

asian missions advance

78

Winter 2023 | Volume 29 | Issue 1

ISSN 2765-0936

Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association *published by*
the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development

FACING THE FUTURE BY FACING THE PAST

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The Asian Missions Movement faces a mind-boggling array of opportunities, needs, and challenges for the foreseeable future. In terms of religious affiliation, the vast respective majorities of the world's two most populated countries, China and India, have religious convictions other than following Jesus Christ. Three-fourths of the world's unreached peoples (5,625 out of 7,417) are in Asia (Joshua Project 2022a; 2022b). The two countries in the world that have by far the highest number of Muslims, Indonesia and Pakistan, are also in Asia—as are several other countries with major Islamic populations. A few Asian countries have demographically sizable Christian populations, but the norm is that the Christian presence is a minority, and sometimes even miniscule.

An itemized list of other needs and challenges for Asian missions is practically endless: post-pandemic realities; economic disparities between the extravagantly wealthy and those living in abject poverty; human trafficking; migrations and diasporas; political suppression; massive urbanization; traumatized relations between numerous peoples and countries; Christianity's foreignness; geopolitical tensions; ecological alarms and more. Asian Christian approaches to mission and ministry are also manifold: partnerships, megachurches, multiple traditions, missionary care, creative access initiatives, various funding systems and others. Whatever the future of Asian Missions holds, that future will be complex and multifaceted.

This article, while keeping in view the kaleidoscopic set of challenges projected for Christian missions in Asia, offers to Asian mission participants the challenge of re-examining various aspects of the past. Stated differently, this article's seemingly paradoxical focus is to face the future by facing the past. One reason for this focus is to utilize the Hebrew notion of "future events ... coming after us" rather than being "thought

to lie before us" (emphases mine; Boman 1960, 130). That is, rather than trying somehow to stand outside of history—past, present, and future—and scientifically analyze what lies ahead, adopting a more dynamic Hebrew view of historical continuity helps in looking at what has happened in the past, including God's earlier acts of creation and redemption, and expecting the eschatological goal that will come later (Boman 1960, 170). A second reason for facing the past

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is the lack of a consensus Christian understanding of God's relationship with Asian history, whether as a whole or in its component parts. Hence to face future challenges responsibly requires re-examining historical understandings in order to understand adequately what the upcoming challenges—those emerging from what has already occurred—actually are.

The article takes a macro to micro approach in examining God's relationship with Asian history. Surveying the whole of Asian history shifts to focusing on particular components. Accordingly, the connection with what follows—future challenges for Asian missions—comes into somewhat clearer focus.

GOD AND "ASIA"

God is the world's Sovereign Creator and Redeemer. However, God did not create "Asia" per se: initially that continental label—along with "Europe" and "Libya" (later "Africa")—was an ancient Greek construct, likely nautical nomenclature used when sailing the Aegean Sea in reference to the western edge of the Persian Empire (Bugge 2000, 4; West 2014). While "Asia" is not mentioned as such in the Old Testament, New Testament references to "Asia" (e.g., Acts 2:9, Revelation 1:4) refer to what by then was the Roman province of Asia, essentially the western one-fourth of modern day Turkey (BibleVerseStudy.com 2022). Among people classified today as "Asians," the current "Pan-Asian" concept of "Asia" emerged much more recently, namely in the nineteenth century in India and especially in Japan, primarily for political purposes (Milner and Johnson 2002; Mitani 2006). Moreover, the multifaceted concept of "Asia" has by no means enjoyed a fixed consensus, especially among Asians themselves (Milner and Johnson 2002). Even with these several caveats, however, Christians can affirm with confidence that the region and nations that over recent generations has come to be called "Asia" was of course part of the world that God made and has continuously sustained, governed, and acted to redeem.

God the Sovereign Creator

"In the beginning, God created heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1). On the fourth day of creation, God made the sun, moon, and stars as heavenly witnesses to divine majesty and governance (Genesis 1:14-19; Jennings 2015, 377). Ever since creation, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2). Furthermore, "God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him" (Acts 17:26-27). Clearly the vast region of Asia and its many

nations have been among the universal recipients of divinely appointed heavenly witnesses (and the rest of "general revelation" through all of creation) and providential guidance.

What is particularly important for Christians—in this case especially Christians in Asia—is to integrate the just stated biblical teaching with a general understanding of Asian history acquired through upbringing, formal education, and (in today's digitally interconnected world) the internet. Without intentional integration, Christians can all too easily live and think in bifurcated historical worlds: one informed by biblical accounts and one acquired through other information sources. Asian Christians need to work intentionally to think through the connection between God's creation (and ensuing providence) and the historical periods, figures, and events learned apart from the Bible's explicit contents. One approach for how Christians can further integrate their Asian historical understandings is to note that the majority of events in the Bible actually took place in what today is generally understood to be West Asia, including the Middle East (Asia Society 2022). Even though the relatively small area that the Bible (i.e., the New Testament) calls "Asia" was miniscule compared to the extensive continent of Asia as understood today, the Bible's primary stage of events—while also including references to northeast Africa and to south-central Europe—was in fact what is understood today as West Asia. Coupling the Bible's primary historical stage with the biblical-theological understanding, sketched earlier, of God having "made [and providentially guided] from one man every nation of mankind" (emphasis mine) should aid Christians in Cambodia, Pakistan, Jordan, Mongolia, and elsewhere in today's "Asia" in believing the close relationship between God the Sovereign Creator and the entirety of Asia and its peoples.

God the Redeemer

It was in today's West Asia that God the Sovereign Creator and Redeemer carried out almost all of his biblically-recorded acts of redemption. Apart from Jacob's descendants spending 400 years in Egypt, the West Asian theater for the Old Testament drama was true for the Patriarchs, Judges, Nation of Israel, Prophets, Exile in Assyria and Babylon, Israel's protection through Esther throughout the Persian Empire "from India [now Pakistan] to Cush [now northern Sudan]" (Esther 1:1, 8:9; Webb 2008, 853), and otherwise. West Asian contexts (along with settings in northeast Africa, eastern Mediterranean islands, and southern Europe) were also the case for God's redemptive acts recorded in the New Testament, most especially God's central act of redemption in Jesus Christ (including those "wise men from the east" in Matthew 2:1) and the ensuing growth of churches after Pentecost. Since God's "redemptive process does not end with Acts 28 or indeed with the apostolic age,"

and since “God has been in no hurry over the process of redemption” (Walls 2017, 64), Asian Christians can rest assured of God’s redemptive work throughout all generations of Asia’s complex and varied history.

One related, complex theological/missiological question concerns the godliness or ungodliness of “cultures” (in Asia)—particularly those lacking in gospel input. That question splinters off into numerous other topics, including God’s relationship with human cultures, who the creator is of human cultures (environment? divine? human? satanic?), and the various aspects of cultures. Rather than delve deeply here into this much explored arena of cultural studies, this article acknowledges the following realities:

- As noted earlier regarding what Paul preached to the Athenians, God has providentially governed all peoples and their cultures—including those throughout Asian history—in such ways “that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:27).
- All peoples and their cultures—including those throughout Asian history—have borne and reflected God’s image, albeit in varying degrees and marred by self-centered sin and rebellion against God.
- Satan and demons have worked to deceive and enslave all peoples and their cultures—including those throughout Asian history.
- In light of the first two assumptions and despite the third, all peoples and their cultures—including those throughout Asian history—have been capable of receiving God’s special revelation and good news about the entire world’s King and Savior, the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, then, just as the risen Jesus foretold would happen after Pentecost, God’s Spirit has been empowering Jesus’s followers to be his witnesses to peoples “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)—including many peoples and their cultures spread throughout Asian history. From the earliest generations in Christian history God’s Spirit brought his witnesses eastward to peoples in India, Syria, Persia, Armenia, Central Asia—and soon China. Later Christians from Europe arrived in various parts of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. Not long afterward, peoples throughout Asia were receiving Western and other Asian Christians that had traversed land and sea. All along—and often despite various types of political, economic, and social hardships, as well as religious, cross-cultural, and linguistic barriers—God the Redeemer was bringing the news of Jesus to Asian peoples and opening their hearts to trust and follow him.

The God of the Bible and the peoples of “Asia” have always been interacting. Moreover, without our “knowing whether we are living in the very last days or still in the days of the early church,” the “unfinished story” of redemption continues through the ongoing “history of every continent and vast numbers of

peoples” (Walls 2017, 64), including of course throughout the peoples and cultures of Asia.

GOD AND CHALLENGES AMONG ASIANS

Throughout the various strands of the Asian historical tapestry, any number of challenges have threatened to tear apart human and environmental life. Of special note are the shifting tectonic plates running all along Asia’s eastern coastlands and underneath many other large regions. These moving plates have made Asia, particularly Asia-Pacific areas, more prone to natural disasters than any other continent. The geological shifts have continually caused volcanoes, earthquakes, and tidal waves, often resulting in great devastations of human, environmental, and economic life. The 1556 Shaanxi Earthquake in Central China, 1976 Tangshan Earthquake in Northeastern China, and 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami are just a few of the more recent geologically-related disasters throughout the history of the Asian continent (Szczepanski 2019). It is also worth noting that the destruction from such catastrophes has become increasingly costly in recent times due to the escalation of massive urbanization in coastal cities (Vokaty 2014; Wood 2018).

Christians may not have adequate answers for why or how God allows such disasters, but we should not thereby totally separate “natural” geological realities from God’s providential governance over all aspects of His world. Redemptively, Christians have joined fellow human beings in both suffering and in bringing relief to those who have suffered from environmental disasters—and seemingly those service opportunities will always present themselves, especially in Asian regions.

Cross-Cultural Interactions

One major religious challenge across the generations has been how the peoples of Asia could hear, then actually believe, the news about an obscure religious figure who reportedly lived in a distant western land (at the continent’s extreme western edge). That “Jesus” undoubtedly has come across as a remote human being geographically, psychologically, historically, and in many other ways. Furthermore, apart from gradual and sporadic influx of Judeo-Christian influences, Gentile Asian peoples have inherited and carried their own religious sensibilities and traditions. Many of those “religions” have been indigenous traditions variously involving shamans, ancestors, reverence for and petitions to awesome parts of creation, a supreme deity, multiple deities, intricate cosmologies, or other aspects. In different parts of China, for example, Confucian or Taoist traditions have been prevalent. Many Asian peoples (including in China) have adopted at various times one or more of the several streams of Buddhism that spread out of northeast India. Across many generations, peoples of West, Central, South, and Southeast Asia experienced

significant growth of Islam. Whatever the resident religious sensibilities or traditions have been, the manifold entrances of Judeo-Christian influences have been cross-cultural.

Clearly the cross-cultural entrances of the news about an obscure, foreign, and reportedly dead-then-risen man-turned-savior named “Jesus” have presented all sorts of communication issues – for both the various witnesses and the various recipients. How, for example, were Chinese to understand Syrian missionary monks, or later Franciscans (of various European backgrounds), who had traversed the Silk Road? Still different Jesuits accompanied Portuguese sea voyagers to China and elsewhere, while yet more Franciscans came with the Spanish to the islands they claimed, and renamed, for their King Philip. Russian emissaries moved overland along China’s northern areas. Other Westerners—in particular Dutch, English, German, and French—also arrived in most parts of Asia. By the time U.S.-Americans started appearing in what Westerners strangely called “the nineteenth century,” any number of “modern” influences, such as those of engineering, industry, economics, and individualistic and Greco-Roman based philosophy, joined the Jesuits’ scientific teachings in the conglomerate packages that included varying forms of Christianity—and that Asian peoples had to disentangle and attempt to decipher.

Of course, for the Western witnesses (as with the earlier Syrians), their encounters with Asian languages, philosophies, customs, religious sensibilities, and myriad other differences made the cross-cultural challenges they faced ominous as well. Furthermore, Asian Christians have served as cross-cultural witnesses among other Asians, too, for example Chinese (and French) Christians serving Koreans in the late eighteenth century (Kim and Ko 2018).

Cross-cultural complications increased during the so-called “nineteenth century” as expanding Western powers increasingly encroached on Asians’ longstanding territories. In a manner correlative to the economically and military invading Europeans (and by then U.S.-Americans), Asian kingdoms and peoples coalesced into “nations” or “countries,” further setting the stage for numerous political and military confrontations. There had, of course, been negotiations and wars within and among Asian kingdoms and peoples across the many generations of Asian history. However, the modern expansion into Asia of Western nations-turned-empires brought increased levels of violence and destruction, not to mention the colonization of whole peoples across most of Asia.

Insofar as the good news of Jesus had become largely indistinguishable for many Asians from “Western Christianity” and Western nations’ oppressive political-military power, cross-cultural gospel communication became all the more complicated. Thankfully, God has always been present and at work

among all the world’s peoples, including before he brought human gospel emissaries. The Holy Spirit is the Master Translator, even when he has re-scrambled the gospel from non-Asian settings across significant barriers into various cultural contexts.

Conflicts

The mid-twentieth-century breakup of the Japanese and various European empires, and the corresponding independence of modern nations throughout much of Asia, was not accompanied by a cessation of painful and destructive conflicts. In Northeast Asia, Japan’s oppressive 1910-1945 colonization of Korea and 1930s military aggressions in China had caused too much trauma for those two relationships to heal after Japan’s 1945 defeat and imperial dismantling. In Southeast Asia, liberation from brief Japanese control, which had followed much longer Western imperial periods, exposed conflicting territorial claims between peoples (and their new political leaders) in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines—correlating with who had been influenced earlier by either Islam or Western Christianity. In South Asia, India’s and Pakistan’s 1947 independence led to ongoing conflicts between the two countries, including the eventual 1971 independence of East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Also, as of 1948 the new British dominion Ceylon eventually became the independent republic Sri Lanka in 1972, only to see festering Tamil-Sinhalese tensions erupt into the protracted 1983-2009 civil war. West Asia saw intensified conflicts emerge, perhaps most especially, out of the last vestige of European migration—the 1948 creation of the state of Israel—and the creation of the new modern state of Iraq (Walls 2023, Ch. 13).

The capitalist-communist US-USSR/China Cold War spawned new conflicts, particularly on the Korean Peninsula (and its division into North and South) and in Indochina. China’s disputed and resisted assertion of control over Tibet has been one of several recent examples of larger powers seeking to expand their economic, political, and military influence over smaller nations. As for Central Asia, the twentieth century saw incorporation of nations into either the Soviet Union or the People’s Republic of China, with Afghanistan remaining relatively independent until the 1978 Saur Revolution (Byrikhin 2021) and ensuing conflicts involving the USSR and then the USA.

All of these conflicts continue to challenge Asian Christian mission efforts. The conflicts also present opportunities for gospel reconciliation to occur despite deep historical cleavages, for example Korean-Japanese, “Manilan-Mindanaon,” Indian-Pakistani, Tamil-Sinhalese, and Jewish-Arab. As Jesus’s fellow followers, considering together the trauma inherited from the past can be daunting—but can also lead to the beauty of the gospel’s power to heal and reconcile.

GOD AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ASIA

Cross-cultural interactions and conflicts are just two of the many challenges among Asian peoples that God has providentially allowed, used, and worked through. Since God is the Redeemer, Christians can face the past and see how God has turned challenges into gospel opportunities, a few of which are sampled next.

Migrations and Diasporas

The Stalinist Soviet Union's en masse deportations of Koreans (who had migrated to eastern Russia) to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the 1930s (World Directory of Minorities 2008) is only one example of how migrations, as well as diasporas, have offered both challenges and opportunities to Asian missions. One result of the injustice and cruelty of the Stalinist deportations in particular has been the development of international people—Korean-Uzbek, for example—who are specially equipped to serve multiple peoples in gospel ministry. For whatever reasons Asian peoples have migrated elsewhere, God's superintendence has included working in peoples both to "feel their way toward him and find him" (Acts 17:27) and to initiate missions efforts in all sorts of creative ways—in their new residences, back to where they were earlier, and otherwise.

Within continental Asia, various peoples have undergone migrations across the generations. One of the earliest involved nomadic Scythians moving in West Asia and into central Asia; the Apostle Paul's mention of Scythians (Colossians 3:11) points to their early proximity to Christian witness (along with being viewed as barbaric by Paul's Greco-Roman readers). The more recent mid-nineteenth-to-mid-twentieth-century migrations of "around 20 million people from China and 30 million Indians ... to the growing cities and plantations of southeast Asia" deeply affected demographic (and religious) landscapes throughout southeast Asia countries—particularly after several countries' independence led to many immigrants ceasing their mainly circular migratory movements and choosing citizenship in their new homelands (Amrith 2014). Imperial Japan's forced emigration of thousands of Korean laborers to Japan, millions of Chinese migrating to Manchuria from the 1890s to the 1930s, and the post-1947-independence transfers of millions of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan to India and millions of Muslims from India to Pakistan are among the most significant backdrops against which the ensuing accelerated migrations of Asian peoples to other Asian countries (including Brunei, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan) offering economic advancement have taken place (Castles and Miller 2009).

