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Making Us Mindful of Our Models of Mission

Missiology presents a rather dense forest of models—models of church, witness, discipleship, and development, just to name a few. Each will be tested on the frontier. Those that normally fly first class may find themselves in the back, while others get an upgrade. The complexity of certain cultural and socio-religious borderlands introduces unforeseen realities, and the authors in this issue of our journal are applying that reality test to our models.

One is tempted to use the term “paradigm” when speaking of models. It became the buzzword in the wake of Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* back in the ’60s, and it’s run a fruitful course. While it has a fluid meaning, a paradigm appears to cover a field of models. It can glue together multiple theories, methodologies, principles, and praxes into a grander shape. This was the genius of David Bosch’s comprehensive assessment of different mission paradigms over the past twenty centuries.¹ Older paradigms of mission can recede, lose their dominance, and yield to new ones. Bosch helped us see the way elements combined into a prevailing paradigm, and the pattern became a “compass” for how new paradigms might emerge. Many suspect a missiological paradigm shift is underway—that the prevailing paradigm may have gotten us to where we are, but it will not solve the problems we now confront.

Paradigm shifts are seldom abrupt, but more likely result from the gradual testing of models across a broad field of endeavor. That’s what the authors in this *IJFM* issue are doing: they’re extending, combining, even inverting certain missiological models. They have seen anomalies from their respective vantage points, and have stepped back to examine the way a certain structure of thought has been framed and perpetuated. They’re challenging the way we’ve assimilated presuppositions that circumscribe our missiological imagination. In each case, each author may be tinkering with a special problem, but take note: they’re addressing blind spots, exposing hidden assumptions, and defying traditional patterns. In so doing, these authors highlight some of the fundamental ways we test missiological models.

They ask dangerous questions. Challenging a model or paradigm is not a safe undertaking. But when our present models fail to bear fruit, someone has to ask the tough questions. Kevin Higgins offers a vivid example in the ground-breaking role of Phil Parshall, a pioneer in contextualization among Muslim populations (p. 117). Back in the ’70s, after a couple of decades of ministry among Muslims, Phil began to ask risky questions. He studied them in his graduate research, formulated hypotheses, then

Editorial *continued on p. 116*

The views expressed in **IJFM** are those of the various authors and not necessarily those of the journal’s editors, the International Society for Frontier Missiology, or the society’s executive committee.

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returned to Asia to apply a new model. This excerpt from the forthcoming festschrift on Parshall's ministry, *Connecting with Muslims: Ongoing Effects of Phil Parshall's Life and Ideas* (William Carey Publishing), honors the impact of his writings on a younger generation. Higgins makes it clear that these very models uncovered further persistent problems that call for tough questions once again.

Christopher Flanders also poses difficult questions for what he calls the evangelical "U-shaped conversion model" (p. 121). His questions began in Buddhist Asia where he didn't witness a typical responsiveness in conversion. Flanders and others have built a large fraternity of thought around the cultural understanding of honor/shame (Ad p. 179; Review, p. 186). He uses this biblical theme to probe our assumptions when encountering other religious worlds.

They study threatening contradictions. Over the past two years an inter-agency task force has addressed the contradictory data surrounding "people groups," and Len Bartlott's article (p. 133) is a seminal contribution from their

recently published cache of articles in the *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* (Ad, p. 132).² An ethnic mosaic of people groups used as a mobilization tool is having to confront the intersection of urban and global realities. The matrix appears to contradict any simple notion of bounded cultural groups. The correctives can lead to more mature models, but we first must surrender our reticence to address contradictions.

Chrispin Dambula claims these apparent contradictions can lead to unfortunate silos in our missiology. He contends that the wall between religious and development studies must be breached (p. 141). This historic cleavage emerged around an apparent contradiction—that religions are primarily an obstacle to progress and that development is best left to more secular visions of human flourishing. Dambula builds a case for transcending this polarization.

They respect the voice of the insider. This journal aspires to bring its readership an inside perspective from frontier peoples. Over the past decade, Alan Howell has written with deep sensitivity of the different voices within a particular

African Muslim people. In this article (p. 161), those voices again challenge the Western hermeneutic of our biblical interpretive models. From the other side of the world, Ji and Hale hear a theme of "blessing" from China that could frame a new paradigm of mission (p. 171). Dye and Talman believe the experience of foreignness among indigenous new believers should be the vital index of contextualization, not characteristics observed from the outside. To accomplish this, they suggest we invert the popular C Spectrum (p. 151).

If the paradigms are shifting, we'll more likely see it by testing our models.

In Him,



Brad Gill
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

Endnotes

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series (Orbis, 1991).

² Marvin J. Newell, ed., *Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ)* 56, no. 4 (October–December 2020), available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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- ☞ promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders;
- ☞ cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology;
- ☞ highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions;
- ☞ encourage multidimensional and interdisciplinary studies;
- ☞ foster spiritual devotion as well as intellectual growth; and
- ☞ advocate "A Church for Every People."

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go, yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." (Acts 26:18)

Subscribers and other readers of the **IJFM** (due to ongoing promotion) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mission professors, field missionaries, young adult mission mobilizers, college librarians, mission executives, and mission researchers all look to the **IJFM** for the latest thinking in frontier missiology.

Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms

Standing on the Shoulders of Others: When Innovations Surprise the Innovator

by Kevin Higgins

Editor's Note: This article is an excerpt from the upcoming book, Connections with Muslims: The Ripple Effect of Phil Parshall's Life and Ideas (William Carey Publishers: Denver, CO, 2021). The editors of this wonderful festschrift, Kenneth Nebrbass and Mark Williams, have collected an anthology of articles honoring a contemporary pioneer who stretched the traditional paradigms of ministry to Muslim peoples. Printed by permission.

Among other things, I am a quasi-closet musician, or singer-songwriter. One genre I have studied and learned from is the broad category known as folk music. The best definition I have heard of folk music is that of Marcus Mumford (of Mumford and Sons), which basically was: *Folk means people, so folk music belongs to people.*

Implied in that remark is the insight that succeeding generations of artists and songwriters stand on the shoulders and learn from and even incorporate the music and lyrics of prior generations. This is actually true of all music, but folk music admits this fact, and celebrates it.

In the same way, whether we speak of music or mission:

Every innovation stands on the shoulders of prior innovations.

Every innovator stands on the shoulders of prior innovators.

That is true of me in my music, and it is true for me in my life in mission. And one of the innovators (there are many) upon whose shoulders I stand is Phil Parshall.

My History with Phil Parshall

Phil and I only met in person one time. I am aware that some of what I have written about, practiced, and advocated has gone beyond the limits with which he felt were warranted biblically and missiologically.

But let me describe my journey.

I first “met” Phil in the early 1980s. I was newly married, and by divine accident I had become involved working with Iranians in the Los Angeles area. I was grasping for anything I could find to help, and I found two giants. The first was Don McCurry, at the Zwemer Institute. I attended the seminars, met with Don, and learned all I could.

The second was Phil's book (perhaps his best-known work), *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*. I remember reading it. I remember being impressed by it.

Kevin Higgins (PhD, Fuller School of Intercultural Studies) lived in two South Asian countries for over twenty years. While working alongside local leadership, from 2000–2017 he served as International Director of Global Teams. He became president of William Carey International University in 2017, and today also fills the role of General Director of Frontier Ventures.

But frankly, I did not yet have any experiential grid through which to absorb or appropriate his insights. He was one voice in my journey toward a sense of call to work with Muslims.

A few years later, midway through my seminary studies, my wife and I were invited to teach at a Bible school in Uganda. We agreed, seeing the position as a way to test a calling to mission by going to a different culture, albeit one that did not particularly need missionaries. This exposure to missions was a way to test the cross-cultural part of our call before testing the Muslim part.

Unfortunately, the Bible school never opened that year; nonetheless we found ourselves engaged in building relationships with Somalis in the little town in Uganda where we were living. God indeed used our experiences that year to confirm the two parts of what we sensed was our calling: working cross-culturally, and working with Muslims. It was also a year that brought us face-to-face with some of the barriers to fulfilling that calling.

Let me be transparent and say that some of those barriers were within us. This realization led to a journey of deeper growth in our own souls— healing our pasts, and addressing our own unhealthy pieces as people (especially mine!). But that year in Uganda, working in a relational way among Somalis drove me back again to a similar place I had found myself while working with Iranians in Los Angeles: I was in need of help and mentors. I found three.

In the process, I purchased my first Qur'an, and the first of my mentors that I will mention here was actually the Imam who began to teach me Qur'anic Arabic.

The second was an author I discovered by accident in a Nairobi bookstore: Giulio Basetti-Sani, who wrote *The Koran in the Light of Christ*.¹

I am not suggesting Phil would enjoy being included with these two, but he was the third of my mentors. I returned to his book, *New Paths*, and found my life experience had caught up with the book. I found it speaking to me and helpful to me in so many practical ways. I will come back to this later.

It was some time before Phil and I crossed paths again, and the next meeting was face-to-face. I returned from Uganda, finished seminary, and then worked for several years in an urban church context which included an attempt at church planting among outpatient mental health patients. Interestingly to me, the insights in *New Paths*, originally focused on

adapting discipleship practices to fit Muslim contexts, had a profound impact on how I understood the work of church planting in an urban US context.

Around that time, our first children were born, we bought a house, and we were settling in. But God intervened and the call to cross-cultural life among Muslims was rekindled. In 1990 we began to prepare to move to South Asia. I took up reading *New Paths* again while we did support raising, and then arrived in South Asia in 1991, ready to put the book into practice.

Or so I thought.

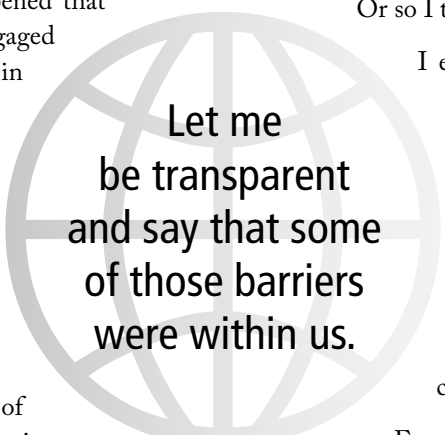
I ended up serving with a national church that deeply opposed such attempts at contextual approaches and took a very strong view of the—dare I say—evil origins of the Islamic religion. For a year I tried to integrate my past learning with the insights of my new colleagues. I learned their language and culture and worked hard at our various responsibilities, including running a business.

Eventually we ran into visa problems and needed to leave, returning to the US just in time to hear two men speak at my seminary about work going on elsewhere in South Asia. They spoke of a large movement, and I remember thinking to myself, “If this is even ten percent true, I need to learn from these people.” I spoke to them—one was an American and the other was the leader of the movement. I was invited to join them and help them with the business they were developing. My aim, while being willing to help, was to learn and return to the country where we had originally been called to serve.

And learn I did.

This was still the early and middle 1990s, when things like the “C Scale” were just beginning to be talked about.² The term “insider movement” had not yet been coined.³ In fact, any talk of “movements” at all was at best in the very earliest of beginnings. But I was experiencing and seeing a movement up close and in person.

The movement had attracted attention, of course, and a decision was made to include it in what was intended to be a three-foci study: this South Asian movement and two other contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. I had the privilege of being a part of the team that designed, conducted, and wrote up the field research in South Asia. And it was this study which led to my actual meeting with Phil.



Let me
be transparent
and say that some
of those barriers
were within us.

I believe, I was introduced to Phil while the research was still going on. We met, as I recall, at Phil's home. I knew that these brothers were not in full agreement on any number of things. Phil was gracious and generous with his time and conversation.

Some months later, perhaps as much as two years, Phil was given a copy of the completed research results. That led to my next "meeting," not in person, but in the form of an article Phil wrote for *EMQ*.⁴ Since the article included the word *danger* in the title, the reader can correctly surmise that Phil was not an enthusiastic supporter of what was happening in the movement.

I know from Phil's later writing that he knows what it is like for a scholar to have godly colleagues wonder about the implications of his own work. He also was challenged by those who felt he had gone too far, or that his ideas would lead others to do so. He describes this in his memoir.⁵

It is this reality that brings me to the main point of relating the history of my connection with Phil's, ideas and thinking: Phil was an innovator. He faced the challenges all innovators face. He needed the courage all innovators need. And his courage in the face of such critique should be applauded by those who follow and build on his innovative work. I count myself as one who applauds.

At the same time, innovators do enable later innovators to begin from a different vantage point than was available as they themselves sought to probe new territory. I self-consciously stand on the shoulders of men and women like Phil Parshall. To return to my metaphor of folk music, I feel I have recombined his melodies and lyrics in new ways. I am grateful.

Lessons I Have Learned

I have hinted already at some of what I have learned. I want to touch on two main areas. The first is missiological, and the second is personal. I will limit myself to two examples of each. I want to outline the missiological "gleanings" I have attained from several of Phil's books I have studied and suggest ways I have been enabled by them to continue to press in, or seek beyond. This is not, of course, to suggest Phil would agree with every new insight or experiment that I feel he enabled me to imagine.

Distinguish between Form and Function

First, Phil's application of what he learned at Fuller School of World Mission encouraged me on my own path of integrating the social sciences and the Scriptures to examine and critique mission practice. It was liberating to be introduced to his practice of probing the consequences of contextualizing

so-called Christian "forms" (which were often Western) in order to allow truly biblical "functions" to flourish in a cross-cultural setting. An older mentor, even at a distance through his written works, can grant validation to the younger traveler who gains a sense of confidence from those who have gone before. That was true for me.

I have in some ways taken that contextualization process further than Phil originally imagined, or in ways that would subsequently make him feel a certain unease. So I want to be careful in what I say, lest it appear that I am assuming Phil would equally celebrate everything I envision as the natural implications of his seed-work. But I do feel as if I have stood on the shoulders of a prior explorer and benefited from his map-making as I (in my understanding) have been able to journey further in the trajectory of the path on which his ideas set me going.

Listening to Others

Second, Phil's books modeled an attempt to listen well to what Muslims themselves thought and felt. In saying this, I refer to his relationships with Muslim friends, as well as his reading of Muslim texts. This too encouraged me on my journey on the path toward realizing the importance of more than the Qur'an in that process.

Eventually, as one example of his influence in my life, this led to my studies in how Muslims approached the translation/interpretation of the Qur'an. I tried to listen well, and in so doing I found insights and wisdom which can inform Christians about the task of translation of the Bible.⁶ Phil was one of the early sources of such inspiration.

Practice Humility in Relationships

In the arena of what I have learned from Phil in terms of relationships, I want to also mention two examples. Both actually both spring from a certain kind of manner which is evident in his written work.

The first is the humility with which Phil describes his own struggles with seeking to live a godly life. He is very honest in his memoirs about the struggles that missionaries face in a number of areas (e.g., marriage, sexual temptations, and more). But he does not point the finger. He is vulnerable enough to include himself. Such transparency is as freeing to younger leaders in the realm of spiritual growth as is his pioneering of experimentation in missiology.

I have sought to lead, as well, from a place of humble transparency. I have learned about the value of humility by observing a number of people in my life over the years. Phil's voice is among them.

The second is Phil's willingness to show how his own spiritual life falls short in comparison to some of his Muslim friends. This exhibits the same humility I just cited. He mentions this in *New Paths*⁷ and also in his memoirs,⁸ thus at the earlier and later stages of his written work. This consistent posture suggests to me that humility was part of the fabric of Phil's inner life.

In recent years, just as the term "insider" has emerged as a way of speaking of believers and movements, so too has the term "alongsider" emerged as an increasingly common way to speak of missionaries. The term has been coined to try to find vocabulary that captures the humble, servant, learning posture many of us are seeking to embrace. And many of us have learned the hard way how to be alongsiders—finding our pride and presumption broken by experience. We become alongsiders through our willingness to learn from others (from insiders, from other missionaries, and from Muslims who do not yet believe). While Phil never used the word alongsider, he modeled some early elements. And once again I reckon my journey is in part, at least, a result of standing on the shoulders of things he spoke and wrote.

Phil also would not have used the term "holy envy," by which some have tried to express a posture of intentionally looking for the best in other religions—in their religious practices and their religious followers. This attitude is not employed to diminish the so-called dark sides of religions. But it is a posture that assumes a charitable assumption about others, while also being willing to look honestly at the dark sides of our own religious traditions.

Again, I see seeds of this in Phil's own life and work. I know he would not welcome all the comparisons, or align himself with all that some people mean when they speak of holy envy.

Endnotes

¹ Giulio Basseti-Sani, *The Koran in the Light of Christ: A Christian Interpretation of the Sacred Book of Islam* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977).

² There have been numerous articles and discussions of the C Scale. I give one example in the references.

³ For discussions about insider movements from different perspectives, see the Lausanne discussion, for example, at <https://www.lausanne.org/lgc-transfer/highly-contextualized-missions-surveying-the-global-conversation>.

⁴ Phil Parshall, "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1998): 404–6, 409–10.

⁵ Phil Parshall, *Divine Threads within a Human Tapestry: Memoirs of Phil Parshall* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000).

⁶ For example, the way that Muslims incorporate the original text of the Qur'an and in some cases include both a very literal translation and in the same publication a more explanatory translation.

⁷ Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1980).

⁸ Parshall, *Divine Threads within a Human Tapestry*.

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This is yet another area where I see myself and others, in our own various perspectives, standing upon the shoulders of those like Phil, able to discover things we could not have seen or obtained otherwise.

Concluding Thoughts

I want to return to some of my opening remarks about folk music. In 1965, at the Newport Folk Festival, Pete Seeger (a patriarch of the folk music movement) reportedly tried to cut the cables that powered the amplifiers Bob Dylan was using to electrify his sound. Dylan played his old music; he just represented it in a new sound (and louder, of course).

This response reminds me of how the Athenians resisted Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22–34). At that rock festival, some in the audience, including Peter Seeger, hated the music; some loved it; some reserved judgement. Dylan took a risk. He innovated, but it was not a risk he would have ever been in a position to make had people like Seeger not pioneered the folk music movement to begin with.

By taking the risk of documenting his thinking and ideas in written forms, as well as by his own living of his life, Phil Parshall has added to the canon, as it were, of the folk music of missiology and mission practice. Others like me stand on his shoulders, and we have taken some aspects of his portfolio to places Phil would not be comfortable going. However, a generation of missiologists are very aware that they would not be standing where they are if not for the innovative spirit of Phil Parshall. **IJFM**

Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms Bringing Shame upon an Honored Missiological Paradigm: A Study of Conviction and Elenctics

by Christopher Flanders

Editorial Note: This article is a revision of the author's presentation at the 2018 Evangelical Missiological Society National Conference in Dallas.¹

Those who have lived in Southeast Asia likely know about durian, that fruit of legendary smell and taste. It has an extremely hard outer casing more like a hand grenade than a typical fruit. To open it one must find and cut along the natural seams of the outer shell. If a person were to try to cut *across* those seams rather than *with* them, opening a durian would be nearly impossible, requiring a chain saw rather than simply one's hands and a knife! But when done properly, a durian opens nicely and reveals the fruity treasure hidden inside.

In certain ways, ministering to people is like opening a durian. For quite some time now missiologists have helped us see this same reality in understanding cross-cultural notions of sin, conscience, and conviction. That is, if we are working at cross-purposes with a person's or a culture's natural form of conviction, we will experience frustration. But, if we can understand the "seams" of a person or a culture, that is, if our approach works *with* rather than *against* these natural cultural "seams," we will potentially find greater connection and effectiveness in our evangelism and discipleship.

This cultural variability of the human conscience—the way we think about sin—has been ably noted.² We now recognize that individuals, and to some degree cultures and sub-cultures, tend towards an orientation that is guilt or shame prone.³ Generally speaking, "shame orientation implies a relational personality type, guilt orientation implies a standard-centered personality type."⁴ Both these ideas are uncontroversial, though perhaps still underappreciated. Admittedly, we use these terms sloppily and can often over-generalize, but no culture is unilaterally a "shame culture," an "honor culture," or a "guilt culture." Each culture experiences all these dynamics variably, but these distinct terms reflect real-world differences.

Unfortunately, there have been strong messages in historic missiology that have directed many of us to try and cut across the seams of human conscience.

Christopher Flanders (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is associate professor of missions at Abilene Christian University. He served as a missionary in Thailand for eleven years. His current research focuses on face and honor-shame issues. He is the author of About Face: Rethinking Face for 21st Century Missions. He is also assistant editor for Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis (missioideijournal.com).

Much has been written on the way Western approaches to theology, evangelism, and discipleship rely too heavily on legal notions.⁵ When this guilt orientation is assumed in other contexts, this bias results in the missiological equivalent of opening a durian the wrong way.

Due to the way our Western tradition can frame the nature of the gospel, missionaries and missiologists have at times accepted this distinction begrudgingly. They look at shame-orientation as a sub-Christian framework, similar to a cultural accommodation. It's like "allowing" for belief in other gods until it matures into a more adequate belief in the existence of one single God; or, like one surrendering to certain local religious terminology because of its familiarity in the minds and hearts of local people. Acknowledgment that shame-oriented people and cultures exist comes with a begrudging acceptance, as mere accommodation that will hopefully mature into a more "Christian" stance of a guilt-oriented conscience. A guilty conscience has become the normative standard based on the nature of the gospel itself.

This deep-seated perspective is in part due to the influential Dutch missiologist, Johan Bavinck, and his writings on sin, conscience, and conviction, what he termed *elenctics*.⁶ What I wish to demonstrate is that one significant misunderstanding in his writings turns out, ironically, to argue the exact opposite of what Bavinck intended. Bavinck claimed that elenctics and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit must rest upon a sense of guilt. Elenctics in scripture, however, does not rest upon guilt, but rather on shame. To put it another way, the biblical terminology Bavinck and many Western missiologists have used to ground a guilt-oriented approach actually authorizes an elenctics rooted in shame.

Elenctic theology was polemical and its aim was to help people see where they were wrong. That was the point. Elenctics was apologetic, confrontative, aimed at unmasking human religious effort wherever false and sinful.

Elenctics: A Short History

What is *elenctics*? If you were a student of missiology in the 1970s–1990s, you would likely have been familiar with the term. Elenctics is a subdiscipline of missiology, brought into prominence in North America by mainstream missiologists such as David Hesselgrave and Harvey Conn. It was a major

topic of missiological instruction during the late 20th century in prominent training institutions such as Westminster Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Wheaton College, and Fuller Theological Seminary.⁷

In practice, elenctics was primarily concerned with the persuasion of others, thus it was often folded into discussions of apologetics and Christian interaction with non-Christian religions. It surfaced in the conversations between conservative Christian voices over against the more progressive, modern, and liberal voices that began to emphasize dialogue and take a more progressive turn in their theology. But, more than just merely persuading people of God's truth, elenctics was also about inculcating in others a sense of conviction about what is true and right and conversely, what is wrong.

The history of elenctics predates modern missiological literature as a type of practical theology, beginning with Gisbertus Voetius and his reformed theology of the 1600s. Voetius provided an encyclopedia for theology in his *Exercitia et Bibliotheca Studiosi Theologiae* (1644), where he separates theology into the traditional divisions of biblical, systematic, and the practical. But he then adds a fourth division—*theologia elenctica*. Voetius derived this term "elenctica" from the Greek verb *ελέγχο* (elencho). As the semantic meaning indicates, Voetius believed this important area of theology should focus on disproving, refuting, and exposing untruth and error, particularly in apologetic disputes Christianity had with paganism, Judaism, and Islam. The famous Reformed theologian Francis Turretin later picks this idea up in his strong reaction against perceived liberal tendencies in his theological environment. These tendencies minimized the notion of personal sin, the importance of personal conviction of human culpability, and the status of a sinner before a holy God. For both Voetius and Turretin, elenctic theology was polemical and its aim was to help people see where they were wrong. That was the point. Elenctics was apologetic, confrontative, aimed at unmasking human religious effort wherever false and sinful. Subsequent Reformed theologians such as Abraham Kuyper advocated elenctics to counteract the growing liberal theological tendencies of 19th and 20th century Protestant theology.

Elenctics, however, was not a missiological issue until the work of the great Dutch missiologist Johan H. Bavinck,⁸ whose writings established this focus of study as a sub-discipline in North American missiology. In his 1960 text *Introduction to the Science of Missions*, one of the most influential texts in modern missiology,⁹ Bavinck laid out his notion of elenctics and its importance for missiology. He defined elenctics as a missionary science that asks the question, "What have you done with God?" In particular, elenctics referred to the work

of the Holy Spirit in convicting people of sin (John 16:8). According to Bavinck,

elenctics is the science which is concerned with the conviction of sin. In a special sense, then, it is the science which unmasks to heathendom all false religions as sin against God, and it calls heathendom to a knowledge of the only true God.¹⁰

It is “strongly controlled by the missionary motive . . . and attempts to convince . . . of sin and to move them to repentance and conversion.”¹¹ So important was elenctics that Bavinck argued it formed one of three areas that encompassed the discipline of missiology: mission theory, mission history, and elenctics.¹² It was Bavinck who brought elenctics directly into the missiological conversation, placing it squarely in the context of missionary proclamation and practice.

A point critical for Bavinck’s notion of elenctics came from his understanding of the Greek term *ελέγχω* (*elengcho*). Bavinck notes that

“elenctic” is derived from the Greek verb *elengchein*. In Homer the verb has the meaning of “to bring to shame.” It is connected with the word *elengchos* that signifies shame. In later Attic Greek the significance of the term underwent a certain change so that the emphasis fell more upon the conviction of guilt, the demonstration of guilt. It is this latter significance that it has in the New Testament.¹³

I will return to this important claim of a linguistic shift later, but here I note that for Bavinck, elenctics was about exposing human guilt and the conviction of guiltiness before a holy God. So, as a practical example, Bavinck recommends that in the initial stages of evangelism, missionaries should concentrate on the proclamation of sinfulness, guilt, and repentance.¹⁴ Guilt and guiltiness form the foundation of the New Testament usage of this term and Bavinck’s understanding of elenctics.

David Hesselgrave brought Bavinck’s notion of elenctics squarely into the North American conversation and popularized it for a generation of missiologists. Drawing primarily on the work of Bavinck, Hesselgrave noted that the term elenctics

comes from the Greek word *elengchein*, which originally meant “to bring to a sense of shame,” but later came to mean “to bring to a sense of guilt.” The latter meaning is found in the New Testament.¹⁵

In his enormously influential text *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, Hesselgrave repeated this claim that “the meaning of the word ‘elenctics’ shifted from ‘to bring shame’ in Homer to ‘to bring guilt’ in Attic and New Testament Greek.”¹⁶ In a 1983 article in *Missiology*, Hesselgrave provided a strong endorsement of Bavinck’s assertion that *elengchein* was based in guilt and was “in accord with Scripture.”¹⁷

Furthermore, Hesselgrave argued that though guilt, shame, and fear all can function to lead unbelievers to conversion, guilt remains central:

elengchein refers to conviction of *guilt*. This is not so much cultural as it is transcultural and spiritual. Sin and guilt, atonement, and forgiveness—these are not culturally derived accidents which are seized upon by God. They are supercultural and spiritual realities insisted upon by him...¹⁸ (italics original)

That is, “only those who recognize their guilt will value the payment made on the cross; only those who value the cross will embrace its Savior.”¹⁹ Hesselgrave makes room for the Holy Spirit to work through various motivations such as shame and fear. However, he posits guilt as the primary, most “Christian” motivation, noting that guilt is “most compatible with, if not derived from, the Judeo-Christian view of a holy and omniscient God.”²⁰ According to Hesselgrave,

shame and the specter of shame . . . are frequently inimical to faith in Christ, because, when a sense of shame supplants an awareness of guilt, the respondent is often so preoccupied with the approval or disapproval of others that he cannot consider the requirements of God.²¹

Parallel to the work of Hesselgrave was that of German missiologist Klaus Müller, whose significant writings in this area have been quite influential in Europe. Like Hesselgrave, Müller argued that elenctics was about guilt and guiltiness and that shame was problematic for the gospel. For example, Müller argued that in 2 Timothy 3:16 the Greek term *elegmon* (typically translated as “rebuking” or “reproof”) should be translated as punishment, meaning something like “to be guided by guilt.”²² He argued that shame acts as an impediment to proper Christian conversion. It is

superficial, the search for prestige, acceptance by others, and the values that lead there, are the motive for a decision. This leads to a sort of “rice Christian” . . . Syncretistic elements are the consequence, if the guilt feeling does not grow . . . Shame is however not only an obstacle on the way. It has to be directed towards God like in the Old Testament, on his omnipotence, omnipresence, and incorruptibility.²³

Like Hesselgrave, Müller relied heavily on Bavinck, and pointed out how the meaning of *elengchein* had shifted from its earlier, pagan definition of “to bring to shame” to an idea of “convicted by guilt” in New Testament context. Müller suggested the gospel should ultimately reshape the human conscience, that when “a shame-oriented conscience accepts the Holy Spirit as his authority, it internalizes the ‘significant other’ and experiences a change to guilt orientation.”²⁴ The goal of gospel proclamation, in Müller’s summation, is that “people should be convicted of their guilt before God in their very consciences, and should accept redemption from the saving work of Jesus Christ.”²⁵

From this short survey of influential voices, elenctics should lead to forgiveness of sins based on a consciousness of guilt before God. Bavinck, Hesselgrave, and Müller alike agree that though there was an earlier sense of shame in the biblical narrative, in the New Testament the meaning of *elengchein* had changed to a focus on guilt and guiltiness.

U-Shaped Conversion

This cultural assumption of guilt and guilt awareness as basic to the Christian experience of the gospel is nothing new. Such a guilt-focused approach in missiology parallels the recent history of conversion in the modern Western Evangelical experience. Historian Bruce Hindmarsh's study of British and American conversion narratives in the 18th and 19th centuries alerts us to the strong expectation of guilt in the western theological imagination. Hindmarsh identifies what he terms the "U-shaped conversion" model, the dominant pattern among the Puritans and early evangelicals in North America. This was a very specific cultural model, one that assumed an explicit awareness of forgiveness of sins and a concomitant personal experience involving guilt-awareness, which became for quite some time the *sine qua non* of authentic conversion in Western Evangelical Protestant Christianity.²⁶ Hindmarsh explains the outline of this conversion model. Such involved a

U-shaped pattern that begins with serious religious impressions in childhood, followed by a descent into worldliness and hardness of heart, followed by an awakening or pricking of religious conscience, and a period of self-assertion and attempted moral rectitude, which only aggravates the conscience and ends in self-despair. This self-despair, paradoxically, leads to the possibility of experiencing a divinely wrought repentance and the free gift of justification in Christ. Forgiveness of sins comes as a climax and a psychological release from guilt and introduces ideally a life of service to God predicated on gratitude for undeserved mercy.²⁷

This model followed the pattern of the younger son in the parable of Luke 15, where the son begins with a type of knowledge of God, but then falls into sin, is filled with guilt, and ultimately finds release for that guilt in the forgiveness of the loving father. This model assumed a guilt-laden conscience that would find relief of its guilt in the cross. Prominent evangelists and preachers such as Charles Finney and Jonathan Edwards would base their appeal for authentic conversion upon this U-shaped expectation. There was continual doubt that a conversion was authentic if it did not exhibit this U-shaped pattern.

Missionaries of the 19th and 20th centuries traveled with this expectation. For example, it represents the dominant framework of modern Thai Christianity, dating from the beginning of Protestant missionary work in the early 19th century and continuing in some places into the present. Early missions

in Siam (modern-day Thailand) demonstrated this same expectation, which formed part of the significant frustration these early missionaries experienced. Many pondered why it seemed the Siamese (and later, Thai) just didn't "get" the gospel. The Siamese did not seem to be moved with the heavy, guilt-laden conscience when receiving or responding to the Gospel. Pioneer missionary Daniel McGilvary and others like him found such a lack of this guilt-laden, U-shaped conversion model frustrating.²⁸ Siamese would verbally accept they were culpable and were a sinner. But these missionaries desired something more to manifest, that is, a deeper psychological experience of a guilty conscience. They did not want their converts merely to acknowledge their guilt, but they needed to feel that guilt deep in their hearts.

When Thai converts failed to exhibit the expected characteristics dictated by Western missionary expectations, the primary defect was thought to be in Thai culture itself. For example, influential 19th-century missionary Jesse Caswell notes that the Thai mind was "peculiarly unfitted for understanding and embracing the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin through an atonement."²⁹

With roots in Europe and North America, this model was individualistic, and emerged with both a distinctive sense of independent self and a heightened sense of introspective conscience.³⁰ The model also assumed the juridical patterns of penal substitution and a Western legal interpretive filter that focused on guilt and pardon. Although there does emerge some level of variance in modern American and European Protestantism, "on the whole . . . the basic U-shaped pattern . . . remains consistent in all the evangelical autobiographies whatever their differences and variations at other levels."³¹

This evangelical conversion narrative, viewed through a legal framework, assumed an experience of deep emotional guilt and an explicit focus on the forgiveness of sins. This was the central motivation for and the chief benefit of conversion. When aligned with this model, the Protestant dialectics of law and gospel, judgment and mercy, and terror and comfort encouraged a level of internal tension that drove people toward a crisis of conscience before the gospel resolved that crisis. Evangelical homiletics stimulated and expressed this pattern.³² As missionaries did their work in non-Western worlds, they carried these expectations with them, assuming people of other cultures would display similar experiences.

As Hindmarsh notes, however, the expectations for this "proper" conversion were often not realized. Many Western missionaries were surprised by how difficult it was to reproduce this conversion model and all its concomitant psychological experiences in their non-Western mission contexts.³³ When missionary preaching did not result in the expected conversion experience, missionaries frequently blamed either

the local culture or the hardness of hearts.³⁴ Often, if religious change did happen among the local people, this “conversion” was viewed with hesitancy or suspicion, especially if it lacked these “authentic” conversion markers of guilt; that is, they were not content with acknowledgment of culpability, but desired something akin to the psychological experience we know as a guilty conscience.

Bending Sin towards Guilt

I return now to Bavinck. Recall that he framed his understanding of elenctics on the Greek term *elengchein*, which he argued changed from a shame-oriented experience in pre-Christian Greek to one of guilt-orientation in the New Testament. There is one significant problem with Bavinck’s claim that the meaning of *elengchein* had changed—he was wrong.

