who want to come out of their caste and investigate and experience the world differently, but societal pressures keep them from doing so. The power of social pressure probably can explain why the Indian diaspora in the West is a lot more accommodative than those in India in such matters.

Overall, this study's research findings indicate that, though urbanisation and other related factors do not seem to have affected the educated middle-class Hindu in a comprehensive or consistent way, there is certainly some change in the way they perceive and relate to people of other caste, religion, and customs. We who are Christians should take this opportunity, though limited as it may seem, to witness to this very strategic group.

### **Towards a Framework of Christian Witness**

This study has examined how urbanisation and related factors have affected the educated middle-class Hindu with respect to caste. Though caste consciousness is surprisingly still strong in this group, the changes that have come about do give us some openings for Christian witness and we need to prayerfully use them.

- 1) If class and caste go hand in hand for this group, and they are ready to interact socially with people of their own class irrespective of their caste or religion, then Christians belonging to this class need to be encouraged to build bridges with their colleagues and neighbours. Such bridge-building will encourage them to open themselves up in the time of need. There are people in this group who look for prayers, counselling, and moral support in their needs, and Christian believers can fill this gap.
- 2) If caste is such an important factor for the Hindus, then in our Christian witness, we need to be careful that we do not get entangled with caste issues, at least at the initial stage. Similarly, if an educated Hindu wants to visit a church, we again must be careful that we take that person to a church where people of the same class would be able to interact more easily. Perhaps after some maturing and further experience, the person could be part of a more inclusive group.
- 3) Local churches in India need to explore apologetic approaches for presenting the Christian gospel to the urban educated middle-class Hindus. Of course, there is

always the question of whether an apologetic approach would help, looking at the fact that the faith of an educated urban middle-class Hindu is not based on logic.

- 4) Though urban middle-class Hindus seem to want to keep to its traditional values, they are also very highly consumerist and highly existential. Biblical discourses need to be made on relevant life issues which affect their daily existential life.
- 5) Urban middle-class Hindus are very keen to explore the medium of arts. Thus, painting, music, dance, theatre, literature, and other art forms need to be explored to present the Christian message.
- 6) The power of caste is based on honour and shame. "Missiologists have recently explored how best to communicate the gospel in honour-shame cultures (George 2020)." It is important that we develop the gospel message with this emphasis rather than use the western concept of sin and innocence or justification, which is difficult for Hindus to grasp.
- 7) Hindus have a pluralistic idea of religion. Christians feel uncomfortable in making friendships with this group, anticipating that they would have to compromise their faith at some point. We need to explore the concept of pluralism and teach our Christian lay people how they need to stand in the face of it rather than detach oneself and thus not be able to take advantage of opportunities for witness when they arise.

Urbanisation has opened up avenues for us Christians, limited as they may seem, for ministry to educated urban middle-class Hindus. We should grapple with the issues that face us as we present the gospel to this group.

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# **Crisis as Kairos: Our Samaria Right Next Door? Acting on Crisis to Minister to Our Native Neighbors<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

In June 2016, a wildfire swept through the Spokane Indian Reservation burning 18,000 acres, destroying many homes and knocking out power to the tribal headquarters town of Wellpinit. The power outage resulted in spoiled food at the only grocery store in town and a blown pump at the town's only well. This was the second fire in two years to rock the community's well-being, and the crisis created lingered on for months for members of the Spokane Tribe. Some still have not fully recovered. Meantime, less than 50 miles away, in the city of Spokane, which derives its name from the tribe, the smoke was a mere irritation to our eyes and lungs as the crisis garnered little attention beyond our health concerns (and spoiled vacations).

Beyond the fires, which are increasing in frequency and intensity because of global climate change, my neighbors, the Spokane Tribe, face a number of other crises, such as an environmental and health crisis (created by an abandoned open-pit uranium mine now actively leaking high-grade uranium into the Spokane River), an economic crisis (caused by high unemployment of 45.3%), a suicide epidemic, and a growing opioid addiction problem.

Missiologist Donald K. Smith has suggested that crisis creates opportunity to form opinions and even change them. And American-Korean missionary Michael Oh has contended that God is sovereign over crises and has "gracious gospel purposes" in them.

Tribal communities all around us are majority world cultures, some besieged by similar, structurally-created crises. Given the colonial history of the dominant culture church, the gospel has made little inroads into many of these communities and an understandable suspicion remains towards outsiders. Might crises, such as those listed above or others among our Native American neighbors, provide the opportunity for us to be good neighbors in the time of crisis, thus opening the door a bit further to effective ministry in our nearby "Samarias?"

In this article, I examine the opportunities, in a growing world of crisis, for Christians to be involved in reaching majority world cultures right in our own backyards.

**Key Words:** crisis; intercultural communication; missiology; reaching our marginalized neighbors; trauma

## **Introduction**

Accompanying the shifting paradigm of missions from pioneer expatriate to national partner, there has been a shift in emphasis (or perhaps an addition of emphasis) from the overseas mission "field" to local mission opportunities. Famous mission passages such as Acts 1:8 have been recast to understand the mission call as to our neighbors (Jerusalem), AND our region (Judea), AND to the marginalized among us (Samaria) AND to the ends of the earth as has for so long been the emphasis of world missions. As one who has spent his career serving in and teaching about foreign mission, I do not mean to diminish the value of foreign mission. On the contrary, I hope to add to the equation by expressing opportunities that exist to reach unreached

(or least-reached) and unengaged<sup>2</sup> populations that still reside right here within our national borders. Many of these groups fit the category of marginalized peoples as the Samaritans were once considered by the Jews.

Living right here in our own backyard, in the United States, are a plethora of unreached and unengaged (or nearly so) peoples: the large variety of Native American nations and communities. Richard Twiss (2006, 82) estimates that at present “only three to five percent of First Nations people have a vibrant, born-again relationship with Jesus Christ despite more than four-hundred years of being tiny islands surrounded by the ‘Sea of Christianity’.” More particularly, living within a one-hundred-mile radius of Spokane are nearly a dozen native nations whose statistics would place them missiologically among the world’s most “unreached” or “minimally reached” nations.

Historically, the dominant culture has viewed Native populations much the same way that Jews viewed Samaritans, as marginals at best. The dominant cultural view of indigenous peoples as inferior is well documented and led to one race taking advantage of another to the great detriment of the latter. This well-worn narrative of American history of that day, a result, in part of the scientific theories of social evolution popular during this period, was embraced by most persons of European descent. Early American Christian missionaries were not immune to assuming the same narrative. Native populations have, therefore, historically been (and remain so to this day) suspicious of the motives of white outsiders, particularly those identifying with the church. This problematic, strained relationship can make desired ministry to Native American peoples by dominant culture Christians problematic at best. Donald K. Smith (1992, 203) suggests, for instance, that “based on past treatment of native Americans by whites, Native Americans frequently reject the white missionary.” He quotes one native respondent as saying,

Christianity is a white man’s religion. Look at what has happened to the Native American in the name of Christ and Christianity. Christianity has contributed to the assimilation process, the removal process, the suppression of tribal religions, the dividing up of the reservations for various denominations, the allotment policy which resulted in a loss of millions of acres of Native American lands, the notion of inferiority of Native Americans- and so on. We want no part of Christ or Christianity (Smith 1992, 203).<sup>3</sup>

Is there any hope, therefore, of white Christians having a positive impact upon native communities?

Smith goes on to describe certain conditions that predispose societies to a change of opinion. He suggests that when a society is confronted by crisis (which he defines as a society that is “unstable and undergoing rapid change”), it is more open to outside involvement (Smith 1992, 209). More recently, Michael Oh, a Korean-American missionary working in Japan, a culture that has historically abused and negatively viewed Koreans, illustrated the same in his ministry. Describing Japan as the “largest unreached nation on earth,” he identified the recent earthquake, tsunami and nuclear radiation crisis as opportunities. He says, “we mourn the twenty thousand lives lost, most of whom did not know Christ. But we believe that God is both sovereign over such tragedies and has gracious gospel purposes that will be revealed” (Oh 2012, 96). While his statement is mainly in reference to the increased amount of wider public awareness (and resultant prayer for Japan and the gospel work there), I believe that increased prayer coupled with increased openness to help from outsiders during crisis, as noted by Smith, combine to increase overall mission effectiveness. In his treatise on missions in crisis, Kurtis Smith suggests that such

thinking represents “best practices for these fertile mission fields that are often ‘ripe for the harvest’” because “disasters can transform entire institutional systems, economics, language and even the nature of mission work.” Smith suggests that “through trauma and travail, people learn new patterns for life,” and he proposes therefore that “Christians in mission can respond to crisis and help turn such events into ‘transformational’ moments” (Smith 2015, 1).

