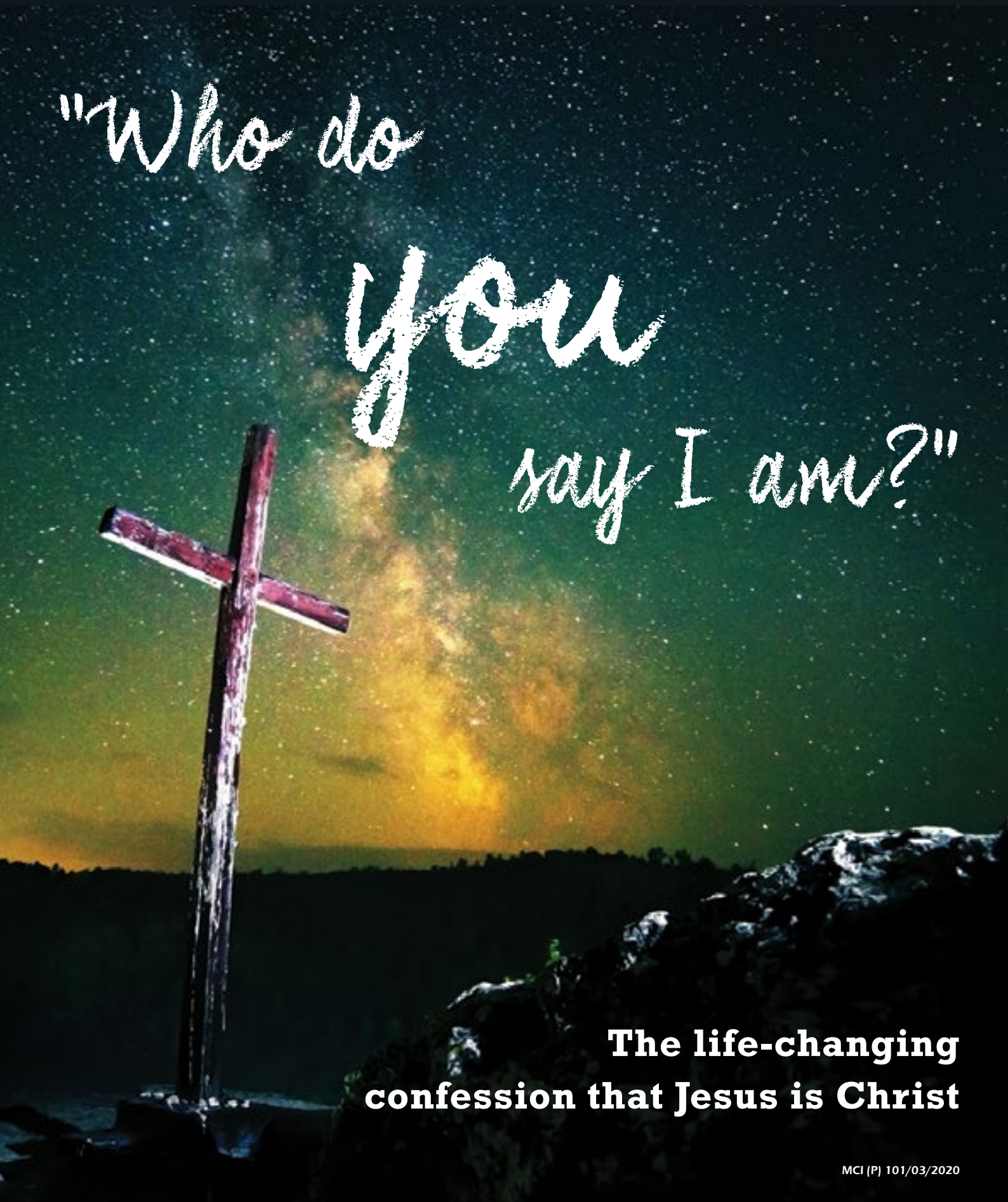
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Mission Round Table

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The life-changing confession that Jesus is Christ

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Editorial

Walter McConnell

The past year has forced us to reexamine many of the things in life we take for granted. When we first heard about a virus affecting the city of Wuhan, we didn't know how widely it would spread or that it would also be called novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, and Covid-19. Neither did we realize how it would impact international travel, commuting to work or school, attending church, going out for meals, and visiting family and friends. Many of us found these things impossible, while others could do them, at least for a while. The arrival of something previously unknown brought life-changing consequences to many, and life-shattering or life-ending consequences to hundreds of thousands of others. And while some have become exceedingly diligent, if not paranoid, in washing their hands, wearing masks, and keeping to a proper social distance, others have responded with denial or scoffing or simply disregarding what government authorities and medical professionals have told us to do. But no matter how we feel about it or respond to it, Covid-19 is a life changer.

Though the analogy quickly breaks down, the life of a man who was born just over 2000 years ago similarly forces us to reexamine our lives and our place in the world. Whether we know him as Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, or the Lord Jesus Christ, his teaching ministry and sacrificial death have greatly impacted people worldwide. And while some sincerely believe that he is the only true God who came to earth in the flesh for the sake of his people and are extremely diligent to obey him, others deny that he was anything more than a man, if he lived at all, and scoff at those who think otherwise.

This issue of *Mission Round Table* will take up Jesus' eternally-important question, "Who do you say I am?" to show that the answer will greatly impact individuals and societies. It will, in fact, cause many—including long-time Christian believers—to reassess their lives, work, and relationships in the light of the Lord of all life.

The issue begins with Arend van Dorp sharing insights from his doctoral study on the church in Myanmar. As he explains, most Christians in Myanmar come from ethnic-minority groups and the majority Bamar people have largely remained on the outside of the church. By reflecting on biblical teaching about the church being a unified body that crosses ethnic boundaries, he challenges individual Christians and ethnic churches to rethink their narrow identity for the sake of a more inclusive ecclesiology that may well attract people from the majority culture into a broader community that is reconciled to Christ and to one another.

Shona Goodman examines the church in Myanmar from a different angle as she reflects on a century-and-a-half of mission work to the Shan people. While acknowledging that Shan church history presents a complex picture with mixed results, she demonstrates the importance of foreign and near-culture Christians adopting Shan lifestyles and learning the language as they communicated the gospel with them. And though Shan who confess that Jesus is the Christ and their Lord are united with believers from other ethnic groups, they often face rejection from their own people who no longer consider them to be Shan.

Jumping to Cambodia, Paul Robinson develops ideas laid out in his doctoral thesis to explain the complex and multi-layered changes that occur when Khmer people become Christians. Raised in a hybrid spirituality incorporating Animistic, Hindu, and Buddhist elements, they navigate a material world imbued with spiritual meaning. When Khmer come to faith in Jesus Christ, their new spiritual environment throws them out of sync with their old practices and requires that they make significant changes in the material spirituality of their domestic living spaces.

The next two papers examine the impact racism has on mission efforts. In "Racism, mission, and me," Dave Andrews explains how he readily recognized that some missionaries were clearly prejudiced against the people they worked with, while it took him many years in India before he realized just how many racist ideas resided his own heart. To correct his attitudes, he drank deeply from Indian Christian culture under the guidance of Indian brothers and entered into a serious dialog with members of other religions to identify the good aspects of each religion.

In "The Language of Lament in Reconciliation," P E relates how, as a white American, getting to know black people in Chicago laid the foundation for understanding what a person from a minority background in Asia feels like, particularly when majority-culture Christians share the gospel with them. His study of biblical lament helped solidify these understandings. It further revealed the need for the majority-culture church to serve minorities in complete humility and to extend deep roots into their culture and language because the God who remembers their needs desires to restore them.

Our final paper is Richard Schlitt's reflection on Peter's declaration, "You are the Christ." By considering the conversation recorded in Matthew 16 when Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" and "Who do you say I am?" Richard reveals his ardent desire to hear people answer this question rightly and shows that it can only come through deep acquaintance with Jesus, thoughtful reflection, and the revelation that only comes through God's Spirit. As with the first disciples, those we work with will need time, truth, and revelation to come to a point where they too can say, "You are the Christ."

May these papers challenge you as you consider how the advent of Jesus is a life-changer for people all over the world. Think deeply as you compare the different ways the authors have responded to Scripture and their unique ministry situations. And carry on the conversation with others so that the people with whom you work can come to know that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God."



Editor, *Misson Round Table*

The Case for Multi-Ethnic Churches in Multi-Cultural Myanmar[1]

Arend van Dorp



Arend has lived in Asia since 1987. After serving for thirteen years in church-planting and pastoral leadership training based in Thailand, he became involved in leading mission teams in neighbouring countries, and lived in Myanmar from 2014 to 2020. He recently completed his DMin with Fuller Theological Seminary. His doctoral project, titled "Ethnic Diversity and Reconciliation: A Missional Model for the Church in Myanmar," seeks to explore how churches in Myanmar could become more open and welcoming to the Buddhist majority in the country. Arend and his wife Jolinda are currently on furlough in the Netherlands, preparing for a new task equipping "the next generation", through mentoring and training young people preparing to serve in mission. Arend and Jolinda have three adult children.

Missionary work in Myanmar has seen limited response among the Bamar (ethnic Burmese) people, while the minorities have shown much greater openness and receptivity. Thus, the church in Myanmar is overwhelmingly made up of ethnic minority people. Moreover, many churches are ethno-culturally defined and predominantly consist of people from a single ethnic group. This strong ethno-linguistic demarcation of Myanmar churches creates a significant obstacle for other ethno-linguistic groups to join. This tendency also clashes with an understanding of the church as a universal body of believers from diverse ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds.

This cultural makeup of many churches makes it difficult for Bamar converts to integrate within a church. Whereas in the larger society they occupy a dominant and privileged position, in the church they often find themselves marginalized and in a minority position. In order for Christians in Myanmar to make a significant impact in this largely Buddhist country, the church may need to rethink its strong ethnic identity and embrace a more inclusive ecclesiology.

Christianity as Western import in Myanmar

While Buddhism has dominated Myanmar for more than fifteen centuries, Christianity appeared only some three hundred years ago with the arrival of Portuguese and other traders. Although the earliest Protestant missionaries (particularly Adoniram and Ann Judson) arrived in Burma before the military incursions of the British army, missionary progress and setbacks were to a large extent connected with the advance of the colonial powers. While the staunchly nationalistic Burmans strongly resented the foreign domination of their country, some of the minorities, such as the Karen, were much less antagonistic, possibly due to the better conditions they experienced under the British. In turn, the British tended to get along better with the Karen, entrusting them with responsibilities they had never been given before.

Their relative openness to the gospel resulted in numerous conversions and the establishment of a multitude of churches both in the delta region and in the hill country.[2] One unintended consequence of the conversion of ethnic minorities and their close interaction with the foreign missionaries was the perception among the Burmans that the Christians had somehow sold their Burmese heritage to the foreigners.[3] It is not unusual to hear Buddhist people refer to the "Three M's" when discussing the foreign influences in Myanmar. When asked to explain, they commonly point out that "first came the Merchants, who robbed our country, then came the Military who occupied our land, and on their coattails came the Missionaries, who tried to undermine our religion." Colonization



has thus been a mixed blessing for the church. While it opened the door for missionaries to enter the country and proclaim the gospel, it also attached a foreign stigma to the Christians that continues to the present day.



The church as religious minority in Myanmar

Despite over two hundred years of Protestant mission work in Myanmar, still only a small minority of the Myanmar population consider themselves to be Christians.[4] Moreover, the vast majority of Christians belong to the country's ethnic minorities, predominantly the Karen, Kachin, and Chin. In effect, Christians in Myanmar have a minority status in a double sense. First, they comprise a small religious community, and secondly, they form a religious community consisting almost entirely of ethnic minority people.

Bamar Buddhist ideology is closely linked with national identity and nationalist rhetoric. Therefore, Christians often experience serious disadvantages in social, educational, and professional areas.[5] When applying for permission to build or expand a church, they often encounter significant obstacles. In rural areas, churches regularly face opposition and harassment from Buddhist monks who seek to curb or restrict Christian activities in their area. Besides a general and widespread dislike towards Christianity as a foreign religion, this perspective also reveals a disdain of Christians as members of "ethnic minority groups whom the Burmans regard as ethically inferior to them."[6] Naturally, such attitudes have not contributed to the acceptance and integration of Christians in Myanmar society and the colonial legacy has not helped the church to win a hearing among the Bamar. This prevalent suspicion and negative view of the Christian minority forms a significant obstacle in the mission of the church to communicate its message to the Buddhist community in Myanmar.

These outside challenges are further compounded by internal hurdles, such as the attitude of Christians towards Buddhists and adherents of other religions. It is not uncommon to hear Christians expressing strongly negative feelings towards Buddhists in particular, which is not surprising given the prejudices and treatment they have faced in this Bamar-dominated society. Many Christians have suffered deeply for their faith at the hands of Burmese Buddhists.[7] Their intense pain simply surpasses the desire to reach out with the gospel message of reconciliation.

Denominational divisions —an obstacle for witness

Even a perfunctory survey of the Christian community in Myanmar will quickly reveal the large number of Christian organizations and institutions, often separated along ethnic and linguistic lines. The *Yangon Directory for Church and Christian Ministries* lists over one hundred Bible schools, seminaries, and training centers in Yangon alone, as well as over seventy orphanages, and this list is almost certainly not exhaustive.[8] Most denominations, including the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) are divided along ethnic lines into Chin, Kayin Pwo, Kayin Sgaw, Akha, Lisu, Kachin, Lahu, Mon, Tamil, Shan, and Wa.

One factor behind the proliferation of different institutions is the vast number of languages and dialects in use throughout Myanmar. It is a widely observed phenomenon that people prefer to gather with those who share their language and customs. Yet, many ethnic churches in Yangon worship in the Burmese language, so clearly there are factors beyond language involved in these divisions. One observer attributed the abundance of small independent entities to the proliferation of foreign-funded initiatives. As Christians worldwide became aware of the needs in Myanmar, they stepped in to support local initiatives. This has led to the establishment of many independent or semi-independent churches, sometimes loosely aligned with a denomination, but without much accountability, as the finances continue to come from foreign partners.

The church and the challenge of reconciliation

Ever since gaining independence from British rule, and most likely much longer, Myanmar has been plagued by internal strife.[9] Seventy years since independence, Myanmar is still experiencing armed conflict with several ethnic armed organizations (EAO), especially in the north and east of the country. The roots of these conflicts have variously been identified as ethnic, religious, and as an identity issue.

Summarizing the conviction of many ethnic people in Myanmar, David Steinberg makes the following observations on the issues dividing the majority Bamar people from the other ethnic groups. The Burman people are prejudiced against the minorities and consider them to be less civilized. The coercive power of the state is in the hands of the Burman leadership and through their overwhelming dominance in the state and the military apparatus, the Burman leadership has used its power to further erode and reduce the autonomy of the minorities. Although some autonomy for the minorities was retained during colonial rule and further promises were made under the first constitution (and the Panglong agreement), this has never been fulfilled. Another grievance relates to the fact that the profits from exploitation of natural resources in minority areas have not been adequately shared and the minorities have been deprived of economic development. Finally, the minorities have been denied the right of education in their native language.[10]

This is not the place to undertake a major investigation into the various causes and backgrounds of the frictions in Myanmar society. The aim here is to consider the church's place and responsibility in this ongoing tragedy. In this regard, it may be illuminating to compare conditions in Myanmar with the situation in Malaysia. Peter Rowan, in his dissertation "Proclaiming the Peacemaker: The Malaysian Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in a Multicultural Society," examines the role the Malaysian church may play in overcoming the divisions in that society. While there are significant differences in the religious, political, and social circumstances of the two countries, there are also some remarkable similarities.

Referring to events surrounding the Japanese invasion of Malaysia during the Second World War, Rowan observes that the occupying Japanese gave preferential treatment to the majority population, while the minorities resisted the new imperial conquerors. "In contrast to their treatment of the Chinese, the Japanese adopted a pro-Malay stance, thereby causing much resentment among Chinese towards the Malays."[11] Similarly, in Myanmar, the independence movement led by Aung San welcomed the Japanese as liberators from the British colonial administration, while most of the other ethnic groups opposed and resisted the occupation by the Japanese forces. The opposing stances of these various ethnic groups in Myanmar were both symptomatic of, and aggravated by, the hostility that has marked inter-ethnic relations since then. Likewise, the identity of Malay Muslims is inextricably linked with Islam as their religion, in the same way that many in Myanmar consider Buddhism the axiomatic identity marker for the Bamar.[12]

Rowan identifies three challenges for the churches in Malaysia. To start with, Christian churches are generally associated with the colonial past. Rowan points out that "Hwa Yung has warned of the serious consequences if churches continue to 'cling on to patterns of Western or other non-indigenous forms of Christianity.'"[13] Secondly, Christian churches feel threatened by the steady process of Islamization. Rowan presents a list of restrictions on Christian activities, which closely parallels the conditions in Buddhist Myanmar.[14] Thirdly, the Christian church exists as a multi-ethnic community in a divided society. Rowan encourages the church to cultivate "positive inter-ethnic relations, building relationships of trust with the other faith communities, paying close attention to the attitude and manner in which Christian evangelism and mission are carried out."[15] Quoting Robert Hunt, he notes that "the Christian community is the only community in Malaysia that has no single dominant ethnic component, and which embraces all ethnic groups."[16]

Having said that, Rowan concedes that "although the multi-ethnic make-up of the Malaysian church has the advantage of spanning the ethnic divides, the churches are in reality segregated both in their local congregational expression as well as in their organizational, denominational structures."[17]

Despite obvious differences, it will be readily apparent that the Christian community in Myanmar shares many of the challenges identified in Malaysia. The association of the church with the colonial administration, the pressure of "Burmanization" on the Christian community, and the ethnic diversity of the church in a divided society, have all been factors affecting the position and conditions facing the church in Myanmar. As in Malaysia, the Christian community needs to consider these questions: What role has the church played in working towards a united society in Myanmar? How do Myanmar Christians approach the question of national identity? Given the social plurality of religions in its society, how can the church in Myanmar be committed both to the proclamation of the gospel and to being an agent for reconciliation in a divided country?



Immanuel Baptist Church, Yangon.

The church in Myanmar faces two main kinds of division. First, it is suffering from division along ethnic and denominational lines internally. Second, it is confronted by the larger separation between the different religions and ethnicities nationally. In order to engage the schisms in society-at-large, the church will first need to address its own divisions and partitions. The largest protestant denomination, the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC), is divided along ethnic divisions. Most other churches (including non-denominational ones) also tend to attract members mostly from one particular ethnic group, regardless of whether this is intentional or not. Instead of demonstrating the diversity of churches in this country, however, this reality expresses their fragmentation, which has resulted in separating and isolating various ethnicities and faith traditions from one another. While it is undoubtedly easier for people from similar backgrounds to come together and build faith communities, there is beauty and fragrance in seeing individuals and groups from different cultures and ethnicities meeting together to worship the One God and Creator of all humankind.[18]

The second issue concerns the separation, at times spilling over into antagonism, between the different ethnicities in society. As the church is largely partitioned along ethnic lines, this also has an impact on how Christians relate (or not) to those from other ethnic groups. The problematic nature of inter-ethnic relations therefore has serious ramifications for the missional role of the church. Decades of ethnic strife have created an atmosphere of mistrust, bitterness, and alienation toward the dominant Bamar Buddhists. Their nationalist ideology, combined with religious supremacy, has left many Christians feeling betrayed and marginalized. Among Karen and Kachin believers in particular, many have strong feelings of bitterness toward the Bamar ethnic majority. This strong resentment has created major obstacles for Christians to have a significant missional impact among their Buddhist fellow citizens.

Biblical-theological reflections on the church

The church is one body in Christ (Romans 12:3–8)

Of all the New Testament images of the church, one of the most powerful is Paul's portrayal of the church as the body of

Christ. When Jesus spoke about his body, it was always in reference to his physical body in connection with the Last Supper (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19). Paul, however, broke new ground when he introduced the image of the church as the body of Christ. While the idea of a community of people as a body was not unknown in the apostolic era, it was Paul who applied it specifically to the church as a community.[19] In 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:29, Paul speaks of the body of Christ to refer to the sacrament of the cup and bread, concluding that "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 11:17, ESV). Thus, Paul uses this image to emphasize the essential unity of the church as forming one body.

Similarly, in Romans 12, he employs the same image to indicate unity within the body of Christ—the church—in all its diversity. While acknowledging that a body is composed of different members, each with individual functions, he underlines that together they form one body in Christ (Rom 12:5). Moreover, Paul adds that "individually [they are] members of one another" (Rom 12:5). This unity in diversity connects the members to Christ and to one another. It seems significant that Paul repeatedly addressed this issue of the unity of the body in the face of diversity within congregations. Here in Romans he urges each believer to "not think of yourself more highly than you ought" (Rom 12:3), obviously because some members were tempted to look down on others.

In 1 Corinthians 12, he addresses the same issue from different angles. First, he speaks to those who feel overlooked, as if they do not belong to the body (1 Cor 12:15–16). Next, he confronts those who consider themselves superior and want to exclude others who they deem less important or valuable (1 Cor 12:17). He then makes it clear that "God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Cor 12:18). There is therefore no excuse in Paul's mind for either excluding oneself or others from the body of Christ. All members are valuable and indispensable. The church as the body of Christ is not a uniform, homogeneous group of people, but there is a basic, foundational unity—organic and integrated, a unity in diversity. This heterogeneous or composite unity is what enables the church to display "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10) to this world.[20] Through reconciled relationships and mutual submission, church members can experience true oneness within the body of Christ without losing their uniqueness.

Christ has removed the barriers (Ephesians 2:11–22)

At first glance, it may seem that Ephesians 2 addresses similar themes to those found in Romans 12, i.e. the unity of believers in the church. However, Paul here approaches the subject from a different perspective. Although he does speak about Jewish and Gentile Christians being brought together through Christ, he employs a number of ideas besides "one body." Here he emphasizes the image of "one new man in place of the two" (Eph 2:15), of coming together in one household (Eph 2:19), and of being built into a temple (Eph 2:21).

First, however, Paul focuses on the fact that non-Jews used to be "separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). As uncircumcised people, they remained outsiders and had no prospect of fellowship with God. Paul does specify here that he is talking about the outward circumcision "in the body" (Eph 2:11), but the implication is that what really matters is circumcision of the heart.[21] Verses 14–18 form a parenthetical section focusing on the peace and reconciliation brought by Jesus Christ, after which Paul resumes the theme of the Gentiles no longer being "excluded and foreigners." But first, in verses 14–18, he elaborates on Jesus as Peacemaker, who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility that stood between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14).[22] According to Leslie Mitton, this wall of hostility should be interpreted metaphorically, as an attitude of the heart "which holds apart whole communities of people in suspicion and hatred of one another … It was this hostility, firmly implanted in human hearts, which Christ had melted away, so that Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile, found themselves knit together in a new and unbelievable friendship."[23] The result is that Christ created "one new humanity out of the two," thus reconciling the two both to God and to one another, thereby removing—putting to death—the hostility (Eph 2:15–16). This act of creating a new community—incorporating former enemies—is further elaborated in verse 17, where Paul underscores that Christ has brought peace both to "you who were far away"—the Gentiles—and "peace to those who were near"—the Jews. The next verse makes it even clearer that there is no more distinction between the two groups, "for through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (Eph 2:18). Clearly, in God's new humanity, there is full equality among believers, whatever their background.

After this short intermezzo, Paul returns to the topic addressed in verses 12–13, the end of alienation and separation of the Gentiles. In verse 19, he announces to the Gentile believers that "you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household." This is an extraordinary declaration in view of their traditional separation from the Jewish people. From now on they belong together in one house of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, a building that "rises to become a holy temple" (Eph 2:21). In the final verse, Paul develops the image even further. Not only do the believers together form a temple, in Christ they are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph 2:20). Paul's theology is both groundbreaking and thoroughly Trinitarian. It establishes that God has expanded his covenant with Israel to include all nations, regardless of ethnic origin, circumcision or non-circumcision, and even without regard to prior compliance with the law, as Paul asserts in verse 15. By the blood of Christ, God has established a new humanity, a spiritual community. Instead of being an exclusive single-ethnicity, the church is meant to be an open, inclusive, welcoming, multi-ethnic community, brought and held together by Christ, its head and cornerstone.

Our unity sends a message to the world (John 13:34–35)

The previous two passages have focused on the essence and composition of the church as understood by the apostle Paul. We now turn our attention to Jesus' view of the church, not primarily to examine its nature or internal make-up, but more specifically, how it is supposed to function in everyday life. Shortly before his arrest and trial, Jesus spent the last few hours with his disciples, preparing them for living in a new kind of community that was to have a profound impact in the world. After telling his disciples that he would not be with them much longer, he

changed the topic of the conversation, saying, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." This is the first of two instances in which Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another, the other being in John 15:12. However, only on this occasion did he refer to it as a "new" command. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel had received the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18), but here the disciples were told, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." This added a new dimension to this old commandment, and thus it is described as a "new" commandment. The new love that should characterize relationships among the disciples—who had been fighting not long before about who should be first—is defined by Jesus' own love for them (cf. John 13:34; 15:9, 12). This love was to lead Jesus to lay down his life for them, and here he commanded them to love one another in the same way.[24]

The importance of the disciples' love for one another is evident by the explanation given by Jesus in the following verse: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." It is important to note that this verse does not indicate the reason why the disciples should love one another. Rather, their love for one another would bring the outside world to recognize that they were indeed true followers of Jesus.

For Christians to merit the attention of the world, they need to take Jesus' command to heart, laying aside petty squabbles and obeying his exhortation to love one another unconditionally. Only a sincere desire to follow Jesus in sacrificial love can cultivate a unity that will send a message to the world. This love must embrace and include people from every ethnicity, language, culture, and nation. It must include those who are despised and rejected by society, as well as those who have caused suffering for others. Only then will the church be the inclusive community God intended it to be, and only then will the church be able to draw in those who are hungering and thirsting for authentic love and life.[25]

Recognizing the implications of reconciliation

The church as a unified body of believers

The church was established to bring together Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, male and female (Gal 3:28). Yet, in spite of this formidable diversity, the church is destined to display a unique oneness. While this unity is often difficult to detect in everyday life, it is still at the heart of God's design and intention. In this regard, it is important to remember that reconciliation with God has implications for relationships with others, both within the body of Christ and beyond.