The large-scale migrations of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) over recent years are well documented. Approximately 84% of the currently

estimated 1.77 million OFWs, 60% of whom are women, are scattered throughout Asia—including in oil-rich and low Christian-populated countries such as Saudi Arabia (Mapa 2022). The missions-strategic roles of OFWs have long been recognized (Tira 2004). So have mission obligations toward the many trafficked Asians enslaved in poverty-stricken Asian cities (Lausanne Movement n.d.).

One recent focal point for many mission leaders is that of "movements." Significant movements ("Church Planting Movements," "Disciple Making Movements," "Kingdom Movements") to Christ have been reported in parts of Asia over the past few generations (Garrison 2004, 35-83). Have such movements taken place earlier in Asian history?

The missions opportunities beyond Asia involving international Asian diasporas have been manifold. In modern times (beginning in the sixteenth century), several Asian diasporas resulted from Dutch, then British, forcibly transferring laborers to trading-then-colonial centers in Africa and the Americas (Sell 2017; South African History Online n.d.). As just one example among many results, resentment toward South Asians for their advantageous positions granted by British authorities has kept East Africa's burgeoning Christian communities from reaching out to resident Indians and Pakistanis—until recently with the advent of such cross-cultural ministries as New City Fellowship in Nairobi (New City Fellowship - Nairobi 2021). Moreover, along with the development over the past several generations of various Asian diasporas, many of them worldwide, have come international, diaspora-focused Asian church and mission networks, perhaps most substantially Korean and (especially for the foreseeable future) Chinese (Gospel Operation International 2022; Kim 2019). Challenges and hardships, as well as opportunities and manifold ministries, will undoubtedly continue to accompany ongoing Asian migrations and diasporas (George, ed. 2021-2022).

Movements

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One recent issue of the missiological journal *Mission Frontiers* carries the theme, “Movements: God’s Way of Reaching Entire Peoples” (*Mission Frontiers* 2020). The issue’s editorial claims, “Movements to Christ have always been the way that God has reached entire peoples.... They have been a continual reality for two millennia” (Wood 2020). Even so, none of that issue’s three articles that include general historical summaries of movements make a single mention of an Asian movement (Addison 2020; Higgins 2020; Lewis 2020). Perhaps our question about earlier Asian movements should simply subside and be content with the suggestion, “movements have become much more frequent in our day” (Wood 2020).

However, more specific studies suggest that earlier Asian movements to Christ—even if few in number—have in fact occurred. Examples include Hakka and Miao minorities in South China between 1845 and 1910 (Hibbert 2012); an “Insider Movement” to Christ in China in the wake of Alopen and other Syrian missionaries arriving in the seventh century (Cashin 2016); the conversion of over 300,000 Japanese by the early 1600s in Japan’s so-called “Christian Century” (Renaissance Japan n.d.). The scarcity of reported earlier movements in Asia should give pause before quickly concluding that somehow Asian movements to Christ have accelerated in recent years, although neither should reports of many such recent movements be summarily dismissed.

GOD’S MISSION CONTINUES

As God has worked throughout Asian history, so can he be expected to continue to work among Asian peoples. This article’s quick summary has touched on just some of the ways God’s Asian mission has been evident. No mention has been made of the vast number of technological advances in Asia—for example, China’s “Four Great Inventions” of the compass, gunpowder, papermaking, and printing; automated water clock, movable metal printing type, and Hangul in Korea; terraced rice paddies and shipbuilding in Southeast Asia—that have evidenced God’s image at work through Asian peoples. Recent accelerations in urbanization that have enabled the growth of megachurches and their international networks are also significant developments. Asian missions can face a multifaceted future by facing the past of God’s work among Asian people. Seeing what has occurred beforehand gives a clearer vision of what comes afterward.

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CONTEXTUALIZATION THE ASIAN WAY: RELATIONAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Enoch Wan & Siu Kuen Sonia Chan

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to propose “relational contextualization” as Asian way of practicing contextualization. Etymologically speaking, contextualization derived from “*contextus*” (Latin) meaning “weaving together,”¹ i.e. the messenger “weaves” with the receivers in their cultural situations. The definition of “relational contextualization” is “the effort of Christians committing themselves to the Gospel by formulating, presenting, practicing, and embodying the Scriptures and the Christian faith that connect people of other cultural backgrounds with the Gospel in relationship.” In “relational contextualization,” the Gospel, the messenger, and the receiver “weave” together in an intimate, dialogical, and creative relationship. The distinctive feature is: bringing relationship into focus. It is tailored to the Asian context that relationship is highly valued. Moreover, it is offered as a new attempt to practice Christian mission in the context of post-modernist ethos.

THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

The focus hence is on hindrances or challenges for relational contextualization.

Rationalist and Compartmentalized Approach

According to Jackson Wu, the practice of “contextualization” by Evangelicals have its focus on the interpretation, communication, and application of the biblical text in view of a cultural context.² Most of the practice of contextualization in the west tends to be reductionistic focusing on biblical text, and interpreting/communicating the message intelligibly and cognitively to the receivers. Most of the emphasis is merely on the technique, method, and especially the content of the message.

It is out of the ordinary that two American missiologists do not follow the popular trend of programmatic and communicative contextualization: (a) Larry Poston proposes that we contextualize not only our faith, but also ourselves. He uses the Apostle Paul as an example and suggests that Paul

“himself was a form of ‘contextualization’.”³ (b) Marvin Newell uses “self-contextualizing” to describe the adaptation of the messenger to another culture.⁴ The contextualization of the person, as proposed by Poston and Newell is outstandingly different from popular rationalist approach. The western way of emphasizing cognitive understanding of the message in contextualization is characteristically rationalist – devoid of the recognition of “relationality” (i.e. the quality and emphasis on relationship in the practice of contextualization).

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

The Elton Law propounds that both ethnocentrism and cultural relativism bring syncretism in contextualization by the following diagram.⁵

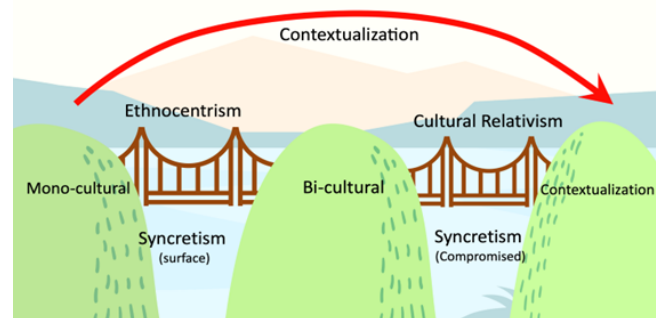


Figure 1: Syncretism in Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism in the process of Contextualization⁶

When contextualization starts from a mono-cultural orientation, there is lack of awareness of ethnocentrism. The Gospel presented is assumed to be supra-cultural and universally conditioned. This type of contextualization is minimal, focusing on the surface level: i.e. the use of local language and certain indigenous cultural forms. Contextualization in such approach tends to unknowingly blends one’s own culture with the Gospel - prompt to syncretism. In addition to the problem of ethnocentrism, another challenge is cultural relativism when meaning is separated from form. If, (a) form-meaning separation and (b) the over-elevation of culture, then another form of syncretism⁷ is inevitable in the contextualization

1. John Mark Terry, ed., *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, Rev. ed. (B&H Academic, 2015), 281.

2. Jackson Wu, “How Do Evangelicals Define ‘Contextualization?’,” Jackson Wu, May 24, 2013, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2013/05/24/how-do-evangelicals-define-contextualization/>.

3. Larry Poston, “Cultural Chameleon: Contextualization from a Pauline Perspective” 36, no. 4, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (2005): 460–469.

4. Marvin J. Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice* (Westmont, U.S.: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 248.

5. Siu Lun Elton Law, “Contextualization” (lecture, Yan Fook Seminary, Hong Kong, October 17, 2022).

6. Law, “Contextualization.”

7. Yoshiyuki Billy Nishioka, “Worldview Methodology in

process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RELATIONAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Relational contextualization is the integration of “relational realism” into ontological praxis of contextualization.

Wan’s “Relational Realism”

Relational realism is offered by Enoch Wan as an alternative paradigm to critical realism.⁸ This ontological orientation of relational paradigm is a response to and corrective of the managerial, programmatic, pragmatic and outcome-based model of popular missiology.⁹

Relational Approach to Cultural Differences

Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are the first obstacles in contextualization and the subsequent strategy to manage cultural differences affect the approach to contextualization, proposed by Sonia Chan as a relation-based strategy to cultural difference.¹⁰ Of the various strategies managing cultural differences, Milton Bennett posits a difference-based approach from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism.¹¹ However, the distinctive of the relational approach of this paper is: the awareness of the differentiated but related presence of others as whole beings, additional to identifying cultural differences and similarities. Therefore, the ideal positions are “ethno-relational,” given the definition of “ethno-relationality” as “a reciprocal and dialogical posture in recognizing the presence of other beings of different cultures as differentiated and connected, and engaging in dialogues with one another.” The goal of ethno-relationality is to develop more authentic, intimate, and creative relationships with God vertically and others horizontally.

A MODEL OF RELATIONAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

The process of contextualization is a relational, reciprocal, and dialogical interaction of: (a) personal Being/being of the Triune God, the messengers, the receivers, the community, and (b) the Gospel and culture. Relational contextualization is not a linear

Mission Theology: A Comparison between Kraft’s and Hiebert’s Approaches,” *Missiology* 26, no. 4 (October 1, 1998): 457–476.

8. Enoch Wan, “The Paradigm of ‘Relational Realism,’” *Occasion Bulletin* 19, no. 2, *Evangelical Missiological Society* (2006), 1.

9. Wan, “The Paradigm of ‘Relational Realism,’” 1–4 and Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory Wan, Enoch Wan, Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, SECOND EDITION. (2nd edition). 2014: chapter 7.

10. Sonia Chan, “Communication Principles In An Ontological Praxis Of Intercultural Communication And Learning” (EdD research paper, Western Seminary, 2021).

11. Milton Bennett, *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Paradigms, Principles, and Practices*, 2nd ed. (Intercultural Press, 2013), 5.

process; it is multi-dimensional and multi-directional with the consideration of multiple relationships involved. The following diagram shows the various interactive relationships in contextualization.

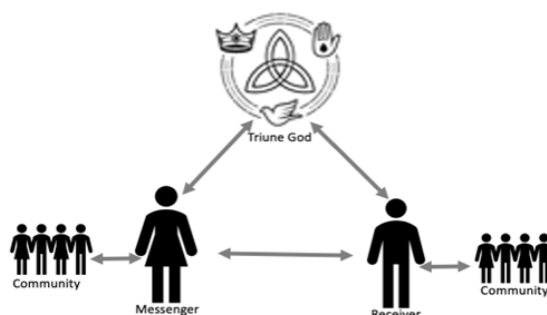


Figure 2: Interactive Relationships within Relational Contextualization

Transformation Process and Outcome

Contextualization is a process of transformation. The following table and diagram are presented to show the process and outcome of transformation in contextualization. The process of contextualization is a dialogical process moving from ethnocentric to ethno-relational for both the messengers and the receivers. The outcome of contextualization is the transformative relationships with God, the messengers, and the receivers.

Process		Outcome	
A Dialogical Process from Ethnocentric to Ethno-relational		Transformative Relationships with God, the messengers, and the receivers	
Being	Identity Awareness	Authenticity	New Identity
Becoming	Dialogical Relationship	Intimacy	New Relationships
Belonging	Narrative Encounters	Creativity	New Creation

Table 1. The Process and Outcome of Transformation in Relational Contextualization

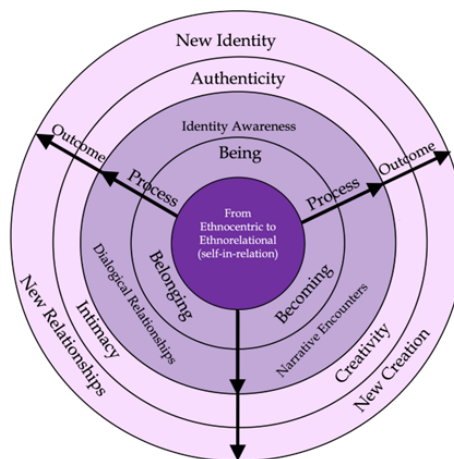


Figure 3. The Process and Outcome of Transformation in Relational Contextualization

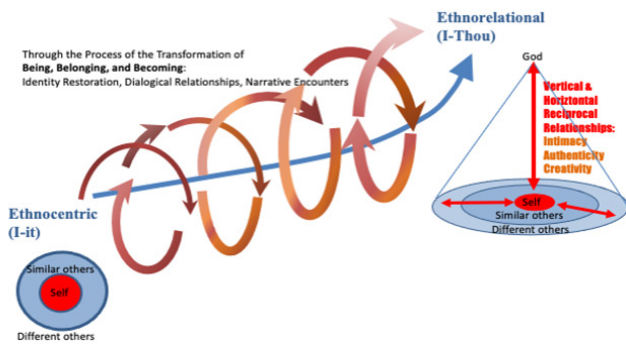


Figure 4. The Relational Contextualization Model

The three phases of transformation process in Relational Contextualization model are: being, belonging, and becoming, with the theoretical framework of Relational Interactionism.¹² The three phases are understood as interconnected and cyclical in this model. The order of practice is not strictly sequential. Each process will help the advancement of the contextualization in the other two processes.

Transformation of “Being” with New Identity

Identity negotiation is part of the contextualization process. It is communal that the receivers enter a period of incorporation and find who they are and where they belong. Both messenger and receiver experience the identity negotiation, from being an outsider becoming an insider. The following model by Richard Hibbert is helpful in understanding how identity negotiation takes place in contextualization.¹³

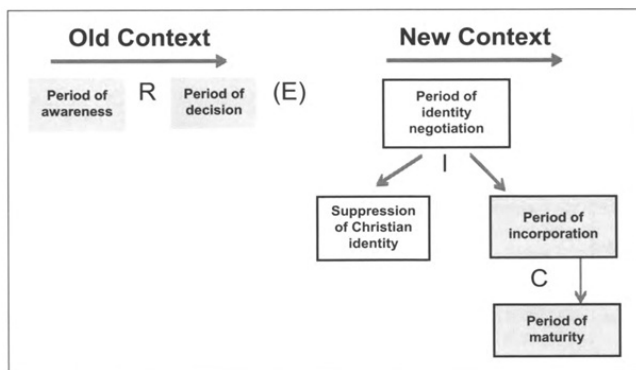


Figure 5. Modified model of conversion (adapted from Tippett, 1992).

Transformation of “Belonging” New Relationships

Both the messenger and the receiver are to be considered in contextualization. Once the receivers become Christians, they will experience and continue the process of the contextualization. Both the messenger and the receiver interact in this process of contextualization together. They are in dialogues

with each other, changing from I-it relationship to I-Thou relationship.¹⁴ They involve in dialogues with God, the Gospel, their cultural context, and also their community – both faith and local.

Transformation of “Becoming” > New Creation

New creation is generated and embodied through the new narratives and story-telling can foster new connectivity and meaning-making in contextualization.¹⁵ It invites us to interpret our lives within the framework of a larger story of God’s meta-narrative. This learning must be achieved through our new relationships with Christ in the community. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

CONCLUSION

This paper is an attempt to introduce the Asian way for the practice of contextualization: a relational approach and relational ontological orientation. Most evangelicals’ attempt of contextualization thus far is in western style: rationalist, cognitive, programmatic, pragmatic and outcome-based. In this paper, relational contextualization is proposed as an alternative Asian way by integrating theories (of “relational realism” and “relational interactionism”) and the practice (of narrative approach, relational approach and dialogical interaction).

14. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2003), Chap. 1, Loc. 480, Kindle.