Today my neighbors, the Spokane Tribe, are facing a number of crises: a climate-change crisis which is making wildfires more common and more destructive (thus creating an associated economic crisis since timber is one of the few resources on the reservation), an environmental and health crisis created by an open-pit uranium mine actively leaking high-grade uranium into the Spokane River, and a plethora of other structurally-related societal crises such as poverty, drug addiction, and suicide that negatively impact the community.<sup>4</sup> In addition, there remain arenas of social injustice such as long-denied equitable compensation for the massive cultural and economic losses created by the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam (as I discuss below), which further breeds discouragement within the community. At the same time, each of these crises may be an opportunity for me to act as a good neighbor in a variety of ways.

### **The Fires**

The Cayuse Mountain Fire that began in late August of 2016 burned over 18,000 acres of reservation land, destroyed 14 homes and left the tribal headquarters town of Wellpinit without power for five days, leading to spoiled food and creating the inability for firefighters to use the town’s well water (which depended upon electricity to pump the water) to fight the fire (Kramer 2018). A year earlier, the larger Carpenter Road Fire destroyed 64,000 acres, causing a “tremendous amount of damage to 18 primary residences, the natural resources and surrounding communities” and caused one death (Hill 2015). In a news article entitled, “Besieged by fire again, Wellpinit residents welcome help,” local residents shared the many ways that various local communities and other tribes came to their aid following the second fire, praising “the outpouring of support” they received from volunteers from surrounding communities who had “worked tirelessly to connect residents with donated goods.” The donations “made all the difference” (Sokol 2016). While it is wonderful to hear that many came to their aid, I am unaware of any churches in nearby Spokane that got immediately involved in the disaster relief efforts. Nor have I heard of churches being involved in the continuing efforts to help those impacted by the fire get back on their feet. It feels a bit like a natural, but missed, crisis opportunity.

Beyond the immediate human cost of the fires, there is also the long-term economic impact. The Spokane Tribe’s per capita annual income is \$14,287, and timber is one of the few resources available to the tribe on the reservation allotted to them. The first reservation proposed for the Spokanes was a regional reservation of approximately six million acres that would have included many other local tribes sharing the territory — as they had always done. This reservation, declared by executive order of President Ulysses S. Grant in April 1872, stretched from the Canadian border in the north, to the Spokane River in the south, to the Pend Oreille and little Spokane Rivers to the east, and to the Columbia River in the west. Less than three months later an amended proposal for a smaller reservation, west of this original location, was made; this smaller reservation was signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on July 2, 1872, and the original reservation land was returned to public domain. This second reservation, further west than the original proposal, contained less than three million acres of land stretching from the



Okanagan River in central Washington in the west, to the Columbia River serving as the southern and eastern boundaries, and to the Canadian border in the north; it did not include many of the Spokane Tribe's most important fishing sites, as the earlier proposal had. In 1873, a US Commission was sent to investigate complaints coming from the Indians about these changes, and a new proposal for a much larger regional reservation, that included both the original proposed reservation plus even more land eastward was never officially established. Instead, in 1873, a portion from this proposed reservation was carved off and established as the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. Under growing pressure to open more Indian land for white settlement, U.S. President Benjamin Harrison opened the northern half of the Colville Reservation to public domain in 1877.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, some bands of Spokane Indians settled within the Colville Reservation, others settled within the Coeur d'Alene Reservation and others stayed camped around the city of Spokane Falls.<sup>6</sup> Growing tensions between these bands of Spokanes and white settlers in the new city led to the proposal in 1877 of a Spokane Tribe Reservation (for the remainder of the Spokanes who had not settled elsewhere), to be carved out from the larger, earlier proposed regional reservation area. This proposal was accepted by Chief Lot in 1880, but before it was signed into law by president Rutherford Hayes in 1881, the northern boundary of the new Spokane Reservation was reduced significantly (almost in half) when the president designated the 48<sup>th</sup> parallel as the northern boundary, rather than the creeks that had been agreed to by Chief Lot. The Spokane Reservation did not include the most important site for the Spokanes, a salmon people: namely the Spokane Falls that now is at the heart of the city. While this loss of access to salmon could have proven economically disastrous for the tribe, it became a moot issue with the completion of the Grand Coulee Dam in 1942. The dam stopped all salmon from progressing upstream and was economically disastrous to all the local tribes. From this point on, the Spokane Tribe was left to manage the meager resources on their reservation land, including timber, much of which was lost during the fires of 2016-2017. Prior to the fire the per capita payments to members of the tribe, funds derived strictly from the tribe's own resources generated from the sale of timber and wood products, were \$400 per year per capita (2014). With limited resources and few employment opportunities, it should come as no surprise—that the tribe's poverty rate is 37.6% and per capita yearly income is only \$14,287. In contrast, the unemployment rate in Washington state is 4.9%, and the poverty rate is 12.2% (U.S. Census).

In Washington state, the number of wildfires has more than doubled over the past ten years (Gentzler 2019). In 2018, the state experienced the most wildfires on record (Jackson 2019). Catastrophic wildfires are not only becoming more frequent, they are becoming more intense (Jackson 2019). Changing climate patterns are leading to earlier spring snowmelt as well as warmer and longer summers, which decreases the ground moisture in many forests for longer periods, thus drying out the trees and weakening their resistance to pests, resulting in more diseased, dead and dying trees that produce great fodder for future fires (UCS 2019; Gentzler 2019). Weather prognosticators are suggesting that such climate patterns are now becoming the "new norm" (Gentzler 2019). If such catastrophic wildfires are an apparent reality for our immediate future, how might the church best prepare to help our neighbors living in these areas in their predictable times of future crisis?

### **The Midnite Mine**

Another contemporary crisis for the Spokane Tribe is the Midnite Mine, an open pit uranium mine actively leaking radiation into a creek on the reservation. In 1950, the mine was opened to produce uranium during the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race, but it closed after a drop in the price

of uranium in 1981 and was abandoned, leaving exposed radioactive ore throughout the site. Locals attribute elevated cancer rates on the reservation to the open-pit mine that first garnered wider attention in the late 1990's. By 2006, the mine had been designated an EPA Superfund cleanup site, but the cleanup plan did not get underway for another ten years and is not scheduled to be complete until 2025. Many tribal families face serious medical conditions on the reservation, perhaps a crisis that nearby Christian doctors and nurses could be involved in mitigating. One might wonder why this site has garnered so little attention over the years compared to the nearby Hanford Nuclear Superfund cleanup site. Perhaps it can be explained by the Midnite Mine's non-proximity to modern cities and the remaining marginal status of Indians in the eyes of the wider culture. How might advocacy to speed cleanup help change attitudes of Spokane Indians toward their dominant culture neighbors?

### **Related Opportunities for Advocacy Against Injustice: The Grand Coulee Dam Settlement**

This convoluted scenario bleeds into this article's central point about crisis and opportunities among the Spokane Indians. There remain justice issues where dominant culture persons may be able to walk alongside our tribal neighbors and maybe even serve as advocates of influence within our own dominant culture circles to raise awareness of the Spokane Tribe's plights. One such issue is an historical injustice created by the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam. Constructed from 1933 to 1942, the dam effectively changed the Spokane Tribe's way of life. With no mitigation made for migrating salmon, the dam blocked all salmon from moving upstream to the Spokanes' historic fishing sites. Poverty and starvation resulted. Furthermore, tribal land was flooded by the creation of Lake Roosevelt behind the dam. While the Spokane Tribe was minimally compensated for the loss of this land (\$4700), the Colville Tribe, who lost land on the other side of the river, were awarded 53 million dollars in 1994 in one-time compensation plus annual payments of 14-21 million dollars for hydropower revenues generated by the dam.