The church is a community of people who are reconciled both with God and with one another. Christ has brought people together in one body, not merely to worship God and enjoy the privilege of communion with him. They are called into community, as they now belong together within one family. It is simply incomprehensible for Christians to remain separated from fellow believers merely on the grounds of ethnic or clan affiliation, social class, educational background, or other identity markers. Allowing such differences to split Christians into separate congregations or communities is incompatible with the reconciling power of Christ, whose purpose it was "to create in himself one new humanity out of the two [Jews and Gentiles], thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Eph 2:15–16). Throughout the New Testament, and particularly in the Pauline Epistles, believers are exhorted to strive for unity and mutual love as the natural outgrowth of the fact that "there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4–5).

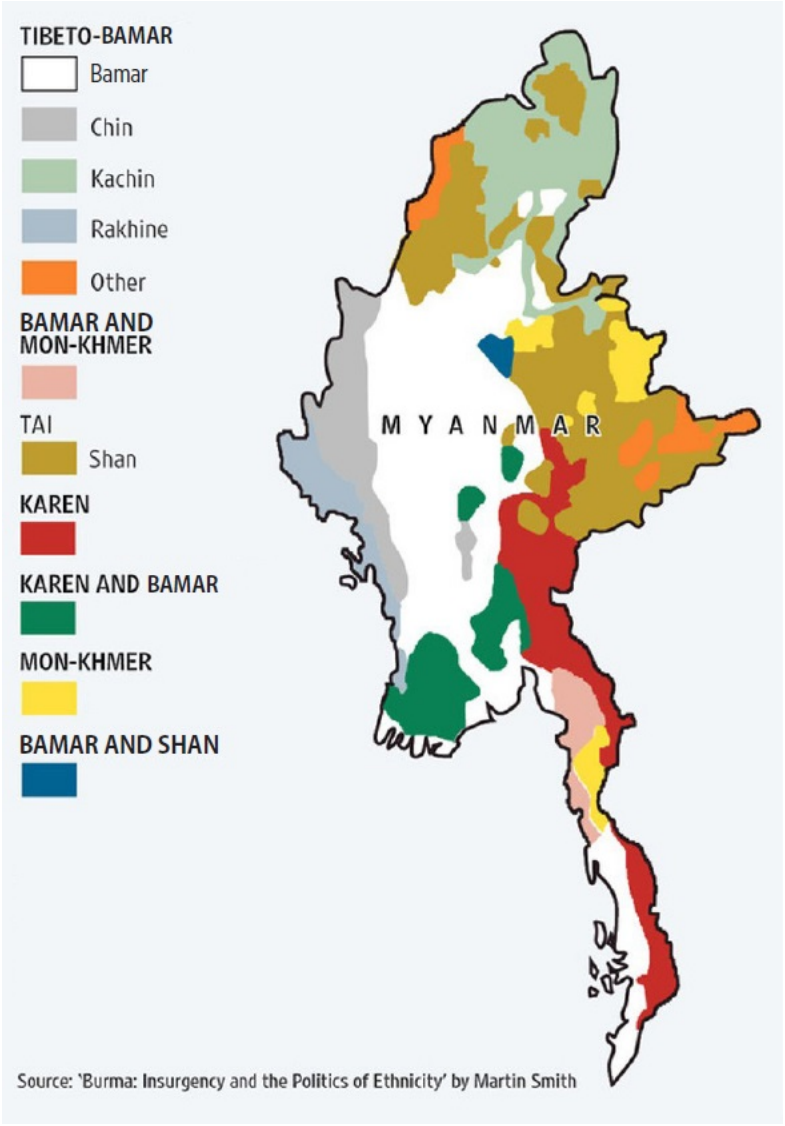
There is no inconsistency between the church's unity and its diversity, just as there is no incongruity between the oneness of God and his existence in three Persons. Diversity expresses as much of the church's essence as does its oneness.

The church as a called community

Not only is the church a unified body; it is also a community with a specific calling. First of all, when the apostle Peter addresses his readers as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Pet 2:9), he accentuates the fact that they were "called out of darkness." Thus, the church is a called-out community, separated from darkness, from evil, and from the world. As the people of Israel were led out of Egypt, the followers of Christ are called to move out of darkness and into God's presence, to "his eternal glory in Christ" (1 Pet 5:10). However, Peter makes it very clear in his epistles that following Christ entails hardship. Thus, it is also a call to suffering, for "to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (2 Pet 2:21; cf. 1 Pet 3:9). This call to suffering is linked with obedience to Christ, a theme developed more fully by Paul in his exhortations to the Romans and to Timothy—whom he also called to live a life of holiness (Rom 1:5–7; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 1:9)—a theme also stressed by Peter.

Furthermore, the church as a community is not only called out of darkness and into fellowship with Christ. It is also called to be church together. Like Peter, the apostle Paul addresses the members of the church in Corinth as "those sanctified in Christ Jesus and *called to be his holy people, together with all* those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:2, italics added). Likewise, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul exhorts his readers to maintain unity and peace, with an appeal to the fact that they form "one body and one Spirit, just as you were *called to one hope when you were called"* (Eph 4:4, italics added). Similarly, in Colossians 3:15, he admonishes the Colossians to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." The concept of the church as community together is essential if the church is to function as missional community. The church does not exist in and for itself, but is called both out of and into the world. As church members live and serve together, they are equipped to impact the society

around them.[26] Christians face the challenge of demonstrating their faith in an indifferent or even antagonistic environment. Closing themselves off from the outside world is not an option, at least not for those who take the clear commands of Scripture to heart. This requires the courage to explore the intersection between faith and societal values. If reconciliation has any significance beyond the relationship between an individual believer and God, it must have implications both within the Christian community and in society at large. Christians have a responsibility as agents of reconciliation, as peacemakers, in situations characterized by brokenness and suffering.[27]



The church as a multi-ethnic mosaic

As we consider diversity within the Christian community, we need to keep its fundamental unity in mind, which is rooted in the unity of the Trinity.[28] It would be wrong, however, to equate diversity with disunity and see it simply as an expression of brokenness. Van Gelder expresses this quite fittingly: "Rather than contrasting the church's oneness with its brokenness, it is more helpful to see its unity in conjunction with its diversity. That is, the church, while existing as one, also must exist as many."[29] There is thus no inconsistency between the church's unity and its diversity, just as there is no incongruity between the oneness of God and his existence in three Persons. Diversity expresses as much of the church's essence as does its oneness. This is emphasized by Paul when he says that "through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Eph 3:10).[30]

Such diversity may be expressed in a number of ways, the most important of which are socio-economic context, educational background, and ethnic identity. The early church made significant efforts to overcome social, racial, and other biases. While it initially consisted mainly of Jewish-background believers, these came from a wide variety of cultural and linguistic contexts. When tensions arose between them, the apostles did not attempt to resolve the conflict by separating them in homogeneous units, but appointed leaders from a variety of ethnic groups (Acts 6:1–6). Social and class distinctions were abolished by exhorting masters to have fellowship with slaves as brothers in Christ (1 Cor 7:17–24; Phlm 8–16). James commands rich and poor to fellowship together in unity, rather than separate along socio-economic lines (Jas 2:1–9). Aubrey Sequeira argues that "while homogeneity in churches simply *reinforces the status quo of society*, the biblical evidence shows us that *the gospel broke down and cut across ethnic, social, economic, and cultural barriers in ways never before seen in history.*"[31] Jesus and the apostles never encouraged ethnocentrism, but rather called Christians to embrace one another in spite of their differences. "While the 'homogeneous unit principle' emphasizes seeking to win people by not offending their ethnocentric sensibilities, Jesus's approach is radically different – Christ lays the axe to the root of ethnic pride."[32] The accounts in the book of Acts demonstrate clearly that churches were not established or separated along ethnic, socio-cultural, or class lines. While it may be true that in practice people prefer not having to cross racial, linguistic, or class barriers when becoming Christians, this does not establish any normative biblical pattern. The truth is that reconciliation to God also brings a person into a community "where people find their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in their race, culture, social class, or sex, and are consequently reconciled to one another."[33]

We have to acknowledge, however, that diversity is not the same as reconciliation and the goal of reconciliation is not simply diversity.[34] Furthermore, the issue is not always a matter of a majority culture seeking to dominate other (minority) cultures. Often ethnic minority communities choose to meet separately in an effort to preserve and sustain their cultural identity. Patrick Cho, writing about the challenge for Asian churches in North America to become more multi-ethnic, comments that "most cultures do not want a melting pot as much as an acknowledgement of cultural identity. To use a culinary analogy, perhaps *a truly multiethnic church would look less like a monochrome chowder and more like a varicolored minestrone.*"[35] This observation is particularly helpful, as it helps us realize that unity in diversity does not necessarily lead to or require uniformity. The image of a colorful cauldron of minestrone soup conveys a helpful message. Other helpful metaphors might include a multi-colored tapestry, a multi-faceted diamond, or a colorful mosaic. Each of the pictures evokes the image of diversity in harmonious unity. The overall unity does not subsume the identity of its individual components. On the contrary,

its composite nature enhances the overall beauty and contributes to its harmony.

Becoming a missional church in Myanmar

As we have seen, the church in Myanmar has experienced a high level of fragmentation along ethnic as well as theological dividing lines. Viewed from a practical as well as historical perspective, this is understandable, particularly where these ethnic divisions are reinforced by language barriers, which make communication with other ethnic groups more difficult. In some minority areas, the older population is generally not comfortable with the national language—Burmese. In addition, some minorities, such as the Chin, consist of multiple subgroups, each speaking separate languages and thus they are not even able to communicate with one another unless they use a common language, such as Burmese or English. This has had a two-fold effect: some groups have opted to use Burmese, thereby strengthening inter-ethnic connection and belonging, while at the same time being more accessible to other ethnic groups. Others have chosen to worship in their particular ethnic language, whether due to a dislike of the national language or out of a desire to maintain their ethnic identity.[36]

Given the pressures and discrimination many ethnic minorities have encountered from the Burman majority, this desire to preserve and cultivate their own ethnic identity is to be expected. It is not surprising, therefore, when Christians are reluctant to open their doors (and hearts) to this dominant Buddhist majority, and instead opt for the safety and familiarity of their own culture and community.[37] While the demarcation along ethnic and language lines is understandable—at least in minority areas where the population consists largely of a single ethnic group—it is not particularly helpful for a church that wants to be missional in a multi-cultural context. Using a minority language almost certainly precludes people from other ethnicities from joining, or at least feeling welcome. This is especially relevant in urban settings, such as Yangon and other major cities that form a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities.

What is needed is an understanding of the church as an inclusive, multi-ethnic fellowship, modeling a diverse, yet united community. This will require a rethinking of the nature of the church, grounded in reconciliation between the various ethnic groups within the Myanmar church. Bringing Christians from various ethnicities together may in turn lead to a more inclusive community where people from all ethnic and religious backgrounds feel welcome. For the church in Myanmar to live out its calling as a missional community, it needs to embrace and demonstrate reconciliation, both within the church and in society in general.

Various internal challenges confront the church, such as disunity manifested in ethnic denominationalism, which hinders its witness because it creates the impression of a fragmented community, reinforcing the perception of the church as a collection of mono-cultural communities. More attention will also need to be given to developing a more outward-focused model of discipleship. These challenges, both separately and together, require a thorough rethinking of what it means to be a missional church in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic society.

Steps toward becoming more missional

Churches do not become missional without taking intentional steps and measures. Like any other community and social entity, they have created patterns of behavior and models of operation over time. These have developed into solid traditions and practices that have served to establish their common identity. It will therefore require purposeful planning and deliberate action plans to move toward a different model of operation. The previous section has identified several biblical-theological elements of a missional church model, which will now be developed into more concrete strategies and plans.



Discipleship focus: pursuing life-changing spiritual formation

While discipleship as a concept and discipleship programs as a practical application have received significant attention in recent years in Myanmar as elsewhere, these efforts have often been focused on individual change and development. However, discipleship requires a more comprehensive, holistic approach based on a biblical understanding of the church as a welcoming community, a diverse but unified body of followers of Christ. In such a context, discipleship is more than a program aimed at helping new believers understand the basic teachings and apply various practices of the Christian life. Not only is it a life-long process of spiritual growth, it is a praxis which involves the entire congregation. Moreover, it is not aimed exclusively at the growth of individual believers toward maturity. Rather, it involves establishing patterns and practices leading to spiritual transformation of the entire community. Discipleship, as a missional church praxis, is thus a life-long process that involves the entire congregation and impacts the whole community. Discipleship in a missional perspective thus incorporates life as a whole, the church as a whole, and society as a whole. The impact of the good news of Jesus Christ in Myanmar will not depend on verbal proclamation only—however essential that is—but on true, life-changing conduct of Christians within their spheres of influence. The changed lives of church members—both individually and communally—demonstrating outward-focused discipleship, will send a powerful message of reconciliation to a society riven by contentious ideologies of ethnic identity and religious extremism.

Inclusive communities: embracing ethnic diversity in churches

An environment that tends to accentuate ethnic identity and to classify communities based on their religious affiliation poses a challenge to advocate inclusiveness and embrace ethnic diversity. As Miroslav Volf argues, "the problem of ethnic and cultural conflicts is

Table 1. Equipping roles and missional environments[44]

Equipper	Thick practices (Liturgies)	Environments they cultivate
Apostles (dream awakeners)	Sabbath Making disciples	Cultivate a *thriving environment* that calls people to join God in the redemption of all things by developing a strong discipleship ethos
Prophets (heart revealers)	Being present to God *(silence, solitude, fasting)* Breaking bread	Cultivate a *liberating environment* that dares people to embody a holistic gospel, helping people experience liberation from personal and social sins, by forming spirit-transforming communities
Evangelists (story tellers)	Hospitality Sharing God's story	Cultivate a *welcoming environment* that invites people to bless their neighbors and be redemptive agents in their vocation
Pastors (soul healers)	Confession Peacemaking	Cultivate a *healing environment* in which people learn to embody the ministry of reconciliation and cultivate a life-giving spirituality in God's new family
Teachers (light givers)	Sacred assemblies Future-oriented living	Cultivate a *learning environment* where people immerse themselves in God's narrative and engage in praxis and future-oriented living

part of a larger problem of identity and otherness."[38] This diversity, however, is exactly what the gospel requires and what the church should embody. John Woodward stresses the importance of churches crossing "ethnic, class and age barriers because one of the statements our world needs to see is that there can be unity in diversity when Jesus is king of that community."[39] While the tendency in Myanmar is to emphasize the otherness of distinct ethnic communities, the church has a responsibility to draw people together rather than separate them. Christians must learn, according to one theological student from Myanmar, to

> accept not only the unity of humanity but also the cultural diversity that ethnic groups bring to the churches in Myanmar today. One of the tasks of the Church in a given culture is to contribute to the flowering of that culture, as well as to make sure that the salutary sense of ethnic belonging does not turn into ethnic aggressions towards the "stranger who is within the gates" or towards neighboring ethnic groups. It is therefore the responsibility of the Church to work towards genuine community, in which each ethnic group remains faithful to its dynamic and changing identity and yet is enriched by and enriches others.[40]

The penchant toward exclusion does not necessarily stem from a deliberate effort to reject others, but may arise from an unconscious bias toward those from their own community and faith tradition. What is needed, therefore, is to realize one's own susceptibility towards discrimination, springing from unbiblical perceptions of those who are different from oneself. Once a process of outward-focused discipleship has been initiated, it should foster a new perspective of welcoming and embracing people from an array of ethnic backgrounds.

Mobilization of the laity: involving all members in ministry

Not only should the church be a welcoming community whatever one's background or ethnic identity, the church should also engage all members in ministry. This aspect has been discussed before, but it is important to reiterate it here, as there are significant ramifications for the missional impact of the church.[41] Without the active participation of its members, the church in Myanmar may not be able to fulfill its calling as an agent of transformation and reconciliation. Ed Stetzer, in an article on his blog, even calls the clergy-laity division a "caste-system."[42]

In his book *Creating a Missional Culture*, J. R. Woodward offers a new model for churches that cover areas from its leadership structure to its mobilization of the laity. He asserts that

> creating a missional culture helps the church live out her calling to be a sign of the kingdom, pointing people to the reality beyond what we can see, a foretaste of the kingdom where we grow to love one another as Christ loves us, and an instrument in the hands of God to bring more of heaven to earth in concrete ways.[43]

He calls for a new kind of leadership, which he calls polycentric leadership. His premise is that leaders in the church should not act as gatekeepers, but equippers. He distinguishes five types of equipping based on Ephesians 4:11–12, linking them to specific environments they create (Table 1).[44]

Thus, apostles cultivate a thriving environment, prophets create a liberating environment, evangelists a welcoming environment, pastors a healing environment, and teachers a learning environment. What this model illustrates is the complementarity of polycentric leadership roles in the church and the purpose of each function in creating an enabling environment where church members have opportunities to engage in various aspects of church ministry. Woodward calls on churches and church leaders to cultivate an equipping ethos, an environment where leaders act less like multi-talented star players and more like coaches and air traffic controllers, enabling and directing others to exercise their God-given abilities.[45]

Contextualized practices and communication

There is an urgent need to consider contextualized patterns of Christian life and ministry in Myanmar. Not many Burmese scholars have written about this topic and few published resources are available, whether in Burmese or English,[46] although some academic papers can be found in local theological libraries.[47] One of the elements most often mentioned as essential for contextualizing Christianity is the need for a renewed appreciation of Myanmar culture and traditions. Tint Lwin recommends a greater adherence to Myanmar dress code and a deeper appreciation of traditional literature, music, dance, and poetry. He also challenges churches to reconsider Christian worship styles, including moving away from Western music and evangelistic approaches, and showing more respect for indigenous customs and practices. Finally, and perhaps most



significantly, he encourages Christians to think through how the Christian gospel message can interact with Buddhist beliefs regarding impermanence, suffering, and selfhood.[48] Van Ram Oke adds several other elements, such as showing appropriate respect rather than a condescending attitude, and serving in practical ways, like paying attention to physical needs, including healing and deliverance. He also suggests considering how the gospel meets felt needs, especially fear and shame.[49]

C. Duh Kam approaches contextualization differently, focusing on the contrast between seemingly similar theological concepts, which need clarification in the communication between Christians and Buddhists. Christ's substitutionary atonement—a key concept in Christian soteriology—is often misunderstood by Buddhists, influenced by the concept of karma. Furthermore, *agape* is very different from the Buddhist belief in *metta-karuna*, while the Kingdom of God is diametrically opposed to the concept of *samsara-nirvana*. Finally, the relationship between sin and suffering is fundamentally different in Christian and Buddhist thought. Other areas where understandings diverge and misunderstandings can easily arise are the significance of religious buildings—churches vs. pagodas—and festivals, and Christian discipleship vs. Buddhist monkhood.[50]

Saw Say Khu points out several areas in need of contextualization. First, Christian attitude, especially avoiding a sense of superiority or seeing Buddhists as "objects of spiritual conquest."[51] Secondly, Christian lifestyle of every member, particularly outside the church, in the family and the workplace. Thirdly, he encourages Christians to study Buddhism, in order to be able to share the gospel in a relevant way. Finally, Christians need to explain how Christ sets people free from fear, including fear of the *nats*.[52] To summarize, contextualization requires adaptations in the areas of attitude and lifestyle, and accurate, relevant communication of the gospel message.

Conclusion

The road to becoming more missional may not be an easy one for many churches in multicultural contexts, whether in Myanmar or elsewhere. Often, the weight of historical traditions and cultural preferences will stifle attempts at innovation or renewal. However, when a genuine desire is awakened to reach out beyond familiar environments and embrace those who are different, this paper offers a pathway forward with a number of suggestions to create a more inclusive, welcoming community. By building on a biblical foundation of the church as a unified body, churches in Myanmar would embark on a journey of promoting discipleship as a life-changing discipline of spiritual formation, mobilizing all members for ministry, embracing ethnic diversity and reconciliation, and using contextualized practices and communication. While for many, this may be a journey into uncharted territory, it is an undertaking that may help the church in Myanmar bridge the gap with the majority population in their diverse, multi-ethnic society. **MRT**

[1] This article is based on Arend van Dorp's doctoral project, "Ethnic Diversity and Reconciliation: A Missional Model for the Church in Myanmar" (Dmin project, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2019), https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin/394 (accessed 25 November 2020).

[2] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), 211.

[3] A common saying, frequently heard when talking with Burmese (Buddhist) people, is that "one more Christian means one less Burmese". This has become a major obstacle to the spread of Christianity among the Bamar population, who are almost exclusively Buddhist.

[4] According to the 2014 population census, carried out with support from the United Nations, Christians make up 6.3% of the population, totaling 3,172,479 people. Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population Myanmar, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census. The Union Report: Religion*, Census Report Volume 2-C (Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar: Department of Population, 2016), 3, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNION_2C_Religion_EN.pdf (accessed 19 November 2020). It should be noted that the actual number of Christians may be higher, given the negative status attached to belonging to a minority religion and the difficulty some people experience when requesting to change their religion on their ID cards.

[5] Cf. Zam Khat Kham, "Burmese Nationalism and Christianity in Myanmar: Christian Identity and Witness in Myanmar Today" (PhD thesis, Concordia Seminary, 2015), 108, http://scholar.csl.edu/phd/22 (accessed 19 November 2020). Hazel Torres, "Christians Being Pushed out of Their Own Church by Buddhist Monks in Myanmar," *Christian Today* (8 May 2016), https://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.being.pushed.out.of.their.own.church.by.buddhist.monks.in.myanmar/85599.htm (accessed 19 November 2020).

[6] Samuel Ngun Ling, *Christianity Through Our Neighbours' Eyes: Rethinking the 200 Years Old American Baptist Missions in Myanmar* (Yangon, Myanmar: Judson Research Center – Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2014), 51. "[N]o matter how widely Christianity is considered a universal religion, it is, to the Burmans, whose great civilization owes its inception to Theravada Buddhism, inferior to Buddhism." Ling, *Christianity Through Our Neighbours' Eyes*, 48.

[7] Kham Zam Khat, "Burmese Nationalism and Christianity in Myanmar," 96–7. Many examples can be found in Rachel Fleming, *Hidden Plight: Christian Minorities in Myanmar* (Washington, D.C.: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2016), 9–20, https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Hidden%20Plight.%20Christian%20Minorities%20in%20Burma.pdf (accessed 19 November 2020). Also Mikael Gravers, ed., *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, NIAS Studies in Asian Topics (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2006), 10.

[8] Salay Hta Oke, *Yangon Directory for Church and Christian Ministries* (Yangon: Christian Media Center, 2006).

[9] Cho Cho Myaing, "Forgiveness Toward National Reconciliation in Myanmar From Christian Perspective" (MDiv thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2013), 51.

[10] David A. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2001), 191.

[11] Peter A. Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker: The Malaysian Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in a Multicultural Society" (PhD dissertation, Open University, All Nations Christian College, 2010), 110.