Critical to Bavinck’s discussion of elenctics is his reference to the work of biblical scholar Friedrich Büchsel, author of the article on the *elench* semantic domain for the famous *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*. It is this work that Bavinck claims establishes a meaning shift from the earlier notions of shame to the New Testament sense of guilt. In both the original German entry and the subsequent English translation, however, Büchsel says no such thing. What Büchsel argues is that the focus or criteria of *elengchein* is reoriented towards sin and God’s truth. He does not, however, say anything about the mode of conviction changing from shame to guilt. Quite the opposite, throughout his brief entry he consistently points out the fundamental sense of shame in the term *elengchein* throughout Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian writings. He notes that in Homer and the LXX, the term means “to shame,” “to scorn,” “to expose,” “to rebuke.”³⁵ Indeed, Büchsel is clear to point out the New Testament speaks more specifically to sin than guilt; but, he also argues that among late Jewish and early Christian writers, discipling and moral formation were accomplished through the means of *elengchein*, that is, to convict or rebuke *through shame*.³⁶

What is clear is that Büchsel does not argue, as Bavinck suggests, for a shift in meaning from “shame” to “guilt” in the New Testament. Bavinck’s note about the *TDNT* entry is illuminating. Bavinck interpolates into Büchsel’s definition the notion of guilt and guiltiness, making elenctics about conviction of guilt. How did Bavinck make this mistake? I hardly think that such could have been deliberate. Rather, I suspect that the dominant modern Western legal framework of his theology led him to assume quite naturally that a

focus upon sin before God (instead of earlier usages that were not theological in focus) meant that *elengchein* *must* mean guilt and guiltiness.³⁷

Bavinck is not alone in doing this. Others have made similar errors of interpolation, based presumably on this Western tendency to read guilt into the idea of conviction. John McClean writes about elenctics in his *Thinking of God* blog, itself a fine blog. He quotes John 16:8, one of the occurrences of *elengchein* in the New Testament; but, McClean adds guilt. John 16:8 notes that when the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict (*elengchein*) the world concerning righteousness, sin, and judgment. McClean, however, changes the verse to “convict the world *of guilt*.” That is, he adds the term guilt to the verse.³⁸

There is one significant problem with Bavinck’s claim that the meaning of *elengchein* (elenctics) had changed. He was wrong.

McClean is simply quoting from Cornelius Haak, whose article in the *Calvin Theological Journal* addresses this topic of elenctics.³⁹ There, Haak does exactly this very thing. His article begins by quoting the text of John 16 and he, too, injects into the verse the term guilt.⁴⁰ Haak notes correctly how *elengchein* is a Greek term that means to pull off the mask, to reveal, to expose—all experiences that typically correlate with shame. He then makes the unwarranted and unsupported claim that due to the juridical nature of the term, elenctics involves the guilt of people in the courtroom of God.⁴¹ I find it ironic that Haak, though he acknowledges that shame is the fundamental sense of the term, continues to read *elengchein* with a focus on guilt, to the point of adding the term into his scriptural citation.⁴²

My purpose is not to disparage or unduly critique these men. It is, however, to point out how easily Western interpreters slip the notion of guilt into our understandings of what it means to convict. It’s more likely that our notions of what constitutes conviction have been profoundly shaped by our Western social, legal, and philosophical presuppositions. This influential Western-legal framework leads us to miss shame dynamics that are present in scripture, and assume there to be a consistent case of guilt dynamics. This seems to be evident with elenctics.

Correcting Western Anthropology

Some of this bias among missiology and biblical interpretation was likely influenced and reinforced by the writings of anthropologists like Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Many have written on how their early notions of shame and guilt cultures were flawed, and while mainstream

anthropology generally rejects these distinctions, the ideas persist in popular opinion and mission literature.⁴³ Mead and Benedict clearly make a strong connection of guilt to conscience in contrast to its absence in shame, which they argue is more attuned to public opinion.

True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior, not, as true guilt cultures do, as an internalized conviction of sin. Shame is a reaction to other people's criticism... it requires an audience. Guilt does not.⁴⁴

There is little empirical support for their claim that shame arises from public exposure of failure, whereas guilt arises from the more private pangs of one's internalized conscience.⁴⁵ In more collectivistic cultures, people internalize standards from what is important in the opinions of others. Thus, they are often much more sensitive to failing to meet those expectations and often feel "shame" when they do not.⁴⁶

Lau notes that in the Old Testament the idea of guilt is about *being* guilty and not *feeling* guilty. Shame, in contrast, denotes "the subjective experience of objective guilt," that is, "deep regret, sorrow, and compunction for past moral failings."

What, then, does it mean to convict or to be convicted? Conviction does not equal a mere cognitive recognition of facts but assumes an affective reaction of dis-ease (discomfort) that accompanies that recognition. "The activity of the conscience is subjectively experienced through the awareness of self-conscious emotions, such as shame, pride, guilt, or embarrassment," sometimes called "moral emotions."⁴⁷ It is this reaction that moves individuals and communities to *repent* or *return*. The biblical notion of conviction assumes this fuller sense of recognition, with the appropriate emotions of self-assessment. Elenctein is no mere rational judgment, not a court simply pronouncing a guilty verdict, but it includes an appropriate recognition. This means that reason alone is not what the term assumes. Conviction must involve both *reason* and *affect*, both *realization* and *emotional response*. This internalized sense of failure and blame, what we call conviction, can come in two forms—guilt or shame.

The Western view primarily thinks of conviction as legal—the declaration of someone's guilt—with perhaps an accompanying sense of guiltiness. This brings us to the semantic complexity of the English term guilt. To be guilty can certainly mean to experience feelings of guilt, the pangs of a guilty conscience, but the primary sense is to simply *be guilty*. That is, to be culpable, to be declared guilty or in the wrong. This sense produces an objective assessment where

one is guilty regardless of feelings. Therefore, "to be culpable" is one definition of the English term guilt. The confusion is that often missiologists and theologians do not clarify which sense of guilt it is they are talking about—the *fact* of guilt or the *experience* of guilt. This often muddies the waters.

Shame and Conviction in the New Testament

As I have pointed out above, however, the Greek term elengchein is not about conviction by guilt, but rather by shame. Or, to use the second sense of guilt, *elengchein is an attempt to bring about shame based upon the guilt (culpability) of a person*. To counter a common Western misconception, conviction of wrongdoing, sin, or moral failure is experienced not only as a form of guilt-conviction, but also, shame-conviction. This is what the New Testament use of elengchein points towards, and it raises the question as to what it means practically to experience a shame-conviction.

Here I must draw upon the work of New Testament scholar Te-Li Lau. In a recent work on shame in Paul's writings, Lau discusses at length the term elengchein and "shaming refutation."⁴⁸ He notes carefully and extensively the dominant role the term played in the Greco-Roman notions of moral education. He also summarizes the shame/guilt terms in both the Hebrew Bible and ancient Jewish thought. Lau notes that in the Old Testament the idea of guilt is primarily one about *being* guilty—of guilt-culpability—and not *feeling* guilty. The Old Testament emphasizes the *fact* of having transgressed YHWH's moral code. Shame, in contrast, when it is associated with the law or the salvific work of God, denotes "the subjective experience of objective guilt," that is, "deep regret, sorrow, and compunction for past moral failings."⁴⁹

Lau is careful to differentiate among different types of shame. He notes, for example, what scholars term *disintegrative shaming* (which treats the offender as fundamentally bad, a defective person). This is the type of shame that eventually assumes a master status and defines the person as a totality.⁵⁰ But there is another type, that of *reintegrative shaming* (shaming that is followed by efforts to bring the person back into a rehabilitated state). This focuses significantly on the act(s), assuming that the person is still fundamentally good and sound, someone who has gone temporarily astray.⁵¹

It draws attention to what is shameful about the behavior or the perspective. Lau argues that Paul operated with a modified version of this second type.

Lau also carefully demonstrates how Paul uses *retrospective shaming* (situations where the shame causing event is in the past) and *prospective shaming* (where the potentially shameful event is still in the future).⁵² In the case of the Galatian church, Paul

uses shame as a salutary tool so that the Galatians are able to perceive accurately their predicament. He wants to transform their minds so that they are capable of self-testing, self-examination, and self-reflection.⁵³

And again,

Paul uses shame (both retrospective and prospective) as a pedagogical tool to transform the mind of his readers into the mind of Christ so that their identity and behavior are rooted in the crucified Messiah.⁵⁴

Lau provides a summary of Paul's extensive use of shame in his letters.⁵⁵

1. Shame is a moral emotion that is vital to the Christian life. That is, emotions play a significant role in Christian spirituality and moral formation.
2. Shame is a powerful emotional response and a window into our moral character. This means that when we experience shame toward a truly shameful event, it demonstrates we have appropriated Godly values and shifted our "court of approval" to God and divinely approved communities. If we lack shame toward a truly shameful event, we demonstrate shamelessness. A good example of this is how Paul uses shame to express his disapproval of the Corinthian church's response to the man guilty of sin in 1 Corinthians 5.
3. Shame is a moral emotion that has the potential to affect our belief structure.
4. Shame is a moral emotion that provides rhetorical amplification and deepens convictions. Paul does this to help his readers "know moral truth in such a way that it affects the core of their being."
5. Shame is the premier social emotion that supports the communal nature of Pauline ethics. Since we often experience shame publicly and communally, particularly in the presence (real or imagined) of those who are close to us or who are important to us, shame can function to discourage violation of social responsibilities and the breaking of accepted social norms.

6. Shame motivates, but gratitude is the ultimate emotional motivation for doing good.

When believers understand that the basis of their honor truly is Christ, their shamefulness before God and their desire to receive a crown of righteousness from him (1 Cor. 9:24–27; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:7–8) motivate them to keep the faith and do that which pleases him.

Paul is not of course the only voice who recognizes shame as a powerful tool for God's work in human life.⁵⁶ The term *elengchein* or its cognates appear several times in the New Testament.⁵⁷ What difference would this shame perspective make for how we read these texts? It is beyond the scope of my discussion here to look at each of these closely. Allow one example to suffice.

In 2 Peter 2, we read of false teachers and false prophets. The language of the entire chapter is one that drips with shaming language, with deeply uncharitable comparisons, and ends with two of the most memorable shame-laden images in scripture.⁵⁸

The term *elengchein* appears in 2:16 describing the effect of the donkey on Balaam. Most English translations render this as "rebuke," "convict," or "correct." The donkey did indeed rebuke Balaam, but it was certainly more than that. The account in Numbers 22 in the Greek version of the Old Testament uses the term *ἐμπαίζω* (*empaizo*), which typically means to mock, make a fool of, or humiliate another. That a talking donkey humiliated Balaam, convicted him through shaming, rather than merely rebuking him, makes more understandable his response of rage and violence,⁵⁹ a common reaction to public shaming and humiliation that at times can even result in murder! This same term *empaizo* occurs in the Genesis 39 account of Joseph where Potiphar's wife reports to the household servants that Joseph had tried to *humiliate* them by trying to forcibly sleep with her.⁶⁰ Again in verse 17, she tells her husband that Joseph tried to humiliate her. What this suggests is that the story of Balaam and the donkey is not about a mere rebuking, or Balaam's conscience convicting him of his guiltiness, but rather a rebuke by shaming. *Elenchein* here in 2 Peter certainly seems to carry strong shame connotations.

I encourage you to examine each of these occurrences of *elengchein* in the New Testament and to substitute the terms "to shame" or "to convict by shame" to see if that does not fit with the context. Of course, I do not suggest that we should expect that every occurrence of *elengchein* in the New Testament must be translated with a sense for shame. What I wish to propose, however, is that unless there is good reason to render it otherwise, the normal semantic meaning should be understood with the sense of shame.

The Value of Shame in Elenctics

So what? How does a more accurate way of understanding elenctics help us?

First, the example of Bavinck and others provides a cautionary tale of how easily we can allow our own biases and presuppositions to impact our theology and even our understanding of the biblical text. It goes without saying that

Western missionaries historically come from backgrounds stressing law-guilt, and tend to emphasize selectively the corresponding biblical imagery (sin as crime, as transgression of the law; guilt as formal pronouncement of a judge in a court of law, as deserved punishment...).⁶¹

**That a talking donkey humiliated
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We must guard against the tendencies of this cultural background. The uncritical imposition of our models and frameworks can impede the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts and minds.

Second, understanding elenctics helps us read Scripture more faithfully. As those who value the truth, we all strive to read the Bible accurately. Seeing the shame dimension in elenctics helps us to step into the shame-laden world of the New Testament, and we become better readers of the Bible. This will assist us in a missiology that must ultimately emerge from and rest upon good theology and an accurate understanding of Scripture.

Third, seeing the shame-dimension of conviction can help correct outdated anthropological notions that still work their way into our missiology and our popular mission writings.

Endnotes

¹ Since making that presentation, I have become aware of two excellent resources that make similar points to those I make here. One of these is the excellent monograph by Hannes Wiher, *Shame and Guilt: A Key to Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2003). The second is the recent work on shame language in Paul's letters. See Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). These two excellent works support my basic arguments here. I highly recommend them both.

² Robert J. Priest, "Missionary Elenctics: Conscience and Culture," *Missiology: An International Review* 22, no. 3 (1994); Thomas Schirrmacher, *Culture of Shame/Culture of Guilt: Applying the Word of God in Different Situations* (Bonn, Germany: Culture and Science Publication, 2013), 64–77; Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*, 30–178; Jayson Georges and Mark Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 162–163, 195–196; Lau, *Defending Shame*, 206–233. Also see the entire January–March 2014 issue of *IJFM*, which focuses on these issues.

In part, this is due to missiology being a derivative discipline. At times, outdated and mistaken theories from anthropology are retained and continue to limit our ability to perceive, transcend and correct our previous missiology. By expanding our understanding of how shame functions, we can clear out these older theories and engage in a refresh of sorts.

Finally, recognizing the legitimacy of both shame-oriented and guilt-oriented consciences will free us to better connect with those who exhibit these differences. We can embrace shame not simply begrudgingly, as mere accommodation, but as the actual basis for a thoroughly biblical notion of conviction. Those of us who live and work in contexts where shame is a more obvious feature of the dominant culture, or where people tend to exhibit a more shame-oriented conscience, should engage in a renewed effort to look for local shame terminology and use these more intentionally in teaching and training. That is, we must learn how local cultural modes of conviction function, fully allowing shame to function as part of that work.⁶²

I end with a quote from mission anthropologist Robert Priest that I have found very helpful.

Conscience is God-given and functions as an internal witness which ratifies the biblical message that we are sinners in need of salvation. Conscience contributes to repentance and faith, and it plays a pivotal role in the sanctification of the believer. But conscience is also culturally variable. As a result, cross-cultural missionaries seldom understand native conscience and frequently work at cross-purposes to it.⁶³

If Priest is correct (and I believe that he is), understanding the essence of shame in elenctics can assist us in this important work. We will avoid the frustration of working against the seams of human conscience. Instead, working together with the diverse responses of the human heart, we can find new resources for seeing how shame shapes conscience and conviction. It will provide new bridges across historically difficult frontiers. **IJFM**

- ³ This has become an accepted distinction in social-scientific and missiological literature. See Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*. Also see Sally Folger Dye, “Cultural Variation in Conscience: Part of God’s Design,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 31, no. 1 (2014); Wayne Dye, “Toward a Cross-Cultural Definition of Sin,” *Missiology* 4, no. 1 (January 1976); Paul Gilbert and Bernice Andrews, eds., *Shame: Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); June P. Tangney, Patricia Wagner, and Richard Gramzow, “Proneness to Shame, Proneness to Guilt, and Psychopathology,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 101, no. 3 (August 1992); Daniel Sznycer, Kosuke Takemura, Andrew W. Delton, Kosuke Sato, Theresa Robertson, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby, “Cross-Cultural Differences and Similarities in Proneness to Shame: An Adaptationist and Ecological Approach,” *Evolutionary Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2012).
- ⁴ Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*, 169.
- ⁵ “Western missionaries historically come from backgrounds stressing law-guilt, and tend to emphasize selectively the corresponding biblical imagery (sin as crime, as transgression of the law; guilt as formal pronouncement of a judge in a court of law, as deserved punishment; grace as justification, canceling of deserved punishment).” Robert Priest, “Guilt,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 419.
- ⁶ See the section on “Missionary Elenctics” in *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*, eds. John Bolt, James D. Bratt, P. J. Visser, and James A. de Jong (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 83–90.
- ⁷ René Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989–2005: A Geography of Fear* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 300.
- ⁸ Several European voices followed Bavinck such as Johannes Blauw, Walter Freytag, Marc Spindler, and Cees Haak, though elenctics did not gain as much popularity in Europe as it did in North America. Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping*, 300. As Haak notes, elenctics, due to the influence of Bavinck, remained a core element of 20th century Reformed mission theory. Cornelius J. Haak, “The Missional Approach: Reconsidering Elenctics Part 1,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 44 no. 1 (2009), 40.
- ⁹ H. L. Richard, “The Missiological Vision of J. H. Bavinck: Religion, Reticence, and Contextual Theology,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 31, no. 2 (2014), 84.
- ¹⁰ Johann H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1960), 222.
- ¹¹ Bavinck, *An Introduction*, 223.
- ¹² Bavinck, *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*, 31.
- ¹³ Bavinck, *An Introduction*, 221.
- ¹⁴ Thomas L. Austin, “Elenctics,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 308.
- ¹⁵ David J. Hesselgrave, and Earl J. Blomberg, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 146–147.
- ¹⁶ David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 610.
- ¹⁷ David J. Hesselgrave, “Missionary Elenctics and Guilt and Shame,” *Missiology: An International Review* 11 no. 4 (1983), 47.
- ¹⁸ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ*, 480.
- ¹⁹ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ*, 482.
- ²⁰ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ*, 479.
- ²¹ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ*, 479.
- ²² “Elenktik (engl. elenctics) ist der deutsche Begriff für ‘elengchein,’ das in 2.Tim.3,16 (für “Strafe”) vorkommt und soviel bedeutet wie ‘von Schuld überführen.’ Das ist das Ziel der Evangeliumsverkündigung: Die Menschen sollen in ihrem Gewissen von ihrer Schuld vor Gott überführt werden und die Erlösung durch das Heilswerk Jesu Christi annehmen.” Klaus W. Müller, “Elenktik: Die Lehre vom Scham- und Schuldorientierten Gewissen,” *Evangelikale Missiologie* 12 (1996): 101. (English translation: “Elenctics is the German expression for ‘elengchein,’ that in 2 Tim. 3:16 (for punishment) comes and means something like “to be guided by guilt.” That is the goal of the proclamation of the gospel: that people should be convicted of their guilt before God in their very consciences, and should accept redemption from the saving work of Jesus Christ” [1996]: 3.)
- ²³ Klaus W. Müller, in Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*, 145.
- ²⁴ Klaus W. Müller, “Elenktik: Giessen im Kontext,” in *Bilanz und Plan: Mission an der Schwelle zum dritten Jahrtausend*, ed. H. Kasdorf and K. W. Müller (Bad Liebenzell: VLM, 1988), 447.
- ²⁵ Klaus W. Müller, “Elenktik: Die Lehre vom Scham- und Schuldorientierten Gewissen,” 101.
- ²⁶ See Bruce D. Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), who traces how this particular model of conversion influenced the eighteenth and nineteenth century Protestant missionary movement. What Hindmarsh notes about the U-shaped evangelical conversion narrative, and the experiences of the early missionaries in Siam also continues today. For a part of my doctoral research in 2003, I surveyed Western missionaries working in Thailand and asked the question, “If someone does not experience a personal sense of guilt before accepting Christ, is their conversion valid?” 53 missionary respondents, and 23 of those selected “strongly agree” or “agree.”
- ²⁷ Bruce D. Hindmarsh, “Patterns of Conversion in Early Evangelical History and Overseas Mission Experience,” in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 73.
- ²⁸ For more on this basic assumption of early missionaries see both Philip J. Hughes, *Proclamation and Response: A Study of the History of the Christian Faith in Northern Thailand* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Payap University Archives, 1989) and Christopher Flanders, “Becoming

- God's Clients: Patronage, Clientelism, and Christian Conversion in Contemporary Thailand," in *Revelation and Leadership in the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of Ian Arthur Fair*, ed. Andrei A. Orlov (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2020), 65–89.
- ²⁹ Jesse Caswell, "Communications from the Missions. Siam. Annual Report of the Mission," *The Missionary Herald* 44 no. 1 (1848), 16.
- ³⁰ Hindmarsh, "Patterns of Conversion," 93. The seminal work regarding the emergence of the modern introspective conscience and its impact on Protestant conversion theory is Krister Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199–215. Much biblical scholarship has followed Stendahl that Paul was not introspective in any modern sense nor given to the type of burdened sinful conscience the Evangelical conversion narrative assumed.
- ³¹ Hindmarsh, "Patterns of Conversion," 75.
- ³² Bruce D. Hindmarsh, "'My Chains Fell off, My Heart Was Free': Early Methodist Conversion Narrative in England," *Church History* 68 no. 4 (1999): 925.
- ³³ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 326.
- ³⁴ When Thai converts failed to exhibit the expected characteristics dictated by Western missionary expectations, the primary defect was thought to be in Thai culture itself. For example, influential 19th century missionary Jesse Caswell notes that the Thai mind was "peculiarly unfitted for understanding and embracing the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin through an atonement." Caswell, "Communications," 16.
- ³⁵ F. Büchsel, "ελέγχο" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 473.
- ³⁶ Büchsel, "ελέγχο," 473. Liddell-Scott, the standard lexicon for early Greek notes the meaning as "to reproach, to disgrace, to dishonor, to put to shame." Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Liddell & Scott Greek-English Lexicon, Abridged* (Chicago: Follett Pub. Co., 1946), 531. Other standard New Testament Greek reference works (e.g., *NIDNTT* edited by Colin Brown, the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* edited by Balz and Schneider) similarly do not bring into their definitions or discussions the idea of guilt or guiltiness. Thayer's Greek lexicon draws specific attention to the shame dimension of the term defining it as "to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted." Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* (Boston: H. L. Hastings, 1896), 202.
- ³⁷ Wiher suggests Bavinck's "unconscious presuppositions" were at work here. Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*, 134.
- ³⁸ "The term comes from the Greek word for convict (*elegcho*), used in John 16:8–11 which says the Spirit 'will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.'" McClean has since changed this blog, which was originally published in 2015 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160421232843/http://thinkingofgod.org/2015/08/gracious-elenctics>). His updated version no longer has the interpolation of the term "guilt" into the text of John 16.
- ³⁹ Cornelius J. Haak, "The Missional Approach: Reconsidering Elenctics (Part 1)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 44 (2009): 37–48.
- ⁴⁰ His citation of John 16 is as follows: "When he [the Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." Haak, "Missional Approach," 37. He does not note what translation he uses, but a quick survey of the standard English translations reveals none that inject the term "guilt" into the text of John 16.
- ⁴¹ Haak, "Missional Approach," 40.
- ⁴² This interpolation of guilt into the text of John 16 finds its way into other blogs, such as <https://theologyinteralia.net/2019/07/07/gracious-elenctics/#more-359>.
- ⁴³ See, for example, my chapter on honor cultures. Christopher Flanders, "There Is No Such Thing as 'Honor' or 'Honor Cultures': A Missiological Reflection on Social Honor," in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood G. Lingenfelter* (Pickwick: Eugene, OR, 2019), 145–65. For a longer discussion of the notion of shame and guilt cultures in anthropology, see my book. Christopher Flanders, *About Face: Rethinking Face for 21st Century Mission*, American Society of Missiology Monograph Series 9 (Pickwick: Eugene, OR, 2011). Also see Millie R. Creighton, "Revisiting Shame and Guilt Cultures: A Forty-Year Pilgrimage," *Ethos* 18 (1990) and Takie Sugiyama Lebra, "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self," *Ethos* 11, no. 3 (1983).
- ⁴⁴ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), 223.
- ⁴⁵ June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford, 2002), 24.
- ⁴⁶ Although terms for shame and guilt exist in every language, "an increasing body of literature suggests that the valuation, elicitors, and behavioral consequences" will differ across cultural contexts. Y. Wong, and J. Tsai, "Cultural Models of Shame and Guilt" in *The Self-Conscious Emotions: Theory and Research*, ed. J. L. Tracy, R. W. Robins, and J. P. Tangney (New York: Guilford, 2007), 219. Much of this cultural difference in shame and guilt experience relates to different types of self-identity that occur in highly individualistic or highly collectivistic cultures.
- ⁴⁷ Frans Schalkwijk, Geert Jan Stams, Hedy Stegge, Jack Dekker, and Jaap Peen, "The Conscience as a Regulatory Function: Empathy, Shame, Pride, Guilt, and Moral Orientation in Delinquent Adolescents," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 60, no. 6 (May 2016): 676.
- ⁴⁸ Lau, *Defending Shame*, 37–59.
- ⁴⁹ Lau, *Defending Shame*, 86.
- ⁵⁰ So, for example, the thought that "I am a failure" or "You are worthless." These global attributions comprehensively describe the person as a whole.
- ⁵¹ Lau, *Defending Shame*, 79–188.
- ⁵² Lau, *Defending Shame*, 91. Lau devotes two entire chapters to careful exegesis of how Paul engages in both these types of conviction strategies.

⁵³ Lau, *Defending Shame*, 105.

⁵⁴ Lau, *Defending Shame*, 161.

⁵⁵ Lau, *Defending Shame*, 161–166.

⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas notes that godly shame is a recoiling from what is dishonorable and disgraceful as “it instills in us a horror for what dishonors.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Vol. 43, Temperance* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1968), 144. The Jewish writer Philo, a contemporary of Paul, notes this about God, using the term *elenchein* to describe the divine work on the human conscience through shame: “Let us, therefore, address our supplications to God, we who are self-convicted by our consciousness of our own sins, to chastise us rather than to abandon us; for if he abandons us, he will no longer make us his servants, who is a merciful master, but slaves of a pitiless generation: but if he chastises us in a gentle and merciful manner, as a kind ruler, he will correct our offences, sending that correcting conviction, his own word, into our hearts, by means of which he will heal them; reproving us and making us ashamed of the wickednesses which we have committed.” Philo of Alexandria, *s* 7, 146, accessed November 13, 2020, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book7.html>.

⁵⁷ Matt. 18:15; Luke 3:19; John 3:20; 8:9, 46; 16:8; Acts 6:10; Eph. 5:11, 13; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 3:16, 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13, 15; Heb. 12:5; Jude 22.

⁵⁸ Verse 22, where these false teachers are compared to dogs that return to their own vomit and washed pigs that return to wallowing in the mud.

⁵⁹ “Balaam answered the donkey, ‘You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now.’” Num. 22:29.

⁶⁰ Gen. 39:14.

⁶¹ Priest, *Guilt*, 419.

⁶² Some have remarked about shame-oriented people that they do not feel deep remorse for sin as do Westerners. Multiple studies have shown how this is in fact a deep misunderstanding. It is true that many non-Western cultures do not feel conviction (shame or guilt) when breaking laws. Many Thais do not feel excessively bad if labeled guilty (*mii khwaam phit*) or a law-breaker (*phuu lameurt gotmaay*). The same may likely experience a significantly negative emotional reaction and deep conviction (both shame and sometimes guilt) when the sin is relational and the designation is shame-based (being called an ungrateful child—*pen luuk akatdanyoo* or *pen luuk nerakhun*, both strong shame labels that can cut to the heart of most Thais).

⁶³ Priest, *Missionary Elenctics*, 291.



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Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms

Reimagining and Re-envisioning People Groups

by Leonard N. Bartlotti

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In the sweeping narrative of Scripture, the focus of God's self-disclosure is the peoples of the world. The biblical image of "the people of God" makes sense only against the background of a tempestuous mix of other "peoples," from which God selects one "holy nation" (Israel)—"you above all peoples" (Deuteronomy 10:15).¹ His ultimate purpose, however, is to dwell among a people from "all the families of the nations" (Psalm 22:27; 96:7; Revelation 7:9). "For once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10). From the standpoint of creation, redemption and eternity, a world full of "peoples" reflects God's beauty, creativity, and love.

Rethinking people groups does not mean eliminating the concept but reimagining and re-envisioning it in light of twenty-first century realities. The essence of my discussion here is reflexive, consciously acknowledging our assumptions and preconceptions. It is also corrective, addressed not to critics but to those of us who embrace and advocate UPG missiology. In this article, I explore ways to reimagine people groups through an upgraded understanding of the concept itself and suggest steps to re-envision the UPG approach in order to maximize efforts to reach all peoples.²

Understanding "People Groups"

However nuanced in the minds of mission scholars, popularly and in practice, "unreached people groups" are primarily "ethno-linguistic" in nature. Criteria related to ethnicity and language dominate.³ This is reflected in databases where a "people group" is defined as "an ethno-linguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members."⁴

The shorthand definition has advantages. It is easily communicated and marketed. "Peoples" as "ethnic groups" can be named, profiled, objectified, enumerated, and portrayed in pictures, videos and media. Another advantage is the appearance of an uncomplicated "this equals that" correspondence with

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Scripture: viz. every identifiable ethnic people and language today⁵ is represented in the eschatological multitude (Revelation 7:9; 5:9). This is highly motivational.

One obvious problem, recognized by Ralph Winter, is that from the beginning, the “people group” concept was intended to include “socio-peoples”—groups formed on the basis of other affinities like “shared interest, activity, or occupation.”⁶ Can we really envision these “shared interest” groups in the heavenly throng? While this is evangelistically pragmatic, I suggest it is an interpretive leap, and thus an imaginative mandate.

While ethno-linguistic groups provide a helpful baseline, we need to look at the challenge of reimagining “ethnicity,” “ethnic groups” and “ethnic identity” in light of more recent thinking. Given the primary UPG orientation toward “ethno-linguistic,” that is the focus of this discussion.⁷ Historically within the social sciences, understandings of ethnicity can be summarized into three general categories: primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist.

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Primordialist

In this view, ethnicity is understood as having a real, tangible foundation, based either on *kinship* and sociobiological factors, or on shared cultural *traits*, practices, and history. We could say that, for the former, ethnicity is “in the heart” or “in the blood,” and for the second, ethnicity is “in the cultural stuff”—distinctive “traits” or “surface markers” of identity (language, dress, food, etc.). The “in the heart” or “in the blood” approach is commonly emic, i.e., how peoples see themselves. Ethnic groups are viewed as “quasi-kinship” or “extended kin” groups.⁸

Historically viewed as primordial and fixed, ethnic groups were objectified, documented, and categorized (e.g., “material races”). Elements of their heritage and culture (including material culture) were institutionalized, sometimes immortalized, in books, journals, ethnographies, histories, memoirs, short stories, movies, and museums.⁹

Instrumentalist

Fredrik Barth’s seminal work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) marked a turning point and “shift from a static to *interactional approaches* to ethnicity.”¹⁰ Barth “abandons the notion that cultures are clearly bounded, separated and homogeneous units.”¹¹ The focus is not on cultural traits, but on dynamic interactions, ways people embrace, constrain, act on and experience ethnicity, and “imagine the ethnic community.” Individuals choose and change their ethnic identity, particularly at the boundaries between groups.

In this view, ethnicity functions as a *tool*, an aspect of the way people organize themselves depending on social circumstances.¹² Individuals and groups are actors, versus merely passive recipients of “culture” or heritage. They use cultural resources to pursue personal or communal advantage in particular settings and contexts. This focus reveals that “ethnic groups and their features are produced under *particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances; they are highly situational, not primordial.*”¹³

Constructivist

Barth’s work led to greater emphasis on the *contextual and situational processes* of ethnic identity. Ethnicity can be mobilized contextually and situationally, “in the contexts of different ‘levels’ and ‘contextual horizons.’”¹⁴ Identities are re-constituted, negotiated and contested in a dynamic process of self-other interaction.

Both the instrumentalist and constructivist approaches reflect a post-modern view of culture. Identities are socially constructed, not fixed but changeable (within certain constraints).¹⁵ Individuals maintain multiple identities and use ethnicity as a set of “diacritic” or “distinguishing markers” and tools for social engagement.

It is fairly obvious that Christian websites, mission agencies and literature tend to display an unquestioned reliance on the primordialist (“in the blood” and “in the stuff”) view of ethnicity, ethnic groups and identity. “People profiles” have become a kind of literary sub-genre!¹⁶ Unfortunately, among other problems this static approach too often rests on little or no contemporary ethnographic confirmation.

Mission thought leaders tried to account for complexity (e.g., sociopeoples, unimax, diaspora). But the above considerations are largely absent in the way the UPG movement today organizes data and conceives of peoples. By veiling reality, static categories fail to convey the dynamism and fluidity of UPGs. This sometimes leads to unrefined strategies, engagements and priorities.¹⁷ In an interconnected, urbanized, globalized, mobile and changing world, we need to re-envision our approach.

Re-envisioning Approaches

Brad Gill, President of the International Society for Frontier Missiology, notes the “new conditions that are pressing us to reimagine these frontiers.” Gill calls for a move beyond the “subtle ‘group think’” of our mission organizations, and the language and categories that may “unintentionally restrict our perception” and “blunt our imagination.”¹⁸

Toward that end, I suggest we need a new *flexible, multi-level model of people groups* that works for multiple contextual horizons. We need to reimagine our understandings of UPGs and re-envision strategies for reaching them. I propose four conceptual steps to help us develop a multi-level model and re-envisioned approach.

Triangular Field of Meaning

First, we need a reshaped model of people groups, one that enables us to understand them over a *triangular field of meaning* rather than a single lens.¹⁹ Based on our earlier discussion, we can think of ethno-linguistic people groups and identities from three intersecting perspectives, like three corners of a field. See figure 1 below.

At one corner of the field, ethnicity is seen “in the heart” or “blood” and “in the traits” or “stuff” of culture. Since, as Geertz

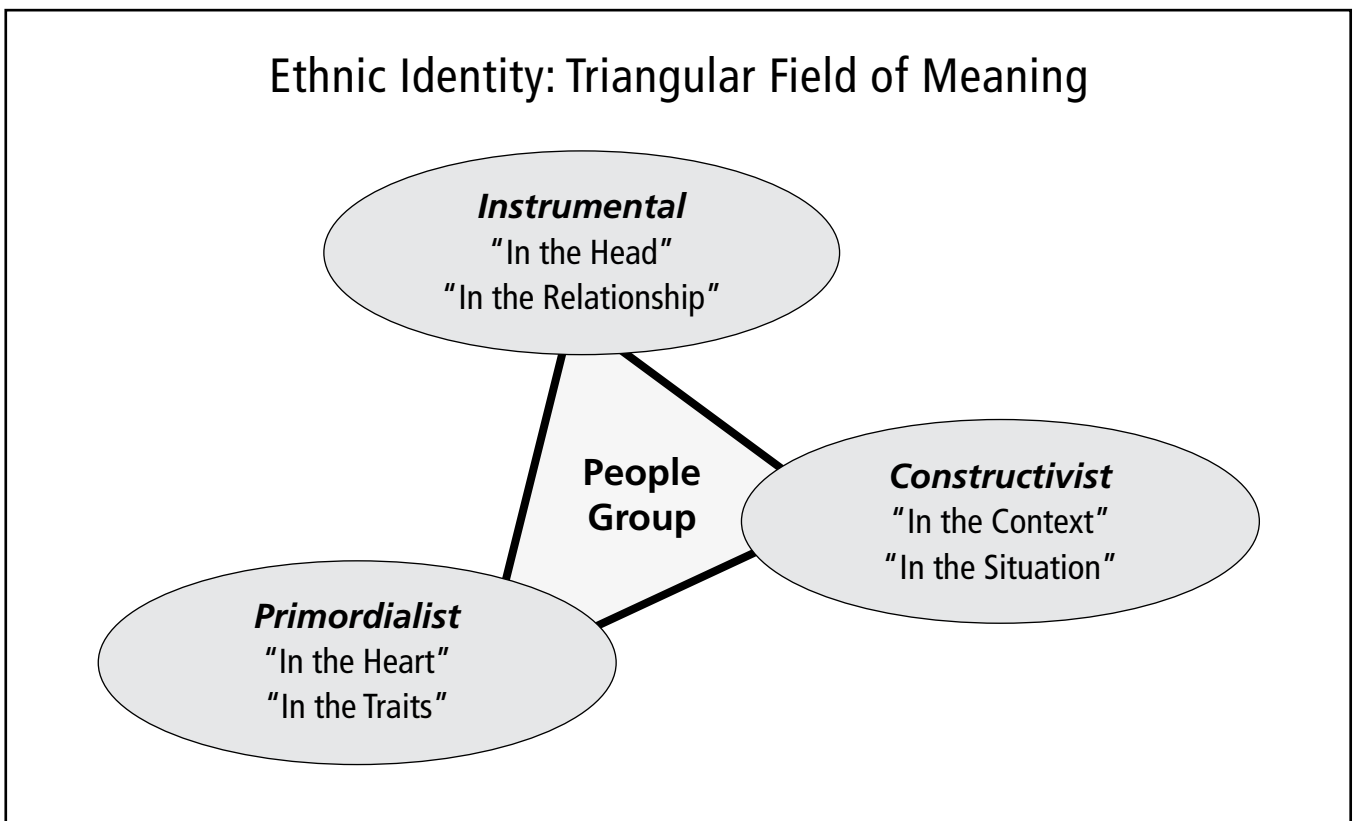
reminds us, “cultures are systems of meaning,” we need to take these seriously. Communities find symbolic meaning in notions of heritage, land and extended kinship, and elements like language, religion, festivals, food, dress, and music. At another corner, we see “in the head” and “in the relationship,” how individuals/groups use aspects of culture as tools for action, instruments to accomplish social ends. Knowing that ethnic identity is also variable “in the context”—constructed, negotiated, contested, self-assumed or ascribed by others—makes us alert to dynamics “in the situation.”