In 1941, the Spokane Tribe began raising the issue of losses incurred by the construction of the dam. In 1994, after the federal settlement with the Colville Tribe, the Spokanes began seeking equitable compensation for their similar losses, but to no avail. Over the past 20 years, there has been a volley of bills passed in the US Senate and the House of Representatives seeking such an equitable settlement, but never at the same time. In 2013, speaking in support of this equitable settlement before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn, of the Department of the Interior, testified that the passage of such a bill "would provide a measure of justice for a historical wrong" and that the tribe's claim was an "equitable one" because, while the Colville Tribe had been compensated fairly, the Spokane Tribe had not. Washburn claimed that "the Spokane Tribe never received similar compensation because they were foreclosed from doing so" and that "while this outcome can be explained legally, it is difficult to justify morally." He concluded in his testimony that "there is no dispute that the Spokane Tribe suffered a loss arising out of the same set of actions by the United States..." that "it is partly an accident of history that the Colville Tribes received compensation and the Spokane Tribe did not... that the Administration supports equitably compensating the Spokane Tribe for the losses it sustained as a result of the federal development of hydropower at Grand Coulee Dam," and that "the facts and history show that as a matter of equity the Spokane Tribe has a moral claim to receive compensation for its loss" (Washburn 2013). While this testimony served to support the passage of Senate Bill 1448 back in 2013, the bill never moved past the introduction stage in the Senate. A similar bill was reintroduced in the

Senate in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2015-2016) and the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress where it passed the Senate, and it is now in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress (2019-2020) where it has again been introduced in the Senate and is awaiting further action. If the bill passes, a similar bill will need introduction in the House of Representatives.

In March 2018, just prior to this most recent Senate action, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke visited the Spokane Tribe on their reservation to discuss the pending legislation for reparations for the various losses associated with the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam (the legislation subsequently introduced by Senator Cantwell in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress). Zinke opined his position on the issue when he concluded, “Clearly, the tribe, in my judgement, was wronged” (Wohlfeil 2018). In an email response reported in the same article, McMorris Rodgers (who will need to sponsor a similar bill in the House of Representatives again if the bill is ever to become law), said that “she also believes the Spokane Tribe was wronged, and that she has worked on legislation to identify a settlement with them and other property owners” (Wohlfeil 2018). McMorris Rodgers was the sponsor of a similar bill introduced in the House of Representatives during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-2006). Since then, however, the tribe has felt that her original support for their cause has diminished. In 2016, the local media reported that “despite her initial support of a bill to compensate the tribe for the damage that Grand Coulee did to the Spokane Tribe, the tribe suggested that McMorris Rodgers had done little to move the proposal forward since then” (Walters 2016). And yet from her words in 2018 noted above, the Spokane would infer continued support for their settlement. Since any final bill would require a passed House-sponsored version of the law (passed as well by the Senate) in order to be enacted into federal law, only time will tell as to Rodgers’ true inclinations on this issue.<sup>7</sup>

How do all of these historical and legal details relate to the topic at hand, crisis and mission? Might advocacy on the part of the wider church for the continuing injustices faced by our neighbors—play a role in changing their attitudes about us and our religious messages? During a recent immersion experience designed to encourage reconciliation, a dominant culture member listening to an indigenous speaker talk about dominant culture mistreatment and abuse of Indians in the Indian Boarding Schools, broke into tears and approached the speaker to offer words of sorrow and confession. The storyteller of this event quips, “It was a beautiful moment as our indigenous speaker hugged the man, and smiling compassionately said, ‘it is okay.’” Such compassionate interactions, accompanied by concrete steps of advocacy on the part of dominant culture Christians would go a long way towards bridging the understandable remaining cultural divide.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, in thinking about this topic more deeply, the implications and applications are endless. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, provide avenues for involvement of Christians in meeting the need for rapid relief all around the world. Weather-related disasters of every kind (whether natural, human-caused, or human intensified) are increasing and intensifying around the globe. Beyond these examples, healing for trauma resulting from disease, disaster or war is increasingly needed throughout the nations. Other obvious “crisis” situations are created by language and culture loss, economic strife, issues of injustice, various addictions, suicide epidemics, crime, school shootings, and data hijackings. The list could go on and on. Each of these traumatic events is happening internationally and may represent a chance for us Christians to be good neighbors in many places. These crises present us opportunities to be the hands and

feet of Jesus to a suffering world. Locally as well there are communities all around us, some historically (understandably) resistant perhaps not to the message, but to the messenger. One recent article focusing on crises in the Middle East suggests, “When there is chaos, there are often *kairos*<sup>8</sup> moments for the kingdom of God to spread. If you desire to see the kingdom tangibly advancing, go to the place where people are suffering” (Bradwell 2015).

In light of the changing nature of missions today (from expatriate to national<sup>9</sup>), the growing crisis opportunities all around us, and the sociological realities that crisis can open opportunities for peoples once viewed with suspicion by others, it seems that the opportunities for mission are many, if we can recognize them as such. While this article has focused mainly upon crisis as *kairos* among the Spokane Indians, the topics covered are not necessarily specifically unique to the Spokane Indians. The Spokanes are just one of dozens of tribes within the region with similar stories. And our regional tribes represent but a few among hundreds of other tribal communities across the nation facing similar crises. Opportunity abounds if we will only open our eyes, be good neighbors as Jesus commanded and see that the fields are white for the harvest, overseas and just around the corner.

Finally, as indicated in the first footnote the article's use of pronouns may construct a white, dominant-culture (and sometimes Christian) United States “us” and a Native American “other.” Given the realities of our human nature, I see no way around this, from either direction. Humanly speaking, none of us can forget our past, and we cannot stop living (either group) with the results of the structural realities that our histories have created, whether that be of privilege or inequity. Humanly speaking, we cannot *entirely* stop viewing one another as cultural “others” through the present social lenses constructed by our own cultural pasts, no matter who is the “us” and who is the “them.” I strongly encourage “us” to use our structural privilege to advocate for personal repentance, public acknowledgement of past wrongs committed, and reparations to pay for the sins of our past. I believe these are minimal essential first steps toward reconciliation. While each of these would be a good start toward demonstrating our sincerity for the reconciliation process, I do not think these actions can completely make up for the past damage done. Humanly speaking, I don't know how the recipients of such horrible loss could ever truly forgive and forget; I am not sure it is possible to “forget” and “move on,” or if it is truly profitable.<sup>10</sup> I say this as a member of the dominant American culture, and again, as one who strongly advocates for these actions to be taken both personally and corporately. Yet I understand my Native American friends who still view me first as a “white man” and evaluate my actions through their cultural lenses as Native Americans, as I view them as “Indians”<sup>11</sup> through mine. I am not sure if it is humanly possible for me to see them otherwise, for them to see me otherwise, or for me to expect them to.<sup>12</sup>

There is a higher-level spiritual calling, however, to which I wish to encourage any Native American believers in Jesus who may be reading this. I am a follower of my Master, Jesus. If you also follow Jesus as your Master, then we are, spiritually speaking, half-siblings; we have different mothers, but the same Father. And because of Paul's pronouncement in Galatians 3:28, that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female,<sup>13</sup> as well as neither white nor Indian, we are fully adopted into the same family with God as our Father. He now considers us full siblings and we are expected to act toward one another with the same obligations and privileges we give and expect from our own full blood kin. It flows in both directions. I ask you to accept the heart behind my challenge. North American tribes historically accepted a variety of people, not their actual kin, into their midst, despite their tribal or ethnic

affiliation. In Jesus, we are now one tribe. Yet we have different ethnic heritages. I seek to be a Christ-follower, who happens to be a white American working alongside a Christ-follower who happens to be Indian. I think the order in which we state our faith and ethnic heritage matters greatly (e.g. a Christian who happens to be a white, dominant-culture American vs. an American Christian, or a Christian Native American versus a Native American Christian).<sup>14</sup> I pray you will receive my plea for brotherly unity in the spirit in which it is intended, and that we can begin to give to, and receive from one another while sharing in ministry with one another (Beine 2019), as true full siblings in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Implicit in my argument is that I am writing as a member of white majority American culture generally, and as a white majority American Christian specifically. My particular use of pronouns (e.g. my, we, our, us, etc.), therefore, reflects this vantage point throughout this article.