15. For details of the use of narrative framework and “relational interactionism,” see Enoch Wan and Jon Raibley, *Transformational Change in Christian Ministry* (Western Academic Publishers, 2022:chapter 2),



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CALLING CHINESE DIASPORA CHURCHES FOR GLOCAL MISSIONS TO ALL

Juno Wang

INTRODUCTION

As our life and ministry gradually returns to normal after being locked down for over two years, have you given thought to the meaning of being a church on missions in a diverse community in the new normal? Globalization provides us with opportunities to evangelize and disciple global diasporas who live in our community. Some diasporas become permanent residents or even citizens in their host country. Some are temporary diasporas such as international students, business people, contract workers, and travelers, while others are displaced people who are refugees or asylum seekers. In fact, it is God who controls movements of people and uses them for His purposes,¹ and it is He who brings them in our countries and communities. He has turned the magnitude of the diaspora population into a mission opportunity,² and it is a foremost part of God's mission and redemptive purposes.³ We need to rely on our relationship with God to manifest his nature of love, glory, and concerns for our engagement with global diasporas.⁴

God gave the vision of Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) to a group of Chinese Christians in the 1940s. However, the Movement of bringing the Gospel to all from China, westward to Jerusalem, was disrupted in 1949, when Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of People's Republic of China. Since then, the Chinese exodus began and dispersed Chinese people globally from their homeland. Along the process of their migration and settling down, many Chinese immigrants have heard the Gospel and accepted the Lord in their newfound homes.

Why would God give such a vision right before the Chinese mass dispersion? God must have orchestrated the movement because the BTJ vision

and missions are not only for Christians in China, but also for Chinese diaspora Christians who would be settling down in their host countries around the world. Our God had paved the way to bring salvation to the Chinese diaspora outside of China. The BTJ Movement will thrive through glocal missions to all.

As the world has become glocal, so must our missions. Will our local missions to diverse communities around us have a rippling effect on global missions? The purpose of this paper is to present how a church in the Chinese diaspora can be involved in glocal missions and to partake in the BTJ Movement when the opportunity presents itself.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Diaspora: Diaspora means "a scattering," used to describe the large-scale movement of people from their homeland to settle permanently or temporarily in other countries.⁵

Glocal Missions: Global in scope but local in action and in sequence⁶ because of the seamless integration between the local and the global,⁷ which means local evangelistic outreaches have global ripple effects.⁸

Missions: Ways and means of accomplishing "the mission" which has been entrusted by the Triune God to the Church and to Christians.⁹

GLOBAL MIGRATION SITUATION

According to the World Migration Report 2022, the estimated all international migrants worldwide in 2020 were around 281 million. That means 1 in 30 people in the world is a migrant, and more than 40% of them were born in Asia. The largest country of origin was India followed by Mexico, the Russian Federation, China, and Syria. Asia and Europe experienced the most remarkable growth from 2000 to 2020 and comprised 61% of the global international migrant stock, and North America, with the United States as

5. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Issue Group No. 26 A and B, "Lausanne Occasional Paper 55."

6. Enoch Wan, written comments on my first proposal draft, Portland, OR, December, 2017.

7. Bob Roberts Jr., *Glocalization: How Followers of Jesus Engage a Flat World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 24.

8. Sadiri Joy Tira, "Glocal Evangelism: Jesus Christ, Magdalena, and Damascus in Greater Toronto Area,"

Lausanne World Pulse, (June 2010), <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/perspectives-php/1291/06-2010> (accessed October 27, 2021).

9. Enoch Wan, "Rethinking Missiological Research Methodology: Exploring a New Direction," *Global Missiology*, (October 2003), <http://www.enochwan.com/english/articles/pdf/Rethinking%20Missiological%20Research%20Methodology.pdf> (accessed October 27, 2021).

1. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Issue Group No. 26 A and B: *Diasporas and International Students*. "Lausanne Occasional Paper 55: The New People Next Door." In 2004 *Forum Occasional Papers*, (September 29-October 5, 2004), under "missional content," edited by David Clayton, 2005, <https://lausanne.org/content/lop/diasporas-and-international-students-the-new-people-next-door-lop-55> (accessed October 27, 2021).

2. Sam George, "Is God Reviving Europe Through Refugees: Turning the Greatest Humanitarian Crisis of Our Times into One of the Greatest Mission Opportunities," *Lausanne Global Analysis* 6, no. 3 (April 28, 2017), under "Missional Content," <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-05/god-reviving-europe-refugees> (accessed October 27, 2021).

3. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "The Seoul Declaration on Diaspora Missiology," (November 14, 2009), LCWE Diaspora Educators Consultation 2009, under "Missional Content," <https://www.lausanne.org/content/statement/the-seoul-declaration-on-diaspora-missiology> (accessed October 27, 2021).

4. Enoch Wan, "Relational Theology and Relational Missiology," *Occasional Bulletin* 21, no. 1(Fall 2007), https://www.westernseminary.edu/files/documents/faculty/wan/Relat_theol_missio_OB_21_1.pdf (accessed October 27, 2021).

the primary migration destination, comprising 21%.¹⁰ According to Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, editors of *World Christian*, only 18.2% of non-Christians around the world knew a Christian in mid-2021.¹¹ We could be the first Christian friend to our global diaspora neighbors. As such, the need is for us to re-orientate our missional eyes to see the world from a global to a glocal perspective, and mobilize Chinese diaspora Christians with the BTJ vision for glocal missions to all, to expand God's Kingdom wherever we go.

GLOCALIZATION, CHURCH, AND MISSIONS

Nowadays, the world has blurred the boundaries between the local and the global. Glocalization means the interconnection of the local, contextual, and homogenous with the global, universal, and heterogenous. The global and local enable each other, and reciprocally form each other. They are deeply and inextricably connected, are interdependent, and are not opposing forces.¹² Glocalization is the interdependent relationship between the local and the global. It is global realities that shape local contexts;¹³ therefore, local missions to a diverse community have a rippling effect on global missions.

Since the impact of our mission task are glocal, the church needs to have a glocal vision. The Church must see and understand the interconnection of the local and global aspects of church and missions. They are both to be considered equally important.¹⁴ What is global is our universal faith, and what is local is contextualization. People live locally, not globally; therefore, the global mission strategies must focus on local realities and local methods.¹⁵ Glocalization is about discourse, learning, and partnership,¹⁶ and so is our glocal missions.

The Lausanne Diaspora issue network affirms the growing reality and implications of hybridity for the mission of God. It also recognizes hybridity as the process by and through which God mixes culture, ethnicity, and identity.¹⁷ However, hybrids often

struggle over identity to reconcile two very different sets of values, norms, worldviews, and lifestyles, and some have multi-cultural identities.¹⁸ It is particularly important to know about our identity in intercultural interactions as we express our identity to others through communication.¹⁹

A church that does not reflect hybridity in her new mission context and live out her distinctiveness and exclusivity of Christian life, faces the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel in this fluid and fast-changing world. She has to truly love her neighbors and build an authentic body of Christ that reflects the community. The Cape Town Commitment calls church and mission leaders in host countries to recognize and respond to the diaspora missional opportunities in strategic planning, training and resourcing of workers among them, and to witness in word and deed.²⁰

THEOLOGY

Our God is a missional God, and mission is "*missio Dei* within the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The foundation of missions begins with sending among the Trinity, where the Father sends the Son to all peoples (Rom 10) who are created in His image, and the Spirit He sends in Christ's name (John 14) to all believers. That mission is now extended to us (John 17:4). We need to see diasporas from God's perspective, recognizing that it is He who has moved our diaspora neighbors within our communities, so that they might know him.

Glocalization is the interdependent relationship between the local and the global. It is global realities that shape local contexts;²¹ therefore, local missions to a diverse community have a rippling effect on global missions.

The Great Commission clearly includes Church mission to win people into the Kingdom everywhere in the world. And the work is beyond Church and missions, to see that God's will is done on earth outside the Church and declare his glory among all peoples.²² The promise of the presence of the Holy

18. Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama, eds., *Experiencing Intercultural Communication*. 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 119.

19. Martin and Nakayama, *Experiencing Intercultural Communication*, 91.

20. The Cape Town Commitment, Part II, "For the World We Serve: The Cape Town Call to Action," in Cameron, 142-3.

21. Hill, *Global Church*, 27.

22. Ralph D. Winter, "Three Mission Eras: And the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800-2000," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 264.

10. International Organization for Migration, "World Migration Report 2022," <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/> (accessed December 16, 2021).

11. Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021).

12. Graham Hill, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 26.

13. Hill, *Global Church*, 27.

14. Hans Aage Gravaas, "Mission and Globalisation: Some Lessons to be Learned—A Brief Summary," in *The Church Going Glocal: Mission and Globalisation*, eds. Tormod Engelsen, Erling Lundebj, and Dagfinne Solheim (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 208.

15. Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Global Strategies and Local Methods of Missionary Work in the Early Church: Jesus, Peter and Paul (Brandtzaeg Memorial Lecture)," in Tormod Engelsen, Erling Lundebj, and Dagfinne Solheim, 30.

16. Hill, *Global Church*, 26.

17. Global Diaspora Network, "The Manila Statement on Hybridity in Diaspora Mission," in *A Hybrid World: Diaspora, Hybridity, and Missio Dei*, eds. Sadiri Joy Tira and Juliet Lee Uytanlet (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 232.

Spirit after the Great Commission is to obey his commandments (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus models his life to the disciples, but they were not transformed to be his witnesses until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) after they have obeyed his command (Acts 1:4). God gives us a spirit of love, of power, and of self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7) to extend his Kingdom. The Church in a hybrid community is to become hybrid with acts of love, compassion, and reconciliation like Jesus to engage, invite, and love our friends and neighbors.

We need to see diasporas in the full scope of their humanity, more than as targets of our religious marketing.²³ God invites us into His fellowship life,²⁴ as humans are created to be in a unique relationship with the Creator.²⁵ The horizontal reconciliation in Ephesians of age, class, gender, and race comprises the 'love your neighbor' commandment which is merely a reflection of the greatest commandment of the vertical reconciliation of sinners to God (Eph. 2:1-10).²⁶ A Christian does not truly believe until he obeys; he is still being born again because his faith is still dead (James 2:14-17).²⁷

The greatest commandments that Jesus spoke of is to love God and to love our neighbors. In addition, we are sent to invite all peoples to enter His diverse Kingdom. Once we understand that our identity in the Kingdom transcends beyond any worldly identities, we will be transformed into disciples and missionaries.

God has sent us among diasporas, empowered by his Spirit to bring the Gospel to them through our witness for Him (Isaiah 43:10-12; Acts 1:8). A Spirit-filled church is a mission-minded church that evangelism should arise spontaneously.²⁸ Evangelism is the daily witness of every church member in their regular contacts.²⁹ In the New Testament, another word for

23. Jared Looney, *Crossroads of the Nations: Diaspora, Globalization, and Evangelism*, ed. Kendi Howells Douglas and Stephen Burris (Portland: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), 87.

24. Hill, *Global Church*, 414.

25. Arthur F. Glasser et al., *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 35.

26. Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: Twenty-First-Century Mission From Everyone to Everywhere* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 26.

27. George Patterson, *Church Planting Through Obedience Oriented Teaching* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 10.

28. The Lausanne Covenant, *The Lausanne Legacy: Landmarks in Global Mission*, ed. Judith E. M. Cameron (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2016), 48.

29. Patterson, *Church Planting Through Obedience Oriented*

witness is martyr, showing the ultimate form of witness is to lay down our life as a witness for Christ.

³⁰The fundamental characteristic of Apostolic mission that made them witnesses of Jesus is that Christ will come again as King of His Kingdom.³¹

Furthermore, the eschatological home keeps us from becoming too comfortable in this world and too institutionalized in the Church.³² Our first calling is to worship God,³³ and Church's mission is to proclaim the Gospel across all of the creation that He is the Lord.³⁴ We need to think theologically, that is, to relate all our thinking to God, who is behind everything.³⁵

DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY IN BRIEF

As creatures in the image of God, our existence, ability to know and undertaking in missions are all dependent on God (Acts 17:28) who is the great I AM (Exod. 3), and it is God-centered.³⁶ What people most desperately need is peace with God,³⁷ and what can be powerful enough to carry us far away from our comfort zones to be his witnesses is a deep sense of divine calling.³⁸ When we know who God is, and who Jesus is, we would want to witness for our God.³⁹ Our Triune God is relational, and we are created as relational beings. His salvation is for all peoples, and it is the Good News. It is good because He has covered our shame of unholiness and unrighteousness through His unmerited grace; we are reconciled with Him; and, we have a personal relationship with Him. Dr. Enoch Wan calls for action to engage in diaspora (glocal) missions and to integrate the Great Commission with the great commandment relationally.⁴⁰

Teaching, 31.

30. Walter A. Elwell, et al., *Encyclopedia of the Bible*, no. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 2155.

31. David J. Cho, "Kingdom Mission: DNA of the Missionary Task" (plenary paper presented at Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Conference, Tokyo, Japan, May 11-14, 2010), under "Conference Details," http://www.tokyo2010.org/resources/Tokyo2010_Plenary_David_Cho.pdf (accessed November 11, 2017).

32. Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 279.

33. The Lausanne Covenant, *The Lausanne Legacy*, 15.

34. Bruce Riley Ashford, "The Gospel and Culture," in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford, rev. ed. (Nashville: Academic, 2011), 125-7.

35. The Lausanne Covenant, *The Lausanne Legacy*, 14.

36. Enoch Wan, "Relational Paradigm for Practicing Diaspora Missions in the 21st Century," in *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, ed. Enoch Wan, 2nd ed. (Portland: IDS-USA, 2014), 192-3.

37. Cody C. Lorange, "Case Study 4: Reflections of a Church Planter Among Diaspora Groups in Metro-Chicago: Pursuing Cruciformity in Diaspora Missions," in *Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*, eds. Michael Pocock and Enoch Wan, Evangelical Missiological Society Series no 23 (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015), 260.

38. Lorange, "Reflections of a Church Planter Among Diaspora Groups in Metro-Chicago," in Pocock and Wan, 277.

39. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 66-7.

40. Enoch Wan, "Global People and Diaspora Missiology" (plenary paper presented at Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Conference,

The greatest commandments that Jesus spoke of is to love God and to love our neighbors. In addition, we are sent to invite all peoples to enter His diverse Kingdom. Once we understand that our identity in the Kingdom transcends beyond any worldly identities, we will be transformed into disciples and missionaries.⁴¹ When we do that in obedience, we glorify him who sends us through the allegiance to his lordship. Diaspora missions requires us to practice strategic stewardship for our relational accountability to God and the unsaved.⁴² It is missions to every person outside his Kingdom everywhere, and supplements the traditional missiology.⁴³ Dr. Wan calls for rethinking missiology in the context of glocalization.⁴⁴

Traditional mission is polarized or dichotomized in focus and territorial with a sharp distinction between here and there; and movement is lineal, meaning goes one way. It is geographically divided and compartmentalized as a discipline.⁴⁵ Diaspora missions focuses on holistic missions and contextualization integrating evangelism and social concern. It is de-territorialized and simultaneously local and global conceptually. In perspective, it is not geographically divided but borderless, and it is transnational and global.⁴⁶

Transnationalism is liminal, in between, and not bi-cultural in the assimilation model.⁴⁷ It is acculturation of selection and integration of traits in the host culture.⁴⁸ The apostle Paul used his bi-cultural diasporic roots to be sensitive both to the ministry and message contexts.⁴⁹ Moreover, the shared memory of the diaspora experience can give all diasporas a shared unity of identity and experience.⁵⁰ Chinese diaspora Christians need to be like the apostle to embrace and

use our bi-culturalism for today's diaspora missions.⁵¹ Missions must be at the full time missionary career level and personal level of all believers, and it is not a matter of either-or.⁵² When Chinese diasporic individuals and congregations are to be mobilized and empowered to fulfill the Great Commission in our homeland and elsewhere, it is "missions through the diaspora."⁵³ When Chinese diaspora Christians have acquired the language and are adjusted to the host culture with the shared migrant experience, we are the natural bridge for "missions by and beyond the diaspora" to reach out to other ethnic groups in host country and beyond.⁵⁴ As the majority of refugees who came to the United States in 2016 were Christians, and the majority of global migrants are Christians, the Chinese diaspora Christian communities have the opportunities to be involved in missions.⁵⁵ Through partnership between Chinese diaspora and those focusing beyond Chinese diaspora to serve other people from diaspora or non-diaspora communities, is "missions with the diaspora" in Kingdom ministry.⁵⁶ Diaspora missions begins at a local level and proceeds to be global in perspective.⁵⁷

Living in a diverse community adds a missional perspective⁵⁸ and a new dimension to our Chinese Christian identity as World Christian, which means to have a global perspective with local and cultural awareness.⁵⁹ However, a church doing missions with outward orientation to others is conceived as an ingrown, complacent, and ethnocentric church.⁶⁰ Being a missional Chinese church is an obedience issue because we will get out of our comfort and safety zones and engage the world as Jesus did if we love like Jesus.⁶¹

THE MISSIONAL MINDSET OF CHINESE DIASPORA CHURCHES

Chinese churches have been applying Romans 9:1-3 to incite the Chinese kinsmen spirit to evangelize the massive number of non-believing Chinese. As a

Japan, May 11-14, 2010), under "Conference Details,"

41. Stan Nussbaum, *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission: A Concise, Accessible Companion to David Bosch's Classic Book* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 23.