In order to have a clearer understanding of UPGs, and to devise more appropriate strategies, we must be able to move subtly and adeptly between these three viewpoints. They are not mutually exclusive. Note, too, that this apparent deconstruction does not eliminate “groupness,” but rather reconfigures it more dynamically. To be honest and accurate, ethnicity is also “in the observer’s head” (us): We are using “ethnicity” as an analytical tool to make sense of what we see.²⁰ These etic understandings are appropriate if we are aware of potential biases.

Dynamic Models

Second, we need more dynamic models of people group interaction and social bonding, especially in multi-ethnic, urban and diaspora contexts.

Figure 1. Ethnic Identity: Triangular Field of Meaning



For example, a Kazakh in Turkey preserves Kazakh ethnicity, but constructs a Turkish Kazakh identity. This allows him/her to negotiate more advantageous social connections and a sense of belonging.²¹ Migration also fosters a more fluid ethnic identity.

Minority Senegalese (e.g., Seereer) in Dakar adopt vernacular “urban Wolof” as the lingua franca. The process of “Wolofization” affects not only language, but also ethnicity. A new “Wolof” identity is constructed, especially among the second generation. As one Pulaar-speaking elementary school teacher reported, “At home I’m Haalpulaar, when I’m in Dakar, I’m Wolof.” This suggests “a new urban identity rather than a switch in ethnicity.” Depending on the context and interaction, residents may reject an ethno-linguistic identifier and simply say, as did one professor, “I’m from Dakar . . . that’s the new ethnicity now in Senegal, to be from Dakar.”²²

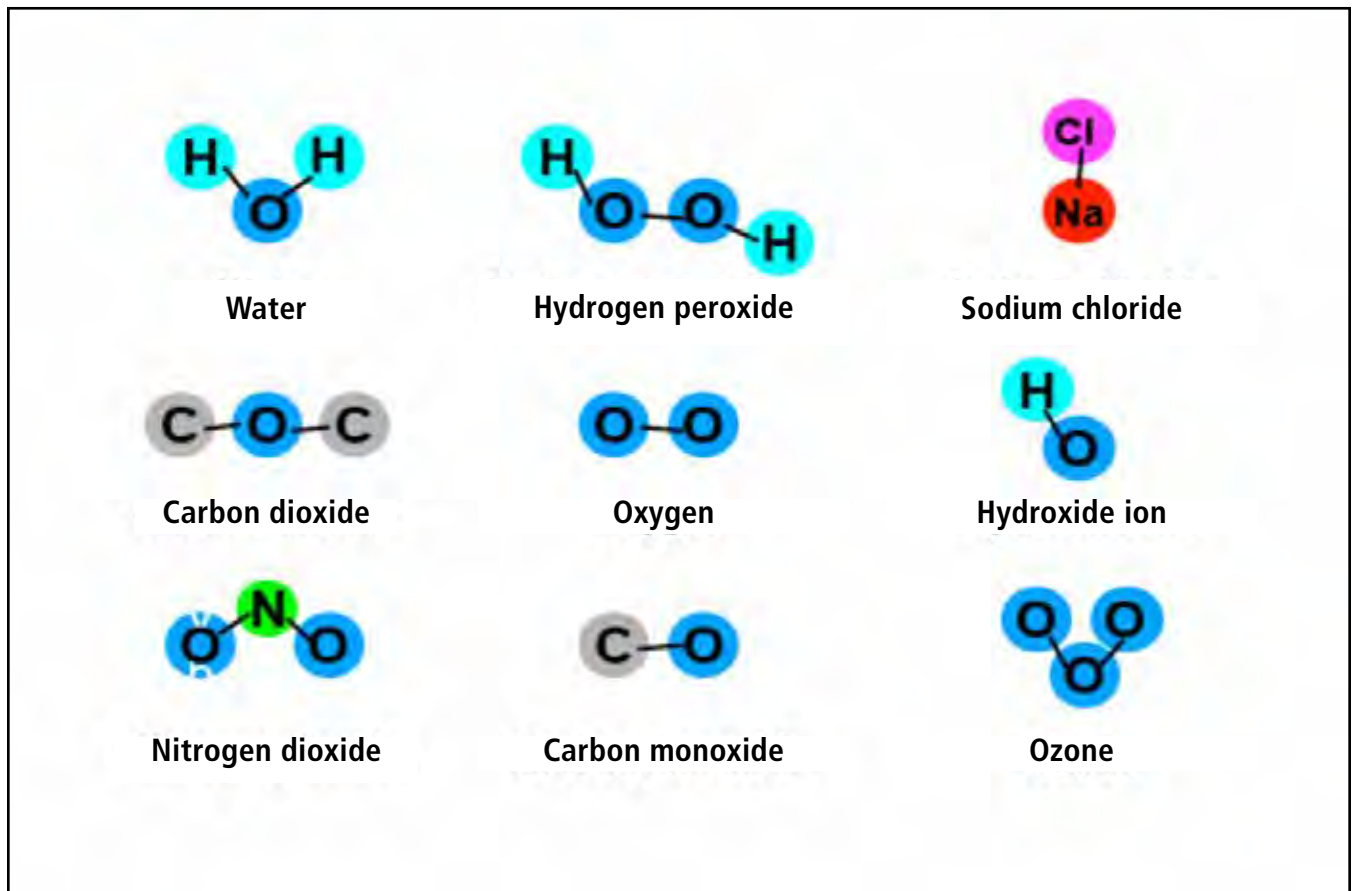
A similar dynamic was observed in Afghanistan. “Kabuli” (people from the capital of Kabul) describes a Persianized urban identity that, while not negating ethnic heritage, influences social relationships and values. Kabulis (Pashtun and Tajik) mix freely and have been more receptive to the gospel than their rural cousins.²³

Case studies from South Africa, the Netherlands, Mexico, Sweden, the United States, Brazil, Israel, Germany, and Singapore, demonstrate strategies that transnational newcomers and students use to negotiate identity. Some adapt with “situational ethnicity” (hiding or asserting traits situationally). Alternatively, others adopt (or accept an imposed) “hyphenated identity.”²⁴

In each case, adaptive identities both reflect and affect an ethnic community’s interaction with other peoples and the larger society. This has important implications for evangelism and church planting. These dynamics influence a group’s sense of belonging, possibilities for bonding with existing fellowships, and/or the need for new movements or compound models of church.

To illustrate this, imagine from high school chemistry how an element like Oxygen can combine with other elements to form molecules (atoms held together by chemical bonds). See figure 2 below. The analogy isn’t perfect, but similarly, we need to envision people groups in a more “combinable” way. With whom, how, when, and in what contexts members of a community affirm “bonds,” develop or reject affinities—these are questions relevant to the discipling and church planting process.

Figure 2. Like molecules, members of a people group bond with others in different ways, depending on the context.



Note that this dynamism assumes the importance of “place,” sensitivity to context, and the relational and situational character of ethnicity. In some contexts, communal structures are tight. In urban and diaspora settings, people often negotiate relational worlds with feelings of multiple belonging or “hybridity.” Ethnic and faith identities persist, but may or may not be foregrounded.²⁵

There are no perfect analogies, but for higher levels of data, we need to deploy new conceptual images and sensibilities. We need to discern peoples, places and populations where the gospel has yet to exert its catalytic force. Pioneer workers must be keen observers and “barefoot ethnographers.” As urban missiologist Alan McMahan puts it, we need to be better “glue sniffers” to figure out the types and strengths of “glue” that hold people together in different networks and contexts.²⁶

Multiple Tiers of Data

Third, re-envisioning people groups requires “ethnographic imagination”²⁷ and multiple tiers of data. The shift from a reductionist, segmented model to one that is multi-perspectival, dynamic, and field-based should include:

- *processes*, social chemistry and facts on the ground;
- how *commonality* (faith, city, ethnicity, nationality) is imagined or sought;
- how *difference* is encountered and dealt with;
- *intercultural* relationships, bridges and barriers between peoples;
- *diaspora* and *transnational* connections;
- styles and modes of *communication*;
- *lessons learned* from historical efforts and previous approaches;
- current *conditions*, socio-political *change* and *crises*;
- *receptivity* of sub-groups (e.g., youth, immigrants) and associations;
- *proximate* cross-cultural witnesses;
- *incorporability* into existing fellowships and churches;
- associational *bridges* (believers with organic, relational connections);
- *media* and evangelistic resources;
- ongoing *assessments* and research;
- *discernment* of what the Holy Spirit is doing.

Obviously, this data is not needed for mobilization. What we know now is sufficient for prayer and obedience!

Greater detail and refinement, what we might call “Second Tier” and “Third Tier” data, take us to a deeper level of understanding and empathy. This is useful for national research, on-site strategy, outreach and church planting. To gather, track,

share, and evaluate field-generated knowledge will necessitate data-sharing platforms, secure communications, and greater collaboration in knowledge stewardship. This re-envisioning of information requires a broader range of inputs.²⁸ For security and practical reasons, we cannot “patch” this Second- and Third-Tier information onto our current segmented databases.

This points to another glaring gap: By and large, field workers feel divorced from the missiological conversation! Many workers complain that “nobody is listening” to them. If we are to move forward, it is essential for field workers to map the context.

Often field-based personnel are in the best position to assess whether a people group is adequately engaged, and their relative access to the Gospel... These contextual ethnographic realities... provide important indicators for new initiatives.²⁹

Another way to address the disparity is through “Case Studies” that illuminate the complexities of pioneer church planting and provide “thick descriptions” of a people, event, or issue for analysis, training and application.³⁰

A multi-tiered, multi-perspectival database must be functional and flexible; view people groups from multiple contextual horizons; promote communities of learning and practice across organizational lines; and contribute to sandals-on-the-ground fruitfulness. Field accessibility is critical.³¹

Re-envisioning the People of God

Finally, we need to re-envision the church as the “people of God,” with a shared consciousness that celebrates yet transcends every local identity. We might revitalize this image in relation to incorporability, multi-ethnicity, and church movements.

A Place to Belong

Christian faith is “embodied” in churches. This is the *telos*, the end and purpose, of frontier missions: viable, indigenous, growing church movements among all peoples.

The gospel cannot be said to be accessible if church is not accessible. The invitation to believe in Christ is an invitation to receive not only “forgiveness of sins,” but also “*a place among those* who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26: 17–18). The church is a place for all peoples (Isaiah 56:6–8; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13–16). “A place to belong” is at the heart of the gospel!

Consequently, for mission purposes, the notion of “unreached peoples” is intrinsically linked to a concept Ralph Winter called *incorporability*.

Thus, for both spiritual and practical reasons, I would be much more pleased to talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be *incorporated*, or the absence of a church leaving people *unincorporable* instead of *unreached*. I feel it would be better to try to observe, not whether people are “saved” or not or somehow “reached” or not, but first whether an individual has been incorporated in a believing fellowship or not, and secondly, if a person is not incorporated, does he have the opportunity *within his cultural tradition* to be so incorporated.³²

The “opportunity within his cultural tradition to be so incorporated” refers to the presence, or absence, of a truly viable, truly indigenous church. If people cannot be incorporated, if existing fellowships are not accessible—due to “barriers of understanding or acceptance”—to other peoples, then a new version of church is needed.

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I would rather talk about the presence
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Ethnic Realities and Evangelistic Potential

We must re-envision “churches” in relation to the peoples around them. In his book *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India*, Donald McGavran, father of the Church Growth Movement, categorized Indian churches there into nine “types.” He described them based on their *varying degrees of ethnicity* as well as their *evangelistic potential*,³³ their “different relationships to and degrees of acceptance by the ‘yet to believe.’”³⁴ The dual concepts of “degrees of ethnicity” and “evangelistic potential” may be useful to re-envision churches in multiethnic and UPG-proximate settings. In Indonesia, an over 150,000-person multiethnic urban conglomerate with contemporary worship in the *lingua franca* Bahasa Indonesia includes at least 3,000 Muslim background believers from a UPG!³⁵ But to *maximize* the “evangelistic potential” of these migrant urbanites requires equipping some to *reach out* to their ethnic neighbors, and training others to *reach back* to their ethnic homeland to catalyze vernacular movements.

Church Growth Where There is No Church

We need to re-envision the connection between frontier missions and church growth. Amidst the global flow of goods, ideas, and people, mega-, multiethnic, and urban/regional house church networks are thriving from Argentina and Chile, to Nigeria, India, and Indonesia, as well as the West. Despite common roots and exceptions, the two streams are largely disconnected professionally and missionally.³⁶ Reestablishing synergy and sharing resources would advance an “all peoples” vision.

UPG enthusiasts need to deconstruct categories and recognize that church movements need not be monoethnic to engage and penetrate UPGs. Gospel freedom allows and celebrates, but does not demand, homogeneous ethnic churches. Some church movements involve ethnic blends, with homogeneity in evangelism, and heterogeneity in discipleship. Others facilitate homogeneity in smaller relational circles, and heterogeneity in larger ones. Homogeneity may suit first generation immigrants, but heterogeneity, the children of immigrants (e.g., pan-Asian and pan-Latino churches). Other churches have an ethnically dominant group plus mixed cultural group (e.g., Persian, Arab). Mobilizing urban conglomerate churches, house church networks, and proximate believers, and purposefully connecting diaspora disciple making with other frontier initiatives, would help revitalize movement toward UPGs.³⁷

Conclusion

The concept of people groups takes us to the heart of the biblical narrative. The frontier mission movement must re-imagine itself in light of global realities, the persistent needs of the unevangelized, and God’s desire for a people from all peoples. We need to upgrade our understandings, envision new dynamic models, and leverage the evangelistic potential of the global church to impact the remaining UPGs.

The frontier mission movement often draws its inspiration from the panorama of radiant worship in Revelation 5:9–10. As New Testament scholar Gordon Fee outlines it, the “new song” acclaims the *means* of his redeeming act (“with your blood”), the *effect* of that sacrifice (“you purchased for God”), the *breadth* of redemption (“members of every tribe and language and people and nation”), its *goal* (“made . . . to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God . . . they will reign on the earth”), and God-centered, God-ordained *climax*, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”³⁸ We are invited to respond both with *wonder* and adoration, and with faithful *cruciform witness* (Revelation 6:9–11; 19:10) to “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 1:2; 20:4) before all nations. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ In the social, cultural and historical context of the Old Testament, each “nation” was distinguished by name, ethnicity, language, territory, kingship, history, and a religious system marked by lesser “gods” (idolatry) and depravity. See A. J. Köstenberger, “Nations,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, electronic ed.), 676. For example, texts from Anatolia (Asia Minor) c. 1700-1200 BC point to a region inhabited by a number of distinct peoples, including the Hittites, Luwians, Palaians, Hurrians, and Hattians. In the Hittite Empire, from the 14th C BCE, “the ethnic and cultural pluralism still increased as the political expansionism added further foreign elements to ‘Hittite’ culture” (Manfred Hutter, “Religion in Hittite Anatolia: Some Comments on ‘Volkert Haas: Geschichte der Hethitischen Religion,’” *Numen* 44, no. 1 (Jan. 1997): 74–90. Each of these nations “had its own pantheon, and individual cult centres had their own names for deities.” (“Religions of the Hittites, Hattians, and Hurrians,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anatolian-religion/Religions-of-the-Hittites-Hattians-and-Hurrians>).
- ² Portions of this article are based on my paper “Rethinking Ethnicity: Implications for the People Group Approach,” presented to the Rethinking People Groups Forum, Dallas, TX, September 11, 2019. I wish to express my appreciation to the participants for their helpful comments and feedback.
- ³ The first lists were based in part on SIL’s *Ethnologue*, a catalog of the world’s languages.
- ⁴ <https://peoplegroups.org/>. Cf. <https://JoshuaProject.com> also based on language and ethnicity, and the geographic distribution of such groups.
- ⁵ The question of the historical genesis, assimilation and disappearance of other people groups is left unanswered.
- ⁶ Ralph Winter tried but failed to prevent the reduction of “people groups” to ethnolinguistic criteria alone. Dave Datema, “Defining ‘Unreached’: A Short History,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 55. Discussions of UPGs usually include sociopeoples; due to considerations of space, I concentrate on the category of ethnicity. Winter and Koch see strategic value in working with sociopeoples “for preliminary evangelism” as an “intermediate bridge to long-range church planting goals... giving a focus for ministry among a specific subset of the larger society as a first step to full-blown church planting.” They consider ethnolinguistic groups primary because of their endurance as endogamous, multi-generational quasi-kinship groups. Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, “Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th Ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter & Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 535.
- ⁷ For a helpful overview of the significant literature and issues, see Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London: Routledge, 1996); cf. Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage Publications, 1997; 2nd edition 2008), “Identity” is one of the most widely researched subjects in every field of the social sciences. I use “identity” here as a social category (referring to a set of distinguishable persons), as well as a personal category (individual actors with self-consciousness). Cf. James D. Fearon, “What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?”, 1999, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf>.
- ⁸ “Ethnicity,” what-when-how.com. The assumption that one’s identity is “in the blood” is a driver behind commercials for Ancestry.com. Discovering they have DNA from multiple sites in Eastern Europe or Africa, a person says, “I was grateful. I just felt more connected to who I am.” The DNA approach actually reinforces the opposite: It’s not really “Who I am” even though one may “feel more connected.” Based on test results, individuals make conscious choices, creating a symbolic ethnic representation of their reconstructed identity using identity “markers” (dress, food, etc.).
- ⁹ Anthropologists and some missiologists today acknowledge the power imbalances that shaped colonial anthropology, the colonialist paradigm of “tribe,” and missionary approaches. Power dynamics continue to influence ethnicities e.g., through the nation state (which “names” and objectifies constituent “minorities”), international bodies, and social institutions (e.g., schools, universities).
- ¹⁰ Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, eds., “Introduction,” *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond ‘Ethnic Groups and Boundaries’* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994), 2 (emph. added).
- ¹¹ Vermeulen and Govers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, 5.
- ¹² Vermeulen and Cora Govers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, 2 (emph. added), 1–9; cf. Richard E. Blanton’s discussion of Barth’s in-group and between-group “visual signaling,” i.e., ethnic-specific behaviors constitute “a system of signals” to establish a boundary difference between groups, and to confirm belonging and commitment to the value-orientations of the community, in “Theories of ethnicity and the dynamics of ethnic change in multiethnic societies,” *PNAS* 112, no. 30 (July 28, 2015): 9177. <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/112/30/9176.full.pdf>. Cf. http://www.chuckiii.com/Reports/Sociology/In_what_ways_is_identity_a_social_construct.shtml.
- ¹³ Vermeulen and Govers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, 12, emph. added. See Ronald Cohen, “Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7 (October 1978): 379–403, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.07.100178.002115>.
- ¹⁴ “Ethnicity,” what-when-how.com.
- ¹⁵ Since ethnic identity involves ascription, what others acknowledge or recognize, constraints related to heritage and cultural “givens” may apply, e.g., a Punjabi is unlikely to be accepted as Afghan.
- ¹⁶ Buttressed by stereotypic descriptions of shared “traits,” some attractive (e.g., “generous hospitality,” “colorful dress,” “love music and dance”), and others from the “dark side” (e.g., “fierce warriors”, deceit, blood feuds, seclusion of women), these caricatures are presumed to be relevant to mobilization, prayer and compassion. In one case, researchers cited Wikipedia as the major source of their information on a people group. A quick check revealed that over 90% of the Wikipedia citations were from newspapers and magazines. Other (readily available) scholarly sources (e.g., peer reviewed articles, books, ethnographies, dissertations and theses, etc.) were neglected.
- ¹⁷ This is not to disparage well-intentioned efforts to describe UPGs that have fostered awareness and global prayer. Some have argued that, however inaccurate or static, “Something is better than nothing! We do not have to pray ‘with our understanding’ in order to be heard!” The problem is

what happens next: bad information—inaccurate, insufficient, un- or misinformed, distorted, stereotypical or promotion-driven—can lead to misguided agency decisions, wasted efforts and funding, unwise field initiatives, and unintended consequences among the peoples we aspire to reach.

¹⁸ Brad Gill, “Reimagining Frontier Mission,” *IJFM* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 111–118; cf. “ISFM 2019 and the “Reimagining of Frontier Mission,” *IJFM* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 161–2.

¹⁹ This phrase is borrowed from M.A. Seifrid’s explanation of the Pauline phrase “In Christ” as moving within a “triangular field of meaning” between three ideas of locality, instrumentality and modality, in Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid and Gerald F. Hawthorne, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (InterVarsity Press, 1993, e-edition), *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Banks, *Ethnicity*, 185. We should also note here the gradual “in our head” shifts in nomenclature from “race” and “tribe” to “culture” and “ethnic group,” and (within missiology) “homogeneous unit” to “people group.”

²¹ Kazakh ethnic identity is preserved through ethnic celebrations, meetings that maintain cultural practices, and speaking Kazakh at home, while constructing a new hybrid identity based on shared religion (Islam) and Turkic roots, and the adoption of new practices, preferences and self-identity. See e.g., Yeniceri, Aslihan, “Hybridization and Kazakh ethnic identity formation” (Graduate Theses and Dissertations, Iowa State University, 2015), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/38939730.pdf>.

²² Fiona McLaughlin, “The Ascent of Wolof as an Urban Vernacular and National Lingua Franca in Senegal,” in eds. Cécile B. Vigouroux and Sallikoko S. Mufwene, *Globalization and Language Vitality: Perspectives from Africa* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008, e-book), 142–170, https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/J5mvAwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA142&dq=Ethnic+identity+and+linguistic+hybridization+in+Senegal.

²³ Internally displaced people and returnees from Iran, Pakistan and elsewhere have swelled Kabul to over 5 million people; according to reports, ethnicity is a more salient identity among them, and the term Kabuli does not apply.

²⁴ Edmund T Hamann and William England, “Conclusion – Hyphenated Identities as a Challenge to Nation-State School Practice?” (Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, 109, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2011), <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1109&context=teachlearnfacpub>. Note the political and power dynamics when a “hyphenated identity” is ascribed by a government or school.

²⁵ “A person can simultaneously hold allegiances to a neighborhood, a city, a region, a country, or a continent, or be a transmigrant in a world city or, yet, a global nomad, an employee of a transnational corporation.” See <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/identity-construction>. Cf. Jenkins, who notes that globalization does not always dilute ethnic identification: local and ethnic identity “each may (re)assert itself either as a defensive reaction to, or a result of, the increasingly global context of social life” (*Rethinking Ethnicity*, 2nd ed.), 45. For the way pan-Islamist sentiments can “coexist” with local forms of Muslim identity, see Darryl Li, “Taking the Place of Martyrs: Afghans and Arabs Under the Banner of Islam,” *Arab Studies Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 12–39, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2262478>.

²⁶ Rethinking People Groups Forum, Dallas, TX (September 13, 2019).

²⁷ I borrow this term from Paul Willis, *The Ethnographic Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000).

²⁸ See Scribner, this issue. As Scribner admits, “Global people group lists, as currently conceived and structured, cannot support dynamic groupings.”

²⁹ Leonard N. Bartlotti, “Refining Our Strategies for Engaging All Peoples,” *IJFM* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 21–26, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/27_3_PDFs/refining_bartlotti.pdf.

³⁰ Case studies are commonly used in the social sciences, and famously, by the Harvard Business School. They can be explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, comparative, or instrumental. See e.g., Baxter, Pamela and Susan Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers,” *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 4 (Dec 2008): 544–559, <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf>. For a simple introduction to the research concept of “thick description” (promoted by anthropologists Gilbert Ryle and Clifford Geertz) and helpful sources, see Chris Drew, “5 Key Principles of ‘Thick Description’ in Research” (2020), <https://helpfulprofessor.com/thick-description/>.

³¹ After a few years on the field, many workers pursue an M.A. or Ph.D. While this contributes to new knowledge, unfortunately, the knowledge tends to be individualized, constrained within publishing channels, or siloed in academia or individual ministries. There appear to be few mechanisms for translating insights into community learning and upgrading of field praxis.

³² For insightful reflections on Winter’s notion of incorporability, see Brad Gill, “The Unfortunate Unmarketability of ‘Unincorporable,’” from which this quote is taken, http://ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/33_2_PDFs/IJFM_33_2-EditorialReflections.pdf.

³³ (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 25, 64–65, *emph. added*, <https://books.google.com/books?id=XCaLJq3ADQgC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

³⁵ I am indebted to Alan McMahan for this example. It should be noted that this urban conglomerate church did not intentionally evangelize along ethnic lines or leverage ethnicity.

³⁶ Note e.g., that the two representative professional networks (International Society for Frontier Missiology, and the Great Commission Research Network) have separate journals, conferences, and non-overlapping attendees and speakers, despite many shared concepts, principles and practices related to evangelistic growth, movements, accessibility, receptivity, diversity, innovative models, ethnicity and incorporating people into the church.

³⁷ See e.g., GlobalGates focused on UPGs in North America’s megacities <https://globalgates.info/>. Certain “Advocacy Networks” focused around specific UPGs in Central Asia, West Africa and elsewhere, have also shown great promise in facilitating joint ventures in strategy, media, training, and recruiting, and placing workers in diaspora, transnational and homeland engagement points.

³⁸ G. D. Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 88.

Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms

Stalemate in Religion and Development: Causes, Implications, and Recommendations

by *Chrispin Dambula*

Theory on the interface of religion and development remains underdeveloped despite an almost universal consensus among scholars, researchers, and practitioners that religion is an important factor that deserves attention in the development debate.¹ An increasingly growing body of literature focusing on Neo-Pentecostalism consistently shores up the role of religion in development.² Indeed, there is enough literature requisite to formulating theory to delineate and systematically guide future research in religion and development. However, to pin down the role of religion to advance theory in this particular interface of religion and development seems elusive.

In this paper, I explore the factors that impede progress in theory advancement in religion and development with a specific focus on Christianity. My thesis is that lack of collaboration between missiologists and development scholars is a major malady that encumbers theory advancement to explain the role of religion in development. To support my case, I will critically review studies on religion and development to reveal the disconnect between mainstream development and missiology. But I will need to begin with a cursory historical background of development studies to trace the cradle of this disconnect. I will mull over the recent turn to religion in mainstream development research and its potential for collaboration with missiologists. There is a great opportunity to advance theory development for the benefit of both development studies and missiology as a discipline.

Motivation

Before plunging into my agenda in this paper, I must point out that the role of religion in development is an emerging topic of conversation in the twenty-first century. It features prominently in the agenda to end global poverty in the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals.³ Indeed, considering that decades of development practice have elapsed without putting poverty in the museum, anything that has not been experimented in the fight against poverty needs to be engaged, and religion is no exception.

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Most fascinating is that from the outset of development studies, religion was ignored due to conflicting objectives. For instance, religion's emphasis on the eschatological hope for the poor in heaven—where there will be no poverty—undermined the urgent development agenda to end poverty here and now, and create a world with opportunities for all to flourish. Another reason for sidelining religion in development was the widespread secularization theory of the 1960s which hypothesized that religion would gradually disappear from the public sphere. Over the course of economic development religion would eventually become completely extinct from the earth.⁴ However, it seems that this thesis was misinformed as religion remains very much alive today, as a factor that influences the tenor of human ways of living. Most appealing is that religion appears to be a development catalyst, evidenced by members of some religious communities in the global south experiencing upward social mobility.⁵ Nevertheless, the elusive role of religion is a puzzle that remains unresolved despite research efforts from both mainstream development and religious studies. Unlocking this puzzle has motivated me to write this paper.

Historical Origins of Development Studies

Development studies emerged circa the 1960s.⁶ In the initial stages, economic growth was considered synonymous with development.⁷ However, several scholars challenged this approach, opting for a broader focus than economic growth. Denis Goulet opined that authentic development must focus on “enhancement needs” such as services that enable humans to invent, explore possibilities, and bring their capabilities to maturity as a people with dignity.⁸ David Korten recommended a people-centered development vision that looks to justice, sustainability and inclusiveness as key dimensions of true development.⁹ The 1998 Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen called for attention to individual capabilities and “instrumental freedoms.”¹⁰ These new ways of thinking enriched and stretched the foci of development to a wide gamut of domains—all except for religion. Development scholars looked down on religion as a proven setback to development progress.¹¹

On the other hand, though missiology as a discipline surfaced on the academic scene earlier than development studies (circa 1867),¹² missiologists seemed to lack consensus on incorporating development into their agenda. Conspicuous cases in point are Donald A. McGavran and M. Richard Shaull. In his 1955 publication *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*, McGavran defended the “people movement” as an effective strategy for nurturing growing churches.¹³ He relegated to the periphery all development initiatives aimed at improving human livelihood, deeming church planting as

core to Christian mission.¹⁴ In contrast, Shaull advocated for participation in the struggles of the marginalized as authentic Christian mission.¹⁵ Inspired by God's redemptive acts in history, Shaull believed that theological contextualization was necessary for social reform in the society to liberate the marginalized.¹⁶ He appealed to Christians to submerge themselves in the world of the marginalized in developing countries.¹⁷ Such disparity represented by McGavran and Shaull not only prevented missiologists from getting ahead of the game in development scholarship, but, quite ironically, it justified the role of religion as irrelevant to development. The disconnect, as I will demonstrate shortly, would cost a huge intellectual price.

The Turn to Religion in Development

Having peregrinated a history that reveals the divorce of religion and development, one question demands our attention: can development achieve its goals while ignoring religion? I doubt it, considering that religion constitutes a quotidian way of living among most people,¹⁸ especially in the global south where most development interventions are focused, where poverty is rampant and largely remains unabated. Several scholars have claimed that religion has important implications for these development settings. An example is Bryant L. Myers, who recommends a change of worldviews towards a biblical worldview, claiming that it uplifts all humanity and countervails the lies that trap the poor in poverty.¹⁹ He challenges both the modern worldview because it has no place for a transcendent God, and the traditional worldview because it legitimates poverty and oppression of the poor as ordained. Note that Myers' work was originally published in 1999. Kurt Allan Ver Beek asserts that avoidance of religion results in less effective development programs.²⁰ Similar arguments have also been advanced by Ogbu Kalu²¹ and Leah Selinger.²²

Indeed, as one would expect, perspectives on development are inevitably shifting focus to religion, a trend which Emma Tomalin has described as “the turn to religion in development research, policy and practice.”²³ This is evident in the rise of faith-based organizations or FBOs.²⁴ Also, collaborative efforts that are emerging between Africa and European countries attest to this shift as they display some religious base.²⁵ Further evidence of the turn to religion can be seen in the burgeoning literature on religion and development observed in recent years.²⁶ The emergence of Religion and Development (RaD) as a subdiscipline within development studies is perhaps the most compelling incident which highlights the importance of religion in development.²⁷ In her recent publication, Barbara Bompani, notes that today religion has gained traction and acceptance in development, leading to an emergence of a new subdiscipline dubbed Religion and

Development.²⁸ This perceptible shift calls into question the specific role of religion in development, and must turn us to the literature to appreciate the progress in understanding this relationship.

The Role of Religion in Development

It is quite apparent that Neo-Pentecostalism is a major form of Christianity which is attracting mainstream development researchers to shift their focus to religion. Once severely criticized by scholars as worsening the plight of the poor, Neo-Pentecostalism is increasingly drawing the attention of researchers from different disciplinary traditions. As far back as the early '90s, Paul Gifford claimed that Neo-Pentecostal churches foster passiveness and fatalism among the poor.²⁹ Lovemore Togarasei and Kudzai Biri³⁰ have responded to critics of Neo-Pentecostalism (such as Gundani, Dada, Hasu, and Kroesbergen),³¹ challenging their attacks as not relevant to all Neo-Pentecostals. Today, these critics have since been slowed down if not completely muted as research consistently shows that most Neo-Pentecostals are effectively promoting entrepreneurial activities among their converts.³² Peter Berger, a former critic of religion, became a staunch defender of Neo-Pentecostalism for its commitment to improving the livelihood of the poor.³³ However, as we shall see in this section, while the implications of religion seem blatant, there is no progress in theory development. Development researchers appear to have run out of ideas to pin down the underlying processes that explain the role of religion, a situation which we may call a research stalemate. A quick analysis of a few randomly sampled studies on Neo-Pentecostalism and entrepreneurship reveals this stalemate.

We must note that scholars define entrepreneurship differently. In this paper, I adopt the more inclusive definition offered by Welter, et al.³⁴ rather than a view that limits entrepreneurs to those cyber business moguls of the Silicon Valley type.³⁵

Research Stalemate in Religion and Development: Evidence from Mainstream Development

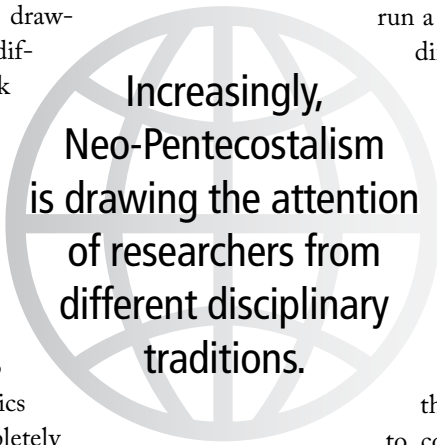
In his investigation of the nexus between religion and entrepreneurship, Andrew Henley claims that the influence of religion is mediated through the propagation of entrepreneurial norms.³⁶ However, this explanation fails to reveal what makes Neo-Pentecostals unique. Microfinance institutions also promote these same entrepreneurial activities among their clients but are not effective.³⁷ Noting the deficiency of

his methodology, Henley quickly recommends isolating the individual convert for analysis to explore the unique influence of Neo-Pentecostalism in further depth.³⁸ Other studies claim that Pentecostal effectiveness in entrepreneurial activities resides in their belief that their prosperity is ordained by God.³⁹ The problem with these studies is failure to demonstrate how the belief that one's prosperity is divinely ordained is actually connected to effectiveness in business. Although the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) further claims that Neo-Pentecostals teach converts how to run a business, it still does not explain how they differ from microfinance institutions that also offer business training.⁴⁰ Deena Freeman suggests that Pentecostal effectiveness in business resides in adoption of lifestyles such as work ethic, time management, and refraining from investing energy in sexual pleasure, heavy drinking, and gambling.⁴¹ But is it a given that savings through expenditure reduction will be invested in business? I am inclined to think not, considering that one does not have to convert to Neo-Pentecostalism to espouse these lifestyles.

