Global Missiology

Current Issue

Vol. 18 No. 2 (2021): April - Digital Media and Missions

Published: 2021-04-22

Issue Editorial

Navigating the Inescapable: Christian Missions and Digital Media

Ruslan Zagidulin

DOCX PDF HTML

Featured Articles

Technology as a Modern-Day Tower of Babel: The Garden of Eden as an Alternative Vision for Missionally Engaging a Media-Saturated Culture

Daniel Topf

DOCX PDF HTML

Digi-Learning: Accelerating Theological Training and Leader Development during COVID-19 – A Leadership Laboratory

Joseph W. Handley, Jr.

DOCX PDF HTML

Media Engagement beyond the Coronavirus

Rudolf Kabutz and Lars Dahle

DOCX PDF HTML

Contextualization

Conversion or Proselytization? Being Maasai, Becoming Christian

Joshua Robert Barron

DOCX PDF HTML

Missiological Paradigm

God's Plan for the Fullness of Time: Overhauling Ralph Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" Models (Part II)

J. Nelson Jennings

DOCX PDF HTML

Indigenous People's Wisdom and the Church's Mission of Caring for the Earth: Towards Integral Ecology

Chito M. Sawit

DOCX PDF HTML

Special Issue

Call for Papers for January 2022 Special Issue: "Kingdom Movements"

GME Editorial Team

DOCX PDF HTML

Review & Preview

Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, eds., Honor, Shame, and the Gospel: Reframing our Message and Ministry

Mano Emmanuel

DOCX PDF HTML

Jonas Kurlberg and Peter M. Phillips, eds., Missio Dei in a Digital Age

Melody Li

DOCX PDF HTML

View All Issues >

Platform &
workflow by
OJS / PKP

Guest Editorial

Navigating the Inescapable: Christian Missions and Digital Media

Ruslan Zagidulin

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

The Internet and other forms of electronic media have spread beyond news and entertainment into becoming a daily reality in almost all spheres of life. This expansion of digital media began almost unnoticed at first, but now almost everyone acknowledges—if not incessantly participates in—the world of digital media. Even those churches who once could afford to escape or ignore social media life in previous decades can no longer neglect it, particularly as they have found themselves limited in social interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital media might now be considered as an unescapable reality of any church's life.

Even so, history instructs us how Christians have reacted differently regarding how to use and participate in technological developments of their day. In the ancient Roman Empire, roads were used by first Christians for sharing and spreading the Gospel. It is easy to draw parallels between those technologically constructed Roman roads to today's digital media as channels of Christian mission efforts. However, some Christian churches, organizations, and individuals are pessimistic and react negatively to using electronic media. Those who take a more optimistic approach urge cautious Christians to discover more information about digital media. There are various Christian perspectives that help others learn about not only threats and dangers but also the blessings and opportunities of social media life and Internet outreach. In turn, an optimistic and proactive Christian approach to media use should also be aware of the limits and far-reaching consequences of the digital side of human life.

This issue of *Global Missiology* devotes special attention to how Christian missions and digital media intersect. In-depth analyses, case study examples, and practical suggestions can be found here in the several articles by experienced authors. Along with the other contributions, this issue offers much that is constructive, inspiring, and thought-provoking. Our editorial team is grateful to offer this special issue for your use and enjoyment.

Technology as a Modern-Day Tower of Babel: The Garden of Eden as an Alternative Vision for Missionally Engaging a Media-Saturated Culture

Daniel Topf

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Abstract

This article highlights some of the limitations of using digital media in the context of ministry and missions. Tech companies like Google and Facebook lead to the concentration of wealth and power and as such can be compared to the Tower of Babel described in Genesis 11. Rather than simply contributing to these powerful systems in an uncritical way, Christians should look for an alternative system based on the Garden of Eden—one that emphasizes shalomic relationships with God, the environment, and other people.

Key Words: concentration of wealth, monopolization of information, shalomic relationships, technology companies

Introduction

The opportunities modern information technology (IT) offers for spreading the gospel message and for promoting missions seem virtually limitless. Personally, I benefit from using digital media in my work as a regional representative and mobilizer for the global sending agency World Team. Applications like Skype, Zoom, and WhatsApp enable me to interact with missionaries, colleagues, and applicants all over the world. Being able to connect with people without having to drive or fly to their locations makes my ministry easier, and in times of COVID-19 these communication tools have even become a necessity as international travel has become increasingly difficult.

These introductory lines should be understood provisorily, insofar as this article is not intended to be an unhealthy and unhelpful expression of technophobia. There are many benefits that digital media can bring about. Nonetheless, this article develops a theological and missiological argument highlighting the limitations of digital media by contrasting the accounts of the Tower of Babel and the Garden of Eden. Today's tech companies operate within the former model as they strive to concentrate the data of all humankind within their (profit-driven) systems. Rather than simply contributing to these structures in an uncritical manner, this analysis proposes that believers ought to offer a prophetic alternative to the media-saturated culture of our time by highlighting concepts found in the Garden of Eden—such as an embodied existence in which people enjoy unmediated relationships with God, each other, and the environment.

The article first describes three ways in which modern technologies resemble the Tower of Babel. (1) Digital technologies have led to the concentration of vast amounts of wealth, considering that tech companies are among the most valuable corporations in the world today. (2) These same companies are also advancing the monopolization of information, as they control tools like search engines and social media platforms. (3) While IT is bringing people closer together, it also divides humanity into new subgroups, as people retreat into echo chambers they create for themselves within cyberspace. After critiquing technology as a modern-day Tower of Babel in this manner, the article's constructive, fourth and final section draws on the Garden of Eden as a

counter-cultural model that engages the world missionally by encouraging a tangible encounter with the living God.

Digital Technologies and the Concentration of Wealth

The first way that digital technologies resemble a modern-day Tower of Babel is because they accumulate vast amounts of wealth in the hands of a few corporations and individuals. Companies like Amazon, Apple, and Alphabet (the parent company of Google) are now among the largest companies in the United States in terms of revenue. Globally, some of the largest corporations continue to be in the energy sector, such as Sinopec Group (from China), Royal Dutch Shell (from the Netherlands/United Kingdom), and Saudi Aramco (from Saudi-Arabia). Nonetheless, the influence of the technology sector is growing worldwide, a trend that is especially visible in China where tech companies like Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu are increasingly making headlines (Fortune Global 500 n.d.).

This growth of tech companies is even more remarkable when put into historical perspective. As the overview below (Table 1) demonstrates, the largest US company by revenue in 1960 was the car manufacturer General Motors (GM), followed by the oil multinational Exxon Mobil (Fortune 500 Archive n.d.). Thirty years later, in 1990, the ranking was still dominated by automobile and oil companies (notably GM, Ford, and Exxon Mobil). However, by 1990 a significant change had occurred. While GM was still occupying the first spot, an IT company appeared in the top five as well: the computer manufacturer International Business Machines (IBM). The situation has dramatically changed since then. By 2020, no car manufacturer was in the top ten of Fortune 500 companies anymore (Ford was #12 and GM #18), and the online retailer Amazon (#2) created more revenue than the oil giant Exxon Mobil (#3).

Table 1. The Largest Fortune 500 Companies in 1960, 1990, and 2020

Ranking	*1960*	*1990*	*2020*
1	General Motors	General Motors	Walmart
2	Exxon Mobil	Ford Motor	Amazon
3	Ford Motor	Exxon Mobil	Exxon Mobil
4	General Electric	IBM	Apple
5	US Steel	General Electric	CVS Health

When looking at market capitalization (rather than revenue) the dominance of tech giants is even more obvious. In previous decades, there was a wide variety of US companies that the stock market determined were the most valuable. Among these were car manufacturers and oil companies but also telecommunication and pharmaceutical firms (like AT&T and Pfizer). However, in recent years tech companies have begun to dominate the scene so much that, in 2020, all the top five corporations by market capitalization in the United States (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Alphabet, and Facebook) belonged to the same industry (Dogs of the Dow 2020).

That a company like Alphabet creates more revenue (and is much more profitable) than the largest car manufacturer in the US seems counterintuitive—after all, are not many of the services that Google, for example, provides free of charge? From an economist's point of view there is, of course, no such thing as a "free" service or product; in fact, one of the fundamental principles of economics is that "there is no such thing as a free lunch" (Smith 2008, 137). Many tech companies

create revenues through their advertising, and consumers using Google or Facebook give these corporations something that is arguably more valuable (and certainly more sensitive) than their money: their personal data (Carr 2020, 160). Given this business model, it is worth highlighting that "data is the new oil of the digital economy" (Toonders 2014; Bridle 2019, 245–47). Some 200 years ago, oil was a largely underutilized resource that seemed of little worth. However, oil soon became a highly valued commodity, creating unimaginable wealth for individuals like John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), as oil became the lifeline of modern economies, reshaping the socio-economic and geo-strategic realities of entire societies.

Oil brought many benefits to the nations that were industrializing: new modes of transport (like the automobile) became available, convenient chemical products (such as plastic) were developed, and houses could be heated without having to rely on burning wood or coal. Christians in the West benefited from these developments just like the rest of their surrounding populations did; moreover, those Christians interested in global missions were especially excited that novel technologies (like airplanes) could now be used to reach even the remotest parts of the globe relatively quickly. However, like all technological progress, these developments brought about new challenges, such as an unprecedented pollution of the environment (Slimbach 2010, 186). By and large, Christians participated in these polluting activities without giving much thought to themes like creation care and the sustainable use of limited resources.

In fact, particularly in the United States, many Evangelicals aligned themselves with the oil industry. As Darren Dochuk, the author of *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America* (2019), explains in an interview:

> Many oil executives were outspoken evangelicals who saw their business and service to the church as one vocation. Meanwhile, countless geologists, drillers, and roughnecks worked the oil fields with strong adherence to the Bible and a conviction that Christian principles informed their labors. So yes, I'd claim that there has always been a special affinity for the oil business among evangelicals (Kidd 2019).

As it turns out, some of the most beloved names and institutions within evangelicalism were closely connected to the US oil industry, including Billy Graham (1918–2018), who received financial and political support from the Rockefeller family for his famous revival meetings in New York City; the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola), which was built with money from Lyman Stewart (1840–1923), the cofounder of Union Oil; and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), which received substantial funds for its campaigns from J. Howard Pew (1882–1971), the president of Sun Oil Company (Dochuk 2019, 246, 336, 364, 367).

Given that data is the new oil in the twenty-first century, US Evangelicals aligning themselves with big data companies resembles their alignment with big oil in the 1960s. Can believers then, with a clear conscience, use the digital media applications that are so seductively convenient and popular? Perhaps so, but engaging these technologies should not be done in a careless manner. Rather, Christians need to think through the theological and missiological implications of all they do, examining their use of technology within the metanarrative of Scripture that tells of creation, fall, and redemption.

It is essential that Christ-followers begin by recognizing the sinful dimensions of big tech and big data, using discernment and critical distance rather than merely contributing to the growth of this behemoth (Heidebrecht 2014, xviii, 69–71, 114). Since God is sovereign, none of the

technological innovations of our time are a surprise to Him, and the Lord can certainly use these tools to advance the cause of the gospel. Nonetheless, "acknowledging that technological developments ... are within God's providence does not mean that we are excused from exercising judgment in weighing both the benefits and costs of such developments. Nor are missionaries and other mission participants exempt from responsibly using—or rejecting—such developments" (Jennings 2020). The recent advances in transportation and telecommunication have created "all kinds of related missions opportunities and challenges," and this ambiguity therefore necessitates "the responsibility to act wisely, ethically, zealously, effectively, efficiently, and carefully" with regards to these technological developments (Jennings 2020).

The Monopolization of Information

Whenever vast amounts of wealth are accumulated in one place or person, there are negative side effects, such as political corruption and the creation of (de facto) monopolies. In the United States, for example, the lobbying industry is a major factor in the political decision-making process. Pharmaceuticals, electronics manufacturing, and insurance are among the largest industries that try to influence Congress by channeling hundreds of millions of dollars toward lobbying efforts (Table 2). In 2009, the oil and gas industry was the second-largest contributor, spending over 175 million US dollars (OpenSecrets.org 2020). However, ten years later (in 2019) this number had substantially decreased (to around 125 million US dollars). In contrast, contributions by internet companies had increased sharply, so much so that in 2019 this industry spent more money on lobbying than did the automotive industry (74 million versus 70 million US dollars).

Table 2. Lobbying Spending Expenditures in 2009 and 2019

	Industry	*2009*	*2019*	*Change in %*
1	Pharmaceuticals/Health	$270.8 million	$298.8 million	+ 10.3%
2	Electronics Manufacturing	$130.5 million	$157.0 million	+ 20.3%
3	Insurance	$167.3 million	$155.7 million	- 6.9%
4	Oil & Gas	$175.5 million	$125.8 million	- 28.3%
(…)	(…)	(…)	(…)	(…)
18	Internet	$15.9 million	$74.3 million	+ 367.3%
19	Automotive	$60.2 million	$70.0 million	+ 16.3%

Crony capitalism is always a problem, no matter what industry—but it is especially problematic in the technology sector. After all, tech companies deal with information, and the free flow of information is vital for the functioning of democracy and the curbing of political power. Companies like Facebook, YouTube (a Google subsidiary), and Twitter are platforms through which everyday people can share their content with millions of users. These platforms are largely committed to free speech, but occasionally they also engage in self-censorship, thereby creating their own set of controversies (Briefing 2020).

In addition, tech giants and billionaires have also begun to control traditional media, such as newspapers. Arguably, two of the most prominent and respected newspapers in the United States are *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. For example, *The New York Times* "has won 130 Pulitzer Prizes, far more than any other news organization," and *The Washington Post* made history in 1972 when it uncovered the Watergate scandal, which ultimately led to the resignation of Richard Nixon as the 37th president of the United States (1969–1974) (*The New York Times*

2020). However, *The Washington Post* is now owned by Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon and (at the time of writing) reportedly the world's wealthiest individual, who bought the newspaper in 2013. *The New York Times,* on the other hand, is a publicly listed company and in that sense has many owners. However, its largest shareholder is Carlos Slim, a Mexican investor in telecommunications, who in 2008 was ranked by *Forbes* magazine as the second-richest person in the world—the same year that Slim also began purchasing shares of *The New York Times* (Duncan and Goddard 2018, 128).

Clearly a massive concentration of power and wealth is taking place within a relatively small number of tech corporations. Not only are the companies of Silicon Valley among the richest organizations in the world, but they are also increasingly buying political influence and monopolizing the availability of information (Carr 2020, 226). Furthermore, the influence of these companies reaches far beyond their home countries. Facebook, for instance, had over 2.7 billion users in 2020; since there are only around 330 million Americans, this means that the vast majority of Facebook users are located outside the United States. In exercising this kind of global influence, these tech giants resemble the Tower of Babel described in Genesis 11, which was an attempt by ambitious humans to create a unifying center within their society. Since, in Scripture, Babel is an expression of a worldly system that opposes the purposes of God, Christians have to ask themselves to what extent they want to contribute to this system by consuming the products and services it so enticingly offers (Hauerwas 2007, 71).

Concentration or Dispersion?

Since tech companies are amassing so much wealth and information, one might think that they could become a new cultural center that provides a sense of unity for humanity. A tower is something that people can look up to and in doing so they all gaze in one direction—which today means gazing downward at hand-held devices. However, just as the people who built the Tower of Babel were also dispersed and divided into different languages (Gen. 11:6–9), so the modern-day Babylonic towers of digital media are becoming symbols of both concentration and dispersion. As highlighted above, they are tools of concentration in terms of economic and political power. However, because digital media offers such a vast array of niche opinions, a dispersion is taking place at the same time.

In the now almost foregone age of newspapers and television, people living within a particular country could still largely agree on what credible journalism was and what the main news stories and opinions of the day were. Today, anyone with a smartphone can become a journalist and broadcast his or her point of view on YouTube, potentially reaching an audience of millions without ever having to go through an editorial process. Increasingly, people are receiving their news through their Facebook feed, which, powered by artificially intelligent algorithms, quite literally feeds them only what they want to see and hear, thereby reinforcing what they already believe.

Ironically, in a time when information is abundant as never before, misinformation abounds. News media that formerly were considered reliable now get labeled by some as "fake news," and for many it has become simply a matter of political preference to distinguish between trustworthy and misleading media. Elections are sabotaged through misinformation campaigns, some foreign and some domestic, thereby putting one of the most essential elements of a functioning democracy at risk. While all this is happening, people are talking less and less to each other; enough entertainment is being provided through the echo chambers people can carve out for themselves

within the vast array of digital media that is available to them. In such an environment, without a unifying center societies are dividing into various subgroups—a development that has become particularly obvious in the United States, where many of the world's most influential tech companies' headquarters are located (Pontifical Council for Social Communication 2020, 182–84).

Granted, there are also advantages to having such large numbers of channels through which information can be dispersed in the digital age. Minority opinions that had no platform before can now be heard and discussed. Christians have the opportunity to communicate the gospel on a global platform; much was achieved in this regard in the twentieth century through radio and television, and it looks like even more will be accomplished in this century through the internet. In some ways, people who have access to the internet are now closer together than ever, since they are (at least potentially) just one click away from interacting with each other. However, believers eager to use these tools would do well to remember this wise insight by a Christian author who writes: "Technology, which does so much to close the distance, also enables much of the distance in our lives" (Crouch 2017, 198).

As the subtitle of Andy Crouch's book explains, his goal is to suggest *everyday steps for putting technology in its proper place*. Such an intentional and discerning handling of technology is vital because digital media like Skype and Zoom have benefits as well as limitations. As Crouch reminds us, "even the highest quality Skype connection is not enough for the really important moments in human life" (Crouch 2017, 198). As many have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the limitations of technology become especially obvious during the most significant occasions in a person's lifecycle, for example: "Although many couples cherish the video recording of their wedding, no one should aspire to be married by video" (Crouch 2017, 200). For funerals as well, under normal circumstances it would be unthinkable simply to witness the funeral of a good friend or family member via Zoom.

Ministers and missionaries should be pastors to people, and this task requires having personal interactions with them and showing up for important events in their lives. A minister is a shepherd who spends day and night with the sheep entrusted to them, not a delivery driver that simply drops a package of information in somebody's mailbox (figuratively speaking) and then moves on to the next assignment. After going through a process of discernment, Christians may be able to use digital tools for the mission of God and to the glory of God. However, simply sending out mass emails or pointing people to a particular website is no substitute for ministry. Both shepherding people and fishing for people are hands-on kinds of work. Rather than succumbing to the anonymous accumulation of data that the Tower of Babel provides, believers should look for an alternative biblical image that more accurately reflects what ministry and missions are all about—such as turning to the Garden of Eden as an ideal that demonstrates the kind of life God intended all humans to have in the first place.

The Garden of Eden as an Alternative to the Tower of Babel

At least initially, structures that resemble the Tower of Babel seem highly attractive as they represent power, wealth, and human ingenuity. However, these human structures and inventions ultimately fall short, and this will also be the case for technological innovations in the realm of IT and digital media. As Derek C. Schuurman reminds us:

> The disciplines of computer science and engineering do offer wisdom, which provides one type of knowing about the world, one that can be incredibly powerful. But this wisdom becomes folly when it is used to explain and control all of reality. Eventually this can lead to a 'tower-of-Babel' culture where people replace their need for God with a reliance on the possibilities of modern technology. This results in *technicism*, a trust in technology as savior of the human condition. This is essentially idolatry: exchanging the creator for something in creation. But idols do not deliver on their promises (Schuurman 2019, 218).

Since idols like big tech cannot deliver on their promises, it is essential for mission-minded Christians to offer an alternative to a world that thirsts to have life, and to have it abundantly.

Instead of succumbing to the concentration of wealth, information, and power that characterizes the modern-day Tower of Babel, this article proposes the Garden of Eden as an alternative model for life: one in which tangible relationships with God, people, and nature come first. In the Garden of Eden, humans (as represented by Adam and Eve) had unmediated access to the Creator of heaven and earth. As recorded in Genesis 2 and 3, God was walking in the garden, in the cool of the evening, and Adam and Eve were able to talk directly with their Creator.

As God is in the process of restoring all things through Christ, it is the task of the Church to invite people to have such a direct connection with their Creator once more, to recover what was lost in Eden. Simply pointing people to watch a Christian video or to click through a website with theological content will not suffice. As Bill Johnson, the senior pastor of the influential Bethel Church in Redding, California, emphasizes: "We owe people an encounter with God" (Johnson 2015, 192). Rather than using digital media to create narratives about God, the essential missionary work consists of leading people toward an encounter with the living God that becomes tangible through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Besides being able to walk and talk with God in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were also able to relate to each other in love. Before the fall they lived sinless lives, without fear or shame, thereby experiencing a depth and purity in their relationship that no other human has known since then. Considering the creation mandate given in Genesis 1:27–28 to multiply and fill the earth, this relationship included the joys of marital intimacy and having children. In contrast, in this current age of digital media countless people experience sex through the various offers made through internet pornography, rather than through an actual physical encounter. In the years ahead, this flight into technology-mediated experiences may become even more prevalent and problematic due to the increasing usage of sex robots (Herzfeld 2017, 91–102).

In such a milieu of virtual lifestyles, Christians need to propose a prophetic alternative that promotes the value of traditional marriage, raising children, and other committed relationships based on face-to-face interactions. Sexual intercourse between husband and wife, a mother breastfeeding her infant, a group of friends hugging each other—these kinds of embodied practices are profound expressions of what it means to be human and must not be replaced by digital experiences, no matter how fascinating they might seem at first. After all, "any sort of mediated presence is the palest shadow of what it is like to be with another person in person—that is, present in the fullness of what our bodies make possible" (Crouch 2017, 199).

Besides providing tangible relationships with God and other people, the Garden of Eden also invites humans to interact with their environment, with the soil, the plants, and the animals that God has created. Digital experiences are no substitute for planting a garden or taking care of

animals, and caring for creation should be part of the gospel message that we proclaim as Christians. Given the increasing urbanization throughout the world today, it may become more and more difficult for people to live in an environment that resembles the Garden of Eden. However, the biblical narrative provides hope in this respect as well, considering that the New Jerusalem portrayed in Revelation is a gigantic city—but one that has a river at its center, as well as trees (specifically, a double portion of the tree of life, Rev. 22:1–2). Inspired by this vision, missional expressions in the twenty-first century may include initiatives to clean up the air and water that is available in our cities and to create an abundance of green spaces, whether in the form of parks, rooftops gardens, or green areas that are integrated on every floor of newly developed skyscrapers.

To summarize, the Garden of Eden represents God's original intention for creation to flourish within the holistic concept of *shalom*, thereby standing in contrast to the false hopes people placed in the Tower of Babel. "In the Old Testament poetic and prophetic literature, shalom is used to indicate an earthly order where justice and delight mark all of one's relationships: with God, with self, with others, with nature" (Slimbach 2010, 197). Digital media can play a role in achieving these rich relationships, but only as people intentionally place technological tools under God's sanctifying and redemptive rule. Ministers and missionaries need to remember that humans are embodied creatures who long for tangible and restored relationships with God, others, and creation. To facilitate this kind of shalomic environment is therefore the crucial missionary task of the twenty-first century.