<sup>2</sup> "Unreached" and "least reached" are terms used synonymously by Joshua Project to mean "a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside assistance." The original editorial board of Joshua Project, somewhat arbitrarily, set the percentage figure criteria for these terms as "less than or equal to 2% Evangelical Christian and less than or equal to 5% Professing Christians." The term "unengaged," likewise, has been defined by Joshua Project as a subset of an unreached people group that "has no known active church planting underway." More about these definitions can be found at <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>. By these definitions, the Spokane Tribe (as would many other tribes in the region and across the nation) might be considered unreached or nearly unreached and unengaged populations. For more about unreached and unengaged peoples see: <https://www.imb.org/beliefs-key-terms/#Unreached>.

<sup>3</sup> All of the various nations noted above within a 100-mile radius of Spokane have all faced all of these same pressures.

<sup>4</sup> A 2016 Spokane Tribal report concludes that "at present, there are several indicators that portray significant distress among tribal members and in the community. The tribal unemployment rate is 45.3%. The poverty rate is 37.6%, and per capita income is only \$14,287. In contrast, the unemployment rate in Washington State is 4.9%, and the poverty rate is 12.2% (U.S. Census). These family stressors have deleterious effects on family functioning and cohesiveness, leading to increased rates of domestic violence, poor learning skills and school attendance among children, intensified use of drugs and alcohol, and increased incidence of crime" (Spokane Tribe 2017).

<sup>5</sup> The proposed larger reservation would have housed multiple regional tribes and allowed for the continued shared usage of historic resource-sharing sites such as the Spokane Falls (where salmon were abundant) and the camas

fields. Both salmon and camas (a root-bulb plant) were significant in the diet of all Interior Salish people. Instead, reservations were developed that divided people geographically mainly along tribal lines. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation is composed of several tribes and bands; Chelan, Chief Joseph Band of Nez Perce, Colville, Eniat, Lakes, Methow, Moses-Columbia, Nespelem, Okanogan, Palus, San Poil, and Wenatchi. The Coeur d'Alene Reservation housed mainly the Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai Indians. Both also contained some Spokane Indians since there was much intermarriage and transmigration between all Salish groups and the Spokane and Kalispel reservations had not been established yet.

<sup>6</sup> The city of Spokane Falls, Washington was incorporated on Nov. 29, 1881. The “e” was added to Spokane in 1883, and “Falls” was dropped from the name in 1891. See <https://my.spokanecity.org/about/history/>.

<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that the “Spokane Tribe of Indians Equitable Compensation Act” (s.216) was reaffirmed by the U.S. Senate, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, and signed into law by President Trump on December 27, 2019. While this may appear as a victory, the settlement stripped any one-time payment (such as the Colville received). The Spokanes lost roughly 40% of the land lost by the Colvilles, which would equate to a one-time payment of 21.2 million dollars. While the annual payments now promised to the Spokane Tribe by the new law (six million annually for ten years and eight million yearly thereafter) will be roughly equitable (percentage-wise) to those that the Colville receive, during her final statements before Congress Spokane Tribe Chairwoman Carol Evans noted that “critically, our Tribal membership made the difficult decision to forego back payments in hope that the Spokane Tribe can finally achieve a semblance of justice moving forward. As each year passes, we lose more Spokane elders who were alive to witness the initial flooding of our lands and complete loss of our salmon fishery. Only a handful remain. It is my great hope that Congress and this Administration will allow me to bring them home a bill signed into law” (Evans 2019, 2). While providing some “semblance of justice,” this certainly seems more of a “compromise compensation act” rather than a truly “equitable settlement.”

<sup>8</sup> Kairos is an ancient Greek word meaning time, not in the chronological sense, but a conceptual sense as in “at just the right time,” a qualitative aspect of time rather than a quantitative one, “the circumstances that open moments of opportunity” (Hill 2002, 217).

<sup>9</sup> I have pointed out elsewhere, however, that I believe there is still room and need for all in missions today (Beine 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Harvard philosopher George Santayana is known to have said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Therefore, it would likely be counterproductive to forget this grievous past.

<sup>11</sup> While I recognize that this term may be considered pejorative when used by non-Natives in some geographic regions (e.g., Canada), the Coeur d’Alenes, Kalispel, Spokanes all use this descriptor of themselves in their tribal moniker. Likewise, my Native friends have told me they prefer me to use this designation when speaking of them.

<sup>12</sup> None of this is to say that attempts to develop an intercultural worldview are not profitable and that recognizing and appreciating cultural differences is completely impossible. Rather, I am simply acknowledging the human struggle inherent in the process and the difficulty of overcoming every obstacle completely. Through this argument I am not advocating what the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer 2012) would refer to as a monocultural minimization mindset (<http://www.truenorthintercultural.com/blog/category/professional-development>). We should certainly strive for what the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) calls “acceptance” and “adaptation” mindsets, stages that recognize, appreciate and value inherent cultural differences.

<sup>13</sup> Paul’s teaching here is not to suggest a neutralization of culture into a monochromatic homogenous Christian identity, rather a rich completeness that comes when we are able to embrace and celebrate the distinctives of each of our cultures, yet under the unity of the cross. This approach would reflect the “adaptation” mindset described by the IDI.

<sup>14</sup> Again, I want to be sure that I am not being read here as advocating a minimization mindset that would dismiss or diminish the importance of our cultural heritages. Rather, all of this is understood in the light of the acceptance and adaptation mindsets, recognizing, embracing and appreciating cultural differences, leading us together to a richer understanding of our world and of our Creator.

**“The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program” and the Social Arian Temptation:  
Recovering from Mortifying Spin – Contextualization  
Gone Awry 4 (Christology) (Part I)**

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**Abstract**

The Trinity *is* our social program, if our understanding of the Triune God is checked by biblical theology and biblical ethics developed within an international hermeneutical community. My thesis is this: “Everlasting Relationships of Following-and-Leading” (ERFL) within the immanent Trinity are founded squarely upon Scripture as read without Neoplatonic, Social Arian lenses. I establish this thesis through a survey of the interactions between the Father and Son in the economic interactions before creation in the covenant of redemption, then in the Son’s work in creation and in redemptive history until and during the incarnation, next after the resurrection and enthronement, and last after the Judgment. I then trace the pattern of Filial-following and Patri-leadership in the dyadic titles ascribed to the Father and Son. Finally, I discuss implications for social theology of a Complementarian Trinity perspective.

**Key Words:** Trinity, Social Arianism, egalitarian Trinity, complementarian Trinity, culture transformation, social revolutionary doctrines.

**Introduction and Thesis**

The Trinity *is* our social program, if the terms “Trinity” and “social program” are checked by Scripture and then sharpened within a truly international hermeneutical community to guard against encroaching syncretism (Prv 27:17) (Volf 1998, 403-423; contra Husbands, 2009). Fundamental to my thesis is that a person or people-group inevitably *become(s) like who or what they worship*, as we shall see repeatedly (Pss 115:1-8, 135:15-18; 2 Cor 3:18). Every view of the Trinity, even for those who reject the idea that the Trinity has social relevance, will lead to culture transformation. *No neutrality exists and no escape from social relevance exists*. If the earth’s ethno-cultures are going to be transformed according to whole Bible teaching, these statements are essential because the Trinity is essential (Mt 28:17-20). If any culture is founded upon the wisdom and truth of a true Trinity (Tri-Unity), it will thrive. If not, it will collapse from the accumulated centuries of idolatry as seen by precept and example throughout Scripture.