[12] Rowan points to "the inextricable bond made in Malaysia's Constitution between Malay ethnicity and Islam, so that to be Malay is to be Muslim. This is enshrined in Article 160 of the Federal Constitution of 1957: 'Malay is a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the

Malay language, conforms to Malay custom …'" Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker," 122.
[13] Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker," 132, quoting from Hwa Yung, "Religious Freedom and Muslim States," *Transformation* 8, no. 2 (1991): 16.
[14] Göran Wiking, *Breaking the Pot: Contextual Issues to Survival Issues in Malaysian Churches*, Studia Missionalia Svecana XCVI (Lund: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 2004), 77–8, cited in Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker," 133.
[15] Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker," 137.
[16] Robert A. Hunt, "A Response by Robert A. Hunt," in Ng Kam Weng, *The Quest for Covenant Community and Pluralist Democracy in Islamic Context*, ed. Mark L. Y. Chan (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2008), 118.
[17] Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker," 137.
[18] The biblical and theological imperatives for such spiritual unity is explored later in this article. Suffice it here to note the powerful message that is communicated by the spiritual unity of God's people, as also attested by the Lord Jesus in John 13:35: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
[19] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 110. Also see Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 145.
[20] Paul extends this to "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." According to Leslie Mitton, former divisions are healed in the church through Christ's reconciling power, bringing unity and peace in place of hostility. C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 126. Perhaps a more vivid way of expressing this would be to speak of the *multicolored* wisdom of God.
[21] In Romans 2:29 he makes this explicit when he says that "a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter."
[22] Some commentators argue that this dividing wall was a reference to the division that existed in the temple between the temple proper and the Court of the Gentiles. Cf. Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Olivetree Bible Study digital edition, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), v. 2:14. This possiblity is also mentioned by James D. G. Dunn, although he rejects it in favor of seeing the fence as a reference to the law. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word, 2012), electronic edition in Olivetree Bible Software.
[23] Mitton, *Ephesians*, 105. Dunn further specifies that this "fence" refers to the law which "in functioning as a fence to protect Israel from the impurity of the Gentiles, … became such a sign of Jewish particularism that it also alienated Gentiles and became a cause of hostility." Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, electronic edition, on v. 15.
[24] It is clear that the message got through to the disciples, as evidenced in 1 John 3:16: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."
[25] "It is not alone the law for a new time, but a law for a new life." George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Dallas: Word, 1999), electronic edition in Olivetree Bible Software.
[26] J. R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), 75. Woodward points out the missional hermeneutic of Ephesians 4, in which "leaders learn to lead from the margins as priests ministering to fellow priests, with Christ drawing all of us toward himself at the center."
[27] Rowan, "Proclaiming the Peacemaker," 49. "In the midst of the brokenness and suffering of the world, the church exists as a community of reconciliation, pointing back to the unique reconciling work of God in Christ on the cross, and pointing forward, by its work and witness, to the ultimate reconciliation of 'all things.'"
[28] See Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 122.
[29] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 121.
[30] This is accentuated by Aubrey Sequeira in "Re-Thinking Homogeneity: The Biblical Case for Multi-Ethnic Churches," *9Marks Journal* (Summer/Fall 2015), 30, https://www.9marks.org/article/re-thinking-homogeneity-the-biblical-case-for-multi-ethnic-churches/ (accessed 21 November 2020). He argues that "establishing multi-ethnic churches is not only more faithful to Scripture, but […] multi-ethnic churches more fully display the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ."
[31] Sequeira, "Re-Thinking Homogeneity," 31–2. Italics in original. Sequeira further contends: "Throughout the NT we see an attack on ethnocentrism, and consequently, a mandate for believers from differing ethnic backgrounds to accept each other lovingly and to live together in harmony in local churches."
[32] Sequeira, "Re-Thinking Homogeneity," 33. Sequeira takes a strong stand against the Church Growth theory of Donald McGavran, which promotes the "homogeneous unit principle" according to which the gospel spreads most rapidly and easily along the lines of homogeneous units in order to grow the church. Against McGavran's insistence that the Jew-Gentile separation was not an ethnic issue, he asserts that "though there are some points of discontinuity between the Jew-Gentile divide and modern ethno-cultural divides, there are enough points of continuity to warrant the parallel. Furthermore, the New Testament does extend the call to unity beyond "Jew" and "Gentile" to include categories like "Barbarian" and "Scythian," which are ethnolinguistic categories (Col 3:11). In the New Testament, unity in Christ trumps all other issues of identity, and the call to embrace the "other" encompasses all categories of "otherness," and takes shape in the form of life together in the local church." Sequeira, "Re-Thinking Homogeneity," 35, footnote.
[33] Sequeira, "Re-Thinking Homogeneity," 34. In a footnote he quotes René Padilla: "[T]he extension of the gospel to the Gentiles was such a difficult step for the Jerusalem church that it took place only with the aid of visions and commands (8:26–28.; 10:1–16) or under the pressure of persecution (8:1–3.; 11:19–20)." Sequeira, "Re-Thinking Homogeneity," 35, quoting C. René Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6, no. 1 (1982): 23–30, http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/1982-01/1982-01-023-padilla.pdf (accessed 21 November 2020).
[34] Jarvis Williams helpfully points out, "an assembly of the United Nations is multi-ethnic and diverse, as is the army, or the local public high school, or so many other groups. Yet such settings hardly enjoy the racial reconciliation of the gospel." Jarvis J. Williams, "Racial Reconciliation, the Gospel, and the Church," *9Marks Journal* (Summer/Fall 2015), 9, https://www.9marks.org/article/racial-reconciliation-the-gospel-and-the-church/ (accessed 21 November 2020).
[35] Patrick Cho, "Helping Asian Churches Become Multi-Ethnic," *9Marks Journal* (Summer/Fall 2015), 67, https://www.9marks.org/article/helping-asian-churches-become-multi-ethnic/ (accessed 21 November 2020). Italics added.
[36] Thus, there are Chin churches identifying as Asho, Falam, Lai, Lautu, Mizo, or Zomi. Karen churches are usually divided into Pwo Karen and Sgaw Karen, and Methodists have Telugu and Tamil churches. See Oke, *Yangon Directory for Church and Christian Ministries*.
[37] While the Burman majority may be in the best position to initiate ethnic reconciliation, there is a missional imperative on the Christian community to act as "agents of reconciliation", in spite of the suffering and marginalization they have suffered. See Matthew J. Walton, "The 'Wages of Burman-Ness': Ethnicity and Burman Privilege in Contemporary Myanmar," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43, no. 1 (2013): 12–4.
[38] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 16.
[39] Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 56.
[40] Puia, "Ethnic Diversities and Their Impacts of Today's Churches" (MDiv thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2015), 42.
[41] See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 520; Kendell Easley and Christopher W. Morgan, eds., *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, Kindle. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2013), loc. 3819.
[42] Ed Stetzer, "Laypeople and the Mission of God: Part 1 – Killing the Clergy/Laity Caste System," *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer*, 17 July 2012, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/july/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-1--killing-clergy.html (accessed 28 November 2020).
[43] Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 29. He also writes, "the church needs a *polycentric approach to leadership*, where the equippers enable their *fellow priests* to live to their sacred potential." Italics in original.
[44] Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 189. In the context of this paper, the focus is primarily on the relationship between the role of the equippers and the environments they cultivate.
[45] Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 199. Ed Stetzer similarly insists that the role of pastors is not to be "the shopkeeper of the religious store providing religious rituals to ceremonialize devotion[,] a religious hierarchy to outsource people's religious obligations." Ed Stetzer, "Laypeople and the Mission of God: Part II - Reclaiming the Priesthood of All Believers," *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer*, 7 August 2012, https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/august/laypeople-and-mission-of-god-part-ii--reclaiming.html (accessed 28 November 2020).
[46] One of the few authors who have published their ideas is Peter Thein Nyunt. His book, *Missions Among Pagodas: Contextual Communication of the Gospel in Burmese Buddhist Context* (Yangon: Myint Offset, 2012), is available in both Burmese and English.
[47] The following examples may suffice: C. Duh Kam, "Christian Mission to Buddhists in Myanmar: A Study of Past, Present, and Future Approaches by Baptists" (DMiss thesis, United Theological Seminary, 1997); Saw Say Khu, "Contextual Models for Church Growth in Myanmar" (DMin thesis, Union Theological Seminary, Philippines, 2007); Tint Lwin, "Contextualization of the Gospel: An Effective Strategy for the Evangelization of the Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar" (PhD dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997); Van Ram Oke, "Missioners as Contextualizers: The Theology and Practice of Contextualization in the Ministry of Bread of Life to the Bama Community of New Dagon City" (DMin thesis, Asia Graduate School of Theology, 2007).
[48] Lwin, "Contextualization of the Gospel," 174–257.
[49] Oke, "Missioners as Contextualizers," 105–15.
[50] Kam, "Christian Mission to Buddhists in Myanmar," 222–45.
[51] Khu, "Contextual Models for Church Growth in Myanmar," 58.
[52] Khu, "Contextual Models for Church Growth in Myanmar," 62.

Mission to the Shan in Burma (Myanmar)

– Lessons We can Learn from the Historical Work

Shona Goodman



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Introduction

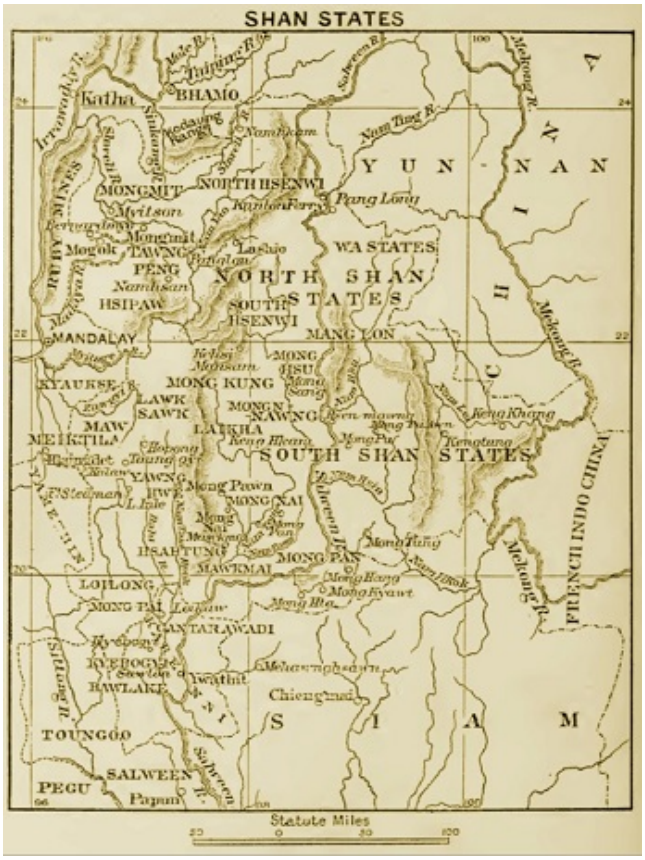
The Shan people are a Tai people group related to the Thai, Lao, Dai, and Zhuang people groups. Like the Burmese, Thai, and Dai, they are a Buddhist people, following Theravada Buddhism. When western missionaries began to enter Burma in the early nineteenth century, the Shan were under Burmese rule. The majority of Shan people lived in Shan principalities within the Shan States of Burma.[1]

This study will briefly look at the entry of Protestant missions into Burma, review the growth of missions to the Shan, and show how the gospel spread in a number of areas of Burma. It will introduce some of the key workers who brought the gospel to the Shan, and look at the long-term results of their labour. Finally, it will look at lessons to be learned from the early work, and provide a brief summary of some recent work among the Shan.

Early years

In the early nineteenth century, Burma was a land of despotic kings, tropical diseases, and few comforts. At that time, William Carey was sharing the gospel in India and William Wilberforce was campaigning to abolish slavery in the British Empire. George the Third was King of Great Britain and Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States. In Asia, King Bodawpaya was King of Burma and Rama I was King of Siam.

The gospel did not take root easily in the minds and hearts of the Buddhist Burmese. The first Protestant missionaries to set foot on Burmese soil arrived in 1807. These Baptist missionaries were sent by William Carey and included his son Felix. It wasn't long, however, before some left and others died of tropical diseases. Felix Carey was the first to survive long enough to learn the language, but he didn't see anyone come to faith or plant a church. He returned to India after a tragic accident on the Irrawaddy River caused his whole family to drown.[2]



Map of Shan States, 1912[4]

Adoniram and Ann Judson of the American Baptist Mission were the first missionaries to plant a church—when a Burmese man believed in 1819. After the Judsons came many more missionaries and a small Burmese church slowly began to grow.[3] Shan traders listened to

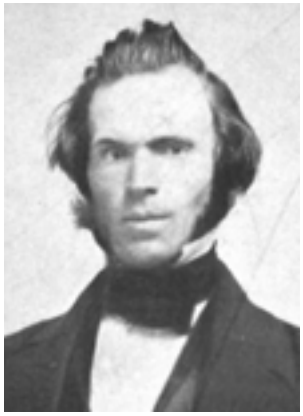
preaching in the market places, and asked questions, so the missionaries began to pray for the Shan. They wrote home to ask for missionaries to come and minister to them. We will now look at the key missionaries who responded to the call and pioneered work in various Shan locations.

Toungoo

Rev. Moses Homan Bixby from New Hampshire, USA, responded to the call for Shan workers when he returned to Burma with his second wife Laura.[5] The tropical climate had already cost him the life of his first wife Susan. When they arrived in Rangoon in 1861, the Shan were on their hearts, but King Mindon Min of Burma forbade mission in Upper Burma. They heard of 10,000 Shan people who had migrated to Toungoo, just inside British-ruled Lower Burma.

Toungoo became the first Shan outreach and for many years missionaries to the Shan learned language and culture there. Bixby travelled widely in the mountains around Toungoo sharing the gospel with the Karenni people and itinerant Shan traders every cold season, but never reached the Shan States. Karen evangelists worked with him to plant churches. The Shan were slower to respond than Karen-related tribes, and so the church in Toungoo was a mixture of races who worshipped in Burmese. This was a feature of early Shan outreach. As other peoples responded before the Shan, fewer resources were available to reach out to the Shan.

Rev. Josiah and Mrs. Ellen Cushing, from Massachusetts, USA, arrived in Toungoo in 1867 to minister to the Shan.[6] Cushing had a broad vision to reach the Shan in Upper Burma. He focused on learning the Shan language before Burmese and began to write a dictionary and translate Scripture.[7] After touring the Shan States, with permission from King Mindon Min, Cushing understood that it was important to reach the Shan using their own language, and that use of Burmese would slow the work, as many Shan spoke no Burmese. He was keen to establish mission stations within the Shan States, and could see opportunities to reach Palaung, Black Karen, and Kachin peoples through the Shan language.[8]



Moses Bixby[9]



Josiah Cushing[10]

The Bixbys left after eight years due to Moses Bixby's ill health. The Cushings both suffered from ill health at times and had to return to America to recuperate. In 1872, a new missionary couple, Rev. Edwin and Mrs. Jennie Kelley, from Vermont and Boston, brought hope of an outreach to Mongnai in the Shan States. He excelled at Shan language and was ready to move to Mongnai within a year. Edwin Kelley wrote home of the death of his newborn baby and the illness of Jennie, and Josiah Cushing and his son Herbert, all suffering from dengue fever.[11] Tragedy struck during a preaching journey to Mongnai with Cushing and some Shan disciples, when, on 1 January 1873, Kelley drowned while swimming in a lake to retrieve a water fowl that he had shot.[12] Jennie Kelley's second child died in June 1873 shortly after birth and her own health failed after a further two years in Toungoo. She returned to the States and, after some theological and medical training, she returned to the Shan mission in Burma in 1880, where she worked until she died in 1889.[13]



Shan Mission House, Toungoo[15]

Upon returning to Burma, Josiah Cushing began a Shan outreach in Bhamo in 1876 after meeting John Stevenson and Henry Soltau, CIM missionaries who were reaching out to the Chinese immigrants there. The Bhamo field began as a Shan and Kachin mission. Rev. J. A. Freiday took charge of the work at Bhamo after Josiah Cushing left.[14] Rev. Freiday and his wife reached the Shan with the help of a Shan evangelist from Toungoo. He made short trips into the Shan-speaking area of China from 1880 and planted a small church of ten believers through five years' labour. Later, Dr. and Mrs. W. C. Griggs took over the Bhamo Shan work, and continued to visit the Chinese Shan. When Mrs. Griggs became sick in 1905, they returned to America and there were no Shan-speaking missionaries to replace them. This caused the Shan outreach to become a Burmese outreach from 1905. After that time, few Shan Christians remained in the church.

Mrs. Ellen Cushing continued the work in Toungoo while her husband began the new work in Bhamo. While they were away on furlough, the small church was scattered, so she began again. When Rev. and Mrs. B. J. Mix arrived in Toungoo in 1880, the Cushings moved to Rangoon to focus on translation. Within a year, however, Rev. Mix's health failed and he died on the journey home. Miss Rockwood moved to Toungoo to run the girl's school when Mrs. Mix left. She, too, died after contracting typhoid, spending less than a year in Toungoo.[16]

The Shan work struggled for several reasons. The Burmese king's dislike of Christians destroyed early hopes of mission in the Shan States. Dangers of travel in the mountains and the deaths of missionaries in Toungoo before they finished language study greatly slowed progress. Added to this, the low status of most of the early Shan believers and the restlessness of Shan refugees made starting churches difficult.

Hsipaw

After the Third Anglo-Burmese war in 1885, the British deposed

the Burmese king Thibaw and annexed Upper Burma. This opened opportunities for mission in Upper Burma, although for some years armed conflict prevented mission. The Southern Shan State Alliance fought against the British to place the exiled Limbin prince on the throne and oust the British from Upper Burma. A new law, the "Act for Disturbed Districts and the Shan State," banned travel in the Shan States until the rebellions were overcome and peace restored.

As more missionaries arrived for the Shan work, Cushing began missions in Hsipaw, Mongnai, and Namkham. In 1890, Dr. and Mrs. M. B. Kirkpatrick opened the mission in Hsipaw with the help of Shan evangelists from Toungoo. Dr. and Mrs. Leeds joined them later the same year to open a hospital and a school. The Shan prince of Hsipaw supported their work, which helped to overcome the wariness of the local people. Kirkpatrick and Leeds made regular trips into the surrounding villages to share the gospel. While in Mandalay for supplies, Kirkpatrick befriended a young English missionary, Charles Lambert, who had been with the CIM in Bhamo. He was then an independent missionary working in Mandalay, but the Anglicans disapproved of his mission as he was not ordained. He applied to join the American Baptists, then went to teach in the school in Hsipaw in April 1895, while the Kirkpatricks returned to the USA for furlough.[17]

Seven weeks into his stay in Hsipaw, bandits attacked and killed Lambert while he was alone. Rev. William and Mrs. Lilla Young arrived five days later, but the local people stayed away from the church and the hospital for months because of fear. Lilla Young developed consumption, so they returned to America in 1898, where she died the following year.

By that time, the Hsipaw Shan church had grown to forty-two members, and supported its own pastor. Dr. Leeds worked in the hospital and visited surrounding villages in a ten-mile radius around Hsipaw to share the gospel and hold small clinics. The medical work was instrumental in the growth of the church, as was the support of the Hsipaw Shan prince. When the Leeds family went on furlough, Rev. Wilbur W. and Mrs. Jennie M. Cochrane moved to Hsipaw in 1906. By that year, the church had grown to more than sixty members and had a Shan pastor. The local government ran the hospital and school from this time. The church continued to grow through local evangelists with some missionary help until 1915, when bandits attacked and killed Dr. M. B. Kirkpatrick, who had returned the previous year. For many years, the Shan church in Hsipaw continued without missionary help, as there was a shortage of Shan-speaking missionaries. In time, the church in Hsipaw changed to Burmese language worship, which it still uses, and the members now are mainly Burmese with two or three Shan families.[20]

Mongnai

Work in Mongnai began in 1892 when Cushing sent Dr. and Mrs. William. C. Griggs with Mrs. Huldah W. Mix to begin a mission to the Shan there. The Mongnai Shan prince was friendly and encouraged Cushing by giving him a plot of land to build on. They discovered that the land had been a Buddhist cemetery, and fear and superstition kept most of the local people away. It took four years for the missionaries to overcome this spiritual obstacle to the gospel. The Shan locals watched as the foreigners built their house and chapel on an evil-spirit-infested plot of land, waiting to see how the spirits would punish them. As the foreigners lived and thrived, a few intrepid local people started to listen to their message.

When they opened a clinic, those who were sick and had lost hope of a cure from their own spirit doctors ventured to try the foreign doctor. When he cured them against all hope, they took an interest in his message. The Shan prince began sending sick animals to Dr. Albert Henderson, who had arrived with his wife Cora in 1894. He sent a dog with a toothache, followed by a goat with a sore ear, then an elephant with a boil. After Dr. Henderson healed his animals, he and his princess visited the clinic with an entourage to show their appreciation. With the prince's approval, people flocked to the clinic and began responding to the gospel.

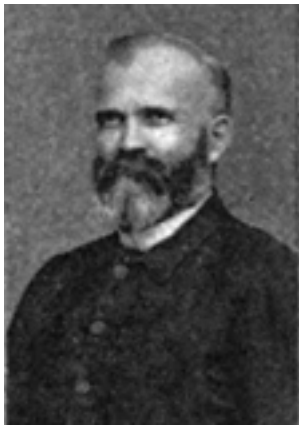
A young Shan man, Po Pu, hired to teach at the mission school in 1897, came to faith. Dr. Henderson employed him to paint gospel posters and trained him as an evangelist. They travelled together to the villages around Mongnai, sharing the gospel and bringing medical care. Then, in 1898, a Karen missionary, Bla Paw, arrived to help Wilbur Cochrane. Bla Paw became the pastor of the church until 1937, when his son Aaron took over as pastor. A number of small churches grew in villages around Mongnai, with a group of evangelists looking after them.

By 1900, over one hundred believers worshipped in the Mongnai Shan church and there were congregations in Panglong and Mawkmai. After Cora Henderson almost died of blackwater fever, the family moved to Taunggyi where the climate was healthier. Albert Henderson travelled to Mongnai for a few days each month until 1907 when Dr. and Mrs. Howard C. Gibbens transferred there from Kengtung. Howard Gibbens preached in Mongnai and in the bazaar in Loilem each week. He and his wife remained in Mongnai until 1932, when they moved to Loilem. Dr. Lao Htin Ah Pon, a godly Christian doctor of Chinese and Burmese descent, worked in Mongnai and Loilem until the Second World War, when the Japanese imprisoned and executed him.[21]

After the war, the Christians rebuilt the church and by 1950, it was a part of the Southern Shan States Baptist Convention. After the missionaries left in 1965, the church in Mongnai



Mrs. and Dr. Kirkpatrick[18]





Charles Lambert[19]

became a Burmese-speaking church with an ethnically mixed congregation.[22]

Namkham

Namkham is twenty-five miles south-east of Bhamo, close to the Burma-China border. Bhamo missionary, Rev. Freiday, travelled to Namkham in 1880 to share the gospel. He saw potential for Shan outreach, but the Hsenwi prince, who ruled the area, opposed the missionaries. There was no opportunity to open a mission in Namkham until 1893, when the prospect of opening a hospital and school helped the prince overcome his reservations. Rev. and Mrs. Cochrane began the work, but saw few results. After their furlough, Dr. and Mrs. M. B. Kirkpatrick moved to Namkham in 1896. They began a school and a clinic, and laid plans to build a hospital. Within two years, thirty-five believers were worshipping at the Namkham church.

Dr. Robert Harper joined them in 1902 with three Karen missionaries, but Dr. and Mrs. Kirkpatrick soon had to leave because of ill health. The spiritual health of the church fluctuated and a number of the Shan preachers suffered moral failures. Persecution of the Christians also caused the church to shrink. Through Robert Harper's ministry, the church in Namkham grew to eighty-eight members, and reached out to plant a church in nearby Selan, the fruit of the witness of the school and evangelism in market places of Namkham.

In 1913, Dr. Kirkpatrick's son Clarence joined the mission in Namkham with his wife Elizabeth. They opened another church at Muse with Shan evangelist Kham Muang as pastor. During the First World War, the economy of Burma slumped and many missionaries left. Only four American Baptist missionary families remained to work among the Shan. This dropped to three when Clarence Kirkpatrick died of typhoid in 1916 and his family returned to America. Robert Harper returned to Namkham in 1917 and remained there until he retired in 1923. He foiled a rebel plot by reporting it to the authorities and was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal in 1923. He was loved and respected by the local people so much that they resented the new missionaries who replaced him.[23]

In 1922, Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Marion "Tiny" Seagrave joined the Namkham mission and worked to expand the medical work. They began a training school for nurses and built a new hospital, named in honour of Dr. Robert Harper. Seagrave opened clinics in three towns around Namkham, which were run by Shan, Burmese, and Kachin nurses he trained. Evangelists worked in the hospital and clinics, and otherwise shared the gospel, and supported the church. The Seagraves remained in Namkham until the Second World War, returned after the war, and continued to work throughout the period of civil war after Burma's independence from Britain. He even travelled into China to treat CIM missionaries who were sick in Longling town, 130 km away.[24]



Dr. Harper Memorial Hospital (permission from http://www.travelservicesinmyanmar.com)

The church in Namkham continued to grow with strong local leadership and began, in 1945, a local association of Namkham, Selan, and Muse churches called the Shweli Valley Shan Baptist Association. By 1958, the Association recorded 768 believers and soon baptized a further 142 Shan, Chinese, and Lisu. Over the following years, Baptist churches in Lashio, Mongkut, MongMyit, and Mong Pa joined the Association, which grew to a joint membership of 1,359 baptised believers in 1992. In this area, the medical work was a clear conduit for the gospel. Despite less support by the Shan prince, the church grew strong and the formation of the Association has held the churches together and encouraged growth.[25]

Taunggyi

When Albert and Cora Henderson moved to Taunggyi in 1905 for health reasons, it was already a centre of British administration with a hospital and schools. Albert Henderson opened a clinic, which became popular with minority groups who spoke Shan rather than Burmese. He trained and supervised people in villages to run small dispensaries, while Cora trained nurses to work in them.

They began a house church, which met from house to house of the believers, until they outgrew the houses. They built a granite church, big enough to accommodate the growing congregation of Shan, Karen, Thaungtu (Pa-O), Burmese, Indian, and Western Christians. This church planted a Shan church in Kalaw in 1910, and by 1914, it was helping five small churches in the area. The Hendersons continued to support the medical work and the pastors of the churches until Albert died of typhoid in 1937.[26]

After the Second World War, the Shan Baptist Conventions worked together to establish a Shan State Bible School in Taunggyi, which opened in 1956. At the present time, the Baptist church in Taunggyi is mixed Burmese-Shan and uses the Burmese language. There are several other strong churches in Taunggyi and the Shan State Bible College continues to train local Christians for leadership.[27]

Kengtung

Kengtung is the capital of the Eastern Shan State, separated from the Western Shan states by mountainous terrain and deep valleys. The Shan people live in the valleys, while Lahu and Wa tribes live in the hills. In 1901, Rev. William Young arrived in Kengtung with his second wife Dell to begin a Shan mission there. They faced opposition from the local authorities until the British Resident helped them. They were burgled by Shan bandits, who

would have killed them if they had moved. Later in 1903, they heard of a plot to kill all the foreigners in Kengtung, including the British Resident, army officials, and themselves. William Young reported the plot to the British army and it was foiled.

Shan work in Kengtung was slow, as the local dialect—Tai Khuen—and customs were different from those the Youngs had learned in the Western Shan State. In 1904, tribal Lahu folk heard of the white man with a holy book teaching in Kengtung. Their sages had passed down a tradition of a lost white book, which was their holy book, and that a white man would bring it back to them. This tradition led to a movement to Christ among the Lahu, and then the Wa, who had a similar tradition. Thousands of Lahu and Wa believed year by year, and the Youngs had difficulty discipling the growing number of believers. They asked for help from the CIM, whose missionaries were already working in the area of China north of Burma where many of the Lahu and Wa lived. CIMers J. O. Fraser and Allyn Cooke helped the Youngs and new missionaries, Rev. Ray and Mrs. Mary Buker, to disciple the Christian Lahu and Wa villages.[28]

During the Bukers's second term, they moved to Kengtung in 1934 to work with the Tai Khuen—the "Eastern Shan". They rented a house in each of six villages around Kengtung and spent a month in each, alternating with a month in Kengtung, living simply in Shan style. By 1939, they saw one hundred people turning to Christ each year. This complemented the work of Ray's twin brother, Dr. Dick Buker, who worked in the hospital in Kengtung. He had begun a leprosy program which brought many to Christ in the area. During the war, the missionaries evacuated to India and Shan pastors took over the work in Kengtung.

The influx of thousands of Lahu and Wa into the church meant that the Youngs had no time to focus on the Tai Khuen, so that work was slow to start. When Ray and Mary Buker were able to live with the Tai Khuen and share the gospel with them, a church was formed which grew steadily. The descendants of those Khuen believers are active members of their local Baptist churches to this day, supporting each other through membership in a Baptist convention.[29]

We turn now to look at the Anglican missions to the Shan.