42. Enoch Wan, "Rethinking Missiology in the Context of the 21st Century: Global Demographic Trends and Diaspora Missiology," *Great Commission Research Journal*, 2 no. 1 (Summer 2010), under "Journal Publications," <http://journals.biola.edu/gcr/volumes/2/issues/1/articles/7> (accessed November 11, 2017).

43. Enoch Wan and Sadiri Joy Tira, "Diaspora Missiology and Mission in the Context of the 21st Century," *Global Missiology English* 1, no. 8 (October 2010), 5, under "Diaspora Studies," <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/383/994> (accessed October 27, 2021).

44. Wan, "Rethinking Missiology in the Context of the 21st Century."

45. David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 348.

46. Wan and Tira, "Diaspora Missiology and Mission in the Context of the 21st Century," 4.

47. Enoch Wan, "Theorizing Diaspora," in Wan, 32.

48. David Scott, "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World," *Diaspora* 1:3 (1991), 275-6.

49. Larry W. Caldwell, "Diaspora Ministry in the Book of Acts: Insights From Two Speeches of the Apostle Paul to Help Guide Diaspora Ministry Today," in Pocock and Wan, 93-4.

50. Ted Rubesh, "Diaspora Distinctives: The Jewish Diaspora Experience in the Old Testament," *Torch Trinity Journal* 13, no. 2 (November 30, 2010), 136.

51. Caldwell, "Diaspora Ministry in the Book of Acts," 103.

52. Enoch Wan, "'Mission' and 'Missio Dei': Response to Charles Van Engen's 'Mission Defined and Described,'" in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 45.

53. Wan and Tira, "Diaspora Missiology and Mission in the Context of the 21st Century," 11.

54. Stan Downes, "Mission by and Beyond the Diaspora: Partnering With Diaspora Believers to Reach Other Immigrants and the Local People," in Pocock and Wan, 83.

55. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "Lausanne Occasional Paper 55."

56. Enoch Wan, "Introduction," in Wan, 8.

57. Wan, "Rethinking Missiology in the Context of the 21st Century."

58. Hyung Jin Park, "The Journey of the Gospel and Being a World Christian," in *Torch Trinity Journal* 13, no. 1 (May 30, 2010), 94.

59. Park, "The Journey of the Gospel and Being a World Christian," 92.

60. Lianne Roembke, *Building Credible Multicultural Teams* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000), 1.

61. Roberts, *Glocalization*, 146.

matter of fact, when the apostle Paul evangelized the Jews of his time, it was not merely a matter of kinsman spirit. There are theological and missiological reasons behind his statement in the passage through his understanding and conviction. When Chinese Churches wrongly apply the passage, they may have cultural, emotional, ethnic and/or pragmatic factors only.⁶²

Nevertheless, the other meaning of the Church is the Whole Church, which is the body of Christ, the Kingdom of the Lord, including all churches that truly believe in the Lord Jesus in his family. Without a Kingdom mindset, Chinese churches are egocentric and ethnocentric and difficult in partnership with others; leaders are narrow-minded, self-exalted, and pursuing power.

The Chinese have inherited a culture of family which is centered on their own, a culture of inward-looking and mediocrity. Churches generally teach members to love their church, and at most extend it to love their denomination. Hence, Christians also center on their church as their spiritual family without much interest or connection with other churches and denominations. Nevertheless, the other meaning of the Church is the Whole Church, which is the body of Christ, the Kingdom of the Lord, including all churches that truly believe in the Lord Jesus in his family. Without a Kingdom mindset, Chinese churches are egocentric and ethnocentric and difficult in partnership with others; leaders are narrow-minded, self-exalted, and pursuing power.⁶³ It is a challenge to mobilize Chinese churches for glocal missions to all, and Christians could continue to stay in their comfort zones because of a mindset barrier about the calling, spiritual gifts, and being a witness.

The two key points for glocal missions mobilization are: that the calling is for every believer to love our neighbors; and to our obedience in doing His will for the Kingdom out of our close relationship with God. The Spirit will bear witness about Jesus when we witness of truth and love from the Scriptures (John 15:26).

Besides, under the possible influence of functionalism

62. Enoch Wan, "Chinese Christian Missions," *Great Commission Quarterly* 26 (February 2000), 30-1,

http://www.globalmissiology.org/gcci/Chinese/b5_publications/GCB/2000/GCB_26.pdf (accessed December 17, 2021).

63. Thomas Wang, 中華民族最後的轉捩點 [The Last Turning Point of the Chinese Race] (Mountain View, CA: Great Commission Center International, 2004), 16-7.

that all aspects of a ministry practically serve as functional acts for the survival of that ministry. Evangelistic efforts are to function for the purpose of evangelism. Conversion is always at the center of evangelism, and the number of converts at any evangelistic meetings determines its success;⁶⁴ therefore, missional approach is pragmatic and managerial. Yet the Gospel we witness is the oneness we are in Christ, and the evangelistic method of the HUP of exclusive ethnic groups is unacceptable in our context. We are all aliens in this world, and we are to stick together. With the connecting links with homeland, the Gospel can be the part of the communication traffic between those at home and those in exile.⁶⁵ Our mission is holistic because we cannot just start a local church among diasporas, such as refugees, without also addressing their physical needs and becoming their advocate.⁶⁶ We should be bold like the early church, and not let the pandemic or anything to keep us away from missions.

WHAT CAN CHINESE DIASPORA CHURCHES DO

Chinese diaspora churches need to have a breakthrough from our egocentric, ethnocentric, and mediocre thinking to a Kingdom mindset, be obedient, transformed, and empowered by the Spirit, adjust our missional vision and directions, and be bold like the early church for our glocal missions. This is the time for Chinese diaspora churches to grow from missions to and through Chinese diaspora to missions by and beyond and with the diverse diasporas to all for the BTJ Movement. When we practice missions by and beyond and with the diverse diasporas to all including the Jews, these diasporas would be a channel to bring the Gospel back to Jerusalem. Our first concern is to see our neighbors with a Kingdom mindset through God's lenses.

Diaspora missions must be intentional because cross cultural missions is almost always against our human nature. He has given us his Holy Spirit as a powerful resource to help us overcome any obstacles and challenges. By the empowerment of the Spirit, we tear down the barriers of egocentrism of my people, my place, my plan, and my comfort and pleasure to serve the people in our diverse neighborhood with a Kingdom mindset. We need to submit ourselves to the Lord and get down from our Tower of Babel of self-centeredness because the biggest barrier we face is ourselves. When we focus on the Kingdom, the Church becomes less cultural, and missions goes glocal because the world has gone

64. Enoch Wan and Tin V. Nguyen, "Towards a Theology of Relational Mission Training: An Application of the Relational Paradigm," *Global Missiology* 2, no. 11 (January 2014), 2, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1626/3600> (accessed October 22, 2018).

65. Jonathan Ingleby, "Postcolonialism, Globalization, Migration and Diaspora: Some Implications for Mission," *Encounters Mission Ezine*, no. 20 (October 2007), 3.

66. Wan and Tira, "Diaspora Missiology and Mission in the Context of the 21st Century."

glocal.⁶⁷ Once we open our missional eyes and see our diaspora neighbors from God's perspective, we see opportunities.

Living in a diverse community, we see people from the mission fields living among us right at our front door. Consequently, the Chinese diaspora church is an army of missionaries sitting in the pews,⁶⁸ particularly when it has a Chinese or multi-ethnic diaspora congregation with culture-crossing experiences. In some ways, the early church was in a similar environment. It was set in a diverse and commercial center context with a dominant language, and they used these as tools for missions.⁶⁹ The believers were multi-ethnic diasporas who identified with both homelands and were bi-cultural.

The first- and second- generation Chinese diaspora Christians are in a unique position with the skillsets to reach other ethnic diasporas than mono-cultural Christians. We know the importance of honor and shame, ingroup and outgroup factors, hospitality, and building trust and relationships as we are from a group culture which is the majority culture of the world. With real time communication, diasporas connect with family and friends back home on a regular basis. Therefore, as a friend of a diaspora, we could become a family friend locally and globally. The shared migrant experience helps Chinese diaspora Christians not only to empathize and understand our diaspora neighbors, but also to help them find their new identity in Christ and the Kingdom. Once diasporas see, hear, and experience the Gospel from Chinese diaspora Christians here locally, it will be shared within their networks globally. Our Christian witness then, is local and global all at the same time.

To live out the Gospel, the body of Christ needs to actively engage the surrounding culture. In general, group cultural people learn through observation and experience. They need to have opportunities to see the transforming power of the Gospel and the outflow of God's love in action within their community before they enter a church building. Let the Gospel flow naturally along relationship lines while we live out a missional lifestyle to be a good steward of our time, talents, and treasures.⁷⁰ The lost needs to meet Jesus in flesh and blood, through us.⁷¹

Our church diaspora missions begin with training and equipping the Kingdom people to live God-glorifying lives in every aspect of our life.⁷² We need to develop the ability to understand cultural differences and similarities; otherwise, we may become suspicious

and isolated when we do not have the skills to relate to one another, and reach out with confidence to the diverse community people outside our church building. Above all, our motive must be genuine because no one likes to be coerced into making a decision for Jesus or be treated as a project or a number. Our outreach style and strategy also need to be adaptable and flexible since every context and the people we reach are different.

With people coming from a group cultural background, we reach out to them with a group and relational approach to provide acceptance, a sense of belonging, emotional security, identity, and mutual support. In this, we create groups that have a combination of Christians and non-Christians. We take a cue from the St. Patrick's group approach model in the 5th Century.⁷³ The first- and second-generation Chinese diaspora Christians witness in such an approach focuses first on our being and then our doing through the common migrant experiences and intercultural skills to build trust and relationships. It takes time to form cross-cultural relationships, and it cannot be agenda driven.⁷⁴ Our mission work is more than learning a national culture and identifying the cultural attributes, but it is to get to know a person within the discourse communities where he lives, works, and worships. It is to build relationships in the local network at a personal and remarkable level where people relate to each other within their communities. This is the focus of mission work from a relational paradigm perspective.⁷⁵ As we have limited resources, we can partner with other churches and mission organizations to be a faithful and obedient steward to our King. Furthermore, we pray and trust the Spirit to bear fruits in his time.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM MY MULTI-ETHNIC DIASPORA MISSIONS

I came to the U.S. from Taiwan having never heard the Gospel. I met Jesus two years later, and was called to full time service. It takes time for a diaspora to believe in Jesus. God brings diasporas to our community so they would be like me: being away from my family was a way to sanctify me, and to set me apart from my family religion that is deeply rooted in our daily way of life. I am engaging in a spiritual warfare and very much in need of the work and protection from the Spirit. The power of Jesus' death and resurrection will set people free from fear, such as fear of not doing enough good works to go to heaven, fear of reincarnation, and fear of possible revenge from the

67. Roberts, *Glocalization*, 29.

68. Mark Galli, "Glocal Church Ministry: Bob Roberts has an Idea that may Change American Congregations, if not the World," *Christianity Today* (July 2007), 45.

69. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 318.

70. Alan and Katherine Carter, "The Gospel and Life Style," in Ashford, 130-1.

71. Charles A. Davis, *Making Disciples Across Cultures: Missional Principles for a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 102-3.

72. Jedidiah Coppenger, "The Community of Mission: The Church," in Ashford, 71-3.

73. Frances S. Adeney and Terry Much, *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 94.

74. Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li, *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity Into Your Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 47.

75. Enoch Wan and Mark Hedinger, *Relational Missionary Training: Theology, Theory and Practice*, ed. Kendi Howells Douglas and Stephen Burris, (Skyforest: Urban Loft Publishers, 2017), 181-3.

evil spirits and so on. All I need to do is to rely on the Spirit and grab the opportunities God has put in front of me, learn from mistakes, and be a sower, most likely the first sower.

The intercultural seminary trainings I received have helped me to grow my intercultural mind from being egocentric and ethnocentric to ethno-relative. After all, the most important training is to be the right person as a witness. It is about being transformed by the Spirit through my willingness to grow and change, and through my obedience to Jesus' commands and the Lordship of Jesus.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Is God trying to tell us that glocalization is the time for us to reach the people in our diverse neighborhoods connecting local missions with global missions for his Kingdom and his glory? The Chinese diaspora churches need to recognize that it is God himself who brings the global diasporas to us (Acts 17:25). Everyone at church needs to understand what God is doing at the global level and involve themselves at the local level. From the Biblical, church, missions, and world histories, we know that nothing, even the pandemic, can stop the mission of our Triune God. We need to have a breakthrough in our egocentric, ethnocentric, and mediocre thinking, and adjust our missional vision and directions for glocal missions to all. We must overcome the temptations of using our calling as an excuse for not reaching out to all, but to think of it as an opportunity to draw closer to the Lord.⁷⁷ We need to seize the glocal missions opportunities by mobilizing the congregation, particularly the first- and second- generation Chinese diaspora Christians, for the BTJ mission task that is in front of us. It is equally important to equip them to live out and share the Gospel in a culturally acceptable way.

Our mission is to invite global diasporas into the present Kingdom, and to enjoy the Messianic banquet with us in the future Kingdom. Missions begins from the Jerusalem church to the diverse diaspora of the Antioch church to the world, and we are in a similar environment as the early church. May Chinese diaspora churches be like the apostle Paul who laid down his life daily, and the early church that was known by its love for missions to, through, by and beyond, and with the diverse diasporas to bring the Gospel back to Jerusalem.

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MINISTRY DIRECTION AND ISSUES IN THE MISSION TRANSITION PERIOD: FROM MISSIO AD GENTES (Mission Focused on Tribes) TO MISSIO INTER GENTES (Mission Centered on the Locals)

S. Hun Kim

MISSION TRANSITION

In the 20th century, as we went through the missions of “Manifest Destiny” led by Western Christianity in North America and the “Mission Moratorium” declared in Africa at the same time, I had some scepticism that the world church would not be possible to do the mission that the way we used to do for the past century.

The nation, which began under God's absolute protection of the Puritans who settled in the United States in the 19th century, came to establish basic values to justify all actions based on the three Manifest Destiny. The first is the legitimacy of Americans and their institutions, the second is to imprint the image of the United States in the world by spreading this system, and the third is to follow the God-given destiny to achieve this. Evangelical missions in North America also jumped on these values to some extent, especially in Africa, despite their devoted contributions, resulting in no less side effects, and so-called Moratorium, which demanded the expulsion of missionaries from outside Africa, was declared in Kenya in 1972. Francis Anekwe Oborji, a Catholic priest who studied the history of missions, describes it in his book *Concepts of Mission*:

“This theory is still today the object of discussion in some circles... the young churches were expected to discover their own identities and develop their own specific character without the control or interference of foreign missionaries. ... He (missionary) must avoid a paternalistic attitude and the temptation to impose his own culture. New missionaries must have an attitude of service, of openness and respect and acceptance of the local populace, their cultures, and institutions.”¹

After this moratorium declaration, various voices of self-reflection came out from within Africa, and at the Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1974, the factor that prevented the growth of young churches was not just the problem of external missionaries, but in promoting evangelization the common responsibility of the internal community in how to cooperate for the incarnation of the gospel through sharing together.

The path of Protestant missions in the 20th century was formed along the traces of the leadership of the Western Church based on tangible results, and this kind of missions can be said to have originated from the so-called ‘Mission for Targeting tribes (Missio Ad Gentes).’ This mission was the basic missionary direction of Protestant missions, led by the Moravians,

1. Oborji, F., A., *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2006. p. 27 – 28.

in obedience to the command of Mark 16:15, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all peoples.”

Protestant missions with this tribal evangelization has been originated from Western-driven missions for the past centuries. Christendom, which was formed after the 16th century when the so-called Great European Migration began, was led by the United States in the 20th century along with the church growth in North America. Their ideology was no different from the re-interpretation of the oracle, which was the founding ideology of the past. Jonathan Ingleby quoted in his book, *Beyond Empire: Post-colonialism & Mission in a Global Context* (2010) about US imperialism.

“Our preeminent position of power is itself the evidence that we are ‘destined’ to be world leaders. Given that this is our destiny, we have the right to make it happen in all circumstances. Those who threaten our interests in the long run threaten their own. Attack is the best form of defence. ‘God who made us mighty, make us mightier yet.’”²

An example in the 20th century when they acted on this value was the occupation of the Philippines. The then president, McKinley, stayed up all night in prayer at the White House, saying, “God does not want to give it back to Spain, nor to France or Germany, nor to leave it to the Filipinos but to convert them to Protestantism and become Christians.”³ He rose the next day and ordered the Philippines to be incorporated into the map of the United States. Protestant scholars in the Philippines clearly pointed out that the Philippine Protestant leaders in the colony showed a certain attitude of sympathy and cooperation with this decision, and the occupied country used the church as a means of colonial rule and plunder.