References

Bridle, James (2019). *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*. London: Verso.

Briefing (2020). "Social Media's Struggle with Self-Censorship" *The Economist*, October 22, https://www.economist.com/briefing/2020/10/22/social-medias-struggle-with-self-censorship (accessed March 12, 2021).

Carr, Nicholas (2020). *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. Rev. ed. New York: W. W. Norton.

Crouch, Andy (2017). *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Dochuk, Darren (2019). *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America*. New York: Basic Books.

Dogs of the Dow (2020). "Largest Companies by Market Cap Today" *Dogs of the Dow* website, https://www.dogsofthedow.com/largest-companies-by-market-cap.htm (accessed March 12, 2021).

Duncan, Russell, and Goddard, Joseph (2018). *Contemporary United States: An Age of Anger and Resistance*. 5th ed. London: Red Globe Press.

Fortune Global 500 (n.d.). "Global 500: 2020" *Fortune* website, https://fortune.com/global500/2020/search/?fg500_revenues=desc (accessed March 12, 2021).

Fortune 500 Archive (n.d.). "A Database of 50 Years of Fortune's List of America's Largest Corporations" *Fortune 500* website,

https://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500_archive/full/1960/ (accessed March 12, 2021).

Hauerwas, Stanley (2007). *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Heidebrecht, Paul C. (2014). *Beyond the Cutting Edge? Yoder, Technology, and the Practices of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.

Herzfeld, Noreen (2017). "Religious Perspectives on Sex with Robots," in John Danaher and Neil McArthur, eds., *Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 91-102.

Jennings, J. Nelson (2020). "Amazed and Perplexed #3: God's Plan and Foreknowledge" *Global Missiology* e-journal 2, no. 17 (January), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2306 (accessed March 24, 2021).

Johnson, Bill (2015). *The Power that Changes the World: Creating Eternal Impact in the Here and Now*. Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books.

Kidd, Thomas (2019). "Anointed with Oil: Evangelicals and the Petroleum Industry" *TGC* website, July 16, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/anointed-oil-evangelicals-petroleum-industry/ (accessed March 12, 2021).

OpenSecrets.org (2020). "Trends in Spending" The Center for Responsive Politics, https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/trends-in-spending?var1=2009&var2=2019 (accessed March 12, 2021).

Pontifical Council for Social Communications, The Vatican (2020). "Ethics in Internet" *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 32, no. 1–2: 179–92.

Schuurman, Derek C. (2019). "Seeking Wisdom in Engineering and Computer Science," in Edward P. Meadors, ed., *Where Wisdom May Be Found: The Eternal Purpose of Christian Higher Education*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 214-216.

Slimbach, Richard (2010). "Learning from Slums: Study and Service in Solidarity with the World's Urban Poor," in Ronald J. Morgan and Cynthia Toms Smedley, eds., *Transformations at the Edge of the World: Forming Global Christians through the Study Abroad Experience*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 185-202.

Smith, David (2008). *Free Lunch: Easily Digestible Economics, Served on a Plate*. London: Profile Books.

The New York Times (2020). "The New York Times Wins Three 2020 Pulitzer Prizes, in International Reporting, Investigative Reporting and Commentary" *The New York Times*, May 4, available online at https://www.nytco.com/press/the-new-york-times-wins-three-2020-pulitzer-prizes-in-international-reporting-investigative-reporting-and-commentary/ (accessed March 12, 2021).

Toonders, Joris (2014). “Data Is the New Oil of the Digital Economy” *Wired* website, https://www.wired.com/insights/2014/07/data-new-oil-digital-economy/ (accessed March 12, 2021).

Digi-Learning: Accelerating Theological Training and Leader Development during COVID-19 – A Leadership Laboratory

Joseph W. Handley, Jr.

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Abstract

As the world changes, the shape of leader development and theological education is in flux and needing to pivot with the times. COVID-19 accelerated several key aspects of these changes, especially thrusting Bible schools, seminaries, and training institutes into the digital world. This article serves as a laboratory sharing insights from a few ministries into how they have navigated these shifts. Hopefully this study will also catalyze further learning for the author and readers alike.

Key Words: Asian Access, digi-learning, John Wesley, leader development, microchurch planting

Introduction

"Theological education in the 21st century is on a hunt…. Amidst declining church memberships, adequately prepared students are becoming more and more scarce. Resources are also scarce to fund education that is appropriate for the changing cultural landscapes" (Moon 2016, ii). The background behind this analysis was the need for new forms of training in the current era, with particular attention to oral learning. In 2017 I was invited to respond to a presentation by Russell West entitled, "The Re-Eventing of Theological Education: Toward a Pedagogy of Leadership Formation in the *Verbomoteur* Mode" (West 2014, 106-120). Asian Access, which I serve as President, along with several other non-formal theological training groups had previously been invited to another forum between formal and non-formal theological educators trying to discern a better way forward for theological training given the challenges to which Moon referred above.

To gain a better appreciation of the need for partnership, see how Ashish Chrispal underscores a critical issue: "The real danger we face in evangelical theological education today is that it is being overtaken by academia, without the vision for mission and ministry" (Chrispal 2019, 6). Later he emphasizes, "We need a two-pronged approach, which comprises both formal and non-formal theological education, with the main focus on the majority world's contextually nuanced styles of learning" (Chrispal 2019, 8). The book with West's article above, *Orality and Theological Training in the 21st Century* (Moon 2016), was prescient in that it was published as a Digi-book: "The Digi-book provides a unique platform that is amenable to the 21st century digit-oral learner by providing embedded videos and blogs in order to create a rich learning community through the shared story. Initial research with the Digi-Book prototype have resulted in high acclaim" (Moon 2016, ii). Little did we know how important new forms of training would become!

Leadership Lab

Asian Access, along with other groups like visionSynergy, Eagles Communications, META, and Scriptures in Use, were ahead of the curve for training oral preference learners (Handley 2014; 2015). While most of our participants are literate, by and large their learning modality is oral rather than literary. We incorporate deep communal learning experiences along with story, play, short lecture, and interactive Socratic-style discussion.

Prior to COVID-19 we were pursuing the implementation of a digital platform, knowing that

future learners would be more digitally adept and that certain situations where the church is under pressure or persecution might require this type of approach if our normal gatherings were less feasible. Restrictions on in-person gatherings accelerated with the spread of COVID-19, and we were forced to shift to a completely digital mode of learning. However, this shift proved challenging, as different generations react in various ways to using and adapting to new forms of communication (Vijayam n.d.).

This article will outline the steps we have taken as a laboratory and as a catalyst for further reflection.

Two years ago, Asian Access launched a new initiative called Pan-Asia Leader Development in which we experimented with a platform called Gnowbe (Gnowbe 2021). Gnowbe is an electronic platform allowing users to design their own learning experiences, providing content (audio, video, and written materials) along with interactive chat rooms for discussions. In personal correspondence, Hikari Suzuki, one of the participants, suggested:

> Gnowbe has been a great help for this training. Before the beginning, the significance and content of the training were confirmed using Gnowbe, and participants could get to know each other, which motivated them. It is also useful as a place where the participants can organize and output what they have input during their training. In addition, we can upload the digest of the training as a video, so the participants can repeatedly check the learning and establish it. The trainees are also younger generations, so it's great to be able to use them on a smartphone (Suzuki 2020).

Acceleration to Digi-Learning

We also conducted a pilot project recording several sessions with one of our lead faculty members at a church in California to begin the process, but we had yet to deploy that resource beyond a few selected viewers before COVID-19 came along.

During the COVID-19 season I began interviewing most of our national directors to see what was happening, and the learning about digital technology and digi-learning was immense. One of the first interviews was with Pastor Joshua Hari, Asian Access/Japan National Director, who was impacted months prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. His church in the greater Tokyo area was forced into a new reality when their landlord did not renew their lease. As they were searching for a new building, they started meeting in community centers—and then COVID-19 changed everything. But as Pastor Hari testifies in a recent interview, these changes were just preparation for a future reality (Hari 2020). He was wondering how Japan could possibly reach the vision set in 2014 at the Vision Festa event, and later shared more broadly at the 6th Japan Evangelism Congress in 2016, to plant 50,000 churches (Mehn 2017, 158-159). As his church was forced to employ Facebook Live and meet in homes, he saw with a new set of eyes how God was preparing his church for accelerated church multiplication. Now, instead of just having three or four active church plants from his home church in Toda city, Pastor Hari envisions each of the 20 homes hosting their services online as possible church plants. Today, he and his team are actively equipping these homes, preparing them for the possibility of becoming church plants someday. They record the Facebook Live video ahead of time and utilize Zoom calls on Sunday mornings, with each of the 20 homes as an equipping time to both worship together and prepare potential house church leaders.

In another call, a leader from one of the largest countries in the world (which cannot be named for security reasons) told me that Christians are seeing a *kairos*-like moment in their country. In early February 2020, right after the initial news of the COVID-19 outbreak, he set up a video call for pastors in their nation. He thought they might get six or seven leaders to join the call, but he was astonished to have over 20 pastors on that first call. When I interviewed him, 800 pastors were gathering every week via these video calls on a weeknight and another 500 pastors meeting weekly during the weekday as well. He said, "We have never seen anything like this." These gatherings involved just the pastors, and each of them represents large church networks that are operating in a similar fashion. These networks have quickly converted to meeting in these digital spaces for church services and leadership training (Anonymous Pastor a 2020).

Following this call, I spoke with Pastor Juserdi Purba from Indonesia. His church is also meeting via Facebook Live for their main services, but weekly he posts and interacts with his congregation using InstaGram. He posts daily short videos and interacts with his young congregation via text messages and sharing posts (Purba 2020).

My colleague Chinzorig Jigjudursen from Mongolia has been discipling leaders online for over five years, since well before COVID-19. His family left Ulan Bator several years ago because his wife took a position in a Japanese university. Since then he has been coaching from afar via Facebook Messenger and other digital platforms. Today he is equipping Mongolians in several countries around the world using these technologies and, while doing so, seeing each mentoring relationship as potentially fostering a new house church (Jigjudursen 2020).

A Microchurch Movement

Herman Moldez from the Philippines and Adrian De Visser from Sri Lanka both believe God is using this unique sabbath season to forge a new form of church and a return to more organic, home-based models of church development (Moldez and De Visser 2020).

During my own personal devotions one day, I was reminded of John Wesley's work in England where he took the church to the streets and people mocked him (Jethani 2020). I pondered, could this new form of church become another Wesley-like revival today?

In further correspondence preparing for a global prayer gathering, Adrian De Visser shared, "Over the past few weeks, I was grappling with the Lord over the Corona virus, and feel led to believe that the Lord is resetting many buttons. One of the buttons God seems to be resetting is Church. I feel led to believe God is moving us from an organizational church structure to a home based Holy Spirit led movement" (De Visser 2020).

These types of movements some are now calling MicroChurch. Ralph Moore, founder of the Hope Chapel Movement, has been interviewing pastors using this form of church throughout the shelter-in-place pandemic season. In one interview he highlights a church from Houston that has multiplied rapidly using this digital format:

> Last week the podcast was an interview with Jason Shepperd who leads a network of hundreds of house churches centered around a weekly gathering in the Houston area. They've reduced church to its essentials. As a result, they're multiplying quickly and across America as well as overseas. Today's podcast is a follow-on to the first. It pinpoints the ability of a network of microchurches to adapt, evangelize and grow in the digital environment induced by COVID-19 (Moore 2020a).

In the interview, as well as in the series of podcasts, Ralph highlights the multiplication of microchurches that are forming (Moore 2020b). In another interview of Moore by Exponential, he describes how microchurches operate much like CRU campus Bible studies, but rather than stopping at just study they embody the body-life dynamic of Acts 2:41-47 (Moore 2020c).

There are many ways of describing these expressions of church, each having its own nuance. Examples include "simple churches" (Dale 2000), "fresh expressions" (Moynagh 2012), and "house churches" (Cole 2010). Some could even argue that at their most basic level these church expressions follow Disciple Making Movement principles (Lim 2008).

Lessons Learned

To be effective, however, this learning format requires significant internet bandwidth. Given this limitation, some participants must use lower-tech options in their networks. For instance, in Myanmar Pastor W connects with his colleagues via Viber. They send messages to one another and call each other. People are ingenious at finding ways to foster community when they are in lock-down or shelter-in-place conditions. One of his colleagues shared via a message, "We maintain our discipleship through phone, Viber and Facebook Messenger…. We are excited and full of expectancy for God's interventions in the future" (Anonymous Pastor b 2020).

Given the acceleration of these platforms, Asian Access had to pivot and pivot fast. We were not able to deploy the original full-scale plan to develop video curriculum with our faculty on location like the earlier-mentioned pilot project conducted at a church in California. Instead, we are now recording interviews via Zoom with some of our faculty, and recently we held our first new country opening completely on Zoom. (The country cannot be mentioned due to security concerns.) To enhance the learning, we sent our PowerPoint slides and speaker notes to the translators a day in advance to allow them time to prepare. The participants were overjoyed, sharing often how much they appreciated the connection, especially given the COVID-19 restrictions. In the midst of feeling lonely and somewhat abandoned by the world, this platform and training proved life-giving.

The learning experience of transitioning more to digi-learning has had other sides as well. Many participants had never used the technology before, and the culturally normative practice of placing more value on the event over the time schedule has proven complex. Unfortunately, using high-tech platforms inhibits being flexible with time schedules. Additionally, while with the Zoom-only country opening about 18 signed up for the cohort, the four days of gathering fluctuated between 10-15 participants each day. Moreover, the numbers faded throughout each day's session. Bandwidth was one problem, but the larger issue seemed to be reliable electricity simply to have access.

Digi-learning sessions require a great deal of patience, too, as it is best not to have everyone sharing at the same time. When one is used to "anybody can ask a question," which is our Asian Access style (typically very interactive), the introduction of technology creates new problems. What might seem to be a simple interruption when together in person becomes a major source of confusion with several talking over one another online. We have done our best to have everyone mute themselves and try to take turns interacting with the faculty member. Even those of us teaching had to downsize our lessons into more accessible formats (moving from an average of 40 minutes of sharing down to 20). We were able to use breakout rooms to have small group interaction, but it was clear that the format was not ideal. People long to be in the same room

interacting face-to-face. That said, given the situation we faced, everyone was elated to be participating.

Each 20-minute segment turned into at least 30 minutes of sharing, because translation was a factor we had not anticipated. While everyone on the call could speak and understand English, the interaction still needed some translation from time to time. From this experience, we would advise a strong translator be available and work in concert with the presenters ahead of time. After the first day, take time to prepare. Experience shows that, with translation, the more advanced the notice is all the better. Also, it is helpful if the instructor has time to rehearse with the translator some of what will be presented. In an ideal world, the trainers and the trainees speak the same language, thereby facilitating a much more cohesive learning experience. In the situation just described, the program was new and none of the trainers were local. Over time, however, several participants from this cohort group likely will become faculty and trainers themselves.

Thankfully, we usually build in time for cultural adaptation and often work with interpreters, so our faculty members were adaptable and able to go with the flow. The sessions ended with some reflection questions for each small group to engage in their own language in the breakout rooms. The rooms proved to be a good place for the participants to share their own stories so they could get to know each other and grow deeper together.

After three days of training, as the instructor I was far more tired than during a normal session. The good news was that we could offer training during lock-down conditions and that leaders went from isolation to feeling connected. Of course, they are still eager to see everyone in person. Additionally, we are improving as we move forward. Each day we learned things to help enhance the next day, and now we are better equipped for the upcoming session.

My colleagues here in Japan where I am based are experimenting with a monthly webinar in which a handful of speakers share while participants message questions to the host. The questions are then filtered for responses. For the session I just described above, this webinar is certainly something to learn from. Also, using platforms like Gnowbe mentioned earlier could serve to enhance the process overall.

Several other groups are using these mediums as well. Recently my colleague Mary Jo Wilson was featured on a growth series webinar for Mongolians focused on Emotional Intelligence. The webinar used a recorded interview format with subtitles and included a list of resources for additional reading. The reach of such a niche topic directed toward one particular people group was surprising. Thousands of people have watched these video recordings available through the Asia Leader Development Network (Wilson 2020).

The biggest challenge, though, is creating space for community. Younger leaders are more adept at this. No technology can fully replace having meals together, sharing down time, and spending time life-on-life to reach deeper levels of community.

Conclusion: An Invitation to Learn

Digi-learning is clearly a key to more effective training in the future. Even so, it is unlikely that distance learning by technology will be able fully to replace the value of life-on-life interaction and mentoring. For us in Asian Access, digi-learning will be an incredible supplement and provide added value between sessions. It will also be a lifesaver for those countries facing persecution or

pressure when we simply cannot meet face to face. Additionally, as mentioned above in some cases the creative meeting platforms are creating revival-like conditions.

In one difficult to reach region, we are getting reports of more people attending online church gatherings because they feel safe joining in the security of their own homes. If they were to venture out to visit a church in their community, they would be fearful for their lives. But during the lockdown brought about by COVID-19, they are not worried and have been worshiping, hearing the gospel, and participating in church gatherings for what apparently has been the first time.

We in Asian Access have learned a great deal in this learning laboratory toward further implementing digi-learning. This article should provide a set of tools and pointers toward learning, but the hope here is that more than just providing some ideas this study will spark dialog. We all need to learn from one another as the world moves increasingly into the digital age. Please share what you are learning so we can all grow together.

References

Anonymous Pastor a (2020). Personal communication with the author. April.

Anonymous Pastor b (2020). Personal communication with the author. April.

Chrispal, Ashish (2019). "Restoring Mission Vision in Theological Education" *Lausanne Global Analysis* September, Vol. 8 Issue 5, available online at https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2019-09/restoring-missional-vision-theological-education (accessed March 24, 2021). See also Woolnough, Brian (2020). "Rethinking Seminary Education: Bridging the Field and Academy" *Lausanne Global Analysis* September, Vol. 8 Issue 5, available online at https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2019-09/rethinking-seminary-education (accessed March 24, 2021).

Cole, Neil (2010). *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dale, Felicity (2000). *Simply Church*. Chicago, IL: Kharis Publishing.

De Visser, Adrian (2020). Personal communication with the author. April and June.

Gnowbe (2021). "Humanizing the world by redefining digital" *Gnowbe* website, https://www.gnowbe.com/about-gnowbe/ (accessed March 16, 2021).

Handley, Joe (2014). "Partnership Training for Oral Cultures" *Orality Journal* 3:1: 57-59. Available online at https://orality.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/V3N1-Orality-Journal.pdf (accessed March 24, 2021).

Handley, Joseph W., Jr. (2015). "Lions and Eagles and Estuaries: Oh My!" *Orality Journal* 4:2: 67-70. Available online at https://orality.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/V4N2-Joseph-W.-Handley-Jr..pdf (accessed March 24, 2021).

Hari, Joshua (2020). *"Pastor discusses online church in Japan and A2's Japanese webinar"* YouTube, from 2:00, posted by Asian Access, May 3, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmPhOjVKi-U (accessed March 24, 2021).

Jethani, Skye (2020). "John Wesley: Breaking with Tradition" *With God Daily* website, https://skyejethani.com/saints/john-wesley-breaking-with-tradition/ (accessed March 19, 2021).

Jigjudursen, Chinzorig (2020). Personal communication with the author. April.

Lim, David (2008). "Catalyzing 'Insider Movements' Among the Unreached" *Journal of Asian Mission* March-September, 10:1-2: 125-145.

Mehn, John (2017). *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil*. Pasadena CA: William Carey Library.

Moldez, Herman (2020). Personal communication with the author. April.

Moon, W. Jay (2016). "Editor's Introduction," in Jay Moon, Josh Moon, and Roman Randall, comps., *Orality and Theological Training in the 21st Century: A Book on Digitoral Learning*. Digit-Oral Publishing Services, LLC. available online at https://books.apple.com/gb/book/orality-and-theological-training-in-the-21st-century/id1072189236 (accessed March 24, 2021).

Moore, Ralph (2020a). email communication with the author. April.

_____ (2020b). "Part 2 Jason Shepperd Interview: Adapting to COVID-19" *The Ralph Moore Podcast*, https://shows.acast.com/the-ralph-moore-podcast/episodes/part-2jason-sheppard-interview-adapting-to-covid-19 (accessed March 24, 2021).

_____ (2020c). "Q&A with Ralph Moore" *Exponential* website, https://exponential.org/qa-ralph-moore/ (accessed March 24, 2021).

Moynagh, Michael (2012). A *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice*. London: SCM Press.

Purba, Juserdi (2020). Personal communication with the author. April.

Suzuki, Hikari (2020). Personal communication with the author. April.

Vijayam, Joseph (n.d.). "All Aboard the Technology Train: Connecting Generations for Stronger Workplaces" *Outcomes* website, https://outcomesmagazine.com/all-aboard-the-technology-train/ (accessed March 24, 2021).

West, Russell (2014). "The Re-Eventing of Theological Education: Toward a Pedagogy of Leadership Formation in the *Verbomoteur* Mode" International Orality Network Forum, April 4.

Wilson, Mary Jo (2020). "ALDN Growth Series Live Session: Emotional Intelligence" Youtube, posted by Asia Leader Development Network, May 9, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVaRFlmvnis (accessed March 19, 2021).

Media Engagement beyond the Coronavirus

Rudolf Kabutz and Lars Dahle

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Abstract

Transformational impact is increased through a holistic perspective for engaging with the media. Many more Christian influencers have engaged intentionally with media during the global coronavirus pandemic. Yet while Christians desire to influence through the media, they are also influenced by media messages. As Christians develop deeper *media awareness*, they interact more carefully with media messages and technologies of media. They can influence with integrity through their *media presence* in mainstream media. Christians can sensitively communicate contextualised biblical perspectives through *media ministries*. By using media to take people on explorative journeys of change, *media engagement* can play a holistic transformational role.

Key Words

equipping, influence, interaction, media engagement, relationship, transformation

Introduction

Engaging with media significantly shaped people's lives prior to COVID-19. During the coronavirus pandemic since early 2020, however, people have interacted differently with media than before. Interpersonal interactions have increasingly taken place through media channels. Media engagement focusses on relating critically to all media influences (Dahle 2014a). By learning to engage better with media, people should improve their interaction through media beyond the crisis. When Christian influencers engage with media intentionally, they can then enable transformational change in the lives of individuals and communities.

Media engagement has three key facets (Dahle 2014b):

1. *Media awareness:* a worldview approach to media literacy, analysis, and critique;
2. *Media presence:* faithful involvement within mainstream news, documentary, and entertainment media; and,
3. *Media ministries:* authentic and relevant pre-evangelism, evangelism and discipling through media platforms by communicating a holistic biblical worldview.