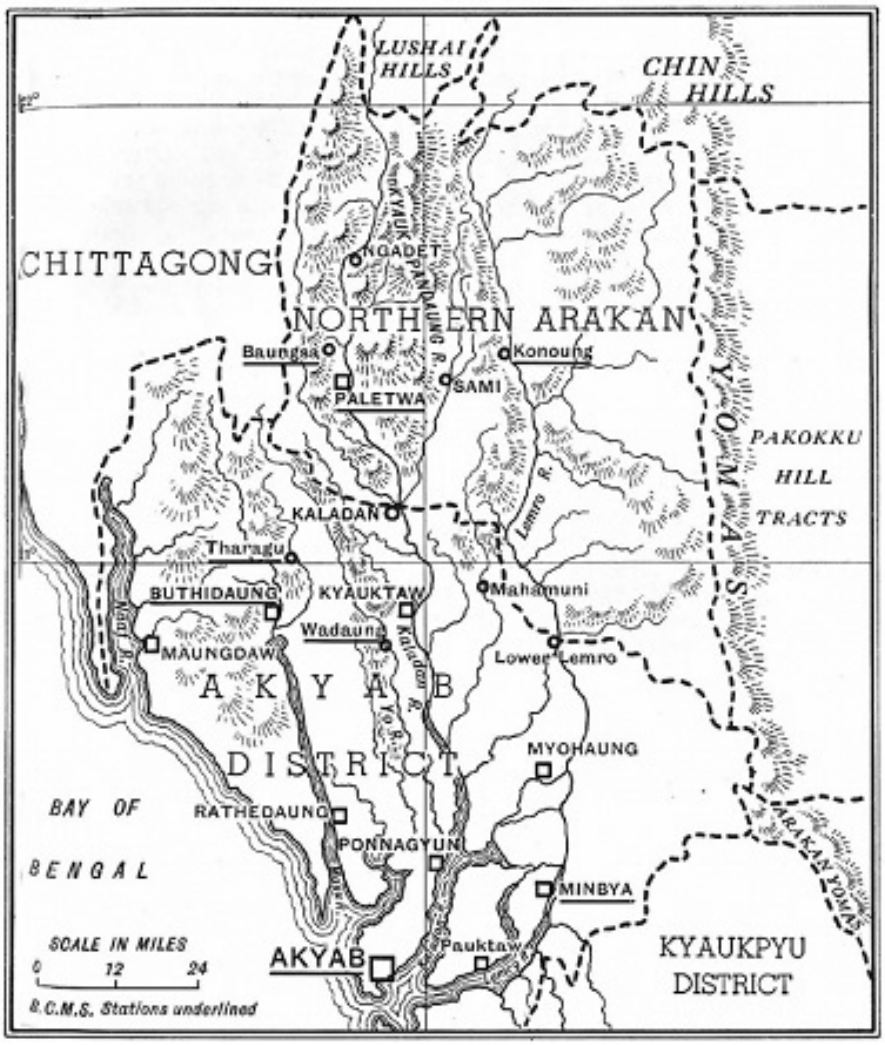
Anglican mission to the Shan: The SPG

The Anglicans entered Burma with the British after the Anglo-Burmese wars to serve as chaplains to the soldiers stationed there. They asked for missionaries and The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG)—a Church of England missionary organization active in the British Atlantic world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—sent workers in 1854. The Anglican missionaries focused on founding schools, believing that training children was the way to bring Christianity to Burma. They reached out to the Burmese and Karen and planted churches all over Lower Burma, wherever the army had outposts. It wasn't until after the Third Anglo-Burmese War, in 1885, that they made any move to reach out to the Shan. After 1885, they built schools and opened churches in areas with potential for Shan outreach, such as Myitta and Shwebo, outside Mandalay. Anglican missionary doctors opened a hospital in Mandalay with a church building attached. This hospital was still missionary-run in the 1960s, but had an increasing number of local doctors. After the missionaries had to leave in 1965, the local authority ran the hospital. It still has a number of Anglican Christian doctors and the church next door continues as an Anglican church.[30]

The strength of the Anglican Church was its Bible colleges, which trained the local people for ministry. By the time the missionaries left, the Anglican Church was run by Burmese and Karen pastors and bishops, so it has continued. Since the Second World War, Shan Anglican churches have opened in Mandalay, Lankher, and other areas of the Shan States.

Anglican mission to the Shan: BCMS

The Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society (BCMS) was formed in 1922 as the conservative evangelical missionary society of the Anglican Church. Rev. Alfred Thomas Houghton was sent by BCMS and arrived in Burma with a



Map of Arakan, *Dense Jungle Green* (permission from the family of Rev. A. T. Houghton)

vision to plant churches amongst the Jinghpaw (Kachin) people of northern Burma.[31] BCMS worked east of the American Baptist mission stations—between the Irrawaddy River and the Indian border. The BCMS valued primary evangelism over education, so they settled in Mohnyin, and began to learn language and share the gospel. As their missionary force grew, outreach was extended to Jinghpaw, Burmese, and Shan people. They had several missionaries with medical training, so they opened dispensaries as a way to build relationships with the local people.

The missionaries' method of itinerant ministry included regular tours of the areas they worked in. This was an effective way to reach the people and to get to know which new places needed missionaries. Providing medical care was especially helpful among the Burmese and Shan, who were quick to seek the help of missionaries once they saw that their medical treatment produced positive results. The Jinghpaw people most often only sought help from the missionaries after their spirit doctors' methods failed, at which point they were often too sick to gain an effective cure. In time, the patients who were cured by the missionaries spread the news, so that trust grew between the people and missionaries.

The BCMS started Shan work in Mohnyin, Lonkin, Wuntho, and Bulimyo between 1928 and 1932. They opened a Bible school in Mohnyin in 1931, which became a theological college that trained local Christians to become Anglican deacons and then priests.[32]

Dr. Walter Barr Johnston opened a hospital in Panglong in the Shan State in 1938, which, along with Dr. Seagrave's hospital in Namkham, helped the British army during the war by providing mobile army surgical hospitals to treat the wounded.

Political upheaval

After the Second World War, Britain offered Burma self-government as a part of the British Commonwealth, but the Nationalists, led by Major General Aung San, demanded full independence. Aung San met with Shan, Kachin, and Chin leaders at Panglong, then with Clement Atlee, Prime Minister of Britain, to discuss terms for independence. After a conference held at Panglong in 1947, the Shan, Kachin, and Chin leaders signed an agreement to be part of a Federated Burma, with an option to secede after ten years. The Karen, Karenni, Pa-O, and Wa peoples were not represented. Before independence, the Head of State (Shan prince of Mong Pawn, Sao Sam Htun), Major General Aung San, and his whole cabinet were assassinated on 19 July 1947. U Nu replaced Aung San as Prime Minister and Burma became an independent country on 4 January 1948.



Judsons began preaching in a *zayat*, 1819[34]

In 1950, the Karen and Mon, followed by the Karenni and the Arakanese, rebelled against the Federation and demanded independence. General Ne Win led the armed forces fighting the rebels throughout Burma. The Communist uprising in China in 1953 caused twelve thousand KMT Chinese soldiers to flee into the Shan States, which brought further turmoil. U Nu declared a "State of Emergency" and gave General Ne Win political control. Then, in March 1962, after winning a general election, U Nu offered greater freedoms to minority peoples at a conference in Rangoon. The military, under General Ne Win, staged a coup to overthrow the government, and imprisoned all the delegates. He further revoked the 1947 Constitution, ending all hope of minority groups using political means to gain independence.[33]

In December 1965, all the foreign missionaries received notice to leave the country. After the removal of the missionaries, little news of how the churches were faring under the military regime reached the rest of the world for many years.

Lessons from the early mission to the Shan

What lessons can we learn from the lives and work of those who have gone before us?

In the early days, the missionaries lived relatively simple lives. No Western foods or amenities were available to them. They learned the local language of those they ministered to and sought to live godly lives amongst them. The main method of evangelism was in market places, preaching from a *zayat*—a locally-designed shelter without walls—to anyone who would listen. As westerners, they had the advantage of novelty, but the low literacy levels meant that most people needed to hear the gospel preached rather than through literature. So, regular contact with the missionaries or local Christians was vital. Among the Burmese and Shan, literacy levels were higher among men, who received education through the temple schools. Both then and now, building relationships has proven to be important in preparing the way for the gospel.

The opposition by the king and his local representatives was a powerful disadvantage, which discouraged many people from turning to Christianity. The power of the king was absolute, and anyone who disobeyed could be flogged, imprisoned, or killed according to the whims of his representatives, the local governors. When the Burmese officials harassed the first converts to Christianity, Judson sought an audience with the king to gain freedom of religion. The king

refused each time he appealed and freedom of religion only came through British law after the Anglo-Burmese Wars. Freedom of religion is official today, but family and community pressure continue to deter profession of faith among Shan people, or cause believers to recant if they are isolated from a Christian community. New believers in a village or community often relocate to live among other Shan Christians, close to a church. This makes it easier for the new Christian to grow in faith, but reduces the opportunity to reach out further in the original village or community.

As believers trickled into God's kingdom in small numbers, they tended to be from the lower classes, the sick, or those on the edges of society. Few of them had influence to provide an opening for general acceptance by the majority of the Burmese community. When Karen people turned to the Lord in great numbers, they were persecuted by the Buddhist Burmese. It didn't change the Burmese attitude to Christianity; rather, it turned the Burmese against the Karen. In Burma, the people known to be Christians are the Karen, Lisu, Kachin, and Chin. As ethnic minorities, these people often find themselves in conflict with the Burmese. The Christian Burmese and Shan tend to be third and fourth generation Christians, and do not have the same understanding of how to share the gospel with Buddhists as does a first-generation Christian who has come from a Buddhist background. Much of the church planting in the Shan context is being done by first-generation Christians who have responded to the gospel after moving to cities for work. After returning to their homes, they begin to share the gospel with family and friends.

As the missionaries lived among the Shan over many years, they gained the respect of local leaders, thus opening doors for the gospel. However, the Shan princes and local leaders could not change faith. As the Shan prince was the head of Buddhism in his area, there was no option for him to change faith. Local leaders would have lost their positions if they turned away from Buddhism. The Shan people have a saying, "To be Shan is to be Buddhist." For this reason, Shan who become Christians face the unsettling problem that Buddhist Shan do not see them as quite Shan anymore. The Shan church has attempted to overcome this in recent years by encouraging Shan literacy in the church and continuing to be involved in the village community in all ways except those relating to Buddhism. Examples of this are helping to cook during funerals and cleaning the village instead of the temple area. Church leaders also meet to discuss culturally appropriate forms for Shan weddings and funerals, and the use of Shan music and dance in Christian worship. In earlier years, the Christians distanced themselves from Shan culture as they associated it with Buddhism, but now that there are mature second and third generation Christians, they are reclaiming aspects of Shan culture which can be separated from Buddhism, thus avoiding syncretism.

The lives and ministries of many missionaries to Burma were cut short by illness or death. Diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, cholera, typhoid fever, and consumption (tuberculosis) were endemic in nineteenth-century Burma. This is one of the reasons why medical missions had more success than primary evangelism without the support of medical missions or education. Medical work opened doors for the gospel in all the areas of Shan ministry and may have been the key to the acceptance of the missionaries. The areas where the main missionary was a doctor are the areas where the church has remained strongest over the years. However, medical work alone could not have built the church. It went hand in hand with evangelism and the use of Christian literature. Nowadays, with vaccines and treatments available for most of the diseases that were problematic in the past, missionaries rarely die of illness on the field. The improvement in health services throughout Asia means that medical missions are less necessary, although in remote areas, medical clinics have remained helpful for the propagation of the gospel and its reception.

In the past, partnership with Karen or Kachin evangelists and missionaries proved helpful for the growth of the church and it continues to be so even now. Near-culture Christians who can speak, or are willing to learn, Shan are a gospel resource that should not be ignored. Right from the first Shan mission in Toungoo, the missionary worked with local Christian evangelists from a near culture, then with Shan evangelists as the work progressed. At the start of the American Baptist mission to the Shan, Rev. Moses Bixby employed Karen evangelists from the area he had worked in during his first term (Moulmein). They were vital to the extension of the work, as the missionaries had few new workers over the years and several new workers died before they had finished language and culture study. Josiah and Ellen Cushing continued to use Karen evangelists as they opened new mission stations in Bhamo, Hsipaw, Mongnai, and Namkham. In each area, the local evangelists helped the missionaries spread the gospel and plant churches. Some of them became pastors of the new Shan churches. Although a number of the local evangelists fell into moral failure, it still meant that the "face" of Christianity was Shan or Karen. Shan people respond to the gospel more positively when it is shared by their own people, in culturally appropriate ways.

Present-day mission in the areas of historical Shan mission



Traditional cow's cart in the Shan State. Daniel Julie, Paris, France (Public domain, CC BY 2.0), via Wikimedia Commons.

According to Tertullian's *Apologeticus*, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."[35] This is a saying which gives hope to the Shan church, as two missionaries in Hsipaw were killed for their faith—Charles Lambert in May 1895 and Dr. M. B. Kirkpatrick in February 1915. Many others died of illness while serving as missionaries to the Shan.

Evangelistic radio broadcasts aired by FEBC are a vital part of outreach to the Shan and have been instrumental to the

growth of the Shan church in many areas. The programs are also a good resource for discipleship and growth of new Christians. Selections of the radio programs stored on micro-SD cards are shared between phones via Bluetooth with cell groups to help them to teach new believers.

Near Hsipaw, a Lisu outreach to the Shan began in the late 1990s when a Lisu village headman developed a vision to reach them. He worked together with a Lisu pastor who had oversight of several churches, and saw eighteen families come to Christ. They contacted missionaries involved in Shan ministry to work in partnership with them. This provided an opportunity for annual teaching seminars on evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, which has grown into a ministry among Shan in several locations in the Northern Shan State.

In Mongnai, a young man who heard the gospel in Thailand returned to his home to share the gospel, and has since planted a church. After initial problems with the local Baptist church, he now works in partnership with them.

The Shan Baptist Church in Lashio has not seen much fruit in recent years when compared to the Lisu and Lahu. There are, however, an increasing number of Christian workers from different groups reaching out to the Shan, Palaung, and other ethnic minorities in Lashio.

The Taunggyi Baptist Church continues to worship and serve the Lord. There are other Shan churches and outreach work to the Shan. Most of the churches worship in Burmese, which can be a challenge to Shan outreach, as Shan respond best to outreach in their own language.

In Kengtung, the Eastern Shan Baptist Convention includes eleven Shan churches and many Burmese-speaking mixed-ethnicity churches. They support each other and shine the light of the gospel in the area.

Conclusion

Mission to the Shan over the past century and a half has been a complex picture with mixed results. In some areas where the roots of the Shan Church were planted in nineteenth-century Burma, churches that worship the Lord can still be found. In recent years, mission to the Shan has come through radio programs and evangelism within Shan communities in Thailand. Several of today's key Shan evangelists came to faith while in Thailand, returned to the Shan State with a vision to share the gospel, and are now planting churches. Some of the new work has been started by near-culture Christians in Myanmar. We can see that God is faithful and historical work has sown seeds that may take many years to germinate and grow. The present work is built on the foundations which were laid by the prayers and toil of many who have gone before. The work God is doing among the Shan people will similarly develop in years to come, as his people join him by planting, watering, and reaping among those he is calling to himself. **MRT**

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An Exploration into the Spatial Impact of Spirituality within Khmer Dwellings

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Introduction

For the first four years my family and I lived in the city of Phnom Penh, we rented a home in a street of shophouses. The neighbours—three university students who lived opposite our house—seemed never to use the second or third floor of their residence other than to dry laundry. Eventually I learned that this was because they were afraid of the spirits that lived up there. I was shocked that such a belief was so prevalent throughout twenty-first century Khmer culture. This revealed not just my own extensive ignorance but also the presence of significant spatial impacts of spirituality within a Khmer house. I started to wonder what would happen to domestic spaces if Khmer people, living in urban settings like shophouses, became Christians. How would their personal Christian spirituality impact the traditional Khmer expression of domestic spatial spirituality and what would happen? For when people become Christians they experience change. The nature of this change is complex and multi-layered and one of the layers that is changed is one's personal spirituality. Before someone becomes a Christian, they believe and practise a spirituality that does not recognise Jesus Christ as Creator, Saviour, and King. Once they become a Christian, their spirituality changes as they recognise Jesus Christ in this way and as much more. This change in belief transforms many areas of a person's life, including the way they live, their priorities, values, and worldview. One of these areas is the domestic space within which a person daily inhabits their dwelling. Their spatial spirituality on a domestic scale changes to "Christian". But what does this look like? Is it merely hanging up emblems—like crosses or icons—on the wall or is it more nuanced than that?

In order to understand the extent of this "change" in a Khmer context, it is important to initially determine what is being changed. The first layer of change is from Khmer traditional spirituality to Khmer Christian spirituality. The first part of this paper will present what is understood as Khmer traditional spirituality as practiced in the twenty-first century by giving a brief historical overview of Cambodian spiritual influences. The second part of this paper will build upon this to explore how this impacts a Khmer person's spatial spirituality on a domestic scale. This will be scrutinised through an observation of the construction and spiritual appropriation rituals of the most common house typology in the



Figure 1: Animistic shrine in Kampot (Photo by author, 2014)

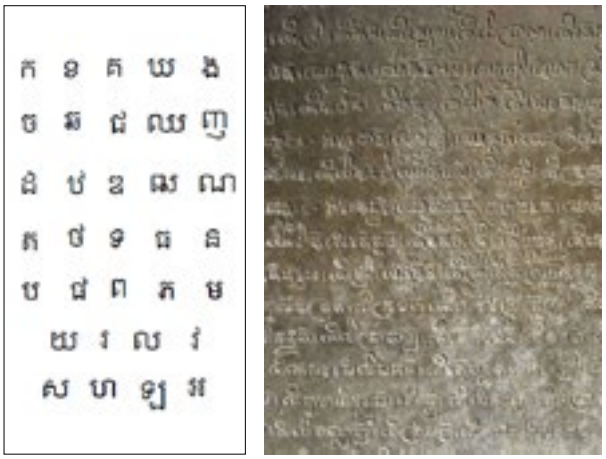


Figure 2: Khmer script today (left) similar to Angkor Sanskrit (right) (Photos by author, 2010)

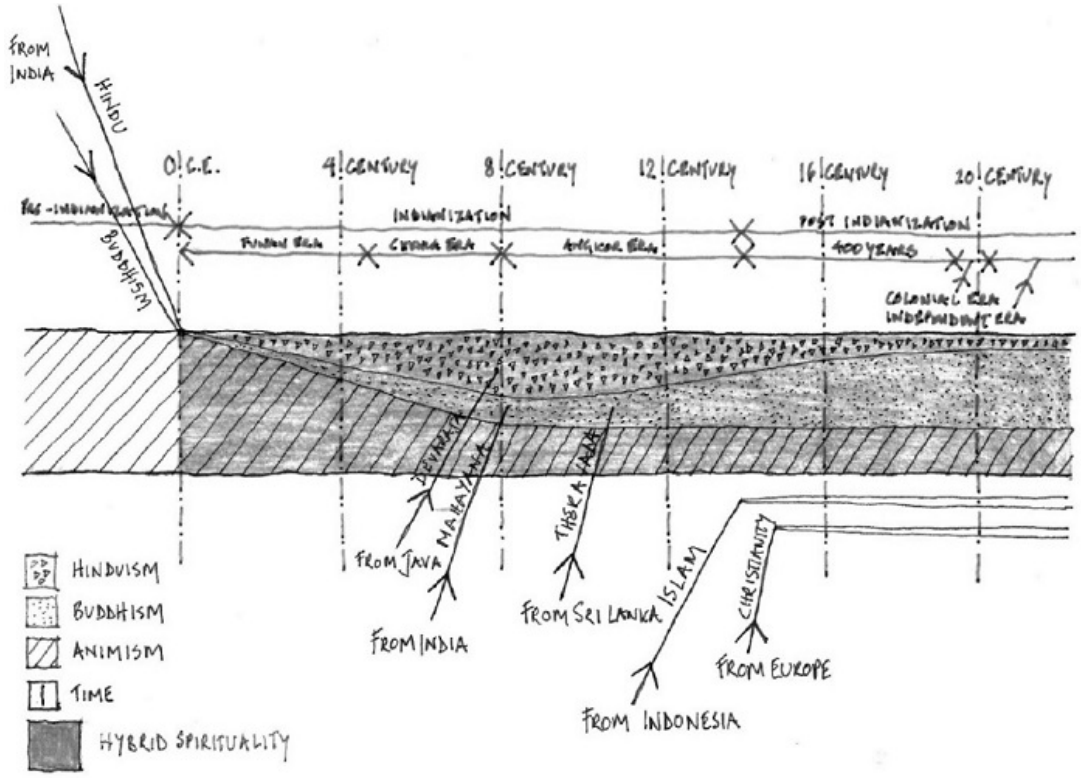


Figure 3: Origins of Cambodia's hybrid spirituality and its perpetuity (Drawing by author, 2016)[12]

city of Phnom Penh—the shophouse.[1] Drawings, photographs, and diagrams created and gathered during several years of ethnographic participant observation of the city of Phnom Penh and data mined from doctoral research interviews will help detail and define the character of a pre-"change" domestic spatial spiritual context. The final part of this paper will then consider what happens when a Khmer resident becomes a Christian. It will analyse the impact that this change of personal spirituality could have on the spatial spirituality of the dwelling. Five leading responses will be discussed and analysed to suggest certain practices and/or rituals that are available to the Khmer Christian to facilitate an alignment between their personal and domestic spatial impacts of spirituality into the future. The most applicable and realistic of these will be summarised in the paper's conclusion.

Khmer traditional spirituality

> Animism is the belief that the entire world, human and non-human, living and non-living, forms a single spiritual whole. Just as people have souls, so do animals; and just as humans and animals are inhabited by a living spirit ("animated"), so too are streams and hills and every other object.[2]

Prior to the Indianisation of Funan[3] (Cambodia) at the start of the Christian era, the dominant spirituality of the region was Animism.[4] The culture and settlements of Funan were near water: coastal plains, deltas, and river valleys. Territorial spirits[5] dwelt in the unsettled wild and its high places: forests, lakes, caves (see Figure 1), and mountains.[6] People built shrines to appease the spirits, ward off evil, and to gain favour, health, and prosperity. From around 1 CE, the sporadic arrival of merchants and immigrants from India into these settlements in Funan soon became a steady flow[7] "that resulted in the founding of Indian-influenced kingdoms practicing the arts, customs, and religions of India, and using Sanskrit (see Figure 2) as their sacred language."[8] One of the impacts of this Indianisation was the introduction of Hinduism and Buddhism to a region that had only known Animism. Hinduism includes

> "the ritual and teachings of the Brahmin priests, the insights of philosophers, the visions of hermits and ascetics, the worship of nature and ancestor spirits … cults such as Vaishnavism and Shaivism … Jainism and many other traditions of which Buddhism is one."[9]

Buddhism encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs, and spiritual practices based on original teachings attributed to the Buddha—Siddhartha Gautama. It originated in ancient India sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE before spreading through much of Asia.[10] The peoples of Funan found, in the peaceful infiltration of Indianisation, an opportunity to integrate new ideas and develop their own culture, society, and belief systems. This "coming together" of Buddhism and Hinduism with the local Animism created a type of hybrid spirituality (see Figure 3) which primarily affected the ruling classes of the states where it spread.[11]

Although it emerged in the pre-Angkor era (1–800 CE), this hybrid spirituality has continued to be very much present (albeit with varying emphases) until the present day, when according to Marston and Guthrie, "Cambodian scholars describe their religion as a mixture of Animism, Brahmanism and Buddhism."[13] The grey shaded area of the diagram in Figure 3 shows this hybrid spirituality that has been practised over time. Each of the three leading strands of spirituality are present, but the extent of their practice in Khmer culture has changed. In addition, none of them are practised independently of each other as each has influenced the belief and ritual practise of the others.[14] In my doctoral research, over half the Khmer people I interviewed specifically referenced this hybrid spirituality: recognising a blend of Animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism in the prevailing spirituality of Phnom Penh today. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that a type of hybrid spirituality has been present in Cambodia for over 2000 years, throughout which an enduring Animism has underpinned every spiritual shift.[15]



Figure 4: Typical 1930–50s shophouses in the Chinese quarter (Photo by author, 2008)



Figure 5: Typical twenty-first century "apartment type shophouses" (Photo by author, 2008)

Today in the city of Phnom Penh, the ascendant Buddhism is evident within the city's urban layout where over fourteen pagodas are located within the inner city. However, their decoration references this hybrid spirituality with paintings of the life of Buddha, the Hindu *Ramayana*, and different types of animals adorning the walls.[16] The following quote succinctly summarises this twenty-first century condition of spirituality.

> If you ask the question to a Cambodian. "what is your religion?", even to me, I would say, I am Buddhist. But in reality, in the Buddhist practice, you can see … the reminiscences of Hindu[17] and especially of a belief system called … Animism.[18]

The shophouse housing typology

This hybrid spirituality has been commonly present throughout Khmer history and influenced settlement and housing construction rituals throughout the centuries. Its prevailing impact is present in the three leading housing typologies of twenty-first century city of Phnom Penh: the shophouse, the semi-detached villa, and the apartment block. As there is not room to discuss each in detail, this paper will focus on the most common typology: the shophouse.

> These buildings were originally built on narrow and long plots and grouped as urban blocks in Chinese districts … a representative typology of urban housing developed by Chinese merchants and immigrants who moved to colonial cities and built their dwellings as a grouped community.[19]

The shophouse typology evolved from the late nineteenth century colonial era. A vernacular architectural typology, it characterizes many historical urban layouts throughout Southeast Asia and southern China. There is a long history of Chinese presence in Cambodia, and in the early twentieth century, during the French protectorate era, they were granted a quarter of the city of Phnom Penh by the French colonial urban planners that surrounded the future site of the Central Market. Here they constructed shophouse residences.[20] Typically, these were two or three stories high with mercantile activity on the ground floor and a residence above (see Figure 4), similar to the European townhouse typology. This design favours the gridiron type of urban layout where plots are long and thin (approximately 12m by 4m). The

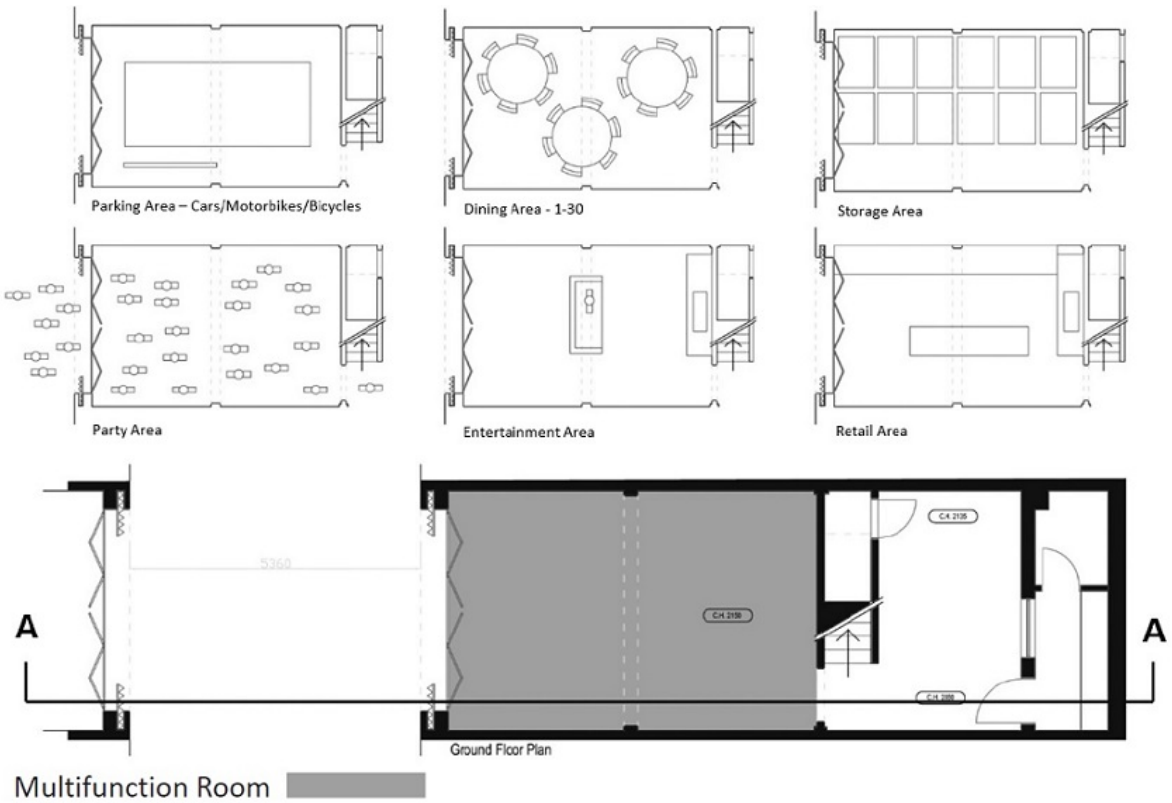


Figure 6: Typical shophouse ground floor plan to show multi-function space in grey with 6 varied uses suggested above (Drawing by author, 2014).