As much as these studies are insightful, their findings are not new. They do not go beyond telling us that Neo-Pentecostals are doing what some microfinance institutions and other development agencies do. But this is not too surprising since these researchers are not experts familiar with the domain of religion. For them it is like trying to beat a path in a foreign territory. Again, there is a research stalemate, and couching a theory of religion's role within development remains elusive. It requires experts in the domain of religion to explain the underlying mechanisms and processes through which Neo-Pentecostals inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship successfully among their converts. Fortunately, missiologists have awakened and are gradually crawling into the game as evident in a parallel stream of literature that is budding unnoticeably within the field of religion and development. A footnote here is that some missiologists involved in religion and development research do not describe their work as development; but, nevertheless, the nature of their work and the questions they address engage this same interface of religion and development.

Missiological Contributions

As one would expect, most studies from a missiological perspective highlight another key to Pentecostal effectiveness in business: the transformation of the individual into the likeness of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.



Increasingly,
Neo-Pentecostalism
is drawing the attention
of researchers from
different disciplinary
traditions.

David E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori found that the influence of Pentecostal rituals helps converts realize their human identity as created in God's image.⁴² Lovemore Togarasei and Kudzai Biri claim that Neo-Pentecostal effectiveness in promoting entrepreneurial activities resides in teaching converts to run a business in a godly way, instilling in them a positive mindset that one can be successful through God.⁴³ Peter Heslam attributes Pentecostal effectiveness in business to empowering converts to realize their dignity and potential.⁴⁴ Tanya Nicole Riches claims that during worship, Pentecostal converts encounter the Spirit of God who enhances their sense of self-worth.⁴⁵ Indeed, the role of Neo-Pentecostalism in transforming individuals is an important missiological insight, but it remains elusive to mainstream development researchers.

Questions remain as to the image of God and how it relates to effectiveness in business. How does the power of the Holy Spirit transform converts? What does it look like to do business in a godly way? These pneumatic explanations seem vague, if not entirely confusing. As it stands, these studies are not substantive enough to conclude that Neo-Pentecostalism is ipso facto the supreme purveyor of what makes its adherents effective in business.

An enhanced sense of self-worth, though also important, does not imply one will be effective as an entrepreneur. In addition, is the development trajectory of Neo-Pentecostals sustainable and one that needs to be promoted?

Golo contends that an extreme emphasis on individual accumulation of wealth, which is widespread in the Neo-Pentecostal context, is not a good development recipe for a communitarian context like Africa.

In-depth analysis is therefore required not only to pin down how Neo-Pentecostals facilitate transformation of their converts, what really changes during transformation, how the change relates to entrepreneurship, but also to address questions of sustainability and viability. Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo may have brought to light what has eluded most researchers in both mainstream development and missiology. While applauding the Pentecostal pneumatic emphases as crucial for psychologically inspiring converts, Golo contends that an extreme emphasis on individual accumulation of wealth,

which is widespread in the Neo-Pentecostal context, is not a good development recipe for a communitarian context like Africa. It threatens disharmony between the individual and the community, especially when intended for egoistic satisfaction.⁴⁶ He adds that Neo-Pentecostal teaching on business and wealth acquisition for all converts is not only unrealistic, but also theologically misleading. It ignores the inevitable ontological realities of discipleship such as suffering, pain, and death.⁴⁷ There is absolutely no room for failure in Neo-Pentecostal teaching, as long as one is tithing or sowing (giving money to the pastor to receive abundant blessings). But what happens when one has done all they have been taught without acquiring the much-promised wealth? Golo wonders.⁴⁸

Surely, the teaching of Neo-Pentecostals is questionable and threatens its own future survival should it fail to fulfil its material promises to adherents. Also, the modern emphasis on individual wealth accumulation undermines those believers who aspire for a life of modesty and are satisfied with the little they have. This is unhealthy for any context like Africa which is characterized by communitarianism.⁴⁹ Though seemingly promising, in truth the modernity perspective of Neo-Pentecostals reduces humans to beings whose sole purpose of existence is to pursue economic gains. Bryant L. Myers reminds us that we are relational beings whose aspirations must go beyond individualistic material desires.⁵⁰ According to Myers, our needs can only be met in our relational nature as we care for one another.⁵¹ Surely the needs of a community must be ahead of individual egoistic pursuits. While wealth acquisition is not inherently bad, its use matters. Modernity poses the danger of creating a society of patrons and clients, as in America, where astronomical wealth is accumulated in a few hands, while the majority is mired in debt and stifled by insurmountable loans. Is this what the non-western poor need?

Reflection on a Disconnect

Clearly, there is a disconnect between mainstream development researchers and missiologists. Their parallel streams of literature are evident and growing. As much as both streams of literature offer important insights, theory advancement on the role of religion in development will remain elusive unless researchers work together, seeing the strength and advantage of combining their different disciplinary orientations. As shown in the previous section, there are certain things which only missiologists can see because of their theological orientation, just like mainstream development researchers can observe certain things that missiologists cannot. For instance, that Neo-Pentecostalism transforms its converts into the likeness of God through the Holy Spirit is not easy

for development researchers to perceive. It appears harder for these researchers to pin down the threat of modernity to harmonious community and its reductionistic effect on humans.

However, missiologists have limitations as well and seem unable to go beyond identifying what fits with their Christian theology. They often struggle to concretize their observations in a more thorough analysis. As noted in the section on missiological contributions above, missiologists will often use vague terms and expressions that largely obfuscate the role of religion in development: terms such as “godly,” “God’s image,” “scripts of low self-worth,” and “power of the Holy Spirit.” This is where collaboration with mainstream development researchers would help their effectiveness and operationalization.

Unfortunately, some missiologists seem deeply suspicious of development scholars and researchers. Instead of regarding them as mainstream, they label them “secular”—a term which many innocent scholars have failed to resist in order to ensure the consistency of their work. It makes me nervous to see some missiologists critique the term “development” as a colonial enterprise. For them development is a colonial project, one inspired by works like Rostow’s *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*⁵² which allegedly promoted western imperialism. Some consider development as mundane business unworthy of their attention, while others render it illegitimate or simply ignore it. Perhaps that is why mainstream development scholars ignore missiologists, because they do not observe much about development in their work. Rather, most missiologists use a wide range of terms that are confusing and sometimes controversial such as *diakonia*, *shalom*, witnessing, incarnational ministry, and servanthood. Some even appeal to change the term “development” without really offering a sufficient alternative. This is one of the major fetters that restrains theory advancement and widens the disconnect. But is development a secular project that has nothing to do with missiology? I believe the disconnect is misinformed and that which they share is unappreciated.

The Relationship between Development and Missiology

The relationship between development and missiology seems evident in a shared concern for human flourishing and environmental conservation. In simple terms, development has two dimensions, practice and scholarship. These are directed towards its central concerns of global poverty and inequality.⁵³ Following the recently adopted United Nations’ (2015) Sustainability Development Goals, we may add environmental sustainability as a third concern. At the core of the development agenda, therefore, is human flourishing in all spheres of life, including health, literacy, and income. Thus,

development strives to create a world with equal opportunities for all humans to achieve their aspirations and to preserve the earth and its endowments for future generations.

Likewise, missiology is the study of Christian mission which involves practice and scholarship, and it pursues human flourishing and environmental conservation (good stewardship) as part of its agenda. I must admit that “Christian mission” is a topic which cannot be fully exhausted in a journal publication. The volumes of various leading missiologists like David Bosch, Francis Oboji, Scott W. Sunquist, and Amos Yong speak to a range of mission without claiming a final word on the definition. I will not pursue this discussion in any depth, but it’s worth noting that these missiologists embrace multiple facets of mission which include creation care and helping the poor.⁵⁴ Golo hits the bull’s eye when he views development as grounded in a Christian idea of the “possibility of a world that is just and liberating and that engenders a flourishing life.”⁵⁵

The relatedness of missiology and development will find no greater proof. It seems illogical to think of development as mundane and unconnected to missiology.

A Call for Collaboration

Although missiology actually emerged as a domain in the academy earlier than development, it is not as advanced in the area of development as mainstream development studies. Mainstream development researchers have been in the game longer and have learned many important lessons—except for the area of religion. Also, considering that mainstream development researchers are now interested in religion, there exists an unprecedented opportunity for collaboration with missiologists. Missiologists should tap into this intellectual interest to contribute meaningfully toward theory advancement, rather than beat their own path and simply reinvent the wheel. Disparate theoretical pathways will impede progress in theory advancement. It is intellectual suicide in academics.

I recommend our research should emulate Bryant L. Myers’ approach as he engages both mainstream development theorists and missiologists in his work.⁵⁶ His approach helps advance theory on the role of religion in development, and his point of departure models for missiologists how to engage literature in mainstream development. Mainstream development researchers should be perceived as collaborators rather than aliens or adversaries. Similarly, mainstream development researchers have weaknesses that inhibit research progress and will need to cooperate with missiologists. As articulated in this paper, each discipline can complement the other through collaboration.

To Avoid Reinventing the Wheel

The role of religion in development needs clear articulation. Not only must we consider religion as an important factor in development, but we also must improve effectiveness in the fight against global poverty. The formulation of theory to advance knowledge in the field of religion and development remains largely underdeveloped. Researchers from both sides have run out of ideas and offer no new insight—a situation I describe as research stalemate in religion and development. I have pointed out contributing factors such as the lack of theological knowledge by one side, and the dearth of skill and research experience in the other. Collaboration between mainstream development researchers and missiologists is, therefore, strongly recommended. They must complement each other's weaknesses if theory building in religion and development is to advance. Otherwise, as it stands, the different literatures of religion and development can easily be dismissed as irrelevant noise. The potential for collaboration is so much greater than advancing theory magically by working alone. Capitalizing on each other's strengths will speed up progress. It actually reminds me of a famous story which I think challenges both missiologists and mainstream development researchers.

Once upon a time in the ancient land of Bharat, there lived a Guru and his bramcharyas or, as you would call them, disciples. Each disciple was supposed to pick as his test a very difficult task to perform. He was to work exceedingly hard

for several years to perfect himself in the task that he, himself, had set. There was this one disciple, somewhat brighter than the others, yet so very shy and timid.

"And what task have you set for yourself, my son?" asked the kindly Guru.

"Master," answered the disciple, "I want to be able to walk on water. I will practice until I'm able to do it. To walk on water—that is my goal."

Years passed and under the gentle guidance of the Guru, most of the disciples accomplished what they had set out to do. Finally, the shy disciple approached the Guru. "Master," said he, "I have toiled and practiced without ceasing, lo, these many years. See that city across the river? I can now walk on the water and go over to the city. Master, I have overcome. I can walk on water."

Looking at the young disciple the old master sadly asked, "Why did you not take the boat? You would have saved so much time."⁵⁷

Mainstream development researchers and missiologists must not continue to practice a cerebral hygiene that isolates their domains. No solo effort will yield a monumental discovery that will set religion and development on a completely new path. The intention may sound good, but I worry just how long it will take to make a breakthrough. Beating a path to a destination where others have explored is a waste of time and defies logic. This old story would say, "When you can walk on water, take the boat." **IJFM**

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Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms

The Foreignness Spectrum: Toward a Local Believer's View of Contextualization

by T. Wayne Dye and Harley Talman

Since the turn of the century, missiological discussions over appropriate approaches to contextualization have frequently focused on the C1–C6 Spectrum, a comparative model developed by John Travis.¹ It was originally drafted in a context of ministry to Muslims, but like many descriptive models it has been deployed in various ways. Generally, it seems to help gospel messengers in cross-cultural settings discern a biblical expression of the faith in evangelism, worship, and daily life. This was as true for themselves as it was for the emerging communities of believers represented across that spectrum. Ranging from very Western/traditional to more contextualized forms of faith in Christ, the spectrum is often employed as a template for locating the cross-cultural worker's religious identity and praxis.

However, the C Spectrum was never intended to serve such a singular missional purpose. Quite to the contrary, Travis sought to describe the various kinds of Christ-centered communities (represented by the letter "C" in the spectrum), specifically those he had seen emerge in the country where he was living. His intent was to bring rejoicing and encouragement in the diverse ways that God was working to advance his kingdom. He trusted that all could appreciate and respect the fruit of others who followed approaches different than their own, leading to greater unity among workers. Ironically, the opposite occurred. Controversy erupted as certain mission agencies began to draw the line on what they believed to be truly biblical.

In response to the controversies surrounding this model, John and Anna Travis have explained how the C Spectrum has been misunderstood and misapplied:

1. The "C" does not represent *contextualization* but Christ-centered communities, i.e., fellowships of Jesus followers or *ekklēsiae* in the Greek New Testament.
2. The C Spectrum signified how Jesus followers who were born as Muslims expressed their faith and identity; it did not suggest approaches for Christian workers serving among Muslims.²

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3. No one point on the Spectrum was intended as the ideal for all contexts or situations.
4. The Spectrum was not all-inclusive; in-between-points as well as other combinations were possible.
5. Communities of Christ followers did not need to remain at a fixed point on the Spectrum; they could change over time.
6. The "C" described *communities* of believers, not individuals who may have more than one socioreligious identity, depending on the situation.
7. The most egregious misuse of the C Spectrum has been to wrongly impute some unbiblical Islamic beliefs or practices to C5 fellowships which are *presumed* to be characteristic, providing a straw man for criticism.³

As with any model, Travis acknowledges that the C Spectrum has limitations, accounting for only the language, culture, religious forms, and corporate identity of a given fellowship. Moreover, it is only able to portray approximations of any given community. Travis has clear recommendations for the use of the C Spectrum and expresses the hope that other models and tools will be developed. Thus, in accordance with these limitations and to stay within the framework of Travis' model, this article proposes a revision to it which we call the *Foreignness Spectrum*. Its primary modification is a shift from the outsider perspective to that of the local community of believers.⁴

Beyond Identity

Perhaps the most complex, confusing, and controversial aspect of the C Spectrum has resulted from the application of studies on "identity." These studies have provided further nuance, as in Barnett's examples of the different forms of individual identity: multiple, hybrid, liminal, and syncretistic.⁵ Tim Green identifies these three layers of identity:

1. Core/ego identity (who I am/we are in our inner core: a new creation, in Christ, etc.)
2. Social identity (my/our various social roles: father, husband, engineer, etc.)
3. Corporate identity (Who is my group/people as distinct from other groups?)⁶

Each new and emergent community of believers will have their own view of their corporate identity. However, the way others view them is largely the outcome of how they follow the way of life of their surrounding community—culturally, religiously, and practically. The more a group departs from the norm, the more foreign it becomes. This is generally perceived by the surrounding community as an increasing degree of "weirdness." It is not that believers purposely change their identity; the message itself will change their lives and relationships so dramatically that society seeks a label to describe that change.

This paper is not primarily about the complexity of individual and group identity. Instead, it focuses on how these same Christ-centered communities perceive their customs and the

Table 1. The C1–C6 Spectrum

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Christ-Centered Community Description	A church foreign to the Muslim community in both culture and language	C1 in form but speaking the language used by Muslims, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim	C2 using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts)	C3 with some biblically acceptable Islamic practices	C4 with a "Muslim follower of Jesus" self-identity	Secret Believers, may or may not be active members in the religious life of the Muslim community
Self-Identity	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Follower of Isa"	"Muslim follower of Jesus"	<i>Privately:</i> "Christian," "Follower of Isa," or "Muslim follower of Jesus"
Muslim Perception	Christian	Christian	Christian	A <i>kind</i> of Christian	A <i>strange kind</i> of Muslim	Muslim

degree to which the surrounding community perceives them conforming to their society's way of life. These customs were considered in the C Spectrum, but that spectrum is based on the perspective of the Christian worker—an outsider. As outsiders, we view this spectrum of believing communities in comparison with the churches from which we came (equivalent to C1 on Travis' Spectrum—see table 1, p. 152). We can be alarmed by the emergent communities at the high end, at the more indigenous side of the Spectrum: "Those believers are way over there!" Or, we might issue prescriptive judgments like, "C3 and we'll see" or "C4 and no more."

Essentially, there must be a change of perspective from that of the C Spectrum. We want to enable the missiological community to adapt to a fresh "inside look" at the level of indigenization wrestled within these same Christ-centered communities. The Foreignness Spectrum (F Spectrum) is a new taxonomy that represents a local community's perception of the degree of foreignness of the Christ-centered community in their midst. Across this spectrum, the seminal questions that believers will ask, explicitly or implicitly, concerning their community are, "How much do we need to change to be faithful to Scripture?" "How do we manifest the reality of our repentance?" In other words, "How do we best live our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ within our community and context?" The F Spectrum is intended to be a tool that captures the indigenous perspective on this question.

Sketching the F Spectrum

We will first describe the F Spectrum in a Muslim context for easy comparison with the C Spectrum. See table 2, "The Foreignness Spectrum," p. 154. Later we will explore what various points on the Spectrum mean to a local community.

But first we should point out a complication with the description of C6 on the C Spectrum. While that Spectrum displays a consistent increase in indigenization of language, cultural-religious forms, and identity from C1–C5, the description of C6 is a mixed bag in these regards. Whereas Travis does not advocate the superiority of one point on the Spectrum as inherently superior to others, C6 is usually perceived as lamentable due to the weakness in witness and fellowship, most often due to the lack of social or religious freedom. Moreover, individual believers may actually perceive themselves as (secret) Christians, as followers of Jesus, or as Muslim Followers of Jesus, while they actually are perceived by their society as Muslim.

C6 is easy to assign as the starting point for the F Spectrum, which focuses on the degree of foreignness as perceived by the society. Because these gatherings and their witness are invisible, the surrounding society does not perceive any degree of foreignness. Hence, on the F Spectrum, the C6 is F0 because the C Spectrum and the F Spectrum are numerically inverted and proceed from opposite sides of the continuum.

Secondly, F0 does not inherently indicate deficient witness and fellowship. While oppressive and intolerant societies may require believers to abstain from public witness and gatherings, this does not assume their absence. For example, the Communist revolution in China forced the church to go "underground" and the resultant lack of visibility led the world to assume its demise. However, these hidden believers did in fact meet regularly (in secret) and relied on the Holy Spirit to guide them to discretely share their faith with those who were spiritually open. As a result, within a few decades the numerical and spiritual growth of the underground church exploded.

Here, then, is the F Spectrum applied to a Middle Eastern Muslim community:⁷

- **F0:** Believers are meeting secretly and witnessing discretely as led by the Spirit, functioning as underground Christ-centered communities. (This may differ from C6 which most understand as a catch-all category for "secret believers" who do not meet and do not share their faith). They may or may not be active members in the religious life of the non-Christian community. They exhibit no publicly observable changes that would create a perception of foreignness. These believers would be perceived by the Muslim community as Muslims, though F0 believers may privately perceive themselves variously as "Christians" or "Followers of Jesus" or "Muslim followers of Isa."
- **F1:** Christ-centered communities display a minimum, and generally tolerable, degree of foreignness, as this designation does not require rejecting any beliefs, values, practices or communal identity unless they violate Scripture and cannot be adapted or reinterpreted. Members of the body of Christ differ over what can be retained, adapted or reinterpreted.⁸ The surrounding community would perceive them as a different kind of Muslim.
- **F2:** Christ-centered communities might be regarded initially, or from a distance, as "Muslim" (nominally or culturally) in some contexts due to their abiding by key, biblically acceptable, Islamic cultural practices and taboos (e.g., abstaining from pork). However, once it is discovered that they do not claim any kind of Muslim identification (such as "*Muslim* Follower of Jesus") they would be perceived as a different kind of Christian.
- **F3:** These Christ-centered communities are viewed as Christian (foreign) due to their rejecting all Islamic "religious" elements, despite keeping non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts).⁹
- **F4:** These Christ-centered communities speak the language used by Muslims in their community, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim. Their culture is seen as even more foreign by the Muslim community.
- **F5:** These Christ-centered communities are foreign to the Muslim community in both culture and language.

Applying the F Spectrum to an American Context

In order to enable our American readers to better appreciate the sense of foreignness which emerges in new communities of Christ followers, we would like to simulate what it is like to “stand in their shoes.” Admittedly, Americans do not have a direct parallel to the Muslim *umma* (worldwide Islamic religious community) or the state religion of many Muslim countries. The nearest analogy is perhaps a kind of *civil religion* that Americans hold to. We share values that allow us freedom to worship God (or not), respect individual and human rights, be kind to children (except the unborn), and allow freedom of sexual identity and practice (except adults with minors and children). Each American has a socio-religious sensibility as to what is familiar and what is foreign.

When Americans trust Christ as Savior and Lord, they do not become any less American. Their lives are reordered and transformed by the Holy Spirit according to the word of God, but they do not automatically become foreigners to their people and culture. Yet, their encounter with Scripture requires that they face some typical questions as they associate with other believers.

- Do they have to attend a church and dress and talk like other believers?
- Must they abstain from certain activities, like viewing certain things, or attending certain events?
- While they should give up drunkenness, do they need to give up alcohol entirely?
- What music should they listen to? All Christian? Their favorite secular music? Where is the line?
- Should new American disciples of Jesus continue to recite the pledge of allegiance to the flag?

To exemplify this Foreignness Spectrum, let us imagine that a Christian from an African Independent Church without any missiological training comes to the United States to evangelize secular or nominally Christian Americans and establish a church in a predominately white, conservative, middle-class community in the deep South.¹⁰ Depending on the attitude of the African evangelist and that of the new believers, the degree of foreignness in the new “Afro-American” church might conceivably be located anywhere along the Spectrum from F0 to F5.

- **F0:** The United States has a constitutional safeguard for religious freedom, and it is usually an asset for someone running for office to claim some form of faith, in keeping with the diversity of American civil religion. Therefore, although there are cases of public discrimination against Christian institutions, F0 might be an appropriate way for a community of believers to live in relatively rare contexts—such as where outspoken believers face rejection by their social network or persecution from secular extremists (e.g., risk losing their job for publicizing their “politically incorrect” views rooted in biblical faith). In such situations, they might not talk about their church gatherings, but would share their faith in other private settings with those who seem open to consider the gospel.
- **F1:** This type of fellowship (*ekklesia*) of American followers of Christ observably shares the customs and values of America, including its civil religion. They do, however, view themselves as somewhat different from other Americans—they are disciples of Jesus. They may be distinct in their opposition to abortion, sexual immorality, and other practices which they label as sins. Their language may exclude certain crude expletives, but they maintain the same vernacular. They feel free to consume alcohol with those

Table 2. The Foreignness Spectrum

	F5	F4	F3	F2	F1	F0
Description of Christ-Centered Community	Foreign in culture and language	Speak common language but different religious terminology Foreign in culture	Reject all Muslim “religious” elements Maintain cultural elements	Abide by key Islamic cultural practices No Muslim identification	Only reject beliefs and practices that cannot be biblically adapted Minimum foreignness	Meet secretly Witness discretely No observable foreignness
Self-Identity	“Christian”	“Christian”	“Christian”	“Follower of Isa”	“Muslim follower of Jesus”	<i>Privately:</i> “Christian,” “Follower of Isa,” or “Muslim follower of Jesus”
Perceived as	Christian	Christian	Christian	A kind of Christian	A kind of Muslim	Muslim

outside the faith and fully participate in tailgate parties at sporting events, but they are careful not to get drunk. They listen to the same popular music as others but add Christian music to the mix. They show their patriotism by proudly displaying American flags on national holidays and honor military personnel on certain occasions, even honoring military personnel during church services. People around them may be aware they are evangelical in certain expressions, but this is seldom a cultural or religious bar to their social acceptance.

- **F2:** Members of this form of ekklesia are careful to avoid situations where drunkenness or immoral behavior is likely to occur, including some of the most common places of recreation. They still watch sports but only with other believers. Although their dress and diet are similar to that of their neighbors, they have few non-Christian friends. However, they are still seen as community members, though significantly different from ordinary Americans. They speak against some ideas of American civil religion, but still volunteer in libraries, voting booths, and other public services. They do not often wear caps or clothing that display patriotic phrases or symbols.
- **F3:** This form of ekklesia separates itself from much of American civic life, including its civil religion. They do not participate in elections and try to find ways to avoid community activities (which they see as *worldly*). They no longer display the American flag on their houses due to its association with civil religion which they view as compromising their loyalty to the kingdom of God. Some refuse to recite the pledge of allegiance or sing the national anthem; a few even stay seated while others stand.
- **F4:** This ekklesia is like F3, and their services are in English, but these believers express their faith differently than other Americans. They imitate the distinctive Christian comportment of this African Independent churchman who came to the different cultural context of America. The church he planted remains a branch of his African denomination. In order to be good, respectable Christians like the particular denomination of their African evangelist, the newly “converted” members begin to wear fancy robes instead of their usual khakis and polo shirts. In their church worship, they incorporate African dances with drums being the only musical instruments. Shoes are removed and left outside of the sanctuary and men sit in separate sections from the women. They speak openly against American civil religion as an idolatrous system.
- **F5:** This type is like F4 in its church worship that is similar in style to that of the African mother church; however, the songs and sermon are in the African native tongue of the evangelist. Church administration and governance follow that of the mother church in Africa, with family heads automatically being elders and serving for life. The major difference in the American daughter church is that most of the faces are white, not black. Other people in the community question their sanity and their loyalty to their country.

Answering the Missiological Question: Where on the Spectrum Should New Believers Be?

In our view, the missiological principle that answers such questions is quite simple: *there is no central form of biblical faith*. Modern Western Christianity is only one valid form of our faith. It is not the central, or exclusive, form. God does not have favorite cultures. He only desires that his people be faithful to him. Therefore, we do not ask new believers to change anything unless it is required by Scripture. We tell them,

Prayerfully study the Bible together and think carefully about your traditional ways in its light. Change what you together sense the Spirit of God is asking you to change. Altering more than that is unnecessary and can hinder your witness to the people around you.

We say this because the Bible speaks prophetically to all peoples and cultures. Beyond that, however, there is no command to give preference to the foreign ways and practices of those who brought them the gospel. New believers do not become more godly by becoming more *foreign*. This missiological principle is biblically grounded in the book of Acts, especially in chapter 15.¹¹ The moral aspect of the principle is laid out in 1 Corinthians 8–10 and in Romans 14. Those who turn to Christ are added to the kingdom of God but not removed from their social networks and cultural contexts. The New Testament does not demand becoming a proselyte to another religious system.¹² It does not require leaving one’s socio-religious birth community, but only its sinful practices. Their lives are reordered and transformed by the Holy Spirit according to the word of God, but they need not become foreigners to their people and culture.

The command to live as “aliens and strangers in the world” (1 Pet 2:11) refers to abstaining from sinful desires, not to becoming strangers to one’s community by adopting a foreign language, culture, nationality, or ethnic, social, or group identity. The only changes called for are those which enable the believers to live out their new faith in Christ on the path of holiness within their community. Such changes will result from processes similar to Paul Hiebert’s critical contextualization, in which changes are made only to the extent that the original custom or its underlying beliefs were contrary to the Bible.¹³ As a result, the community does not perceive that those who follow Jesus are no longer members of the community.

Furthermore, the decisions about what needs to change, how those decisions should be made, and how and when they are introduced should be left to the local community of believers—not outside workers or *alongsiders*.¹⁴ Spirit-filled local believers intuitively recognize both the degree and the kind of change that are needed, whereas even experienced outside workers are handicapped in their understanding of local cultural dynamics. The meaning of local customs and how the biblical principles can be appropriately applied is better understood by cultural

insiders. Thus, they should be the ones making the decisions—not outside teachers who too often control the process and result. Western missionaries, especially, have a long history of paternalism that they must guard against and overcome.

While some may fear that we are advocating that outsiders abstain from any involvement in the decision-making process, we are not asserting that they have no role to play. Travis has outlined many important roles for alongsiders to play in indigenous movements.¹⁵ Additionally, they can mentor local leaders through Hiebert's critical contextualization process. To adequately examine appropriate roles for outsiders in these decisions would require another article or a book. The main point we want to make is that while it is possible to do too little, historically, outsiders have erred in the opposite direction.

Therefore, we seek a seismic shift in the mentality of mission, manner of leadership, and method of ministry of outside workers. May they view as their greatest goal and contribution empowerment of local believers and encouragement of those leaders closest to the situation. These leaders must trust their spiritual intuitions and the insights shaped by a process of biblically informed, prayerful, Spirit-guided consensus. Depending on the context and the particular case, local leaders may seek the input, assistance, or participation of an outsider. However, these locals should ultimately be in control of this process and the decision.

Defending the Principle of Minimal Change

There is an important missiological reason for a specific underlying principle in this Spectrum. We identify it as the principle of minimal change: *The greater the change, the greater the increase in resistance to the gospel.* The reality of this principle should be self-evident to our American readers when we consider our instinctively negative reaction to the African Inland churchman planting F4 or F5 churches in America. A second witness to its truth is the widespread acceptance in mission circles of the principle of contextualization. Although there are controversies about the appropriateness of, or application to, specific issues, the need to contextualize is widely recognized. Thirdly, recent data from field workers indicates that higher numbers of movements to Christ correlate directly with higher degrees of contextualization/lower degrees of foreignness.¹⁶

This means that the number on the F Spectrum should not go higher—unless it is necessary for biblical faithfulness and witness or in following the leading of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ A local community has a common way of life and norms for righteousness that should be maintained to the degree that the Scriptures permit.

We are not asserting that one particular level of indigenization is to be promoted as the ideal for all contexts. Travis and other mainstream defenders of C5 communities have repeatedly stated the same. (Unfortunately, this has seldom been heard amid the rancorous rhetoric over the C Spectrum).

For example, F3 (C3) or F4 (C2) may reflect the desired level of indigenization of many congregations of Iranian believers—who after four decades of suffering under an oppressive and often corrupt Islamic regime, are moving away from anything associated with Islam, and multitudes of Iranians are leaving their Muslim identity. Foreign customs may still seem unnatural to them, and a foreign visitor might perceive them as still Muslim. However, while they do not conform to norms of religious life and practice, in other respects they still live as normal Iranians.

The underlying missiological principle in this Spectrum is one of minimal change: the greater the change, the greater the increase in the resistance to the gospel.

In addition, in some Islamic countries, varying numbers of young adults are becoming Westernized or secularized—some even rejecting any religious affiliation with Islam. For them, F3 or F4 expressions of Christianity may be their choice for new religious expression. In applying the principle of minimal change (not going higher on the F Spectrum than is necessary for biblical faithfulness), the foreignness of the church (the F level) is evaluated in terms of how different it is from their former lives (F0). The socio-religious norm of the overall society and that of Westernized subgroups are different—they vary as to their F0. So, the foreignness of F3/F4 for the larger society is only an F1 or F2 for those already Westernized subgroups. This kind of variation was noted by Travis when he developed the C Spectrum, where he observed and then formulated the different types of Christ-centered communities existing in the same Muslim society.

Applying the Model to Other Religious Contexts

This model is a useful tool for recognizing how much cultural change is being introduced, not only in American and Middle Eastern Muslim cultures, but in any culture anywhere. The specific content of each of the change levels, and even how many levels it is useful to postulate, will depend on the particular cultural area. We will illustrate this principle as well as the usefulness of the model for evaluating changes with Hinduism.

In Hindu contexts, direct parallels are particularly difficult to establish, because Hinduism is radically different from both Christianity and Islam—and also because the socio-religious breadth of Hinduism allows for an extremely high degree of variation in practices. Rather than designating Hinduism as a religion (an extremely elusive and dubious concept among academics of religious studies), some describe it as a civilization which encompasses hundreds of religions. A very rough approximation of the F Spectrum in a typical middle-class

Hindu context, *might* look something like the paragraphs below.¹⁸ However, particular Hindu communities may evidence more or fewer categories. We hope those who work in Hindu contexts will experiment with this model, delineate clearer categories, and refine it for further use.

- **F0:** Due to the multi-centered, pluralistic, inclusivity of Hinduism, the pressures to F0 secret, underground ekklesiae would be absent from traditional Hindu contexts. Yet functionally, most Hindu devotional meetings are “hidden in plain sight”; no one knows or cares that a new group is worshipping a new god (such as Jesus), for they just hear the familiar devotional sounds. However, where Hindu extremism is resurgent, the association of Jesus with a foreign religion could provide pressure on a more familiar indigenous type of worship gathering.¹⁹ Where pressured to participate in temple rituals, these Hindu disciples of Christ, like Naaman in 2 Kings 5:18, may bow down in front of idols, but their hearts are not engaged, and they pray for the day when such practice is no longer deemed wise or necessary.
- **F1:** Hindu disciples of Jesus who hold Christ-centered meetings use Hindu forms and terms whereby Hindus understand and appreciate the atmosphere of the meetings. These disciples of Christ also participate in family festivals and functions where other deities are acknowledged, based on a clear understanding that their involvement and appreciation for the event is due to love and respect for family, not for other gods (many secular Hindus also participate in exactly this way). Hindu disciples of Jesus will be interested in their familial traditions in ways that few other Hindus are, and will respectfully study Hindu texts from their (and other Hindu) traditions, while recognizing the centrality of the Bible for faith and life in Christ.
- **F2:** Believers refrain from bowing down to idols but uphold the Hindu cultural ideal of honoring parents by accompanying them into a temple as they worship. F2 believers refer to themselves as (Hindu) devotees of Jesus, and use language, terms, and symbolism common to their Hindu peers. In general, believers would at least attend Hindu festivals and celebrations and practice vegetarianism in vegetarian communities. Marriage ceremonies would not be held in a church and the bride would not wear a white dress.
- **F3:** Those in this kind of ekklesia may refuse to accompany parents to temple rituals, even if not required to participate. They maintain some biblically acceptable forms from the Hindu community. They use local language and may accept some Hindu terms beyond what is sanctioned by the normal Bible translations. Yet many key terms, such as the name for God, would be borrowed from an outsider language/dialect. Participation in corporate Hindu celebrations may vary from person to person and group to group. Most corporate gatherings of upper-caste believers are strictly vegetarian, as it would be for them at home among vegetarian families. Following modern permissibility of Hindu custom, individuals are free to eat even meat and fish (not beef, except perhaps abroad!) outside of the home.

- **F4:** Uses community insider language with outsider key terms but rejects any forms and symbols from the Hindu community that might be viewed as having any “religious” connotation. Participation in festivals and even life-cycle rituals would be reluctant and rare (for example, marriage ceremonies would take place in a church setting). Secular cultural forms such as dress and food are retained. Indigenous music genres are to be rejected for western genres, or for western hymns translated into local language. Vegetarianism is practiced by some, but it is a preference, not a dictum. These F4 believers no longer identify themselves as Hindu.
- **F5:** These believers eschew all things “Hindu” except traditional terms adopted in the Bible of their particular local language. All their practices would seem strange, confusing, or offensive to a Hindu: seeing men and women sitting intermingled, shoes worn in the place of worship, and Bibles allowed to be placed on the floor. Many of these F5 believers in Hindu contexts reject vegetarianism because of their understanding of biblical freedom. A decisive break with Hindu culture and identity is a hallmark of this level.