However, while entering the 21st century, along with the decline of the Western church, global churches began to grow, especially in Asia, South America, and Africa. Lamin Sanneh offers some analyses⁴ of this growth.

First and most important, expansion occurred after colonialism ended. Perhaps colonialism has become a major stumbling block.

Second, it is the result of the translation of the Bible into African mother tongues. This is because the native language Bible increases

2. Ingleby, Jonathan, *Beyond Empire: Postcolonialism & Mission in a Global Context*, Authorhouse UK Ltd, Milton Keynes, 2010. p.35.

3. Aguilan, Victor, *The Other side of Our Heritage: Protestant Mission and American Imperialism*, presented at the conference of the Protestant Centennial in Philippines.

4. Sanneh, Lamin, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Cambridge, 2003. p. 18.

accessibility to local people and tends to be culturally reviving.

Third is the initiative of African churches. This means that there is no longer any disadvantage in compromising with external institutions.

Fourth, theological issues can be cited. For example, if the indigenous view on the concept of God and the name of God in Christianity tends to be compatible with each other after being colonized, and this compatibility of Christianity and indigenous beliefs increased. In particular, areas with a strong African traditional religion tend to respond better than areas with a weak one.

According to the above analysis, it is true that the African churches are transformed into self-conscious churches only after foreign, especially Western, forms of mission are eliminated. Through this phenomenon, it can be eventually concluded that the strategy of Western missions in the 20th century, which took ethnic peoples as objects of evangelization, has to be altered because the diaspora phenomenon caused by the growth of global churches and human migration that entered the post-colonial era after the 1960s has turned our societies into a global village where almost all tribes can access the Gospel due to refugee crisis that hit Europe, Asia, and North America.

The strategy and concept of 'Mission for targeting tribes (Missio Ad Gentes)', which has been taken for granted for the modern mission, should be converted into 'Mission focused on the locals (Missio Inter Gentes)', which is faithful to the essence of missions in which the locals become the center of evangelism and discipleship. This will also focus on developing the ability of the locals to carry the gospel on their own. We will look further at the comparison of these two missions in the next paragraph.

"MISSIO AD GENTES" Mission Focused on TRIBES

Mission focused on tribes (peoples) essentially result in disciple-making of Christ, and all Christians have a calling to carry out His Great Commission. This traditional mission was first adopted as the main theme of the church's mission at the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church, and it was clear that the evangelization of all peoples was the church's missionary banner. Pope Paul VI opened the door to frontier mission and dialogue with other religions and beliefs by proposing an edict called 'to tribes (Ad Gentes)'. It is beyond the fence of the existing doctrine of sharing that salvation only exists in the church, and of the exclusive grace of God's redemption. Furthermore, it was also an opportunity to improve better relations with other Christians (Protestants) and religious communities. However, despite the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* (meaning 'Our Age')⁵,

5. This Declaration was passed on October 28, 1965 with 2,221 of the bishops in favor and 88 against as an improvement in the relationship between the Church and non-Christians. It is a

these viewpoints were unfortunately not extended to the perspective of the 'universal church', which is the body of Christ, from the point of view of practical application.

In many ways, the positive concept of mission focused on tribes were highlighted. For example, respect and love for people of different races as equal human beings, sharing culture and social life, awareness of God's presence in other traditions and living according to their conscience. However, the limitation of the mission is that missionaries can fall into the trap of the so-called 'Gap-eul(assymetirical) relationship' in which they are right, and the target of mission is insufficient. In his article, 'Towards a Mission that Evolves from Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes'⁶, M. D. Thomas, president of the Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies (IHPS) in New Delhi, India, said, "The most important misconception [of missionaries] is an act of forgetting that God is already at the mission field before they arrive," he said, reciting Ray Laan's article, and pointed out the danger of tribal target centrality in missions.

In addition, Yonathan Y. Tan, a mission theologian at the Catholic University of Sydney, Australia, who created a theoretical framework for local-centered missions in the nations, said that *Missio Ad Gentes* is 'a framework that does not fit the current era of religious pluralism. It was claimed that it was missionary work that should be abandoned.'⁷ Looking at Christ's missionary work, Jesus escaped the so-called 'Jerusalem' (church), a culture familiar to his disciples and Jews, and took the lead in expanding the gospel of Samaria (de-Church) through a woman living in that area. He did not stay there but passed through Galilee and went into the culture of the Gentiles to the non-church, which was seen as the end of the world at the time, and preached the gospel, symbolically revealing that He is omnipresent in all worlds as equal to God. (See chart below)



FIGURE 1 Expansion of the Gospel and Christ's Ministry

Today's Protestant missions are still immersed in Christian imperialism to convert 'pagans' by mobilizing Christian slogans such as 'mission to unreached tribes', or 'unreached tribes' adoption', and so on. Bishop Desmond TuTu, the leader of South Africa, once pointed out the fallacy of Protestant mission in Africa, saying that when the missionaries arrived, they had the Bible in their hands, and we had

declaration to form a relationship.

6. Thomas, M., D., Towards A Mission that Evolves from Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes, excerpted at Academia.edu on 5th July 2021. Re-quoted from Laan, Ray, Vander, Early Church Discovery Guide: Becoming a Light in the Darkness, Michigan, 2008, p.153.

7. Tan, Yonathan Y., Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, Mission Studies 21.1, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004. p.88.

the land. They asked us to pray, so when we closed our eyes and opened them again, we had the Bible in our hands, and they had the land.”

At the WEA (then WEF) World Mission Leaders Conference held in Iguazu, Brazil in October 1999, while discussing reflection on the Protestant evangelical missions and future prospects, the three-self principle of self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagation was not enough. And by adding two self-reliance principles namely: self-theologizing and self-missilogizing, “we can expect a surprising diversity of culture and church changes within a community of faith which is faithful to the Bible. The results will be fundamentally different from the present.”⁸ However, the results after that have yet to be proven.

Andrew Walls, who has an excellent insight into the history of modern missions, wrote on the topic of 'Christian Mission in a Five-hundred-year Context',⁹ that at the Edinburgh Conference in 1910, the history of dramatic Christian expansion in Korea, the Himalayas, and China, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, was unexpected. And that the worldwide universality of Christianity, which had been developed in the early days of Christian history, was being restored. And he also observed that theology and history, which had been led by the West, have now handed over the initiative to global Christianity. True theology comes from field missions, and the subject and agenda of the theology must be culturally defined by the local active Christian life.

Walls also said that if the local theology develops, the church and mission as an organism cannot but be subordinated to the indigenous culture, so all our religious expressions can only be perfected in Christ. As solidarity and unity among Jewish converts and gentiles from different Greek backgrounds in Ephesus church are seen not as a mere union of two races, but as a living union of two functional members with Christ as the head. He argued that ultimately the mission accomplished during the Great Europe Migration now give the Great Reverse Migration an opportunity to cooperate in building the body of Christ.

MISSIO INTER GENTES (Mission Centered on the LOCALS)

After the second half of 2019, as the Covid-19 virus began to shrink all human activities, we realized that the visible and quantitative missions we have, no longer worked. And the world mission began to ponder the post-Covid era. In particular, the Protestant missions, which have been led by the West, broke the myth of advanced countries, which have been the

8. Edited by William Taylor, Donghwa Kim, Sangcheol Moon, Hyunmo Lee, Hyungkeun Choi, 21st Century Global Missiology, Christian Documentation Society, Seoul 2004. p. 30.

9. Walls, Andrew, Christian Mission in a Five-hundred-year Context, in Mission In the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission, edited by Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2008, p. 200 – 204.

quantitative and strategic basis of missions due to this Covid crisis. While the international order is being reorganized into a new structure, global churches is becoming more accountable agent for world mission. As for the church in the lockdown era, Jason Mandryk of Operation World makes the following predictions.

“CoVid-19 is demonstrating all around the world that the essence of the Church is not in the physical structures, but in the people who abide by His word and are filled with His Spirit. In a post-Christian West, there are lessons for us, that our ears have to hear. Increasing antipathy toward organized religion, dwindling finances, a disinclined younger generation, and congregations too frequently disconnected from local community all may require the Church to make a quicker transition to being a relational network rather than a calcified institution.

In the face of pandemics, societal dissolution, economic crises, and even sustained persecution, such grassroots models have proven themselves time and time again. It may feel macabre even to make such comparisons, but the best-equipped churches in the days to come will likely resemble how people follow Jesus in Iran or Vietnam rather than the USA or Australia.”¹⁰

He also predicted that the traditional Western missionary dispatch model would disappear because of high cost, regional restrictions, and reduction in mission donations. So, in the future, it was expected that the church would have more and more things to respond to after the Covid crisis, such as: the existence of mission organizations, missionary placement issues, missionary withdrawal, short-term mission trips, and thorough calculation of mission expenses. In this situation, the existing West-led missions with vested interests will no longer have a place to stand, and future missions will appear in the form of indigenous people centered on locals residing in the missionfield. In the end, it seems that in the future, missionary work will require more initiative from the locals rather than help from outsiders.

Where should our direction go in this fluctuating missionary environment? Like many missiologists and strategists, missions led by outsiders seem to have already revealed their limitations. Eventually it is important to let locals take the lead and get help from outsiders as facilitators. Therefore, I think the Missio Inter Gentes, (mission centered on the locals) should be introduced next as an important direction that Protestant missions should consider in the future.

The original meaning of this word, 'Inter Gentes', is 'mission between tribes', which is 'mission of the tribes, by the tribes, for the tribes and with the tribes'. This concept first appeared in 2001 by William R. Burrows, a professor of missiology who was in charge of the World Christian Program at a seminary in New York and it was Yonathan Yun-Ka Tan,¹¹ Professor

10. Mandryk, Jason, *Global Transmission, Global Mission: The Impact and Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic*, 2020. p. 22-23.

11. Professor Tan compiled the material from 1974 to 2000 at the FABC meeting and published it in 2004 as FABC material

of Missiology at Catholic University of Sydney, Australia, who organized this concept.

This concept aroused great sympathy at the Nairobi meeting, 2013, and at the International Theological Conference led by the University of Münster, Germany in 2014. In 2015 the first journal titled 'Missio Inter Gentes' was published by the Divine Word Mission Institute in Manila, Philippines. The term 'Inter Gentes' affects not only the religious realm but also the general academic realm.

The 'mission centered on the locals' is quite in line with the insider movement pursued by Protestant missions. Its most characteristic is the life of Christ, the human Jesus, and his teachings. The values set forth by Christ are perfection without discrimination, seeking perfection as a spiritual goal, loving one another and loving enemies, unconditional forgiveness, washing the feet of others, serving others, welcoming others as friends, caring for the weak, being the gospel to all, considering all better than oneself, being brothers and sisters to all, through which all are united in the Father. The important thing about these values is that they are universal and can be sympathized with because Christ wanted to reveal His life through Himself, transcending religion.

Jay Matenga, an Aboriginal New Zealander who is in charge of the WEA Missions Division, had a presentation at the Wycliffe Global Alliance and SIL conference held in January 2021 entitled "Together in Christ 2021". He argued the following three points of view that should be kept in mind when the global mission community cooperates in enhancing the capacity of local people in his article, 'Centering the Local: The Indigenous Future of Mission',¹² about missions in the post-pandemic era.

First, *Indigeneity*: is no longer the concept with negative and foreign-dependent, uncivilized, and primitive connotation as we thought in the past. But an implication of local innovation, local guardianship to transform and cultivate own autonomous ability. This can be said to have a similar meaning to the Asabiyya or Umma communities of Islam. This indigeneity should be seen as opposed to contextualization, which began to grow with the so-called "impositional missiology" rooted in enlightenment and colonialism. Therefore, what indigeneness must aim for is that insiders must share their own beliefs with outsiders by cultivating the ability to express themselves in a way that they can be easily understood by outsiders.

Second, *Influence*: speaking of insider-centered missions, the influence of outsiders should no longer be exercised. In Africa, Asia, and Native American regions it is a common practice that locals play the role of guardians for the safety of the community. In this sense, in the case of the gospel as well, I believe

No. 109 with the approval of the 'Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference. The name of the material is 'Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm of the Mission Theology of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference.

12. Matenga, Jay, Centring the Local: The Indigenous Future of Mission, presented at the Wycliffe Global Alliance/SIL "Together in Christ 2021" conference.

that local leaders should lead the stewardship of the community.

Third, *Integration*: One of Donald McGavran's effective missionary principles, the 'homogeneous unit principle', overlooked the biblical fact that even in the single community of the Early Church, they did not achieve unity (It is true in the book of James). Homogeneous groups are not important, but how diverse groups can be faithful to the call of Christ in John 17:18-25 towards unity. Therefore, our ultimate goal should be how to unite in the community of God as one rather than missionary achievements.

The 'local led mission' that Matenga claims is ultimately a new direction of mission that we slowly realize through long reflection after Covid, which is the mission centered on the local. In particular, when we think of the world of pluralism, we see that it has a premise that it is born in 'all traditions and cultures given through one creator'. Therefore, in the end, it can be called 'mission in a way that reveals a harmonious human culture that transcends the barriers of all man-made beliefs and ideologies'.¹³

The most dynamic perspective of mission centered on the locals is the dialogue between different beliefs and religions. Until now, the most closed factor of Protestant missions could be the lack of understanding and hostility towards other religions. In particular, considering that the remaining tasks are concentrated on major religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous religions, it is necessary to strengthen research for understanding or dialogue with other religions. Moreover, considering that the diaspora phenomenon is accelerating, and the cities of Europe are the most active mission fields where people from many different backgrounds live together due to the influx of refugees, we should not force the locals with the gospel wrapped in our own language and cultural baggage.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to share the perspective of new missions that will be developed after Covid through two contrasting missionary engagements. At this point, such considerations and discussions are reflectively necessary, and whether you have just entered missionary work or you are a veteran minister of 30-40 years, we are standing in front of the same question as to where to go in this time of transition.

Recently, in the non-face-to-face seminar held regularly by ARILAC Research Center in Korea, many insights were presented about the need for regional research and the role change between local-centered missions and external missionaries as missionary alternatives. Inspired by this, I focused on the change in the perspective of missions that has accelerated since the declaration of the Second Vatican Council.

13. Thomas, M., D., Towards A Mission that Evolves from Ad Gentes to Inter Gentes, excerpted at Academia.edu on 5th July, 2021. p.18.

Through Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology, I tried to further develop the thoughts I had personally in the refugee learning community (Equip7: Learning Community) operated in Germany. In fact, I started thinking about this topic after listening to a presentation by an Indian Catholic priest at the 2016 International Society for Missionary Society (IAMS) held at Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, Korea.

Particularly, in urban areas and pluralistic environments where human migration is unprecedented, multicultural and multireligious, situations are developing more and more dynamically. Missions do not seem possible in the same way as 'the homogeneous unit principle' movement.

As can be seen in the history of missions in Korea, converts have already formed a community of faith through the distribution of the Bible before missionaries even came in. Even today, these similar tribes, especially being captured in the field of Asian missions, minimize external influence and I think it is right to change to missions in which missionaries play the role of a helper so that locals can eventually discover the Creator through their own indigenous ability, influence and potential.

In the area of Protestantism, various missionary alternatives are emerging but we should look back on the fundamental mission issues. The concept of 'mission centered on the locals (Missio Inter Gentes)' seems to give us many challenges and reflections both theologically and from the practical point of view of the mission field.

I hope that through active discussions, a new breakthrough will be made in Protestant missions. Samuel Escobar said, Mission comes from below. "It is a mystery that the dynamism of missions does not come from the privileged and powerful, but from the little ones who have nothing."

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ORALITY AND 21st CENTURY ASIAN MISSION

Charles Madinger

ORALITY IN ASIA ADVANCES UNPRECEDENTED KINGDOM GROWTH.

A **Manila pastor** preaches on the Feeding of the 5,000 but this time uses all 5 senses to communicate it with more power. He builds to the point of the disciples astonishingly distributing their loaves . . . and unexpectedly calls the ushers in the auditorium to bring THEIR baskets of ensamadas (a packaged small sweet bun). Everyone sits together and discusses the sermon as they quiet their own growling stomachs.

A **church planter** among a tribal people in **Northern India** returns to his village after an intensive 2 weeks of learning a contextualized Bible story-telling strategy. Before, he was the one sharing the Gospel to his Hindu neighbors. Now he's training 20 people who are learning stories that match the needs of the people. They begin sharing these "God stories" and a new wave of life washes over the village.