Figure 7: Typical shophouses (Photo by author, 2014)



Figure 8: Shophouse development (Photo by author, 2016)

shophouse footprint is extremely efficient as it shares a masonry wall with houses on both sides that allows for an increased density of development, as each storey can also become an apartment. The following exploration of the shophouse will describe a typical twenty-first century shophouse construction, observe its spiritual appropriation, and analyse its ongoing spatial spiritual agency within current Khmer domestic architecture.[21]

Typical shophouse construction

Shophouses are constructed on both green field and brown field sites.[22] Initially, the site is cleared, but it would not be necessary to demarcate a specific sacred zone as these have already been established in the urban layout by the temple complexes throughout the city of Phnom Penh. In urban projects, none of the site's natural resources would be utilised, but a spirit house would be erected on the site's boundary to house the spirits of the land that are displaced. Urban land can be quickly developed through the construction of multiple terraced shophouse units (see Figure 8). These are easy and cheap to build with modern materials (such as reinforced concrete), as the longest span is only four metres. Today, modern materials allow shophouses to be built up to six stories high (see Figure 5), so they are flexible enough to allow for single- or multiple-family occupancy. Its form allows for multi-functions such as retail, office, storage, leisure, restaurant, parking, etc. (see Figures 6 and 7). The dominant materials of reinforced concrete and minimal glazing to the front and the rear (see Figure 7) allow for easy expansion and repair. This cheap flexibility escalated the popularity of the shophouse typology throughout the city of Phnom Penh from the mid- to late twentieth century as it engaged well with developing technology, enabled capitalism to flourish, and allowed for a swelling population through its flexibility and affordable rents. The challenge for this typology was how well it could integrate the strong domestic Khmer tradition of housing as a spatial spiritual microcosm.

Typical shophouse spiritual appropriation

House construction rituals are significant as they spiritually appropriate the regional shophouse typology to create spatial impacts of spirituality in the Khmer tradition through construction. Once a site is cleared, the typical Khmer foundation ceremony ritual is followed, directed by an *achar* (see Figure 9).[23] The design and construction team attend, and incense, food, and drink are offered to the territorial Animistic guardian spirits (*Neak Tha*), so that the spirits are respected. The historical role of *wise man* on the construction team, who would advise on local planning law, is often replaced in urban projects by an architect or building contractor because in the twenty-first century they are better suited to navigate the relevant building codes and cultural design constraints. The extent (and presence) of the role of *guru* in the project would be subject to the client's level of belief in traditional Khmer spirituality.[24] Rather than a *master carpenter*, today a building contractor and/or an architect (with associated construction engineers) will design and build the house. In a continuation of the main column and ridge beam/pole construction rituals of traditional wooden Khmer houses, once the main reinforced concrete structure is in place, both male ancestral spirits and the female guardian spirits—*Jumneang Phteah*—are intentionally invited into the building structure to possess and bless it for perpetuity. A *yantra*—a piece of decorative cloth, usually red, inscribed with spiritual symbols for protection—is hung in the top of the stairwell (see Figure 10 location A and Figure 11). Offerings are placed at the side of the property entrance (see Figure 10 location C and Figure 12), and a separate spirit house is sited at the edge of each domestic property at its perceived property boundary line (see Figure 10 location E and Figure 12).[25] Upon completion, a



Figure 9: Ritual for construction project (Photo by author, 2014)

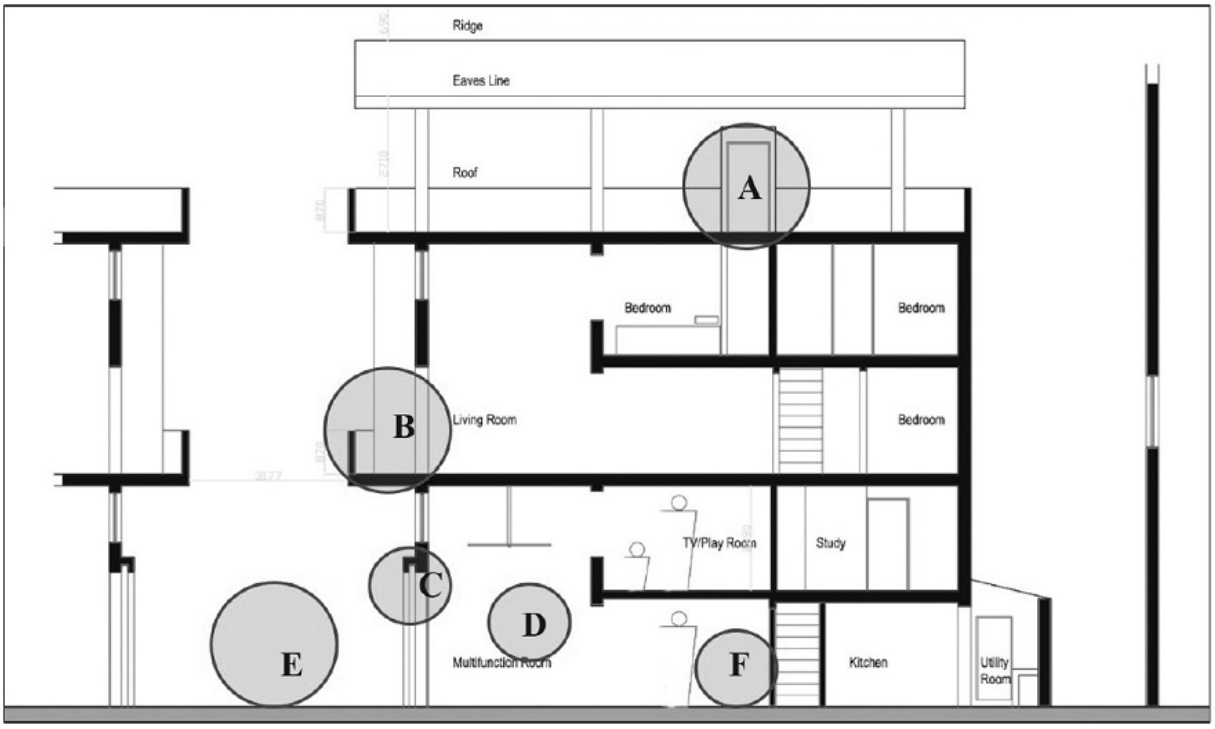


Figure 10: Long Section AA from Figure 6 through a typical shophouse to show locations of shrines and spirit houses A-F (Drawing by author, 2014).

ceremony is performed to celebrate the house's existence and to pray to the spirits for good fortune. Once more, it is subject to the client's belief whether an *hora*—fortune teller—is involved in the ceremony.

Once the shophouse construction is complete, people are often scared to dwell in the upper floors as that is where it is believed the spirits dwell. A Khmer colleague spoke of his regular interaction with spirits on the first floor of his shophouse dwelling, saying that they physically pulled his legs whilst sleeping and eventually the pain would wake him up.[26] He alone amongst his family does not seem to mind the discomfort; the rest of the family sleep on the ground floor where most of daily life is conducted. Ongoing spiritual protection is maintained by a number of internal (and regularly maintained) shrines:[27] one facing the door[28] (see Figure 10 location F and Figure 13); an ancestor ancestor shelf usually about two metres from the floor (see Figure 10 location D); voluntary subsidiary shrines throughout the rest of the house; and a regularly updated *yantra* (see Figure 11). If the shophouse was of multiple occupancy, an additional spirit house was often erected at the edge of each of the resident's legal boundaries on their balconies (see Figure 10 location B and Figures 14 and 15) to counteract the differing levels or types of beliefs adhered to by neighbouring residents. In this way, the horizontal and vertical spaces of the shophouse continue to remain spiritually appropriated, as well as the hard edge (the "possessed" structure and the "blessed" foundation), through the Khmer house construction rituals. Today these rituals are practised extensively, though not in the completely orthodox way of tradition, revealing a continued commitment to appease the spirits and create spatial impacts of spirituality at a domestic scale.

What happens when the resident of a Khmer shophouse becomes a Christian?

Traditionally, Khmer people intentionally engage with their lived experience of hybrid spirituality as they continually practice both construction rituals and domestic rituals. So, when Khmer people become Christians, they experience a fundamental change in their personal spirituality, which means they will face a domestic schism. This is because their dwelling and its physical and spiritual condition have been consecrated in three dimensions according to traditional Khmer spirituality. Spirits have been invited into the fabric of the building (the foundations, structure, and eaves) and they (in addition to ancestral spirits and territorial spirits) are regularly appeased through offerings at established shrines, ancestral shelves, and spirit houses. Once the Khmer resident's personal spirituality changes, it no longer aligns, physically and spiritually, with the space in which the person dwells, and a disruption occurs. There are five main responses to this disruption available to the Khmer Christian: conflict, relocation, demolition, dismantling, and expulsion. Each of these will be discussed and analysed to determine their potential effectiveness and spatial impact of spirituality on Khmer dwellings, as well as their feasibility within the urban context of the city of Phnom Penh.

The first response for the new Khmer Christian is to do nothing and live in a space of spiritual tension and **conflict**. There is an ongoing conflict between their personal spirituality and the spatial spirituality of the shophouse that they inhabit. Often, this choice is driven by economic or social reasons. The person may be the only Christian in a family that continues to adhere to traditional Khmer hybrid spirituality. The new Khmer Christian cannot afford to relocate, expel the spirits, or demolish or dismantle their home. An enduring conflict occurs which is unsustainable, and the longer it endures, the higher the likelihood that the Khmer Christian becomes overwhelmed and "choked" by the conflicting spatial spirituality within which they reside (cf. Mark 4:18–19). This can result in the person returning to their previous spiritual beliefs that comfortably align with that of their dwelling.

The second response is to **relocate**. Upon recognising the spatial spiritual schism within their dwelling, the Khmer Christian can choose to leave the shophouse and rent or buy a dwelling that is more in line with their personal beliefs. This would be one that has been constructed (or re-consecrated) without the traditional Khmer hybrid spirituality rituals and has none of the shrines, ancestral shelves, or spirit houses that invite the presence the spirits. The Khmer Christian can now physically live without domestic spiritual conflict and experience rest as personal spirituality and domestic spatial spirituality are aligned. This choice is only available to those with economic capacity, social mobility, and a viable spatial spiritual opportunity to relocate.

A further response is to **dismantle** the dwelling that has been consecrated according to traditional Khmer spirituality, relocate, and then reconstruct it according to the new Khmer Christian spirituality of the resident. There is a precedence of house dismantling within Khmer culture. Historically, Khmer houses were of timber construction. Should the resident experience significant bad luck or misfortune, it was considered a spiritual issue and the construction rituals—related to the land and spirits—undertaken for the dwelling's construction were questioned. To change one's luck, people would sometimes dismantle their home, relocate, and reconstruct the home with the existing materials and perform devout rituals in the hope that good fortune would follow. This process of dismantling is also a choice for someone who becomes a Christian and finds their personal spirituality in conflict with the spatial spirituality of their domestic space.[29]

Theoretically, this is a viable approach should the dwelling be made of timber and rurally located. In an urban setting, however, there are three problems that make it an unlikely solution. Firstly, it is very difficult to dismantle a shophouse due to its materiality—predominantly concrete—and terraced character (see Figure 8). This would compromise the structural integrity of other connected shophouse dwellings and is extremely expensive. In addition, finding a suitable location to relocate and then reconstruct is economically prohibitive within urban contexts. Finally, there are currently no established, orthodox Khmer Christian construction rituals that would supersede the hybrid spiritual rituals described above.

Another possible related response is **demolition**. This is a clear and emphatic rejection of the previous home and its traditional Khmer spirituality. Following the demolition, a new home could be constructed with new materials and rituals on the same site. Or the land could be sold and the person relocate to another space. Like the approach of dismantling, there are similar concerns with this process in the urban context. This method is only available to people with significant economic means and opportunities and is highly unlikely to be widely used.

Perhaps the most reasonable response to the domestic spatial spiritual schism facing the new Christian is **expulsion**. This compels the Khmer Christian resident to engage directly with their spirituality and how it conflicts with the traditional Khmer spatial spirituality of the existing dwelling in each of its spaces and built form. It is important to clarify that Christian spirituality is not a synchronistic (or hybrid) spirituality. In Exodus 20:3, Yahweh demands of his people, "You shall have no other gods before me." This is commonly known as the first of the Ten Commandments and emphatically states that within a person's spirituality and, by extension, their personal space, other spirits will have no standing or presence (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14). This starting point allows the Khmer Christian to systematically engage with the traditional Khmer home through the following three suggested expulsion procedures/rituals. Firstly, the superficial emblems and structures in and around the dwelling—such as spirit houses that house the *Neak Tha*, shrines, ancestor shelves, and *yantras*—could all be physically gathered. The sovereignty of God can then be proclaimed over them in prayer and they can be destroyed (usually through burning). This act/ritual symbolically, physically, and spiritually expels and rejects the previous spiritual inhabitants of these items from the domestic space.[30]

Secondly, each space within the home and around the dwelling (including the legal boundary) could be re-consecrated to the Christian God through prayer(s) in each identifiable space. The content of these prayers should recognise the sovereignty of God (Ephesians 1:20–23) over all spiritual presences that have been or are resident within the domestic spaces. These other spiritual presences can then be intentionally rejected and expelled from each of these spaces by the authority of Jesus Christ and the space cleansed accordingly. During the years that my family lived in the city of Phnom Penh, we experienced this first hand in 2016. At the front of our semi-detached house was a mango tree within which, our neighbour believed,



Figure 11: *Yantra*
(Photo by author, 2014)



Figure 12: Doorway offering to the left and spirit house to right
(Photo by author, 2014)



Figure 13: Internal shrine
(Photo by author, 2015)



Figure 14: Multiple occupancy shophouse (Photo by author, 2016)



Figure 15: Enlarged picture of the portion in the yellow box from Figure 14 to show the spirit house on balcony

dwelled the *Neak Tha* for the housing estate (see Figure 16). Regular offerings of food were made to appease the spirit and bring our neighbour's family good fortune (see Figure 17). Once we realised what was happening, we recognised the conflicting spatial spirituality of our dwelling—between Christianity and hybrid spirituality. Rather than chop down the tree and burn it (we were renting the property), we prayed over the tree, quoted the Bible, declared Jesus Christ's sovereignty over the tree and our dwelling, and commanded the *Neak Tha* to depart. We thus re-consecrated the tree to the creator God of the Christian Scriptures. Subsequently, the neighbour ceased making offerings and told us some time later that the *Neak Tha* had left that tree for another residence elsewhere.

Finally, the structural fabric of the building could be intentionally engaged with. It is not necessary to destroy or dismantle the dwelling's built form. This is because Christians believe in a creator God (Genesis 1) who crafted the world and everything in it (Psalm 24:1). Thus, all the material elements (such as clay and water used to make bricks) that together become the built form of the dwelling's structure were originally created by God. It is only later, through the traditional Khmer house-construction rituals, that the built form became inhabited by the guardian spirit—*Jumneang Phteah*—like a tenant. Now that the human resident has a new spirituality, an expulsion/restoration prayer and/or ritual is/are necessary to declare the Christian God's sovereignty over the building's built form, expel any conflicting/guardian spirits, and cleanse it accordingly (Luke 16:13). Once these three steps are taken, the dwelling can be considered to be re-consecrated according to Khmer Christian spirituality. Ongoing spiritual protection and consecration of the residence should continue if the Khmer Christian maintains an active belief in the Christian God through conducting regular prayer and obedience to the Christian Scriptures. This expulsion approach to re-consecrating the dwelling is the most cost-effective, sustainable, and accessible response to a resident who has changed his spiritual alignment.

Conclusion

This paper introduced traditional Khmer spirituality as a type of hybrid spirituality that includes Animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This hybrid spirituality is common in twenty-first century Cambodia and its impact and presence has been clearly identified in the ubiquitous housing typology of the shophouse. Through a series of construction and domestic rituals, this type of Khmer dwelling can be considered a significant place of spatial spirituality which "comprises broader ontological territories that transcend the common assignation of home to the secular."[31] It has been observed that when a Khmer person changes their spirituality from the hybrid spirituality of tradition to Christianity, their personal spirituality becomes incompatible with the spatial spirituality of their dwelling. Inaction is not a viable response, as living within a continued state of conflict between personal and spatial spirituality is not sustainable. A change is required to align personal and domestic spatial impacts of spirituality.

The responses of dismantling or demolishing the home were also not viable primarily due to prohibitive cost. The responses of relocation and expulsion were identified as the most reasonable. The expulsion practices/rituals suggested are not new and



Figure 16: Mango Tree with offering highlighted in red circle (Photo by author, 2016)



Figure 17: Close-up picture of area marked by red circle in Figure 16 to show the offering to *Neak Tha* (Photo by author, 2016)

are practised in piecemeal fashion by Khmer Christians. However, they have not yet been gathered together to form a construction ritual that is widely practised and considered orthodox within current Khmer Christianity. The content, procedure, style, and method of these rituals need to be determined by Khmer Christians who can best navigate their symbolic culture and theology rather than outsiders like myself. I would, however, be so bold as to suggest that developing these procedures should be a priority for the Khmer church as this would reduce some difficult dilemmas and disruptions that new believers may face due to their new religious worldview. It would also create more plausible domestic choices and variety for the rest of the urban Khmer community, who, though not yet Christian, are uncomfortable with the spiritual appropriation of dwellings according to the traditional Khmer hybrid spirituality.

Though the change from traditional to Christian belief is spiritually and ritualistically dramatic for Khmer people, a Khmer Christian shophouse dwelling will structurally look very similar to a shophouse consecrated in alignment to traditional Khmer spirituality. The spatial impacts of traditional Khmer spirituality on a domestic scale are predominantly characterised by fear through the appeasement of spirits, as evidenced by shrines, spirit houses, and *yantras*. People become enslaved to the Animist spirit world that masters and controls their domestic space (2 Peter 2:19). In contrast, the spatial impacts of Khmer Christian spirituality on a domestic scale are characterised by freedom. Through Jesus Christ, people and their domestic spaces can be liberated from slavery to fear of the spirits (Galatians 5:1). So, in the Khmer Christian home, on the boundary line, there may be a row of potted plants. At the entrance, there may be wooden shoe rack. On the internal walls, there might be a cross, a family photo, or a painting. Facing the front door, there may be a comfortable chair, and in the eaves, there will probably be nothing at all. The possibilities are so endless; there is not room enough to expand on them all. **MRT**

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[1] The small domestic scale of the shophouse is a core part of the large urban scale of the city. When grouped together they are known as communities or neighbourhoods and when these are gathered together they constitute a large influential part of the city. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that spatial expressions of the hybrid spirituality on the domestic scale of the shophouse can be used as a measure of a city's relationship with spirituality: the shophouse becomes a spatial spiritual microcosm of the city itself. See François Tainturier, ed., *Wooden Architecture of Cambodia: A Disappearing Heritage* (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Center for Khmer Studies, 2006).

[2] Philip Coggan, *Spirit Worlds: Cambodia, The Buddha and The Naga* (Oxford: John Beaufoy, 2015), 25.

[3] "In Cambodia, the Chinese place the founding of the Kingdom of Funan by the Brahman Kaundinya in the first century AD." George Coedes, *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii, 1968), 17.

[4] Animism (also known as folk religion) and its "beliefs in spirit worship and the supernatural existed in Cambodia long before the Hindu influences." Seanglim Bit, *The Warrior Heritage: Psychological Perspective on Cambodian Trauma* (El Cerrito, CA: Seanglim Bit, 1991), 16.

[5] "An array of guardian spirits (both benign and more malevolent) called '*Neak Tha*' inhabited the mountains, rice paddies, trees, etc. of the physical environment. Others were ancestral spirits, and still others are composites of mythological heroes." Bit, *The Warrior Heritage*, 16. Belief in these spirits is still common in Cambodia today.

[6] This expression of Animism has similarities to certain Old Testament practices in which high places were used for spirit worship, contrary to the commands of God. Thus, the statement: "For the message he declared by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true" (1 Kings 13:32).

[7] This was due to both technological reasons—maritime architecture developed that allowed larger boats to travel further—and religious reasons—the development of Buddhism abolished caste purity restrictions, thus allowing foreign contact. Coedes, *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, 21.

[8] Coedes, *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, 15.

[9] Coggan, *Spirit Worlds*, 22.

[10] Today, two major branches of Buddhism are generally recognized in Cambodia: Theravada and Mahayana.

[11] The sixth-century Chinese text—*History of the Liang*—writes of people worshiping the sky spirits—an Animistic practice—and making bronze images with two "faces and four arms … Harihara … Vishnu and Siva united in a single body." Coedes, *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, 61. In addition to these Animist and Hindu practices, the same text writes of Buddhism flourishing in sixth-century Funan, where it posits that "a Chinese embassy was sent to Funan between 535 and 545 to ask the king of the country to collect Buddhist texts and to invite him to send Buddhist teachers to China." Coedes, *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, 60. A thriving, hybrid spirituality was in place.

[12] This diagram was composed using data from a number of historical sources that identified when leading strands of spirituality where present in Cambodia and their extent of influence. It shows that the three dominant strands have been, at different times, in ascendancy. See Lawrence Palmer Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1951); Coedes, *The Indianized States of South East Asia*; David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 4th ed. (Colorado: Westview, 2008); Jean Boisselier, *Studies on the Art of Ancient Cambodia*, ed. and trans. Natasha Eilenberg and Robert L. Brown (Phnom Penh: Reyum, 2008); Chou Ta Kuan, *The Customs of Cambodia*, 4th ed. (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2001); and Gabriel Quiroga de San Antonio, *A Brief and Truthful Relation of Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia*, trans. Antoine Cabaton (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998).

[13] John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie, eds., *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2004), 4. Seanglim Bit corroborates this when he writes that "the merging of classical Buddhist thought with Animistic and Brahmanist traditions produces patterns which are quite atypical of Buddhism as practices elsewhere." Bit, *The Warrior Heritage*, 21.

[14] This "cross fertilisation" between the three leading strands of spirituality is also suggested through the term "hybrid spirituality".

[15] Marston and Guthrie, *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*, 7–12.

[16] Danielle and Dominique-Pierre Gueret, *The Khmer Pagoda* (Phnom Penh: KAM, 2017), 53.

[17] In 2012, a sculpture of the Hindu god Ganesha was unveiled at the junction of Monivong and Russian Boulevards, spatial evidence of the enduring Hindu belief within Khmer hybrid spirituality.

[18] Paul D. C. Robinson and Clarissa Cheung, *Conversations with Khmer* (Phnom Penh: Self-published, 2017), 66.

[19] Sokly Yam and Seo Ryeung Ju, "Transformation of Shophouses in Phnom Penh, Cambodia: In the Aspect of Spatial Organization," *Family and Environmental Research* 54, no. 1 (2016): 13.

[20] Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2007), 48.

[21] This is based, in part, on the shophouse where I lived for four years between 2008 and 2012.

[22] These terms distinguish a new building site from one where there has been earlier construction.

[23] *Achars* are experts in all kinds of rituals, not just construction ones. They also conduct funerals and weddings. Today the Khmer government is intentional about training both men and women for this role. Coggan, *Spirit Worlds*, 71

[24] In my doctoral research, I interviewed a locally recognised *guru* who shared some of his experience and status. He believes that he is possessed by a spirit who he must daily appease through acceptable behaviour and worship. Robinson and Cheung, *Conversations with Khmer*, 199.

[25] Today, a number of spirits are thought to dwell in spirit houses. They include the displaced spirit of the land as well as the *tevoda* (angel) from the Hindu pantheon. Coggan, *Spirit Worlds*, 77. All residents of the spirit house need to be regularly appeased; particularly at significant annual rituals.

[26] This same person proceeded to say they were more afraid of thieves who steal, than spirits, because thieves are real/physical people. Robinson and Cheung, *Conversations with Khmer*, 28.

[27] Daily prayers and offerings must be made by the homeowners to appease the local territorial spirits.

[28] This is for the *Jumneang Ptheah*, the wholly benevolent spirit who protects the dwelling from all enemies: supernatural and human. Coggan, *Spirit Worlds*, 80.

[29] In the Cambodian province of Ratanakiri, some Khmer people who became Christians were forced to relocate to the edge of the village because their neighbours were afraid that the new believers' non-compliance with the spirits would have negative consequences on the whole village.

[30] A precedent for this approach is found in the Old Testament where several texts (cf. Exodus 20:4–5; 34:14; 2 Chronicles 14:3; 1 Kings 15:11–14) advocate that idols, shrines, stones, and poles consecrated to other spirits and deities are not to be worshipped or appeased, but must be destroyed because Yahweh is a jealous God.