This and subsequent articles focus especially on *Christology* gone awry. My thesis is as follows: Everlasting Relationships of Following-and-Leading (ERFL) truly exist within the immanent Trinity. The Tri-une Godhead has always consisted of three Persons who share equal value, dignity, majesty, and glory. Yet, at the same time, all three have always interacted with equal glory-yet-diverse roles within the Father’s single Being. Consequently, true equality and real diversity of authority roles are absolutely compatible, because that is what Scripture everywhere reveals our three-one divinity to be like. In the Scriptural revelation of the economy, *the Trinity is always and everywhere led by the Father* with the Son following. This is true in the pre-creational covenant of redemption all the way to after Messiah Jesus presents the universe back to his Father, who becomes “all in all.”



I maintain that it is legitimate, therefore, to carefully infer backwards from these revealed economic relationships to the everlasting divine metaphysical time (DMT) of the ontological Trinitarian relationships before the covenant of redemption. Several other indications (e.g., God-Word, Glory-Radiance relationship) also demonstrate that this has always been the internal immanent way the Godhead *is*, was, and will always be. Hence, the following of the Son and leading of the Father in the economy is not temporary.

Further, whenever an ethno-culture's worldview becomes grounded upon a view of the relationship of unity and diversity that prioritizes the equality of unity above any diversity, it will self-destruct. This worldview concept will become a Pac-Man that devours all social freedom and created diversity in an egalitarian collective. The envisioned result is a communal-collective in which everyone is supposed to be absolutely and interchangeably equal, with no social hierarchies and no social boundaries. An updated slogan of the French Revolution could well be "Equality, Liberty, and a unitary family of Humanity." Such a viewpoint encapsulates the contemporary boast that equality is absolutely morally better than maintaining created social diversities. In contrast, our Lord provides a strong indication that true social unity and real, created, social diversity can exist in harmony when he prays, "Let them be one as we are one" (Jn 17:11, 23). His ideal social model is actually modeled on the Tri-Unity of his relationship with his Father (and by implication also with the Spirit). His new creation community in vital union with him is truly diverse – bi-gender, multi-ethnic, and multi-class – yet is also truly a unified community because only the Son's new-creation diverse and unified community *reflects* the immanent-ontological Trinity. Hence, an accurate understanding of the Trinity *is* our social program.

Unfortunately, the Trinity within the classic tradition has too often been relegated to being a mere thought puzzle with little practical relevance to social systems. This type of relegation is especially true of Latin scholastic Trinitarianism, but also definitely occurs in earlier Greek and Latin Christianity as well (Hennessy 2007). However, as several scholars demonstrate in the last half century, such as the VanTillians, Frame, Poythress, and Rushdoony in the USA, and especially Colin Gunton in the UK, only a correct Trinitarian view builds a stable social order in all spheres of life. Therefore, what I term *Social Arianism* prioritizes the intuited moral value within the ontological Trinity of a simple-egalitarian unity above any real diversity of the Godhead. Within this simplist tradition that includes a timeless, strongly immutable, and impassive deity are hidden deadly Neoplatonic presuppositions, as occurs within Augustine (Mullins 2013, 181). Robert Jenson summarizes: "Throughout his writings," Augustine possessed an "unquestioning commitment to the axiom of his antecedent [neo]Platonic theology, that God is metaphysically 'simple,' that no sort of self-differentiation can really be true of him" (Jenson 1997, 111). The Cappadocians before and Aquinas after him held to the same presuppositional syncretism.

### **Does Scripture Support a Complementarian or Egalitarian Trinity?**

I have established elsewhere the biblical foundations of a doctrine of the Trinity without this mortifying and debilitating Neoplatonic (NP) syncretism (Kreitzer 2019a, 2019b, 2016); readers unfamiliar with these earlier articles would do well to read them now. This article seeks to demonstrate an alternative "Everlasting Relationships of Following-and-Leading" (ERFL) thesis by Scriptural evidence and sound deduction from that data. Two other alternative explanations of exercising authority and following authority exist: 1) The Eternal Subordination of the Son

(ESS) or Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS) (Grudem 1994; 2012) and 2) Eternal Relations of Authority and Submission (ERAS) (e.g., Ware 2005; Strachan and Peacock 2016). I reject both for reasons given in the ensuing discussion. (Subsequent articles will map out the truly social-revolutionary implications of taking this classic simplist tradition (mentioned above) alongside and even above the clear teaching of Scripture and worshipping a syncretistic deity based upon the priority of unity over diversity).

In summary, world Christians have two main options: *Complementarian Trinitarianism*, allowing freedom for real, created, social diversity, or *Egalitarian Trinitarianism* with its concomitant, *Social Arianism*. First, J. Scott Horrell agrees: “For egalitarian trinitarians, eternal social differentiation in the Godhead is perceived as ultimately incompatible with triune equality-” (Horrell 2004, 209). In the economy the Son is man, following the Father. In his divinity, he is absolutely equal with the Father and potentially could have exchanged economic roles with him/her/it in another putative creation. Second, on the other hand, many complementarian Trinitarians teach that each person in the ontological Trinity has always ever-lived in an everlasting “social order— [a] characteristic way of experiencing divine koinonia” (Horrell 2004, 409; see also Jenson 1997, 111-112). The Father is always the Initiator and Planner. The Holy Spirit is always glorifying and executing the decisions (albeit mutually made) of the Father through the Son. And it was always befitting that the everlasting Son become incarnate as the Son of Man and Son of God.

### **The Father’s Leadership in the Covenant of Redemption before Creation**

I opt for the second of these two options. *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone, not *solo Scriptura*) is the final authority in this choice. First, it establishes the Father’s supreme and unique leadership role before the creation in what many theologians term “the covenant of redemption” (*pactum salutis*) (see, e.g., 2 Tim 1:9-10; Eph 1:1-14; Rev 13:8; 1 Pet 1:1-2; Fesko 2018). Luke in Acts is explicit about the Father’s role even in planning the cross: “This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23); and, “They did what your power and will [ἡ βουλή] had decided beforehand should happen” (Acts 4:28). This all occurred in a pact between the Father and the Son by which he agrees to become the Kinsman Redeemer of the Father’s chosen people (family). As such he will be the Older Brother and Firstborn of the family, and the Victor over all of his Father’s enemies both visible and invisible (Eph 1:3-14, 19b-21; Col 1:12-18, 2:10, 15; Heb 2:14-15; Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; Rom 8:28-30; Kreitzer 2017, 2020). To accomplish all of this the Son freely agrees to be the substitute for his Father’s chosen family as both the Second Adam and as their human King and High Priest (e.g., Ps 2:7, 110:1-4; Zec 6:13; Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15; Heb 2, 5-7), so as to fulfill all their broken covenant responsibilities (Gal 4:1-7; Rom 5:17), and agrees to submit to their curse for their treason in their place (Gal 3:12-14; Rom 3:24-27).

In this covenant, the *Father* purposed, foreknew, and pre-chose Christ’s people that will eventually include all peoples grafted into the single commonwealth of Israel and blessed in Christ with blessing every blessing of the Spirit. The Son and Spirit followed the Father’s leadership (Eph 1-2; Ps 22:27-28). Wayne Grudem agrees: “But if we are to be faithful to the meaning of ... Eph 1:3-5, [we] still must say that in the eternal councils of the Trinity, there was a role of planning, directing, initiating, and choosing, that belonged specifically to the Father” (Grudem 2012, 233).

The Father thus predestined them to enter union with his blessed Son; and pre-planned to work everything for their good to accomplish the counsel of his plan (Rom 8:28-29). He does this “before” – a temporal word – “the foundation of the world,” that is before the creation (Mt 25:34; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8). This foreordaining work of the Father occurred not in a totally-other, atemporal Simple Oneness, but within the tri-personal counsel in interactive Divine Metaphysical Time (DMT) (Kreitzer 2016). Any other interpretation is eisegesis, *reading Neoplatonic presuppositions into key texts*, and building upon Tradition and Scripture not Scripture alone.