A group of believers among an **Indonesian people group of only 2,000** scattered members *craves a Bible in their own language* that has no written texts. The most non-literate group is off the radar for most Bible translation organizations stretch to their limits with larger language groups. But these hungry believers find some people who do "oral to oral" Bible translation that can be done on a faster track. Is it perfect? No. Is it THEIR's? Yes. Can they improve it over time? Absolutely, just like the 5 revisions of the NIV!

Asia now leads the way in all these things and more. WE are the epicenter of God's mission in the 21st century. More believers. More strong churches. More wealth. More leaders being trained. More unreached and unreached-unengaged peoples. Now is our day. Now we must rise to the task!

Orality is changing the way we do mission. From theological education in formal and non-formal settings to grassroots bible storytelling methodologies, we share the models for communicating the Gospel in the business world and the world of the poor and oppressed. We're learning how to use the arts, media, and other orality-centric methods to meet the needs of thousands of languages without Christ, without a Bible, and without our hope (Eph. 2:12)

WHAT IS ORALITY?

Bottom line? It's what Jesus used to proclaim the Kingdom of heaven. You will see it in what follows. He was commanded by the Father "what to say" and "HOW to say it." (John 12:48-49 NLT).

Orality in its classical definition has to do with a

preference for the spoken word. Yet how might that word be spoken – aurally and audibly only? What about the deaf who also speak? What about "the picture that speaks a thousand words?" Orality is MUCH more than the early authors of the mid-20th century led us to believe.

As a term it is, quite frankly, *elusive*. It's kind of like the term "oncology." You know it's about the study and treatment of cancer. The term is here to stay even though you've probably never seen or studied an "onco." Wait. Yes, you have. You just didn't understand the term! "Onco" is Latin for "tumor." Orality is an emerging field of study launched in the 1950's and popularized by Walter Ong's work around 1980 – *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. It's not really about literacy and illiteracy, Bible Storytelling methods, or media and technology tools. It's about how we communicate. It's what Jesus in His human experience had to learn as he said His Father "commanded me what to say and *how to say it*" (John 12:48-49 NLT).

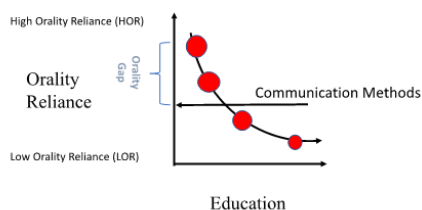
Orality is about a God who made us *communicators in His image!* He imagined a universe. He spoke every detail into existence. He communicated His mind and thoughts in so many ways and means. He audibly spoke with us. He spoke through dreams and visions, pillars of fire and smoke, the taste of bread, oil, and wine for His priesthood, prescribed incense ascending before the Throne, the touch of healing for lepers, the blind and deaf, and even a woman with an issue of blood. And as He prepared us for this world, **He gave us these same powers to communicate our "inner speech."**

Orality is just that simple. People as communicators in God's image. With learned expressions of our "inner speech. Using all 5 (or more) senses. We can't communicate through dreams, but we can make people dream. We cannot reveal ourselves in a non-incinerated burning bush, but we can draw pictures of it. We can't make handwriting appear on a wall, but we can digitize it. God made us able to communicate just like our Father!

We all start out as 100% reliant on what we call here our orality – learned expression of inner speech. That is High Orality Reliance. We see our mother's breast and want to eat and even make gestures or give non-verbal expressions (cry!) to get what we want. Later we learn to speak the words for eating or drinking, write the words, draw the thought, even create music, drama, or dance about it. With more education

and learnings, we move into other ways and means of expressing thought. With time and training we become more comfortable expressing ourselves through print text and other literacies that change the hardwiring of our brains.¹

The Orality Gap



A little later, we will look at how this plays out even in musical or dramatic expressions, how it affects what stories we tell from the Bible and how we tell them. The Spirit of God can use ANY effort we make to share our witness of the Kingdom, but God designed us to follow HIS design for communicating with ALL people, not just the ones that are like US in our Low Orality Reliance (LOR).

A challenge you and I face is that nearly 400 years of the Enlightenment convinced the “modern world” to overvalue the genius of print-text with the unexpected devaluation of all other “literacies.” Suddenly only the lettered were smart/intelligent. Only those who could understand the Word of God using the rules of grammar (in Greek and Hebrew if we are really being honest) could fully grasp the truth. Without high literacy (print-text) people must surely be deficient. Unable to function completely in this world. Need help to be sustainable or even satisfied in life.

But we were not entirely enlightened! In the process of jettisoning all unrelated to learning the art of reading and writing we lost sight of the other impressions of the God-imagined capacities for communication. We missed the obvious. 8 out of 10 people on the planet grow up with a framework that trained our brains

The Literacy Fallacy

“Literacy is something different from orality.” No. Literacies are simply different expressions of our oralities. Is a song oral or literate? Neither! It began with thought and impressions in someone’s inner speech. They expressed it through instrumentation and/or vocalization (singing rather than talking, which is also related to singing with pitch, modulation, volume, etc.).

A book, printed journal, or even a drama script is just as much related to our orality (learned expression of inner speech) as the song, story, or video! Someone expressed their inner speech. It came out using

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2HHRKpjiYM> how reading changes the brain
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2sqXbwlaWw> how music (and other literacies) changes the brain

spoken words in their heads that they learned how to express through an orthography (alphabet) that can be archived in the book or journal. The song also can be archived in an audio/video format as well as a different kind of literacy – sequential notes written on cleft with specific keys, time signatures, and all sorts of other printed symbols.

If you have some background in the field of orality you know of Walter Ong, a student of the communication guru Marshall McLuhan.² They identified people as being either oral or literate. While this makes a good initial image of what we’re talking about, it also confuses the matter. Yes, the brain gets hardwired differently when we develop any form of literacy and it’s especially evident with print-text literacies. Yet the same is true when you learn the literacies of sign language, braille, playing music from notes on a page, or using mathematical or digital programming symbols and sequences.

Jesus’ Model of Communication

Any student of the Bible when asked, “how did Jesus teach,” responds with: “He taught in parables.” But we need to dig deeper if we hope to teach like The Master as He showed us as He brought the message of the Kingdom to His disciples and the peoples of the region – including Samaritans and Greeks.

John’s Gospel tells us that on at least 4 occasions Jesus said that His message was not his own, but it came from the Father. In one of his final encounters with the Jewish religious leaders, (Jn 12:31-50) Jesus gets even more explicit in describing his message from the Father: “My message is not my own, for my Father commanded me what to say and how to say it.” (NLT). We normally focus on the “what” of Jesus’ message. Less often do we ask questions about his “how to say it.” It’s more that methods (parables). It’s as much how he frames the message, connects it with the people, gets people talking – creating a “buzz.” And how he made every message unforgettable.

The “How” of Jesus

He began by understanding and framing every message *through the lens of local cultures* – from fishing villagers to urbanites. From the “uneducated masses” to the Torah-trained elite of the synagogues and Sanhedrin. He made sure to use the language and dialect everyone related to in the area – especially those tribal, hillbilly, IP’s called Nazarenes. He used “code words” that every Jew understood, or every Greek related to (in the Gerasene): City set on a hill (within sight of the audience), or “offer your gift at the altar” (Matt. 5:23 as all knew his meaning of the “fellowship offering”). In fact, he used multiple literacies related to farming, fishing, gardening, and even their Biblical literacies (you have heard it said). He used social learning networks to make sure

2. Ong, W. J. (2013). *Orality and literacy*. Routledge.

everyone processed the Kingdom message together. His 3 disciples who shared the Transfiguration, the 12 who regularly argued about their place in the Kingdom, the masses gathered for a sermon and an unexpected and unexplainable Mosaic type meal while seated in groups of 50.

He drew on his 30 years of human experience to relate his message making them unforgettable through commonly shared metaphors and symbols (cross, land stewards, vineyards, Passover meal). And yes, he captured the attention of the masses and even the social elites using the arts – singing with the disciples enroute to Gethsemane, spontaneous proverbs, parables, and the culinary sensations of his day (bread, wine, feasts, and even drinking with sinners). He also demonstrated **mastery of all forms of media** – mass media, simple large gatherings (synagogues), and smaller gatherings in homes like Lazarus'. He used audio, visual and even print (writing in the dirt and reading in the Nazareth synagogue).

There are probably more ways that Jesus communicated, but you'll have to dig that out for yourself. These 7 find their roots in Scripture, but they also have been proven out in communication strategies throughout history. Martin Luther King, Jr, John Kennedy, Gandhi, Mao, Mandela, Steve Jobs all used these same 7 "Descriptive Disciplines of Orality." Research also demonstrates that simultaneously using ALL 7 multiplies the impact of a message.³ It's not magic. It's the Master! So, orality is critical not because of the communication principles, but because even the Son of God deemed all these things essential to delivering His message. *It does not guarantee people will accept your message. It does guarantee they will receive, understand, remember, and can pass it on to others.*

How to Find an Orality Sweet Spot for MY Audience?

Watch any sport played with a ball and the best players connect with the ball in a location that delivers maximum power – the sweet spot. It's the exact center of a badminton racquet, golf club or cricket bat, or the volley ball, football (the real one – soccer). It's what separates great play from astounding play. And the same is true in communication. When you find the sweet spot of driving home a message for a specific group its astounding! Lights go on. Eyes are opened. Minds explode with new possible worlds.

To find it is more than a casual pursuit. It takes discipline in the disciplines. Orality as a field of study or as a research discipline overlaps with multiple others. In fact, orality has at least 5 streams of influence in which practitioners and scholars lean on this communication phenomenon.⁴ It relates to

3. IOS Research: <https://i-ostrat.com/orality-research/>. Multiple projects using all 7 disciplines demonstrate an increase in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior changes from 20-40%.

4. Charles Madinger (2022). Transformative Learning through oral narrative in a participatory communication context: An inquiry

anthropology since inner speech finds its expression as it relates to other people in ways that all consider appropriate. It relates as well to educators interested in the scope of all learning as well as how to engage those with lower print-text literacy skills. **Psychology and cognitive sciences** help clarify how the brain functions and what is going on inside as we interpret our world. It relates to **Biblical scholars** who direct us to fathom how the message was delivered and passed on for generations and how we even have what we call a Bible today.⁵ It also relates to **the literary world** and its "oral literature," and to missiology with the resurgence of telling the stories of the Bible as a strategy for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development. Yet orality is a phenomenon of communication beginning with God and then people created with His image and capacities.

All these fields magnify the details and intricacies of orality. Ong found 9 psychodynamics. William Parker saw 11 criteria, James Slack and other missiologists talked about characteristics, tendencies, and frameworks. In the past nearly all these characteristics of orality came from general observations, anecdotal evidence or stories, or popular theories.⁶ Now we can be more precise with studies from overlapping fields or disciplines.

The Global Orality Mapping Project (GO*Map) takes 15 *overlapping characteristics* or tendencies and clusters them on sliding scales from Very High Orality Reliance to Very Low Orality Reliance. Complete the survey for your people group. Each cluster is scored, and each characteristic is also scored to give a clearer picture of best strategies. You'll also find links to more resources to learn more and practice better.

These are not just "Western" outsider perspectives. They come from Asian, South Asian, Central Asian, and African leaders describing their communication preferences. They are also not merely anecdotal or what seems to be the stories from the ground. They all have solid objective research and publication to test them out.

Why are these critical? It's like checking for someone's heart pulse. You can tell if they are living if you can feel the surge of blood. But you can tell even more when you put on the stethoscope and listen closely. You can tell something about the pressure (high or low). You can tell if there is blockage in the carotid artery in the neck that might cause a stroke. You can hear if there is a leak in a heart valve. All this

into radio drama-based training among Zambian caregivers of abused and exploited children. University of Kentucky, pp. 62-65.

5. Especially relevant since the Old Testament canon was not "closed" until the Council of Nicaea (CE 326). During the life of Jesus the Sadducees believed only the first 5 books (Torah) were inspired. The book of Isaiah, Psalms, the historical books were put into written forms after the Babylonians and Medes held the Jews in captivity years before the earthly ministry of Jesus

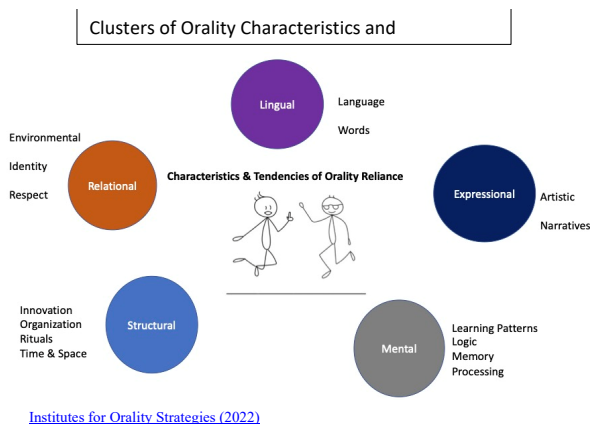
6. For example, right-brain/left-brain dominance or learning. A very popular notion that intrinsically sounds great. However, there is no empirical research that establishes it as a valid assumption. Yes, the brain does have those functions, but no, there is no such thing as an auditory, visual, or kinesthetic learner. Is it true? Yes, it MAY be. Is it proven? Not yet. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/right-brainleft-brain-right-2017082512222>

give more detail.

Likewise, you may intrinsically perceive some of these characteristics of orality. But when you dig deeper you may unearth a wealth of insights that prove the difference between someone clearly understanding your message or getting only part of it then drifting into syncretism, heresy, or eventual apostasy.

A Lingual Cluster – every target audience has its preferred **language** and even dialect that makes a message more inviting. It sounds like us, feels like us, and sets us at ease.

Language represents learned forms of communication, expressed through sounds, gestures, and behavior either orally, in written, visual or other forms. It is a unique articulation of ideas and views which varies from one cultural group to another.



[Institutes for Orality Strategies \(2022\)](#)

Language is passed from one generation to another generation through a proceeding called cultural transmission and is just how local people describe their world and everything that they need to talk about. So, no two groups are alike. Therefore, no two preaching/teaching strategies are alike – they are unique and require intentional efforts for higher impact.

The words they use may also range from very vague (HOR) to very specific use (LOR) depending on orality reliances. Words are an important component of a language in speech and other literacies. They can either be clearly spelled to their intended meaning or articulated to indirectly convey rhetoric to make an emphasis and/or avoid certain use of taboos.

An Expressional Cluster speak primarily of the innate creative capacity to express our inner speech through all our senses. The arts are not the message but a door opener to the heart. Traditionally, it has been defined as mastery but for our purposes it is a spectrum that ranges from a child’s simple expression to a masterpiece created by an artist. This cluster also elaborates creativity, beauty & aesthetics as well as how we design those in a story.

Arts. All this requires communicators to understand all the cultural art forms and use what local people use and love. Yes, we often must use “**GLocalization**” – the global artistic and narrative expressions like Hillsong or Bethel music, YouTube, and Tic Tock

translate them into local languages, but the sound and feel is still very much from “outsiders” - the “globals.” Most often we need **LOCALIZATION** of artistic expressions – the instruments, rhythms, tones, shapes, colors, textures, foods, and much, much more must be considered. A newer trend may be the increase of local to global use of the arts – “**LoGolization**” of reggae, Ethiopian Jazz, Bollywood, Korean melodramas all make their way into the more dominant mainstream powers artistic of influence.

All artistic expressions come out in the same kind of continuum from HOR to LOR. A song with higher orality reliance may be sung in unison in a minor key using “fifth intervals” or the pentatonic scale (*Amazing Grace* originally from Africa), or the often 8-part major key harmonies of Handel’s *Messiah*. It may be the dance/song of the Masai with rhythmic undercurrent droning (HOR) or the precision of the drums in Fanfare for the Common Man.

Narrative. Equally significant is **how we express our stories**. Even secular scholars insist that the art of storytelling and story-listening is what makes us distinctively human.⁷ The stories of HOR peoples often get handed down orally or in other visual art forms. Oral Histories, oral literature, and especially the Homeric poetry of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* originally sung as navigational guides for Mediterranean sailors. Who tells the story, what is the purpose of the story? When and how is the story told? All these may give meaning depending on an orality reliance.

A Mental Cluster helps identify how we think and make sense of things, best process, learn and remember important parts of our world.

Learning Patterns are pathways for people to construct knowledge and better understand their world. They include all domains of learning - cognitive, affective and behavioral that can be stimulated in different ways for different orality frameworks.

Memory tools vary from context to context. Sometimes the simple repetition of a story or song suffices for a group to remember the message and pass it on to others

Logic, while related to the era of Greek philosophers, is a term framed by later European linear minds and worldviews. However, not all reasoning fits that typology or even ways of knowing (epistemology). Higher orality reliant peoples can use a type of “circular thinking” unrelated to circular arguments.⁸ They can go beyond binary thinking and hold to what may seem like contradictions to outsiders.