Media engagement begins with identifying media influences from a worldview perspective (Sire 2009, 22) by examining underlying beliefs and assumptions (Clark et al. 2017, 90). Furthermore, media engagement focusses on how Christians can contribute within influential media spaces in the wider society and communicating contextually relevant messages based on an integrated biblical worldview (Samples 2007, 274). In addition, media engagement centres on how to equip followers of Jesus to engage with media as disciples and witnesses, and how to enable them to teach others to engage well with media.

During the global pandemic, people have been prevented from meeting in-person, from travelling, and often from moving around locally. Therefore, many have engaged more extensively with news media, entertainment media, and social media, both professionally and privately. However, the coronavirus period has challenged fundamental perspectives and life priorities of people, and thus also has affected how people relate to and consume media.

When followers of Jesus become equipped to engage well with media, they can integrate such media engagement into their life, work, and witness to shape communities (Kabutz and

Dahle 2019). With such an integrated perspective on media, they can use media to nurture a holistic and meaningful everyday life that may lead towards deep transformation. Moreover, Christian influencers collaborating to develop further resources for media engagement helps more people to explore their appropriate roles and relationships with media.

This article explores the process of engaging with media on journeys of transformation. Such a journey begins by having a personal relationship with God and by relating closely with other people. Such relationships lead to engaging interactions and appropriate ways of influencing one another through media. The process continues with equipping Christians personally to engage well with media, so they may train others about media engagement. Finally, this media influence leads towards transformed lives and communities with authentic local applications of media engagement.

Relating to God Individually

A faith journey begins as an individual enters into a relationship with God. Some people begin with a conversion experience, while others come to personal faith over a longer period. God can take people through substantial healing, while they learn to trust God and become vulnerable to God's shaping.

Mediated messages can play a significant role in such faith journeys. God can communicate intimately to someone personally through his mediated message of the Bible. As a disciple lives in close relationship with God, he/she can become aware of media messages, which either nurture or distract from his/her personal relationship with God. As people express their relationship with God in daily life, their home and place of work can be affected by their faith. As they model their relationship with God in their interactions with people, these relationships can further impact the lives of others. When they interact through media with one another, the influence of their interactions can spread even wider.

Media engagement is imbedded in the 'Three Great Commissions' (Watkins 2021). Christians are commissioned to:

1. care for all the earth, which is 'The Creation Commission';
2. bring comprehensive goodness and wholeness to all nations, which may be called 'The Blessing Commission'; and
3. make and mature disciples, which is 'The Gospel Commission'.

Jesus also provided 'The Great Commandment' that prioritises loving God and one another. Based on this biblical framework, Christians are aware and cautious of the challenges in the world around them, while they are active and involved in contributing to the world. Christians' informed involvements lead them to engage responsibly with media by consuming carefully and contributing constructively.

Relating to One Another

Media can play an important role in nurturing community. The journeys of faith are lived in community, not in solitude (Rhodes 2016, 139-155). As human beings we only really find our identity and discover ourselves within the relational context of a community. Also, we learn to contribute according to our gifts and abilities within a community space. Through close interactions we experience the challenges of relationships, which then enables us to mature as individuals. As God calls people to follow him, he transforms them from within to love and relate well to others. When Christians meet and interact via media, they can nurture fellowships of trust and grace (Lynch et al. 2016, 79). They can develop love for their local communities, where together they can equip disciple-makers who may transform society through their love

and witness. Caution is needed when media distracts from relationships (Chapman and Pellicane 2014; Koch 2015).

Through Christian communities, people can journey into much deeper relationships with one another. They learn to accept each other, forgive, reconcile, and envision a thriving future. Media tools can be effective for mutual equipping and encouragement, for sharing valuable Bible resources, and even for deep personal conversations through video conferencing (Detweiler 2013, 14-15). Through the regular interactions in relational communities, people then influence each other.

Interacting with Each Other through Media

We as human beings are communicative and as such build and nurture relationships through our interactions with others. When we can meet face-to-face, direct communication takes place. When we are unable to meet in-person, we need some form of medium to transmit our messages to each other. Then we are interacting through media.

Humanity has increasingly communicated through mediated messages, interacting across different spaces and times. People have recorded messages on various media devices that can be sent almost anywhere. They can receive mediated messages from people in the past, and they can transmit their own mediated messages to people in the future. People are nowadays not just using media, but they are actually living in the media (Deuze 2008, 233). As they communicate messages to one another, they influence others through media while they themselves also become influenced. And when their messages move even wider beyond single-person interactions, their mediated influence extends even further.

By nurturing relationships, people build trust and open themselves to becoming influenced by others. Even influence through media is built on trust; the more people trust, the more they influence. Such trust is cultivated by telling powerful stories that build on the narrative of many interactions with which people can identify (Cosper 2014, 24). These stories then re-shape people's perspectives on reality when combined with their experiences, views, relationships in community, and deeper experiences in life. Through compelling stories shared in community, people may grow in trust, which then will shape their sense of belonging and enable them to influence one another.

When people increasingly interact on emotional levels, relationships deepen. Media influences become more meaningful through "emotional interactions" as someone:

- listens with the heart to the needs of the other, sharing both joy and sadness with one another;
- feels the other's pain and disappointment, coming alongside him/her, and inspiring each other to look beyond the pain;
- responds to the other with emotional cues and experiences so the other really feels heard; and,
- shares in the excitement and hope for life, walking together towards healing and transformation.

Through these trusting emotional interactions between people, influencing through media can become more authentic and significant.

Influencing Each Other through Media

The essence of media engagement is about exploring the influence that media has on an individual as well as how that person moves within media spaces of influence and contributes

to media himself/herself. In the same way, groups of people may ask themselves how media influences them, and how they can live authentically within media contexts and contribute through their combined media ministries. These questions can help Christians explore various aspects of media influence:

1. How are people *influenced by* media messages?
2. How do people *think deeply* about influences from media contexts? (Carr 2011, 123)
3. How do people *live within* media spaces of influence?
4. How do people *respond to* media messages amongst them?
5. How does *God influence others through media messages people* contribute?

Media influence often leads to change. Processes of positive change begin by listening to God and to other people. Change then continues as people digest and process the messages they have heard. When they act on new information received, they begin to "change" what they do, and then become able to speak to other people about the change happening in them. Listening and changing oneself needs to occur before speaking into the media context (Kabutz 2020).

Gospel influence through media leads to meaningful personal transformation. God can enable a healing of brokenness in a person's life and can establish his/her self-identity in him. Jesus can transform someone into a renewed person, even when not all challenges are resolved. On their discipleship journeys, people can envision desired changes and help one another implement appropriate actions to address relevant personal and social issues.

Beyond the coronavirus pandemic, engaging with people through media will take on a specific focus. This focus will involve exploring the changing roles of media messages as well as identifying new places and messages to contribute as media influencers. Media awareness, media presence, and media ministries will all be involved.

With respect to *media awareness* beyond the coronavirus, the equipped disciple will need to think critically about all kinds of emerging media messages, explore their changing meaning, and evaluate various emerging worldviews behind these media messages that are shaping different ways of thinking (Wilkens and Sanford 2009, 198). A responsible media user is aware of conflicting messages addressing the key themes of the day, relating them carefully to a biblical worldview. Beyond the coronavirus, such discernment will include evaluating how both media technologies and media messages have shifting influences (Lanier 2011; Chen 2012, 4), some beneficial, but others harmful (Huddleston 2016).

In exercising *media presence* beyond the coronavirus, equipped disciples must move with integrity into newly emerging places of media influence. They should equip, encourage and resource other Christian influencers who are already within mainstream media spaces. Together they may explore innovative mainstream media platforms that are emerging as relevant spaces for providing powerful voices into society.

Media ministries beyond the coronavirus should entail Christian communicators speaking intentionally and contextually with rich biblical content into emerging issues of society. These communicators will need to produce fresh quality media content that cuts through clutter, while being aware of the limitations of media reach within the constantly growing media world. In addition to Christian communication channels, Christian influencers should explore and try out new media spaces for pre-evangelism, evangelism, and discipleship purposes.

Beyond the crisis of the coronavirus, Christian voices from a variety of sectors of society will need to speak into changing situations both for the church and the wider society in order to shape cultures (Turner 2013, 46). These voices of influence must address challenges, inspire holistic transformation, and contribute hope and healing into communities (Wilkens and

Sanford 2009, 16). Through various media platforms, Christian influencers can express and develop their unique voices to benefit society at large.

Helping Each Other on Journeys with Media

Media engagement plays an important role in equipping people on their journeys of faith and in life. The Lausanne Media Engagement Network (Lausanne Movement n.d.a; n.d.b) has provided numerous workshops to equip people for engaging with media, mainly in East Africa and Europe amongst media practitioners, Christian leaders, teachers, and youth leaders, as well as at international Lausanne conferences. The training has provided theological foundations for media engagement together with practical tools for how to analyse media, connect with media houses, and produce inspirational media content. The workshops have helped participants to engage with media both for personal spiritual growth and for the transformation of their communities. Ultimately, the various workshops have functioned as training to equip people to become competent in teaching others about engaging with media.

Helping Others to Journey in Life

Helping another person begins in small steps by coming alongside them. What a person learns on his/her faith journey, he/she can use to inspire others for their faith journeys. When a group of influencers learn to trust Jesus together, they can equip another group on their communal journeys of faith. When they become vulnerable towards others and develop trust, they can love them by addressing their actual needs (Thrall et al. 1999, 68). Equipping people to engage well with media also begins on a personal level, then expands as communities of people equip others for media.

Equipping for media engagement can help individual media contributors in social media, groups of people in churches interacting with media as an online church, and organisations contributing media content into various media spaces. People can be equipped with *key practices* for each facet of media engagement. Simple *practical exercises* help people to apply and internalise these media concepts. Each *inspiring story* shows how people are practically implementing media engagement in their local contexts.

Equipping People towards Media Awareness:

- *Practices*: Christians learn to identify and analyse worldviews that are embedded in media messages, and how to evaluate and critique media messages. They learn to formulate and communicate from a biblical worldview perspective and learn how to discuss media messages and their underlying worldviews with their families, friends, and colleagues in their local communities.
- *Exercise*: The articles in a daily newspaper or lyrics from a popular local song can be used to analyse underlying worldviews embedded in media messages.
- *Story*: A Christian media practitioner hosted a "reading competition" for youth in Kenya. After the learners read a book on media critique (Telfer 2015), they wrote an essay to reflect on their experiences with the media. The book's author attended the prize-giving and then presented media awareness workshops for the parents. Furthermore, the youth learned about becoming aware of the media they consume through regular media topics in a local Christian youth magazine.

Equipping People towards Media Presence:

- *Practices*: Inspire Christians to enter mainstream media spaces intentionally and equip them to live as credible witnesses within various facets of society, especially within workplaces in various mainstream media.

- *Exercise*: Identify a Christian working in mainstream media and develop a friendship to encourage and motivate this person in his/her professional work.
- *Story*: A media-focussed pastor in Uganda visited local media stations, praying with the staff, encouraging them, and nurturing relationships with them. Initially they were very sceptical of the church and only reported on its problems, but later they became more open also to report on inspiring church initiatives.

Equipping People toward Media Ministries:

- *Practices*: Equip Christians to assess the needs of an audience in order to create relevant gospel media messages and to tell meaningful stories on a personal level.
- *Exercise*: Simply take a smartphone to record a short video that addresses a current issue, either by interviewing a person or by filming a local situation. Contribute clear ideas through personal perspectives and share the video on accessible media channels.
- *Story*: A church in Uganda wanted to contribute gospel messages for Easter over television, but they did not have their own station. They visited a local TV station and proposed providing an Easter message. The station offered a broadcasting slot at midnight over the weekend. The pastors arrived in the middle of the night and presented their prepared Easter messages to the audience.

Once people have learned how to engage with media themselves, they can then become equipped to help other people engage well with media.

Equipping People to Help Others Engage in Media

Training Christians to teach media engagement can have great impact, but they must be provided with resources they can use to equip others.

For media awareness:

- provide simple tools for worldview analysis of media messages that Christians can pass on to others;
- equip Christians to teach worldview thinking about media through the church and through educational institutions; and,
- facilitate Christian apologists to train younger apologists with tools, opportunities, and internship experiences so they learn to address life-issues and key questions within various contexts.

For media presence:

- motivate pastors and Christian teachers to inspire their youth to explore creative media work, including looking for opportunities within mainstream media;
- equip participants to hold seminars within local churches that can help Christian influencers to communicate relevantly and clearly within secular media spaces; and,
- help participants to encourage mature media professionals to coach and mentor younger Christians in mainstream media.

For media ministries:

- equip Christians to help others find their own passion, calling, and voice to express their stories through media;
- provide tools to Christians for focussing primarily on relationships with others and then utilising media channels to engage with them; and,

- help Christian media communicators intentionally to equip younger communicators to contribute their own media messages.

A Story of Equipping Christians to Engage with Media

Over the course of one year, a young Christian leader in Uganda who attended media engagement training workshops became a local media engagement influencer. He travelled to various regions with his bishop where he trained groups of pastors on media awareness, who then could equip their congregations. This leader also interacted with media professionals by caring for their needs and hosting events about media presence. Furthermore, this man contributed to media ministries by addressing the local issues of reconciliation by providing media content to local media houses and nation-wide broadcasters. He applied the media engagement training as he equipped many others to spread wholesome media influence into various facets of Ugandan society.

A Tool for Equipping Christians to Learn about Media Issues

One tool for equipping people is the Lausanne Global Classroom on media and technology (Burdick n.d.), which addresses faithful discipleship in a world increasingly shaped by media and technology. The online videos and the user guide of this Global Classroom enable critical thinking about and creative engagement with media and technology.

Those media practitioners who are teaching "media engagers" can help each other by building relationships through collaborative networks where they can share their experiences and helpful resources. Such collaborative training for engaging with media widens the media influence.

Experiencing Gospel Transformation

When media is used as a platform for appropriate influence, God can use it for transformation. Such transformation occurs as God engages with a person, enabling him/her to experience spiritual renewal through the gospel, and then to journey through deep personal discipleship towards personal restoration and maturity. This journey changes the person's thinking processes, emotional engagement, and perspectives of community. The transformation also changes the understanding of self-identity through life experiences and the perception of life-fulfilment through relationship with God and others. Self-identity can be significantly misshaped, as well as redeemed by media (Detweiler 2018, 200). A sense of calling can be developed towards making personal contributions to the community (Lynch et al. 2016, 84-87).

Such transformation usually occurs on a very deep level personally before expanding within groups of people or amongst organised structures in communities (Quinn 1996, 32). Transformations occur both as short once-off occurrences as well as over longer periods. As individuals are transformed through the gospel, renewal of the social and physical environment can result.

As God reconciles the world with himself, transformations begin as God relates and interacts with individual persons. God wants to relate to people in a way that restores them individually, bringing them closer to others and enabling them to be more intimately connected with their whole environment. This multifaceted restoration may lead to personal transformation and to authentic living as salt and light for the gospel. Broader interactions with communities through media then lead towards wider gospel transformation.

Applying Media Engagement

Whether individually or collectively, Christians may engage within media spaces with the following practices and results in view:

1. Individual Christians, who have a personal relationship with God, deepen their knowledge and life-application of a biblical worldview through intentional media engagement.
2. Christians become more self-aware of their spiritual journeys, individually and in community, and learn how media tools help them on their journeys.
3. Followers of Jesus become aware of underlying worldviews in media messages that influence their own lives and learn how to consume and interact wisely with these messages.
4. Christians discover how to move into influential media spaces, where they professionally contribute contextual media messages that are consistent with a biblical worldview.
5. Followers of Jesus find their own unique voice to contribute value to others through their relationships and their authentic contributions embodied in media messages.
6. Christian media influencers distribute media messages, interact with people online, and use virtual, physical, and hybrid spaces to nurture community and enable faith journeys.
7. Christian leaders become trained to equip others for engaging with media, so that communities of people may resource the wider church for engaging well with media.
8. Christians contribute with multiple voices in various media channels, addressing real-life issues with messages of hope through practical care and witness, so that people in society are drawn to the gospel and follow Jesus.

Both personal and social transformation becomes effective and practical when the various facets of media engagement all work together.

Concluding Reflections on Media Engagement beyond the Coronavirus

Fruitful media engagement begins with developing personal intimacy with God, which leads towards journeying together with one another in community. Relationships between people through appropriate interactions may result in constructive influence, especially as people interact intentionally through media. When Christians carefully evaluate the media messages they consume, they learn what is influencing them. The voices of Christian individuals, of the church community, and of Christian organisations through intentional media interactions may then have a significant impact on society.

When Christians are equipped to engage well with media, and trained to teach others about media engagement, then their voices as disciples and witnesses are amplified. As Christians engage holistically with media, their relational influence may lead towards transformation whereby God shapes individuals and communities with the gospel.

References

Burdick, B. (n.d.). “Lausanne Global Classroom: Media and Technology” *Lausanne Movement* website, https://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-global-classroom/media-and-technology-episode (accessed April 14, 2021).

Carr, N. G. (2011). *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains.* Norton pbk. ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

Chapman, G. D., and Pellicane, A. (2014). *Growing up Social: Raising Relational Kids in a Screen-driven World*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing.

Chen, B. X. (2012). *Always on: How the iPhone Unlocked the Anything-Anytime-Anywhere Future—and Locked us In.* First Da Capo Press paperback ed. Boston, MA: Da Capo Press.

Clark, W. M., Anderson, T. J., and Naugle, D. K. (2017). *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World*. London, UK: Apollos.

Cosper, M. (2014). *The Stories we Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Dahle, L. (2014a). "Media Engagement: A Global Missiological Task" *Lausanne Global Analysis 3*(1). Available online as "Media Engagement" on the *Lausanne Movement* website, https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2014-01/media-engagement-a-global-missiological-task (accessed April 14, 2021).

_____ (2014b). "Media Messages Matter: Towards a New Missiological Approach to Media Engagement" *Norsk Tidsskrift For Misjonsvitenskap* 2/2014: 105-121. Available online at https://journals.mf.no/ntm/article/view/4311/3628 (accessed April 14, 2021).

Detweiler, C. (2013). *iGods: How Technology Shapes our Spiritual and Social Lives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

_____ (2018). *Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Deuze, M. (2008). *Media Work*. Reprint ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Huddleston, B. (2016). *Digital Cocaine*. Brad Huddleston Ministries.

Kabutz, R. and Dahle, L. (2019). *"*Engaging with Media at the Workplace for Transforming Society" *Lausanne Movement* website, https://www.lausanne.org/content/engaging-with-media-at-the-workplace-for-transforming-society (accessed April 14, 2021).

Kabutz, R. (2020). *"*Engaging Well with Media During the COVID-19 Crisis" *Media Engagement Network* website, https://engagingmedia.info/engaging-well-with-media-during-the-covid-19-crisis/ (accessed April 14, 2021).

Koch, K. (2015). *Screens and Teens: Connecting with our Kids in a Wireless World*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

Lanier, J. (2011). *You are not a Gadget: A Manifesto.* First Vintage Books ed. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Lausanne Movement (n.d.a). "Lausanne Media Engagement Network: Equipping the Global Church to Engage with Media" *Lausanne Media Engagement Network* website, http://engagingmedia.info (accessed April 13, 2021).

_____ (n.d.b). "Media Engagement: How is the Church Influencing the Greatest Influence in the World?" *Lausanne Movement* website, https://www.lausanne.org/networks/issues/media-engagement (accessed April 13, 2021).

Lynch, J., McNicol, B., and Thrall, B. (2016). *The Cure: What if God isn't who you think He is and neither are you?* Third ed. Phoenix, AZ: Trueface.Quinn, R. E. (1996). *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rhodes, T. M. (2016). *The Wired Soul: Finding Spiritual Balance in a Hyperconnected Age*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

Samples, K. R. (2007). *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Sire, J. W. (2009). *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog.* 5th ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Telfer, P. (2015). *Media Choices: Convictions or Compromise?* Mount Carroll, IL: Phillip Telfer.

Thrall, B., McNicol, B., and McElrath, K. (1999). *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence*. Phoenix, AZ: Leadership Catalyst / Trueface.

Turner, S. (2013). *Popcultured: Thinking Christianly about Style, Media and Entertainment*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Watkins, T. (2021). "Theological and Missiological Framework for Media Engagement" *Lausanne Media Engagement Network* website, https://engagingmedia.info/theological-and-missiological-framework-for-media-engagement/ (accessed April 13, 2021).

Wilkens, S., and Sanford, M. L. (2009). *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories that Shape our Lives*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Conversion or Proselytization?
Being Maasai, Becoming Christian[1]

Joshua Robert Barron

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Abstract

Conversion is part of Christianity's DNA. Scholarly discussions about the meaning(s) and nature of Christian conversion perhaps reflect a popular—and historical—confusion about conversion vis-à-vis proselytization (e.g., Goodman 1994; Cornelli 2017, 413). Nonetheless, proselytization and conversion are not the same. Culture plays an important role in proper Christian conversion because this conversion, or "the turning to Christ what is already there" in the words of Andrew Walls, takes place within the context of culture. By contrast proselytization is the mere exchange of one human culture for another and was rejected by the Apostles. Because "the gospel enriches the culture," in African contexts "Christianity should strengthen and reaffirm one's African identity" (Falconer 2015, 161). After exploring these themes, I will propose a model to discuss Christian conversion within the Maa language and culture of the Maasai people of East Africa.

Key Words: contextualization, conversion, Maasai Christianity, proselytization

Introduction

Scholars typically use the term "'conversion' to describe changes in 'established customs' or 'religion'" (Kling 2020, 588). By 'conversion' some mean a change of affiliation or of institutional membership, and others mean a change of conviction (Ikenga-Metuh 1987, 19). Indisputably, "conversion establishes new boundaries" (Rambo and Farhadian 2014, 2). Outside of the academy, the term 'conversion' is often used as mere "'theological slang' for when a person decides to become a Christian" (Hull 2016, 20), Muslim, or some other religious affiliation. But what does 'become a Christian' mean? For many, it means abandoning one's own culture and becoming, essentially, a foreigner. But that is the path of proselytization, not of conversion. Eugene Hillman, a former Spiritan missionary among the Maasai, offers a pertinent warning: "In so far as one preaches the gospel as it has been developed within one's own culture, one is preaching not only the gospel but one's own culture. In so far as one is preaching one's own culture, one is asking others not only to accept the gospel but also to renounce their own culture and accept one's own" (Hillman 1993, 7).

Renunciation of one's own culture in order to adopt another culture is the very definition of proselytization, as "proselytes take on the cultural forms of the tradition they join" (Burrows 2011, 107). We should note from the beginning the biblical distinction between the two models: *epistrofē* (ἐπιστροφή) expresses the idea of conversion whereas *prosēlútisē* (προσηλύτιση) means proselytization. The Council of Jerusalem determined once and for all that "the followers of Jesus are not proselytes. They are converts" (Walls 2004, 5). In the Maa language of the Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania, the equivalent quotation is *ime ilasujak le Yesu ilmeek. Ilooyelieki e ilata ninche*. As the Maa language does not distinguish between "proselytes" and "converts" terminologically, however, I could not translate Walls's observation literally. Instead, I have used *ilmeek* ("despised foreigners") and *ilooyelieki e ilata* ("anointed adoptees," literally "those who are anointed with oil"), for reasons I will explain below.