[31] Thomas Barrie, Julio Bermudez, and Phillip James Tabb, eds., *Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2017), 105.

Racism, Mission, and Me:
Some Personal Reflections

Dave Andrews



Dave, his wife Ange, and their family have lived and worked in intentional communities with marginalised groups of people in Australia, Afghanistan, India, and Nepal for nearly fifty years. Dave, Ange, and their friends started Aashiana, Sahara, and Sharan—Christian community organisations working with slum dwellers, sex workers, drug addicts, and people with HIV/AIDS in India. They are currently part of the Waiters Union, an inner-city Christian community network that is walking and working alongside Aboriginals, refugees, and people with disabilities in Brisbane, Australia. Dave is interested in radical spirituality, incarnational community, and the dynamics of personal and social transformation. He is author of many books; his forthcoming book *To Right Every Wrong—The Making and Unmaking of One Improbable Minor Prophet* will be launched in early 2021. Dave is a lecturer at Christian Heritage College, a trainer for Community Praxis Cooperative, and an elder emeritus for Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. www.daveandrews.com.au

I am a white, English-born, Anglo-Australian, well-educated, middle-class Christian. People like me may not want to be seen as racist, and may even sincerely not want to be racist, but it doesn't help anybody, especially those who may be oppressed by my unrecognised and unredeemed racism, if I protest that I am not racist. I think all cultures encourage us to be racist to some degree or other, and I am no exception.

If we are to deal with our racism, we need to admit it. Racism is the systematic discrimination that advantages the dominant ethnic group we belong to; discrimination is prejudicial treatment that disadvantages a non-dominant group. And while pre-judgment of others may occasionally have a positive survival value, prejudice—or unjustifiable negative pre-judgment—is the basis of all discrimination and racism.

In these reflections, I examine how I came to acknowledge my implicit racial bias as an Anglo-Australian with the help of my Indian friends, and then how I came to address my explicit religious bias as a Christian with the help of my Muslim friends.

Recognising prejudice

I wasn't aware that I was racist while growing up because I was raised in England as the only white boy in our suburb with two black, foster brothers from Nigeria. And when we moved to Australia, unlike most Anglo-Australians, my mother and father worked closely with indigenous leaders and I had many Aboriginal aunties and uncles. It was only when I moved to India at the age of twenty-one that I was confronted with my racism.

It started when I encountered the racism of some of the missionaries I met. Let me be clear, most of the missionaries I met did not come across as blatantly racist, quite the opposite. But I quickly became aware that when many of them talked of "Indians", the term was a pejorative that reflected prejudice. "Indian" work was short-hand for "slip-shod, shoddy" work. "Indian" workers were "incompetent, irresponsible" workers. There were two ways of doing things: "the right way and their way."

One older missionary took me aside when I arrived and told me that I could "never really make friends" with "Indians" as these "Indians" could "never be trusted." This prejudice led to discrimination when it came to these missionaries making friends. They "ministered" to the Indians, but only made "friends" with the foreigners. When it came to "ministry", one older couple, who had lived in India for thirty years, told me that we couldn't preach the gospel properly in Hindi as it was derived from Sanskrit, which was the language of the *Vedas*, the sacred texts of Hinduism which thwarted any attempt to communicate the "true truth" in the local language. They said I could only preach the gospel properly in English.[1] They seemed to be completely oblivious to the multiple "pagan" influences on the English vocabulary that named the first month of the year after the Roman God "Janus", named the fifth day of the week after the Norse God "Thor", and, according to the Venerable Bede, named "Easter", the most sacred occasion in the English Christian calendar, after "Eostre," the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, fecundity, and fertility.

I secretly despised these missionaries and prided myself I wasn't racist like them. I vowed never to live in a mission compound, but instead chose to live in *Aashiana*—Urdu for the "nest"—an Indian Christian residential therapeutic discipleship community in Delhi where I delighted in proving these missionaries wrong by developing the best, most-trustworthy friendships I have ever had in my life with dear Indian friends. However, it was these

very Indian friends with whom I lived in community, who, in due course, were to confront me with my own racism.

Confronting racial bias

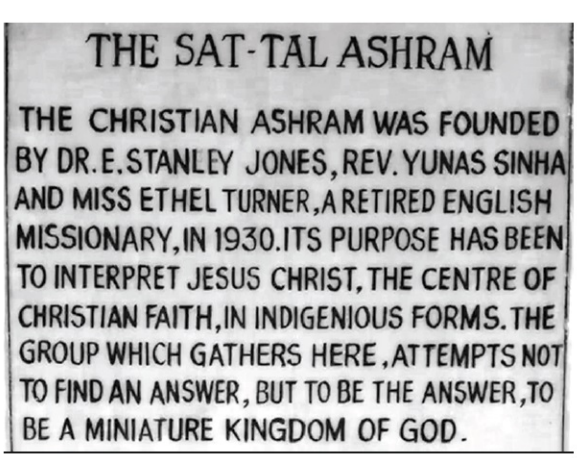
In my experience, many Indians deferred to fair-coloured people, particularly to white people. If a white person turned up at an Indian gathering, they were typically welcomed as a celebrity, asked to be the keynote speaker, and given a seat of honour—often the only seat in the house. I think this deference was partly a function of India's default to their gracious tradition of extending incomparable hospitality to guests. But I also think this deference was partly a result of centuries of colonisation by waves of increasingly fair-coloured people, from the Aryans, through the Moghuls, to the *Angrezee*.[2] However, while my Indian friends were always hospitable, they were in no ways deferential. They told me that, whether I liked it or not, I represented the harbinger of yet another neo-colonialist project in their country that disavowed the worst aspects of colonialism but still embodied an implicit "west-is-best", "white-is-right" bias. One of my friends said, "We have enough problems in India, we don't need to import them!" I was mortified, but confessed there was no doubt they were right. So to offset this bias, I—along with all the other foreigners who were in our community—agreed to accept the recommendations our Indian friends made to us.

First, we agreed to devote time to an intensive study of the language and culture. We studied Hindustani rather than Hindi because it was the language of the common people. Furthermore, we studied the art, religion, economics, and politics of the society. We were most affected by the culture as it had been reinterpreted during the Indian renaissance in the early twentieth century, particularly the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, the Noble Laureate Bengali polymath philosopher, composer, and painter, and the politics of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the world-renowned *Mahatma*[3] of the anti-colonial, nonviolent, nationalist, independence movement.

Second, we all resolved to discover the meaning of our faith in Christ within the Indian context from a traditional Indian leader. We felt this was important for all of us, since we had all been brought up in an educational system that had been largely influenced by the West (even those of us who had not been brought up in the West). Thus, we all felt the need to become more in touch with our Eastern context. We stayed for three weeks in Bharuch, a small town in Gujarat in western India and learned from Subodh Sahu, who initiated us all into the Indian art of meditation, an inductive study of Christian Scripture, and dialogue with neighbours of other religions. Later, we invited Archarya Dayaprakash from *Sat Tal Ashram*[4] to hold a *satsang*[5] in our house. He introduced us to the radiance of our faith in Christ in the light of other religions. Consequently, we came to understand our faith with contributions from both Western knowledge and Eastern wisdom, forming a uniquely Indian synthesis.

Third, we agreed that we would, within the framework of India and infused by a faith that was Indian, make our decisions about how to develop the community through consensus. There was some debate about whether or not consensus was an Indian practice. Indian people were described by French anthropologist Louis Dumont in 1972 as "*Homo Hierarchicus*," suggesting that the very concept of equality was foreign in India.[6] Yet Vinoba Bhave, a National Teacher and spiritual successor to Mahatma Gandhi, maintained that the concept of equality was no more foreign than the *Vedas*, and the equality of all is vouchsafed in the *vedic* notion of the Oneness. Moreover, Jayaprakash Narayan, a National Leader and socialist protégé of Mahatma Gandhi, advocated the practice of *lok niti*—direct participatory democracy, which involved all the adult members of a community—as the archetype of authentic Indian politics. To these disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, it seemed that nothing could have been more Indian than the development of community through consensus. Indeed, this was the Mahatma's dream. So in our own community, we sought to make this dream a reality, and it is a principle that we practiced with profound effect. As Nimmi Parambi said, "so much precolonial and even postcolonial missionary zeal has been borne of an unconscious spirit of patronism and it has produced a sense of inferiority and shame among Indian people." In reflecting on *Aashiana*, Nimmi contended that "a sense of very real equality exists among the members of the community" and "one of the main outcomes of *Aashiana* has been the gradual restoring of a sense of real dignity for the Indians in the group."[7]

Fourth, we decided to reinforce this process by seeking to be as financially self-sufficient as we possibly could be. We would take funds to support projects for others, but as much as possible, we would not take money from abroad to support ourselves. In practice, the foreigners had to depend on foreign funds for their personal support, and the local members of the community generated their own income from within the country. One time, a wealthy





"Sattal Christian Ashram information video," 8 July 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsvMw_XSrXA.

man from abroad offered us substantial sums of money, and we discussed it and then kindly declined the offer. Another time, when Nimmi Parambi and Susie Mathai's families offered furniture and a vehicle to the community, they were accepted with much appreciation. This reinforced the sense of dignity in our identity as an Indian community.

Our emphasis on our Indian identity did not eliminate the tension between the foreign impetus and the indigenous shape of the model for our community—nor did it eliminate tension between those from the East and those from the West within the group. Tensions continued to exist. Yet the community intentionally made decisions that would offset the influence of its non-Indian (or even anti-Indian) historical antecedents in order to facilitate the development of a fellowship that would reflect a creative fusion of the East-West tension. To begin with, that fusion had a decidedly Western accent, but it became more mixed with Eastern rhythms. This intermixing was echoed in our name, which is a common Urdu word (not English) that connotes "a place of protection, support, nurture and sustenance."[8]

Confronting religious bias

Not all prejudice leads to racism, but prejudice always leads to discrimination. As an evangelical Christian in India, I discovered I needed to do more work on myself to deal with the implicit bias in my religious prejudice that led to religious discrimination.

Before I went to India, I studied apologetics. I believed Christianity was the "true truth" as Francis Schaeffer—a prominent evangelical apologist of the time—once famously claimed. Thus, my task as a "missionary" was to witness to the "true truth" claims of Christianity over against the "false truth" claims—that is, lies—of other religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The pre-suppositional apologetic approach that I was taught to take in relating to other religions was to expose the "unreasonable" presuppositions upon which other religions were based (e.g. the non-dualism of *Advaita Vedanta* Hinduism), unpack the "unrealistic" implications of those "unreasonable" presuppositions (e.g. with no duality, there could be no morality, no right as opposed to a wrong), and then present Christianity (or at least Schaeffer's version of a dualistic neo-Calvinism) as the only "reasonable", "realistic" way to righteousness.

You can imagine how dangerous this technique was in the hands of someone as self-righteous as I. Wielding this tool like a sword, I thought of it as "the sword of the Spirit" which was "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). For someone as combative, dominating, and intimidating as I, the conflict between competing truth claims was a creedal, zero-sum game—a win-lose clash of civilizations. I won a lot of arguments, but also did a lot of damage as I often needlessly, heedlessly, publicly shamed many beautiful and sensitive souls who were nurtured in the bosom of an Asian honor-shame culture.

By the time we started *Aashiana*, which was established by Indians for Indians who came from many other religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam), I had come to realize that while I might have some knowledge of the "true truth," my knowledge of the "absolute true truth" was relative, limited, partial, and incomplete. I found that dialogue with people of other religions was not only meaningful, but also mutually enlightening. I was able to proceed on the basis of three beliefs. First, there is only One God. Second, God is bigger than my own religion. Third, God can speak "truth" through my religion and also through another's religion. But the challenge for me, as a confronting apologist with a confronting personality, has been to move from a position of "hostility" to a posture of "hospitality" towards that "truth" in others.

Henri Nouwen said:

> The German word for "hospitality" is *gastfreundschaft*, which means friendship for the guest. The Dutch word for "hospitality," *gastwrijheid*, means the freedom of the guest. Hospitality, therefore, means the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.[9]

In this sense, showing "hospitality to the truth" means that I, as a white, English-born, Anglo-Australian, well-educated, middle-class, Protestant Christian, needed to seek to create a free space in myself for the "truth of a stranger" or a "strange truth", which I could welcome and befriend—even when it was spoken to me by a traditional "enemy".

The "strange truth" in a "strange language" that I have come to welcome as a friend through a more hospitable approach to dialogue with Muslims is the *Bismillah*, which stands for the Arabic phrase, *Bismillahi r Rahman r Rahim*, the invocation at the beginning of each *surah* in the *Qur'an* (except one). This beautiful, poetic phrase encourages me to seek to work "In the name of God the most merciful, most gracious and most compassionate." I have welcomed the *Bismillah* into my home and my heart.

For me, empathy is the heart of compassion. Empathy is the capacity for us to feel how others feel. In the context of interfaith dialogue, Christians and Muslims can seek to empathize with one another as people and try to feel how each other might feel. As we empathize with one another, we can develop interpersonal relationships that bridge the gaps of division, suspicion, and opposition that have set people of our religions over against each other for ages.

In seeking to improve relationships between Christians and Muslims, most people opt for what I call the "problematic approach," which focuses on problems and tries to fix them. At first glance, this approach may seem to make sense, because if we want to improve our relationship with one another, we will want to identify any problems and then try to solve them. However, when we give the "problematic approach" a second thought, we realize that it is endlessly "problematic," because when we look for problems, we find lots of them. And the more we look for problems, the more problems we'll find, and the more we look at all those problems, the bigger, scarier, and harder to deal with they become—until we often find ourselves so overwhelmed by all the problems that we become unable to solve them.

In dialogues between Christians and Muslims, I have seen this happen time and time again. Christians try to fix Muslims, Muslims try to fix Christians, and both sides end up overwhelmed by all the problems and completely battered and bruised by our cack-handed attempts to solve them. Such engagements do not lead to meaningful dialogue, but to the avoidance of meaningful dialogue. When I first met my Muslim colleague Nora Amath, the Chair of Islamic Relief, she

said she didn't want to meet me at first because she knew I was a Christian, and she was sick of Christians like me seeing her as a problem and trying to fix her.

Nora and I have discovered an alternative way to improve relationships between Christians and Muslims, which is the "appreciative approach." The "appreciative approach" does not focus on the "bad things" in others, but the "good things" in others. At first glance, this may not seem like a way to improve anything, because if we celebrate the "good things" in others, they won't make any real effort to get any better. But I have found that when we give the "appreciative approach" a second thought, we realize that it is the only approach that will make any of us want to do better, because when we notice the "good things" in each other, we enhance the "good things" in one another, and we can encourage one another to do "good things" more often. As we observe authenticity, honesty, and integrity in the other every time we encounter it, and as we celebrate sensitivity, sincerity, and vulnerability in the other each time we encounter it, our appreciation can lead to meaningful interfaith dialogue that bridges divides instead of widening them.

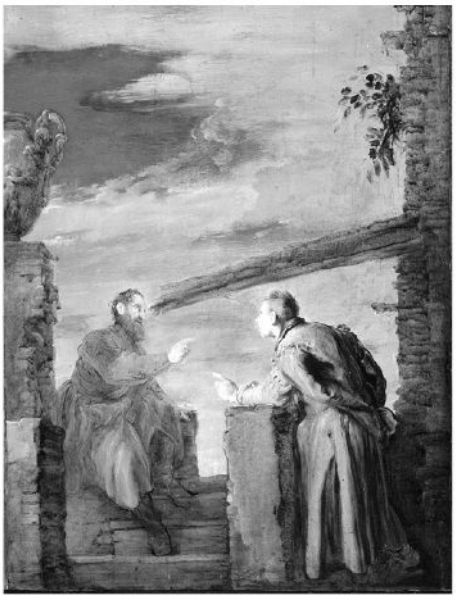
As I have already said, one of the really "good things" in Nora's religion that I have come to appreciate is the *Bismillah*, which Nora says contains the true essence of the *Qur'an*—indeed, the true essence of all religions. The more I have thought about the *Bismillah*, the more I have realized that it represents the best perspective of God within any religion. Both *rahman* and *rahim* are derived from the Semitic root *rhm*, which signifies the *womb* and *nourishing tenderness* and *lovingkindness*. *Rahman* describes the quality of limitless grace with which God embraces the whole world and all who dwell in it, while *rahim* describes the general embracing grace of God as it interacts with us in the particular circumstances of our lives, always proactive, prevenient and responsive. In talking with Nora, I have gladly and regularly affirmed how much better both our religions would be if we interpreted our sacred texts in a way that reflects a spirituality of the *Bismillah*. We have both come to believe that we should use this invocation as a hermeneutic to interpret our sacred texts in the light of God's nourishing tenderness and lovingkindness.

However, how does a "born again" apologist like me affirm the "good things" that need to be celebrated, and still confront the "bad things" that need to be confronted? In Christian-Muslim engagement, people either do not confront the "bad things" that need to be confronted, or they confront the "bad things" that need to be confronted by criticizing them. But when we attack the "bad things" about the other in the name of aggressive apologetics, we make things worse by escalating the conflict that already exists.

The words Jesus spoke to his disciples about how we can proceed with care when criticizing others have been transformative for me:

> Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," while the plank is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye (Matt 7:3–5).

Nora and I have both tried to heed these words of Jesus and encouraged people not to be *critically projective*, attacking one another's religions and escalating the conflict, but to be *critically reflective*, helping one another to confront the "bad things" in our own religions and working to make things better. Such a *critically reflective* approach can help us work together to resolve the existing conflict between our religions.



The Parable of the Mote and the Beam **by Domenico Fetti (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons.[10]**

For example, rather than criticize the violence in one another's traditions, Nora and I help one another confront the violence in our own traditions and host conversations within our own families of faith to help those who share our religion to reflect critically, safely, honestly, and vulnerably on interpretations of our sacred texts that have all too often been used as pretexts for violence, such as the contentious "genocide commands" in Deuteronomy or the controversial "sword verses" in the *Qur'an*.[11]

Conclusion

Those of us from the more dominant cultures, traditions, and religions need to deal with implicit biases that lead to prejudice, discrimination, and racism that are antithetical to the practice of the gospel of love for our neighbor which works with real empathy and respect towards the possibility of authentic reciprocity.

However, like me, no doubt you will find the change required involves a long slow process. Repentance does not consist of a single cathartic moment but a continuous ongoing moment-by-moment willingness to prayerfully confront my contradictions:

> Lord grant me
> the serenity to accept the people
> I cannot change
> the courage to change the one I can
> and the wisdom to know it's me.[12] **MRT**

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[1] These missionaries I am quoting were not with Interserve, the mission agency I was associated with.
[2] *Angrezee* is Hindi for the "English".
[3] *Mahatma* literally means "Great Soul", a title that was given to Gandhi by Tagore.
[4] An *ashram* is a spiritual community in India. The *Sat Tal Ashram* is in the Himalayan foothills.
[5] *Satsang* is a Sanskrit word that means a traditional Indian "gathering together for the truth."
[6] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (London: Paladdin, 1972).
[7] From my forthcoming book, *To Right Every Wrong—The Making and Unmaking of One Improbable Minor Prophet*, to be published in early 2021 by Wipf and Stock, 163.
[8] Andrews, *To Right Every Wrong*, 164.
[9] Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 51.
[10] Metropolitan Museum of Art, Online Collection, Rogers Fund, 1991. The image is a public domain work of art. It is in the public domain in its country of origin, the US, and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.
[11] See Deuteronomy 20:16–17 and *Qur'an* 9.5a.
[12] My version of the "Serenity Prayer," cited in my book *Plan Be* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008), 2.

The Language of Lament in Reconciliation and the Global Church

P E

P E and his wife serve with OMF International in East Asia where they work with a minority people group. They are passionate about all types of racial reconciliation and how that is part and parcel of the advance of the gospel and God's kingdom being established among unreached peoples.

I first heard of a particular minority people in 2003 when my wife-to-be and I served for a year in a large East Asian city. Previously, we didn't know that there was a group of people who didn't speak the majority language as their main language. A couple on our team was burdened for these people and often prayed for them and talked about them. On campus, I came to know a young man from this minority group with whom I hung out a few times. But our friendship didn't go far because his English wasn't great and I was a little intimidated by his religious beliefs, though I thought they were interesting. By the end of my year, God had taken my general interest in this people and turned it into a burden.

After we got married, my wife and I settled in Chicago. By helping a refugee family from Somalia, we developed a burden for justice issues and saw the need for holistic ministry. God united this with the love we already had for East Asia to enhance our concern for the minority people we had encountered in our time there. Two-and-a-half years ago, God led us to return to serve these people.

Throughout my life, I never had much experience with lament. It didn't seem to have any relevance until recently when we started thinking more about how minority people have to find ways to grieve and deal with tragedy in their lives. I have discovered that lament has more relevance to these people than I had ever known, even as it has much to teach us about reconciliation. This article will examine the language of lament as it addresses reconciliation and how that effects the global church.

Introduction to Lamentations

Lament is a passionate expression of grief and sorrow. And though the Bible says much more about lament than that, the one who laments is *passionate*, *grieving*, and *sorrowful*. In due course, we will look at this in more detail, but the greatest difference between the way the world views lament and the Bible's understanding is faith. An old negro spiritual can help us bridge this gap. The song "Bye and Bye" says,

O. Bye and bye, bye and bye
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load
I know my robe's gon' to fit me well
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load
I tried it on at the gates of hell
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load

Though they could try on the robes of Christ in the hell of slavery, they express hope that the burden will be laid down in the Bye and Bye. That is exactly what lament is. It is an honest recognition of the horrific realities of life that sets its hope in eternity.

The book of Lamentations is a funeral dirge for Jerusalem. Lamentations 1:1 says: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she has become." The book is a response to the destruction of Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity. Judah's understanding of lament flowed from this historical reality. So should ours. The Hebrew title for the book *ʾêykâ*—the first word in verse 1—literally means "how?". The same word repeats itself in chapter 2:1 and 4:1. The question raised is likened to other expressions of grief, such as those found in the psalms that ask, "How long, O Lord?" It has much in common with our response when confronted with tragedy: "How could this happen?"

The book of Lamentations comprises five poems that (with the exception of chapter 5) are written in an acrostic form using all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to begin each metered stanza. Some commentators have conjectured that perhaps Lamentations was written in acrostic form because the poet wanted to bring some order into a chaotic situation. Whether



People Mourn over the Ruins of Jerusalem (Lam 1:1–5) **by Gustave Doré (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons.[1]**

this is true or not, expressions of grief in the book of Lamentations alternate from way down and then way up and then down again like a roller coaster. This is the reality of grief. My wife reminds me that grieving is not a linear process. One who deals with great pain and ongoing loss often finds himself all over the map. For this reason, working with an intensely oppressed people who constantly grieve over their situation is messy and difficult.

Lamentations makes it clear that lament has several components. First, it can be understood as a funeral dirge or eulogy. But it's not just any eulogy. Typically, in the twenty-first century when people attend funerals, we often call the "eulogy" a celebration of life. However, in Lamentations, this eulogy speaks to the loss of a country that has been taken by force. This is by no means a celebration of the life of Jerusalem, but a deep groaning and expression of pain and loss, not unlike how parents who have to bury their own child feel.

Second, as seen throughout the book, but particularly in chapter 5, lament is an honest expression of pain and sorrow. We will look into this below. Third, according to Lamentations 5, lament often includes an honest confession of sin and broken relationship or broken covenant with God. Fourth, lament includes recognition of God's sovereign reign and ultimate goodness. Fifth, and finally, lament also includes assurances of hope in the midst of great pain. A conclusion we can draw from these five things is that lament is an act of faith. It's an honest prayer to God about the brutal realities of life. Lament can only be truly made by one who is in a covenant relationship with God. The one who laments knows that God hears his prayer and, therefore, deliberately turns to him in faith while making his complaint.

Lamentations was written for liturgical use. During worship in the Second Temple, after the Israelites returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile, they would have read portions of this book to remind them of what happened to their city and people. The graphic depictions of their plight along with the expressions of great grief and sorrow were intended to produce hope in a holy, unchanging God whose compassions are "new every morning" (Lam 3:23). The Lord is the One who will remain faithful to keep his promises in spite of his covenant people's faithlessness. The pain and sorrow are just as real and graphic as the restorative hope in God. The lament in chapter 5 points ultimately toward restoration and has much to teach us about the plight of minority peoples. We will condense the teaching of this chapter to three main points: the tragic reality, the confession of sin, and the hidden hope.

The tragic reality

First, we should pay attention to the pronouns the poet uses in Lamentation 5:1. He writes, "Remember O LORD what has befallen *us* … see *our* disgrace". The way the author uses pronouns is very intentional. If you were to read the entire book and take note of all the pronoun changes you would find a deliberate and complex shifting from one pronoun to another. By and large, in chapters 1–4, the author gives his personal perspective, written from the first-person point of view to express his own afflictions and observations of the terrors of the exile. But in chapter 5, a dramatic shift to plural pronouns takes place, and the author raises a deliberate corporate appeal to God. Judah—as a nation and people—raise their lament and express their desire to turn back to God. This is important as we think about an entire people who were stricken but also hope for a ray of light that will lead to restoration. And yet, lament is an act of faith by one who is in a covenant relationship with Yahweh. Israel was God's covenant people. Even so, what we learn here, because of the corporate nature and graphic description of the nation's loss, can be used to highlight the plight of and agony felt by many minority peoples.

The second thing I want to point out from verse 1 is that the poet, on behalf of the whole nation, calls on God to "remember". "*Remember* O LORD what has befallen us … *look and see* our disgrace." This calling on God to remember is common in the OT. However, it's not as if the author thinks God needs to be reminded or has somehow forgotten about their situation. The one who laments only *feels* that God has forgotten them. We see this specifically in Lamentations 5:20, where the poet writes, "why do you *forget* us forever? why do you *forsake* us?" When we grieve, we may feel like God has forgotten us and that we are forsaken—which is an extremely bitter feeling. In reality, calling God to remember is not a statement that he is unaware of our situation, but a call for him to take action. For instance, in Exodus 2:23–25, God remembers his people in Egypt.

> During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.

In Exodus, God took action to rescue his people. In 1 Samuel 1:19, God remembered Hannah and she became pregnant with Samuel. In Psalm 106:45 we read, *"For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*" God being called on to remember is always bound up with his covenant faithfulness and steadfast love. It is vitally important that we understand that the God who makes promises will always keep them because he never changes and his deliberate love never changes, even if he must exercise discipline along the way to a people who are often disobedient. The foundations laid here will help us as we consider the tragic reality faced by Judah that is revealed in a few key verses from the chapter.