A Structural Cluster looks at how we order our world. How do we classify and categorize? How do we view tradition, our rituals and rites, and even our sense of time and our (versus their) space.

Innovation looks for the value of new things or

7. Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communications Monographs*, 51(1), 1-22.

8. Circular arguments say: “Narendra always speaks with integrity. How do I know? Narendra is a tribal leader.”

processes. Some cling to the past traditions that have served the people well and even give them a degree of their identity. It could be a farming technique, a type of singing or dancing, or even what we do in our wedding rituals. This tendency on a continuum will also vary, but where a group lands on that continuum may affect how they respond to the Gospel and how we frame it as related to their willingness to innovate or cling to tradition.

Organization describes patterns in and by which we holistically arrange our world - physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. All of these patterns normally find meaning in part related to the physical world around us and how we live in our unique contexts. It also considers the spaces in which we appropriately live and move.

Some cultures tend to first think in terms of the **concrete real-life** experiences in their environment to organize their thoughts and categories. **Others** may prefer to begin **with abstract realities** and move backwards into the real-world realities (when necessary). The latter is satisfied to stay in the realm of the conceptual, and the former requires an immediate connection with real life. Hence, preaching in LOR settings can be satisfying when making conceptual points (love one another). Preaching in a HOR setting begins with real life events that move eventually to the truth to embrace and practice.

Rituals contribute to a variety of other orality characteristics linking artistic expressions together with narrative, they are loaded with meaning and tell a people's story, they are a memorable and emotion loaded way how groups pass on values and cultural norms, and often used as rites of passage that puts the participant into a new state, gives identity, or association with a group.

All cultures have rituals marking important points in life (birth, adulthood, marriage, death). Washing rituals are found in most religions and have a spiritual meaning making a natural bridge to the washing, cleansing, and purification needed as we share the Good News of what Jesus did for us.

Time and Space has to do with the created sequential dimension in which we experience life in the eternity of God. It is important because this is how people see themselves as part of history and the world. How do we measure time? Do we see it as simply what we are doing - worshipping, working in the farm, showing my child a new skill? Or, maybe we measure it out in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years. You are late when the clock says you are late. Or you are late if you do not show up when the rest of the group worriedly wonders "where might they be?" Space might be viewed as the specific neighborhood lot on which my house sits, or it could be the vast region that my tribe claims as their ancestral domain - a sacred space that ties them to the land where their fathers and mothers are buried.

A Relational Cluster forces us to look at how we view the most valued people in our community and how

we treat them and cater to their needs. It involves our relationship to the land and other forces at work in our environment. And it also helps us better perceive who we are as a community and how that relates to us as individuals.

Do we see it as simply what we are doing – worshipping, working in the farm, showing my child a new skill? Or, maybe we measure it out in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years. You are late when the clock says you are late. Or you are late if you do not show up when the rest of the group worriedly wonders “where might they be?”

Environmental is EVERYTHING a group of people relate to in *their world*. That includes the sum of all the interacting living things (material and immaterial - physical and non-physical, like spirits) as well as non-living elements and how they affect the growth, health, progress, and meaning of human life.

For many animistic cultures, people believe that, for everything in the seen world, an invisible but real counterpart (twin) exists. Dreams are one way they interact with this immaterial reality. The term "dream ego" describes this invisible twin of oneself. It is important to understand that both worlds are both real to these people and mutually influence each other. They may also use hallucinogens, incantations, and mediums to connect at this "twin" level of reality.

Environment also looks to **Identity** as it refers to how individuals or groups perceive and define themselves, and how other individuals or groups perceive and define them. Identity is "concerned with sameness and difference at the level of social categorization, group affiliation, and intergroup relations, as well as at the level of individual consciousness or subjectivity."⁹ Others see identity in the dimensions of culture as related to the individual or the group. Individualistic peoples care most about individual rights, needs, and choices. Collectivistic peoples think first and foremost about their group, family, tribe, sometimes their religious block.¹⁰

Respect is a way admiration for another person or thing is shown. It is part of a value system or beliefs based on a esteem, role, or position conferred (mother, elder, chief, etc.), earned through education/title, achievement rite of passage, "sport," and even

9. Hammack, P. L., & Toolis, E. E. (2015). Putting the Social into Personal Identity: The Master Narrative as Root Metaphor for Psychological and Developmental Science: Commentary on McLean and Syed. *Human Development*, 58(6), 350–364. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26765124>

10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHdqPqWle04>

pastoral training/ordination. Or respect may come from exemplary acts or worthiness to receive such elevated or demeaned status. Respect ascribed by the community and should be closely adhered to by all.

In many cultures no one would either interrupt or directly challenge an elder in public. Entering a community for missional activities should never be done without the express blessing and permission of the elder, chief, or other respected and recognized leader – whether that recognition is formal or non-formal.

So, Dig Deeper. The greatest wealth lies below the surface!

Each of these 5 Clusters and their composite characteristics must be given consideration if we hope to have the kind of impact Jesus demonstrated and that we are created for like himself. At first the process of digging this all out is painstakingly slow and challenging to figure out. With more experience it gets easier, like everything else you learned. Eventually those you lead or teach will catch it too, and without being directly taught each cluster characteristic by characteristic.

LEARNING ORALITY FROM OUR CHRISTIAN ROOTS

Orality oozes out of our historic church roots and its mission strategies as seen in the School/Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus (Acts 19). This was a rented hall where people came from all over to join in the “discussions” about Jesus, His resurrection, and the Good News of His kingdom. We can only speculate what was going on here, but the one thing we do know for sure is that “all of Asia heard the Word of the Lord.”

Ulphilas of Cappadocia – a bishop of the 4th century, took the Gothic language, gave it an alphabet, and one of the earliest translations of the Scriptures to share the Gospel with barbarians. They needed the Scriptures in the language those people understood, not Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He translated the Bible so that they might be transferred from their domains of darkness and into the Kingdom of God’s glorious Son.

The CHINESE Printing Press/Moveable Type, not



German, changed forever the way the world would precisely communicate and diffuse their thoughts as well as archiving them for

their generations and all to come. Inner speech to wood carvings to printing on scrolls to the minds of hearers, readers of text and pictures from their inner speech. The first use was probably Buddhist sayings, but soon the Manichaeian texts in the 700s promoted a Christian message..

India’s Folk Art Narrative¹¹ Indians for centuries

11. Chatterji, R. (2020). *Speaking with pictures: Folk art and*



express their most important values and stories in a type of progressively framed images (left). Some are minute and others resemble large tapestries. When working among Hindus this familiar look draws attention and even a sense of familiarity even when it is the storyline of the Good Samaritan. Orality captures attention, draws a person into the story/message, and takes them into a new reality – the Kingdom of heaven.

Indonesians embroider the Word. Openwork embroidery gained world renown and can speak a message with creative beauty. Nearly every province owns its unique expression from the Batik of Java, to the Songket of Palembang, and the Ulos of Medan, the Bay of Tomini, or others from Sulawesi and Karawo from Gorontalo. They all share high artistic value. Kerawang has for generations been an embodiment of the culture and heritage of Gorontalo people.



21st Century Innovations and Trends in Asia¹²

Preaching: From Propositional Returning to The Story On the Philippine Island of Mindoro pastors normally have earned less than a high school diploma. They attempt to emulate the preaching of early missionaries who used propositional preaching as well as exegetical preaching tied to understanding the nuances of the printed text of Scripture. Yet lately they’ve learned to preach in a narrative form and the people of their churches are suddenly coming alive, remembering the messages for weeks (not minutes), and report passing the message on to friends and relatives!

OK, so that’s the “lower-literate” context again. But no. The Lighthouse Christian Community of Metro-Manila started digging deeper into orality, sent 7 pastors into a 2-year training, and now insist that all who preach or teach use the “ways” Jesus communicated. The opening vignettes of this article refer to one of these pastors using all five senses to communicate Jesus’ message when he fed the 5,000.

The Arts: From illustrational to Expressional and Inspirational

The church from its beginning used the arts as a means of proclaiming the Good News and building Kingdom communities. Peter and the 11 stood with tongues of fire and the sound of a mighty wind, he told the story of David, used the Psalms and prophets. Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin relating their common story of God and Israel, and it was that same sermon you can see in Paul’s latter sermons. They took the Lord’s Supper together weekly proclaiming

the narrative tradition in India. Routledge India.

12. Note: the author is not here endorsing any of the organizations, but demonstrating Asians are taking charge of evaluating how to best communicate the Kingdom message in the most culturally appropriate means and communicate in the way local people prefer to receive, process, remember and pass it on.

the death, burial, and resurrection as they awaited His return. The Revelation of John remains the best multi-modal communication of all times! Recorded in print-text, but stands replete with graphic images, metaphors, light, color, sounds, stories of conflict and resolution, and a garden of healing as all concludes with the saints in the very presence of God who illumines them.

The early church produced songs, hymns, and spiritual songs. It created symbols of its own as the Neronian persecution erupted (sign of the fish), produced visual arts in the catacombs, and eventually used architecture to communicate its message. The first buildings place the baptistry in the entryway – only those willing to die to themselves as they claim Jesus as Lord may freely enter.

PAYAP University in Chiang Mai, Thailand along with SIL offer multiple opportunities to understand ministry across cultures as well as how to engage cultures through their own arts for greater receptivity and ultimate fruitfulness.

Institutes for Orality Strategies (i-OS) is a source of orality training, collaboration, and research. The 4 modules bridge the gap of historic seminary and mission organizational training and build competencies in the application of Jesus' model of communication. Collaboration involves working with mission organization and projects that needs competencies beyond a group's current training and experience. Research digs into evaluating why oral strategies work and tools that help you maximize your impact.

Global Arts Network - sees every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions. GEN offers networking, training, and resources for the flourishing of biblical and culturally appropriate arts. This article, published January 2020 in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (Vol. 56, no. 1), explains more: <https://tinyurl.com/GEN4EMQ>

Ethnoarts Philippines localizes these same kinds of works among the 172 ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippine archipelago's thousands of islands. The Groups long subjugated to colonial interests for more than 400 years have been discovering the high value of embracing their own culture above the dominant cultures of the region. Even the national language of the Philippines (Tagalog) is not universally understood or spoken, yet all ethnic minorities must either directly or more subtly bow to the identity of the dominant defining forces. Groups like EAP give short and long-term training to tribal leaders who reframe their identity, teaching, and preaching through the local arts just as the early church did



Conferences with real outputs throughout Asia. The recent Asia 2022 is just one of many that focus on our unique message and the arts through which it must

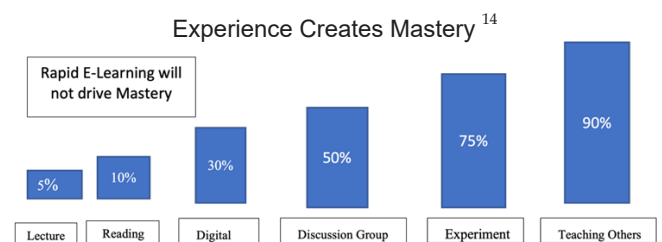
find expression if we are to disciple the nations in our region. In 2019 Jangkholsam Haokup and David W. Smith organized a conference in N.E. India to address our need to rediscover the power of orality through the use of myth and folklore. Their concerted efforts birthed a new resource published by Langham – *Voices from the Margins: Wisdom of Primal Peoples in the Era of Word Christianity*.¹³ We need more! The Evangelical Mission Society national conference now includes an annual track dealing with orality, and the American Mission Society annual meeting and papers scheduled for June 2023 likewise is dedicated to promoting better orality understanding and practice.

Education: From Informative Lecturing to Integrative Communication (orality-centric)

First, a word to our academics who dedicated their careers to the highest standards. Thank you. Your work is essential. We need more of it. Just as it began in your heads as inner speech, and you expressed in in the technical literacies in which your band of brothers and sisters excel. We are not saying orality does not require “textuality.” Just the opposite. Orality education requires highly skilled expressions of inner speech in the realm of people like yourselves. Research it. Practice it. Teach it.

The best teachers have always used many of the principles and methods of orality. *They recognize not all instructional methods are equal*, even though this really isn't acknowledged in most seminary classrooms. We continue believe that if we instruct in the way we were instructed, create projects and expressions that our instructors assigned us (long ago). Every teacher/professor aspires to attend the most prestigious school available to them, produce text-based resources (books and journal articles), and reward only those students who rise to the level of our guidelines and formats. We really believe that we graduate those who master the information.

But mastery of theology or any other subject (information) in our schools is not about the information. It's about knowing God and experiencing God's design for us. He told us all about it in every story, proverb, parable, song, dance, and vision recorded in what we eventually came to know as the Bible (AD/CE 326). How do we teach it for mastery? Some suggest the progressive effectiveness that only begins with the lecture and readings.



13. Haokin, Jangkholsam and David W. Smith (eds.) (2022). *Voices from the Margins: Wisdom of Primal People in the Era of World Christianity*. Carlisle: Langham Publishers.

14. www.worklearning.com

Orality competencies include them ALL. Now innovative educators around the world look to integrate orality into their classrooms and curricula. The first holistic program in orality was launched last year by the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST, Philippines) and the Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines. Their program includes a ThM and PhD in Orality Studies¹⁵

Other movement likewise plan new programs for schools and seminaries that see the need for high quality research and the best of an orality theology, artistic theology, a biblical narrative theology, missiology, homiletics, and hermeneutics that return to our oral nature, and many more. Dr. Ezekiel Ajibade recently led a group of global theological educators to produce the first draft of an Africa-centric course on orality.¹⁶ In other developments, groups like the Asia Theological Association that oversees thousands of schools and seminaries is beginning to examine how orality must be included in 21st century theological education. One delegate at the recent General Assembly noted: "If we do not start promoting orality principles and methods we'll continue becoming irrelevant to the next generation of students."

SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

Groups like SIL International historically trained people how to translate the Bible and encourage mother-tongue literacies and education. Lately they also pioneered on-line resources that help grassroots workers ensure that the "end users" *use the Scriptures*. This came about because dedicated translators gave their lives to bring the Bible to people who had none - **Bibleless peoples**.¹⁷ However, the local people did not use these translations they became *peopless Bibles*. This same spirit drives leaders in TAP (Translation Associates of the Philippines), Wycliffe Associates, and others in Wycliffe Global Alliance now practice Oral to Oral Bible translation and *Oral Bible Strategies (OBS - Studies, Bible storytelling, Bible schools)*. With literally thousands of languages with no Bible these orality savvy pioneers bring a process where the local people help create their own translations and produce them in oral platforms - from cassettes (yes, they are still used in many parts of the world!), CD's, SD cards (for phones), and apps. While some might dispute whether these fast-track products can claim the status of "Scriptures," the bottom line is that people who did not have the Word except in languages they could not fully understand now hear the message. Those who argue the point probably have dozens of variant translations in their own mother-tongue with the title:

15. Contact Dr. Cameron Armstrong, Director of Orality Studies (cameron@ats.ph)

16. revzikky@gmail.com. This program came about through the collective effort of the International Orality Network and Dr. Victor Madziakapita, the ION-Africa Director.

17. Quote from an SIL Country Director

"Holy Bible."

Amazing Bible apps like GRN's 5 Fish give tools for outreach in ways we never knew before! As I rode in a Grab taxi from my traveler's hotel in Bangkok, I could not speak a word of the local language. 5 Fish has the local dialect of my driver. I opened the app and began playing the story of Jesus encountering resurrection and encounter with the 2 on the Road to Emmaus. Did the driver receive Christ? I have no earthly idea. I gave my testimony. He understood. And the seed was either planted or cultivated. 5 Fish made it happen.

The whole point of using orality principles and methods is to communicate the Truth in ways HOR people can themselves receive, process & understand, remember, and pass them on to others. **Keep innovating!** Keep up with the needs of real people in the real world.

MEDIA

This generation in which we live leave the church in grievous numbers because we do not yet speak their mediated languages. Nearly 60% of Hindu, Buddhist, tribals, and even Muslims will never even HEAR the message of the Kingdom because we do not connect with them in their preferred ways and means of communication! The emerging generation is GREAT at YouTube, Tic Tock, and old school things like Instagram and Facebook.

Check out the hundreds of offerings through sites like EMDC and MediaLight. Seminaries like the Singapore Bible College and Professor Calvin Chong lead the way in Asia adapting to the needs of digital natives and training pastors, instructors, and church leaders how to go beyond the analog, and entry-level digitality into the power connectivity that comes with a little training and some hands-on experiences.