Christian conversion can be defined as "a turning to God in Christ" (Kling 2014, 607). Specifically, Christian conversion is the process of "taking what is already there and turning it to Christ" (Walls 2018; cf. Walls 2012):

> Converts have to be constantly, relentlessly turning their ways of thinking, their education and training, their ways of working and doing things, toward Christ. They must think Christ into the patterns of thought they have inherited, into their networks of relationship and their processes for making decisions (Walls 2004, 6; see also Asamoah-Gyadu 2011, 99).

In Christian conversion, "people receive the names, the identity, the mission, the privilege, of Israel; yet they preserve the ethnic and cultural identity that is theirs by creation" (Wright 2004, 15). According to Clement of Alexandria, all Christians, regardless of their ethnicity (*ethnos*), come together to form a new nation (*genos*) composed of the saved people (*laos*) (Buell 2005, 139). Yet they bring with them their ethnicities and cultures in all their diversity. Thus the poetry of Revelation 7:9 beholds "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation [*ethnos*], tribe [*phulē*], people [*laos*] and language [*glossa*], standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (NIV1984).

Proselytization and Conversion in Christian History

When the choice between conversion or proselytization was raised in the early days of the Church, the Jerusalem Council ruled decisively that one enters the Church by converting to Christ rather than by proselytizing to Jewish culture and ethnicity. Andrew F. Walls observes that

> cultural diversity was built into the church within the New Testament period. This was an inevitable result of the early decision not to require circumcision and obedience to the Torah for Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus. In making this decision, the early church abandoned the long-standing proselyte model by which Gentiles were incorporated into Israel by assuming Jewish religious culture (Walls 2010, 18).

In line with that decision, Pope Gregory the Great (bishop of Rome from 590 to 604) declared that the missionary "Augustine [of Canterbury] should not simply import current Roman liturgical practices" and impose them upon the English (O'Sullivan 2016, 60). But proselytizing has been the practice at other times. During the Spanish Inquisition, it was not enough for Moors to stop being Muslim: they had to stop being Moorish as well. Likewise, Jewish converts were expected to stop being ethnically and culturally Jewish in order to become Christian (e.g., see Fernández-Armesto 2009, 33).

This issue was again raised during the later debate over Jesuit efforts to convert Chinese and Indians to Christ within their respective cultures, avoiding proselytization to European culture. Ultimately Pope Benedict XIV (pontiff from 1740 to 1758) ruled against such efforts of inculturation, essentially contravening the decision of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15: "Where the Judaizers had failed the Europeanizers triumphed" (Hillman 1993, 36–39). Specifically considering attempts, failures, and possibilities of inculturation of the gospel for the Maasai, Hillman also speaks of the "congenital and chronic foreignness" of the [Roman Catholic] "church in Africa" (Hillman 1993, 44). Insofar as the spirit of Benedict's ruling is not vigorously rejected, the Church in Africa cannot help but be a "*Wazungu* Religion" (i.e., a religion of foreigners; on the Swahili term *wazungu*, see below).

The Protestant modern missionary movement as well has not been immune to this difficulty. Christian missionaries often consciously thought of Christian conversion in terms

which unmistakably describe proselytization. Discussing the factors involved in the spread of Christianity in East Africa, Neal Sobania strikingly uses the terms 'conversion' and 'proselytization' synonymously (2003, 47–48; see also Hoehler-Fatton 1996, 89, 179). New Christians were simply to stop being what they were in order to become someone completely different. In the 1800s in Southern Africa, conversions to Christianity were rare and "implied a transition to the European way of life" (Denis 2016, 254). For Virginia Blakeslee, an African Inland Mission missionary among the *Agĩkũyũ* in Kenya in the mid-1900s, an African must leave behind African ways and culture in order to convert to Christianity. The *Agĩkũyũ* are a Bantu ethnic group; properly speaking, '*Agĩkũyũ*' refers to the ethnic group and '*Gĩgĩkũyũ*' to their language; in popular English usage '*Kikuyu*' often refers to both. An Agĩkũyũ convert to Christianity had to decide to "leave the paths of the *Agĩkũyũ* to take the path of God" (Kinoti 2010, 53–54). It is no wonder that Kenyan scholar E. S. Antieno-Odiambo complains that "missionaries felt it right that the African must receive the Western culture with his Christianity" (Strayer 2015, 19). Tragically, it has been all too common for missionaries to practice proselytization instead of seeking conversion, even while using the language of "conversion" and "converts":

> … early Pentecostal missionaries … [often] were insensitive to the indigenous cultures among which they worked … [They thus] brought with them not just the gospel from the West, but also in many instances believed and then imposed their Western version of the gospel on those being evangelized.… The supremacy of the gospel was translated also to mean the supremacy of Western (Euro-American) culture. [Thus] converts were socialized into rejecting their cultural heritage: this was presented as the essential meaning of Christian conversion (Yong 2010, 45).

Such efforts of proselytization rather than conversion result in "the transformation of Christians into replicas of the white man" (Thomas 2001, 211). This confusion of culture with Christianity has been as common (ref. Taber 1991) as it is a rank betrayal of the heart of the gospel. It has resulted in the characterization of Christianity as a "*Wazungu* Religion" by many East Africans (among Christians and non-Christians alike) or, in the words of Maasai Christian theologian Godwin Lekundayo of Tanzania, "as something alien which has been imposed upon them" (Lekundayo 2013, 2).

Mzungu (*Wazungu* is the plural) is the *kiSwahili* term for 'white people'. While *mzungu* denotes someone of light complexion generally, it connotes 'foreigner'. The common sense of *wazungu* is "(light-skinned) people with a different language and an incomprehensibly strange culture"; in some cases, *mzungu* can be a racial slur. To claim that Christianity is a "*Wazungu* Religion" is to imply it is impossible to become Christian while remaining African: if you become a Christian, *ipso facto*, you lose your Africanity.[2]

African scholars such as Kwame Bediako and Lamin Sanneh have made a compelling case that Christianity is inherently not "a western religion" (Bediako 1992; 1995; Sanneh 2003). Thomas C. Oden has insisted on acknowledging the debt of Western Christianity to ancient African Christianity (Oden 2007; 2011). Andrew F. Walls has persistently and cogently argued that Christianity as European Christendom (and thus inherently as territorially and culturally Western) was historically a brief aberration which has now passed, as "Christendom is dead, and Christianity is alive and well without it" (Walls 2016, 691).

Nonetheless, feelings against Christianity as explicitly Western remain strong. South African theologian Tinyiko Samuel Maluleke contends against Bediako that "Africans must first cease to experience Christianity as alienating and foreign before they can start discussing Christianity as non-foreign and non-Western" (van der Merwe 2016, 570).[3] Yet "Christianity

has always been, in principle, global; this is not just a phenomenon of the twentieth century. It is clear that the few centuries when Christianity was overwhelmingly Western actually represented an exception" (Walls 2017, 71).

Vincent Donovan and Conversion Among the Maasai

The labeling of Christianity as a "*Wazungu* Religion" is in fact an issue of conflating conversion with proselytization. The long-observed resistance of the Maasai people to the gospel (e.g., see Neckebrouck 1993) may well have more to do with a resistance to misguided attempts at proselytization than to the gospel itself. It should also be noted that the Maasai have been more resistant to all Western cultural influences (Rigby 1989). Neckebrouck notes that in order for a people resistant to the gospel to be drawn to the gospel, finding it attractive, it is first necessary for Christians to loose themselves from whatever causes Christianity to be considered "*une religion importée*" ("an imported religion"; Neckebrouck 2002, 7), a phrase analogous to "*wazungu* religion." He continues by observing that Roman Catholic missionaries were more tolerant than their Protestant colleagues of important parts of Maa culture and had as well the distinct advantage of a looser connection with civil authorities (Neckebrouck 2002, 8); the British and German colonial powers in East Africa were, of course, nominally Protestant.

In this vein, Vincent J. Donovan's 1978 *Christianity Rediscovered* has been celebrated as a missiological triumph, as the right way to deal with issues of culture and conversion while avoiding proselytization. Donovan served with the Spiritans, a Roman Catholic missionary order, among the Maasai in Tanzania for 17 years. Unable to see any "common ground with the Masai [*sic*]" (Donovan 1978, 15) yet embracing a cultural sensitivity, he came to the realization "that God enables a people, any people, to reach salvation through their culture and tribal … customs and traditions" and that "an evangelist [or] missionary must respect the culture of a people, not destroy it" (Donovan 1982, 30). Here Donovan was following the tradition of the Spiritan missionary François-Marie-Paul Libermann (1802-1852; née Jacob Libbermann), who instructed the missionaries under his direction: "You are not going to Africa in order to establish there Italy or France or any such country. Dispense with Europe, its customs and spirit. Make yourselves Negroes with the Negroes. Then you will understand them as they must be understood. Our holy religion has invariably to be established in the soil" (Sundkler and Steed 2004, 103).

Donovan's missiological theory is both sound and commendable, but his work should be taken with a grain of salt. While I never met him personally, I have reason to doubt his grasp of Maa language and culture.[4] Moreover, whatever the value of his theory may be, the fruit of his efforts is more difficult to see. Later visitors to the areas in which he labored found that churches he had strived to plant had primarily withered on the vine (see, e.g., Priest 1990, 13). As Neckebrouck concluded, the Catholic efforts of evangelization among the Maasai—in spite of initially healthier approaches—have not been more successful than those of Protestant missionaries (Neckebrouck 2002, 8). Perhaps extra-biblical Roman Catholic dogma—especially the insistence on clerical celibacy (even though this violates the canons of the Council of Nicaea in 325)—makes Roman Catholicism more inimical to Maa culture. Indeed, Maasai have increasingly embraced evangelical forms of Christianity in their thousands, although discussing why is well beyond the scope of this article.

Conversion in Maasai culture

In spite of many analysts' pessimism about Maasai acceptance of the gospel, the truth of Christianity apparently enables an increasing number of Maasai to make better sense of the world, at least judging by the numbers of those turning to Christ. If the exposition of the gospel

to the Maasai does not move into the intellectual sphere of the Maasai people, huge areas of their thought life will remain untouched and thus unconverted. But when the proselytizing model of missions is replaced with the conversionary model, Maasai can experience the "turning of what is already there to Christ" in their social life, family life, and intellectual life (Walls 2018). In this conversion, some new things will be embraced by Maasai Christians, some traditional practices (such as institutionalized sexual immorality) will be rejected, and everything else will be turned to Christ. Because a non-proselytizing "encounter between the Maasai and the Bible provides conceptual tools for strengthening not only [Maasai culture] but also African culture and identity more generally" (Nkesala 2020, 194), Maasai Christians will be enabled to translate "biblical truth into [the] vernacular categories and worldview" (Shaw 2010, 167) of the broader Maa culture. When the interactive process of this translation takes place, both the real change that results from conversion to Christ and authentic continuity with Maa culture and traditions are readily seen.

The key terms in OT Hebrew and NT Greek related to conversion denote the actions of turning or changing. The primary words in Maa for both "turn" and "change" are *aibelekeny* (the verb) and *enkibelekenyata* (the noun). These terms convey the ideas of *change*, *translation*, *conversion*, *proselytization*, *transformation*, and *corner*. Such a plethora of non-Maa-linguistic meanings of Maa terms makes Bible translation challenging, whether into or from Maa. *Aibelekeny* is the probable choice for translating an entire semantic domain of New Testament Greek verbs, as is *enkibelekenyata* for a range of Greek nouns.[5] Interestingly, the first edition of the Maa Bible (BSM1991)[6] does not directly translate the Greek terms μετανοέω (*metanoéō*; etymologically "to transform the mind" and traditionally rendered as "repent" in English) or μετάνοια (*metanoia*; "transformation of the mind" but typically translated as "repentance"). Instead, the Maa Bible typically translates the English terms *repent/repentance* as *airridu* (the verb) and *enkirridunoto* (the noun), which refer to feelings of remorse or contrition for wrong-doing and have nothing to do with the ideas of either *changing* or *turning*. In Acts 2:38, Peter is calling his listeners to *metanoia*, a radical and conversionary change. But instead of an imperative to change, the Maa translation here just commands the people "*erridutu*," which translates into English as "be remorseful" or even just as "feel bad." Such feelings may be fitting, but the choice of the imperative *erridutu* (from *airridu*) points more to the etymological history of "repent" in English (i.e., the idea of repeated acts of penance in Roman Catholic piety) rather than to the key meanings of the biblical terms for turning, changing direction, and transformed thinking.

Despite the lexical difficulty in distinguishing between conversion and proselytization, Maasai culture may help to differentiate between the two concepts. Indeed, though the Maa language may lack a specific term for 'proselytization', the Maasai themselves understand the concept. Most of the *Yaaku* or *Mukogodo* people of Kenya, whose language belonged to the Cushitic family, have been assimilated into Maa culture and language; those who assimilated are known as the *Dorobo Maasai* (Cronk 2002; 2004). An outsider will not be able to tell the difference between a Dorobo and an ethnic Maasai (e.g., from the Purko or Iloodokilani subtribes); the Dorobo have 'proselytized' themselves and completely assimilated. At the same time, the Maasai have another cultural practice which may provide a model for understanding Christian 'conversion' within Maa culture: cross-tribal adoption.

Many cultures practice forms of adoption. The Maasai practice adoption of children: a child will be given to a couple that has not been able to conceive (ref. Talle 2004). More important for a model of Christian 'conversion' is the Maasai rite of cross-cultural adoption, in which a captive, a refugee, an economic migrant, or a non-Maasai spouse can be adopted into the Maasai people. The Maa phrase for this adoption into the Maasai people is *enkiyieleta e mpere*,

literally "the anointing of the spear" (Mol 1996, s.v. *enkiyieleta*; also see Waller 1993; Talle 2004; Lamphear 1993). The adoption ceremony includes the initiate being "reborn," which is symbolized or acted out by his or her head being shaved and the initiate being anointed or smeared with oil or fat. When such a person is adopted, the adoptee is no longer considered to be their former non-Maasai identity, e.g., Agĩkũyũ, but is now fully considered Maasai, and is assigned a clan and other central traits.

The potential of using *enkiyieleta e mpere* (or similar words) as Christian terminology, should the adoption practice and ceremony be turned to Christ, should be obvious. The language could describe both the initiatory rite of baptism in Christianity and the ancient accompanying ritual 'chrismation'. (In churches which are part of the old Greek, Syriac, and Coptic traditions, chrismation is the ritual anointing of the newly baptized with oil as a sacramental sealing of the gift of the Holy Spirit; in Western Churches this practice largely has been either replaced by the rite of confirmation or else forgotten entirely.) In this cross-cultural adoption into the Maasai people, the adoptee experiences a "new birth" and can be called first *oloyela* ("the one about to be anointed"; plural *ilooyela*) and then *oloyelieki* ("the anointed one"; plural *ilooyeliek*; alternative forms are *oloyelaki* for the singular / *ilooyelaki* for the plural),[7] just as Jesus can be called *Oloyelieki le nkAi* ("the Anointed one of God").

The Maa language distinguishes one's degree of belonging or of foreignness:

olmaasani (ilmaasai) ..... Maasai person(s)

oyati (iyat)..... resident alien(s), migrant(s)
(in some contexts *oyati* can mean 'orphan' or 'unloved child')

olmeeki or *ormeeki (ilmeek* or *irmeek)* ..... despised foreigner(s)

(*Olmeeki* and *ormeeki* are dialectical variations of the same term; *ilmeek* and *irmeek* are the plural forms, respectively. In the quotations below, the forms used are those used by those cited.) *Olmeeki* does not just indicate a foreigner but is a derogatory slur, a term of contempt. For example, in Maasai culture, one who commits homicide is subject to penal justice, but if the victim were an *olmeeki*, traditional Maasai justice does not consider a crime to have been committed—the *olmeeki* is little valued. In traditional Maasai thought, "murder" applies only to the slaying of an *olmaasani*; killing a non-Maasai is traditionally considered only "homicide" at most. But for killing an *olmeeki*, whether accidentally or with malice aforethought, the *olmaasani* would not even be required to pay a fine.

An *oyati* or even a despised *olmeeki* may, as an anointed adoptee, be granted the full status of an *olmaasani*. Suppose an *oyati* has been living among the Maasai. He probably already has received a Maasai name like Lemayian in addition to his birthname. If he undergoes the "anointing of the spear" ritual, Maasai will say, "Lemayian has become *olmaasani* now. Before, he was only a foreigner. But now he is *olmaasani* together with us!" This cross-cultural adoption is an excellent analogy for the nature of Christian conversion, in which we who were once "not a people" have been adopted as sons and daughters, becoming the very people of God (Romans 9.25; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 2:10).

On the other hand, proselytization means that the proselyte stops being what he or she was, not only in terms of status but in culture as well. Thus the Dorobo, or more properly their ancestors, were proselytes. But suppose an Agĩkũyũ man named Mugo is adopted as a Maasai through "the anointing of the spear." Mugo thenceforth will be fully recognized as *olmaasani* among the Maasai. Should Mugo visit his home Agĩkũyũ village, he would be recognized as a

Maasai-ized Agĩkũyũ, but not as a foreigner. He would be still recognizable as Mugo. But when an *olmaasani* has had to become a proselyte to become a Christian, effectively becoming a Black European rather than a Maasai Christian, the Maasai have told him "you have become *olmeeki* to us!"[8]

Thus when Maasai *proselytize* to European Christianity or even adopt Swahili culture, they have been traditionally ostracized as no longer *olmaasani* but *olmeeki* or *ormeeki*. Dorothy L. Hodgson narrates historical examples of Maasai who have become *ormeeki* (Hodgson 2011, 63–64, 250–258). She observes that Maasai explicitly mark "*irmeek* as profoundly not-Maasai" (Hodgson 2011, 258). Where traditional Maasai have scorned Maasai Christians as *ilmeek*, I propose that proselytization has been at fault. Missionaries and other Westerners by and large insisted upon the adoption of Western culture by Maasai "converts." Interestingly, however, this adoption of Western culture has been largely unenforceable for Maasai women. Hodgson also notes that feminine forms—*emeeki* and *imeek*—are relatively rare (Hodgson 2011, 253). It seems the majority of Maasai women converts to Christianity were *converts*, not proselytes. They continued to wear traditional clothing rather than adopting Western attire and continued to function culturally as Maasai.

When a non-Maasai first becomes *oloyela* ("the one about to be anointed," as noted earlier) and then undergoes the *enkiyieleta e mpere* ("the anointing of the spear") ceremony to become *oloyelaki* or *oloyelieki* ("the anointed one"), he experiences a good deal of authentic *enkibelekenyata* ("change"): receiving membership within a clan, the name of the lineage into which he has been adopted, the acceptance of certain Maa cultural norms. The *oloyelaki* is also given livestock. But unlike the proselytization of the Dorobo, becoming an *oloyelaki* seems to be a conversionary change, similar to the changes involved in Maasai marriage. When an *esiankiki* ("bride") is married, she receives a new name and joins a new lineage. In order for her to have an opportunity to learn the customs of her new family, she and her husband will at first live in her mother-in-law's home. She will have to learn to do things her mother-in-law's way instead of her mother's way. But she does not stop being who she is.[9] There is real change *(enkibelekenyata),* but it is not the change of proselytization. Similarly, an *oloyelaki* may maintain relationships with his biological family, but he is now fully a member of his new Maasai family.

Although some older missionary models mistakenly required Maasai to become *ilmeek* in order to become Christians, new missionary efforts which began in the 1970s recognized that when a Maasai is immersed into Jesus, he or she can (and should!) remain *olmaasani*. Today there are growing numbers of Maasai Christians in Kenya and Tanzania who recognize that Maa culture and Christianity are not incompatible. But there are still many Maasai who perceive conversion to Christ as an act of proselytization whereby one most forsake one's Maasai-ness, one's Africanity. Likewise, some African Christians struggle to know where to draw the line dividing contextualization from syncretism. This struggle is also true for the Maasai. But traditional Maasai practices "can and should be used in some measure to formulate an understanding of the Bible from an African context" without the displacement of "biblical revelation" (Mburu 2018, 7). The *enkiyieleta e mpere* ceremony may be a "redemptive analogy" (missionary Bible translator and missiologist Don Richardson's phrase) enabling the Maasai churches to distinguish between conversion and mere proselytization. Moreover, the implications for such a contextual theology of conversion may be relevant to other East African contexts as well. This is true not only for Nilotic groups (e.g., Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Kalenjin) but also for Bantu groups such as the Agĩkũyũ (ref. Kinoti 2010, 110 and 119; Kenyatta 1961, 22 and 323; Mbua 2018).

Perhaps the language and ritual elements of "the anointing of the spear" cultural practice can be incorporated into Maa baptismal liturgies. Maasai believers tend to have a period of being catechumens prior to being immersed. Can the Church refer to such new *ilairukok* ("believers") as *ilooyela* ("those preparing to be anointed") *le Kristo* ("of Christ"), and to the baptized as *ilooyelaki le Kristo* ("the anointed adoptees of Christ")? When I have discussed this possibility with Maasai believers, they have uniformly been excited at how Christian teaching has the potential to fulfill Maa ideals and how Maa customs can make biblical teaching much clearer than approaches which assume Western (*olmeeki*) culture.

Conclusion

While true Christian conversion *does* involve significant change, *enkibelekenyata*, this transformation does not change the new Maasai believer into an *olmeeki*: he or she remains completely *olmaasani* yet *turns to Christ*. Reflecting on a conversation which he had had with Andrew Walls, Christopher Wright notes that "the vast, global, and cultural diversity of the Christian church today is the legitimate fruit of this essential distinction between conversion (i.e., conversion to *Christ* within any culture) and proselytism (which essentially says, 'You first must *become like us*'). Sadly, Christian mission has not always preserved this distinction" (Wright 2004, 19; emphases original). In order to maintain this necessary distinction, my conversation partners among Maasai Christians agree that the Maa cultural practice of *enkiyieleta e mpere* can be an effective way to explain the biblical conception of Christian conversion—both what it is and what it is not—in the Maasai context.

References

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena (2011). "'Turning That Which Is Already There toward Christ': The Contribution of Andrew F. Walls to Understanding African Christianity," Chapter 14 in William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean, eds., *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 193-203.

Bediako, Kwame (1992). *Theology & Identity: The impact of culture upon Christian thought in the second century and modern Africa*. Regnum Studies in Mission. Oxford: Regnum Books.

_____ (1995). *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Biblia Sinyati: te nkutuk oo lMaasai o natisiraki eng'ejuk (2018). Nairobi: The Bible Society of Kenya. (Abbreviated as "BSM2018.")

