

## Editorial

### The Beauty of Particularity

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Jesus of Nazareth. All that the Shunammite woman in Elisha's day faced: the birth and death of her son, their seven-year sojourn with the Philistines, the restoration of their land and wealth (2 Kings 4 & 8). Those "men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:20). The myriad recipients of the gospel of Jesus Christ across the generations, shared by witnesses empowered by the Holy Spirit—just as Jesus predicted (Acts 1:8). All these and countless other people, situations, encounters, and events were unique in their particularity. They have also shared describable traits with other people, situations, encounters, and events, but each particular person and episode within the outworking of God's mission has carried its own fascinating characteristics worthy of marvel, interest, and discerning examination.

This July issue offers several enlightening analyses of numerous particular situations, contexts, and challenges in worldwide Christian missions today. The need for empathetic listening, especially to diaspora peoples, is examined and encouraged by Joey Peyton. Jim Harries breaks down a complex political, legal, interpersonal, cross-cultural, ethical, and religious situation involving attempts to safeguard against vulnerable people suffering abuse from international aid workers. The proliferation of miracles and claims of miracles among Pentecostal churches in the Nigerian city of Owerri is carefully dissected by Ifeanyi Okeke. The variety among mission thinkers in describing movement catalysts is reported and analyzed by Gene Daniels and Emanuel Prinz. This issue's two book reviews convey important studies of Christ-ward movements and of the Ugandan Anglican Apolo Kivebulaya. Each of these studies considers particular people and situations.

Focusing here on people's unique particularity and on how God deals with his world does not stem from a philosophical preference for nominalism over realism or idealism. Nor does the stress here on "the beauty of particularity" unwittingly arise from an underlying individualism that underappreciates the corporate people of God. Rather, God—not an abstract "unmoved mover" or some kind of "ultimate reality" but the world's Creator, Judge, and Redeemer—has dealt personally with all the creatures with which he has populated his created universe. He "made . . . the sun to rule over the day [and] the moon and stars to rule over the night" (Psalm 136:7-9). "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: . . . "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me"" (Jeremiah 27:5). "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (II Peter 3:9). The story of redemption features the lead Actor and a multitude of particular characters playing unique roles.

The particular authors of this issue's articles, reviews, and books reviewed have researched and reported on an intriguing array of settings, communities, ministries, and people. Each situation, person, and episode conveyed throughout this issue is full of special needs, actions, consequences, interpretations, questions, and characteristics worthy of careful attention, prayerful consideration,

and further study. Wherever you and those whom you serve might be on your particular journeys, and no matter the unique settings in which you live, may you find in this issue's studies helpful lessons, insights, and examples—and a renewed appreciation for “the beauty of particularity.”