Conclusion

As a descriptive model, the C Spectrum enabled the mission community to distinguish key features of various Christ-centered communities. However, there was need for more practical tools for guiding contextualization and indigenization efforts, and the apparent void contributed to widespread misunderstanding and misapplication of the C Spectrum. Missiological discussions have become rather hardened and often unproductive, pointing to the need for a fresh perspective on the issues. The Foreignness Spectrum should be useful for this purpose.

The F Spectrum model may be beneficial for new believers, helping them to think clearly about the adaptations they wish to make in expressing faith, community, and worship.²⁰ It can help outside teachers and workers to identify conscious or unconscious expectations for what the ekklesiae should look like, prepare them to accept and encourage alternative expressions, and help them empower local leaders to make these decisions.

The F Spectrum can also benefit missiologists. It provides a set of parallel categories for comparing the contextualization choices made by various Christ-centered communities in a particular cultural region. Missiologists can compare the various descriptive categories of Muslim or Hindu ekklesiae to better analyze the missional dynamics, challenges, and fruitfulness associated with each.

The F Spectrum also speaks strongly against the tacit assumption that modern Western Christianity is normative and that other forms are to be measured as departures from that. We maintain that modern Western Christianity is only one of many valid forms of our faith. It is not the central form because there is no central form. God does not have favorite cultures. He only desires that his people be faithful to him. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ For convenience sake, we utilize here the C Spectrum diagram in Joshua Massey, "God's Amazing Diversity in Drawing Muslims to Christ," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 7.
- ² Kyle Meeker and Warrick Farah, "The W-Spectrum: Worker Paradigms in Muslim Contexts," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2015): 366–75. See this for contextualization paradigms for Christian workers.
- ³ John Jay Travis, "The C1–C6 Spectrum after Fifteen Years: Misunderstandings, Limitations and Recommendations," in *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus within Diverse Religious Communities*, eds. Harley Talman and John Jay Travis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 491–493. Note: In subsequent endnotes, we shorten the reference to this book as it appears several times.
- ⁴ In our conversation with John Travis about our proposed modification to his model, he expressed enthusiastic support for the Foreignness Spectrum.
- ⁵ Jens Barnett, "Searching for Models of Individual Identity," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 581–97.
- ⁶ Tim Green, "Conversion and Identity," in *Longing For Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?*, ed. David Greenlee (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 41–51.
- ⁷ Other Muslim contexts may differ significantly from the Middle East. Richard Jameson observes that differences in religious terms and practices protect Arab Christians from Islamic incursion onto their religion, functioning like the tall walls in an ancient Arab city. In contrast, Muslims and Christians in Indonesia share religious vocabulary rooted in Arabic. Along with worldview values such as harmony, the boundaries between Christians and Muslims are more like a village that transitions into an open field. Thus, F1 and F2 identity in the Arab world requires clear distinction between Christian and Muslims so that it functions more like a fortress—either you are in or out. In South East Asia blurring is not so bothersome, so that the differences between F1 and F2 may appear more like colors on a spectrum of light. Richard Jameson, "Respecting Context: A Comparison of Indonesia and the Middle East," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 170–171.
- ⁸ As Muslims they still seek to be submitters to God, but as Muslim Followers of Jesus (MFJ), they no longer trust in Muhammad as an intercessor nor do they view him as the model of sinless perfection to emulate. Many Islamic religious practices (e.g., fasting, ritual prayers) are transformed through new motivations and attitudes and by modifying or removing aspects that do not conform to Christ's teaching (e.g., Matthew 6); other practices are rejected. They gather in homes as an *ekklesia* though some may continue mosque attendance for outreach. All are committed to biblical faithfulness, but (just as with Christians), they may have different views or scruples about what beliefs and practices can be retained, what must be rejected, and what can be redeemed through reinterpretation or revision. Most of the controversy over C5 (F1) may be attributed to such differences.
- Perhaps the most controversial issue in Muslim contexts concerns the prophethood of Muhammad. Contrary to assumptions of many critics, MFJs hold to a wide range of views (negative and positive), but which they deem to be compatible with biblical authority (Harley Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus, Muhammad and the Qur'an," in *Muslim Conversions to Christ: A Critique of Insider Movements in Islamic Contexts*, eds. Ayman S. Ibrahim and Ant Greenham [NY: Peter Lang, 2018], 123–138). Similarly, some prominent Christian theologians and missiologists are willing to concede various kinds of prophetic roles to Muhammad as compatible with Scripture (Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007], 41–44; Harley Talman, "Is Muhammad Also Among the Prophets," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 31, no. 4 [Oct–Dec 2014]: 169–190).
- ⁹ Separating what Western workers view as "religious" from "cultural" is much less clear in traditional societies where they are often fused together. This distinction is much easier to make where non-Muslim communities already exist. The Islamic "religious" elements are those which are not shared with non-Muslims.
- Western Christians hold firmly to unexamined notions of what constitutes a religion, whereas contemporary scholars of religious studies are unable to reach any kind of consensus defining the concept of "religion" (Seth D. Kunin, ed., *Theories of Religion: A Reader, with Jonathan Miles-Watson* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006], 1). Some argue that religions themselves are cultural systems (Kurt Anders Richardson, "Considering Religion(s): What Does the Word Really Mean?" in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 357). See articles in Part 4, section 2, Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, "Religion and Syncretism," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 339–386.
- ¹⁰ This hypothetical example is used for illustrative purposes only. In reality, most African Christians coming to the West would likely be more culturally sensitive than the average American Christian going to Africa.
- ¹¹ Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 43–53.
- ¹² In their study "Conversion in the New Testament," Roberts and Jameson observe that the Greek term "for one who changes from one religious system to another is *proselutos* (proselyte, convert), and it is used four times. . . . In every instance it refers to Gentiles converting to Judaism. It is not used to refer to someone who has come to Christ, repented from sin, turned to God, found new life or transformation in Christ, or put his or her trust in Christ as Savior and Lord" (Michael Roberts and Richard Jameson, "Conversion in the New Testament," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 199–200). These latter meanings are conveyed through different Greek words (sometimes translated as "convert") but which do not connote changing to another religious tradition.
- ¹³ Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 104–11.
- ¹⁴ John and Anna Travis delineate important roles that "alongsiders" can play in serving insider movement communities (i.e., Jesus movements outside of Christianity) (John and Anna Travis, "Roles of 'Alongsiders' in Insider Movements: Contemporary Examples and Biblical Reflections," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 455–66). We believe these kinds of roles are appropriate

for any outsiders who work closely/alongside local believers to sensitively serve and strengthen Christ-following communities, regardless of their position in the C or F Spectrum.

Some insist that the apostle Paul dictated changes and therefore we ought to do the same, but Greer highlights the need for local communities to develop their own expressions of faith and thought; otherwise we risk continuing colonialist mission mentality and policy (Bradford Greer, "Moving Beyond: Frontier Missions in Our Postcolonial World," *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 36, no. 4 [Winter 2019], 189–200).

¹⁵ John and Anna Travis, "Roles of 'Alongsiders,'" 455–466.

¹⁶ Field data is somewhat limited, but that collected from 280 workers at the 2007 Fruitful Practices Consultation indicates that "All three levels of contextualization, C3–C5, correlate with the formation of churches, but higher degrees of contextualization appear more conducive to the development of movements" (Rick Brown, Bob Fish, John Travis, Eric Adams, and Don Allen, "Movements and Contextualization: Is There Really a Correlation?" *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 1 [Spring, 2009], 22).

¹⁷ A higher number than F0 would be appropriate in contexts which do not warrant secrecy.

¹⁸ We are indebted to H. L. Richard for assisting us in modifying this taxonomy in light of his observations of on-the-ground realities.

¹⁹ We thank Don Eenigenburg for pointing out the impact of Hindu extremists.

²⁰ There are many hindrances to faith in a resistant situation in addition to the life and worship style of believers. Therefore, it is not to be expected that a more appropriate form of Christian expression will necessarily cause resistance to melt away. However, the lives of believers are usually the first important information potential believers have about Christianity, and appropriate forms help weak believers to stay with and grow in their new faith. We therefore consider it an aspect too important to ignore.

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A Hybrid World

My hope is this book will remind us Christians wherever we find ourselves in the world that only together can we constitute the healthy and whole body of Christ (Eph 4). As the Ethiopian proverb puts it, "Without you there is no me."

JONATHAN J. BONK, PhD

Research Professor of Mission, Boston University School of Theology

Linking... Blending... Intermixing with Divine Purpose

People are on the move. As individuals and people groups are constantly migrating, the unreached have become part of our communities. This reality provides local Christ-followers with the challenge and opportunity of navigating both the global diaspora and mixed ethnicities.

A Hybrid World is the product of a global consultation of church and mission leaders who discussed the implications of hybridity in the mission of God. The contributors draw from their collective experiences and perspectives, explore emerging concepts and initiatives, and ground them in authoritative Scripture for application to the challenges that hybridity presents to global missions.

This book honestly wrestles with the challenges of ethnic hybridity and ultimately encourages the global church to celebrate the opportunities that our sovereign and loving God provides for the world's scattered people to be gathered to himself.

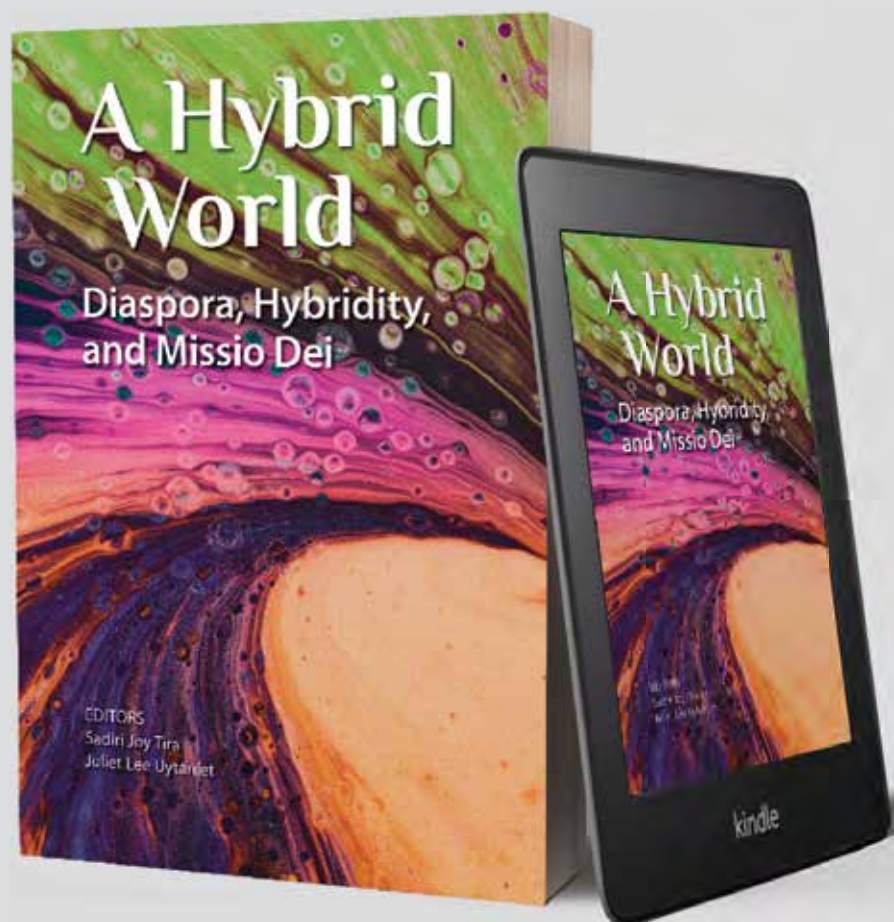
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Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms

Swapping Drinking Songs for Spiritual Songs: *Skolia* and Possession in Ephesians 5 and Mozambique

by Alan B. Howell

Certain aspects of the cultures of the Bible are more easily grasped today by Africans than by Westerners.¹ By recognizing important parallels to Greco-Roman culture, Africa can serve as a “laboratory,” an appropriate setting, for reading both the Classics and the New Testament well.² Reading the biblical text in the “laboratory” of Mozambique, for example, led to observations and connections that, although surprising to me, in retrospect, have been there all along.

The Makua-Metto Christians made a number of insightful observations as we studied Ephesians 5: 15-20 together, connecting Paul’s counsel for the church in Ephesus to our context in northern Mozambique.³ We noted how the verb *wiipa* in the Makua-Metto language means both “to swell” and “to sing.” That semantic connection fit well with the instruction in the text to be filled, or swell, with the Holy Spirit while singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The conversation took another direction when one person brought up the prevalence of drinking songs and how drunkenness is an overwhelming problem for the people in this region. Additionally, this condition seemed wedded to fear as lives are deeply affected by the occult and spirit possession. It seemed plausible to them that fear, magic, and alcohol were also an integrated problem in first century Ephesus. That led them to connect Paul’s instructions about drinking wine, songs, and spirit possession this way: *Paul is telling the believers not to sing drinking songs, because that will lead to foolish living and possession by a corrupt spirit. Instead, as followers of Jesus, we should sing spiritual songs, which fill us with the Holy Spirit and help us to live lives full of thankfulness.*

As a foreigner, I was only minimally familiar with Makua-Metto drinking songs. So, after conducting interviews and collecting popular drinking songs in their language, I learned to set up a contrast between drinking songs and songs of the Holy Spirit when teaching Ephesians 5.⁴ This interpretation was such a helpful and natural reading of the text in the “laboratory” of Mozambique that

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it led me to investigate how well this “swapping songs” approach to 5:18-19 fit the original context of the church in Ephesus.

In the first section of this article, we will briefly explore the situation in Ephesus. We will look at the settings in which people drank wine across that city, from the *symposium* (in ancient Greece, a convivial discussion or drinking party held after a banquet) to the mystery cult of Dionysus. Along the way, we will note the important connection of that whole region to the genre of drinking songs (σκόλια—*skolia* or *scolia*).⁵ We will then examine the rhetoric of a first century Greek orator, Dio Chrysostom, whose explicit contrast of drinking songs with morally instructive songs is similar to the argument made by the Apostle Paul. In the second section, we will jump to the context of Mozambique and examine the content of five popular Makua-Metto drinking songs, noting their inherent spirituality. Finally, we will turn to a reading of Ephesians 5 in light of spirit possession and potential applications for swapping drinking songs with spiritual songs.

Plutarch saw danger in the way music affected people, and since he knew that music was unlikely to be eliminated from the symposium, he cautioned participants to use it wisely and be aware of its potentially dangerous effects on the soul.

Ephesians 5 in Context Skolia and Symposium

Gatherings where people would eat and drink together are an important cultural artifact of the first century. The end of a banquet, the symposium, would often include the drinking of a wine “libation, followed by the singing of a song, usually a hymn of praise to a god, and then by entertainment, . . . further extended discussion, or perhaps more singing.”⁶ Discussion and debate could occur, or the drinking might cause the crowd to descend into a drunken orgy.⁷ Wright notes that, “music was an integral component of banqueting activities. Singing games were frequently played by participants.”⁸

There were three types of skolia (σκόλια), a genre of drinking songs, present at such gatherings.⁹ The first type was to be sung as a chorus, while the second in a regular succession. The third type—where the skolia actually derive their name—come from the fact that instead of following the order of seating, the turn-taking would be in an irregular or crooked pattern.¹⁰ Athenaeus notes that participants would often perform one *skolion* after another, and lists twenty-five examples, including this one: “Would that I might become a lovely ivory lyre, and that lovely lads might take me to join the chorus of Dionysus.”¹¹ Also: “Drink with me, sport with me, love with me, wear wreaths with me, rage with me when I am raging, be sober when I am sober.”¹² One of the

Attic skolia references the patron goddess of Ephesus, Artemis.¹³ The skolia were apparently known for being composed in the Ionian mode,¹⁴ another connection to the region where the city of Ephesus is located.¹⁵ Collins notes that

contrary to what we might think always constituted a spirit of conviviality, wine drinking for Greek symposiasts could be lighthearted on the surface while underneath it was an acknowledged doorway into hidden intentions

as the spirit of competition could take over the group while they attempted to best each other with their skolion lyrics.¹⁶

Plutarch saw potential danger in the way music affected people, and since he knew that music was unlikely to be eliminated from the symposium, he cautioned participants to use it wisely and be aware of its potentially dangerous effects on the soul.¹⁷ He

lists the “singing of any kind of song” as one of many undesirable activities taking place when drinking parties got out of hand. Yet simultaneously he shows how the scolon was known to have filled a religious purpose.¹⁸

There was certainly a spiritual dimension to similar gatherings, one intricately connected to the consumption of alcohol.

Dionysus

Rogers argues that the cult of Dionysus (or Bacchus) plays an important part in the background of Ephesians 5,

It would seem that the cult of Dionysus was so widespread and common that anything having to do with grapes, wine, ivy, or any other Dionysian motif was at once connected to Dionysus and his worship. Many pagans even accused the Jews of worshiping Dionysus, simply because certain things in Judaism appeared to have Dionysian motifs. To talk of wine and drinking immediately brought Dionysian expressions in the conversation, and to live a riotous, wanton, debauched, drunken life was characterized as a “Dionysian mode of life.” The cult was so widespread that it was part of common everyday life in the ancient world.¹⁹

The influence of this cult was significant.

Dionysus flourished in the Roman world, both East and West, simultaneously in the form of a mystery religion and in the iconography of mosaics, paintings and sculptures. This imagery does not always, everywhere and necessarily have a cultic significance—far from it . . . But it carries references to a cult and a myth whose popularity it both reflects and reinforces, because it makes a visual impression.²⁰

So, who is this Greek god Dionysus and how should we think about his impact? Meyer notes that he

had numerous manifestations and his worship was incredibly diverse... The worshippers of Dionysos acknowledged his presence in the raw flesh of the wild beasts as well as the goblet of wine, in the phallus concealed in the *liknon* (a winnowing basket that may be used as a cradle for a baby), and also (among the Orphics) in the immortal human soul. Thus, one who was confronted with the presence of Dionysos and possessed by him might feel his power variously: in ecstasy, in inebriation, in sexuality, in spiritual bliss. Such a person became one with Dionysos, and in fact may be called Bacche (feminine) or Bacchos (masculine) after the god himself. Little is known of the actual mysteries of Dionysos, but presumably they were as diverse as the manifestations of the god... The holy drink of initiates that initiates consume was ordinary wine, since wine was the special gift of the god. Sexual practices must have been a part of some Bacchic festivals.²¹

The goal of Dionysism, then, was “to become a *Bacchos*, that is to say, to become identified with the god.”²² In Euripides’ play, *The Bacchanals*, we are told that humans can rest from their grief when wine fills (πλησθῶσιν) them.²³ Interestingly, in Ephesians 5:18–19, Paul tells the believers to be filled (πληροῦσθε) with the Spirit, with singing that included hymns (ᾠμοίς). During Euripides’ play, the chorus sings,

Dionysus ordains, will I chant him, his hymn (ὕμνήσω) out—O happy to whom is the blessedness given, To be taught the Mysteries sent from heaven, Who is pure in his life, through whose soul the unsleeping Revel goes sweeping!²⁴

And later,

One dancing-band (θάλασσοις) shall be all the land when, led by the Clamour-king, his revel-rout fills the hills—the hills where thy women come whom the Vine-god chasing, in frenzy racing, Hunted from shuttle and loom.²⁵

Euripides describes the identification with the deity or possession this way,

A prophet is this God (δαίμων): the Bacchic frenzy and ecstasy are full-fraught with prophecy: For, in his fullness when he floods our frame, He makes his maddened votaries tell the future... thrilled with panic (φόβος)... This too is a frenzy Dionysus sends.²⁶

In being filled with wine, Dionysus entered the intoxicated worshippers’ bodies, thus allowing them to comply with the deity’s will.²⁷ In addition, music played an important role in this inebriated process of possession.²⁸ And their singing was known such that Philo of Alexandria, writing in the first century CE, remarks on the superiority of a Judean group’s singing in honor of God, of their beautiful fashion in comparison with the symposia of others, including the Bacchic festivities.²⁹

It seems fitting that Paul would follow his instruction on songs and wine with a section on household codes (beginning with the conduct of women and men in marriage, 5:21–33), as the rites of Dionysus were connected with disorganization, disruption, and a “dangerous level of possession. . . . More specifically, it is through his effect on women that Dionysus’ terrifying ability to overturn the normal order of things is demonstrated.”³⁰ Blundell notes that,

The participants were known as Maenads (*mainades* or “mad women”), a word which signifies possession by a god but which at the same time carries derogatory connotations, implying masculine disapproval of uncontrolled female behavior.³¹

Maenadic worship likely included, “ritual chants and frenzied dancing to the music of drums and flutes (thrillingly evoked in one of the choral odes of the *Bacchae*, lines 152–69).”³² The effect of Dionysus on women was said to have caused madness and leaving of one’s home, “rushing away from domestic life . . . with hair disheveled to the choral dances of Dionysus.”³³

In 41 BCE, according to Plutarch,

when Antony made his entry into Ephesus, women arrayed like Bacchanals, and men and boys like Satyrs and Pans, led the way before him, and the city was full of ivy and thyrsuwands and harps and pipes and flutes, the people hailing him as Dionysus, Giver of Joy and Beneficent. For he was such, undoubtedly, to some; but to the greater part he was Dionysus Carnivorous and Savage. For he took their property from well-born men and bestowed it on flatterers and scoundrels.³⁴

We know that Dionysus played a significant part of “the Ephesian pantheon, even before Roman times.”³⁵ Oster states that “in addition to legendary episodes which place the god Dionysus in Ephesus, there is abundant additional evidence that Dionysus was revered and his cult was faithfully maintained there.”³⁶ According to Aurenhammer, “the majority of Dionysiac sculptures feature the god alone or grouped with members of his thiasos.”³⁷ These groups, the *thiasoi*, who drank and worshipped together, could refer to a bacchic cult or they could have been more like a funerary association.³⁸ Some of the thiasoi had “nothing ‘mystic’ or even ‘of mystery’ about them” as those groups may have functioned more like drinking clubs.³⁹ Turcan notes that this

...Dionysism with a middle-class bent, patronized by local notabilities in Italy as in Asia Minor, was a religion of festive euphoria and well-being guaranteed by the Pax Romana. Furthermore, it often went hand in hand with the imperial cult.⁴⁰

Dio Chrysostom

Another resource that informs our understanding of the background of Ephesians 5 comes from Dio Chrysostom’s *Second Discourse on Kingship*. That speech is set up as a

dramatic conversation between Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander, holding out the Stoic ideal of kingship, drawing from Homer's writings.⁴¹ He affirms that "the king should not offer such prayers as other men do," and should not "call upon the gods with such a petition as Anacreon, the Ionian poet, makes."⁴² Dio Chrysostom references two prayers, or *skolia* (interestingly, both specifically reference Dionysus), and counsel is given that while these "ballads and drinking-songs of the Attic symposia" are appropriate for "country folk and for the merry and boisterous clan-meetings," they are not suitable for kings.⁴³ Instead, we are told, it would be better to pray like Homer's king of the Greeks in the *Iliad*, leading into a section on the proper qualities and conduct of a king.⁴⁴

Dio Chrysostom's work follows a similar rhetorical approach to our reading of Ephesians 5, where Paul contrasts drinking songs with songs of the Holy Spirit which then leads into a section on proper behavior. Hengel notes that Paul's description of these songs shows their inspiration by means of the Spirit, "given its concrete form in worship," and that Paul is not distinguishing between the three terms, "psalms," "hymns," and "songs," since these titles are used interchangeably in the LXX for religious songs.⁴⁵ It is unlikely, then, that Paul mentions these three terms for songs to specifically highlight the contrast with the three "competing" kinds of *skolia*. What seems clear, though, is that the Dionysian cult forms

a very real and present background for the statements by Paul in Eph 5:18–19. The more we learn about this cult and its presence in Asia Minor, the more likely it becomes that Paul was responding directly to the influence of the cult in the church at Ephesus.⁴⁶

While this text may give little attention to the form of worship, it is clearly focused on the content and orientation of that worship and the way that worship fills us, forms us, and transforms us by means of the Spirit, into a people with the character of God.

We have looked at the ways the symposia, *skolia*, the Cult of Dionysus and the rhetoric of Dio Chrysostom construct a backdrop for reading Ephesians 5:18–19 as an appeal to swap drinking songs for songs of the Holy Spirit. The main contrast being made is between two conditions, or two types of possession, that of being filled with wine (Dionysus and drunkenness) and another of being filled with the Spirit.

Wine is the content (the beverage) that is consumed and that renders one drunk. By analogy, the Spirit is the content

that the believer takes in and with which he or she is filled. This overall conclusion then makes Paul's statement thoroughly consistent with Luke's repeated references to believers being filled with the Spirit in the book of Acts.⁴⁷

Instead of possession by a capricious spirit,

the hallmark gift of the new covenant is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul calls believers to yield their lives completely to the Spirit's influence and to resist coming under the pull of other mind-altering and numbing substances.⁴⁸

And the way the follower of Jesus participates in being filled by the Spirit is to fill the mind and heart with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.⁴⁹ In that way, the church becomes a radically different kind of *thiasoi*, a community of worshippers filled not with wine, but with the Holy Spirit.

Drinking Songs and Spirit Possession in Mozambique

In this section, we will look at the context of Mozambique and show how drinking songs are both powerful and inherently spiritual among the Makua-Metto people. We will begin by summarizing the message of five drinking songs (with samples from lines of two of them) and make observations about the kind of spirit they promote.⁵⁰

1. "*Uwurya akinbiya*" ("I won't stop drinking"): The singer, Mpakala, borrowed the chorus from a traditional drinking song, adapting it and the rhythm into a modern format. The singer pledges his allegiance to *niipha* (local moonshine) and states that people shouldn't complain about him drinking because he's using his own money that he earned from cutting and selling firewood.
2. "*Nanbapaliya Khanliyala Itoroku*" ("Drunks don't forget their change"): This famous song, that is often sung when people drink together, was written by Nigabozoni. Even though it is a song about drinking, it starts by mentioning God and later invoking God to get justice for the drinker, to get his change back from the owner of the bar. The message is: "Don't try to take advantage of me, just because I'm drunk. I can still control my own money."
3. "*Anonkoma ukabankani*" ("Sitting at the place of drinking"): The words of this song by Mukopola sound similar to a lament. It tells how people sit and drink all day long. It is not typically sung where people drink, but about people who drink.

The main contrast is between two types of possession: being filled with wine and being filled with the Spirit.

4. “*Ixima ni Royali Yo Civa*” (“*Xima* or Royal Gin, which is Sweet?”): *Xima* is a staple food for people in northern Mozambique, while Royal is a well-known brand of gin. The song lists various types of foods, asking if any can compare to Royal Gin. The song’s answer is that Royal Gin is best. At one point, reference is made to a wound that the singer has. His response was that it is better that he fall and cut himself rather than stop drinking alcohol. In commenting on this song, a Mozambican Christian said that this person is a slave to alcohol.

Mwani mi ilansoruwaka inovithiya; iximaka kakimeliya; nkora aka yovithiyaa; mi nsuruku aka wira Royal aka khanompwanya. Nula navithiye isokwaka ni kahalaa ka uhuruwe nenno nihukunno kanavithiya. When they hid my bed sheet; didn’t share my xima with me; hid my bed from me and my money, at least my Royal Gin they did not get. If they had done that, I would have hit them and on the same day they would bury me.

Ala yakwaka nsalapaaya ukokhala wo siyani ala? Uhapaliya tho. So, the cross I will die on, what will it be? Just Drunkenness.

Não precisa wo thapwa, só cathukanihaciyaru ikarafacixo chesiyaka wimuru no, nsalapakava uhotosa. I don’t need one made of wooden boards, just join together bottles, and put them next to my head, that will be my cross there—that’s enough.

5. “*Uhapaliya Kakinhiya Itampi Nimpanka Nkhayi*” (“We won’t stop being drunk, it’s a sin we do together”): The message of the song is that everyone has their own destiny, and the singer says his destiny is drunkenness. The singer makes fun of religious people who tell him to stop because they have their own set of sins. At the end of the song, the singer says that his family blames their problems on his drunkenness, but he uses drunkenness as a mask to do what he wants.

Akinhiya! Uhapaliya mi akinhiya. I won’t stop! I won’t stop getting drunk.

Nluku nawumpa anatamu awe pwavahaka uhapaliya ntuuniyani. (x2) God made and possesses humans and gave drunkenness to the world.

Poti ukona mi uhapaliya usikiya niusikiya nkhai. You may see me in my drunkenness, but we’ll be buried together.

We poti uyona usilamo itampi wimpanka nkhai. You may think you are a just person, but we are both sinners.

Yuvahale Nluku! Nna mi uokiwaha Nluku! That’s what God gave you! This is what God gave me!

Shame is an important theme in the Makua-Metto culture, and it is a powerful force in these lyrics.⁵¹ In interacting with this material, participants noted that people in their lives would sometimes shamefully admit the exorbitant cost of drunkenness. One story, in particular, was of a professor who lamented that he lost everything because of alcohol—his marriage, house, etc. While some songs served to lament the loss that drinking brings, another observation was that, for many people, music and drinking end up going together because the sound and singing drown out the shame that is associated with getting drunk.

If the Makua-Metto drinking songs are a real force hindering the flourishing of the kingdom of God in northern Mozambique, how can churches defend themselves against this enemy and these songs? One Christian commented that the secret is to bring their message into the light and work to destroy the hollow pleasure of drinking by revealing the spirit of drunkenness for what it is. The suggestion was to overtly contrast these songs with songs of the Holy Spirit and talk about the way the church can practice a robust theology of singing.

The linguistic connection between singing and swelling in the Makua-Metto verb *wiipa* has been helpful to point out that lives filled with the right songs can be lives filled with the Holy Spirit. And that way of being empowers us to be the kind of people who live by a proper ethical code (Eph. 5:21–6:9). Immediately following the household code in Ephesus, are instructions on the armor of God and how our battle is against spiritual powers (Eph. 6:10–20). Likewise, Mozambican Christians naturally heard the musical theme continuing to play in the background of that section. They noted that music plays a role on the battlefield, and songs of the Holy Spirit train us for the spiritual battle. It is common to hear soldiers most mornings as they go to and from the military base in our town in Mozambique. Singing and marching together is an important aspect of their training, and believers there were quick to note the connection to singing as part of the training for Christians to do spiritual battle against the powers of evil in this context.