In Lamentations 5:3, Judah calls God into action as they cry out, "We have become orphans, fatherless, our mothers are like widows." Yahweh is the Lord of his people. And though he is their Father and they are his children, the exile has left them as orphans and widows—those whose fathers or husbands are dead. Orphans and widows are the weakest and most vulnerable in any society, and the whole of society is now reckoned as



The Akkadian cuneiform inscription on this clay tablet lists certain rations, and mentions the Babylonian captivity and the name of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), King of Judah. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin. Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP (Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

orphans and widows. Their king is dead and they feel like God has abandoned them. In a similar fashion, thousands of people today have seen their societies upended by more powerful peoples. Families either flee or are sent into exile. Parents are sent away from home or are housed in reeducation camps and their children placed into orphanages. One young woman we know who has three little children has lost her husband and is left with hardly any money. Despite her desperate situation, landlords by the dozen have refused to rent to her, simply because of the ethnic group to which she belongs. They regard her as a criminal, thief, or terrorist. Similar to Judah's experience in Babylon, the weakest and most vulnerable are discriminated against. And even if they choose to identify with the locals, they are often treated as foreigners in their own country.

Similarities can also be found as we compare Judah as described in Lamentations 5:11–12 with many modern situations. "Women are raped in Zion, young women in the towns of Judah. Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders." This lament brings an honest and graphic expression of pain and suffering, as it not only describes different types of suffering but also the shame that goes along with it. Rape is as shameful as it is torturous. The Babylonians not only show disrespect to elderly Israelites, they openly shame them in public. In many places, minority people are subjected to rape, torture, and the shame that accompanies them in an attempt to turn them into submissive members of society. When that fails, they may be imprisoned or even killed.

The dislocation of the exile produces the grief expressed in Lamentations 5:14: "The old men have left the city gate, the young men their music." All meaning and joy in life is gone. No social positions or pleasures remain to identify them as a unique culture, people, and society. Indeed, they could say that "The joy of our hearts has ceased, our dancing has been turned to mourning." Their identity as a people is gone. All they have left is grief and loss.

A few years ago, my wife and I spent ten days in a large Asian city where we visited the Grand Bazaar. The Grand Bazaar today looks nothing like it used to, but has been completely transformed and commercialized to become a tourist spot. It now looks like a massive food court in Disneyland that features ethnic food. It's like entering a museum exhibit designed to resemble something that was once real. The result is that it feels fake. Although some of the local people were dancing in the bazaar, it felt as though they were only dancing in an attempt to cling the best they could to what they still have as a people. And yet, in their dancing, they were grieving what once was.

Where does all this lead? Lamentations was written to be read as a means for God's people to turn to him in their loss and pain. Israel's experience was real. The experience of loss and pain is equally real to many today. By deliberately and graphically recounting their story, the exiles were moved to repent of their sins and return to faithful obedience in Yahweh who had adopted them to be his covenant people so that they would not have to experience this again. Biblically, the end of lament is restoration. Far from being an end in itself, lament is a path to God. It leads the grieved to recognize personal wrongdoing and acknowledge personal sin.

Confession of sin

The need to acknowledge one's sin is highlighted in verses 7, 16, and 18.

> Our fathers sinned, and are no more and we bear their iniquities … The crown has fallen from our head, woe to us, we have sinned … for Mount Zion which lies desolate, jackals prowl over it.

Israel sinned, and in Lamentations they are trying to remember the ways in which they have wronged Yahweh. They realize they have treated him as one god among many. They acknowledge that previous generations had adopted the worship practices of Assyria and Egypt. And though that generation is gone, the people in exile are paying for their fathers' sins. But lest we think their experience of the exile was all their fathers' fault, Jeremiah's generation acknowledges that their loss of the monarchy is a result of their own sin (Lam 5:16) so that the most sacred of their places has become a den for wild animals (Lam 5:18).

The acknowledgement of wrongdoing is the first step in repentance. The second step is turning back to God and doing so continually so that the sin is never committed again. They must choose to turn away from sin and towards God. But is turning back to the Law and the Mosaic covenant—as good as it was—enough for God's people? No. They still fail. And how do people truly turn from their sin when they were never God's covenant people to begin with? How is racism forgiven and thousands of years of practicing false religion turned from? How does reconciliation take place and restoration of hope occur for minority people today who are stripped of their identity?

In many ways, the reconciliation that comes through the gospel starts with the most privileged people humbling themselves, stooping as low as they can.



The Flight of the Prisoners **by James Tissot (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons. Jewish Museum, New York.[1]**

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This includes foreign Christians working in Asia. It also requires that Christians among the majority people humble themselves so that God's kingdom can advance among minority people. As we have seen, true lament can only be done by those who are in covenant relationship with Yahweh. That being true, those who truly need to lament and repent of sin is the majority culture church. When the church laments for the sake of others, for the sake of an oppressed minority, this not only provides an avenue for genuine repentance but also validates those who are the victims. The more the majority church acknowledges and laments the fact that they, along with the majority culture, are a part of the victimizers who have caused the minority people to experience pain, the more their humility can serve to be a gateway to reconciliation. What might this look like? The answer lies within the far-reaching realities of Lamentations 5:19–22 and leads to my third and final point.

A hidden hope

The contrast between verses 18 and 19 is vivid. From the situation in which jackals prowl over Zion as a result of the sin that lead to the exile, the focus shifts to the Lord reigning forever. The reign of Babylon's king was no more than a passing moment compared to the endurance of Yahweh's throne. In verse 1, we saw that calling on God to remember was a call for him to take action. In verse 20, Judah's suffering is so great, it has caused them to feel like Yahweh has forgotten them forever. However, the character of God is not such that he overlooks any injustice done to any people. We can take heart that this is true for the injustice done toward minority peoples as well. In Lamentations 3:34–36, we read, "To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth, to deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High, to subvert a man in his lawsuits, the Lord does not approve."

This ultimately leads to the last two verses of the book, which are quite possibly the most important. "Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old—unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us." Verse 21 again ties back into verse 1. Calling on God to "restore" is the same as calling on God to "remember". Judah longed to be the people they once were, and they knew that only God could bring about such a revival. But as verse 22 shows, they still had no assurance. They knew they were sent into exile due to God's wrath against their sin. Their suffering was so real, their hope was so crushed, and their future was so bleak, that they could not be sure there was anything else for them but the life of slavery and suffering. In the midst of all this it was hard—almost impossible—for them to remember the true character of God and that he is an unchanging promise maker and keeper. Old Testament scholar H. L. Ellison, commenting on verse 22, puts it like this:

> The simple fact is that the people of Israel—with few exceptions—had so failed to grasp God's revelation that an experience parallel to the bondage in Egypt and a new Exodus were needed to prepare Israel for the appearance of her Messiah and the world's Savior.[2]

There was purpose in this suffering that went beyond the comprehension of Israel. Though their situation seemed utterly hopeless, it wasn't gone; it was only hidden. As Lamentations 5:21 makes clear, the reality of *restoration* is the ultimate end in Israel's confession of sin and lament. This restoration, however, only comes when one's repentance is initiated by God's sovereign act and culminates when God's covenant is renewed. It is important, therefore, to see that God's full plan of restoration goes beyond Israel being restored to the people they once were. The lens of the telescope needs to be adjusted to focus on something much further out, much further away. As Jeremiah prophesied:

> Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer 31:31–33)

Ezekiel similarly prophesied that their heart of stone will be removed and replaced with a heart of flesh (Ezek 11:19; 36:26). Their hearts, that were as hard as the heart of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, will be replaced with hearts of flesh and they will no longer merely try to obey a law written on a stone tablet, the law itself will be written on their hearts.

This was God's way of keeping his promise to Abraham to make him the father of many nations. He would provide a sacrifice that was sufficient to deal with the heart, not just the surface sins. God would provide a perfect sacrifice that would turn human hearts from stone to flesh. God had promised this sacrifice way before he called Abraham. In response to the Fall, God promised Eve that her seed would crush the serpent's head, but not before the serpent would fatally bruise his heal (Gen 3:15). This had to refer to a real sacrifice. And for this reason, the long expectation of true restoration that the people of Israel sought in Lamentations 5:21 found its fulfilment when Jesus Christ came to deal with sin and create a people who can worship him in spirit and truth. Christ himself walked the *Via Dolorosa*—the way of suffering. His path to Calvary was marked by lament so that he could receive us into his arms where those who lament find comfort.

When all this happened in the death and resurrection of Jesus, a new movement, a new restoration, a New Covenant was initiated. This new thing that emerged through the lament is what we call the church—God's people, consisting of all who believe from Israel and the nations. The church is God's means of keeping his promise to Abraham. *It is this gospel truth—that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church was born—that takes everything I want to say to its grand crescendo.*

Application

How, then, does this apply to minority peoples? It begins as majority people and

people with power humble themselves as members of the church and join those who are suffering in their pain. For the past five years or so, my wife and I have been praying through what we have come to call Vision 2:14, based on Habakkuk 2:14 and Ephesians 2:14:

> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
>
> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

The content of this vision is nothing earth-shatteringly new. It includes themes and situations that many of us have been praying through for many years. But it's worthwhile to say that our vision is—by God's grace and the power of the cross—to see the walls of hostility between the majority church and the minority people we love broken down so that God will unite his people to take the gospel to the ends of the earth; and that, as we are reconciled to him and with each other, his glory may be seen in the power of the gospel and fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

We strongly believe in this vision and pray that God will fulfil it for his glory. We are convinced that the minority people church is an essential component of taking the gospel to peoples of other religious backgrounds. More significantly, the testimony that the gospel has the power to reconcile two groups who hated each other and unite them to go into the world is undeniably powerful, a witness that gives all the glory to God because only he could bring reconciliation in this way.

While prayer is the most important part of this vision, there are other things that foreign workers and mobilizers can do. Foreigners can play the crucial role of mediators between majority and minority peoples by encouraging the majority people church to love and understand their minority neighbors. To do this, we need to have friends among believing majority people and minority people and bridge the gap between the two, especially when the minority people are too afraid to reveal how they actually feel.

We have a friend from a minority group who owns a restaurant and who has become quite open with us and trusts us fairly well. He knows that we know their situation quite well. In the evening when most of their patrons are from the majority people, I often stood outside of the restaurant talking with him and his brother. When some of their regulars came along, our friend greeted them with a hand shake and big smile. But as soon as they turned their backs and walked into the restaurant, he would look at me and growl a common English curse in their direction. This phrase—along with "Happy birthday to you"—is the only English he knows. He can utter the blessing and the curse. Though the hatred is often hidden, it resides deep in his heart. Minority people long to openly grieve, but often because of fear, do not allow themselves to do so. Instead, they remain silent and cover their pain with a smile.

The testimony that the gospel has the power to reconcile two groups who hated each other and unite them to go into the world is undeniably powerful, a witness that gives all the glory to God because only he could bring reconciliation in this way.

So, how can we as foreigners bring reconciliation into the church and help to plant a vision so that minority and majority Christians can work together for the cause of the gospel? My answer comes from our experience of living in the city of Chicago—in our home country—for about eleven years. For six of those years, we lived in subsidized housing near Chinatown, on the twenty-first floor of a building. The complex was about 80% black, 20% Chinese, and us. Our children were born in a hospital in a black and Latino ghetto. My window-washing business took me all over the city. As my wife and I came from predominately white parts of the United States, you can imagine the level of culture shock we faced. Our experience living in this city and complex played an essential role in God's calling us to work with a different people on the other side of the world. It was absolutely necessary because it forced us not only to befriend people who were different from us, but to befriend people who feel they have been racially aggrieved by whites.

In America, poorer black people who live in cities often feel more racial animosity towards whites than those who live in rural States. The fact that we lived in Chicago at the time when a white police officer shot dead a black man in Ferguson, Missouri forced us to deal with racism and ethnocentrism that we didn't even know was in our hearts. We quickly learned to listen to our black neighbors and the people I met on my window-washing routes. We heard how they were often mistreated just because of the color of their skin, how they were abused by the police, looked down upon by white people, and marginalized. And though we didn't agree with everything they said, we came to understand them and their situation much better. Living in Chicago revealed that racism was hidden in our hearts and taught us to truly love our black neighbors. For the first time, we saw how privileged we are as white people and developed a desire to use it to benefit those who are less privileged. We similarly learned to genuinely love black people: their culture, the way they talk to and interact with each other, even their faults. We got to know where they are different from white Americans and the difference became beautiful to us.

Working with a minority culture on the other side of the world has shown us that there is not much difference between the experience of a Jew in Babylon, an African-American in the United States, or Asian minority group as they relate to the majority culture. As foreigners who work in Asia, we need to confront the racism that exists in our own hearts. My hope is that we all allow Christ to break down any dividing walls that have been raised between us and others (Eph 2:14). I also hope that we can help the local church of majority culture people to examine their hearts and confront racism that they may have.

Let me name a few specific ways that foreigners who work with minority peoples can work toward this end. My first example relates to a majority-people family who are our friends. They are wonderful people and a great family. A church meets in the upstairs of their home and they have a very genuine love for the Lord. They have a heart for the minority people too, but I would say they have a greater burden to mobilize

them towards a wider missional vision of taking the gospel to related people groups in neighboring countries. They own property in an area with a large population of minority people and desired to use it effectively to train up people from their church and send them out in mission. At one point, they told us they believe the area and the minority people are essential for their wider missional vision. That was, however, before life in the area became more difficult and they started to feel that they should focus on the next country. Hearing this saddened us greatly. We became even sadder because they were unwilling to learn the minority language and culture since the minority people can speak their language.

My second example relates to my first language teacher. He is a great guy with a genuine Christian faith and a really good heart. Once in class, the topic of the minority people and their land came up. I don't remember the details, but I remember explaining to him how difficult things are for the minority people as they are poor, disadvantaged, and oppressed. My teacher responded by telling me that things are actually quite easy for them since government programs take care of them and that life is really harder for the majority people because they don't get the same benefits.

These examples demonstrate the all-too-common mentality of people from the majority church. Though they often go to do ministry in areas where minority people live, they rarely stay for the long haul. How do we respond when we hear things like this? How does a racially transformed heart speak into these situations?

Our diagnosis for the large family goes back to what we saw in Lamentations 5:1 and 5:21 about God being a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. He "remembers" and he has "restored", and the way he has done that is through the church—a multi-ethnic body, comprising all the colors of the spectrum. The family had seen minority people as a project that fits into their wider vision and mission, but once things "got too hard," it seems they decided that the "project" was no longer worth pursuing or necessary. They have failed to see that they *need* minority people. As Ephesians 2:19–22 says:

> You are no longer strangers and aliens but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined and held together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God.

My friends and the majority people church need to see that they need minority people and that they need to value them as a unique culture and people. In Christ, they are being "built and joined together." They therefore need to genuinely love them and desire to preserve their language by learning it. In many cases, the use of a minority language is essential so that those who do not know the majority language—especially the older ones—can hear the gospel in a way they can understand. There is a need to recognize that minority peoples and their cultures have value and that forcing or even coercing them to be like the majority culture can feel truly oppressive. People like my friends also need to be reminded that we can't give up on mission because it's hard. *Mission is hard.* And even though minority people may not always respond well to majority people, as Ephesians 2:14 and 2:19–22 inform us, we should love others in spite of how they treat us, and keep working for as long as it takes to bring about true reconciliation, as this is a by-product of the gospel.

My teacher and others like him need to see the value of unity in diversity. Ephesians 3:10 is a multi-colored spotlight that shines on Revelation 7:9: "So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." The phrase "manifold wisdom" has the idea of a multi-faceted cut diamond or prism that refracts light into all the colors of the rainbow. That light shines on Revelation 7:9, which describes how—in heaven—every tribe, tongue, and nation will worship the Lamb in the greatest display of unity in diversity. For this reason, my teacher needs to value minority people as people, because diversity is not only multi-ethnic but also cuts across all levels of income and social strata. Poor and wealthy are unified, as those with privilege help those without.

How, then, do foreign workers with racially transformed hearts fit in? How can we best fulfill the role of mediator? We should start by valuing the unity and diversity we find in our own countries. If we don't, we won't be nearly as effective in Asian contexts. Valuing unity in diversity comes through repenting of ethnocentrism and racism that one may not even know is there. As we saw in Lamentations, honest confession of sin is essential. As we mobilize and send people into the racially tense contexts of minority peoples, we need to ensure that those we mobilize are made ready through dealing with similar issues in their own countries first. For my teacher to truly understand minority people, he needs to sit down with them over a pot of tea, listen to their stories, and get to know their life experiences, even if he doesn't agree with everything that they say. Only in this way can he truly understand what it means to be a minority person and then begin to minister to them.

No matter where you are from, you need to ask what racism or ethnocentrism you might need to repent of. If I, as a white person, had never listened intently to the stories and experiences of my black neighbors, how could I advise my teacher to do the same thing without being labeled a hypocrite? If I, as a white person, haven't learned to value the ethnic minorities in my own country that I have held prejudices against, how can I tell my Asian friends that they need to value the minorities in their country and learn their language and culture too? Having these experiences with minorities in our own countries will give us real examples to draw on when we talk with our majority brothers and sisters in Asia.

Another way that those of us who have a burden for minority people can be used is to love the church of the majority people who live around them. If we desire that they learn to love unconditionally, we need to love them unconditionally and thus live out the gospel before their eyes.

As we mobilize and send people into the racially tense contexts of minority peoples, we need to ensure that those we mobilize are made ready through dealing with similar issues in their own countries first.

I would thus strongly recommend that all new workers who want to work with minority people, along with mobilizers, should gain this kind of experience and begin to address heart issues before going to the field or sending people there. Here are a few ideas that may help.

1. Find ways to listen to the stories of minority people in your home country. To do this, you could visit a nearby ethnic church and tell the pastor that as you are preparing to serve in a part of the world where racial tensions are high, you want to better understand minorities in order to be of greater service to those people.

2. Find ways to mobilize people from African-American (or other minority) churches to reach minority people in Asia. Black Christians, as minority people, could greatly help the majority church to understand minorities. They may also be able to identify with the minority people in their suffering, come alongside them, and lead them to Christ.

3. Prepare your heart to face multiple frustrations when working with Christians from the majority people who want to work with minority people. Learn to love the church with all its faults.

In closing, I'd like to highlight a powerful example of lament and reconciliation. College Park Church in Indianapolis specializes in bringing white and black Christians together and taking them on a bus tour to visit important sites connected with the civil rights movement. Though I haven't taken part in one of these trips, I want to and I believe that it would be of great value for anyone involved in minority people work to do the same. During these tours, devotional readings are given from lament psalms and Lamentations. As the groups visit different sights, everyone writes their own lament psalms and reads them to the group. The language of lament brings unity to this diverse group and brings healing at a deeper level than you can imagine. Like rapper Lecrae said in his hip-hop lament "Facts":

> You want unity then read a eulogy,
> kill the power that exist up under
> you and over me. Reconciliation
> or conciliation happens when
> defrauded parties are made whole
> not just apologizing for the offense.

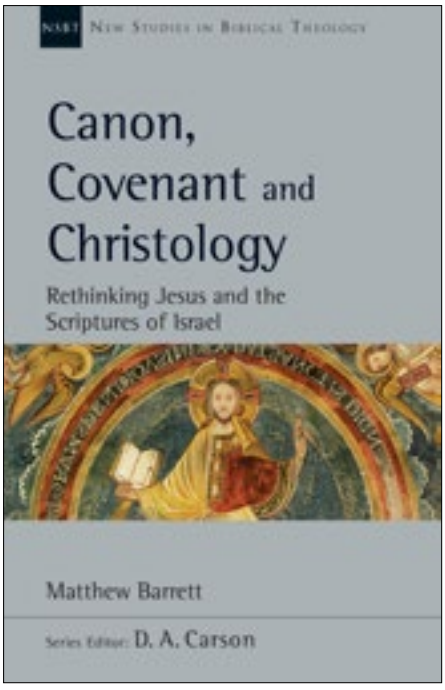
So, let's help and love minority peoples. Let's help and love the minority people church. Let's help, love, and mediate between the minority and majority people churches. In this way, God's kingdom can advance among the minority peoples and they can move toward being made whole as they are freed up to have space to lament, because lament is a pain-filled prayer for revival to a God who remembers and restores. **MRT**

[1] The image is a faithful reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art. It is in the public domain in its country of origin, the US, and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.
[2] H. L. Ellison, "Lamentations," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Vol. 6*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 733.

Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel

By Matthew Barrett. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020.
ISBN 978-0-8308-2929-3. 384pp.

Reviewed by Martin Paterson



Questions relating to the authority and unity of the Bible come to the surface in every context of gospel ministry. It is therefore essential that those who seek to make disciples develop a reasoned response to such crucial questions. Matthew Barrett's recent addition to the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, Canon, Covenant and Christology, is a resource which does exactly that.

Although we can draw on the apostolic witness to defend the divine authorship and integrity of the Bible (2 Tim 3:16), Barrett seeks to advance the discussion in a way that avoids falling into the trap of proof texting. His suggestion is that we recognise the way Jesus interacts with the Scriptures (the Old Testament) in light of the covenants which God has made with his people. Barrett sums this up by stating that "showing Jesus to be the 'Christological clamp' is paramount to confirming canonical unity and the canon's divine origin" (39).

Barrett takes the reader through the covenantal framework of the Old Testament (chapter 2) and then illustrates how Jesus read, taught, and thought about the Scriptures through case studies in Matthew and John (chapters 3 and 4). In this way, we come to realise more clearly, or certainly in a fresh way, how integral Christology is to our understanding of the canon of Scripture. This is one of the book's greatest contributions and will provide stimulus for further reflection concerning the unity of the canon for years to come.

The book then illustrates how Christ's filial relationship with the Father in covenant obedience (as opposed to the disobedience of Adam and Israel) proves the unity of the canon (chapter 5). The author advocates that our Christology should be directly linked to our understanding of the intrinsic unity of the Bible. He sums this up by saying: "scriptural authority comes unhinged if not rooted in biblical Trinitarian Christology" (248). Finally, Barrett asks how evangelicals will hold to the unity of the Bible in the future. His suggestion is that "there is a Christological warrant for inerrancy, one that moves our defence of inerrancy away from shallow proof texting to a more organic, redemptive-historical approach that reflects Scripture's typological and Christological focus, fulfilment and finality" (302).

On a far more practical level this volume is helpful as it brings a needed corrective to common oversimplifications

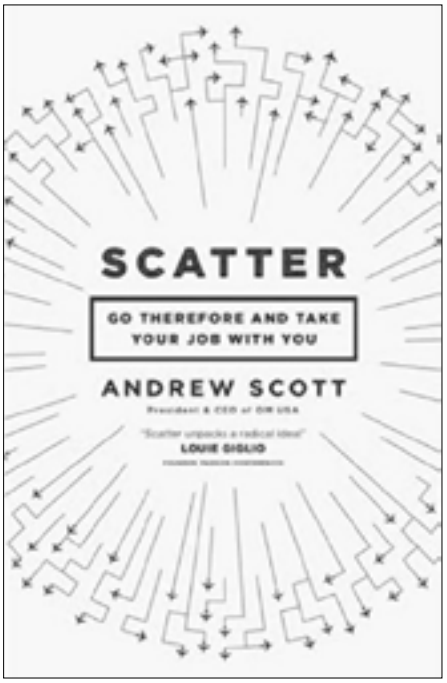
and oversights concerning the Old Testament. Barrett rightly argues that "the Old Testament Scriptures are not adopted by Jesus and the church (that is the approach of most sects and cults), but the Old Testament Scriptures give birth to Jesus himself and are the genesis of his church" (197). As we seek to answer people's genuine objections to the Bible—and therefore the God of the Bible—it is essential that we are clear concerning its unity and focal point. We do not worship a made-up deity who was subsumed into the Jewish Scriptures. Rather, we follow God's chosen King who brings to fulfilment all of his promises.

If you serve in a context where the integrity of the Bible is suspect, you will find this book to be a helpful companion. If your context values narrative over proof texting, Barrett's demonstration of how Christ is the focal point of the Bible will be useful. If you are involved in a church planting ministry or are considering doing so in the future, it is essential to understand that the Bible's unity flows from Jesus Christ as its focal point. For everyone who serves the church in such a role, this book provides important insights and structure.

Scatter

By Andrew Scott. Chicago: Moody, 2016. ISBN 9780802412904. 224 pp.

Reviewed by Paul Robinson



In Scatter, Andrew Scott introduces his idea that God intends his people to "scatter" into every sector of society to share Jesus Christ. He explores his theme by showing the big picture story of the Bible, humankind created in God's image, and the essential value of vocation and work.

Through telling a number of distressing stories from around the world, Scott introduces his text and dramatically states that "this generation has learned to worship in the church but seems unwilling to worship in the world" (32). He provocatively cites Amos 5:23–24 and lays down the challenge that "A good merit of true compassion is resulting action" (34). In the following chapter, the scatter theme is observed throughout Genesis, the exile to Babylon, the Gospels, the early church, and church history to-date. Scott asserts that throughout time it was not just preachers and missionaries who were responsible to share the good news of Jesus Christ, but also "business owners, labourers, fathers, mothers, storekeepers and carpenters living out their faith in the marketplaces" (58). He concludes that making Jesus known is the responsibility of all the people of God. As he says, "When we lose our 'why' we lose our 'way'. When we fail to keep the main thing the main thing, our focus, energy and efforts all seem to get distracted and wasted on things that do not matter as much" (63).

Chapter 3 discusses God, creativity, and the big picture plan for creation. The following three chapters (4, 5, and 6) then articulate humankind's agency within this plan. Scott establishes that humans are imprinted for a relationship with God, "chosen before time to be His child" (93). They are designed for good works that God has prepared in advance for them to do. They are uniquely shaped to do these as they discern their talents (112–116). Failure to do this has sobering consequences. "In asking new recruits to give up their vocation and the skills related to it, the modern missions effort, with the best of intentions, has succeeded in removing the greatest tools God gave these individuals to live out their role in His purposes among the nations" (115). This is a searing and timely challenge to mission agencies, in light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, to critically reflect on past recruitment practice and be more flexible, creative, and nuanced going forward. Action that may result in many pathways into mission becoming intentionally mobilised rather than only the "vocation abandonment" route condemned by Scott.

The book seems to gather momentum when Scott addresses work, beginning in chapter 7. Inspired by the eighteenth-century Moravians, he presents work as a vehicle for using God-given talents, for pointing others to God's glory, and for sustaining people. He stresses that work is not the ultimate goal, rather it allows people to use their best years for the purposes of God. "Work is part of our life and therefore the place where we primarily get to reflect His glory and goodness—and the good news is that most of us work. No one gets excluded" (144).