Consequently, the Son is the Heir of the Father and shares the Father’s everlasting DMT. The Son (and the Spirit) mutually share in the Father’s glorious, ever-living, single-yet-diverse Being. As a gift from our Abba, all things belong to us as joint heirs of Christ: “All things belong to you.” The reason is that “you [all] belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God,” the Father (1 Cor 3:22-23, cf. 1 Cor 11:3; Rom 8:17). Paul proclaims the same in Romans. From Christ and his decision; comes all things: “For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Rom 11:36). The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ever shares his Being with the Son (and the Spirit) so that through the Son by the Spirit. The result is that “Honor and eternal power belong to him [the Father]! Amen” (1 Tim 6:16 ISV). Certainly, our Lord shares that same blessing and honor because he is the Heir. He is furthermore, also, the Lamb, who sits with the King of kings and Lord of lords on his throne. The Father’s singular yet glorious Being is “invisible,” “spirit” and “unapproachable light,” yet Christ, always one with the the Father, is the outshining radiance of his glory (Jn 4:24, 6:46, see also Jn 1:18, 10:30-33; 1 Tim 6:15-16; 1 Jn 1:5; Rev 5:13).

“To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen” (Jude 24-25). Notice here also the authority and priority the Lord’s brother Jude gives to *the Father*, whom he calls “the only God our Savior” (cf. Jn 17:3). He prioritizes the Father’s glory and authority, a glory he exercises *solely and only* “through Jesus Christ our Lord [κύριος, kurios = YHWH].” He exercises this “before” all created ages because our God is not atemporal (Kreitzer 2016). Therefore, the Lord Jesus *has always* shared the one-of-a-kind divine identity of the Father. As Richard Bauckham reminds us, throughout the NT Jesus shares the Father’s “unique identity” (true unity) but does not share the Father’s personally distinctive quality (property) (Bauckham 2008, ix). That unique property is his leading authority that is his real diversity from the Son.

As we shall see, on the other hand, some teach that the Father, Son, and Spirit are all absolutely equal in sharing the unique identity of “the [one] Name” and therefore are absolutely interchangeable in authority in other potential creations. These teachers prioritize the oneness of the Godhead over the true everlasting diversity. Consequently, these teachers begin a process of absorbing the real diversity within the Godhead into its unity. Certainly, this classic tradition does not go so far as does thorough-going Modalism, but it does draw incredibly near to that schismatic teaching. Again, this process and subsequent worship given to this non-biblical divinity is surely syncretistic and is another permutation of encroaching Neoplatonic philosophy (Mullins 2013; Van den Brink 2014).

The point is this. The Father has always shared his singular yet diverse Spirit-Being with the true personal diversities belonging to his Word (Son) and their Spirit. At the same time, *Scripture always reveals the Father as the one who leads, takes initiative, and shines out as the source* of the radiance which we see in the face of our Lord (2 Cor 3:18, 4:6; Heb 1:1-3). Our Lord is “Light from Light.” Hence, there is no generic “divine nature” but that nature is the Father’s, which Christ fully shares, and we only partake in those communicable attributes that God can share and maintain the Creator-creature distinction (1 Cor 3:21-23). Consequently, even “before” the creation and the beginning of Cosmic Physical Time (CPT), God the Father has priority in the order of the Trinity and leads the Son while the Father and Son lead the Spirit. He is always the first person of the Trinity throughout biblical revelation, including in those glimpses of Divine Metaphysical Time (DMT) that we have in Scripture. There is only one “Name” (YHWH) (unity of the Godhead), but also within that one name dwell the *ordered* diversities of first the Father, second the Son, and third the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:18). This divine unity and diversity cannot be explained away with a prior “we know” that this is certainly analogical “anthropomorphic” language. Only by presupposing the Bible’s definition of Trinity as possessing both true unity and real diversity can any human reader from any ethno-linguist group discern that in divine metaphysical time the Father has always had priority and authority (true diversity) to work through the Son by the Spirit to accomplish the consensual divine plan.

### **Biblical Evidence**

For further evidence, pay close attention in the following selection of passages supporting the Father’s leadership in this covenant-counsel of redemption and the Son’s willing following *before* the creation (Grudem 2012, 233). Italics accentuate time orientating words, and ***bold italics*** emphasizes the Father’s authority.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every blessing of the Spirit in the heavenly places, even as ***he chose us*** in him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ***he*** predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of ***his will*** [εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος]- (Eph 1:3-5, based on the ESV).

[The Father] ***made known*** to us the mystery of ***his will*** according to ***his good pleasure***, which ***he purposed*** in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In him we *were* also chosen [***by the Father*** – divine passive], having been *predestined* according to the ***plan of him*** who works out everything in conformity with the ***purpose of his will*** (Eph 1:9-11).

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to [***the Father’s***] ***purpose***. For those whom ***he foreknew he also predestined*** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom ***he predestined he also called***, and those whom ***he called he also justified***, and those whom ***he justified he also glorified*** (Rom 8:28-30).

[***The Father***] ... saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of ***his own purpose and grace***, which ***he gave*** us in Christ Jesus *before the ages began* (2 Tim 1:9).

To those who reside as aliens, ... who are chosen [divine passive] according to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood (1 Pet 1:1-3).

Wayne Grudem summarizes: “The role of planning, purposing, predestining for the entire history of salvation belongs to the Father, according to Scripture. There is no hint of any such authority for the Son with respect to the Father” (Grudem 2012, 233). Consequently, from the time of the Covenant/Council of Redemption up to Paul’s time, the Father was the sole leader. This conclusion is further strengthened in the following.

### **The Father’s Leadership in Creation**

The most well-known of the passages speaking about the leadership of the Father’s acts in the creation as he created through the Son are the following. I have put brief editorial comments in brackets: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was [living/existing] in the beginning with God. All things were made [divine passive for “God, the Father, made” – see Jn 1:18] through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn 1:1-3 ESV).

Clearly, the “Word of God” in John’s first chapter is a mediatorial concept, applicable to both revelation and creation. The Father *initiated* the speaking, while the speaking itself was the Word himself manifested in creative actions (Gen 1) and in the incarnation, as both John 1:14 and John 1:18 make clear. The Word *is* the Son. That the Word is the Son is clear also in the following passage: “In these last days [God, the Father] has spoken to us [uniquely] by/in [ἐν] his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Heb 1:1-2 ESV). Again, the Father speaks, appoints, creates through his Son, who is also implicitly the incarnation of the spoken-thought of the Father and his final Word. Consequently, for Paul as for the Lord himself, the Father is the “one God,” “the only God,” “the only wise God” (see Jn 5:44, 17:3; 1 Thes 1:9; 1 Tim 1:17), yet at the same time our Lord before the incarnation was always existing in the external glory of his Father [ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων] and was “equal with God” [τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ] (Php 2:6-7) and the one *through whom* the Father receives glory: “To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Rom 16:27).

Consequently, Paul, clearly, is resolute and consistent: “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, *from whom* are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through whom* are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:6; see Eph 4:4). As Richard Bauckham points out, this confession is most likely based on the Shema, which states there exists only one God and Lord (Bauckham 2008, 211-218). Yet at the same time, 1 Corinthians 8:6 indicates that, within the unity of the single Being, different economic roles have existed and have been exercised even before creation. Last, Jesus is presently [ἐστίν – present active indicative], quite possibly in the pregnant sense of always being in the past and future, “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over [NIV] all creation. For *by him* all things were created [at the Father’s command – divine passive], in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him [δι’ αὐτοῦ – divine intermediate means] and for him” (Col 1:15-16 ESV).

The same pattern exists throughout the NT literature. The Father initiates with his own authority (“from him”) through the mediatorial work of the Word/Son (“through whom”), who carries out the plan, purpose, desire of his Abba, Father in the process of creation and upholding

the universe “by his powerful word” (see also Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; Grudem 2012, 243). Certainly, all these passages clearly discuss aspects of the economy of creation and redemption, but the texts also give definite hints that this order (τάξις) may also be essential or ontological and not merely economic.