Biblia Sinyati: te nkutuk oo lMaasai o sotua musana o sotua ng'ejuk (1991). Nairobi: The Bible Society of Kenya; Dodoma: The Bible Society of Tanzania. (Abbreviated as "BSM1991.")

Buell, Denise Kimber (2005). *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Burrows, William R. (2011). "Conversion: Individual and Cultural," Chapter 9 in William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean, eds., *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 96-113.

Cornelli, Evaristi Magoti (2017). "Inter-religious Relations," in Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 411-420.

Cronk, Lee (2002). "From True Dorobo to Mukogodo Maasai: Contested Ethnicity in Kenya" *Ethnology* 41(1): 27–49.

_____ (2004). *From Mukogodo to Maasai: Ethnicity and Cultural Change in Kenya*. Westview Case Studies in Anthropology, Ed., Edward F. Fischer. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004.

Denis, Philippe (2016). "Christianity in Southern Africa," Chapter 21 in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner, chief eds., Chammah Kaunda and Kennedy Owino, assoc. eds., *Anthology of African Christianity*. Regnum Studies in Global Christianity. Oxford: Regnum, 248-258.

Donovan, Vincent J. (1978). *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

_____ (1982). *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*. 2nd Edition. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

_____ (2003). *Christianity Rediscovered*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Falconer, Robert *(*2015). *Spectacular Atonement: Envisioning the Cross of Christ in an African Perspective*. Sloane Park, South Africa: South African Theological Seminary Press.

Fernández-Armesto, Felipe (2009). "Prologue: Conceptualizing Conversion in Global Perspective: from Late Antique to Early Modern," in Calvin B. Kendall, Oliver Nicholson, William D. Phillips, Jr., and Marguerite Ragnow, eds., *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age: Considering the Process in Europe, Asia, and the Americas*. Minnesota Studies in Early Modern History 1, Ed., Edward L. Farmer. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for Early Modern History, 13-44.

Goodman, Martin (1994). *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hillman, Eugene (1993). *Toward an African Christianity: Inculturation Applied*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press.

Hodgson, Dorothy L. (2011). *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Hoehler-Fatton, Cynthia (1996). *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Holy Bible, New International Version: Containing the Old Testament and the New Testament (1984). International Bible Society.

Hull, Bill (2016). *Conversion and Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

Ikenga-Metuh, Emefie (1987). "The Shattered Microcosm: A Critical Survey of Explanations of Conversion in Africa," in Kirsten Holst Petersen, ed., *Religion, Development and African Identity*. Seminar Proceedings 17. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies., 11-27

Kenyatta, Jomo (1961). *Facing Mount Kenya: The traditional life of the Gikuyu*. London: Mercury Books. (Previously published by Secker & Warburg, 1938.)

Kinoti, Hannah Wangeci (2010). *African Ethics: Gĩkũyũ Traditional Morality*. Studies in Intercultural Philosophy 19, ed., G. Wakuraya Wanjohi, with Gerald J. Wanjohi. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Kling, David W. (2014). "Conversion to Christianity," Chapter 27 in Rambo R. Lewis and Charles E. Farhadian, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 598-631.

_____ (2020). *A History of Christian Conversion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ole Kulet, Henry R. (1971). *Is It Possible?* Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers.

Lamphear, John (1993). "Aspects of 'Becoming Turkana': Interactions & Assimilation Between Maa- & Ateker-Speakers," Chapter 4 in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds., *Being Maasai*. Eastern African Studies. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 87–104.

Landman, Christina and Hannelie Yates (2017). "Africanity and research: A case study in rural South Africa." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(4): Article 4775, 9 pages.

Lekundayo, Godwin (2013). *The Cosmic Christ: Towards Effective Mission Among the Maasai*. Regnum Studies in Mission. Oxford: Regnum.

Mbua, Abigael Wangari (2018). "The Kikuyu Conceptualization of Adoption: A Cognitive Grammar Approach" *Impact: Journal of Transformation* 1(1): 90–121.

Mburu, Elizabeth (2018). *African Hermeneutics*. Nairobi: HippoBooks.

Mol, Frans (1996). *Maasai Language and Culture*. Lemek, Kenya: Maasai Centre Lemek.

Neckebrouck, Valeer (1993). *Resistant Peoples: The Case of the Pastoral Maasai of East Africa.* Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures XIV. Rome: Editrice Potificia Universita Gregoriana.

_____ (2002). *Le Maasai et le Christianism: Le temps du grand refus*. Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia XLI. Leuven: Peeters.

Nkesela, Zephania Shila (2020). *A Maasai Encounter with the Bible: Nomadic Lifestyle as a Hermeneutic Question*. Bible and Theology in Africa 30. New York: Peter Lang.

Oden, Thomas C. (2007). *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books.

_____ (2011). *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic.

O'Sullivan, Tomás (2016). "Christianity and the European Conversions," Chapter 5 in Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond, eds., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*. Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 54-66.

Priest, Doug, Jr. (1990). *Doing Theology with the Maasai*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library.

Shaw, Mark (2010). *Global Awakening: How 20th-Century Revivals Triggered a Christian Revolution*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic.

Sundkler, Bengt and Steed, Christopher (2004). *A History of Christianity in Africa*. Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia 74. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rambo, Lewis R. and Farhadian, Charles E. (2014). "Introduction," in Rambo R. Lewis and Charles E. Farhadian, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-22.

Rigby, Peter (1989). "Ideology, Religion, and Ilparakuyo-Maasai Resistance to Capitalist Penetration" *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 23(3): 416–440.

Sanneh, Lamin (2003). *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Sobania, Neal W. (2003). *Culture and Customs of Kenya*. Culture and Customs of Africa. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Spear, Thomas and Waller, Richard, eds. (1993). *Being Maasai*. Eastern African Studies. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Strayer, Robert. "Mission History in Africa: New Perspectives on an Encounter," in Brendan Carmody, ed., *Religious Conversion: An African Perspective*. Lusaka, Zambia: Gadsen Publishers, 2018, 5-26. (An earlier version of this paper was published in *African Studies Review* 19 (1976): 1–15.)

Taber, Charles R. (1991). *The World is Too Much with Us: Culture in Modern Protestant Missions*. The Modern Mission Era, 1792–1992: An Appraisal. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press.

Talle, Aud (2004). "Adoption practices among the pastoral Maasai of East Africa: Enacting fertility," Chapter 5 in Fiona Bowie, ed., *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Adoption*. European Association of Social Anthropologists. New York: Routledge, 64-78.

Thomas, Guy Alexander (2001). "Why Do We Need the White Man's God? African Contributions and Responses to the Formation of a Christian Movement in Cameroon, 1914-1968." PhD Dissertation. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Available online at https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/29549/1/10731705.pdf (accessed 17 February 2021).

Van der Merwe, Dirk (2016). "From Christianising Africa to Africanising Christianity: Some hermeneutical principles" *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 2(2): 559–587.

Waller, Richard (1993). "Acceptees & Aliens: Kikuyu Settlement in Maasailand," Chapter 11 in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds., *Being Maasai*. Eastern African Studies. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 226-257.

Walls, Andrew F. (2004). "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28(1): 2–6.

_____ (2010). "World Christianity and the Early Church," Chapter 1 in Akintunde E. Akinade, ed., *A New Day: Essays in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*. New York: Peter Lang, 17-30.

_____ (2012). "Worldviews and Christian Conversion" Chapter 11 in John Corrie and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in Context: Explorations Inspired by J. Andrew Kirk*. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 155-166.

_____ (2016). "The Transmission of Christian Faith," Chapter 51 in Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond, eds., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*. Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 685-698.

_____ (2017). *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity*. Mark R. Gornik, ed. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

_____ (2018). "New Testament Background of Conversion." WC 970 (Culture and Conversion) PhD seminar lecture, Centre for World Christianity, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Africa International University, Nairobi, 12 March.

Wright, Christopher J. H. (2004). "Implications of Conversion in the Old Testament and the New" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28(1): 14–19.

Yong, Amos (2010). "*Many* Tongues, *Many* Practices: Pentecost and Theology of Mission at 2010." Chapter 4 in Ogbu U. Kalu, Peter Vethanayagamony, and Edmund See-Fook Chia, eds., *Mission after Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 43-58.

[1] The title intentionally draws on the influential 1993 volume edited by Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, *Being Maasai*.

[2] For a discussion on the use of the term 'africanity,' ref. Landman and Yates 2017.

[3] Citing T. S. Maluleke, "Half a century of African Christian Theologies," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 7.

[4] I am not sure how well he learned the Maa language, as he states that Maa lacks a future tense (Donovan 2003, 61), which is not quite accurate. There are other inaccuracies with his reports of the Maa language as well.

[5] E.g., the verbs ἀλλάσσω *(allássō)*, διερμηνεύω *(diermēneúō)*, ἐπιστρέφω *(epistréphō)*, ἑρμηνεύω *(hermēneúō)*, μεταμέλομαι *(metamélomai)*, μεταμορφόω *(metamorphóō)*, μετανοέω *(metanoéō)*, and μετασχηματίζω *(metaskhēmatídzō)* and the nouns ἐπίλυσις *(epílusis)*, ἐπιστροφή *(epistrophē)*, ἑρμηνεία *(hermēneía)*, μετάθεσις *(metáthesis)*, μεταμόρφωσις *(metamórphōsis)*, μετάνοια *(metánoia)*, and τροπή *(tropē)*.

[6] BSM1991, jointly published by The Bible Society of Kenya and The Bible Society of Tanzania, was translated from the English *Revised Standard Version* with occasional reference to the English *Good News Bible* (sometimes referred to as *Today's English Version*) without any recourse to the biblical languages. The corrected edition (BSM2018), released by The Bible Society of Kenya in 2018, did refer to the Hebrew and Greek, but this was one of the many suggested corrections which was not included. (Disclosure: I served as a translation consultant for BSM2018.) Both versions were ecumenical endeavors, with participants from Protestant mission churches, the Roman Catholic Church, AICs (African independent churches / African-initiated churches), and Pentecostal churches.

[7] I am especially indebted to Francis ole Yenko, a Maasai of Olepishet near Naroosura and a dear friend and colleague, for helping me recognize the distinction between *oloyela* ('the one about to be anointed') and *oloyelieki / oloyelaki* ('the anointed one,' denoting the cross-cultural adoptee).

[8] For insightful narratives of this tension from the perspective of a Maasai writer, see the novels of Henry R. ole Kulet, especially *Is It Possible?*

[9] This insight was pointed out to me by my wife, Ruth Elizabeth Barron, who has spent more time with the Maasai mamas than I. It has since been confirmed to us by a number of Maasai, both husbands and wives.

God's Plan for the Fullness of Time: Overhauling Ralph Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" Models (Part II)[1]

J. Nelson Jennings

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Abstract

Over the past half-century, Dr. Ralph Winter (1924-2009) shaped the framework, goals, and strategies of evangelical missions more than any other single missiologist. Winter's monumental presentation at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, entitled "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," steered the focus of evangelical missions away from converting individuals and their countries to reaching people groups. Winter argued persuasively that distances missionaries needed to traverse were cultural more than geographical. The concept of two ongoing structures he termed sodalities and modalities, along with his identification of modern missions' "closure" trait, are only two of many other seminal insights that reinforced Winter's expansive influence.

Related were Winter's two historical models that have influenced evangelical missiology. His "Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement" has especially shaped Evangelicals' historical sensibilities; Winter's broader "Ten Epochs of Redemptive History" links with and supports the "Three Eras" model. Both of these models substantiate Evangelicals' expectation that today is both the final missions era and the age of Jesus's return. As such, Winter's "Three Eras" has provided evangelical missiologists and missions mobilizers a useful historical framework for inspiring fellow Christians to become involved in today's missions movement.

These "Eras" and "Epochs" models have undoubtedly galvanized evangelical missions with easily understandable historical metanarratives necessary to sustain any movement. They convey a passion and spirit to be cultivated and treasured. Even so, the models seemingly de-emphasize important biblical-theological themes. Moreover, due to contextual changes the models appear to have inadequate capacity for current historical sensibilities as well as the kind of theocentric and worldwide-collaborative character required for future mission movements.

Divided into three parts, this study conducts an overhaul of the two models to see what repairs and enhancements might be needed. Part I introduces the models, including their general context and basic components. Important influences on the models' formations are noted in Part II, leading into an analysis of the models' contextual moorings, traits, and limitations for wider use. Part III then considers viable courses of action, including commending features of more adequate historical models for Evangelicals to consider for moving forward. Recognition of the inherent limitations of all human constructs for explaining God's "plan for the fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:10) concludes the study.

Key Words: context, iterations, limitations, mobilization

Influences on the Models

Ralph Winter understood himself to be a "scholar-activist" (Winter 2004, xviii). All of his missions models arose out of an impressive breadth and depth of scholarship. Just as important was Winter's active involvement in Christian missions. Indeed, Winter's activist side was a, if not *the,* primary

driving force behind the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" frameworks. Winter's active Christian missions service involved stimuli and interactions that catalyzed his understanding and message.

Contemporary Catalysts

Winter rolled out both models in close connection with founding the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) and its associated organs, as well as with pivotal meetings with mission executives (EFMA in 1979, Edinburgh in 1980). That flurry of activity came in the wake of a decade of teaching at Fuller School of World Mission, which had followed a decade of missionary service, including creating a Theological Education by Extension system, in Guatemala (Frontier Ventures 2020a; Huckaby 2013). Ralph Winter's missions service drove the formulation of his historical models.

Mobilizing Christians for frontier missions was a laser focus for Winter and his various formulations. Winter's awareness of the need for frontier missions among unreached peoples was piqued during his ten years of missionary work among the Mam, a Mayan people in Guatemala's Western highlands largely ignored by the national Latino church (Huckaby 2013; Winter 2008, 2). During the ensuing decade of teaching at Fuller, Winter learned through missionaries doing masters and doctoral studies, then himself beginning to write, about "thousands of minority groups in every country [that] were still walled off from missions by the tendency of many missions to assume that the churches they established could easily bridge the many ethnic differences which make most countries into a linguistic mosaic" (Winter 2008, 2). Regarding that same theme on a macro-structural level, Winter personally reported on the 1961 amalgamation of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches, then four decades later published his analysis of that 1961 event—which he termed "the gravest transition in mission cooperative structure in the 20th Century" (Winter 1999c; Winter 2003).

Winter saw a "slow, massive, agonizing transition between a Second Era and a Third (and final) Era" of Protestant missions, in which "the partnership and participation stages of the Second Era confusingly overlap and tend to obscure the logic of the pioneer and paternal stages of the emerging Third Era" (Winter 1981b). To promote understanding and mobilize pioneer missionaries for frontier missions, in 1976 Winter founded the USCWM, "a vast 'implementation annex' to the Fuller School of World Mission" (Winter 2008, 2). Having taught the "Historical Development of the Christian Movement" for ten years at Fuller (Winter 2004, xvii), Winter again "intuitively drew on historical analysis as a tool for mission" (Gill 2016, 3) by rolling out both of his historical models to compel Evangelicals to serve in frontier missions. Winter's conclusions to his models' essays call for participation: "The Kingdom Strikes Back" cites Matthew 24:14, "The Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples, and then shall the end come"; the last sentence of the "Three [Four] Eras" essays' concluding "Can We Do It?" sections proclaim, "No generation has less excuse than ours if we do not do as He asks." Winter generated both models to help mobilize Evangelicals for frontier missions.

Winter's immediate forerunners Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran were also vitally important stimuli for how Winter's historical models took shape. Specifically regarding the "Three Eras" scheme, Winter had studied and taught about William Carey and Hudson Taylor as historical missionary figures. In the cases of Townsend and McGavran, however, Winter directly entered the same concrete settings where these two missionary statesmen, both three decades his senior, served. Swimming personally in Townsend's and McGavran's same ministry streams persuaded

Winter quickly to add them—first Townsend, then McGavran—as the two pioneers for modern missions' third and final era of reaching hidden/unreached peoples.

Winter's missionary service in the Western highlands of Guatemala among the Mam people was "the precise place, we were told, where Presbyterian missionaries told Cameron Townsend that it was of little use distributing Bible portions in Spanish to people whose mother tongue was radically different…. [H]e was the young man later called affectionately 'Uncle Cam,' who ... established today's marvelous Wycliffe Bible Translators," knocking down linguistic barriers to gospel ministry among UPGs (Winter 2008, 2). Winter's personal acquaintance with Townsend's legacy was strong enough to persuade him to add an important feature to what he had already added in an earlier version about Townsend's ministry, namely that "He was befriended by a group of older missionaries who had already concluded the indigenous 'Indian' populations needed to be reached in their own languages" (Winter 1981c, 174; Winter 1992b, B—41).

Winter acknowledged McGavran to have been central to the USCWM's eventual founding through McGavran's move to Fuller Seminary in 1965 to establish the School of World Mission. "For ten years, from 1966, I [Winter] was a witness to what that move meant, since I was the first additional faculty member appointed, arriving in the new school's second year. The worldwide respect McGavran had already gained drew students rapidly and the school soon possessed the largest missiological faculty and student body in the world" (Winter 2008, xvii). Late in life, Winter introduced a volume of his collected writings by noting, "If there is any one looming figure from whom I have gained many clues and encouragement it would be Donald A. McGavran, now deceased, a third-generation missionary to India" (Winter 2008, ix). It is no wonder, then, that Winter's description of McGavran's fundamental and vital pioneering role in the third era of modern missions included the grand claims, "McGavran's active efforts and writings spawned both the church growth movement and the frontier mission movement, the one devoted to expanding within already penetrated groups, and the other devoted to deliberate approaches to the remaining unpenetrated groups." (Winter 1981c, 175).

Clearly Townsend and McGavran were key figures in shaping Winter's "Three Eras" scheme. Winter's later emphasis on "Kingdom Mission" was also an important catalyst, even if this focus was not integral to either historical model, particularly their original formulations. However, as noted earlier Winter's later revisions of both models (particularly "Three Eras") was very much affected by his interest in combating evil, including eradicating disease, a passion that arose after his first wife Roberta was diagnosed in 1996 with a rare form of terminal bone cancer called multiple myeloma (Roberta Winter Institute n.d.b; Fickett 2012, 127ff.). Roberta died in 2001, soon after which Winter established the Roberta Winter Institute with a mission "To ignite in the body of Christ a theological shift regarding disease and its eradication" (Roberta Winter Institute n.d.a). Soon afterward Winter was diagnosed with the same multiple myeloma, continuing to provide him impetus for pursuing mission as "destroying the works of the devil." Winter's voluminous output of scholarship and writings continued until his death in 2009, including through editing the IJFM 2001-2008 (International Journal of Frontier Missions n.d.) and, as noted earlier, adjusting his historical models accordingly.

Contextual Moorings and Traits

The models' contemporary catalysts, purposes, and influences motivated Winter against the backdrop of his prior development. Ralph Winter also described himself as a "Christian social engineer" (Time Staff 2005). Winter had grown up watching his father Hugo work and teach as an

engineer, then he studied civil engineering himself at California Institute of Technology University (Fickett 2012, Chapter 2; Noland 2009). His adulthood shift to Christian ministry and mission studies utilized the skills and instincts of his engineering background. It should be no surprise that Winter engineered his historical models out of analytical approaches, methodologies, and tools developed throughout his childhood and early adult years.

Historical Framework

Using those tools, Winter engineered both the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" models out of his foundational historical framework. It should be noted that any attempt to tease out Winter's assumed (i.e., unarticulated) framework should recognize that, like in most any other field, Winter was progressive and generally ahead of his contemporaries in his sense of history. Moreover, those close to Winter knew that "he was different and would think and act in counter-intuitive ways from those around him" (Parsons 2012, 38). As an engineer by upbringing Winter may have indeed been "a Johnny-come-lately to history," but his complexity and ingenuity prevents him from being easily "pigeonholed" within a familiar historical approach (Gill 2016, 3).

In terms of his historical views, then, Winter would not have been simply and mindlessly stuck in a common but outdated Euro-centric view of world history, or of Christian history. Indeed, Winter's writings demonstrate that he had a broadly informed, wide-ranging historical sense that gave substance to the influential models of redemptive history and modern missions history under consideration here. To complicate matters further, Winter's understanding of history—including cosmic, biblical, and human—never stopped developing, including through his later years as he doggedly sought to integrate scientific and biblical metanarratives of the cosmos (Fickett 2012, 140-153).

Even with its multifaceted contours and never-ending development, however, Winter's historical sensibilities reflect his particular U.S.-American context and era. No human being develops in a vacuum, and even the most broad-minded and widely experienced thinkers have concrete heritages, models, and inputs that help shape them. In Winter's case, his lifelong home was Pasadena, California; his godly parents and two brothers were central components of his stable and evangelical-presbyterian Christian upbringing; and, his studies in civil engineering and in theology, sandwiched around eight months in the U.S. Navy in 1945, broadened and deepened what he learned while growing up from his engineering and military veteran father, godly mother, and other Christian mentors (Parsons 2012, 33-79).

From his life setting and writings, at least four marks of Winter's context and era that characterize his historical framework, and hence the two models specifically under consideration here, can be discerned.

First, despite tantalizing indications otherwise, throughout his writings and models Winter's overall approach to history is Western-based and even U.S.-based. To cite one representative example from his most focused publication on the "Ten Epochs" model, "The Kingdom Strikes Back," Winter hints at approaching the subject based on a worldwide outlook, most especially in referencing "world population" at the time of Abraham as well as "surviving documents that are respected by Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions" (Winter 2009a, 7). Even so, Winter follows the innocuous qualification, "In the space available ... it is only possible" by proceeding "to outline the Western part of the story of the kingdom striking back" (Winter 2009a, 10). More accurate

would have been something like, "Based on what is most familiar and important to me, I will outline the Western part of the story."

Given a similar dearth of attention to non-Western history(ies) elsewhere in Winter's writings (apart from where the missions movement enters those histories), his implicit but foundational Western-based historical view—certainly of human history—is clear. In setting the stage for the essay's culminating challenge to U.S.-American Evangelicals to join the frontier missions challenge, Winter notes, "Clearly we face the reaction of an awakened non-Western world that is suddenly beyond our control"—connoting a view of the world outside the West having been inactive and asleep (Winter 2009a, 11). Later in the same "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay, Winter's references to "our own country" and "we in the West" (Winter 2009a, 23) further reveal his assumed view of history underlying his description of redemptive history. Even in his cutting-edge emphases on non-Western missions, Winter celebrates "new" and "national" missionaries as additional recruits for the modern missions enterprise that can also help to overcome hindrances erected by "the prolonged educational experience which we have come to prize so highly" in "our American educational system" (Winter 1983).

As Winter added to and later revised his "Three Eras" model, the ten pioneers and influential individuals he added consisted of two eighteenth-century Englishmen, Wesley and Whitefield, and eight U.S.-Euro-American men. Given that Winter was born and bred in a U.S.-Euro-American setting, his Western, U.S.-based approach to history is not surprising.