In many ways, a typical African worldview is closer to the Greco-Roman worldview than the current Western perspective. In the first century, the spiritual realm was seen as omnipresent and having a real impact on the average person.⁵² Since the spirit realm is one that is perceived as both active and full of secrecy for the Makua-Metto people, it is helpful to speak openly about this topic in order to shed some light on this dark and mysterious part of life. It must expose one crucial conviction: human beings are made for possession.⁵³ That idea, that we were “made for possession,” may sound strange to Western ears, but it is one that Paul would likely

agree with.⁵⁴ Our Mozambican friends connect easily with this idea that humans were made for possession and they understand that there is a drastic difference between being possessed by God's Holy Spirit and being possessed by a lesser spirit.⁵⁵ While many people in this context are filled with destructive, divisive, deceptive, and defective spirits—including the spirit of drunkenness—all of God's children can be filled with God's Holy Spirit. Behind this whole consideration of spirit possession is another helpful conviction: all songs are spiritual.⁵⁶ When we fill our lives with drinking songs it prepares us for possession by the spirit of drunkenness, whereas “songs, hymns, and spiritual songs” prepare us for the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

Conclusion

The experience of reading Paul's epistle in the “laboratory” of Mozambique helps us appreciate the depth of its significance. Dionysus serves as a vivid and appropriate representation of the spirit of drunkenness—embodying the duality and contrast between the close companion (“the friendly god who lavishes blessings”), and the angry drunk who could tear you to pieces (“the bestial and wild one”).⁵⁷ Through participation in his cult, a person could become part of a community, “incorporated into the thiasus,” as well as join “a sort of divine life” through possession.⁵⁸ As we have shown, wine was so

connected with the Dionysus cult that it is hard to imagine people in Ephesus not linking the two.⁵⁹ Some residents of the city would have been embedded in the mystery cult, seeing Dionysus as their guide to eternal life, while many others may have seen these occasions as a way to enjoy themselves, get drunk, and lose their inhibitions among friends.⁶⁰

Songs are pervasive, and it seems clear that due to the prevalence of the symposium and skolia, even non-initiates would have been very familiar with the connection between songs and possession. They would understand how this connection might require ethical instruction. Theilman reminds us of the orator Isocrates who warned Demonicus that “when the mind is impaired by wine, it is like chariots which have lost their drivers . . . The soul stumbles again and again when the intellect is impaired.”⁶¹ Paul's ethical instruction in Ephesians 5:18–19 addressed this very same milieu. It seems reasonable that the church in Ephesus would appreciate that in contrast to a life of drunken singing and possession by an unclean spirit, they have been called to swap those crooked songs, *skolia*, for songs, hymns, and spiritual songs that lead to goodness and order. This is an important word for churches in both Ephesus and Mozambique, and everywhere in between: to leave behind that twisted path and sing songs that give direction and life, songs that fill followers of Jesus with the Spirit of the living God. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ Ernest A. McFall, *Approaching the Nuer of Africa Through the Old Testament* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1970), 1–3, 90–93. Any appreciation of similarities, though, should not cause us to overlook differences.
- ² Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 252.
- ³ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2–61. While Pauline authorship of Ephesus is a matter of debate, the Makua-Metto churches assume authorial authenticity. In light of this assumption and the reasonable argument for Pauline authorship, we will read this as a letter from the apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus.
- ⁴ After first encountering this way of interpreting the text, I did individual interviews (20–30 minutes) with five people and discussed these findings with small groups or classes of mostly men (over 100 total participants throughout the different stages in the development of these ideas).
- ⁵ The English translation of this term appears both as *skolia* and *scolia* in the literature.
- ⁶ Peter W. Gosnell, “Ephesians 5:18–20 and Mealtime Propriety,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44, no. 2 (1993): 366.
- ⁷ Gosnell, “Ephesians 5:18–20,” 366.
- ⁸ Richard A. Wright, “Drinking, Teaching, and Singing: Ephesians 5:18–19 and the Challenges of Moral Instruction at Greco-Roman Banquets,” *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (Fall–Winter 2017): 93.
- ⁹ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, XV 694 a–b (Loeb Classical Library No. 345. trans. Charles Burton Gulick, Vol. 7).
- ¹⁰ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, XV 694 a–b. See also *Lyra Graeca: Being the Remains of all the Greek Lyric Poets from Eumelus to Timotheus excepting Pindar*, Vol. III, Book 7 (Loeb Classical Library No. 144. trans. J. M. Edmonds), 549–555. “The course followed among them was skolios or ‘crooked’ owing to the arrangements of the couches in polygonal rooms, which made the seating irregular. Thus, the songs, according to these authorities, were not called crooked because of their metrical structure but because of the crooked course taken by the myrtle-twig as it passed from hand to hand.”
- ¹¹ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, XV 694c–695c. Additionally, there are the eighty-seven Orphic hymns, a collection dedicated to different deities, with two of them in honor of Dionysus. Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 103, 105, 108.
- ¹² Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, XV 695d.
- ¹³ *Lyra Graeca*, Vol. III, Book 7. Attic Scolia number 3 (Loeb Classical Library No. 144. trans. J. M. Edmonds). The collection contains 36 skolia.
- ¹⁴ “But the character of the Ionians today is more voluptuous, and the character of their mode is much altered. They say that Pythermus of Teos composed lyric scolia (σκολιά) in this kind of mode, and since the poet was an Ionian the mode was called Ionian . . . it is to be

- believed that Pythermus, being from Ionia, made the style of his lyrics fit the character of the Ionians.” Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, XIV, 625c-d (Loeb Classical Library No. 235, trans. Charles Burton Gulick, Vol. 4).
- ¹⁵ While the Seikilos epitaph, appearing on a memorial stele found in modern day Turkey (not far from the city of Ephesus), is referred to by some as the “Skolion of Seikilos” and is one of the oldest musical compositions including notation surviving today (usually dated from around the time of the New Testament), it is unlikely that this should be classified as a drinking song. For more on the Seikilos inscription see Warren D. Anderson, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 222–227. For a summary of the debate surrounding the classification of the song as *skolia* or not, see Peter Jeffery, “The Lost Chant Tradition of Early Christian Jerusalem: Some Possible Melodic Survivals in the Byzantine and Latin Chant Repertories,” *Early Music History*, Vol. 11 (1992): Footnotes 37, 167, 170.
- ¹⁶ Derek Collins, *Master of the Game: Competition and Performance in Greek Poetry*, Hellenic Studies Series 7, (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2004), 109. This competitive spirit can be seen in the “numerous ritual contexts in ancient Greece that call for joking and abuse, generally termed αἰσχρολογία ‘obscenity’” (225). A term Paul also uses in Ephesians 5:4. Instead of using singing prowess to show sexual dominance (57), a type of playing (παίλειν) that contained a serious, dark side (63), Paul picks three different Greek words when he encourages Christians to speak, sing, and make melodies.
- ¹⁷ Plutarch, *Moralia, Table-Talk*, Book VII, 706A–B, 712F–713F (Loeb Classical Library No. 425, trans. Edwin Minar, F. H. Sandbach, and W. C. Helmbold, Vol. IX).
- ¹⁸ Gosnell, 367. See Plutarch, *Moralia, Table-Talk*, 1.1.614 (Loeb Classical Library No. 424, trans. P. A. Clement and H. B. Hoffleit, Vol. VIII).
- ¹⁹ Cleon L. Rogers, “The Dionysian Background of Ephesians 5:18,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136, no. 543 (July–September 1979): 253. While the cult of Dionysus “certainly involved drunkenness . . . this vice was not limited to just the one cult. Achilles Tatius relates, ‘It was the festival of Artemis and drunken people were roaming everywhere, so that all night long a crowd filled the entire agora’ (Leuc. Cli. 6.3).” Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007): 25.
- ²⁰ Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, trans. Antonia Nevill, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 294. Turcan goes on to reference “a whole series of figured monuments—frescoes, stuccoes, terracotta plaques . . . picturesque reliefs, sarcophagi, mosaic floors—in the imperial period illustrates certain aspects of the initiatory ritual, at least allusively or symbolically.”
- ²¹ Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 63. For more see, Susan Guettel Cole, “New Evidence for the Mysteries of Dionysos,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1980): 233.
- ²² Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 295.
- ²³ Euripides, Vol. 3, *The Bacchanals*, line 280-1 (Loeb Classical Library No. 11, trans. Arthur S. Way, Vol. 3).
- ²⁴ Euripides, Vol. 3, *The Bacchanals*, line 70–75. The root word for hymn matches one of the song words used by Paul in Ephesians 5.
- ²⁵ Euripides, Vol. 3, *The Bacchanals*, line 115–119.
- ²⁶ Euripides, Vol. 3, *The Bacchanals*, line 298–306.
- ²⁷ For more on inspiration by inebriation in the Dionysus cult and other bacchanalia, see Yochanan Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas: Untersuchungen Zur Geschichte Der Antiken Mystik, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* (Beiheft 9. Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1929).
- ²⁸ Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 311. Hymns were even regulated by the Bacchic association; one set of rules notes that “no one is permitted to recite a speech (or: perform a hymn [?]) unless the priest or vice priest gives permission.” Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, TX: de Gruyter, 2012), 15.
- ²⁹ Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations*, 244.
- ³⁰ Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995), 166.
- ³¹ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 166.
- ³² Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 167.
- ³³ Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, trans. Robert B. Palmer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1965), 134. See Apollodorus, *The Library* 3.5.2 (Loeb Classical Library No. 121, trans. J. G. Frazer, Vol. 1); and Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, 45–47 (Loeb Classical Library No. 356, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, Vol. 3).
- ³⁴ Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives, Antony*, XXIV, 3–6 (Loeb Classical Library No. 101, trans. Bernadette Perrin, Vol. 9).
- ³⁵ Maria Aurenhammer, “Sculptures of Gods and Heroes from Ephesus,” in Helmut Koester, *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia*, Harvard Theological Studies 41 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 267.
- ³⁶ Richard E. Oster, “Ephesus as a Religious Center under the Principate, I. Paganism before Constantine”; German title: “Religion (Heidentum: die religiösen Verhältnisse in den Provinzen [Forts.],” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Teil II: Principat; Band 18:3 (New York, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 1673. In addition to epigraphical and numismatic evidence of the influence of Dionysus in Ephesus, “noteworthy is the fact that the month Lenaeon, sacred for Dionysia, was part of the Ephesian calendar” (1673–4). And it seems that even after the time of Paul, Dionysus was still affecting the church in Ephesus. Oster notes that, “a later Christian work entitled ‘Martyrium Timothei’ records a celebration of the Dionysian activities which resulted in the supposed martyrdom of the Bishop of Ephesus, Timothy.” (1674).
- ³⁷ For more on the sanctuaries, inscriptions, and statues in Ephesus related to Dionysus see Aurenhammer, “Sculptures,” 267–269. Also, for more on inscriptions see Stanley E. Porter, “Ephesians 5:18–19 and its Dionysian Background,” in *Testimony and Interpretation: Early Christology in its Judeo-Hellenistic Milieu Studies in Honour of Petr Pokorný*, eds. Jiří Mrázek and Jan Roskovec (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 68–80.

- ³⁸ Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 312–313. Philo of Alexandria comments on *thiasoi* whose fellowships were not founded on good principles. See Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations*, 245.
- ³⁹ Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 312.
- ⁴⁰ Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 312.
- ⁴¹ Dio Chrysostom, Vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library No. 257. Trans. J. W. Cohoon, Vol. 1), 49.
- ⁴² Dio Chrysostom, Vol. 1, 2.62.
- ⁴³ Dio Chrysostom, Vol. 1, 2.63.
- ⁴⁴ Dio Chrysostom, Vol. 1, 2.64ff.
- ⁴⁵ Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 273–4. For an exploration of the meaning of being filled with the Spirit in connection with Old Testament texts and Luke see C. John Collins, “Ephesians 5:18: What Does πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι Mean?” *Presbyterian* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 12–30.
- ⁴⁶ Porter, “Ephesians 5:18–19 and its Dionysian Background,” 73. As we noted earlier, Euripides’ *The Bacchanals* (line 281) refers to being filled with wine, while in Ephesians 5:18 it is used in reference to the Spirit.
- ⁴⁷ Clinton Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010), 350.
- ⁴⁸ Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians*, 348.
- ⁴⁹ For more on the exhortation to swap drinking songs for spiritual songs in the early Church, see Johannes Quasten, *Music & Worship in Pagan & Christian Antiquity*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1973), 121–122.
- ⁵⁰ I am deeply appreciative of Cruz Francisco Aquita’s help in transcribing and translating these songs.
- ⁵¹ For more on honor and shame in Africa see Andrew Mbuvi, “African Theology from the Perspective of Honor and Shame,” in *The Urban Face of Mission*, eds. Harvie M. Conn, Manuel Ortiz, and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 279–95.
- ⁵² Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 82.
- ⁵³ I am indebted to Phil Henderson for introducing me to this idea.
- ⁵⁴ Romans 7 and 8, for example, contrast how being led, controlled, or indwelt by “sin” is different than being led, controlled, or indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:20; 8:5–7; and 8:14).
- ⁵⁵ One example that has been helpful is to think of human beings as cups. We were made to have our souls filled by something—and we will be filled by something. If nature abhors a vacuum, then it is even more true in the spiritual realm (e.g., Luke 11:24–26). And whatever we are filled with can’t remain hidden for long. There is a spillover effect into the rest of our lives.
- ⁵⁶ I am grateful to my daughter, Ellen Grace Howell, for naming this simple truth so succinctly.
- ⁵⁷ Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, 110.
- ⁵⁸ Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 311. He goes on to note Bacchic inscriptions that list names of 420 members of the *thiasos* with various titles.
- ⁵⁹ It seems like the place of wine and the Dionysus cult would be similar to my experience of African Traditional Religion in Mozambique, in that while few people are deeply committed, most people are certainly connected.
- ⁶⁰ Susan G. Cole, “Landscapes of Dionysus and Elysian Fields” in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*, ed. Michael Cosmopoulos (New York: Routledge, 2003), 205, 211, 237. Cole also notes one tablet in particular whose text may be of Ionian origin (201).
- ⁶¹ Frank Theilman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, eds. Robert Yarbrough, and Robert Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 358.

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MOBILIZING MOVEMENTS

Few people have written books on saturation church planting (SCP) in recent years, and even fewer on the role of movements in SCP. These two important topics are made for one another. SCP is an important goal, and movements are the primary means by which to achieve this goal. To consider either without the other is to miss a key connection for achieving the advance of the kingdom and the completion of the Great Commission. Murray Moerman writes from a position of considerable experience on several levels, most notably in his leadership of the Global Church Planting Network.

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Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms Restoring Blessing: A Preferable Paradigm for Today's Mission

by Yajie Ji and Thomas Hale

Mission as we know it clashes with today's world. "Missionaries"—those full-time workers engaged in a variety of activities carried out through multiple organizations funded by churches and individuals—are simply unwelcome in more and more countries.¹ Pew Research correlates and confirms that restrictions on religious freedom and government harassment of religious groups have increased in every region of the world.² This, despite the fact that people sent by Christian organizations, whatever their ministry, are "dedicated servants, faithfully assisting the people to whom they were called."³ More often these fully funded Christian workers are associated with colonialism or imperialism, past or present—just one of the reasons for the increasingly unwelcome reception they face.⁴ Recently there have been calls and manifestos to adjust Christian mission and our mission terminology to these new conditions. It's becoming quite apparent that a "follower of Jesus" is rarely unwelcome in the same way as a missionary. In response to this fact, "tentmaking" was proposed in the 1970s and 1980s, spearheaded by J. Christy Wilson, Jr.⁵ Around the same time, German mis-
siologist Ludwig Rütli declared "the entire modern missionary enterprise" to be "so polluted by its origins in and close association with Western colonialism that it is irredeemable."⁶ Nevertheless, mission continued much as it had before. In the 1980s, many sending organizations adopted "tentmaking" and chose not to disclose the missionary purpose of their workers. However, with the advent of social media, this non-disclosure came to require all who were participating in the sending of workers to maintain the same non-disclosure.⁷ In practice, keeping all participants on the same "nondisclosure page" has been difficult to achieve, given the high regard for missionaries in their sending churches.

The Predicament of Missionary Identity

This paper supports the call for a new approach to engagement with the world by followers of Jesus, and we believe it will require a new metaphor for "mission." Amidst increasing global connectivity and government scrutiny,

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followers of Jesus serving in restrictive countries will require authentic lives that avoid the need for secrecy. Especially in restrictive contexts, a more integrated identity can only increase the effectiveness and well-being of the expatriate worker, and of their family, colleagues, and community.⁸ After observing this challenge firsthand over a couple of decades in the Soviet Union, I (Tom) argue in *Authentic Lives* that “there is simply no need for all the stratagems or secrecy.”⁹ What I call “hidden identities” need to be reframed with an appropriate metaphor or model, one that resolves the deep ongoing tension this creates for expatriates in mission.¹⁰

We believe any new effective model or metaphor is one in which “one’s visible identity or identities should match one’s stated identity.”¹¹ It’s becoming clear that “any metaphor in today’s interconnected world needs to be suitable for discussion in any context and in anyone’s presence,” and new metaphors and models are emerging.¹² The late Rick Love proposed “blessing the nations,” and Jason Georges has suggested a model of “dignification.” A further possible candidate would be the “prophetic dialogue” advocated by Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, even though they propose it as a paradigm of mission, rather than as a replacement.¹³

This paper reviews three fresh metaphors for today’s context. Over the past decade, three authors have presented suitable and relevant metaphors, each providing “a single identity that encompasses all of who you are and is recognizably the same in any context.”¹⁴ But each will require a complete rethinking of the church’s engagement with the world. Each offers a substitute for “mission” that will challenge those organizations which continue with traditional mission metaphors. Suk Ki-Tan (pseudonym), writing a biblical exposition in Chinese, proposes a move from “mission” to “restoring blessing.”¹⁵ Andrew Scott, President of Operation Mobilization USA, writing for a non-academic audience, introduces the image of “scattered” in his advocacy for a large number of self-supported workers who will supplement more traditional mission efforts.¹⁶ Finally, Michael W. Stroope, in his academic manifesto, *Transcending Mission*, advocates “pilgrim witness” in place of “mission.”¹⁷ This survey concludes that Suk’s fresh paradigm of “restoring blessing” answers the concerns of hidden identity, and encompasses the work of both Scott and Stroope.

Restoring Blessing: A Biblical Paradigm for the Nations

Suk Ki-Tan writes as a missiologist, both as a scholar and a practitioner. *Blessings Restored for All Nations* is a biblical exposition of the theme of blessing, from Genesis to Revelation. Perfect enjoyment of God’s blessing appears in both the first chapter of the Bible and the last (Gen. 1:28;

Rev. 22:14–15). Semantically speaking, in both Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, blessing is an alien term that was gradually enriched, transformed, and sanctified to encompass God’s abundance, favor, and goodness in each God-human encounter.

The Hebrew *barak* is linguistically rooted in pre-Israelite Ugaritic *brk* and Akkad *karabu*. *Barak* carried a meaning of “to endow with beneficial power” which some believed to include self-contained beneficial power. The story of Balaam (Num. 22–24) well indicated this pre-Israelite mindset in Balak, king of Moab. In the New Testament, blessing is the Greek *eulogia*, meaning flattery. Jesus used this word following the Old Testament practices of blessing and fellowship; and Paul too. Using the same Greek word in its verb form, Paul cited Genesis 12:1–3 in Galatians 3 and related the blessing of all nations with Jesus Christ’s redemption, thus enriching *eulogia* with Hebrew traditions.¹⁸

Thus, blessing itself is deeply missional.¹⁹ Blessing is God-originated, communal, and holistic. It is rooted in Moses’ Laws and Jesus’ Emmanuel. By bridging creation theology and salvation theology in the *missio Dei*, the concept of blessing encompasses both social responsibility and proclamation of good news, erasing a previous generation’s conflicted dichotomy over models of mission.

Suk and her colleagues, working in the context of a restrictive government, have employed the “restoring blessing” paradigm over the last two decades and continue to find it useful. She asserts that “mission” is no longer a helpful word in her context and replaces mission with “restoring blessing” as a new framework for the church’s engagement with the world. We offer our own simple translation of her perspective:

The main term in this book is “restoring blessing,”²⁰ which replaces the two terms “evangelism” and “mission,” commonly used in the past. From a biblical perspective, “restoring blessing” is the most basic intention and will of God for human beings, and it is also one of the most frequently appearing concepts in the Bible. “Restoring blessing for all peoples” is to restore the blessings of God to all peoples (including the paramount gospel message but not limited to the gospel message)... Restoring blessing is not only concerned with the number of people who believe in the gospel, but also with the renewal of all cultures through the truth of the Bible.²¹

Unlike mission, blessing is understood and appreciated in her context. Workers with explicitly Christian organizations can even approach a local political leader and propose a project that blesses the region. It also blesses the leader indirectly by increasing chances of promotion due to his/her association with a successful project. Direct blessing by gifts is not encouraged, but credit for project successes—whether

charitable or business projects—is given to the person in authority rather than any claim by the organization. Suk points out that the recognition received by the official is not in exchange for a “ministry opportunity,” but rather establishes a legitimate and sustainable window for the transformation of people and culture. One can be a blessing among them, as in Nebuzaradan’s acceptance of Jeremiah when he allowed the prophet to go wherever he wanted (Jeremiah 39–40).

One might object that “mission,” particularly the “mission of God,” is conceptually more all-encompassing than “restoring blessing.” But, to take David Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* as the seminal exposition of “mission,” one can understand all the elements of his “emerging ecumenical paradigm,” as well as all eleven facets of mission that he mentions, through the lens of the restoration of blessing.²² God’s restoration of blessing began in the first days following Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden, yet for the church today, it offers a new paradigm for engagement with the world. This is because the existing paradigms for engagement are deeply entrenched in unfortunate connotations.

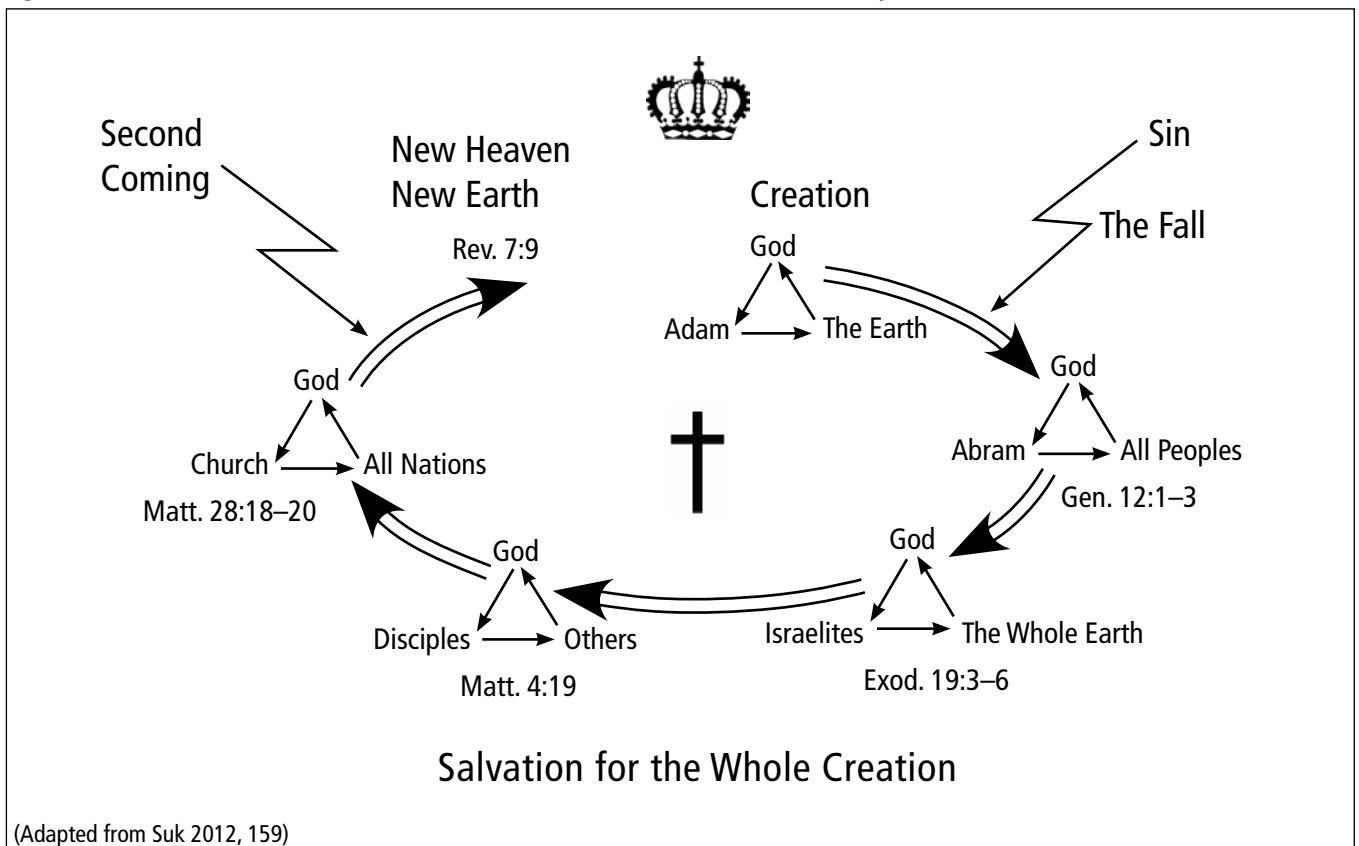
Overcoming the inertia of existing paradigms is encouraged by examples from the biblical narrative. Jeremiah’s proposal to the Israelite exiles, to seek the peace and prosperity of the

Babylonian enemy, was just one of many such difficult transformations towards blessing. It involved building shalom in a land with an idolatrous culture, governed by a ruler bent on violent conquest. Similarly, today’s Christian worker is often geared up to oppose such rulers rather than to cooperate with them as in the case of Jeremiah.

Despite the fundamental changes that occurred throughout previous paradigm shifts in mission, to “be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2) remained constant, and the shift to a “restoration of blessing” paradigm today should maintain considerable continuity with the element of blessing in previous paradigms. Ngan-Zeng Ko attempts to show this historical continuity by condensing “be a blessing” into a relational triangle of the *missio Dei* (as illustrated in Genesis 12:1–3 at the right of figure 1): God called and blessed Abraham, the blessed Abraham became a blessing, and finally all nations would be blessed and subsequently turn to bless the Lord God.²³

From the Garden of Eden to the New Heaven and Earth, the legacy of blessing in this relational triangle has continued from generation to generation until today.²⁴ Like running a relay, figure 1 below summarizes the passage of this relational triangle from Adam to the New Jerusalem, and now places it in our hands.

Figure 1: Salvation for the Whole Creation from Adam to the NT Church, A Relay from Generation to Generation



(Adapted from Suk 2012, 159)

However, recent centuries of colonialism and imperialism marred mission and left difficulties in applying the blessing legacy, both outside the mission community and inside the church itself.²⁵ Since the end of the colonial period we've witnessed an increasing number of countries that bar missionaries, and—within many countries officially more open—populations who find the idea of Christian proselytizing disgusting.

It is this blessing legacy that offers us a fresh paradigm for the 21st century. This signifies the potential of a new “breed” of intercultural workers.²⁶ They are called and blessed to a multi-level, multi-faceted care for God's creation, to a life that demonstrates God's blessing via family, work, community, and private life. This is a task that calls for both total commitment of individuals and the collaboration of communities. It includes both believers and non-believers, government and non-government organizations, calling for individuals who work not by authority but by influence, not as hierarchy but in servanthood. Always fixing their eyes on the better home, they are determined to bear fruit even in the worst environment. As with the prophets and the apostles, this blessing legacy seems impossible, as unimaginable as God's promises. In these times it is a paradigm worthy of adoption in place of “mission.”

Scattered: A Metaphor for a New Generation

Andrew Scott is the US director of Operation Mobilization, and his book *Scatter* appears to be aimed at college students interested in intercultural service. Scott wants to see a mass movement of Christian professionals from the West,²⁷ independent of “full-time” supported missions, that would answer a common predicament in mission:

We have asked those who “felt called” (defined something like a still small voice pointing them to a specific country) to give up what they are doing in the “secular” world to go do something else that is “sacred” in the ministry and missions world. Oh, and you need to raise your own support to do it. You really are not doing ministry unless you follow this path.... We add weight to our model by including the “forsaking all” and “taking up our cross” verses. [And so,] the vast majority of those who follow Jesus have come to the conclusion that they must not be “called” to ministry and mission and remain on the sidelines.

This dichotomized thinking has relegated talent, passions, work, and as a result the vast majority of the church, to a second-tier class or caste where they are only called upon for money, prayer, and a few odd jobs around the church. They do ministry on the weekends in their church or on a mission trip in the summer, and the rest of their life work, hobbies, community involvement and so on—is merely for their own fulfillment and financial well-being.²⁸

Scott likens the notion of a special calling for service to planting “carefully selected, individual seedlings” in a window box.²⁹ While instances of such planting occur in the Bible, Scott finds that more often God tends to “scatter” his people. Extending a biblical metaphor, Scott refers to Jesus' description of his followers as salt and light, that “we do not apply salt to anything one grain at a time. . . . It is normally scattered as it is shaken out of the shaker.” This use of metaphor is important for the way it can shake the church from its complacency. Many share Scott's conviction that the division between “full-time Christian workers” and the rest of the church needs to disappear. While it may appeal to some believers for the way it relieves further financial burden to the local church, it also exposes the absence of traditional missionary support for these scattered ones—whether it's prayer, accountability, help with children's education, or pastoral and psychological member care.

Scott's alignment with the model of restoring blessing is the way God scatters agents of restored blessing. God's sending in the Bible has at times been forced, disorderly, and even violent. (The exile of Israel, and the dispersal of the church in Acts 8, immediately come to mind³⁰). In the midst of such situations, God enables some of those who were scattered to continue being a blessing. Scott is not proposing such involuntary and extreme conditions, but rather is highlighting intentional moves overseas by thousands—perhaps millions—of followers of Jesus. Given that this is a voluntary movement, steps can be taken to guide and prepare the scattered, insuring they restore blessing and reduce any perceived form of neo-colonialism (however inadvertent). Training in cross-cultural differences and coping with intercultural living are possible, but further resources for these expatriate workers should also address the compelling reasons national governments restrict mission efforts.

Pilgrim Witness: A Replacement for “Mission”

Michael Stroope, holder of the M. C. Shook Chair of Missions at the Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University and a former career missionary, challenges the notion that “mission” is prescribed by the Bible, or that it accurately describes the church's encounter with the world in its first millennium. In his book *Transcending Mission*, Stroope's intention is

to acknowledge the habits of language and thought that developed around mission beginning in the sixteenth century and to foster new rhetorical expressions for the church's encounter with the world.³¹

These new “rhetorical expressions” are needed because “mission” is inescapably tainted by the colonial and imperialist context in which it was birthed. Stroope makes a “clear and substantial connection between expansion of the European colonial powers and the advance of the church.”³²

It is not merely language that Stroope is concerned about, but he wants Christians to change the associated concepts of mission as well, to “reconceive the church and world encounter.”³³ Reviewers are divided over whether the focus is on terminology or on concepts.³⁴ Some, like Rosemary Dewerse, say Stroope is talking about semantics,³⁵ while others like myself (Tom) argue that the terms are crucial because they are enmeshed with the concepts.³⁶ A careful reading of Stroope, including his later comment on his own work,³⁷ reveals that his primary concern lies in the concepts conveyed by the terms of mission. The reason Stroope spends so many pages refuting the notion that mission is biblical, or the assumption that mission was practiced during the first fifteen centuries of the church, is that these concepts are deeply ingrained in the modern evangelical mind. Due to this misguided and deeply embedded paradigm, any possibility of change will require thorough refutation. These same ingrained notions also may explain why some reviewers dismiss *Transcending Mission* as merely a matter of semantics, particularly when those reviewers have dedicated their lives to mission. Even a favorable reviewer admits he was “reluctant to accept [Stroope’s] verdict on the modern mission paradigm.”³⁸ It is no surprise that Stroope’s work appears to threaten the mission establishment.

Through the lens of “the restoration of blessing,” one can understand all the elements of Bosch’s emerging ecumenical paradigm, as well as all eleven facets of mission that he mentions in his seminal exposition, *Transforming Mission*.

Stroope’s review of 2000 years of church history lays the foundation for today’s task of “reconceiving” the way the church interacts with the world. In Part I, he critiques more than eighty authors who have justified modern mission by claiming they “found” it in the Bible and in the first millennium of church history, a tendency Stroope identifies as reading mission anachronistically back into earlier times. He describes the “innovation” of the concept of mission beginning during the Crusades (Part II),³⁹ and then follows this model into the Protestant era and its revision in the 1930s (Part III). The apex of the book occurs with the founding of the Jesuit order and the first use of the term “mission” (*missio*) as it appeared in the Jesuits’ fourth vow.⁴⁰ Stroope notes that the context for the introduction of this model of mission was the Catholic campaign to retake the Iberian Peninsula from Muslim rule, and the subsequent papal authority granted to Portugal and Spain.

In an epilogue, Stroope turns from his historical case against the modern model of mission to reimagine the church’s encounter with the world with new language and fresh concepts:

When discovered and embraced, God’s reign forms us into *pilgrim witnesses*, who, though weak and afflicted, are liberated to live alongside and love those we encounter along the way.⁴¹

Stroope’s “pilgrim” is a sojourner, an alien, along the lines of 1 Peter 1:1 and 2:11. His “witness” is one who both “beholds” and tells. The beholding is a crucial part of Stroope’s paradigm: “more than seeing with physical eyes; it is to be captured by a vision of that which is revealed (apocalyptic), and thus hopeful and transformative.”⁴²

The *telling* part of this witness “is to convey with one’s words and life what has been seen and experienced.”⁴³ This metaphor differs markedly from those modern images of mission strategy—dubbed “managerial missiology”—that focus more on human plans and methods.⁴⁴ In contrast, Stroope believes the fostering of “Kingdom language places the end results with what God does, by the means he chooses, and according to his timetable.”⁴⁵

Reviews consistently express caution about the replacement of mission with this pilgrim witness to God’s reign. They point out that “pilgrim” (or “pilgrimage”) and “witness” may carry connotations that work against the meaning Stroope seeks to frame.⁴⁶ For example, pilgrimage is thought of as a medieval journey to a holy place, and “witnessing” can be formulaic and far from listener oriented. It’s also noted that in many contexts “kingdom” (which Stroope uses more than “reign”), connotes political domination and imperialism even more than mission.⁴⁷

We believe the positive connotations of Stroope’s “pilgrim witness” fit well within Suk’s “restoring blessing.” Stroope’s discussion of witness reminds us that the gospel—that central part of the restoration of blessing—is most effectively a blessing when it is a witness of a personal beholding (rather than a rote formula). Stroope’s pilgrim image counterbalances Suk’s use of Jeremiah’s call for the exiles of Judah to put down roots and settle in Babylon: although we are called to seek the blessing of our earthly place of calling, we go there without claim to power or assertion of privilege.

Advancing through Blessing

All the works discussed in this essay call for serious reconsideration of the global church’s engagement with the world. The ideal engagement is by “followers of Jesus” whose identity is minimally complicated by membership in any sending organization or church denomination, and who as expatriates in restrictive contexts can do more when they no longer need to

hide their identities. Suk advocates a paradigm of restoring blessing, and Stroope calls for pilgrim witness. Scott wants only to supplement the status quo with a broad and very numerous “scattering.” Yet all agree about an urgent need for change from “mission as we know it.”

We propose that Suk's restoration of blessing is the best paradigm for the church's engagement with today's world; it's a superior way of encompassing and reimagining a change

from mission as we know it. Restoring blessing is unmistakably biblical and includes both witness and dignification. Beyond a blessing that attends to people's need for salvation from sin, it addresses their very real and daily needs. And to be a channel of blessing is an identity that goes with almost any profession. In a world where “mission” is increasingly unacceptable, the restoration of blessing offers a way of advance. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ Thomas Hale, III, *Authentic Lives: Overcoming the Problem of Hidden Identity in Outreach to Restrictive Nations* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016), xiii.
- ² Pew Research Center, “A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World,” *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog) (July 15, 2019), <https://www.pewforum.org/essay/muslims-in-america-immigrants-and-those-born-in-u-s-see-life-differently-in-many-ways/>, accessed February 12, 2021.
- ³ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, 24.
- ⁴ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, 13–17, 20.
- ⁵ J. Christy Wilson, Jr., *Self-Supporting Witness Overseas* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1973); *Today's Tentmakers: Self-Support, an Alternative Model for Worldwide Witness* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1979).
- ⁶ Ludwig Rütli, *Zur Theologie der Mission; Kritische Analysen und Neue Orientierungen* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1972, 1974), paraphrased by David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 518.
- ⁷ Rick Love, “Blessing the Nations in the 21st Century: A 3D Approach to Apostolic Ministry.” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 31–37.
- ⁸ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, ch. 2.
- ⁹ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, xxiv; see also 61ff.
- ¹⁰ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, xiv–xvii, 47–52.
- ¹¹ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, 63.
- ¹² Hale, *Authentic Lives*, 65.
- ¹³ Love, *Blessing the Nations*; Hale, *Authentic Lives*; Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*, Self-published, 2014; Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011.
- ¹⁴ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, 63.
- ¹⁵ Ki-Tan Suk, (叔紀田), *Blessings Restored for All Nations: Biblical Foundation* (福境重尋: 延福萬族的聖經基礎) (Sunnyvale, CA: Great Commission Center International (大使命中心), 2012), 11.
- ¹⁶ Andrew Scott, *Scatter: Go Therefore and Take Your Job with You* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016).
- ¹⁷ Michael W. Stroope, *Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 355.
- ¹⁸ P. K. Chung, “A Case Study in the Application of the Blessing Motif to an Urbanizing County in South China” (Doctor of Transformational Leadership diss., Hong Kong: Bethel Bible Seminary, 2018), 45–50.
- ¹⁹ Chung, “Blessing Motif,” 201.
- ²⁰ The Chinese character “延” here translated “restoring,” could also be translated as “expanding,” “extending,” or “bestowing.” “Restoring” was chosen because it highlights Jesus' salvation that restores the blessing originally given to Adam and Eve in the Garden. “Bestowing” seems to belong to God alone, so does not fit in a book about the human role of partnering with God in blessing others. As to the other two alternatives, choosing “expanding” would highlight the enrichment and transformation that is experienced by those who receive and pass on God's blessing, while choosing “extending” would highlight geographic spread and cultural influence of services rendered by those seeking to spread God's blessing to all.
- ²¹ Suk, *Blessings Restored*, 11–12, trans. Hale and Ji.
- ²² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, chs. 12–13.
- ²³ Ngan-Zeng Ko, “Blessing the Nations: From a Restructure of Foundational Truth to a Restructure of Practical Acts,” *The Holistic Gospel of Christ to All Peoples*, ed. Philemon Choi (Bali, Indonesia: Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism, 2011), 39–40.
- ²⁴ Suk, *Blessings Restored*, ch. 6.
- ²⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 227–31; Paul V. Kollman, “At the Origins of Mission and Missiology: A Study in the Dynamics of Religious Language,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 2 (2011): 427–429; Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 179–353.
- ²⁶ Hope S. Antone, “New Paradigm Concepts of Mission,” a paper presented at the conference Beyond Edinburgh 1910: Asian Reflection on Mission (Tainan, Taiwan: Christian Conference of Asia, September 29–October 3, 2008): 61, https://www.cca.org.hk/ctc/ctc08-03/08_hope62.pdf, accessed February 12, 2021.