Then we have the digitally marginalized. The majority of the world who do not function as the digital affluent. The digitally affluents not only have knowledge, experience, and tools they also have the economic wealth and access that most of the digitally challenged or impoverished lack. The challenged/impooverished cannot consistently connect! They may have the apps. They may have the hardware, software, and platforms. But they do not have stable connections. The access is extremely expensive with telecom giants that exploit them with data-fees and out-of-reach subscriptions. The overpriced subscriptions provide a SMALL fraction of the advertised bandwidth and make extended meetings, courses, and even Zoom/Google calls erratic at best. Solutions? Believe it or not *radio may still be the best option*. It's low tech, fairly cheap (batteries DO cost). Can be accessed in a group - which is consistent with High Orality Reliance. Episodic radio drama may still be one of the most powerful media tools available to the masses.

For those digitally challenged by connectivity the

smart phone still can provide multiple options. Some people may be able to access and download content for those who cannot. Savvy developers can also create content flashed on to SD cards to upload to the memory of local users. Proprietary vendors like MegaVoice, FCBH, and Renew World Outreach.

Binging it home

Asians have forgotten more about orality that the West will ever know. Now is the time to look deeper into our OWN orality roots. Our own minimally valued treasures jettisoned to embrace the values and “textuality” of a Western Enlightenment. We need our own expressions of theology. We need our own culturally driven missiology. We need our own principles and methods of orality seen in the peoples of Asia. There is no only one expression. There are thousands! Therefore, we need hundreds of specialists that will take us to where the West and our colonizers could never go.

How will you be part of this movement? What do you need to bridge the orality gap in your own training and education? Educate yourself - it’s available through Google searches. Connect with those in your region who have begun practicing even if their practice is in one methodology. Get in touch with any of the people or sites listed in this article. And if all else fails, feel free to contact me personally.¹⁸ Unreached peoples remain unreached partly because we choose to use Low Orality Reliant principles and methods that our teachers used with us.

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Chuck and Roce his wife were called together as ministry partners and then partners in marriage in 2018. He is the founder and CEO of the Institutes for Orality Strategies. Chuck served twenty-seven years in congregational ministry, earned his D.Min. from Fuller Seminary, and is working on his dissertation for his PhD studies at the University of Kentucky College of Communication & Information. He helped launch three mission and consulting organizations helping reach the Oral Majority with programs and projects that bring transformation to broken children of our God and King. His experiences include designing oral strategies and instruction for issues ranging from discipleship and church planting to widow empowerment, HIV/AIDS awareness in Africa to civil society programs in places like Iraq, Sudan, and Afghanistan. Chuck also serves as the International Director of the International Orality Network (ION) and has published extensively in the field of orality and communication.



FALSE TEACHERS AMONG US

James D. Langteau

The Lord Jesus warns against false teachers, and explains how they can be identified.

As recorded in Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus proclaimed, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."

IDENTIFIED BY THEIR FRUIT, NOT JUST BY THEIR DOCTRINE

Interestingly, Jesus does not declare in this passage that false teachers should be identified merely by their doctrine or prayers. Yes, often false teachers can be identified by doctrines that violate the absolute truth of Scripture, and such error must be exposed and refuted both transparently and publicly. Yet sometimes a false teacher can craftily preach sound doctrine but either fail to implement it himself or misapply the application. In essence, a false teacher is then testifying falsely to that which he has not himself personally embraced. A false teacher is speaking of that which has not transformed him. He is trying to proclaim that which he does not himself know or believe. By definition, one cannot honestly testify to that which one has not experienced or known.

How then does our Lord actually tell us, according to Matthew 7:15-20, to identify false teachers? Jesus proclaims that by their fruit you will know false teachers, not merely by what they say they believe

The Church and mission field today needs shepherds who are themselves transformed, and who then go on to care for and equip all of God's people for ministry, reference Ephesians 4:11-12. Servant leaders do not just produce followers, but empower new leaders who themselves go on to produce new leaders who exemplify obedience to Christ. For that is what God has called the Church to do. A.W. Tozer rightly observed, "Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late – and how little revival has resulted? I believe the problem is that we have been trying to pray for obeying, and it simply will not work." Tozer also stated that if one is not changed by grace, then one is not saved by grace. Proof is in the outcome and not merely in talk. 1 Corinthians 4:20 clearly states, "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power."

Sound theological doctrine based on the full context of

Scripture is essential. It is not genuine and authentic, however, until and unless it is exemplified. Satan, after all, knows sound theological doctrine, spoke with God, and is capable of quoting Scripture both in broad context and in line and verse. Nevertheless, the enemy doesn't know God and is not transformed. Mere knowledge of God does not equate to saving faith in God. Even serving as a pastor or missionary could become nothing more than works that exist apart from faith, regardless of how sound the doctrine may be. James 2:18-19 records, "But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!"

QUALIFICATIONS OF MINISTRY

The Lord's emphasis on fruit and not merely intellectual assent to doctrine in the passage from Matthew 7:15-20 also explains why the qualifications for ministry as delineated in 1 Timothy 3 has far more to say about conduct than just agreement with a statement of faith. For conduct demonstrates that doctrine is genuinely believed.

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." – 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Rather than a legalistic litany, the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 ensures that the Shepherd demonstrates a transformed life. It testifies to new life and to the power of Christ in the servant leader rather than just the assertion of an academic report about Christ. Isn't it only rightly so, after all? How can one teach or preach yet not have a life above reproach? How can one preach sound doctrine yet not be sober-minded and exemplify self-control, which is a Fruit of the Spirit? How can one claim to be qualified, yet not see others as created in God's image, eternal, valuable and redeemable, - which is necessary to behave with

hospitality? How can one minister the Gospel, yet be quarrelsome rather than gentle? Can someone claim to be qualified to care for others in God's family if his own household is not managed well first? Likewise, can a missionary be expected to make disciples on the foreign mission field if he is not first making disciples in his own country?

These qualifications are not to insinuate the qualified. They must possess a sinless life or the need to be perfect. For 1 John 1:8 reminds us that, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." No, rather, those who are qualified keep a short account of sin, instead of justifying sin or covering it up. They repent and exemplify that they know of what they preach. They are walking in the Spirit and are not fulfilling the desires of the flesh, reference Galatians 5:16. They are daily calling on Christ to transform them from glory to glory.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." – 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT VERSUS THE EVIDENCE OF THE FLESH

Galatians 5 delineates both the Fruit of the Spirit and also contrasts the evidence of the flesh. The evidence of the flesh includes: malice, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, and divisions, among others. Further, this passage includes a strict warning that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Then in the very next chapter, in Galatians 6:7-10, Scripture warns:

"Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

In this there can be no partially nor human manipulation. Both Galatians 5 and 6 refer to the flesh, the evidence of flesh, and the consequences. This also explains why our Lord further stated as recorded in Matthew 7:22-23, "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

If Jesus cursed a fig tree for not producing fruit and it died, can anyone expect to be praised for merely spouting sound doctrine but not producing fruit? "And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it

and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, 'May no fruit ever come from you again!' And the fig tree withered at once." – Matthew 21:19

NOT JUST EMPTY YET ACCURATE WORDS, BUT TRANSFORMED LIVES

Clearly, Jesus seeks for us to be known and transformed by Him, not just have accurate academic head knowledge and public speeches. Consequently, we see that sound doctrine must not only be preached but also practiced and biblically implemented.

This reality does in no way diminish the importance of sound theological doctrine, but only emphasizes what Jesus declares, that sound doctrine must be soundly practiced resulting in the bearing of good fruit in order to be real.

For example, it is not enough to just give intellectual assent to the authority of Scripture, if one's life exemplifies malice, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger (lack of emotional self-control), rivalries, dissensions, and divisions. If one still fights with the weapons of the world such as slander and backbiting instead of following direct biblical conflict resolution, can one seriously proclaim that the old is gone and behold all things are new? No, for then one is merely trying to obtain through illegitimate means what one fears could not be achieved through Christ.

Can anyone pretend to be direct and honest when they are not direct and not honest? Can anyone pretend to be encouraging others while they are discouraging others? Is rejection, indifference, critical bitterness, and disdain examples of the Fruit of the Spirit? Of course not! Are pastors and missionaries known for a shepherd's heart of reaching out to each and every sheep in compassion, based on truth? Or is the old man still unsettling the spirit of the pastor and missionary, thus causing them to dislike other members of the Body - members who Christ loves?

When sound doctrine is genuinely applied to life then it will first come alive within the one who ministers, and the Holy Spirit will produce the Fruit of the Spirit with the evidence of transformed lives. Sound doctrine that changes lives is testified to both by and through godly relationships. Only then is it authentic. The teacher will die to self (with its pride, bitterness, self-promotion, and backbiting), the old is gone and all things become new (reference 2 Corinthians 5:17). Then the teacher will not only agree with Holy Scripture, but will be transformed into exemplifying it.

CLANGING CYMBALS?

To preach and minister as a pastor or missionary without exemplifying the Fruit of the Spirit is to proclaim one's own guilt. Sound doctrine testifies against the ministry leader who has head knowledge but is without transformation. Galatians 5:22-23 delineates the Fruit of the Spirit, and the first among

them is love.

Scripture declares that mere head knowledge and preaching sound doctrine without being transformed by the Holy Spirit and producing the fruit of the spirit is worthless. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." - 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

It is possible, therefore, for even pastors and missionaries to look very good on the outside, to be accurate theologically, to come so close, and yet fail miserably.

Is there bragging, stubbornness, a critical spirit, lack of humility, authoritarianism instead of submission to biblical conflict resolution, prideful arrogance, or a lack of biblical accountability? Nominal Christians often want to critically focus on the weaknesses of others and reject them, not recognizing that in doing so they also reject the God who is able to save the utmost. Those who minister the grace and mercy of Christ must also exemplify it in their own lives and declare it to others who are equally undeserving as they themselves are. Christ came in grace and truth (John 1:14), and grace and truth are not mutually exclusive. In fact, one without the other is neither.

Preaching sound biblical doctrine does not substitute for a transformed life. Some pastors and missionaries need a pastor or missionary themselves! No one can authentically give away what they do not first possess themselves.

DIVISION WITHIN THE CHURCH

Doctrinal differences create conflict within a church or mission organization, and even between churches and between mission organizations. Sound theological doctrine must, after all, be embraced and clearly articulated. Still, even when doctrine is theologically sound and agreed upon, conflict can still arise within a church or mission organization when the truth of doctrine is not practiced.

For example, it is unlikely that many biblical pastors or missionaries would attempt to justify murder, yet some would diminish the significance of a transformed life that leaves no room for angry insults, gossip or slander. Still, gossip, slander and anger are forms of hate that the Lord equates to murder within the heart, reference Matthew 5:21-22.

Likewise, it is unlikely that many biblical pastors or missionaries would attempt to justify adultery, yet some would diminish the significance of a

transformed life that leaves no room for lust. Still, Jesus equates lust with committing adultery in the heart, reference Matthew 5:27-28.

Further, though most pastors and missionaries I personally know would publicly declare their commitment to sound doctrine, not as many would exemplify a shepherd's heart.

"For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized." - 1 Corinthians 11:18-19

DECEIVED TEACHERS WHO DENY THE FAITH

God's people are called to be in one accord with sound theological doctrine, but not with the failure to implement it. Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones rightly applied Scripture to life by stating:

"It is no good being a great theologian if you deny it all by your behavior. If you are rude to your wife or your children or to your next door neighbors, you are a denier of the Gospel."

Matthew 7:21-23 records the extent of deception:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

Sadly, many of these deniers of the faith may not see themselves as such, proving the extent of the enemy's deception. The worst aspect of deception is that, when it is most effective, it leaves the victim completely convinced they are not deceived. This can include pastors and missionaries who know sound doctrine, but may only possess head knowledge without spiritual transformation.

In contrast, let this be a cautionary warning to individually reflect on 2 Corinthians 13:5-6: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test."

CONCLUSION

The Good News is that after examining yourself, if there is bad news, it need not be permanent. A number of years ago I met an elderly chaplain serving with an internationally recognized mission organization. He shared his ministry passion to prepare new missionaries for the foreign field, to help them avoid pitfalls he experienced. This missionary chaplain openly explained his personal testimony. He admitted he had served 12 years on the foreign mission field before ever repenting of his own sins and becoming

a Christian. Before that he only knew facts and head knowledge, but was not a Christian. As shocking as this may sound, it is perhaps not as uncommon in ministry among pastors and missionaries as it may at first appear.

God's servants must not merely have a form of godliness that denies the power thereof, and be always learning but never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, reference 2 Timothy 3:1-7. As a pastor, missionary, or teacher, let no one resort to preaching or giving mere academic assent to sound doctrine that first hasn't changed their own life. For no matter how succinctly stated, accurately asserted, or loudly proclaimed, sound theological doctrine that is head knowledge alone will not avail much. It certainly is not acceptable to God. Partial obedience is often acceptable to men, but not to the Lord. Let us not be left peddling to others a message that hasn't yet worked in us, deceiving ourselves.

Jesus is relational and restorative, and has called us be the same. Christ came to restore us to a personal relationship with God, and also made it possible for us to be restored to personal relationships with others. Restored relationships are significant, because they are both the result of salvation in Christ and the evidence of it.

This transformation and the evidence of changed relationships are proclaimed in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us

to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

In the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28, Jesus declared that all power in Heaven and earth is given to Him. Let us therefore fear only God, yet let us be sure to fear and honor Him in truth and action and not merely words. Only the Holy Spirit can change a man. Wise men and qualified men are those who submit to Him.



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asian missions advance

Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association *published by*

ASIAN MISSIONS ADVANCE, published from 1978 to 1993 by the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development as the Occasional Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association, has re-started publishing from August 2011 as the Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association by the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development

1520 James M Wood Blvd, #303, Los Angeles, CA 90015, USA
www.asiamissions.net | www.ewcmrd.org
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ISSN 2765-0936

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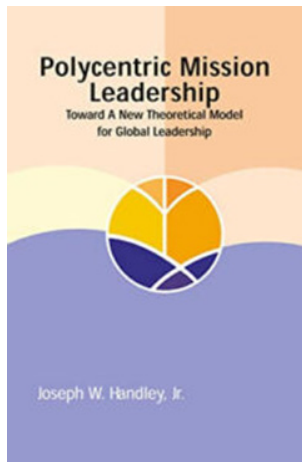
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BOOK REVIEW

Polycentric Mission Leadership: Toward a New Theoretical Model for Global Leadership

Joseph W. Handley, Jr.

Oxford: Regnum Books, 2022. 118 pages, ISBN: 978-1-914454-56-1



The author of *Polycentric Mission Leadership*, better known as Joe Handley, is the president of Asian Access and was the founding director of Azusa Pacific University's Office of World Mission. He also served as lead mission pastor of Rolling Hills Covenant Church and a co-catalyst for the Lausanne Movement in Leader Development. Recently, he was invited to join a new global initiative for multiplying Christian leaders called the Galilean Movement. All these ministries provided a myriad of leadership scenarios relevant to the context of his experience and reflection on missional leadership.

The thesis of the book builds on a conceptual approach to understanding mission history through the lens of polycentric missiology as developed by Allen Yeh (p.16ff). Handley envisions a leadership model called Polycentric Mission Leadership characterized by the following values, "collaborative, communal, diverse, free, relational, and charismatic" (Chapter 4). He believes that these leadership ideals foster a "rich diversity of sources" that lead to "better and more representative outcomes than the traditional top-down hierarchical" leadership approach (Chapter 1, p. 7). This leadership model could address the "centralized or statist" approach to mission leadership and governance that are ineffective given our current complex reality (Chapter 1, p.6).

The book also provides an overview of recent thoughts and development on the concept of polycentrism (chapter 2), a comparison of various leadership models that point toward a need for a better model (chapter 3), and an interview describing the extent and impact of polycentric leadership among global leaders with the Lausanne Movement (chapter 5). Finally, in chapter 6, Handley concludes by articulating the strengths and weaknesses of his proposed model and offers areas for more research and development.

Polycentric Mission Leadership is a welcome idea in this multicultural and multidisciplinary context of the global church. This approach to leadership invites people at the periphery to come and participate in decision-making and governance. Voices from majority-world contexts are frequently drowned by the competing voices situated in the center of power. Yet, these voices from the margins are often more sensitive to the realities on the ground. The global church cannot afford to turn deaf ear to those who understand what it means to be a Christian witness beyond the four walls of the church.

One weakness of the study was the lack of sociocultural elements that may inform such a model. The model may work within a low-power distance community or organization, but one wonders if it would be accepted in a traditionally high-power distanced society.

Given the complex reality that the global church faces today, mission organizations and denomination can no longer rely on the wisdom of a few individuals deciding for the future of any ministry, we need the wisdom of the whole community if we are to survive in this present age. This can only happen when multinational Christian organizations are willing to be "collaborative, communal, diverse, free, relational, and charismatic," in their community. This book is a recommended reading for those engaged in missional leadership.

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