A second mark consists of the contemporary historians that Winter most deeply appreciated, trusted, and commended to others. For his "pioneering" 1974 "The Historical Development of the Christian Movement" course at Fuller School of World Mission (Kraft 2013, 94), Winter's four recommended textbooks were Christopher Dawson's 1958 *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, a different survey of (Western) medieval history, and two on Christian mission history, one each by Stephen Neill and Kenneth Scott Latourette (Dawson 1958; McEvedy 1961; Neill 1964; Latourette 1970). Perhaps even more telling were the four *required* textbooks: three by Winter (one of those co-authored with R. Pierce Beaver) and "the basic text" listed first, Latourette's 1953 *A History of Christianity* (Latourette 1953; Winter and Beaver 1970; Winter 1973; 1974). Winter's comments in the syllabus note the improvements of Latourette's 1953 volume over his magisterial seven-volume *Expansion* set (Latourette's textbook recommended for the course) that had been written with "great detachment," namely that the 1953 *History* included "devotional and spiritual dimensions … beautifully and even adds a wealth of information on the monastic movement…." (Winter 1974a, 3-5). Winter had actually encountered the Yale historian when Latourette contributed lectures to his wife Roberta's and his missionary training for Guatemala. That contact not only launched what his close colleague Charles Kraft described as Winter's "major interest in and commitment to a unique approach to the history of the Christian movement, looking at that history as a missionary enterprise that is always expanding," but also, and even more fundamentally, "Winter lit his history candle at the fire of Kenneth Scott Lautorette" (Kraft 2013, 91, 94).

Winter especially picked up on Latourette's observation of "resurgences" and "recessions" in Christian history. The "resurgences" have matched, in Winter's view, corresponding "renaissances" that have occurred, first in Western history and more recently globally in connection with Christian missions (Winter 2009a, 21). Elsewhere Winter notes, "A good way to

tell that [same] story is in 400-year epochs; each beginning in chaos or extreme difficulty and ending in a flourishing of the Gospel in a new cultural basin" (Winter 2009e, 29).

Christopher Dawson was "a Catholic historian [and] a giant of an intellect" whose writings, Winter testified late in life, provided "one of the major turning points in my understanding of the fact that our [Christian, perhaps U.S.-American/Western?] religion, our faith, our people, our church, our activities, really are forming and developing our whole world and society" (Winter 2009c, 22). Winter clearly drank deeply from the wells of Lautorette, Dawson, and a select group of other contemporary Western historians. At the same time, along with Lautorette's "basic text" Winter required three of his own writings for Fuller's pivotal missions history course, "The Historical Development of the Christian Movement." Winter's historical framework included a deep sense that he himself had unique contributions to make to understanding history, particularly that of the Christian movement.

A third contextually identifiable mark of Winter's historical framework concerns his intriguing understanding of Israel's obligation, and in turn the obligation of nations blessed by the gospel after Jesus's first coming, to bless other nations. Perhaps various Christian understandings in his day of the 1948 constitution of the modern state of Israel played a role in Winter's viewpoint. More certain would have been the ubiquitous role played by the heritage of a European Christendom that shaped Westerners' instincts that European people and nations (and their offspring) were Christian and others were not. In any case, Winter understood that, just as Israel had been called to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant "to be a blessing to all families of the earth," so was it that after Jesus's time "the other nations are both blessed and *similarly called*" (Winter 2009a, 9; emphasis original). Awkwardly juxtaposed with Winter's understanding, expressed otherwise, that the international Church (comprised of both modalities and sodalities) was obligated to convey the gospel to all peoples is his explanation of so-called Christian nations' obligation to succeed Old Covenant Israel in doing so. Winter's trend of taking innovative approaches nevertheless bears contextual marks of his era.

Finally, the fact that both of Winter's historical models included what Winter often described as a "closure theology" showed the contextual conflation of technological advances, worldwide Christian growth, and eschatological expectations associated with A.D. 2000. Here are Winter's own words, published in 2002:

> The word 'closure' refers simply to the idea of finishing. In the 1970s, the Lord began to open the eyes of many to the fact that the irreducibly essential mission task of a breakthrough in every people group was a completable task. At the time, over half of the world's population lived within unreached people groups. Even so, a small group of mission activists had the faith to believe that if a movement could be mobilized to focus attention on the unreached peoples, which for a time were called 'hidden peoples,' then the essential mission task could be completed within a few decades. In faith, they coined the watchword 'A Church for Every People by the Year 2000' to capture the essence of the completable nature of the mission mandate (Winter and Koch 2002, 21).

The first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization had built "Great Momentum" in 1974 (Winter and Koch 2002, 23), further spurring Winter on to spearhead a coordinated strategizing movement he called "'Mission 2000': Towards a Strategy of Closure" (Winter 1985a). Shifting the focus of missions to a measurable task of reaching unreached peoples helped to fuel the hope of closure and completing the Great Commission (Johnson 2001, 83-84). These initiatives were

just some of the enthusiasm and confidence budding from what statistics and eschatological expectation strongly suggested: mission activists could actually "fulfill Jesus' mandate to have a 'witness' among every people, or in other words to 'disciple all the nations' (Matt 24:14; 28:19,20). We can confidently speak of closure to this unreached peoples mission" (Winter and Koch 2002, 21).

Winter distanced himself (and tried to distance others as well) from pinning hopes on Jesus's Second Coming occurring in A.D. 2000. As he put it in the mid-1980s, "We must not *predict* the return of Christ, but we must *prepare* for his return" (Winter 1985b, 219; emphases original). Winter further explained, "No one I know is trying to *predict* when Jesus will return, but many are convinced that it is *possible* for every tribe and tongue and nation to have a resident church community by the year 2000, a goal which might be one of the bases for the return of Christ" (Winter 1986, 68). Winter's engineering analysis calculated that the task was doable, even while offering disclaimers about the specific Y2K eschatological hope that was widely embraced.

In sum, Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" historical models arose within his discernable historical framework that was Western-/U.S.-based, shaped by select Western historians (including himself), tied to a European Christendom-conditioned sense of national obligation, and bounded by a contextually developed "closure theology."

Engineering Design

Along with Winter's underlying sense of history was an engineering design methodology that produced his many influential diagrams, including those for the two historical models this study is overhauling. A scientific mentality could also be pinpointed here, particularly since "Science inquiry and engineering design use similar cognitive tools such as brainstorming, reasoning by analogy, mental models, and visual representations." In Winter's case, however, the engineering goal of changing the world by finding solutions overshadows the scientist's process of discovering rules that provide explanations of observed patterns (National Academy of Engineering 2020). Both the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" models seek scientifically to explain observed patterns in redemptive and missions history, respectively. More than simply providing explanations, however, was Winter's motive to mobilize Christians to help reach the models' ending arcs, namely the "Ends of the Earth" and "Unreached Peoples."

An initially striking feature of each model's diagram is their geometric symmetry, perhaps indebted to their engineering design. There is also a balance between the explanations given of each arc within each model. Winter qualifies the "Ten Epochs" scheme by commenting that the succession of "400-year 'epochs' is designed to be easy to remember, not to determine the reality of history" (Winter 2009a, 21). However it was that Winter designed the model to "determine," "remember," or reflect actual history, one can almost see some of the bridgework that Ralph Winter's father Hugo would have helped design for the Los Angeles freeway system or that Winter himself had studied in civil engineering at CalTech (Fickett 2012, Ch. 2; Frontier Ventures 2020b).

Winter's evolving articles about each model demonstrate the aforementioned conceptual tools of "brainstorming, reasoning by analogy, mental models, and visual representations" he clearly used in pulling the models together. Winter did not develop the two models and their diagrams initially as hypotheses to be tested as historical explanations. Rather, as Winter carried out his wide-ranging studies in TESL, linguistics, anthropology, mathematical statistics, and theology, then served for ten years as a missionary among the Mam people in Guatemala, then began to

teach missions history back in Southern California, his earlier imbibed engineering instincts and studies equipped him to wrestle through formulating schematic historical backdrops against which he could wholeheartedly give himself to the missions task of "Catalyzing Kingdom Breakthrough" through the USCWM starting in 1976 (Frontier Ventures 2020b).

Winter's self-description as a "Christian social engineer" is no more evident than in his "Ten Epochs of Redemptive History" and "Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement" graphics. Their simple, elegant designs emerged out of painstaking study, discussions, experience, and heartfelt striving after solutions. Having had his eyes opened in the 1970s "to the fact that the irreducibly essential mission task of a breakthrough in every people group was a completable task," Winter designed these two historical models to show Christians the necessity, significance, and urgency of their involvement in reaching the world's remaining unreached peoples.

Contextual Limitations

Ralph Winter would have been the first to acknowledge that there were limitations and inadequacies in his two historical models. Winter's revisions to the "Three Eras" model, made by integrating "Kingdom Mission" themes, is clear evidence of his realization that limiting modern missions to three eras, each of singular focus, was inadequate. While Winter never modified the "Ten Epochs" pattern—either in essay form or graphically—to the extent that he did the "Three Eras" scheme, both his minute revisions and his substantial attempt to add both Latourette's analysis and wider historical phases to the "Second Half" of the story demonstrated again that neither model is sacrosanct and beyond revision.

At the same time, Winter developed (and revised) those models as a passionate missions mobilizer and astute scholar. They were part of his "means," to use Carey's (and Winter's) term, to convey the urgent need for zealous missions participation. There are good reasons why Winter and those who have learned from him have used the models as part of their missions efforts.

In order for this study to press ahead with its overhaul of Winter's two models, exploring five contextual, limiting traits is a necessary next step.

Western Viewpoints

Ralph Winter was a brilliant and widely read scholar with eclectic interests and worldwide connections. He also lived his entire life in the Americas, all but ten years in the United States of America (mostly in Southern California). All of his family members and the vast majority of his ministry and scholarly colleagues were fellow English-speaking U.S.-Euro-Americans. Since the creator of the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" models was so decidedly rooted in the U.S. and the West, the models as well assuredly bear unmistakably Western traits. It is no wonder that the earliest publication of the models begins and concludes with an analogy of when "a startled world stepped hesitantly into the space age" with a 1961 U.S. satellite launch (Winter 1979), although "the world's" actual first satellite launch was in 1957 by the Soviet Union, Sputnik 1.

The models' Western historical frameworks and having been shaped by Western historians' emphases has already been noted. Given those roots, both models clearly developed an approach to redemptive, missions, and world history that assumes Western—and often U.S.-American—centrality. Visually, the final arc in each model's diagram continues the previous arc's reach to non-Western peoples (from the West); the verbal explanations in later versions of the "Three Eras" diagram of "Non-Western dominance" and a "Non-geographic" strategy have trouble dislodging

the visual connotation of Western missionaries going to non-Western heathens (Winter 1999b, 259). Models with a more worldwide or universal fabric would look quite different, as explored later.

Objections to such an analysis could take several different forms, first in relation to the "Ten Epochs" model. One objection would point out that redemptive history since the time of Jesus has taken place primarily in (and from) the West, in terms of both numbers and societal effect. In fact, however, substantial Christian histories have taken place eastward over the centuries quite apart from Western Christian history, especially before (but also after) the seventh-century birth and spread of Islam. The latest, 2009 fourth edition of the Perspectives reader seeks to rectify the previous readers' (and two models') unwarranted Western historical imbalance (Winter and Hawthorne 1981, 1992, 1999, 2009). Winter even hints that the "Second Half" portion of the "Ten Epochs" story could have focused (at least some) on Eastern Christian history with the innocuous quip, "In the space available ... it is only possible to outline the Western part of the story of the kingdom striking back" (Winter 2009a, 10). Moreover, "redemptive" history is not necessarily restricted to "Christian" history (nor to "church" history); discussing that point would move this study too far afield, particularly insofar as it correlates with various understandings of how God's dealings with the world are, or are not, connected with Christian presence.

Another "Ten Epochs" model-related objection might point to the global reach of "the Ends of the Earth" during the last epoch. A quick retort would point out further that the Western base of the model is evident in that last epoch's movement "*to* the [non-Western] Ends of the Earth," i.e., from the Western center (in Acts 1:8 language, "Jerusalem"). Yet another objection, in specific connection with the "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay, would highlight the early and late references to the "immeasurably strengthened non-Western world … that is suddenly beyond our control" and could possibly "invade Europe and America," which would be God's rejection of the self-centered West as conveyors of blessing: "God can raise up others if we falter" (Winter 2009a, 11, 23). An answer would agree that Winter's models have an inherently Christian commitment to the gospel and Christ's Kingdom that ultimately supersedes any loyalty to one's own people or group; but, the Western limitation of the model comes through in the essay's consistent identification of "we" with "Westerners" or "U.S.-Americans." (This particular discussion will continue further below under a separate heading.)

Second, objections related to the "Three Eras" model's alleged Western-centeredness might first point to actual historical realities that modern missions were Western-originated and initiated; that movements progressed as the model describes and shows; and, that missionaries (until well into the Third Era) were Westerners. A more thorough response to this objection will come later. For now, suffice it to reply that the mission receivers over recent generations need more explicit space than in relation to other (Western) Christians' awareness of them; and, in actual fact many "modern" missionaries and missions initiatives have been non-Western.

A further objection might point out that non-Western missions are explicitly highlighted as a main characteristic of the Third Era; as shown earlier, iterations of the model's graphic progress from asking "Third World dominance?" to stating "Non-Western dominance." Indeed, this objection might continue, Winter was one of the first mission leaders to promote and celebrate non-Western missions (Winter 1983). This objection is important for appreciating the combined limitations and usefulness of the "Three Eras" model. The Western-centered character of seeing non-Western missionaries as new recruits to the modern missions enterprise was noted earlier. At

the same time, Ralph Winter's zeal, ingenuity, lifelong learning, and breadth of missions awareness have woven worldwide threads into his models for present and future missions.

In addition to explanations given earlier, the limited, Western character of each model's history is manifested in various ways, some explicit and some subtle. Non-Western peoples, except for their missions roles in the "Third Era," are absent, objectified as geographic or linguistic-social groups, or "hidden" from or "unreached" by Western Christians. That is, the histories presented have no active non-Western participants—except those who appear by group description in relation to Western Christians, including the late reinforcements for the dwindling missions task force that will finish the missions task. The models' mobilizing purpose connects here. As the prelude to the earliest 1979 publication of the "Three Eras" history appeals, "The concentrated paragraphs below contain an urgent message we hope you will take to heart and help deliver quickly to at least a million *evangelical Christians in America, people just like you,* who have accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour and have made Him the Lord of their lives" (Winter 1979, 4; emphasis mine). Even if the "Third (Final) Era" is described as involving a "Non-geographic strategy based on people groups" of going "To the Ends of the Earth" (Winter 1999b, 259), the "evangelical Christians in America" being mobilized will catch a skewed historical progression that is mis-taken from Jesus's prophetic forecast recorded in Acts 1:8—"Jerusalem [through Europe, then the U.S.] to the ends of the earth." Insofar as that skewed view of Christian history continues to be passed along (often by well-meaning Evangelicals), limitations are shackled onto all peoples who try to incorporate all of history, including their own, into their relationships with the triune God.

Alongside the Western-centered (or U.S.-centered) history inherent to each model, that limiting character was reinforced by Winter's later attempted couplings, described earlier, of on the one hand Latourette-informed "Pulses in Western Civilization" and Winter's "Renaissance" periods with the "Ten Epochs" (second half) scheme and, on the other hand, "Kingdom Mission" themes with the "Three Eras" model (Winter 2009a, 11, 21; Winter 2009b, 265). These later revised models reflect Winter's belief, informed by Christopher Dawson's writings as described earlier, that Christian churches and missions "really are forming and developing our whole world and society" (Winter 2009c, 22).

Accordingly, Winter's models embody an optimistic Western-Christian historical view of what Latourette has called Christian "Resurgences" or "Expansions" that have had a deep and comprehensive socio-political impact on settings in which Christianity has grown, most especially on Western Civilization as a whole. Hence the "Western world ... has, until this age, been [the] most prominent sponsor [of] Christian ideals." To be sure, each model opens the door for "Non-Western dominance" in the wake of "The present spectacle of a Western world flaunting the standards of Christian morality," "a decay of spirit," and Western insistence "on keeping our blessing instead of sharing it." Even so, "the tremendous energy that is mushrooming in the Third World today" is due, "Rightly understood," primarily to "Protestant missionaries, along with their Roman Catholic counterparts, [who have] led the way in establishing throughout the world the democratic apparatus of government, the schools, the hospitals, the universities and the political foundations of the new nations" (Winter 2009a, 22, 23).

Winter's optimistic view of Christian socio-political impact throughout history—and stated in his "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay on the "Ten Epochs" model, as noted immediately above—enabled him to claim that, in the sense that the non-Western world has embraced Christian ideals

through Protestant missions, "Christianity has already conquered the world" (Winter 2009a, 22). Perhaps it was Winter's European Christendom heritage, which has deeply shaped most all U.S.-Euro-Americans, that gave him such a view. Perhaps the seemingly inexorable progress of U.S.-American capitalism and political influence throughout Winter's twentieth-century lifetime played a similar role. Whatever the explanations, the limited view of history interwoven into each model has a peculiar Western and U.S.-American flavor, foreign to many others.

The second area of the models' embodiment of Western viewpoints, intertwined with the first area of history, is that of mission agents. This topic has already been touched upon and will thus require less attention here. In sum, the only active human agents or "subjects" in both models are those understood to be Christian (or Abraham and his descendants, Israel, in the first two millennia of redemptive history). Others are either objects of mission or not present at all. That characterization holds true throughout the "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay and the various versions of the "Three Eras" model. Insofar as the former only outlines "the Western part of the story"; the latter focuses on English and U.S.-American mission "pioneers"; and, both seek to recruit U.S.-American Evangelicals to frontier missions involvement, the models' active agents of missions are Western Christians.

Even when including non-Western mission agents in the Third Era, Winter notes elsewhere that "probably only in the South Pacific" had earlier (pre-1970) missions activities been taken at "the initiative of the national churches" (Winter 1983). In actuality, however, indigenous non-Western Christians had been widely instrumental in cross-cultural missions work for generations, for example nineteenth-century Sierra Leonean and other West African Christians, including Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and even Japanese Christian missionaries in Korea before Western Protestant missionaries had arrived there (Walls 2002, 160-161; Matsutani 2017). Those vast numbers of non-Western missions agents are "hidden" from the models' Western viewpoint.

More broadly, the objects of missions focus are cast as "hidden," "unreached," or passive recipients. Important for a healthy missions understanding, however, is to recognize that "the peoples of the new worlds beyond Europe [and later U.S.-America] were not passive in the encounter either with Europe [and U.S.-America] or with its faith…. The meeting with the Americas, Africa, and Asia has been equally transformative of the Christian faith" (Walls 2002, 28-29). All peoples are active subjects with respect to Christian missions, including those not yet engaged by "frontier missions" efforts (even if they are in "kingdoms of darkness" held in bondage by Satan (Winter 1996, 63-64)), those encountering but not embracing the Christian gospel, and those who believe and give witness. Even though the models' primary purpose has been to mobilize Western (U.S.-American) Christians for frontier missions, the history into which recruits are being asked to enter should include all active subjects.

Eschatological Connotation

Each model has conveyed that the current "epoch" of redemptive history and "era" of modern missions is the final one. The first two versions of "The Kingdom Strikes Back" had the subtitle, "*The* Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," and ended with the sentence, "The expanding Kingdom is not going to stop with us, 'This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples, and then shall the end come' (Matt 24:14)" (Winter 1981d, 137, 155; emphasis mine). The various iterations of the "Three Eras" essay and graphic assert that the "Third Era" is the "final" one (with only a few exceptions among the several latest versions). The model's first version points to the "last frontier" (Winter 1979, 5), and another early version ends with

Matthew 24:14 (Winter 1981a). Taken together with some of the adjustments made in later versions (noted earlier), the strong connotation is that these historical models were birthed with an eschatological expectation of Jesus's Return and the end of history.

Winter's active role in the AD 2000 Movement reinforces that same connotation. Indeed, many other participants in that movement apparently looked for the Second Coming in AD 2000 (Coote 2000, 161). Some of Winter's other remarks in the early to mid-1980s also suggest an eschatological hope tied to his models and the year 2000, e.g., "Will 1986, like 1886, be another "threshold year"—a *final* threshold just prior to the End of History? This is no idle question" (Winter 1985c, 152; emphasis original). In 1985 Winter even initiated a discussion called "'Mission 2000': Towards a Strategy of Closure," with nine "Underlying Convictions" that included, "We believe this task ['to plant the church within every people by the year 2000'] is … more readily within our grasp than ever in history, and that *the very end of history* may therefore be near" (Winter 1985a, 1; emphasis mine).

As noted earlier, Winter elsewhere explained—beginning in the mid-1980s—that "No one I know is trying to *predict* when Jesus will return" (Winter 1986, 68). Put differently in 1989, "I know of no mission leader who is confused about the difference between the Return of Christ and the completion of the task." Winter then retorts, "Let me ask you, 'In our concern to avoid setting a date for His Return must we give up the thought of setting any goals at all, until we have coasted safely past the 2000 mark? Is this the only decade in which we are not allowed to benefit by setting goals for prominent future dates?'" (Winter 1989b).

Along the same line, "The leaders of the ["AD2000 and Beyond," the revised name] Movement neither predict nor prophesy 'closure' by the year 2000. But they are calling the church to face realistically its commission to make disciples of all peoples and to pursue that priority with greater zeal and unity than ever before" (AD2000 and Beyond Movement 1999). Similar to the AD 2000 Movement's leadership, Winter explained (in the mid-1980s) that, strategically speaking, "many are convinced that it is *possible* for every tribe and tongue and nation to have a resident church community by the year 2000, a goal which might be one of the bases for the return of Christ" (Winter 1986, 68; emphasis original). Winter's related revisions to the "Kingdom Strikes Back" essay and "Ten Epochs" model, similar to his just-mentioned explanations, likely were either in response to questions and criticisms he received, indicative of some changes in his own understanding, or perhaps both.

In 1990 there were reportedly "more than 2000 different evangelization plans by Christian organizations and denominations focused on the year 2000" (AD2000 and Beyond Movement 1999). Clearly eschatological expectations were involved. Winter's two historical models reinforced many Christians' hopes for a Y2K Second Coming. That connection was (and still is) a limitation, given that many other Christians have not shared those same specific eschatological hopes or understandings. Kenneth Latourette, in the very textbook Winter assigned to his students at Fuller, expressed the diversity of Christians' eschatological understandings—and by implication the limitations of conveying a conviction of only one option: "What is to be the end of the story? That the course of Christianity on the planet has only recently begun is evident. Is it only at its beginning? Is history to go on until all human society, within history, and all individuals within it fully conform to God's ideal for men? Or is God to bring history suddenly to an end, perhaps at an early date? Here Christians have not agreed" (Latourette 1953, 1476).