- ²⁷ Scott, *Scatter*, 144.
- ²⁸ Scott, *Scatter*, 12–13.
- ²⁹ Scott, *Scatter*, 160.
- ³⁰ Hale, *Authentic Lives*, 69.
- ³¹ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 28.
- ³² Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, xvi.
- ³³ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 353.
- ³⁴ Six journals have published reviews as of this writing: *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* (Richards, 2017), *Reviews in Religion and Theology* (Kinsey, 2018), *Mission Studies* (Dewerse, 2018), *Missiology* (Hale, 2019), *Transformation* (Oxbrow, 2020), and *Journal of European Baptist Studies* (Ord, 2020). Richards, Kinsey, Hale, and Ord write favorable reviews, while Dewerse is dismissive and Oxbrow respectfully disagrees. *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* also reviews Stroope 2017 favorably as part of a longer article (Gill, 2019).
- ³⁵ Rosemary Dewerse, “Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition, written by Michael W. Stroope,” *Mission Studies* 35, no. 3 (October 2018): 459.
- ³⁶ Thomas Hale, “Book Review: Michael W. Stroope. *Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition*,” *Missiology: An International Review* 47, no. 3 (July 2019): 337.
- ³⁷ Michael W. Stroope, “Reimagining Witness beyond Our Modern Mission Paradigm,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 163–68, 163.
- ³⁸ Brad Gill, “ISFM 2019 and the ‘Reimagining of Frontier Mission,’” From the Editor’s Desk, *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 161.
- ³⁹ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 29.
- ⁴⁰ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 240.
- ⁴¹ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 358.
- ⁴² Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 371.
- ⁴³ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 371.
- ⁴⁴ J. Samuel Escobar, “Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future at the Turn of the Century,” *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 101–22 cited in Anne-Marie Kool, “Revisiting Mission in, to and from Europe through Contemporary Image Formation,” *The State of Missiology Today: Global Innovations in Christian Witness*, ed. Charles E. Van Engen, Chapter 12 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 245.
- ⁴⁵ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 378.
- ⁴⁶ Mark Oxbrow, “Book Review: *Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition*,” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 2020): 84; Hale, “Book Review,” 337.
- ⁴⁷ Oxbrow, *Transformation*, 84; Dewerse, *Mission Studies*, 460.

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I am delighted to see this interdisciplinary contribution to honor-shame studies bring together influential scholars and practitioners from many backgrounds and contexts.

Nijay K. Gupta, PhD, professor of New Testament, Northern Seminary

HONOR, SHAME, AND THE **GOSPEL**

Reframing Our Message and Ministry

CHRISTOPHER FLANDERS & WERNER MISCHKE (Editors)

Christians engaged in communicating the gospel navigate a challenging tension: faithfulness to God's ancient, revealed Word—and relevance to the local, current social context. What if there was a lens or paradigm offering both? Understanding the Bible—particularly the gospel—through the ancient cultural “language” of honor-shame offers believers this double blessing.

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Books and Missiology

To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations, by Lauren Frances Turek, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), xii + 295 pp.

—Reviewed by Dwight P. Baker



Taken as a product of thought, how productive could it be for a researcher to link “evangelicals” in the second half of the twentieth century as a group with the topics of “influence on human rights” and contributions to “U.S. foreign relations”? Is such an idea a non-starter or at best a mash-up? Or might it be a short path to an abrupt dead-end?

After all, how much can there be to write about something everyone knows to have been next to nonexistent?

Did not David Hollinger recently remind us that, at midcentury in the United States, the hands gripping the levers of power belonged to scions of the mainline denominations? Hands on the throttle were not those of fundamentalists or newly self-declared evangelicals. When that grip began to slip, it was to secular leadership that they ceded control.¹ Conservative Christians were not in the running. Not having attended the right schools or become members of old boy cliques or been in possession of imposing meritocratic pedigrees, they lacked proper credentials. Election to high office or appointment to senior governmental positions was not for them. That characterization might rankle, but in the second half of the twentieth century, the chasm between conservative Christians in the United States and significant influence on national policy was seemingly too wide to bridge, however often Billy Graham might have been invited to meet with various presidents.²

Quick Quiz

Not sure about the adequacy of that scenario? OK, let’s have a “pop quiz.”

Class, please close your books. Take out a clean sheet of paper. Place your name and the date at the top. Here is the question: Please identify a conservative US Christian leader in the second half of the twentieth century—whether evangelical

or fundamentalist—who assembled significant political influence that he or she brought to bear on the issue of human rights and did so in a way that became central to shaping the course of US foreign relations.

Brows furrow. A few hesitant scribbles. A hand is raised.

Jerry Falwell, you say? Hmm. . . . What’s that? . . . Yes, I agree. Falwell did make a lot of noise and pushed himself forward. But can we say that striving to drum up backing for the apartheid government in South Africa played a signal role in advancing human rights? Doesn’t that seem a mite retrograde?

A voice, tentatively.

Did you say, “President Jimmy Carter”? Again, hmm. . . . We’ll deal with him later.

Let’s shift the parameters of the question a bit. Instead of a stellar individual with whom policymakers fell in step and into whose train they willingly blended, please list several conservative Christian groups that were known for rallying broad-based support for the issue of human rights and for gaining a respectful hearing among US policymakers.

Another hand, furtively.

What? Falwell and the Moral Majority again? We really must work on this. The name of one person, in questionable standing, with the name of his organization appended, does *not* constitute a list or a group.

Plunging In

How did *you* answer? Did your list come up short, also? If so, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*, by Lauren Frances Turek, is just the place to dive in.³ Well researched, insightful, and solidly documented, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is a significant scholarly achievement. It shines light onto an oft overlooked intersection of evangelical missional engagement and US foreign policy. To proceed through the volume with utmost dispatch, the book consists of six chapters. The first three provide the framework and background, beginning with shifting missional realities in the United States. The number of missionaries sent by mainline denominations was declining; the number of missionaries being sent abroad by independent and evangelical churches and denominations was increasing markedly. Next Turek interrogates shifts in communications that occurred in conjunction with a growing evangelical sense of internationalism. I found the attention she gives to evangelicalism’s construction of mechanisms to influence US foreign policy to be deeply informed and illuminating. The book’s remaining three chapters look closely at the way evangelical engagement with human rights worked out in three markedly disparate settings. As their titles suggest—“Fighting

Dwight P. Baker retired as associate director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut, in 2011. He was associate editor of the International Bulletin of Mission Research (2002–15) and has coedited several books, including Serving Jesus with Integrity: Ethics and Accountability in Mission (2010) and People Disrupted: Doing Mission Responsibly among Refugees and Migrants (2018).

Religious Persecution behind the Iron Curtain,” “Supporting a ‘Brother in Christ’ in Guatemala,” and “The Challenge of South African Apartheid”—the stakes were high with ample opportunity to get things wrong. But interventions, if well-conceived and carried out well, seemed to hold promise of immense benefit.

As the second half of the twentieth century opened, the cards on the table included the dire state of the world, at least as viewed by Carl F. H. Henry, a leading evangelical spokesperson.⁴ As a newly coalescing group on the US religious landscape, the self-labelled “new” evangelicals were restive to be recognized as distinct from fundamentalism, and they aspired to exert influence in corridors of power, in this case on the shape of US foreign policy. Another card, as indicated above, was the flux within the missionary movement from the United States. Numbers have weight; as they rise or decline they carry with them shifts in power to influence policy. As a whole, conservative evangelicals were ardent anti-communists, as were their missionaries and mission agencies. As their missionary force swelled, so did their expectations to help shape national policy. Though they recoiled from totalitarianism, they were only too willing to give authoritarianism a pass and to align themselves with repressive regimes that they could construe as being useful bulwarks against the spread of Communism.

But the path from aspiration to achievement, or even from launch to recognition, Turek shows, was neither short nor straightforward, nor was it free of egregious missteps. Rather than offer a précis of Turek’s highly readable account, I will look at key components and developments in evangelicals’ effort to acquire access to corridors of power and political potency sufficient to gain influence on foreign policy. I will also glance at some of the questions and issues that, for me, reading *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* brings to the fore.

Critical Components

In order to get underway on the path to influence, several steps were necessary. First of all, a new movement needs a striking cause. The cause has to be one that is intrinsic, that has anchorage in the beating heart and life blood of the movement. But for the cause to become influential, it also has to resonate widely beyond the movement itself. So, second, the cause has to be sticky; it has to have hooks that appeal to and attract support among members of the wider body politic. The smaller the movement, the greater the need for allies, a point of which the leaders of the nascent evangelical movement were strongly aware. But if the cause had to sell in multiple directions, both within the evangelical community and beyond those confines, how were these countervailing objectives to be achieved?

At this crux point Turek deftly, and wisely, anchors her account to the heartthrob of the evangelical movement, evangelism itself. What could be more central to evangelicalism than evangelism? To evangelicals, evangelism meant outreach to the neighbors

across the street and in their own neighborhood, certainly, but it also meant carrying the gospel around the world, to all nations. By the logic of saltwater baptism, what was evangelism at home became mission/missions once oceans were crossed. Evangelism and mission/missions, as the heart of evangelicalism, became the common cause around which disparate personalities and conservative Christian factions could rally, and the number and variety of evangelical missionary agencies increased throughout the twentieth century. Turek uses this point to good effect. Evangelicals went to every nation preaching the gospel for the simple reason that that is what evangelicals are and what they do.

At this point evangelicals took a critical step by invoking the language of human rights.

But how to enlarge the circle of support? What could attract allies? “Furthering Christian evangelism” was not likely to be a catchy slogan within the halls of Congress or among staff of US embassies around the world. True, the opportunity to preach the gospel far and wide may have value in itself, but, for evangelicals, freedom to respond openly to the gospel, to embrace religious change, and to assume a new religious allegiance, was equally vital, if not more so. At this point evangelicals took a critical step by invoking the language of human rights (see the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948).⁵ Looking within the evangelical community, discussion was couched in terms of proclamation and response to the call to follow Jesus Christ; freedom of religion was presupposed. Looking outward and in seeking allies, the language of human rights was embraced, along with the assumption of fostering democratic values and personal freedom of choice.

Building a Constituency

Having a cause and felicitous language with which to present it are essential, but they are not sufficient. Whether airy or erudite, a cause that exists solely as a project of thought will falter. It has to touch life, and terrestrial life exists in bodies. In a democracy a constituency, that is, bodies in sufficient quantity that are invested in the idea, is essential. Those bodies must be willing to carry themselves to polling places and there to place marks on ballots. The more bodies, the better. In the second half of the twentieth century, evangelicals had access to a growing constituency of such persons. Those individuals’ level of involvement ran the gamut from highly motivated members at the core to minimally involved well-wishers at the fringe. But together they composed a reservoir of goodwill that could be marshaled in support of office holders and administration officials who would look with favor on advancing human rights in general and freedom of religion in particular as integral to US foreign policy.

That growing constituency constituted a potent card that evangelical spokespersons could invoke in discussions with elected officials and administrative personnel. Bodies as votes counted.

How does one go about growing an informed and motivated evangelical constituency? For the motivation critical to the evangelical cause, nothing can outrank personal face-to-face contact. It would be hard to overstate its importance. First there were the missionaries themselves who went abroad to live and work for a shorter or longer period of time. They had primary contacts both here in the “homeland” and there, in the United States and in the countries where they served. The circle widened as the missionaries sent letters (later emails, blog postings, Skype conversations, and now Zoom meetings and more) back to family, friends, churches, and supporters with vignettes of the people and places and circumstances they encountered. Missionaries on furlough (today on home assignment, which tends to occur at shorter intervals than furloughs formerly did) spoke in churches and at camps and addressed conferences. Books and articles by missionaries reached an even wider audience (think of Elisabeth Elliot; but even if preeminent, she was far from alone⁶). As the century progressed and the number of evangelical missionaries increased, the number of church-sponsored mission trips exploded. The US reservoir of goodwill scaled up exponentially.

Some members of this reservoir possessed a bit of general background information, though maybe not as much as one might wish. Short-termers acquired a degree of firsthand knowledge by *having been there* and having formed friendships or acquaintanceships, according to their gifts and personalities. Some members of churches in the “field” reciprocated by visiting sister churches in the United States. Those in the United States who had not visited churches abroad knew someone who knew someone who had. In sum, for a sizable and growing segment of US evangelicals, the triad “evangelism → mission/missions → human rights” felt natural, for it wore a known face, that of a friend.

Direct Contact and Constructing a Constituency

What a difference two or three centuries make. *Well, of course; that is more than obvious*, you say. Indeed so, but I raise the point because of having read *The Poor Indians*, by Laura M. Stevens, shortly before receiving a copy of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*.⁷ Nurturing and shaping the sensibility of a body of spiritual and financial supporters who can in turn influence public opinion—while an important facet of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*—is completely central to Stevens’s account. What differs is the widening in the twentieth century of the mechanisms and opportunities for transmitting knowledge and broadening of horizons. Both authors have a focal constituency of mission supporters in view. For Stevens that constituency consists of incipient mission supporters in Britain and to a lesser extent in Britain’s American colonies. Turek’s focus is on conservative

Christians in the United States. The gaze of the British mission supporters of whom Stevens writes is singularly channeled toward Britain’s holdings in North America and the efforts there during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of a few, mostly British, missionaries to convert members of the Indigenous Peoples. For the British populace, reports from British missionaries serving in British held territories was largely something new. By the twentieth century, the case was quite different. Missionary accounts were a familiar genre. Far from being a novelty, they had a long and, to many, a well-known history. They had undergone a marked democratization as well. Laypersons and missionized persons as well as missionaries were in a position to comment on and interpret missionary efforts and achievements.

How does one grow an informed and motivated evangelical constituency? For the motivation critical to the evangelical cause, nothing can outrank personal face-to-face contact. It would be hard to overstate its importance.

In place of a single focus on one locale, during the second half of the twentieth century the eyes—and bodies—of US mission supporters were roving everywhere. That quality of *having been there* and having made firsthand contact with persons who lived *there* marks a crucial difference. This quality constitutes possibly *the* crucial contribution of the late twentieth-century craze for super-short-term missions and mission tourism. Personal contact and possession of at least some degree of direct experience shifted mission supporters’ epistemological stance. It placed evangelical mission supporters of the past half century in a qualitatively different position from that of the incipient British mission supporters of whom Laura Stevens writes. Back then, she contends, correspondence sent to homeland supporters by British missionaries in the American colonies coupled with the absence of contact between those supporters and the Indigenous Peoples of America served to foster a generalized feeling of benevolence toward the Indigenous Peoples that, significantly, stood in place of action on their behalf. The feeling *was* the action and was very nearly the full extent of it. Contact was never expected to be part of the equation, for personal jaunts across the ocean were simply not among the possibilities open to the vast majority of the British populace of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One can surmise that were people then to travel such a distance and at such an expense, it was likely to be for a weighty reason such as commerce (profits to be made), conquest (riches and martial honor to be grasped), or permanent migration (“free” lands to be seized and occupied).

The one who came to the colonies might in fact be transient and erelong pass on to greener pastures, but the quest for gain likely lay at the root of both the coming and the going.

Widespread tourism, as a mode of conspicuous consumption motivated not by conquest or mercantile gain but undertaken solely to see and to spend, was to come later. By the mid-twentieth century, the decline of travel costs, both in money and in time, also opened the door to short-term missions, followed by super-short-term missions, and mission tourism. How did this shift play out in missions and in US foreign policy? For one thing, it vastly augmented the reservoir, not just of goodwill, but, as noted, also of persons who had a connection, however tenuous, “over there.” These were persons who were inclined to parse abstract issues in terms of real people whom they had met, with whom they had conversed, and possibly with whom they continued to communicate. When faced with news of dire social conditions and repressive political conditions, such persons made the progression from evangelism to mission/missions to human rights concretely, that is, as something that impinged on “my friend” Oscar or Svetlana or Ahmed or Mangyang or Jocee.

As we can see, even at the level of mission tourism, *being there* introduced qualitative differences in mission communication and in mission supporters’ sense of attachment and engagement. However strong the argument that the opportunity to *be there* in massive numbers was an effete outflow occasioned by the rise of a social sector in the West that was awash with discretionary cash and an overabundance of free time, the fact remains that lives were fundamentally changed through short-term mission engagement. Possibly the lives changed were more often those of the short-termers who ventured abroad than the lives of their temporary hosts. But the changes were real. Mark Noll, for example, writes of the significant impact that two stents of teaching in an underground pastoral training program in Romania, toward the end of the Cold War, had on him. Other factors along the way contributed to his shift in outlook, but his experience teaching in Romania enlarged his vision of the church and helped to reorient his career as a historian.⁸ Every short-term missionary’s experience had unique facets, but the reorientation of outlook Noll experienced was far from being something isolated. Being there and the experience of direct contact led to personal growth and redirection for many.⁹

Developing of Expertise, Making Connections

A defined cause, a terminology or language that can travel, a demonstrable constituency: wrap it all up in an anticommunist aura and you had, in twentieth-century United States, a combination with sales potential. Some assembly, however, was still required. Leaders were needed who had been around long enough to become known entities. They had to have shown that they were knowledgeable, reliable, and trustworthy; that they were in it for the long haul and could be depended upon. Time had to be invested in professional

development, meetings, presentations, and becoming known. There were friendships to form and sharing to be done. If these “friendships” were to extend to a deeper level than self-interested utilitarianism, they also required investment of time.¹⁰ Cultivating contacts and becoming a known entity included plenty of the humdrum of simply living alongside others and demonstrating that one was neither a shyster nor a shirker and that one was not likely to evaporate when things became difficult or to wilt under the glare of the spotlight. Such ministry partook of a long obedience.¹¹

Turek’s account does not develop each of these points. Some she cites or points to; others she assumes. But they constitute the logic that underlies her historical study of emerging evangelical influence on policy. Making contacts, acquiring expertise, amassing partners’ confidence, and becoming fluent in the language of presenting religiously critical issues in the language of impartial human rights discourse demanded patience. Turek takes Carl F. H. Henry’s 1956 inaugural editorial for *Christianity Today* as her starting point, but she reckons that evangelical influence on US foreign policy did not come to maturity until the mid-1970s.¹²

As I read Turek’s fluent account I was struck by the way that conservative Christians who wanted to gain influence often seemed to move by indirection (the comparison may be a bit macabre, but think of Esther, who, while having a very definite objective in mind opened by indirection, invited the king to a sequence of private dinners before blurting out her purpose, she wanted to deepen and secure her standing in the eyes of the monarch). One can, however, as easily see these political neophytes as moving in accord with bedrock elements of evangelical ethos and practice. What could be more quintessentially evangelical, for example, than hosting Bible studies and luncheon prayer gatherings for legislators, government officials, and similar figures? These off-the-record meetings brought persons in high office together on a common ground of personal engagement with biblical and spiritual realities rather than focusing on policy or partisan issues. Participants in them could meet and interact on the basis of their common humanity. Some groups, such as the Freedom Foundation, Turek relates, operated largely out of public view or convened meetings and conferences that were accessible by invitation only. Other evangelicals, such as Michael Cassidy in South Africa, cultivated the background role of catalyst, serving as intermediaries for occasions at which leaders of contending political forces could meet directly to sound out possible partners for cooperation and consider potential courses of redirection—and could do so apart from the glare of publicity and the high stakes associated with parliamentary proceedings.¹³

Embarked

The new evangelicals waited long at the door and in the vestibule, but with the aforementioned components at least embryonically in place, thereafter all went swimmingly, right? Not at all. There were successes, but they were intermixed

with drawbacks and outright failures. In the second half of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, Turek examines evangelical engagement with human rights in three widely separated and markedly different settings—the Soviet Union during its decline and implosion, Guatemala in the early 1980s, and South Africa during the death throes of apartheid.

While in office, President Jimmy Carter, by extending succor to Russian Pentecostals, focused a bright light on the issue of human rights in the USSR. Refusing to coast along after leaving office, he went on to recreate the position of Post-President, making it into a role of value, significance, and substance not previously seen. But while he was in office, Turek writes, evangelicals became disenchanted with his administration's failure to give sustained attention and follow through to issues they valued.¹⁴ Carter's successor, President Ronald Reagan, was not "their man" in the way that the self-identified "born again" Carter was, but Turek judges that Reagan, by a species of benign neglect, let causes dear to evangelicals move forward in ways that had not gained traction under Carter.

It was during the Reagan years that the evangelical foray into Guatemalan politics unfolded. Following the earthquake that struck Guatemala in 1976, the reconstruction assistance provided by California-based Church of the Word/Gospel Outreach along with the Bible study groups it helped to plant grew into a long-term connection. The contact was maintained as *el Verbo*, a sister church established in Guatemala City, grew in size and prestige. Influential persons—one of whom bore the name of Efraín Ríos Montt—flocked to it and rested in its branches. Elevated to a role within the leadership of *el Verbo*, Ríos Montt became the country's new president via a coup in March 1982. What could be more a sign of God's favor? When the Guatemalan war against the indigenous peoples, conducted under the guise of resistance to the spread of Communism, became too noxious for even the US government to back, evangelical coreligionists in the United States took up part of the slack. As a freelance end run around US foreign policy at that moment, they raised money and even supplied arms to support Ríos Montt and Guatemala's infamous campaigns of genocide against the Maya. Decades later, in 2013, an aged Ríos Montt was tried and condemned for "genocide and crimes against humanity" by a Guatemalan court.¹⁵

In South Africa, evangelical actions were a similar mix of the commendable and utterly deplorable, but eventually they came to a better end. Connections and contacts some evangelicals cultivated helped to clear a path for Michael Cassidy and African Enterprise to work across the lines of contention in that country. They were able to play a mediating role by providing a venue in which South African leaders who envisioned ending the era of government sponsored apartheid could meet and converse. But evangelicals' conversion to the cause of full human dignity in South Africa was delayed, and in practice

their conversion was instrumental. Turek records that in South Africa evangelicals did not turn against apartheid until they began to understand, not that apartheid was an abomination, but that their alignment with apartheid was impeding personal conversions. Evangelists came to see that by misaligning themselves with racial repression, they were alienating potential converts. Only then did they begin to change their stance. All the same, retrograde evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell continued advocating loudly in behalf of South Africa's apartheid government and busily raised funds to shore it up. Praise be for intermediaries such as Michael Cassidy, but overall the evangelicals' record was mixed at best.

They played a mediating role by providing a venue in which South African leaders who envisioned ending the era of government-sponsored apartheid could meet and converse.

Any Legacy? The Fate of Human Rights Today

The leaf withers and the flower fades. To go beyond Turek's account in *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, what has been the fate of the triadic flower, evangelism → mission → human rights, so long and so tenderly cultivated? Have all vestiges of evangelical internationalism been jettisoned in parallel to US evangelicals' unseemly embrace of the slogan America First? The current occupant of the White House (at the time of this writing), however, cannot claim all the credit for the sorry state of US evangelicals. According to Anne Applebaum, even before Donald Trump's ascension to the presidency, some US foreign policy personnel had already left the language of democracy and human rights behind.¹⁶

So, was the whole effort to enlist US foreign policy in behalf of evangelism *cum* human rights misbegotten? Was it a noble failure? Or possibly a temporary success, though now eclipsed? More largely, what is the mission community to make of American exceptionalism? Was the cause of American exceptionalism nothing but a last gasp of dying Christendom, something now well gone?¹⁷ What is to be made, not of US policymakers' embrace of causes advocated by evangelicals, but of evangelicals' one-time endorsement of whatever US policymakers put forward in the name of anticommunism? Historically, evangelicals have a reputation of having a high tolerance for authoritarian regimes. Does meaning well absolve all? Or if one embraces authoritarians as a lesser evil, does that inevitably lead to complicity when they become repressive or commit genocide? These questions and others like them are hardly idle queries. How mission spokespersons answer them carries huge consequences for proclamation of

the gospel. When is the Good News actually good news, and when is it twisted into an instrument of enslavement? Can a gospel that is not outraged at forced “reeducation” of Muslim Uighurs claim to be good news at all?

Raising Questions

Turek writes as an attentive and very well-informed historian. As such she addresses historical questions, and her domain is the “having happened-ness” of things. Influence tends to be inchoate or amorphous. What shape or shapes might influence take? How is or was it bodied forth and given substance? Were there natural affinities, channels, or ties of influence? Did evangelical influence go in particular directions and not others? Did it focus on some topics or issues and glaringly overlook others? Was it subject to being “played,” that is, were evangelicals naïve in their efforts and open to being coopted or duped? These and similar questions can be addressed on the strictly historical plane.

Of a different order are questions such as how concern for human rights relates to mission. Is such concern an impediment—not an error, but a lesser good that should be sloughed off because it dilutes and slows down missionary engagement? Going further, are investments of attention in and efforts on behalf of human rights, however well meant, outright error because they dissipate missional focus and divert missionaries’ attention and energy? Or, worse, does engagement with social ills turn missionary personnel, energy, and finances away from the sole “real” missionary task of proclamation? A different question from a different perspective: Is engagement in behalf of human rights intrinsic to mission? Far from being a lamentable distraction, is wider engagement with human beings’ bodily, temporal, and social concerns central and essential to mission if it is to be true to the name and character of Jesus Christ? Does true Christian mission pull others out of the world, or does it plunge the missioner and the missionized more deeply into the world? If the latter is the true calling of ambassadors of Jesus Christ, by what ways, in what forms, and to what extent might or should missional engagement with deep-seated issues of human rights take place?

These “should” and “ought” questions about how to carry out missionary practice do not fall within the purview of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*. They are missiological questions. Turek writes, however, in ways that, for me, indirectly bring to the fore these and similar questions of missional means, intent, and degree of accomplishment. Her penetrating account of evangelical engagement calls for and calls forth deeper reflection. Not every plunge by evangelicals into the whirlpool of US foreign affairs was thoroughly thought through or had a happy outcome. What cautions does Turek’s work raise? What concrete steps of repentance for actions taken do her investigations demand? Conversely, when is contrition a proper response to opportunities overlooked or deliberately spurned?

Good Company

Published in 2020, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is a worthy addition to a recent spate of substantive books flowing from academic presses that examine evangelical Christian mission from the United States and the topic of humanitarianism or benevolence, broadly construed. In company with David Hollinger’s *Protestants Abroad* (2017), which focuses on the mainline denominations’ contribution, recent titles include Heather Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (2018); David P. King, *God’s Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism* (2019); Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (2018). The year 2020 saw two more volumes join this list: Hillary Kaell, *Christian Globalism at Home: Child Sponsorship in the United States*, and Jeremy Rich, *Protestant Missionaries and Humanitarianism in the DRC: The Politics of Aid in Cold War Africa*. Mission, humanitarianism, and benevolence is showing itself to be a fertile field for cross-disciplinary reflection and interrogation.

Endnotes

- ¹ David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2017).
- ² Grant Wacker, *America’s Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, *The Preacher and the Presidents: Billy Graham in the White House* (New York: Center Street, 2007).
- ³ Lauren Frances Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2020).
- ⁴ In her Introduction Turek cites from Henry’s editorial for the 1956 inaugural issue of *Christianity Today*, see pp. 1–3.
- ⁵ A PDF of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be downloaded at <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.
- ⁶ Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (New York: Harper, 1957).
- ⁷ Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
- ⁸ Mark A. Noll, *From Every Tribe and Nation: A Historian’s Discovery of the Global Christian Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 78–89.
- ⁹ The time length of short-term mission is amazingly elastic. For two examples of personal growth through short-term mission that extended well beyond the two-week image of a short-term mission trip, see Amy Peterson, *Dangerous Territory: My Misguided Quest to Save the World* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2017) and Christine Jeske, *Into the Mud: Inspiration for Everyday Activists, True Stories of Africa* (Chicago: Moody, 2010).
- ¹⁰ Compare the penetrating observations of Phil Cooper in *The Big Kabuna* (1999). Three lubricant salesmen are rooming together at a trade convention. Cooper, played by Danny DeVito, advises his neophyte colleague Bob Walker, an ardent Christian played

by Phil Facinelli, on how to establish a relationship with someone who might otherwise be viewed simply through the gimlet eye of sales potential.

Cooper: . . . You, too, are an honest man, Bob. I believe that somewhere deep down inside of you is something that strives to be honest. The question that you have to ask yourself is, "Has it touched the whole of my life?"

Walker: What does that mean?

Cooper: That means that you preaching Jesus is no different than Larry or anybody else preaching lubricants. It doesn't matter whether you're selling Jesus or Buddha or civil rights or how to make money in real estate with no money down. That doesn't make you a human being. It makes you a marketing rep. If you wanna talk to somebody honestly, as a human being, ask him about his kids. Find out what his dreams are, just to find out, for no other reason. Because as soon as you lay your hands on a conversation, to steer it, it's not a conversation anymore. It's a pitch, and you're not a human being. You're a marketing rep.

¹¹ The phrase "a long obedience" is borrowed from the title by Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

¹² Turek's selection of Henry's 1956 editorial provides an excellent starting point, but the temporal span could easily have been extended further back. A decade earlier Henry had already expressed disquietude with the insular vision manifest among his fellow conservative Christians. See Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).

¹³ The stakes of some meetings were high indeed, but one should not jump too quickly to a vision of all efforts at reconciliation as potential dramatic sequels to *The Journey* (2017). In this movie Ian Paisley (Timothy Spall) and Martin McGuinness (Colm Meaney), constrained by the contrived proximity of an artificially prolonged car ride, lay the relational groundwork for ending the strife in Northern Ireland.

¹⁴ Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, 84.

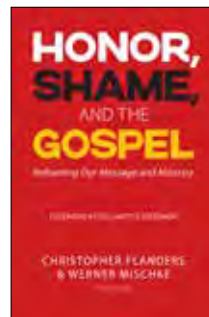
¹⁵ Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, 149–50, 244n190; Stephen Kinzer, "Efraín Ríos Montt, Guatemalan Dictator Convicted of Genocide, Dies at 91," *New York Times*, April 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/obituaries/efrain-rios-montt-guatemala-dead.html>.

¹⁶ Anne Applebaum, "American Surrender," *The Atlantic* (November 2020), 86–93; see p. 88; also available online at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/11/trump-who-withdrawal-china/616475/>.

¹⁷ In his thoroughgoing re-visioning of mission as reconciliation, Al Tizon, with bracing brevity and clarity, makes this point almost *en passant*, as an identification no longer in question or to be struggled over. His commendable work shows the value to be gained for mission theory by acceptance of a post-Christendom and post-US-centric perspective. See Al Tizon, *Whole and Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

Honor, Shame, and the Gospel: Reframing Our Message and Ministry, edited by Christopher Flanders, Werner Mischke (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2020), xi + 221 pp.

—Reviewed by Cameron D. Armstrong



David Bosch once summarized the discipline of missiology as “a gadfly in the house of theology,” due to the constant push against status quo boundaries.¹ In other words, missiology ought to question how ministry models are conceived and applied. Doubtless, some stakeholders in the current “house of theology” will find themselves challenged and perhaps

disturbed by missiological conversations. One such conversation is honor-shame.

In *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel*, Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke bring together sixteen authors with considerable missiological experience in various global regions. The book is a result of the inaugural Honor and Shame Conference, which was held at Wheaton College in June 2017. Interestingly, Flanders and Mischke relate that the idea for the Honor and Shame Conference originally sparked out of an International Orality Network conference in 2014 on the intersections between orality, honor-shame, and theological education. Flanders and Mischke's goals for the book are twofold: assist current practice and “add energy” to further honor-shame dialogue (xxv).

Before moving into the actual chapters, Flanders and Mischke helpfully offer definitions of shame and honor. Whereas shame is “the feeling or condition of being unworthy or defective,” honor is “the positive recognition of or by a group or individual based on some type of excellence or norm” (xviii). In other words, shame is a lingering sense of unworthiness; honor involves public recognition of excellence. According to Flanders and Mischke, the Bible displays God as intimately involved in addressing honor-shame, transforming their shame into honor, as well as calling for his people to honor him. An honor-shame dynamic pervades the Scriptures.

The book is divided into two sections. Section 1 considers honor-shame in “general contexts.” The seven authors connect honor-shame with such issues as the glory of God, church history, and biblical interpretation. An impressive chapter by Jayson Georges quotes extensively from eight theologians across church history who used honor-shame language in their preaching, teaching,

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and writing. Another fascinating chapter on how Jesus was shamed in the Gospel of John, penned by E. Randolph Richards, notes, “Shame protects the boundaries of a group” (74).

Section 2 analyzes honor-shame in “various mission contexts.” Eight chapters depict how missiologists are applying honor-shame research in global regions as diverse as San Francisco, Cambodia, Croatia, and the Muslim world. The honest reflections of authors in how they stumbled into honor-shame realizations is quite emotional. For example, Audrey Frank’s chapter on ministering among Muslim women vividly portrays both their inherent shame and the power of the gospel to turn shame into honor. According to Frank, female honor is the “nucleus of all Muslim life” (199). Any attempt at gospel contextualization, then, must include honor-shame realities.

An honor-shame dynamic pervades the Scriptures.

Honor, Shame, and the Gospel possesses at least three strengths. First, the honor-shame conversation is clearly driven by field-tested ministry. Far from being a closed, academic forum behind institutionalized walls, the authors of this volume are actively involved in real mission endeavors with real people. Second, the wide range of contexts from which the authors’ experience comes is commendable. Honor-shame dynamics are shown to not only be something experienced by Asians or Muslims, but also by people in other regions, including North America. Third, the authors deeply engage the Bible. Especially in Section 1 of the book, the chapters by Stephen C. Hawthorne and Jackson Wu both illuminate the Bible’s teaching on honor-shame and depict its necessity for the planting and equipping of local churches.

Concerning weaknesses, there are times when the authors contradict one another. One example includes the relationship between the concepts of honor and shame. In Steve Tracy’s chapter on how honor-shame addresses abuse victims, he claims, “Shame is the opposite of honor” (103). Yet in an earlier chapter, E. Randolph Richards explicitly states the two are not opposites (74). Further, there seems to be a disagreement between authors concerning whether or not honor-shame is the only alternative to the Western value system of innocence-guilt. Tom Steffen, for example, posits other paradigms, such as power-fear and purity-pollution. Katie Rawson cites power-fear in her chapter on racial reconciliation. Yet these were the only mentions I found beyond honor-shame. While such contradictions indicate the honor-shame conversation is ongoing, a forewarning note in the introduction by Flanders and Mischke that the authors do not always agree could be helpful.

Beyond this first weakness, the authors also appear to overgeneralize cultures. Cristian Dumitrescu’s fascinating chapter on discipleship often makes claims like “the typical Asian . . .” (157)

and Steve Tracy declares that “80 percent of modern cultures can be described as honor-shame.” Interestingly, in another work, Christopher Flanders has himself called for an abandonment of labeling cultures as honor-shame. Instead, Flanders asks believers to consider how honor-shame is valued in *every* culture.²

These weaknesses aside, the conclusions and questions raised in *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel* merit attention from missiologists on a broad scale. Honor-shame connects with multiple areas within missiology. One particular field is orality. Besides the Honor-Shame Conference being spawned from discussions within the International Orality Network, the authors of this volume continually draw attention to biblical characters, storytelling, and oral learning preference. Flanders and Mischke’s choice to bring in two orality experts, Tom Steffen and Lynn Thigpen, signals an essential link between the two fields. Yet, as Lynn Thigpen notes in her chapter, honor-shame exposes a “dark side of orality” because it highlights the “toxic shame” of oral learners realizing they cannot compete with a literate elite (122). Such a link deserves further exploration.