> "God is looking for a people who will see heaven as their home and so no country, city, or house—no matter how comfortable—will keep us planted, stuck, and settled while we are here on earth" (149). Through the stories of Joseph and Daniel, Scott argues, in chapter 8, that this heavenly perspective releases the scattered people of God to make a lasting, and at times excellent (Daniel 1:19–20) impact for his glory through the nations. It is a motivational chapter on the power of work to share Jesus Christ that recognises that "there is no real point in simply scattering if we do not have the 'fire'"—the Holy Spirit-prompted desire to share Jesus Christ—"attached to us" (165). The final chapters warn against "tent faking" (173)—which Scott defines as the practice of using mediocre work practice as a sort of façade for

Continued on p. 47

Peter's Declaration "You are the Christ"

Richard Schlitt



Richard Schlitt served in the Philippines for thirty years. During this time he served first among the open-access people and then among a restricted-access people. He spent the next ten years in International Director roles. He has also given much time in non-formal and informal training. Currently Richard is the National Director for OMF Canada. Richard holds a doctorate in I ntercultural Studies. He is married to Marilyn, with three daughters and eight grandchildren.

> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 16:13–17)[1]

As one who, for many years, regularly shared Jesus with a most-resistant people, the words I longed to hear were, "he is the Son of God," "he is the way to God." Whenever those words were said, they were never said lightly, but only after deep reflection. They came with the recognition that this declaration could cost one his or her life. This is not unlike Peter, whose pivotal articulation will be considered in this article. I believe Jesus had waited for this moment. He had intentionally discipled towards it. John MacArthur writes, "For some two and a half years Jesus had been moving to this moment – teaching and reteaching, affirming and reaffirming, demonstrating and redemonstrating, building and rebuilding the truth of who He was in order to establish it completely and securely in the minds and hearts of the twelve."[2]

Peter's declaration was a watershed moment. This article will consider what Peter was actually declaring and why it marked a turning point for the disciples and for Christianity. We will consider the journey the disciples made before this declaration was possible. We will also note the significant and intentional steps in Jesus' discipleship that lead to this point and the marked change in Jesus' discipleship from this point forward.

Although it was Peter who articulated the great declaration, Jesus had put the question to all twelve disciples and Jesus' charge in Matthew 16:20 that they not tell anyone else who he was indicates that Peter was speaking for all of the twelve. The disciples collectively had come to this great point of recognition and declaration. Jesus' discipleship, after this point, would change profoundly. Only now, with this great recognition and declaration, did Jesus speak of his coming death on the cross. Only now would that be understandable and significant. And in fact, it still took a long time before they understood his coming death. They only really understood it, with Jesus' added explanations, after the resurrection. Such is the nature of discipleship. This declaration allowed Jesus to move to the next stage of discipleship.

What was it that Peter actually said in his declaration? According to Matthew 16:16, "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" I remember discussing the question of who Jesus is with a door-to-door cult evangelist in the Philippines. Members of this cult believed that Jesus was only a man—a great man and teacher, no doubt, but still, a man. When I pointed to the confession Thomas made after the resurrection, "my Lord and my God," I was told this was an expression of surprise. In Filipino, "*Dios ko!*" In English, "My God!"

I frequently hear this kind of expression of surprise now that I am back in Canada. "OMG," short for "Oh my god." I cringe every time I hear it. Those who say this have no idea that they are breaking the fourth commandment and taking the Lord's name in vain. But that was not the case with Peter. A Jew would never lightly refer to a person as God. Jews held the God of creation, the great "I Am" of Exodus 3, in such holy reverence that these words would never just slip off their tongue.

So, what had Peter just said about Jesus? What had Peter come to understand? The Jews were waiting for God's promised

deliverer, the Messiah, the Anointed one, the Christ. Peter had just declared that Jesus was this long-awaited Christ. Though he still misunderstood a lot about the nature and work of this anointed deliverer, Peter had recognized that Jesus was the one. Jesus was God's promised Messiah. The promises that began in Genesis 3, where we read that the seed of the woman would crush the Serpent's head, had finally been fulfilled. The promises that this one would be of the tribe of Judah, the descendent of King David, were being fulfilled. Peter did not yet understand Isaiah 53's teaching about the suffering Servant, but he knew that this was the one who would bring in God's kingdom.

It is insightful to our present-day understanding of discipleship that Peter understood many things while many other things were not yet clear. As Jesus moved from his joyous affirmation of Peter's enlightenment and the fact that his Father in heaven had given Peter this understanding, he began to speak of his coming suffering, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem. This clearly did not fit into Peter's new understanding and Peter rebuked Jesus for such a thought.

> Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (Matt 16:22–23)

Again, such is the nature of discipleship. Peter had made such a significant discovery and declaration, but he still could not fit into his new understanding the fact that Jesus would need to die. In Peter's thinking, the Christ was to be victorious, not killed. Peter still had significant steps to travel in his growth as a disciple before he could understand even the most basic and essential elements of God's salvation. As disciplers, we can and should rejoice in every measurable step forward an inquirer or new disciple makes, but we must recognize that it is but one, significant step in a much longer journey.

Coming back to Peter's declaration, two significant things should be highlighted. First, "You are the Christ." And second, "You are … the Son of the living God." Commenting on the first—"You are the Christ"—D. A. Carson writes, "The designation 'Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham' resonates with biblical nuances. 'Christ' is roughly the Greek equivalent to 'Messiah' or 'Anointed.'"[3] As Carson goes on to note, this one would bring "in the promised eschatological reign."

Peter, and as we understand, all the twelve together, had come to realize that this one they were walking with, working with, and learning from was in fact the fulfilment of God's promises and the one who would bring in the new age.

The second of these declarations leads to a question that is of extreme importance for first-century and twenty-first-century disciples. Did God have a Son? Peter had just announced that Jesus was "the Son of the living God." Much of Christianity seems to give little thought to what this meant, but to two great monotheistic faiths—Judaism and Islam—that statement comes across as blasphemy. How could the Creator God have a son? The *Shema Israel* of Deuteronomy 6:4 declares that "the LORD is one!" The *Shahada*—one of the Five Pillars of Islam—also declares belief in the oneness of God. My Muslim friends, quoting from the *Qur'an*, declare with absolute conviction that, "God neither begets nor is he begotten." And to what they are declaring, I agree. And, I believe, Peter would have agreed.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary gives the first definition of "begotten" as the past participle of beget.[4] The first definition of beget is to procreate as the father or sire. The second way Merriam-Webster treats begotten is as an adjective, meaning: "brought into existence by or as if by a parent." Either of these understandings of the word would lead us to an unbiblical understanding of Jesus as God's son.

Many Christians are used to the 1611 King James Version translation of John 3:16, which says that Jesus is God's "only begotten Son." Seeking to be true to the original text, while writing for today's English-speaking audience, the English Standard Version refers to Jesus as God's "only Son", dropping the word "begotten". This is a helpful corrective, as the Greek word *monogenēs* should rightly be translated "only" or "unique" and says nothing about procreation.[5] Even so, it does not help us understand what Peter might have meant when he said the Jesus was the Son of God.

Once, sitting on a plane in deep discussion with my Muslim seat-mate about their utter rejection of Jesus being the son of God, by God's grace I gave a response that he found satisfying. First, I admitted that I believed that many Christians did not understand the meaning of "Son of God" as used regarding Jesus. I then explained my understanding—that the Spirit of God placed the Word of God into the womb of Mary, resulting in Jesus being born. Muslims believe that the Prophet Jesus is also known to be the Spirit of God and the Word of God and to be born to the virgin Mary. With this explanation, he was satisfied that we believed the same thing regarding Jesus' relation to God. While there are still other critical aspects of theology that we could not yet agree upon, we both agreed that the relationship of God the Father to Jesus was totally different to that of a father who had procreated a son.

The Gospel of John, which was written sometime after the first three Gospels, does not follow the approach of Matthew and Luke, who tell the story of Jesus from birth to death and resurrection. One of the reasons for this is related to John's specific purpose for writing, which is clearly stated near the end of his Gospel. "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31).

Writing with that purpose in mind, John opens his Gospel with what would have been a mind-bending assertion, but one that provides the needed understanding of the relation of Jesus to God, as "the Son of God."

John opens his Gospel with what would have been a mind-bending assertion, but one that provides the needed understanding of the relation of Jesus to God, as "the Son of God."



Christ Walking on the Water **by Julius Sergius von Klever (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons. The work is in the public domain in its country of origin, the US, and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.**

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. (John 1:1–4)

Merrill C. Tenney, commenting on John 1:1, makes a number of key points which can be summarized in this way. "In the beginning" recalls Genesis 1:1 where God created the world. "Word" is the Greek *logos*, which is both the spoken word with meaning, but in Scripture, it is also the creative power. Tenney writes, "To the Hebrew 'the word of God' was the self-assertion of the divine personality; to the Greek the formula denoted the rational mind that ruled the universe. John is asserting that the 'Word' is the source of all that is visible and antedates the totality of the material world. The use of logos implies that John was endeavoring to bring out the full significance of the Incarnation to the Gentile world as well as to the Jewish people."[6]

Tenney further comments on the relation of Jesus—the Word—to God as he addressed the "with God" and "was God" of John 1:1. "The preposition 'with' in the phrase 'the Word was with God' indicates both equality and distinction of identity along with association." Commenting on "was God," Tenney writes, "The 'Word' was deity, one with God, rather than 'a god" or another being of the same class."[7] There is a lot of content in that one verse. I believe this is what Peter and the other disciples had come to understand as Peter makes his declaration.

The journey to this understanding

We have to ask ourselves, how did Peter come to this understanding of who Jesus was? Jesus' answer was that, it was "not revealed to you [Peter] by man, but by my Father in heaven." The Gospel story indicates there was a process of revelation and understanding. There was a journey of discovery. Two chapters earlier in Matthew, the disciples had made a declaration that sounded very similar. After Jesus had frightened the disciples by walking on the lake, Peter had walked on the water, began to sink, was rescued by Jesus, and then Jesus stilled the storm. The disciples worshiped him and made this declaration. "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matt 14:33). Why does Jesus respond to Peter's declaration in Chapter 16 and not the multiple disciples' declaration in Chapter 14? Was Jesus able to see that they were not quite there yet in their understanding?

Actually, there seemed to have been an amazing declaration of who Jesus was, way back when he was just first calling his disciples. John 1 records the calling of Jesus' first disciples who would become the Apostles. The other Gospels add to the story by telling us how Jesus interacted with some of the future disciples, but that seems to precede their calling. In John 1, after Jesus gave Simon the name Peter, and called Philip to "follow me," we read the brief story of Nathanael.

> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:44–45)

We need to note that Philip had already concluded that Jesus is the one Moses wrote about. That seems to be far down the road of understanding, but Nathanael goes even further.

> "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." (John 1:46–49)

What more is there to say? In these early encounters between Jesus and men who had not yet been selected to be Apostles, they seem to have made a full and accurate declaration about him. Philip recognized Jesus to be the one Moses wrote about. Nathanael declared that he was the Son of God and the King of Israel. Nothing seems to be lacking and yet Jesus knew that a much longer journey of discovery and understanding was to come.

> Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You



Saint Peter Walks on the Sea **by James Tissot. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, 19.5 x 11 cm. From Brooklyn Museum, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4514.**

shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:50–51)

It would have been at least two more years of one-on-one time with Jesus before he would affirm Peter's Matthew 16:16 declaration as having been revealed by God. It is apparent that even though Nathanael's declaration sounds similar, Jesus recognized that they are still lacking in understanding.

Jesus takes them on a journey towards greater understanding. In John's account, three days after meeting with Philip and Nathanael, Jesus performed his first recorded miracle. At a wedding feast, about to go horribly wrong as a groom was about to be disgraced by running out of wine, Jesus turned water into wine that made up for the lack and caused experts to gasp at its quality. John's closing statement on that story is very insightful. "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him" (John 2:11). Thus, at a very early stage of their journey of faith and discovery, the disciples "put their faith in him." Though this was a significant step, they were still far from having adequate understanding to receive the salvation that comes through faith in him.

It is worth noting how these phrases of observation come at the end of many Gospel stories. They show the new insight that has been received. They mark the next step forward in the journey of faith. I will include just a sampling of such phrases of observations. The first three show the growing understanding of the wider group of followers.

> The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. (Mark 1:22)

> The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." (Mark 1:27)

> He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:12)

In Mark 4, as Jesus stills the storm, it becomes evident that the twelve have still not come to an adequate understanding of who Jesus is. "They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:41). They clearly had not yet understood the statement John made in the first verse of his Gospel that Jesus was God the Creator and therefore able to control the elements of his creation.

The discipler needs to observe the indicators of a disciple's understanding. There is generally no value in teaching difficult truths that a disciple is not ready for. At the same time, we must keep the process moving towards an adequate understanding until there can be a commitment of faith that brings salvation.

As intentional disciplers, we should listen for similar phrases of observation and celebrate every insight that people receive. These moments of insight and teachable moments are there for those who are ready for more. We can recall that in the record of Matthew 13, the crowds received the parables as stories of insight, but Jesus' disciples received a second level of explanation and teaching. The discipler thus needs to observe the indicators of a disciple's understanding. There is generally no value in teaching difficult truths that a disciple is not ready for. At the same time, we must keep the process moving towards an adequate understanding until there can be a commitment of faith that brings salvation.

In the discipleship process, not all come through to understanding and faith. John's Gospel makes it clear that some who were following Jesus and seemed to have arrived at this point of commitment, pulled back. We find this clearly in John 6 in the context of what are known as Jesus' hard teachings.

> Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:53–69)

This passage reveals a great many discipleship insights. One that we must not miss is that people only come to Jesus because the Father enables them. This reminds us that discipleship is not just a calculated process. While there is every evidence that Jesus is calculating and intentional, the work of the Spirit of God is essential for spiritual enlightenment.

In this John 6 interaction, Jesus had just preformed an amazing miracle by feeding the five thousand. Again, the people were amazed. Some of them concluded that, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world"

(John 6:14). Through the miracle, they seemed to have come to a greater recognition of who he was. One would expect Jesus to rejoice at this recognition and to confirm it. But we are told in 6:15 that Jesus knew this was about to go the wrong direction. They intended to make him king by force because they did not understand the road that was necessary for him to travel in order to fulfil prophecy. Jesus had to stop them from taking action that would have hindered him from travelling the right road so that the prophecy could be fulfilled. Had he given in, their incomplete understanding would have actually sabotaged the process. Jesus thus responded by making himself unavailable by withdrawing to a mountain by himself.

The whole series of interrelated events was not finished. The twelve had another encounter with Jesus. While they were struggling to cross the lake at night against strong winds, Jesus came to them walking on the water. They were immediately terrified, but when Jesus identified himself, they allowed him into the boat and the storm stopped. They had another impactful encounter with Jesus. This time, instead of the storm being stilled, the boat immediately reached the shore. Again, Jesus had shown the twelve his power over the natural world.

The rest of the crowd who had enjoyed the teaching and the free lunch the previous day on the other side of the late, wanted more. These included the group that wanted to make Jesus king by force. It would seem Jesus needed to dissuade them and therefore, when they did find him, he rebuked them for the shallowness of looking for another free meal. He then entered into the very deep teaching about his body being the real food and his blood the real drink. The discussion was effective in turning them from making him king by force, but it accomplished something else as well. Many who hitherto would have been identified as his disciples, stopped following him. This whole encounter that seemed to have been taking the Jesus-movement great steps forward, has just faced a great reversal. Now, fewer people were following him than before.



Peter proclaims Jesus. Detail from stained glass in the church of St Mary and St Lambert in Stonham Aspal in Suffolk. Kevin Wailes (Public domain CC BY 2.0), via Wikimedia Commons.

Jesus is aware that this is a critical point of decision for the chosen twelve. From his question, and their answer, it would seem he does not expect them to have understood his "hard teaching" either. They are, however, confronted with a difficult decision: continue to follow based on what they do understand or give it all up. Peter articulates the decision very well. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68–69).

There was now enough that they were sure about regarding Jesus that they could cope with what they did not understand. Even so, it was some time after this, and many experiences and teachings later, that Peter made his great pivotal declaration: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). While these statements do not appear to be that significantly different, Jesus perceived a new level of understanding that allowed him to move to the teaching of the cross.

I believe it is clear that the chosen twelve spent at least the first two-and-one-half years pondering the question of who Jesus was. Some of their early declarations seem to be so complete and accurate that they would have made every disciple-maker rejoice. They seemed to have really understood it all early on. And yet, Jesus took them through a three-year progressive process of encounter, observation, and discovery. The Matthew 16 declaration seemed to be the level of understanding Jesus was looking for. It was a pivotal point. It is noteworthy that in Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's recording of this declaration, Jesus immediately followed it by speaking for the first time of his coming suffering on the cross. This would now be a new focus of teaching for the remaining time that Jesus had with them. But in each rendering, that new piece of information about the coming suffering was not understood, but rejected. In Matthew's and Mark's accounts, Peter, who had just been commended for having received this insight from Jesus' Father in heaven, is rebuked in the strongest way. "Out of my sight Satan." Having heard and accepted an insight from the Father, he now heard and accepted a lie from Satan. Such is the nature of discipleship.

Peter's declaration in Matthew 16, "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God," expressed the profound recognition of the twelve disciples of who Jesus was and what he came to do. It was a recognition that was divinely inspired, and at the same time, reached through a progressive understanding. Finally, after their two-and-a-half years of one-on-one time with Jesus, Peter and the twelve had come to understand that Jesus was the Christ, the anointed Messiah, the one who would fulfil God's promised salvation, and was, in fact, God. That acknowledgement, however, did not come with the understanding

Peter's journey of discipleship and discovery reflects the journey of those we disciple today. We can similarly expect them to make great steps forward, and to slip back. We would do well to follow Jesus' example of being intentional disciplers, introducing new truth at the speed in which our listeners can receive it, while recognizing that they are on a spiritual journey that requires the Spirit's enlightenment.

that, to complete the role as deliverer, Jesus needed to endure the cross.

Peter's journey of discipleship and discovery reflects the journey of those we disciple today. We can similarly expect them to make great steps forward, and to slip back. We would do well to follow Jesus' example of being intentional disciplers, introducing new truth at the speed in which our listeners can receive it, while recognizing that they are on a spiritual journey that requires the Spirit's enlightenment. As difficult as it will be to accept, we recognize that some will not follow through to a saving faith. As Jesus persisted with Peter and the twelve, may we persist in faithful, intentional discipleship.

While acknowledging the "two steps forward, one step back" nature of discipleship, Peter's understanding that Jesus was the Christ, the anointed Messiah, the one who was, in fact, God, was pivotal in his discipleship. It is equally pivotal today in the journey of each disciple of Christ, and a confession that we should long to hear. **MRT**

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the NIV, 1984.
[2] John MacArthur, *Matthew 16–23*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 17.
[3] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). Accordance electronic ed., version 13.1.4.
[4] *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "begotten," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/begotten. (accessed 9 December 2020).
[5] William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago and Cambridge: University Press, 1957), 529. See also, Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 105. Morris gives numerous examples to show that "only begotten" does not express the meaning of the term, particularly since "Etymologically [the term] is not connected with begetting" but with being. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 105, fn. 93.
[6] Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Accordance electronic ed., version 13.1.4.
[7] Tenney, "The Gospel of John."

Continued from the review of *Scatter*, p. 41

the cross-cultural worker to hide behind in order to have access to people to share the gospel. Rather than separating and devaluing work and faith in this way, Scott advocates for integration, transparency, and authenticity when sharing the good news of Jesus Christ:

> If we were to live out our lives with excellence for the purposes of God in every sector of society, we would not have to shout so loudly to make our message heard. It seems today that Christians spend most of their time screaming out their dislike for the way things are in society. We are then labelled as intolerant and irrelevant. It is time for the whole church to live out all of life in every sector of society. To be who God has made us to be and to do it with excellence "as unto the Lord" (177).

This book is very accessible. Scott includes many personal stories and experiences from around the world to explain his points, frequently elaborated by biblical texts from both the Old and the New Testaments. His language is easy to understand and each chapter concludes with a handful of questions to facilitate personal application. However, for me, it is only in the final third—where Scott turns his focus specifically onto vocation and work—that the book becomes compelling. At times, the earlier chapters feel like "scene setting" that prepares the reader for the main event. At the end of the book, Scott makes helpful suggestions for churches and mission agency leaders to better recognise, affirm, disciple, and commission people into workplaces across the street and across the world.

Probably my biggest criticism is the "assumption of choice" that is presumed within the text and evidenced by intermittent slogan quoting (See the Howard Thurman citation on page 116). Yes, many people can choose their vocation and work, but there are many who cannot. Surely, they too have an important role in furthering God's kingdom. At times, the text seemed silent in addressing (and valuing) people in this situation and context. Overall, I found the book inspiring and extremely affirming about the biblically grounded role of personal vocation and work and its far-reaching power to further God's kingdom, scattered, throughout the nations.

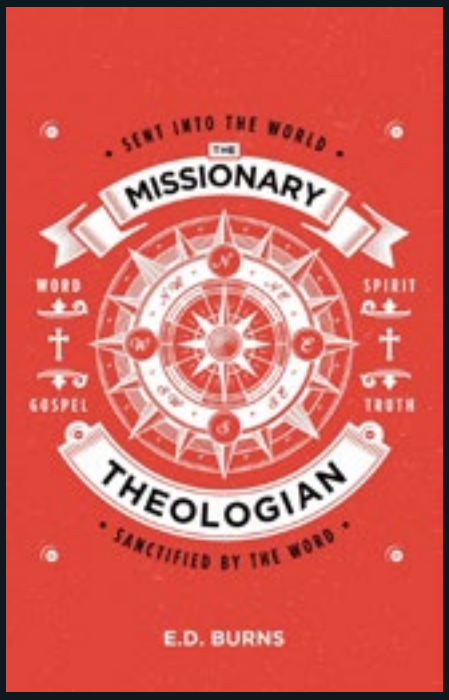
I will close by quoting Scott's words from the back cover:

> My prayer is that we will be the first generation to scatter on purpose … that we will go to every sector of society—business, the arts, education, and more—and be the Daniels of our day: being good at what we do, gaining favour in our workplace, and having the credibility and freedom to share our faith boldly.

The Missionary-Theologian: Sent into the World, Sanctified by the Word

By E. D. Burns. Fearne: Christian Focus, 2020. ISBN: 978-1527105393. 264pp.

Reviewed by Chris Howles, Head of Theology, Uganda Martyrs Seminary



In *The Missionary-Theologian*, E. D. Burns argues eloquently and energetically for the stronger integration of theological rigour into applied missiological practice. Throughout a wide-ranging series of chapters covering topics such as "The Missionary in Prayer," The Missionary as Servant of the Word," "The Missionary as Sent-One of the Sending Church," and "The Missionary as Pastoral Model and Church-Planter," Burns's basic premise remains consistent: "In this age fewer and fewer missionaries ground their missionary conviction and call in the Scriptures … they are far more fascinated with the mystical than the biblical, with the pragmatic than the propositional" (22). His book calls for Western missionaries and their sending churches to realign their values and methodologies in accordance to God's own as revealed in the Bible.

Burns's concerns about the increasing disconnect he sees in many missionaries between the patterns laid out in Scripture and the practices lived out in their daily lives emerge primarily from his own experiences as a former missionary in the Middle East and East Asia, and now as the director of the MA in Global Leadership Studies program at Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon. His argumentation is combative and his tone at times polemical, but his clear and irrepressible desire to see the gospel faithfully, clearly, and boldly proclaimed, and to see people respond in faith in Christ, means that his writing remains challenging and provocative without becoming disingenuous or insensitive.

However, readers must beware. Burns is not afraid to speak critically against what he perceives to be significant structural, methodological, and theological errors in contemporary missionary praxis. Readers must approach the book prepared to engage in honest and substantive self-reflection. For example, he highlights and criticises the syncretizing of evangelicalism with cultural fads; the juvenilizing of churches by replacing sound doctrine with experience; authoritarian sending-churches; a lack of biblical discernment in mission strategizing; cause-driven rather than truth-driven missions activism; the eclipsing/assuming of verbal proclamation in outreach; the "everyone is a missionary" mentality; the hazy subjectivism of the "missionary call"; casual and light-hearted methodologies that cheapen the gospel message; the tepid timidity of Westerners' prayer lives; a lack of emphasis on godly discipline in missionary training; a prioritization of opinions, statistics, experiences, and emotions above the Bible; and a Christian culture that seeks instant gratification and ushers impatience, entitlement, and dissatisfaction into the missionary mindset, all of which result in more pragmatists than preachers and more anthropologists than apologists.

At times, the critiques can feel relentless but, more crucially, Burns consistently remains grace-filled and scripturally-anchored, always conscious of God's free offer of redemption in Christ as both message and motivation. As he says, "Gospel truth is not just the message missionaries should promote: it is the heart that pulses blood through their veins" (35). Nowhere is this clearer than in his outstanding chapter on Christ's victorious work on the cross (33–50), which spotlights the rest and peace that fruit-driven, success-seeking missionaries receive from knowing that. His aim in the book is not simply to pinpoint problems, but to identify necessary corrective responses according to God's word. No one could read and subsequently doubt his passionate desire to see Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered, biblically-informed, theologically-equipped, missiologically-astute, long-term Christian workers mobilized, trained, and sent into the world. These persuasive convictions saturate every page and energize and excite the reader.

Burns writes clearly and engagingly to senders, supporters, thinkers, and goers in the modern missions movement. He engages deeply with a number of key biblical texts (e.g., a chapter on Paul's apologetic methodology in Acts 17), key theological concepts (e.g., a chapter on Luther's teaching on righteousness), and key historical figures (e.g., a chapter on Adoniram and Ann Judson), all of which strengthen his arguments in a readable and relatable manner.

Those wishing for a gentle and smooth ride through their next book may wish to avoid this one for now. But those who want—or need—to carefully evaluate their own missiological principles and practices would be well-served by reading *The Missionary-Theologian* slowly and prayerfully with a pencil in hand, before then sharing it with others in their teams for discussion. It may not always be a comfortable experience, but this book will almost certainly provoke thought, precipitate change, produce growth, and—most importantly—refresh and encourage readers in the perfect worthiness of Jesus Christ and the privilege of knowing him and making him known to the ends of the earth.