Scientific Infrastructure

"Engineering design" was elucidated earlier as one of the models' contextual traits. Winter wanted to solve the problems of U.S.-American Evangelicals' being oblivious to, and hence uninvolved in missions endeavors for, unreached people groups. Part of engineering a solution was to design the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" historical models as compelling interpretations "of the *advancement* of God's kingdom" (Gill 2016, 4) that Christians should excitedly feel constrained to join.

Since scientific inquiry and engineering design share such cognitive tools as "mental models and visual representations" (National Academy of Engineering 2020), the models' scientific makeup or infrastructure is another limitation to be considered. On the one hand, part of Winter's genius was his dogged pursuit of integrating scientific and biblical explanations. One strength of the two models under consideration here is the integration of scientific, biblical, historical, and missiological insights. At the same time, the specifically scientific underpinnings of the models—perhaps the "Three Eras" model more so—limit their capacities to convey God's redemptive-missional dealings with his world. This limitation is compounded when people who are not as scientifically trained or driven as Winter encounter the models and attempt to follow them, use them for instruction, or critique them.

The models' scientific infrastructures are striking. Both models have a mathematical symmetry, first arithmetically. The "Ten Epochs" model has equal halves of 2,000 years before and after the historical midpoint, and each half is divided into five "roughly" equal 400-year "epochs." Although more difficult to achieve because of ties to specific years, the "Three Eras" model also exhibits arithmetical symmetry with near-equal completed first and second eras (118 and 115 years) and transition periods (45 and 46 years). These arithmetical symmetries are articulated and refined, starting in the earliest versions of each model (Winter 1979, 4; Winter 1981b; Winter 1981d, 138-141).

A second mathematical symmetry is geometrical. In "The Kingdom Strikes Back" essay, God gives "His own Son *at the very center* of the 4000-year period" (Winter 2009a, 7; emphasis mine). The models' geometric symmetries appear visually (including as representations of the arithmetical symmetries just described) in the various iterations of graphics presented earlier. A subtle variation that reflects the geometric precision employed is the gradually increasing sizes of arcs representing the five epochs during the story's second half (0-2000). (The clarity of the changing sizes increases with advancing technology from the first (1981) version to the second (1992) and especially third (1999) versions—unless the first version intentionally increased only the final epoch's arc.) The steady enlargements no doubt depict "the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming His fallen creation" (Winter 2009a, 7).

Another manifestation of the models' particularly Western type of scientific infrastructure is their use of Western (Gregorian) calendrical units. The Gregorian dating system is ubiquitous enough in today's English-speaking circles to be too obvious to notice, as well as too prevalent to allow for easy alternatives. Even so, many peoples of the world use other calendars, including Islamic, Chinese, or various imperial systems. These other systems can be "scientific" as well, but in general they maintain a holism that Western scientific approaches often lose by employing analytical, reductionist, quantitative, empirical, objectified, positivist, and materialistic methods (Mazzocchi 2006).

Biblical dating systems also were different from the Western-scientific and solar-based, specifically Gregorian, calendar. The Bible speaks of "generations" and ruler's reign lengths rather

than of "centuries" or punctiliar year-points on a mathematical timeline. The fact that the models assume Gregorian calendrical dates and units of time is another signal of their contextually assumed, Western-scientific macro design. (Since each version of the "Ten Epochs" model's graphics mistakenly lists the year "0," sometimes even accompanied by "BC" or "AD," perhaps the graphics creators were more mathematically inclined than familiar with the Gregorian dating system.)

Perhaps Winter's early voracious study of the Scofield Reference Bible helped to inculcate a scientific and mathematical approach to biblical and Christian history (Winter 2005, 69-70). Depicting history through charts and distinct periods would have been modeled and reinforced for Winter's instructional techniques as an adult.

Of course, the extensive scientific research that underlies identifying the "hidden" or "unreached people groups," which comprise the central characteristic of the "Three Eras" model's "Third (Final) Era," almost goes without saying. Anthropological, sociological, scientific-historical, and statistical research together birthed the conception of "people groups" in the first place, as well as of their "hiddenness" and "unreached" conditions.

Winter certainly did not intend for the models to detract from his fundamental notion of a cosmic, spiritual war being depicted. Here is how he framed the alleged dilemma of scientific-spiritual interrelationships leading up to AD 2000: "Is God really playing with statistics … watching curves on a computer graph? Is He mechanically waiting for a certain number of souls to be saved? Is counting peoples and persons the name of the game? Is that all He expects us to shoot for by AD 2000?" Winter's answer was that frontier missions is "primarily a spiritual battle," but also "we know that it is our fight, not just His, and that He is fighting with us" (Winter 1996, 63-64). While the models were inherently enhanced and limited by their scientific infrastructure, all epochs and eras were intended to depict "the grace of God intervening" and "contesting an enemy … so that the nations will praise God's name" (Winter 2009a, 8). Even so, per the scientifically structured "Three Eras" model in particular, Christians' roles in the spiritual war of missions can unwittingly give the appearance of displacing the overriding and central role of God.

U.S.-American National Identity

Another limitation needing explicit, intentional discussion is the U.S.-American national identity associated with the models' formulations and appeal. This limitation emerged earlier, under the limitation of Western-centeredness. The significance of U.S.-American identity that seems intertwined with the models merits its own consideration.

This topic arose earlier in connection with the regular, consistent, and unqualified use, in both models' essays and elsewhere in Winter's publications, of the first-person plural pronoun in reference to U.S.-Americans: "we," "us," "our." Toward the end of "The Kingdom Strikes Back" Winter writes, "We may not even be sure about the survival of our own country" (Winter 2009a, 23). "What has been launched in Pasadena [the USCWM] must alert us, as did that first satellite, that we have entered a new age, and nothing short of a total effort will conquer this last frontier," the initial (and relatively short) rollout of the "Three Eras" scheme concludes. "As individual Christians and as a nation we are responsible 'to be a blessing to all the families of the earth'," subsequent "Three Eras" versions assert (Winter 1981a; Winter 1981c, 168).

An objection to reading too much into such usage might suggest that Winter's essays were simply and consciously addressing other U.S.-Americans. That objection is strengthened upon adding that the late 1970s and 1980s were still days of pre-Internet, pre-email, and pre-instantaneous digital international communication. *Mission Frontiers* and the *Perspectives* course reader (the sources just quoted) were intended for—mailed to and taught to—U.S. Christians. It is only natural, then, that the first-person-plural pronoun would be used in essays written by one U.S.-American for other U.S.-Americans.

That objection loses force, however, upon examining later iterations of the two historical models, i.e., after even more international missions collaboration, celebration of non-Western missions leadership, as well as digital international communication had come to the fore. For example, later versions of "The Kingdom Strikes Back" essay leave unchanged those same first-person-plural pronoun references present from the beginning (despite tiny adjustments meticulously made about other topics, as noted earlier [in Part I – ed.]). Both of the later and substantially revised versions of the "Three Eras" essay focus extensively and primarily on U.S.-American history. For example, in "Three Mission Eras and the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800-2000," among the various events and periods discussed are "the War of 1812," "the Second Great Awakening," and "the Civil War," leading to the following brash claim: "Between these two wars extensive religious awakenings, coupled with the general upheaval, *fostered the most extensive positive transformation any country has ever experienced in history*." The ensuing paragraph then begins, "The resulting transformation of the young nation was so extensive we sometimes read back into the ethos of our earlier Founding Fathers the bold and creative Christian character of this later, much more Christian, period" (Winter 2009b, 268-269; emphasis original). In "Seven Men, Four Eras," the added "Fourth Era" discusses "Evangelicals" (another de facto first-person-plural label) and U.S.-American history. Finally, the three aforementioned U.S.-American scholar-authors are described as "the pioneers of the growing Kingdom Era for American Evangelicals in the 20th and 21st centuries. Thus we now have 'Seven Men and Four Eras'" (Winter 200b, 314-315). Rather than dissipating and internationalizing in later versions, the inherent U.S.-American identity of the models' earliest versions became even more evident and focused over the next three decades.

There are numerous other examples in Winter's related publications of U.S.-American national identity, illuminating further how that identity is interwoven in the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" schemes. One mid-1980s presentation draws lessons from the late-nineteenth-century Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) (and its hopes to evangelize the world by 1900) for mobilizing fellow U.S. Evangelicals to reach the world by the year 2000. The section "Mt. Hermon and the Year 1900" has three sub-sections entitled "The Institutional Current," "The Secular Current," and "The Spiritual Current." While interweaving various themes, the essay notes within "The Secular Current" sub-section, "Shortly after the 1886 [Mt. Hermon student] conference, six new states were admitted in two years…. [T]hese new states secured *our* border in the West against Canada. Shortly *we* were to plunge southward to take over Cuba and Puerto Rico…. Within months *we* had reached clear across the Pacific to seize Guam, the Philippines, and half of the Solomon Islands" (Winter 1985c, 161; emphases mine). Winter and his fellow U.S.-American-Evangelical audience moved seamlessly, subconsciously, and imperceptibly between U.S.-American national identity and Christian-Evangelical identity.

As another example, the aforementioned 1989 article that uniquely presents both the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" models is part I of a two-part "Seeing the Big Picture" series (Winter

1989a). Forecast in Part I to "zero in on the more recent scene," Part II is subtitled, "Positive Lessons from Our American Past." The historical sketch focuses on the late 1800s in order to shed light on present-day U.S.-American Evangelicals and how, "as no other generation, we find ourselves nearing rapidly the 'blessing' of all remaining peoples on the face of the earth" (Winter 1989b).

One noteworthy example of Winter's assumption of a widespread U.S.-American view of history, then adjusting when constrained by new research findings and by his own integrity, is in the revision of one small part of the depiction of pre-European America in "The Kingdom Strikes Back." At the beginning of the section on 1600-2000 AD, the earlier versions state, "Apart from taking over what was almost an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of the non-Western world" (Winter 1981a, 153; Winter 1992a, B—19). Starting with the 1999 version the wording has been tweaked in the two places indicated: "Apart from taking over what was *relatively* an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of *the rest of* the non-Western world" (Winter 1999a, 210). Ralph Winter viewed the world and world history—including pan-American history—as a widely read and ever-growing U.S.-American.

Clearly it is paradoxical that the historical models which Winter created for mobilizing frontier missions to reach all "people groups" would be self-limiting by embodying any "national" trait in the modern political-state sense. The concluding sentence (in the earliest versions) of "The Kingdom Strikes Back" essay rings out the present epoch's final challenge of Matthew 24:14, including the re-interpreted "people groups" for *ethne* (Winter 1981d, 155; Winter 1992a, B—21). The "Three Eras" model describes and visualizes the current final era's frontier of reaching the "nations" understood as "hidden" or "unreached peoples." Winter later explicitly explains, "By the phrase 'all the nations' [in Matthew 24:14], Jesus was not referring at all to countries or nation-states. The wording he chose (the Greek word ethne) instead points to the ethnicities, the languages and the extended families which constitute the peoples of the earth" (Winter and Koch 2002, 16). On top of Winter's mobilizing objectives and scholarly explanations was his own multifaceted engagement with peoples, histories, and studies from all around the world. Winter also explicitly separated U.S. well-being and blessing from God's ongoing kingdom war against Satan, for which "God can raise up others if we falter" (Winter 2009a, 23).

The paradoxical reality comes from Winter's own background, as previously described, and from the subtle potency of modern national self-identity—especially within the United States of America since the mid-twentieth century. Winter grew up in a period when the United States was growing into its role as a world power and became locked in a superpower struggle with the Soviet Union. "In God We Trust," adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1956 as a distinguishing trait compared with the atheistic Soviets, gave Christian U.S-Americans all the more pride and self-identification as Christian "Americans." Those U.S. Christians like Winter who came to identify as "Evangelicals" (not in the twenty-first-century sense, but in distinction from mainline WCC Christians) became all the more rooted in their identities as Christian "Americans." Winter could thus look back at the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and enthusiastically see its "bold and creative Christian character," having undergone "*the most extensive positive transformation any country has ever experienced in history*," as cited earlier. Like for other U.S.-American Christians, for Ralph Winter the U.S.-Christian heritage was exceptional.

Given the reality of such a powerful, subterranean sense of Christian-national self-identity, it is only to be expected that the historical models inherently targeted "at least a million evangelical Christians in America" to join the task of frontier missions (Winter 1979, 4).

Protestant-Evangelical

A final limitation considered here is that the models' specific appeal to Protestant Evangelicals conveys the sense that Protestant-Evangelical missions must continue to build the explosive growth of worldwide Christianity that Carey's and Taylor's efforts began. This limited focus is clearly evident in the "Three Eras" model. The initial 1979 publication of the model claims that "This new thrust [to inland areas] sparked recurrent attention to new frontiers throughout the next 100 years of unprecedented Christian growth until today almost half the people in the world are either committed to Christ or at least claim to be Christians" (Winter 1979, 4)—despite the fact that over half of the world's Christian peoples were (and are) Catholic and Orthodox. The historical backbone of the model's appeal comes from Carey and Taylor having been direct precursors of contemporary Evangelicals. Self-awareness of the Third Era's focus on "frontier missions" to "people groups" emerged together with the evangelical Lausanne Movement. Moreover, as noted earlier Winter explicitly cast the "Three Eras" paradigm as part of his mobilizing appeal to "evangelical Christians in America."

In a much broader way, "The Kingdom Strikes Back" addresses 4,000 years of "Redemptive History." The "Ten Epochs" model thus traces biblical history from Abraham's day up through Western Christian history. Winter, no doubt surprisingly to many fellow Evangelicals, stressed the importance of Roman Catholic missionary orders as part of his historical sketch. It is relevant to note that Winter's appreciation for Catholic mission efforts took many forms, including his coordinating a 1991 multi-author set of reflections on Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. Winter's own positive reflection included his acknowledgement that "The fact is, the plain language here on paper, … one must admit in sheer honesty, is a remarkably clear and Biblical statement on mission to the unreached peoples" (International Journal of Frontier Missions 1991, 103).

Even so, in the end the "Ten Epochs" model exhorts Protestant-Evangelicals to continue what Protestant missions took over from 1800 (Winter 2009a, 22). The Tenth Epoch focuses on "The Ends of the Earth," which is evangelical missions phraseology. The concluding obligation of Matthew 24:14 is particularly directed to U.S.-American Protestant-Evangelicals. The "Modern Missions Movement" and its continuation are misleadingly assumed to be Protestant-Evangelical. [To be continued – ed.]

References

AD2000 and Beyond Movement (1999). "AD2000 and Beyond Movement Overview" *AD2000 and Beyond Movement* website, https://www.ad2000.org/ad2kbroc.htm (accessed April 16, 2000).

Coote, Robert T. (2000). "'AD 2000' and the '10/40 Window': A Preliminary Assessment" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* October:160-166. Available online at http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/2000-04/2000-04-160-coote.pdf (accessed April 16, 2020).

Dawson, Christopher (1958). *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*. Garden City, New York: Image Books, A Division of Doubleday.

Fickett, Harold (2012). *The Ralph D Winter Story: How One Man Dared to Shake Up World Missions*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Frontier Ventures (2020a). "Founders" *Frontier Ventures* website, https://www.frontierventures.org/about/founder (accessed March 3, 2020).

_____ (2020b). "History" *Frontier Ventures* website, https://www.frontierventures.org/about/history (accessed April 10, 2020).

Gill, Brad (2016). "Ralph Winter and the Strategic Use of History" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* January-March, 33, 1:3-4. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/33_1_PDFs/IJFM_33_1-Editorial.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

Huckaby, Chuck (2013). "How One Man Dared To Shake Up World Missions: The Ralph D. Winter Story" *Mission Frontiers* July-August. Available online at https://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/how-one-man-dared-to-shake-up-world-missions.

International Journal of Frontier Missions (n.d.). "*IJFM* articles by Ralph D. Winter" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* website, https://www.ijfm.org/dr-ralph-winter.html (accessed April 15, 2020).

_____ (1991). "Reflections on Redemptoris Missio" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* July, 8, 3:99-105. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/08_3_PDFs/8_3Reflections.pdf (accessed April 17, 2020).

Johnson, Alan (2001). "Analyzing the Frontier Mission Movement and Unreached People Group Thinking, Part I: The Frontier Mission Movement's Understanding of the Modern Mission Era" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* Summer, 18, 2:81-88. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/18_2_PDFs/AJFrontier.pdf (accessed April 24, 2020).

Kraft, Charles H. (2013). *SWM/SIS at Forty: A Participant/Observer's View of Our History*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott (1953). *A History of Christianity*. New York: Harper Brothers.

_____ (1970). *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. Vols. I-VII. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Matsutani, Motokazu (2017). "Japanese Christian Missions to Korea in Early Meiji Japan" Presentation at Stanford University. Abstract available online at https://history.stanford.edu/events/japanese-christian-missions-korea-early-meiji-japan (accessed February 11, 2020).

Mazzocchi, Fulvio (2006). "Western science and traditional knowledge: Despite their variations, different forms of knowledge can learn from each other" *EMBO reports* May; 7(5):463–466. doi: 10.1038/sj.embor.7400693. Available online also at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1479546/ (accessed May 18, 2020).

McEvedy, Colin (1961). *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.

National Academy of Engineering (2020). "What is Engineering Design?" *LinkEnglineering Educator Exchange* website, https://www.linkengineering.org/EngineeringDesign.aspx (accessed March 3, 2020).

Neill, Stephen (1964). *A History of Christian Missions*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.

Noland, Claire (2009). "Ralph D. Winter dies at 84; Christian missionary was one of America's most influential evangelicals" *Los Angeles Times*, available online at https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-ralph-winter24-2009may24-story.html (accessed February 29, 2020).

Parsons, Greg H. (2012). *Ralph D. Winter: Early Life and Core Missiology*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press.

Roberta Winter Institute (n.d.a). Homepage, *Roberta Winter Institute* website, http://www.robertawinterinstitute.org/birth-of-an-institute (accessed April 15, 2020).

_____ (n.d.b). "Founding" *Roberta Winter Institute* website, http://www.robertawinterinstitute.org/birth-of-an-institute (accessed April 15, 2020).

Time Staff (2005). "Ralph Winter" *Time* "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America" Series. Available online at http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1993235_1993243_1993320,00.html (accessed February 28, 2020).

Walls, Andrew F. (2002). *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Winter, Ralph D. and Beaver, R. Pierce (1970). *The Warp and the Woof, Organizing for Mission*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Winter, Ralph D. (1973). *Seeing the Task Graphically*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

_____ (1974a). "The Historical Development of the Christian Movement." Fuller School of World Mission, SWM 651 Syllabus. Courtesy of the Ralph D. Winter Archives and Research Center, Pasadena California.

_____ (1974b). *The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

_____ (1979). "What is this all about? The Hidden Peoples: the last frontiers" *Mission Frontiers* July/August, 1, 5:4-5.

_____ (1981a). "Three Men, Three Eras: The Flow of Missions History" *Missions Frontiers* February. Available online at http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/three-men-three-eras (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (1981b). "The Concept of a Third Era in Missions" *Missio Nexus* website, https://missionexus.org/the-concept-of-a-third-era-in-missions/ (accessed April 16, 2020).

_____ (1981c). "The Long Look: Eras of Mission History," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 167-177.

_____ (1981d). "The Kingdom Strikes Back: The Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 137-155.

_____ (1983). "The Explosion of New Missions Within the Non-Western World" *Mission Frontiers* January. Available online at http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-explosion-of-new-missions-within-the-non-western-world (accessed April 16, 2020).

Winter, Ralph (1985a). "'Mission 2000': Towards a Strategy of Closure" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* January, 2:1:39-52. Available online at http://ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/02_1_PDFs/2_1%20Winter%20Mission_2000%20fixed.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

_____ (1985b). "The Final Era of World Missions" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* July, 2:3:215-230. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/02_3_PDFs/The%20Final%20Era%20of%20World%20Missions.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

_____ (1985c). "The Student Volunteers of 1886, Their Heirs, and the Year 2000" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* April, 2:2:151-180. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/02_2_PDFs/Student%20Volunteers%20of%201886.pdf (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (1986). "Momentum is Building!: Many Voices Discuss Completing the Task by 2000 A.D." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 3:1-4:67-78. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/03_1-4_PDFs/3_1Winter.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

Winter, Ralph D. (1989a). "Seeing the Big Picture, Part I: Lessons from the Past" *Mission Frontiers* October. Available online at http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/seeing-the-big-picture1 (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (1989b). "Seeing the Big Picture, Part II: Positive Lessons from Our American Past" *Mission Frontiers* November. Available online at http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/seeing-the-big-picture (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (1992a). "The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Revised Edition. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, B—3-B—21.

_____ (1992b). "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Revised Edition. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, B—33-B—44.

_____ (1996). "'Thy Kingdom Come': An Analysis of a Vision" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* April-June, 13:2:63-69. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/13_2_PDFs/04_Winter.pdf (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (1999a). "The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Third Edition. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 195-213.

_____ (1999b). "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Third Edition. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 253-261.

_____ (1999c). "The Rise and Fall of the IMC: Observations on the International Missionary Council among other cooperative mission structures, recognizing the significance" *Mission Frontiers* April-June. Available online at http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-imc (accessed April 15, 2020).

Winter, Ralph D. and Koch, Bruce A. (2002). "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* Winter, 19, 4:15-25. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/19_4_PDFs/winter_koch_task.pdf (accessed April 17, 2020).

Winter, Ralph D. (2003). "The Rise and Fall of the IMC—and Today: Some observations on the gravest transition in mission cooperative structure in the 20th Century" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* Spring, 20, 1:14-19. Available online at http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/20_1%20PDFs/14-19Riseandfall.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

_____ (2004). "Introduction," in *The Impossible Challenge: The Founding of the U.S. Center for World Mission*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University, xvii-xxxi.

_____ (2005). "Growing Up with the Bible: Understanding What it Says, Yielding to What it Means" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* Summer, 22, 2:69-74. Available online at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_2_PDFs/69-74Winter.pdf (accessed April 24, 2020).

_____ (2008). *Frontiers In Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the* Missio Dei. Fourth Edition. Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press. Available online at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5be3338f21c67c84dfc1b9f1/1541616554604/Frontiers_in_Mission+4th+ed+copy.pdf (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (2009a). "The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," in Ralph D. Winter, gen. ed. and Beth Snodderly, assoc. ed., *Foundations of the World Christian Movement: A Larger Perspective*. Second ed. Pasadena, CA: Institute of International Studies, 7-23. Available online at http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/1_kingdom_strikes_back.pdf (accessed April 17, 2020).

_____ (2009b). "Three Mission Eras and the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800-2000" in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Fourth Edition. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 263-278.

_____ (2009c). "Editorial Reflections" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* Spring, 26, 1:21-26. Available online at

https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/26_1_PDFs/26_1_Editorial_Reflections.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

_____ (2009e). "The Story of the Battle for Our Planet: Declaring God's Glory among All Peoples," comp. by Beth Snodderly, in Ralph D. Winter, gen. ed. and Beth Snodderly, assoc. ed., *Foundations of the World Christian Movement: A Larger Perspective*. Second ed. Pasadena, CA: Institute of International Studies, 25-31. Available online at http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/1_kingdom_strikes_back.pdf (accessed April 15, 2020).