For producing a work of missiology available to both the academic and field worker, Flanders and Mischke are to be commended. This book details how honor-shame conversations are essential for developing and executing mission strategy. Mission-minded Christians will no doubt benefit from such biblically based reflections. At the same time, the chapters humble and challenge readers with stories of how God transforms shame into honor for his glory. As such, this book is a genuine work of missiology. The “house of theology” is called to examine, evaluate, and perhaps tweak time-honored methods of fulfilling the mission task.

Endnotes

¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 596.

² Christopher L. Flanders, “There is No Such Thing as ‘Honor’ or ‘Honor Cultures’: A Missiological Reflection on Social Honor,” in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood Lingenfelter*, ed. Christopher L. Flanders (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 145–165.

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- Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology Series 16. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991.
- Flanders, Christopher L. “There is No Such Thing as ‘Honor’ or ‘Honor Cultures’: A Missiological Reflection on Social Honor.” 145-165. In *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood Lingenfelter*, ed. Christopher L. Flanders. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019.

Suggested Reading List

- Georges, Jayson. *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*. Timē Press, 2014.
- Wu, Jackson. *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015.

Questions of Context: Reading a Century of German Mission Theology, Missiological Engagements, by John G. Flett and Henning Wrogemann (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 233 pp.

—Reviewed by Brad Gill



Evangelical missiology can easily create its own echo chamber, our voices bouncing off of walls we have erected. Someone needs to escort us beyond our gated community, and that was my experience recently. A Norwegian Lutheran missiologist, Thelle Notto, was reflecting on the early 20th century ministry of Karl Reichelt among Buddhist monks in China.¹ His

European, ecumenical-style commentary lifted me out of my American evangelical missiology. It was more than a study of encountering Buddhism—it was a reflexive experience, one that exposed and objectified my own mission orientation. The recent publication of John Flett and Henning Wrogemann’s *Questions of Context: Reading a Century of German Mission Theology* promises much the same experience.

This book finds its genesis in the remarkable absence of contextualization language in German mission theology. Over the past century German mission studies have had a deep interest in different cultural contexts (customs, art, symbols, institutions), and in how the faith is rooted differently in these contexts, where no formal theory of contextualization exists. To discover why, Flett and Wrogemann trace how a century of high colonialism, devastating wars, and post-war vulnerability shaped German questions of culture, cultural interaction, and the relationship between gospel and culture. A very evident distance developed between English and German missiology, rooted in their differences of language, culture and history. Yet the authors believe their shared colonial mission experience offers lessons for us.

...the value of this present study lies in the significant mistakes German missiology made, in the theological positions it constructed in support of those mistakes, and in the direction it has taken in reaction to these mistakes and the widening recognition of world Christianity. (10)

Shoki Coe coined the term contextualization back in 1973.² Before they arrive at Coe’s watershed moment, the authors narrate 165 pages of German mission theology. Beginning in the late 19th century with Gustav Warneck and Ernst Troeltsch

(chapter 1), they provide a chronological account, each chapter introducing two or three missiologists representative of that period. Their introductory commentary and concluding analysis of each chapter roots their narrative in its historical context and the relevant questions of that time.

Warneck’s magnum opus, *The Protestant Doctrine of Mission*, became the most influential textbook of mission for half a century, establishing individual conversion as the “undeniable goal of mission.” But Flett and Wrogemann point to how German missiology understood this evangelical experience to be embedded in the establishment of a local *Volk* church (*Volkskirche*). The idea of Volk stemmed from later 18th century German Romanticism, and German missionaries applied this idea of social unity to the peoples among whom they ministered. While difficult to translate into English, Volk was understood as

...a consistent ethnic group, unified by kinship bonds, a common region of settlement, a common language and religion...the sum total of social and environmental relationships, constituted both by ties of blood and by the sharing of common ground, by blood [*Blut*] and soil [*Boden*]...it was an enduring and organic unity... (it) existed at its inception in a pure form, a cultural matrix that constantly reproduced the same features. (17)

This idea of Volk would find fertile ground in the post-World War I (WWI) Germany, and the authors feature the way Bruno Guttmann developed the strategic nature of primordial ties (“The Orders of Creation”—chapter 2) as a basis for conversion of entire kinship groups.

Guttmann came to regard every ethnic group as a distinct entity that follows an inherent order (*Ordnung*) given by God the Creator. These orders of creation (*Schopfungordnungen*) consist of social and kinship relations and rites. Though it was possible, to some degree, to affect these orders, human sin did not and could not destroy them. (46)

Flett and Wrogemann see a foreshadowing in this earlier German thought, and link it to Donald McGavran’s promotion of the concept of “people groups” in North American missiology during the ’60s and ’70s. I recall in 1980, as a young mission candidate, reading the translation of the 1929 work of Christian Keysser, *A People Reborn*, a reprinting instigated by McGavran. I lacked the historical context that Flett and Wrogemann offer here on this German missiologist. In my enthusiasm for the idea of group conversion, I missed how McGavran, in his forward to the book, had recognized Hitler’s role in bringing the term Volk (or *Volkskirche*, “people’s church”) into disrepute. (Keysser himself would become a card-carrying member of the Nazi

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party). But McGavran persisted with the idea of peoples (*Volk*, *ethne*) and affirmed the importance of “*Volk* movements” in the evangelization of India. He discarded the Nazi implications and promoted instead his “Homogenous Unit Principle” against forceful winds of resistance in an individualistic and racially explosive post-World War II (WWII) America.

This admittedly cautionary tale foreshadows the recent missiological debate on people groups in mission strategy.³ It illustrates how a social science tradition can favor the communal-rural over the individual-urban, where *Volk* frames the values of community over-and-against cosmopolitan society.

History can be unkind to any settled mission theology, and the post-(WWII) years justifiably caused deep reaction to anything, anyone, or any idea previously identified with that holocaust. Not surprisingly, this idea of *Volk* came under severe criticism in German missiology. In chapter 3 (“Eschatology and Agency”) and chapter 4 (“Widening the Horizons”) the authors bracket this dark and introspective couple of decades with relevant contextual data and analysis, and one can’t help but sympathize with the questions that arise. The pendulum swings wide—a tendency we suspect of any community facing the agonies of their own abuse of power. Post-war existentialism, neo-orthodoxy, and ecumenical conscientiousness also stirred new questions of context.

History can be unkind to any settled mission theology, and the post-World War II years justifiably caused deep reaction to anything, anyone, or any idea previously identified with that holocaust.

The devastating loss of financial support for mission due to diminishing faith and commitment forced German missiology to reflect deeply on the true “agency” of mission—can it be just the mission organization, the mission mandate, or an activist church? This post-WWII period fostered a more transcendent perspective on agency—God’s agency. It is here we witness the annunciation of *missio dei*, the mission of God. It is God who enters this “time between the times” with his mission. Flett and Wrogemann’s chronology indicates how this view of the eschaton nourished ideas of contextualization in the ’70s, and specifically the way Shoki Coe

sets the whole within the eschatological ferment of the resurrection and the coming kingdom. Contextualization as a process is located in relation to something beyond, which comes to us and to which we are called to respond. It means both

the valuing of contexts as the location of God’s acting and our own embodiment, and moving beyond our own contexts in the mutuality of becoming the people of God. (219–20)

This was more than an escape from acute failure. German mission theology certainly was seeking to divorce itself from any further complicity with the State (and National Socialism), but darkness can also be a truly creative experience.

The contrast of this German mission narrative to the American is almost shocking. We in America swam in a very different stream, and these authors punctuate their text with this comparison. History matters. It fosters different questions of context. Post-WW II America could frame “25 Unbelievable Years”⁴ of tremendous mission enterprise and advance. Its own reconstruction was slight in comparison to post WWII Europe, and the context was fertile for more positive, optimistic, and pragmatic questions. Flett and Wrogemann present the division of two streams of mission, the German trajectory being far more deconstructive, while the GI Bill enabled American missionaries to educate themselves in the social-science method and surf the wave of opportunities that opened for global mission.

Deconstruction and Reconstruction

Much in German mission pivoted on the radical critique of J. C. Hoekendijk, a Dutchman who in those early years after the war turned ecumenical mission towards questions of ecclesiology—how are we to understand the church in mission? What is the church’s true missionary nature? This missiologist more than any other exposed the consequences of “*Volk*” in Western ecclesiology. Flett and Wrogemann reflect positively on the necessary critique of this rather controversial mission theologian:

Concepts such as *Volk* color an entire way of seeing the world. Reference to *Volk* framed the understanding of culture, assumptions concerning normative social institutions, gave priority to village life as bearing an essentialized identity, and provided evaluative means for the relative merits or faults of all cultures. It included, by way of example, expectations concerning the shape and purpose of education, health, economics, religion, governance, and the nature of their interaction. All of this found support in strong biblical warrants and sophisticated theological argument for the being of a people, a *Volk*, and for how God works in and through creation and culture. (213–14)

In “Widening of Horizons” (chapter 4), German missiologists respond to Hoekendijk, but they do so amidst accelerating historical change. A non-Western world is awakening, political independence movements are arising, and new theologies are emerging in the younger national churches. How the church is to be embodied in this new world seems to require that we jettison *Volk*. Mission must be extracted from a Western ecclesio-centrism if it was to answer the call to be a “church-for-others.”

German missiologists were receptive to this radical rethinking, but their rank and file were not homogenous. Genischen resisted Hoekendijk's deconstruction of missionary existence and offered a conservative voice for the place of church planting in mission—what he calls the “coming-into-being” of the church. Hoekendijk seemed to have forgotten the church in his eschatological view of Christ breaking into the world, and certain German missiologists saw his failure to offer a viable reformation for mission purposes.

Margull and Hollenweger's responses introduce new themes in German missiology. Margull's emphasis on vulnerability—the vulnerability of God—offers a new perspective on what he labels the experience of harm—“harm done to mission through dialogue and harm done by mission to the religious other.” This theme came initially from Kenneth Cragg's sensitivity to the inter-religious encounter of the gospel and Islam, and the Germans heard it. It provided the basis for a new starting point and a posture of listening as a true church-for-others, an approach that could transcend the barriers of power, politics and culture. In a study of New Testament pluriformity, Hollenweger suggests a church-for-others will begin with pneumatology (the leading of the Spirit) rather than Christology. Flett and Wrogemann reveal the way these emerging ideas would support a new generation's emphasis on hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics and Intercultural Theology

This rebound out of a very dark German period actually nurtured a new voice—a new approach. It will be one “that places the initiative for embodying the faith within the local culture itself” (135). In chapter 5 (“Hermeneutics, Communication, and Translation”), the authors introduce a new generation of missiologists that build on the growing capacity of theology to listen and understand the breadth and depth of inter-religious encounter. There arose a new “hermeneutic of the stranger”—the attempt “to listen for these voices, recognize them in their difference, and seek new community with them” (171). In no way should we hinder the local embodiment of the Word of God.

At the same time, German missiology appeared quite deaf to the call for contextualization in the '70s. Shoki Coe's coining of this missiological orientation would immediately galvanize Anglo-American mission, but the gestation period in Germany extended until the '90s. Flett and Wrogemann help us see how German mission theology was actually realigning itself with particular aspects of Coe's original insight.

The English language approaches (to contextualization) tend to focus on the “contextuality” side of Coe's dynamic. The German concern, by contrast, better aligned with “conscientization,” a trajectory that would lead to the development of a hermeneutics of intercultural engagement. (167)

Coe's “authentic contextuality” would build on the biblical concept of *kenosis*—“a mutual self-emptying for the other that invites participation and seeks the newness of the new creation” (167). This is developed more thoroughly by Sundermeier, who introduces a hermeneutic that is participatory, oriented to communal life, and focuses attention beyond mere words—to symbols, myths, rituals, the human body, medical systems and art. It's a hermeneutic that “opens the self beyond its own egocentrism” to a “hermeneutic of absorption” (168). This is the shift in methodology that Flett and Wrogemann want us to understand, that this German response to non-Western concerns was attempting “to understand each context in its own terms, and to let other voices drive the discussion” (218).

Sundermeier introduces a hermeneutic that is participatory, oriented to communal life, and focuses attention beyond mere words—to symbols, myths, rituals, and art—letting other voices drive the discussion.

One wonders what happens to the transmission of the gospel in this dialogue—in this “convivency” (Sundermeier) that empties itself, listens, and opens itself in mutual relationship. This is certainly a significant shift from a more active proclamation and a more clear response to the gospel. Friedl's study of the complexity of Bible translation in Buddhist Japan tempers our evangelical reaction. He justifies a deceleration in communicating the gospel. He calls us beyond an oversimplified communication studies approach to one that respects the multiple layers of meaning (a hermeneutical task). Specifically, he examines the polyvalent religious meanings latent within Japanese, Hebrew, and Greek culture. Flett and Wrogemann want us to see the way these Germans used the complexity of language to understand the hermeneutical approach in inter-religious encounter, which is relevant to the emergence of any community of faith.

What does a local embodiment of the gospel look like when local institutions and social order are framed by a Hindu belief structure and when the language is infused by that belief? ...a spectrum develops, spanning options from embodying the gospel within certain traditional local religious forms, to a faith parsed through Hindu philosophy, to critiques of these forms as perpetually unjust social structures. (172)

If there is any climax to this crescendo of a new hermeneutical method, it would be the formation of the missiological domain “Intercultural Theology” (chapter 6). The term was

coined in the '70s, when these Germans began to wrestle with hermeneutical questions, but it wasn't until this century that a methodology was proposed. Essentially this is a missionary method, one that "reflects on the missionary/boundary crossing interactions of Christian faith witness" (184). Wrogemann himself has contributed masterfully to this discipline, and his recent three volumes on intercultural theology are quite definitive.⁵ In *Questions of Context*, the authors capture the essence of that comprehensive work, and they weave it into a greater German narrative. Intercultural theology appears to be the fruit of Sundermeier's hermeneutical focus on symbols and mutual conviviality, but additional accents are added to the method (i.e., implicit theology, discourse studies, and culture as both communicative memory and cultural memory). Intercultural theology has become a German way of reintegrating and reframing the different dimensions of contextualization.

For instance, the tendency in missiology—particularly in the Anglo-American experience—has been to separate the domains of "World Christianity" and "World Religions." Meanwhile, the questions we face in the inherent diversity of a global Christianity may resonate with those presented in our encounter with other religious worlds. By contrast, this German stream has fused these two domains in their intercultural theology, since they present a similar hermeneutical challenge.

Contextualization

This review of a century of German mission theology—a chronology of its assertions, disastrous missteps, retractions, and reformulations—can disturb any settled notions of contextualization. Flett and Wrogemann wrote this book to explain the absence of contextualization studies in German mission theology, but their work makes everyone a bit more aware of their place in mission studies. The authors alert us to a more general pattern.

Theories of contextualization are themselves part descriptions of the community out of which they develop: how this community embodies the gospel, the values it promotes, the rituals it accepts as necessary, those it is willing to forego, the authorities it draws on, and how it orders these authorities. (213)

The pattern is evident in early 20th century German missiology, where a "strong account of contextualization was supported by German culture's own self-narrative and resulted in a problematic affinity with the ideology of National Socialism" (213). The pattern—the reality—is a general cultural deafness to the way nationalism or any other ideology can heavily influence mission theory. Post-WWI Germany gave fundamental cultural significance to their own *Volkstrum* (ethnic customs), and this created a totalizing vision that shaped the way German missionaries appreciated and cultivated it in other

peoples. But it made them dull to the weaknesses of this form of contextualization, and a disastrous war would cause them to retract it almost entirely.

Understanding this pattern will loosen an absolute grip on any particular contextualization theory. Peering into German realities should prompt us to reflect. Flett and Wrogemann make sure we in the Anglo-American stream of missiology get the point. They suggest we reflect on some of our own cultural propensities—our rather "mechanical" view of sender/receiver communication, the dominance of Western social science theory, our tendency towards a "technical rationality," and the assumptions of an overly activist missionary mandate.⁶ Listening to Flett and Wrogemann's account of this German story can present some uncomfortable moments. Whether one agrees or not with their assessment of American propensities, the reflexive value is well worth it. It helps us take a step back and reflect on our own views of contextualization. And that level of self-awareness will be crucial as we encounter the hermeneutical challenges of an increasingly pluralistic and reactionary 21st century world. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ The Ralph D Winter Lectureship 2021, forthcoming in *IJFM*, 2021.

² Shoki Coe, "In Search of Renewal in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 9 (1973): 233–243.

³ Len Bartlotti, "Reimagining and Re-envisioning People Groups," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October–December 2020, Volume 56, Issue 4. Reprinted by permission in *IJFM*, 37:3–37:4.

⁴ Ralph D. Winter, *The 25 Unbelievable Years: 1945–1969* (William Carey Publishing, 1970).

⁵ Henning Wrogemann's comprehensive work on Intercultural Theology was translated from German and published in three volumes: *Intercultural Hermeneutics*, Volume One (2016); *Theologies of Mission*, Volume Two (2018); *A Theology of Interreligious Relations*, Volume Three (2019), all as part of the Engagements series of IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.

⁶ The authors cite Michael A. Rynkeiwich, "The World in my Parish: Rethinking the Standard Missiological Model," *Missiology*, 30 (2002): 301–322.

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, websites, blogs, videos, etc. Standard disclaimers on content apply. Due to the length of many web addresses, we sometimes give just the title of the resource, the main web address, or a suggested search phrase.

How Do Pandemics Affect Missions, Historically?

Don't miss an essay on how pandemics in general—and the 1918 Spanish Flu in particular—affected global missions (“[COVID-19 in Missiological and Historical Perspective](#),” by Hartley, Danielson, and Krabill in the January–March 2021 issue of *Missiology*). James Krabill looks at Nigeria and how the devastation of the Spanish Flu compelled Nigerian believers to turn to prayer and revival. Krabill's enlightening piece highlighted the emergence of new indigenous forms of Christianity in the wake of the impotence of Western medicine and the Western church to protect or heal.

Is There a New Variant in the Amazon?

Deep in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, Manaus—a city of two million devastated by COVID-19 last April—is being hit all over again by the virus. Hospitals are inundated, mass graves are being dug, hospitals have run out of oxygen, and people are dying of asphyxia. Check out this disturbing story in [The Atlantic, February 2021](#): “The Brazil Variant is Exposing the World's Vulnerability.” Is this a new variant to which there is no immunity? (See the *BMJ*'s “[COVID-19: Is Manaus the Final Nail in the Coffin of Herd Immunity?](#)” See also *Nature*'s “[COVID Research Updates](#),” Feb 26, 2021.)

Why Is India's COVID-19 Fatality Rate so Low?

Compare it to India where they have had very low percentages of fatalities but very widespread cases of the disease, with estimates of one in four people out of 1.3 billion having already been infected. (See the *Jakarta Post* “[Over 300 Million Indians May Have/Had COVID-19](#),” and the *Straits Times* “[Over Half in Delhi May Have Had COVID-19](#).”) Scientists really don't know why the virus is so virulent in some settings and so weak in others. One possible clue might be the number of previous exposures to other viruses (*NPR*'s “[The Mystery of India's Plummeting COVID-19 Cases](#),” February 2, 2021.)

COVID-19 Economic Hardship Hits Africa and Slums

But the poor, and the continent of Africa, have been the hardest hit, not necessarily by COVID-19-related deaths, but by economic hardship. See the article, “[Millions of Defaults Threaten the Future of Microfinance in India](#),” in the *Japan Times*, February 4, 2021. See also: “The Pandemic Could Undercut Africa's Precarious Progress” ([The Economist, February 6, 2021](#)). Also don't miss the excellent academic study of COVID-19 in eight global slums published January 21, 2021 by the *Journal*

of the Royal Society Interface: “[Spread of COVID-19 in Urban Neighbourhoods and Slums of the Developing World](#).”

Thanks to [JustinLong.org](#) for some of these links in “Round Up.”

Kidnapping Nigerian Children: A Steady Source of Income for Terrorists

Speaking of Africa, Nigeria has been again hit hard recently with [mass kidnappings](#) of school children. Over [600 have been abducted](#) since December 2020 and [several hundred more in March 2021](#). Most have been returned, but only after ransoms were paid, turning kidnapping into a new income stream for terrorists. Yet, according to UNICEF, 173 girls remain missing out of 276 kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2014 from Chibok, NE Nigeria. (See “[Nigeria's Boarding Schools Have Become a Hunting Ground for Kidnappers](#),” in the *New York Times*, March 1, 2021.) Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa and [Business Insider Africa](#) predicts it will be the second most populous country in the world by 2100. But what is happening to a generation of schoolchildren, the country's future leaders?

There are 10.5 million Nigerian children out of school. And with every attack, this number continues to swell . . . Nigerian children are unfortunately—and their parents—being forced to choose between their lives and their education. This poses the risk of creating a lost generation of Nigerians that will affect not only the future of those children, but also that of the whole country. (“[Fighting Nigeria's Kidnapping Industry](#),” *NPR*, March 7, 2021)

How Has Terrorism in Nigeria Affected the Church?

Take a look with fresh eyes at the Lausanne Global Analysis in July 2019 entitled “[An Existential Threat to Christianity in Nigeria?](#)” This analysis comments that the Global Terrorist Index “ranks Nigeria the third most terrorized country in the world after Afghanistan and Syria.” It also states that:

Nigeria's population is evenly divided between Muslims and Christians. The church in Nigeria has one of the most dynamic evangelical and missionary movements in Africa and indeed the world, with about 7,200 missionaries and a missional presence in about 196 countries. Nigeria has been delisted from the countries with unengaged unreached peoples groups (UUPGs). Despite this vibrancy, the future of the church in Nigeria is at stake because of persecution. Although Nigeria is officially not at war, what the Church is witnessing is tantamount to a declaration of war against Christians. Especially in rural areas, Christians are being killed and dispossessed of their ancestral farmlands. Their homes are being burnt and many have been internally displaced or taken refuge in neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. Others are in captivity and slavery.

Catholic Bishops Warn Survival of Nigerian Nation at Stake

The Council on Foreign Relations' [March 2, 2021 article](#) contains an even stronger recent declaration by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria:

Against an immediate backdrop of escalating [mass kidnappings](#), jihadi resurgence, growing [separatist sentiment](#) in the old Biafra,

and conflict over water and land that often assumes a religious and ethnic coloration, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has [issued](#) a statement sounding the alarm over the very survival of the nation... The Roman Catholic Church is one of Nigeria's few national institutions. (Others are the Nigerian army and the Anglican Church.) The Catholic bishops have an almost unique access to what is going on at the grassroots all over the country... It and the Anglican Church have long been the two largest denominations of European origin, but both have been usurped in [size](#) by [Pentecostal](#) churches. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church is an "establishment" institution, and its bishops by and large have good relations with the traditional Muslim leadership. The Catholic bishops' statement should be a wake-up call...

Reexamining Missiological Paradigms

Nelson Jennings has published Part I of his 20,000-word analysis of two of Ralph D. Winter's missiological models. Jennings' article is entitled "God's Plan for the Fullness of Time: Overhauling Ralph Winter's 'Three Eras' and 'Ten Epochs' Models." Read it in its entirety here in the free online January 2021 issue of [Global Missiology](#). For your reference, here is a reprint of the original Three Eras article, "Four Men Three Eras" (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/four-men-three-eras>) and here is a reprint of the original Ten Epochs article entitled: "The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History" (http://wwwFOUNDATIONScourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/1_kingdom_strikes_back.pdf).

We also commend to you Warrick Farrah's blog, [Circumpolar](#). Farrah's first two 2021 posts are an introduction to a new book just out edited by Martin Accad called *The Religious Other: A Biblical Understanding of Islam, the Qur'an, and Muhammad*. Here's a quote from Farrah's own chapter in this book on the topic of hermeneutical hinges:

As Martin Accad has proposed, "Your view of Islam will affect your *attitude* to Muslims. Your *attitude* will, in turn, influence your *approach* to Christian-Muslim interaction, and that *approach* will affect the ultimate *outcome* of your presence as a witness among Muslims." I would like to add a more foundational layer to this proposal, namely, that your *understanding* of religion and culture will affect your view of Islam. In other words, your view of Islam inevitably hinges upon your approach to religion and culture, and specifically, the relationship between the two.

BBC Claims Detained Uighur Women Systematically Raped

On February 2, 2021, *BBC* published a very credible account of systematic rape and torture of Uighur women in the Xinjiang camps in Western China. Based on first-hand accounts from interviews with women who were held in those camps, released, and subsequently escaped the country, the article paints a horrific picture:

"Yes, the rape has become a culture. It is gang rape and the Chinese police not only rape them but also electrocute them. They are subject to horrific torture..." "They say people are released, but in my opinion everyone who leaves the camps is

finished. And that," she said, "was the plan. The surveillance, the internment, the indoctrination, the dehumanisation, the sterilisation, the torture, the rape. Their goal is to destroy everyone," she said. "And everybody knows it." ("[Their Goal is to Destroy Everyone: Uighur Camp Detainees Allege Systematic Rape](#)," *BBC World News*, February 2, 2021)

Chinese Uighur Policies Declared "Genocide" by US, Canada, UK, and The Netherlands

What are some of the current repercussions of this? More than [180 human rights groups](#) are calling for the relocation of the Winter 2022 Olympics away from Beijing—logistically almost impossible to do. *BBC World News* has been [completely banned](#) in all of China, even in the hotels catering to foreigners in Beijing and Hong Kong. The Chinese government has delayed shipment of 50 million vaccines to Turkey on the condition it ratifies an extradition agreement, putting the largest Uighur diaspora at grave risk. (See "[Are the Uyghurs Safe in Turkey?](#)" in *The Diplomat*, February 13, 2021.)

Four Western nations—the US, Canada, the UK, and the Netherlands—have declared the Uighur atrocities amount to 'genocide.' President Biden's new Secretary of State Blinken has [already concurred](#) with outgoing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announcement, but now some of the State Department lawyers aren't so sure. (See "[State Dept. Lawyers Concluded Insufficient Evidence to Prove Genocide in China](#)," *Foreign Policy*, February 19, 2021.) But an article in *The Economist* argued that "genocide" was the wrong word. (See "['Genocide' is the Wrong Word for the Horrors of Xinjiang](#)," *The Economist*, February 13, 2021.) The debate appears to hinge on the meaning of genocide. (See: "By Any Other Name: [Thoughts on US Genocide Determinations](#)," Council on Foreign Relations.)

New "Love Jihad" Laws

Don't miss the article in *Al Jazeera* about the anti-conversion law dubbed the "anti-Love Jihad" legislation in three Indian states. Mixed marriage (Hindu-Muslim) couples have been separated and Muslim husbands imprisoned:

Believing "love jihad" is real "would be a laughable idea if it wasn't so dangerous," said rights activist Harsh Mander. "What we're witnessing...is the complete demolition of everything that the constitution promised." "...It's the unholy trinity of patriarchy, caste and dominant religion that has always wanted to control women's sexuality and freedom," lawyer and rights activist Vrinda Grover told *AFP*. ("[Another BJP-Governed State Plans Anti-Conversion Law](#)," *Al Jazeera*, December 26, 2020)

Democracy Continues to Erode in Modi's India

From a *Human Rights Watch* article posted February 19, 2021 comes a chilling description of violation after violation of some of the main principles of democracy—ostensibly core tenets of India's constitution—since Modi took office:

"The government has not only failed to protect Muslims and other minorities from attacks but is providing political patronage and cover for bigotry... The BJP government's actions have stoked communal hatred, created deep fissures in society, and led to much fear and mistrust of authorities among minority communities" Ganguly said. "India's standing as a secular democracy is at serious risk unless the government rolls back discriminatory laws and policies and ensures justice for abuses against minorities." ("[India: Government Policies, Actions Target Minorities](#)," *Human Rights Watch*, February 19, 2021)

A recent article in *Christianity Today* (March 2021) highlights the tightening of regulations regarding NGOs:

Since Modi took office in 2014, the Indian government has revoked permission for more than 16,000 nongovernmental organizations to receive foreign funding using the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) "It is deliberately an assault against the nonprofit sector," said Vijayesh Lai, the general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, "and that includes churches."... A senior Indian Christian leader who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue for his ministry, said the FCRA laws have been disproportionately applied to Christian ministries and have had a devastating impact on the poor. "The withdrawal of licenses has left millions of people in India—it's not an exaggeration, tens of millions of people—without a social help, social net, and taken away employment which the [nonprofit] sector was providing," he told CT. ("[Indian Government Regulation Squeezes Christian Charities](#)," *Christianity Today*, March 2021)

Myanmar Coup

After the surprise takeover of the government in Myanmar by its military on February 1, 2021, hundreds of thousands of its citizens poured into the streets to protest. This is the same country where Muslim Rohingya have been massacred and millions driven out by Buddhist militias and priests. See the February 11, 2021 article in *The Atlantic*, "[Why Did it Take a Coup?](#)" See also a [summary of the Rohingya crisis](#) from *BBC News* last year. From a *Christianity Today* article comes reports of increased vulnerabilities for Myanmar's Christian minorities who make up just under 5% of the population and are the largest religious minority. (See *Christianity Today's* report, "[After Military Coup, It's 'Time to Shout' for Myanmar Evangelicals.](#)")

China Arrests Pro-Democracy Advocates ahead of Hong Kong Election

Forty-seven pro-democracy advocates were abruptly arrested on February 26 by Hong Kong officials (at the behest of the Chinese government) ahead of an election they looked likely to dominate. If charged with treason or subversion, they could be imprisoned for life. Electoral changes slated to go into effect March 11 will virtually guarantee "only patriots" will be eligible to run for office. (See "[Attack on Political Rights](#)" in *US News and World Report*, March 5, 2021.)

Last year, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers demonstrated for months in the streets against new Chinese-mandated extradition laws—laws which prompted Britain to broaden both the benefits and eligibility requirements for the British National (Overseas) Passport or BN(O) passport. These new benefits for BN(O) passport holders took effect January 31, 2021:

As of Sunday, holders of British National Overseas passports—which are available to Hong Kong citizens born in the territory before it was handed back to China in 1997—can move with their families to the U.K. on five-year visas. After that period, they can apply for British citizenship. Previously these passport holders could only get six-month British visas. The immigration overhaul is a response to China's [imposition of a new national security law](#) on Hong Kong, which Britain says violates Hong Kong's judicial independence from Beijing. The U.K. argues this was guaranteed until 2047 by an international treaty the two countries signed. (Don't miss, "[UK Opens Its Doors to Five Million Hong Kong Residents, Starting Sunday](#)," in the *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2021.)

Just How Many Hong Kongers Are Predicted to Actually Move to the UK?

The *Washington Post* breaks down the actual numbers of those eligible to move:

The Home Office estimates there are 2.9 million BN(O) citizens eligible to move to the U.K., plus a further 2.3 million dependents and 187,000 people aged between 18 and 23 who have at least one BN(O) parent, bringing the total to about 5.4 million, or around 70% of Hong Kong's 7.5 million population. ("[The British Passport Stoking Controversy in Hong Kong](#)," *The Washington Post*, January 31, 2021)

The *Wall Street Journal* takes a look at how much Hong Kong wealth these would-be immigrants could take with them to Britain: "The visa offer . . . could trigger capital outflows of \$75 billion from Hong Kong over five years, estimates Bank of America Corp." (See "[UK Opens Its Doors to Five Million Hong Kong Residents Starting Sunday](#)," *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2021.)

Fastest Growing Movement to Christ in the World among Muslims

From The Gospel Coalition comes a report on the fastest growing movement to Christ in the world—and it's in a Muslim country:

While official reports still claim that 99.4 percent of Iranians practice Islam, a 2020 survey found that just 40 percent actually identify as Muslim. An even larger number—about 47 percent—said they were "nones," atheists, spiritual, agnostic, or humanist. Another 8 percent claim Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian religion. And a small sliver—1.5 percent—said they were Christians. "About 20 years ago, the number of Christian converts from a Muslim background was between 5,000 and 10,000 people," Crabtree said. "Today that's between 800,000 to 1 million people. That's massive growth." ("[Meet the World's Fastest-Growing Evangelical Movement](#)," The Gospel Coalition, February 8, 2021) **IJFM**



Whether you're a Perspectives instructor, student, or coordinator, you can continue to explore issues raised in the course reader and study guide in greater depth in **IJFM**. For ease of reference, each **IJFM** article in the table below is tied thematically to one or more of the 15 Perspectives lessons, divided into four sections: Biblical (B), Historical (H), Cultural (C) and Strategic (S).

*Disclaimer: The table below shows where the content of a given article might fit; it does not imply endorsement of a particular article by the editors of the Perspectives materials. For sake of space, the table only includes lessons related to the articles in a given **IJFM** issue. To learn more about the Perspectives course, visit www.perspectives.org.*

Articles in **IJFM** 37:3–4

	Lesson 1: The Living God is a Missionary God (B)	Lesson 7: Eras of Mission History (H)	Lesson 8: Pioneers of the World Christian Movement (H)	Lesson 9: The Task Remaining (H)	Lesson 10: How Shall They Hear? (C)	Lesson 12: Christian Community Development (S)	Lesson 14: Pioneer Church Planting (S)
Standing on the Shoulders of Others Kevin Higgins (pp. 117–120)			X				
Bringing Shame upon an Honored Missiological Paradigm Christopher Flanders (pp. 121–131)		X			X		
Reimagining and Re-envisioning People Groups Leonard N. Bartlotti (pp. 133–140)				X			
Stalemate in Religion and Development Chrispin Dambula (pp. 141–150)						X	
The Foreignness Spectrum T. Wayne Dye and Harley Talman (pp. 151–159)							X
Swapping Drinking Songs for Spiritual Songs Alan B. Howell (pp. 161–169)					X		
Restoring Blessing Yajie Ji and Thomas Hale (pp. 171–178)	X					X	



"I am truly thankful for this site and all God has done through it! Without it I never would have met Joseph, and that is truly amazing."
- Diana

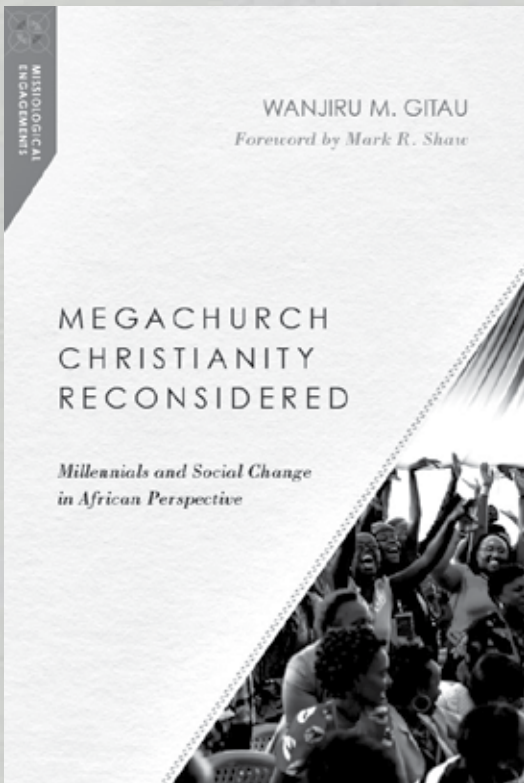
"I opened a CalledTogether account and met my wife there. We got married less than two months ago and are very happy. Thank you!"
- Foster

"I met someone on CalledTogether that is amazing. Thank you so much for creating the website for people to meet that have a heart for missions."
- Eduardo

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