### **The Father’s Leadership in the Incarnation of the Christ**

YHWH the Father sends the Theanthropos. The Father promises to send the Son in the OT revelation. He fulfilled the promise and sent the Son for the benefit “of the faith of God’s chosen ones” so that they can come to know the truth and possess the certain hope of everlasting life, “which God [the Father], who cannot lie, promised before time belonging to [earth’s] ages” – in other words in God’s time stream, the Divine Metaphysical Time (DMT) (Tit 1:2).

In the outworking of earth-time (CPT), the Father provided many explanations of the pre-CPT promise made in the covenant of Redemption. Two of the most important of these promises, for the purposes of this discussion, in the OT are Isaiah 9:6-7 and 48:16. Isaiah 9 comes at the end of a larger pericope (Is 7:1-9:7); and is situated in the first of Isaiah’s three sections, “The Book of the Coming King.” The theme is a coming scion of the house of David, who will be named “Immanuel” or “God with us” and who will be born of a virgin (Is 7:14). The passage ends with the prophecy that this Coming One will be prominent in Galilee of the idolatrous nations to the north of Jerusalem, the City of David (Is 9:1-5; Mt 4:13-16). He will hear the called-out salutations of his people, consisting of four couplets that consist of titles only YHWH himself carries: “Wonderful-Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father-King [of his people], and Prince of Peace.” Yet, paradoxically, the text states that this mysterious, fully-divine figure will also be virgin-born and fully human, so that he pre-figures Yehoshua-Jesus in the *Carmen Christi* song in Philippians 2. Jesus is born “unto us” – the Jewish people, as “a son” of David’s dynasty. The prophecy and its fulfillment in the Kingdom of Immanuel will be accomplished by YHWH-Shabaoth himself: “The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this” (Is 9:7). Consequently, the text distinguishes the promised Theanthropos from the one accomplishing the promised Kingdom, and by implication, distinguishes the One sending from the Anointed, Reigning King “Mighty God” and “Prince of Peace.”

The second passage is much more disputed. It is situated in the second of Isaiah’s three books, “The Book of the Suffering-Servant King”: “Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit” (Is 48:16). Here the pre-incarnate Messiah, speaking in and through Isaiah as the “Spirit of Jesus” and “the Spirit of Christ,” makes astonishing claims of being equal with the Creator of all things (see 1 Pet 1:11; cf. Acts 16:7). The context seems to indicate that the speaker is not the prophet but the Coming Suffering-King. The “I” and “Me” speaking throughout the pericope says that he called Jacob/Israel, created the heavens and earth, and called Cyrus. He entitles himself YHWH: “I am He; I am the first, and I am the last” (Is 48:12), titles Jesus appropriates for himself in *both* John 8:58 (“Before Abraham was I AM”) and Revelation 1:17 (see Rev 22:13), quoting this very verse. Notably, Israel’s King and Redeemer YHWH, most likely the Father; applied to himself exactly the same Name earlier in the book (Is 44:6). Finally, the passage we are examining makes the last first person claim about the speaker. It is one of pre-existence (at the creation) and being sent with the Spirit by another with the shared Name, YHWH. Only our Lord Messiah fits this description:

Come near to Me, listen to this:

From the first I have not spoken in secret,

From the time it took place, I was there.

And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit: (Is 48:16 NASB).

The NASB and NKJV show by the capitalization of “has sent Me” that the translators agree with this conclusion. However, again, these are economic passages, yet they are still part of an accumulating inductive case that will be completed with a final deduction.

### **The Sending of the Theanthropos in the Gospels, First John, and Paul’s Letters**

The Scriptures clearly speak elsewhere of the Father sending his Son, the God-Man. First, key passages are found in the Gospel of John, which report the sending of the Son to the earth. These are either from John’s commentary on his Lord’s mission or in the words of the Lord from heaven himself. The most well-known of these passages are John 3:16 and 17, which claim that the Father took the initiative to give and to send his Son into the human world of language and people-groups. This sending of the Son is a major theme in John’s Gospel and First Letter (e.g., also Jn 5:37, 6:39, 1 Jn 4:9, 10, 14), but the Synoptics also use the same language: “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Lk 10:16 NIV; see Mt 10:40).

In addition, Jesus also explicitly mentions the sending of a “beloved son” in one of his parables as well. In this case, the land owner, clearly representing the Father having authority, sends his messengers to collect rent (the prophets), and then finally sends his “one beloved son that he had” [ἓνα εἶχεν υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν], whom the tenants murdered because he was the sole heir. This “son” clearly represents Jesus, the only-begotten, beloved Son and Sent One (Mk 12:1-9; Mt 21:36-46; Lk 20:9-18). In all these passages, a father was already the ruling initiator before the sending of his son, the one who listened and followed his father’s instruction. As in the case of Moses and Joshua sending the spies, the sender has higher rank and thus possesses authority to send those who follow the lead and mandate of the sender. Yet at the same time, the spies and the two leaders actually shared an equal human dignity because they share in the same human *imago Dei* (image of God). Analogously, also, just as the Father sent the Spirit to the earth – through Christ and as Christ’s representative – so he has highest rank and authority to send (Jn 14:26; cf. per Acts 1:4).

Second, just as he was sent by his Father the Lord Messiah does nothing of his own initiative but only as first prompted and led by the Father. This point is clear from several passages in John’s Gospel but also includes a few in the Synoptics as well. For example, “Jesus replied, ‘Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does’” (Jn 5:19); and, “By myself I can do nothing [ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ, ap’ emautou; from myself, “on My own initiative” – NASB]; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (Jn 5:30 NIV). The account of the Samaritan woman at the well; is also perspicuous: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work:” (Jn 4:34 BSB). This theme of the Father’s leading includes the Son’s cross-work: “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (Jn 8:28 NASB).

Our Lord makes clear his calling and mission: “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me” (Jn 6:38 BSB; Ovey 2016). Here Messiah Jesus states that he possessed a will or set of desires [τὸ θέλημα] carried with him from heaven, but his core desire is to do the desire/will [τὸ θέλημα] of the Father. God, the Father, sent him to build his community just as he “[God the Father] desired” [θέλω] it to be like (1 Cor 12:18). With the Spirit, who also determinately-desires (βούλομαι, e.g., 1 Cor 12:11), the three desires and one leading desire, that of the Father, operate together as a “mutual work of the Father, Son, and Spirit, each exercising the mode of agency given by his inner-triune role as God” (Jenson 1997, 111). The result is a single act of Trinitarian will or decision-making. Re-interpreted by biblical data, the classical Christian intuition can be substantiated. One-will prevails as all three persons with their own desires work out together one decision/will. Christ’s dependency and his following agency carry on until the resurrection and last judgment because the Father delegated to him authority: “But even if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone when I judge; I am with the Father, who sent Me” (Jn 8:16) and “the Father judges no one, but has entrusted [delegated] all judgment to the Son” up until the Last Day (Jn 5:22, see 23-27). Our Lord Jesus “came with his Father’s authority” (Jn 5:43) and after that Last Day and its Judgment, Christ presents his authority back to the Father, as considered below.

Third, Paul also explicitly mentions the Father sending his Son at the proper time, presumably set by his authority as is the second coming: “At just the right time” (καιρός, kairos), “in the fullness of time [χρόνος, chronos]” the Father sent “his own Son” (Rom 5:5, see 8:3; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:9-10). The Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:9-10 passages in context unmistakably demonstrate the Father’s authority in setting the right time for the sending of the Son.