Winter, Ralph D. and Hawthorne, Steven C., eds. (1981, 1992, 1999, 2009). *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. First, Second (Revised), Third, and Fourth eds. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

[1] Part I was published in the January 2021 *Global Missiology* issue and can be found at http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2418.

Indigenous People's Wisdom and the Church's Mission of Caring for the Earth: Towards Integral Ecology

Chito M. Sawit

Published in Global Missiology, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Abstract

Today, the world faces the challenge of ecological destruction due to global warming and climate change. The situation is made worse by massive industrialization, modernization, and urbanization, driven by insatiable capitalistic and consumeristic desires. The Catholic Church responds to the worsening ecological destruction crisis with Pope Francis as the prominent figure in this task. In 2015, with the world facing an ecological and environmental challenge, Pope Francis gave the whole world a message of caring for the earth in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* ("On Care of Our Common Home"). The indigenous peoples are our dialogue partners in this document in caring for our planet.

Key Words: care for the earth, indigenous peoples, integral ecology, mission, wisdom

Introduction

The world, together with humanity, is facing destruction. The devastation of the planet that we are bringing about negates some hundreds of millions, even billions, of years past (Dunn and Lonergan 1991). Nonetheless, the world answers the environmental and ecological problems with "sustainable development," defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs (The World Conference of Environment 1987). Indeed, caring properly for our common home, developing an integral ecology, and an ecological and cultural conversion are needed.

The Church and indigenous peoples have wisdom traditions to contribute positively and constructively towards mitigating the increasingly pressing ecological crisis. This article is about the indigenous peoples' wisdom and the Church's mission of caring for the earth towards an integral ecology. This study attempts to see the Church's contribution and the indigenous peoples in the care for our common home. The article is not exhaustive and comprehensive, though it attempts to see the common ways of the indigenous peoples in the care for the earth paralleled with that of the Church. It is difficult to develop a universal or general description of indigenous peoples; indeed, "diversity" may be the term that best describes them (Javier 2014).

In developing the topic, the discussion will focus on the following questions: What are the indigenous people's wisdom traditions of caring for the earth that point towards integral ecology? Why should the Church look at indigenous peoples' wisdom in its mission of human and ecological flourishing? How can the Church perform its mission of caring for the earth while learning from indigenous people's wisdom and thereby respond to the challenges of today's ecological and environmental destruction?

The Wisdom of the Indigenous Peoples

The term "indigenous" refers to the ethnic groups with obvious cultural, linguistic, and kinship bonds who are often so marginalized by modern nation states that their inherent dignity and coherence as societies are in danger of being lost (Grim 2001). Indigenous peoples are

connected through their close relationships in their clan, and they are people whose underlying organizational principle is a social relationship among family, clan, band, tribe, or other structures, rather than the religion or sacred belief system to which they subscribe (Palmer and Burgess 2012).

The wisdom that the indigenous peoples have is rich and abundantly immeasurable. Such is a knowledge that is gained (some may say earned) through time, place, and experience (Jones 2009). From the beginning of their existence, indigenous peoples have embraced a sustainable ecological approach towards nature and its resources from which modern human societies can and should learn. Their land as their home is an extension of themselves. Their land and their life, thus, are understood to be deeply intertwined. Life begins and ends in the same land. The land and all living beings are sacred, providing material sustenance and fulfillment regarding their spiritual longing. The earth is understood as sacred and holy, for the revered spirits are one with nature. Indeed, the indigenous peoples developed a unique belief and knowledge of managing and caring responsibly for their natural resources. They see and find life in nature, which they cherish, protect, and preserve.

Indigenous peoples value the environment more highly than they do their own short-term benefits. The *kaingin* or the swidden system (slash-and-burn "shifting cultivation") is regarded as an exploitation of the forest by some indigenous peoples. For example, the Indigenous Mangyans of Mindoro, Philippines, respect particular places that are free from *kaingin* because of their sacredness. According to one Mangyan in an interview: "What we *kaingin* [verb] are not major forests, because we consider those sacred, we respect that. We *kaingin* between our plants, *hagonoyan* (type of weed), not big trees" (Rodriguez 2015). Indigenous peoples also consider the common good, which means that rampant use of their land is avoided by practicing traditional shifting cultivation of the land with alternative fallow periods (resting of land), a system that is considered to be more sustainable.

Indigenous peoples take from nature only what is needed. For example, the Mangyan share the same view with those of the Arrernte people of Australia and the Samoan people. The elderly teach the young to consume what is only needed and moderate in consuming natural resources (Nguyen 2016). The indigenous peoples consider their land as their home. They are one with their land, and their land owns them. God created land for people. People die and are buried in the earth. Land, the earth, owns the people. These are sacred places. Land is a place to live in, to use and to work for its fruits and then to be buried in and thus, finally, be owned by it according to the tribal leaders (Simeon 2017). At the same time, land must be cultivated so as to give and sustain life.

Besides taking what should be consumed only within the day and thinking of others who should benefit from nature, indigenous peoples also have to ask permission, talk to nature, and perform rituals when they are to cut a tree or take an animal's life. Nature is an extension of their own life to be respected. As Gaston Kibiten attests:

> Farmers casually addressed their rice fields and gardens, gently coaching the plants to grow robust and productive. They talked to their rice fields, expressing their wish that these do not get barren or give way to erosion; to the water to be sufficient and make the plants grow; and to the water spring so that this will not dry up. When cutting down trees, people addressed the tree and gently asked permission to cut this, as they explained their

> need for doing so. Upon cutting down the tree, they covered the stump with leaves and soil, just like a poultice is applied to a wounded person (Kibiten 2018).

What then can the Church learn from the indigenous peoples in their daily living of caring for the earth? According to Andylyn Simeon, the indigenous peoples' environmental values are considered human values among the indigenous communities, and their indigenous beliefs guide their respective communities in their understanding of how the natural world should be viewed and treated (Simeon 2017). Thus, the ecological concern springs from values inherent in the indigenous peoples. The indigenous peoples' traditional worldview and religion, including ecological ethos, can be an important resource in today's struggle towards caring for the earth (Kibiten 2018).

The Church's Mission in View of Integral Ecology

All of humanity is now on the brink of losing our only home and threatening the precious gift of life. No one is exempted or excused from this situation; even culprits are now becoming victims. Pope Paul VI has already stated that this dire situation is due to man's ill-considered exploitation of nature, such that he now risks destroying it and becoming in turn the victim of this degradation (Paul VI 1971). The evangelical Cape Town Commitment also acknowledges that humanity must "repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism" (Lausanne Movement 2011). The horrific destruction of the earth, thus, is a result of humanities' rampant and relentless manipulation and wasteful exploitation of the earth's natural resources.

The care for the earth concerns all people regardless of who they are and where they come from. Together with the various sectors of society, the world's religious leaders have to do something to prevent the earth's obliteration. As Pope Francis points out, the destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift that must be defended from various forms of debasement (Francis 2015). Earth, our common home and our only home, is now crying for help to be emancipated from the hands of her exploiters.

The voice of the earth has long been neglected. Care for the earth is a duty that all of humanity needs to fulfill. Calling for the urgency of the situation, Pope Francis explains that today the scientific community realizes what the poor have long told us: harm, perhaps irreversible harm, is being done to the ecosystem. The earth, entire peoples, and individual persons are being brutally punished (Vigini 2016). The poor, marginalized, and primary victims in this world-wide tragedy include the indigenous peoples. The world is now facing different catastrophes that endanger all peoples from all walks of life. Humanity is now, just like before, being called to listen and act on the mission to care for the earth which is our common home.

The answer to the problem of the earth's crisis is to consider and live up to the true meaning of sustainable development. Thus, according to *Laudato Si',* a technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress (Francis 2015). Development and progress should be geared towards human flourishing, achieving a good quality of life. The goal of integral progress is not merely technological innovation or the increase in economic growth rates, as in the traditional understanding of progress (Marx 2016). The goal of quality of life, which has never before taken up such a central position in any other social encyclical, refers to human beings as made in God's

image and to their particular dignity. The shift in the notion of progress is, however, not achieved only *for* people, but also *through* people (Marx 2016). People of the earth must then participate toward solidarity and communion for a just and sharing of life for the whole creation (Boff 1995).

On the other hand, sustainability, according to Daniel Scheid, is the ordered interconnection among species. God wills the diversity of race, cultures, and creatures. A diversity of creatures best manifests God's goodness, while the harmonious order among these various parts best glorifies God. Human beings, however, have the highest position and responsibility among all the created beings. As such, we are the only creatures on Earth gifted with such a degree of intelligence and free will, hence humans have a privileged role in promoting the cosmic good through our wise governing of other creatures. *Dominion* does not mean to dominate but to have a thoughtful and judicious participation in God's governing of the entire universe. Moreover, humans ought to preserve the goodness of Earth that enables such a rich diversity of creatures and ecosystems (Scheid 2016).

Clearly the care for the earth must be a matter of grave concern to all of humanity. "The Bible declares God's redemptive purpose for *creation* itself. Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, *and* for society, *and* for creation" (Lausanne Movement 2011). Sustainable development has to consider the quality of life of all persons and families. This development moves toward integral ecology that focuses on the principle of common good. The integral ecology approach developed in *Laudato Si'* corresponds with the principle of the common good that the Pope regards as the central principle in social ethics (Marx 2016, 304-305).

In the project of Pope Francis' call towards an integral ecology, what is needed is a missionary renewal wherein strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature (Francis 2015). Missionaries and missiologists who share in God's mission have the mission to promote care for the earth and integral ecology. Pope Francis urges every person to have a deep and serious ecological conversion. The care for the earth as a common home is a duty to be upheld by each and every person. Integral ecology includes all of humanity, all of God's creatures, and all that is within the natural environment's bounds. It is noteworthy, however, that indigenous peoples are given a special place: according to Pope Francis the land for the indigenous peoples is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values (Francis 2015).

The Mission of Dialogue Towards an Integral Ecology

Today we are called to listen and engage in dialogue in a global, plural, and diverse world. The earth does not only speak for itself but can even bring different sectors, such as religions and cultures, into dialogue to denounce injustices afflicted on nature and humanity. This dialogue is a movement away from capitalists' project of an economy that kills (Francis 2013). A project that favors those on the margins and denounces both the self-interest of a few and the whole contemporary globalization project is marked by a call for dialogue (Castillo 2016). Felix Wilfred points out, "Today it is the earth that holds the prospect of bringing the religious together and so leading them to a meaningful dialogue on God and humanity" (Wilfred 2009).

The earth brings people and God into dialogue, while the peoples making up humanity are closely interrelated due to living in a common home. Human beings are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it (Francis 2015).

Caring for the earth needs a concerted effort from all peoples in the spheres of politics, religion, economy, culture, and science, to name a few mentioned in chapter four of *Laudato Si'*. Dialogue is the key to the collaboration of the Church in all of these areas. This dialogue should connect us with the expertise of indigenous peoples' ways of caring for the earth. The earth is for them a common home of all living beings great and small. According to Edgar Javier, "Indigenous peoples survived because of human-earth interaction" (Javier 2014). They have survived for many generations because of their knowledge and experience of the natural world. They know the meaning of the saying that the "whole is greater than its part."

Engaging into dialogue *with* and not only *to* the indigenous peoples would lead the Church to the true meaning and sense of being dialogue partners. In the field of interreligious dialogue, people of other faiths are seen as equals yet as having their own uniqueness. However, the indigenous peoples have been looked down upon for many generations, even until today. Javier argues that "The colonial and neo-colonial articulations of indigeneity such as pagan, primitive and uncivilized must be removed from the lexicon" (Javier 2014). The indigenous peoples are to be recognized as who they are, and within the global community the indigenous peoples must define themselves (Javier 2014). Such acknowledgements would be initial steps in genuine collaboration and in engaging in honest dialogue. To ask for forgiveness, and being forgiven, is a way towards the process of authentic dialogue.

The indigenous peoples' solidarity with the earth and all creatures springs from their view that the world is a common home for all. Creatures on earth are brothers and sisters, like what St. Francis of Assisi believed, taught, and lived. In the same way, indigenous peoples acknowledge kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky, and water (Javier 2014). Integral ecology follows the way of looking at others as another self, as one with one's self. The beauty of diversity should move people to acknowledge and respect others, from which acceptance and learning would come. Pope Francis explains in *Laudato Si'*: "If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs" (Francis 2015). There must be an attraction to what is beautiful, what could be called a missiological attraction to the beauty of nature and ecology. Such an attraction may be equivalent to the "way of beauty" or the *via pulchritudunis* in the *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis.

The earth as a common home is for all to live in. A common home integrates and gives access to its richness for all, for the common good. God so designed the universe in order and in beauty. The order of the universe is its greatest attribute. Humans must foster nature's ability to create new life and harmonious interconnections, rather than merely what it is able to yield for human consumption (Scheid 2016). Related is how finding interconnectivity in a plural and diverse world is our mission today. The world and all that is in it is meant for all. This is what in particular the rest of the world should learn from indigenous peoples. The Mangyan peoples who do *kaingin*, performing shifting cultivation and fallow periods to allow rest to the land, can instruct others to think of others who in the future will also cultivate it. The Dumagats of Bulacan and Aetas of Zambales in the Philippines consider the forest as their home, and even

domestic animals are revered as members of the family. The Samoan people catch fish that is enough only for the family members, including their guests; if they catch more than what they need, they return the surplus fish to the sea. The Arrernte people do the same; they will only pick needed fruits from a tree so that others may benefit from their share of the tree's fruits. The Arrernte also distribute and divide among their relatives meat of a kangaroo. The indigenous people know how to dialogue with nature. Michael Nguyen states that a kangaroo hunted by Arrernte people in the bush will be cut through a sacred ritual as a thanksgiving prayer to Mother Earth and to the precious life of the kangaroo (Nguyen 2016).

In the same manner, the Church should engage in dialogue with those who highly esteem Mother Earth. Mother Earth cares for us, like a mother cares for her children. Thus, care must also be given to the earth, our common home. This care and love have been expressed and practiced by the indigenous peoples since their origins. Their cultures should be protected, for the disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal (Francis 2015). The indigenous peoples' ancestral lands must be safeguarded, because when they remain on their land they themselves care for it best (Francis 2015).

Conclusion

As original inhabitants of the world's myriad settings, the indigenous peoples have gained wisdom from love and care for the earth. They embody the most authentic meaning of caring for a common home. Their life is a life that speaks for itself (a faithful witnessing of life), because they see the world as one with them. The world is sacred because it is also where their ancestors and other spiritual beings co-exist with them. The Church's call to love and care for the earth is a call to love God, human beings, and nonhuman creatures. Thus, to live in a common home is to live according to the principles of solidarity and common good.

These principles are present in the lives of the indigenous peoples. As such, indigenous peoples have many things to teach the so-called developed world. May we who consider ourselves more advanced be evangelized by their way of life. Learning from them, may we have a real sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us (Francis 2015). Doing this, we take the path of dialogue.

References

Boff, Leonardo (1995). *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Castillo, Daniel P. (2016). "Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept" *Theological Studies* 77, no. 2: 353-376.

Dunn, Stephen and Lonergan, Anne (1991). *Befriending the Earth.* Mystic, Connecticut: Holy Cross Centre of Ecology and Spirituality.

Francis, Pope (2015). *Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home Laudato Si',* AAS 107.

Francis, Pope (2013). *Apostolic Exhortation on The Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World. Evangelii Gaudium.* AAS 105.

Grim, John A. (2001). "Indigenous Traditions and Deep Ecology," in David Lands Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, eds., *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 35-57.

Javier, Edgar (2014). "The Wisdom of the Indigenous People and Missiological Paradigm Shift: A Missioner's Reflection" *Religious Life Asia* XVI (3): 61-73.

Jones, Peter N. (2009). "Indigenous Peoples must protect Their Culture's Intellectual Property Rights," in Diane Andrews Henningfeld, ed., *Indigenous Peoples.* Detroit, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 193-197.

Kibiten, Gaston P. (2018). "*Laudato Si's* Call for Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples: A Cultural Insider's Response from the Christianized Indigenous Communities" *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 8 (1): 1-15.

Lausanne Movement (2011). "The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action." Part I, 7. A. Available online at https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment#p1-7 (accessed March 5, 2021).

Marx, Reinhard Cardinal (2016). "'Everything is connected': On the Relevance of an Integral Understanding of Reality in *Laudato Si'*" *Theological Studies* 77 (2): 295-307.

Nguyen, Michael (2016). "Mission to the Arrernte Australians: Entering a Sacred Ground" *Religious Life Asia* XVIII (3): 76-86.

Palmer, Michael D. and Burgess, Stanley M., eds. (2012). *Religion and Social Justice.* Malden Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Paul VI (1971). *Apostolic Letter on the Occasion of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" Octogesima Adveniens* AAS 63. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html (accessed February 19, 2021).

Rodriguez, Fritzie. (2015). "Mangyans and Kaingin" *Rappler* website, https://www.rappler.com/science-nature/environment/105618-hanunuo-mangyan-environment (accessed August 14, 2019).

Scheid, Daniel P. (2016). "Saint Thomas Aquinas, The Thomistic Tradition, and the Cosmic Common Good," in Tobias Winright, ed., *Green Discipleship*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 129-147.

Simeon, Andylyn M. (2017). "Living in Solidarity with Nature Through the Examples of IndigenousPeoples." DLSU website, https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wpcontent/uploads/pdf/conferences/artscongressproceedings/2017/paper-32-abstract.pdf (accessed August 14, 2019).

Vigini, Guilano (2016). *Pope Francis Care for Creation: A Call for Ecological Conversion.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Wilfred, Felix (2009). "Toward an Inter-religious Eco-Theology." *Concilium* 3: 43-54. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). "Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development." Sustainable Development

website, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf (accessed January 21, 2021).

Call for Papers:

"Kingdom Movements"

For Publication in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, January 2022

The January 2022 issue of *Global Missiology* - *English* will take up the increasingly discussed theme of "Kingdom Movements." The following topics are examples of requested articles:

- Review of recent literature on Kingdom Movements / Disciple-Making Movements
- Contemporary Case Study
- Historical Case Study
- Biblical-theological Analysis
- Missiological Analysis
- Strategic Model

Proposed titles with approximately 100-word abstracts are due June 15, 2021. Full manuscripts of approved paper proposals will be due October 31, 2021. Manuscript guidelines can be found on the *Global Missiology* website here.

Please address all submissions and questions to globalmissiologyenglish@gmail.com.

Book Review

Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, eds., *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel: Reframing our Message and Ministry*

Reviewed by Mano Emmanuel

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Flanders, Christopher and Mischke, Werner, eds. (2020). *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel: Reframing our Message and Ministry*. William Carey Publishing, Pasadena, California, 240 pp., $17.99 paperback, $9.99 ebook, ISBN: 978-1-64508-280-4.

This book contains a veritable smorgasbord of topics related to honor and shame, contained in 15 articles. The writers take a multidisciplinary approach to the overall theme, and so readers are treated to a multifaceted exploration of the gospel and how to communicate it. Not many volumes on honor-shame will cover the breadth of these articles, whose topics include honor and shame in historical theology, a proposal for a grand narrative of scripture incorporating four value systems, and suggestions for a sensitive re-framing of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. The second section on the book contains topics addressed through concrete cases of cross-cultural mission and explore such situations as discipleship, sexual abuse, ethnic tensions, and displaced communities, showing how sensitivity to honor-shame can make the Church more effective in bringing reconciliation and healing to communities.

While being well-researched and scholarly, the essays are easily accessible for seminary students and those just beginning to inquire into honor-shame topics. The brevity of the chapters also means that they leave tantalizing questions of "what now?" and "what next?" for both the practitioner and the researcher. It is thus helpful that every chapter ends with questions for discussion or reflection that will prompt readers to go deeper and to consider how to apply what has been presented to their own situations. As the writers argue, it is not only those who find themselves ministering in contexts identified as honor-shame cultures that can apply the topics addressed in this volume. Indeed, elements of honor-shame dynamics are found in all societies, making this book a valuable resource for anyone concerned with communicating the gospel in today's complex and changing world.

Book Review

Jonas Kurlberg and Peter M. Phillips, eds., *Missio Dei in a Digital Age*

Reviewed by Melody Li

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2021

Kurlberg, Jonas and Philips, Peter M., eds. (2020). *Missio Dei in a Digital Age*. SCM Press, London, 288 pp., £25.00, ISBN: 9780334059110.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further multiplied the worldwide reliance on digital technology. This book is a timely collection of essays concerned with the impact of a digital age on missions, and it gathers the voices of experts and practitioners from academic institutions, churches, and mission organizations. The contributors to this book provide remarkable perspectives on current missiology and digitality, missional practice in a digital world, and digital technology in mission within social and political spheres. Readers from both evangelical and academic backgrounds will encounter new explorations of the theory and practice of missions in the digital age.

The contributors postulate novel prescriptions for how to continue the Great Commission in a drastically different world. Katherine Schmidt, in Chapter 2, considers digital media as a culture instead of a tool or instrument in the modern world. Jonny Baker calls for greater practical imagination for mission in a digital age in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, Rey Lemuel Crizaldo suggests constructing contextual theology through the possibilities of digitality.

The second section of essays favor appropriate missional practices in today's digital age. Steve Hollinghurst argues in Chapter 5 that digital media changes both the method and audience involved in communication, and he suggests that digital missiology is required for missions in digital times. In Chapter 6, Christian Grund Sørensen focuses more on a technological perspective and advocates the creation of supplementary digital information strategies so that the Church is not limited to the market's most popular search engines. Erkki Sutinen and Anthony Cooper emphasize in Chapter 7 the importance of a design process that can get all local church members involved in the *missio Dei*. In Chapter 8, John Drane and Olive Fleming Drane call for Christians' life-impacting engagement instead of an anesthetic subsistence in a digital age. Maggi Dawn's essay in Chapter 9 puts forward that digitally engaging in worship requires imagination, contextualization, and appropriateness. In Chapter 10, Frida Mannerfelt points out that preaching in a digital age resonates with the oral communication of the Early Church.

The last two chapters offer social-political analyses. Tim Davy, in Chapter 11, stresses the darker side of the digital sphere and the needed awareness of its negative impacts on vulnerable children. In Chapter 12, Alexander Chow discusses the complexity of current Chinese public theology, which tries to keep a certain level of privacy while seeking to publicize the message of the gospel.

In contrast to a negative and gloomy attitude towards digital technology applications, these experts and practitioners tend to reflect on the rapid changes in technology and the apparent possibilities they bring to *missio Dei*. Above all, this collection of essays emphasizes the priority of the Christian faith that God is sovereign to continue his Great Commission, even through this digital age. Not only will Christian IT professionals and Christian academics find these studies and

arguments beneficial in their respective fields, but pastoral staff, missionaries, and lay members of the Church will all find that the contents of these essays can contribute to a healthy community and fruitful evangelism.