### **The Father’s Leadership in the Person and Work of Christ**

All of the passages discussed so far imply that the Father was the one who possesses supreme authority during the whole time-span from the covenant of redemption up to and including the incarnate life of the Messiah. Again, the Lord affirms the Father’s authority plainly by stating that his Father was “of higher rank than all” (pantōn meidzon estin, πάντων μεϊζόν ἐστιν) *including himself* in his (then) present tense, always-existing oneness [ἐν ἑσμεν] with God, the Father: “The works that I do in my Father’s name testify about me.... My sheep listen to My voice.... No one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is [higher rank] than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:25-30). For the following reasons, “higher rank than all” is a better translation than “greater than all” (NIV) in this passage. In the the LXX and NT, πάντων μεϊζόν ἐστιν in similar contexts almost always means, or strongly implies, “higher rank” not “greater power.” Notice especially the following: Ex 18:s11 LXX, and Jn 4:12 [higher rank than Jacob], 8:53 [higher rank than Abraham], 15:20 [slave not higher in rank than his owner]; 1 Jn 3:20 [God is certainly possessing a higher authority-rank over our hearts], 4:4 [μεϊζων ἐστιν, of higher authority and rank is he]; Mt 11:11 [higher rank than John the Baptist], 12:6 [higher authority and rank than the temple], 12:41-42 [higher rank than Solomon and Jonah], and even 13:32 [higher tallness than the herbs].

Yet also observe that Jesus is speaking in John 10 of his unity with the Father, a concept, as Richard Bauckham reminds us, derived from the “shema” (Dt 6:4; Bauckhan 2008, 104-106). Jesus’s union with the Father certainly means that both Father and Son share the one Name, YHWH, “the one who was, is, and is to come.” Consequently, “I and my Father are-continually



one” (ἔσμεν, present active indicative), an indication that this “higher rank” of the Father is *always* existing in the ever-living Name, *equally shared* by the Father as leader, and Son, as the one following. This definitely hints that the relationship of Father to Son, one of following and leading, is everlasting-eternal. King Jesus, hence, was “the one whom the Father set apart as his very own” – before the creation of the world as explained earlier – “and sent into the world.” He asks, “Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God's Son’?” – one with the Father (Jn 10:30, 36), referring back to the previous context of his true unity and yet at the same time real rank-distinction with the Father.

The classical Tradition's standard exegesis has simply been to relegate this whole discussion to temporal economic matters, by-passing the dilemma of rank in the immanent, single Being of the Father, shared equally by the Son and Spirit. Such exegesis seems wrong-headed. Furthermore, no one disputes the Father's authority in the passages examined as it is clearly in the economy of creation and redemption. Yet, still, these passages are part and parcel of the systematic evidence that shows a consistent pattern from the pre-creational covenant of redemption to after the handing over the kingdom by the Son to the Father, so that he would be all in all, as we shall continue to see.

### ***The Father's Leadership after the Ascension to after the End***

The same following-leading relationship, interestingly enough, remained just before the Crucifixion as well. The Lord Jesus confessed that he was not yet then privy – because he voluntarily put aside the external glory of full divinity – to the timing of the Second Coming because that was the purview of the Father alone: “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mt 24:36). The exact same relationship continued until just before the Ascension. In Acts, the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” His reply is revealing as the authority relationship between Father and Son continues even after the Resurrection: “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed *by His own authority*” (Acts 1:6-7, italics added).

Daniel 2:21 seems to be an intertextual background reference in the Lord's and the Apostles' minds because of the terms “times and seasons” and “kingdom.” In both contexts, only Elohim (God the Father) can set up kingdoms and change the times. Also, in the context of Daniel 2, Elohim must describe the Father because the Coming King (Jesus) is mentioned as a distinct figure in the vision, which describes the Rock cut out without hands (Christ) by whom the “God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Dan 2:44). Further, in both contexts the Father has the right to do so “*by His own authority*” (emphasis added; Acts 1:7; Dan 2:20-21; see 1 Tim 6:15).

Further confirmation of the ultimate authority of the Father is the present session of the Lord. When he returns to heaven, the Father seats him “at the right hand of God,” “the Mighty God” or “the Father” (e.g., Col 3:1; Lk 22:69; 1 Pet 3:22), or “of the Majesty in heaven” (Heb 8:1, see 12:2), using terminology gleaned from Psalm 110:1: “YHWH said to my Lord-Adoni, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Clearly “God, the Father,” here YHWH, has the final authority as the “One who put everything under Him” (1 Cor 15:24a, 27c, my trans.). Then, most fascinating of all, this *sole* Patri-leadership pattern continues into the Apocalypse. The Father *gave* the Revelation to the Son, who, in turn as the Commander of the heavenly armies, sent his angel to show it to John: “The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God

[the Father] gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John” (Rev 1:1).

Last, and this is a very strong statement, the following-leading relationship will continue into the everlasting future ages. Again using language gleaned from Psalms 110, and the pattern is similar in the other key enthronement Psalm (Ps 2), Paul says that Jesus must continue reigning with the Father’s grant of authority (cf. Jn 17:2; Mt 28:17-20) *until* every enemy, the last being death, is totally conquered. Then he gives the whole bought-and-won universe back to his Father, “God himself,” so that the Son himself “will be made [again] subject to the Father that he, the God [ὁ Θεός] – the definite article is significant – would be all in all, *falsifying* the Social Arian narrative by contextually affirming his leading role in the triune community.

What the following passage implies, certainly, has been a matter of ancient discussion. But what is clear is that the Father is the Leader, the Authority, the Majesty and that the Son shares it with him:

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28 NIV).

Last, the Lord Jesus calls God, his God, and the Father, his Father analogous to how we call upon him as God and Father. Yet, uniquely and distinctly different from our relationship with him. He said to Mary in the Garden of the Tomb: “Do not cling to Me ... for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and tell My brothers, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God’” (Jn 20:17 BSB). Yet paradoxically, but wonderfully, the Father turns around in Psalm 45:6-7 and 102:25-27 (cited in Heb 1:8-12) and also calls the Son Creator, everlasting Ruler-God (ὁ Θεός, ho Theos) and Lord (κύριος, kurios). The NT authors use the title kurios very often to apply to Jesus in OT passages they quote. In addition, since kurios translates the divine Name YHWH, they mean he is *equal* in divinity to God (the Father) and “shares his unique divine identity,” again to use Richard Bauckham’s terms (see e.g., Php 2:7; Rom 10:11-12).

As a result, the Latin church recognized the oneness of Being between the Father and the Son by continually citing “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30) and “these three are one” from the Vulgate (1 Jn 5:7-8). The two equal sharers of mutual divinity give each other mutual praise and glory because, as our Lord prays, “Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed” (Jn 17:5). Yet this “oneness” is true unity and real diversity of following and leading. The human community “in me,” the Lord prays, should “be a single community corresponding to the uniqueness of the one God in which he and his Father are united (Jn 17:11, 22; Bauckham 2008, 105).

Certainly there is no absolute interchangeable equality in just human communities because they reflect analogously the unity and diversity of the Father’s single Being. Equality of value, importance, and human dignity, for example, between magistrate and citizens, parents and their children, husband and wife, elder and members does not obviate their differences in authority-

role. Humans are equal under the same-single standard of divine justice but not equal in interchangeable person and authority roles (Rom 2:6-16; Ex 12:49; Lev 24:22; Num 9:14, 15:15-16; Dt 1:16). Any other schema is social revolutionary, often rejecting with violence any roles that include followers and leaders, wealthy and poor distinctions, and even created male and female functions, as subsequent articles shall demonstrate.

In summary of the biblical evidence, in all of the mutual operations of the Three, all of which occurred in a long time line starting before the Creation until Christ's final victorious presentation of the re-conquered universe to his Father, God the Father always and everywhere led and the Son followed. God, the Father, "put all things under [the Theanthropic Messiah's] feet: "For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his [Christ's] authority [feet]." (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God [the Father] himself, who gave Christ his authority)" (1 Cor 15:27 NLT). God, the Father was exempt, of course, from the Messiah's authority so that after the victory presentation, he *once again* becomes "all in all": "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:23). This referent is unmistakably and undeniably clear. The Father, as Leader of the Three, subjected all things to the Son before the Creation as we have seen. He subjected nature, demons, sickness, and gravity to the Son in the Incarnation, in practice. Last, he subjects all things to the Son until the Last Judgment at which time he takes up the "all in all" status as Supreme leader after that Final Judgment.

Therefore, preliminarily, would it not be a correct logical deduction to teach that the Father was the leader of the Triune community before the covenant of redemption as well? Part II of this article will consider one more set of biblical data before reaching a final conclusion and application.

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## 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.